

This study grew out of a situation that compelled my wife and me to leave the traditional church and to begin assembling within our home. After having been very involved in the Evangelical movement all of our married lives, we slowly came to realize that if we were going to be true to the Word of God (and that is our primary desire), then we could no longer do so while remaining a part of the Evangelical community. As painful as it was, we pulled our deeply embedded roots out of the rocky soil of Evangelicalism, and began to look around to see what the Lord would have for us. After trying a couple of Baptist churches, we soon became aware of the fact that moving from one church to another only led to variations of the same problems. We realized afresh that we are personally accountable to the Lord and we cannot hide behind the trappings of a church (no matter how fundamental they might claim to be). We then began a study of the Word of God in our home, and we started with Ephesians.

This study took place over a period of about three years, with some breaks here and there. As we delved into the Scriptures, we found that much of what we had always considered to be sound theology (what we had been taught within Evangelicalism), often did not measure up to the Word of God. Throughout this study, I have endeavored to adhere to the Scriptures, and to compare Scripture with Scripture, rather than seek the counsel of commentaries as my primary resource. Additionally, I have purposed to take the Scriptures, and apply them to what we see around us (something that is clearly missing within most churches).

May the Lord bless all of you who desire to take His Word as your final authority on all matters of life, and may you be prepared to take the time to discover what God really has to say to you. He has not changed and will not change, but the Evangelical landscape continues to crumble into the pool of apostasy and religious paganism. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). This is one of many warnings for us to adhere to the unalterable Word of God; it is His Word that has been pronounced and preserved for our benefit. Let us search the Scriptures so that we are able to measure the worth of all that we hear and read (Acts 17:11).

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Chapter 1 – The Eternal Purposes of God



1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

Paul. In the typical style of the day, the letter opens with the name of the author.

I wonder if Paul ever lost the marvel of receiving the call to be an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. He who had persecuted the early believers with such vehemence, and in his zeal for God had labored to eliminate the work of God, was now a messenger (*apostle*) for God. He referred to himself as the “least of the apostles” and the one who was “born out of due time,” yet the New Testament (NT) bears testimony to the impact that his life had on the early believers (1 Corinthians 15:8, 9). Who of us does not feel inadequate? Yet what a mighty work is possible through a life that has yielded to the Savior!

Paul leaves no doubt as to Whose Apostle he is: he is a messenger (*apostle*), a *servant (doulos* – slave) of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1).¹ *Jesus* means “Savior” (Jehovah is salvation), even as the angel of the Lord conveyed the message to Joseph that His name was to be *Jesus*, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).² *Christ* means “Anointed,” just like the Hebrew word *Messiah*.³ Paul is the messenger, or herald, of God’s anointed Savior for the world, the One Who died to open the way for us to the Father.

Paul identifies Who he is representing and the title that he has used to identify himself, now he clarifies by what authority he presents himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ – *by the will of God*. Surely, Paul’s mind must have flashed back to that day on the road to Damascus when he met the Lord Jesus in a life-changing way. Paul had not sought the Lord out, but God found Paul and commissioned him for a very specific work. There was no room for pride in this, for Paul was a persecutor of the followers of Jesus when God shone a light on him that knocked him to the ground (Acts 9:3, 4). Paul was a man on a mission; he was determined to stamp out Christians wherever he could find them, and all in his zeal for God! Here was a man who had a tremendous understanding of things pertaining to God, yet he still walked in darkness. There comes no light to the soul through knowing **about** God; unless we come to **know** Him, we will remain in spiritual darkness for nothing less will lift us out of our sin. God shone His light on Paul and his life changed forever in that instant. When the light of God came into Paul’s life, the darkness could no longer hold him in its grip. Did Paul become perfect in this life? There are some who claim that we can experience perfect holiness in this life, yet that is not what we find in Paul. Romans 7 tells us that Paul was very aware of the conflict that raged within him, but that did not negate his challenge to live victoriously (Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, 6:19, 20; Galatians 5:1; Hebrews 12:1-3).

¹ Strong’s Online, (<http://onlinebible.net/>).

² Ibid.

³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

The “will of God” is often considered to be an elusive thing for which we must diligently seek – that niche in life that, if we find it, will result in God being pleased with us. Yet here Paul openly and boldly declared that it was the will of God that he should be God’s messenger – there is no question about it, and no hesitancy in declaring it. It would seem, in our zeal to wax eloquently in spiritual things, that we have made a mystery out of something that is not one, we have created confusion where God has given us clear direction, and we have introduced gray where there is only black and white. We carry the Word of God, the Bible, about with us, yet we struggle to understand the will of God; we hold the declaration of the will of God in our hands, yet expect God to somehow show us what He wants us to do without having to open the Book to read it. The will of God is really nothing more than His commandments, His precepts or teachings, His desires and His pleasure. How can we know the will of God for ourselves? Read the Word of God; study it diligently with the promised leading, guidance, and illumination by the Spirit of God; if we have placed our faith in the finished work of Christ, then this wonderful promise is ours (John 16:13). Begin with a mind that is being continually renewed by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:23), resulting in a changed life (Romans 12:2); then simply walk in obedience to the commands that God has given. However, do not walk in superficiality, but from the heart, and with a renewed mind – that mind of Christ that dwells in you by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 2:16).

However, even though this might appear to be simple, it will not be easy. The purpose of the will of God in our lives is holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3a), not only externally as the Pharisees thought to do, but completely (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Such a life will require endurance and perseverance (*patience – hupomone* includes both; Hebrews 10:36) along with the understanding that there will be opposition;⁴ indeed, suffering is an integral part of our new lives in Christ (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:17; 4:19). Some of the opposition may come from the ungodly, for we are told that our godly lives (lived according to the will of God) will be a testimony against them: for our *well doing* will put them to silence (1 Peter 2:15). However, even a cursory look at the life of Jesus confirms that His greatest opposition came from those who were religious – those who felt that their lives were in order and did not want to change. Do not be mystified if you face opposition and even persecution from those who profess to be Christians. For them, walking in the will of God is too narrow, and they call it legalism (a misdiagnosis of obedience), for they, too, will be condemned by your holiness of life. We have been promised eternal life if we do the will of God (1 John 2:17), but Jesus also told us that it is the one who remains faithful to Him through adversity who will one day be saved (Matthew 24:13). Some have used the phrase *easy believism* (pray a prayer and you’re cleared for heaven), but there is nothing like that here! Paul was an apostle by the will of God, yet he faced much hardship and persecution for the Lord; there is a cost to being a Christian – there is a cross that we are all called to bear!

Paul now identifies the primary and specific audience of this letter: *the saints which are at Ephesus, and ... the faithful in Christ Jesus*. It would appear that it was at Ephesus that Paul had a significant ministry – both in terms of effectiveness and length (Acts 19:1-20). However, the target audience is not limited to the Ephesian Christians, but everyone who is faithful in Christ Jesus may consider this epistle to have been written to them as well.

⁴ Strong’s Online.

Faithful, within this context, does not carry what we would consider to be the usual sense of trustworthiness or fidelity, but rather those who are *believing* (a continuously applicable description) in the Lord Jesus.⁵ This letter was written to those who were firm in their faith – those who were truly, actively Christians. Perhaps because Paul was so long at Ephesus, his epistle to them is largely instructive in nature, rather than corrective. Unlike his letter to the Corinthians where he chides them for not being able to bear the food that he desired to feed them, it would seem that his letter to the Ephesians contains this nourishing food (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2).



2. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace and *peace* were both commonly used in salutations in NT times. Yet for the believer, *grace* carries with it the understanding of all of the mercies and favor of God; *peace* (a common greeting among the Hebrews as well) brings a sense of the believer being at peace with God through the finished work of Christ – a peace that the unrepentant sinner cannot appreciate. The Hebrew greeting (*shalom*) carries the thought of being complete, safe and at peace before Jehovah, something that finds spiritual fulfillment in Christ.⁶ For the early believers, even though these greetings may have been somewhat common, their new relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ would have infused them with a whole new and greater appreciation for *grace* and *peace*.

The Apostle does not wish these virtues on the Ephesians from anything that he had within himself, but rather he identified the source of this *grace* and *peace* as being *God our Father* and *the Lord Jesus Christ*. Herein is a significant difference between the traditional greeting and what the Apostle uses – it is the Source! There are a couple of noteworthy items contained in Paul's simple, yet profound greeting that we need to consider. 1) God is identified as being particularly *our* Father – the Father of all Christians or saints – not the Father of all of mankind as the New Agers and Mormons would have us to believe, but only of those who have been truly born again by the Spirit of God. There is no spark of God within us that we must diligently fan into flame so that it might make us into everything that God is; we were dead in our sins before being made alive by God (Ephesians 2:1, 5). As true believers, we have been brought into a unique relationship with the God of the universe through the completed work of Christ – we have been adopted into His family, and are His children (1 Peter 1:3-5). In this new and vitally unique relationship, we obtain an inheritance – something that only takes place with the children of a family. God is identified as “our Father” but it is not through anything that we have done – it is all of God: He purchased us out of a life of sin and death so that we might become His children. 2) In a very unassuming manner, the Apostle clearly demonstrates that God the Father and the Lord Jesus are equal, for each is looked to as being the Source of this *grace* and *peace*. In a day when the divinity of Christ is being called into question by so many, this is another indication that there was no such question in the mind of the Apostle.

⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶ Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (BDB), Bibleworks 8.



3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

The salutation is over, and Paul enters right into what he wants the Ephesians to learn about their faith and walk with God. He begins with praise to God for what He has done for us, but again uncovers, in a very unassuming way, significant truths about the Godhead. He ascribes blessing, or praise, to the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ and the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ; this word for *blessed* (*eulogetos*) is only applied to God, and acclaims God as being worthy of praise.⁷ On several occasions during His ministry, Jesus identified Himself as being *I am* (John 13:19) – the eternal One Who was so identified to Moses (Exodus 3:14). However, having taken on the flesh of man, He also spoke of God as being His Father, and of Himself as being the Way to the Father for everyone (John 14:6). As our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) Jesus holds a unique relationship with God (being both eternal God and Creator of all, and the sinless Man Who intercedes for us) and, while He carried out His earthly ministry, His relationship with the Father was even more unique. To Nicodemus Jesus said: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is [present tense] in heaven” (John 3:13);⁸ even as He spoke with Nicodemus, He was also in heaven with the Father – even while on earth, Jesus still held the omnipresence of God. Within the mystical union of the Godhead, there is God the Father and God the Son, Who is the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 16; 3:16; 1 John 4:9), and God the Holy Spirit. Can we comprehend the mystery of the triune God? Not too likely, nor should we desire to do so, for the ways of God cannot be understood by the mind of man (Isaiah 55:8-9) – the infinite is so beyond the finite.

It is interesting to note that the attack of Satan is so often against the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. It was promised that, through the work of a coming Savior, Satan would be dealt a death-blow (Genesis 3:15). From the time of Christ, Satan has worked diligently to discredit Jesus, and to nullify His saving work in the minds of any who will give him heed. The Jehovah’s Witnesses will give Jesus *god* status (small “g”), but deny that He is equal with God the Father (He is *not Almighty God*⁹). The Mormons make Jesus a god among many gods, and hold Him up as an example of what we will become if we hold faithfully to the teachings of Joseph Smith.¹⁰ Although the Roman Catholic Church has not officially declared Mary, the mother of Jesus, to be Co-Redemptrix with Christ, this has been a title that has been held by some Catholics since the Middle Ages, and even today there is a conservative Catholic movement that is attempting to get the Church to include this in their dogma.¹¹ Many religions will accept Jesus as a good teacher, perhaps even as a prophet, but they will deny Him His rightful place as God (e.g., Islam). Modern Evangelicals have denied that Jesus is the only way to God; the late Billy Graham said that “everybody who knows Christ, **whether they are conscious of it or not** ... whether ... Muslim ... Buddhist ... or ... Christian ... are “**members of the Body of Christ**, because they’ve been called by God. **They may not even know the name of Jesus** ... I think they are saved, and that

⁷ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, “blessed.”

⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁹ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jehovah-witness-beliefs/>

¹⁰ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual-2017/chapter-51-doctrine-and-covenants-131-132-1-33?lang=eng>; Doctrines and Covenants 132:20.

¹¹ <https://cruznw.com/vatican/2021/03/once-again-pope-francis-says-mary-is-not-the-co-redemptrix/>

they are going to be in heaven with us.” (emphasis in original).¹² The “pope of Evangelicalism” denied the words of Jesus in John 14:6; take heed, the evidence of Satan’s activity is all around us.

God, the Father of our Mediator, has bestowed a blessing upon us. *Us* can be identified as including the Apostle Paul and those to whom he has addressed this letter, namely the saints who are at Ephesus and those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. God has *blessed us with every spiritual blessing (all and blessings are both singular in Greek)*;¹³ there isn’t one spiritual blessing that God has neglected to bestow upon us. God may bless us with good health, or with many of the good things in life, but these are only temporal in nature – spiritual blessings bear an eternal element. Herein we receive our cleansing from sin, our adoption into God’s family, and our inheritance of heaven itself. Our temporal blessings often come in a mixed manner: some enjoy good health, but have little in life; others may enjoy all the wealth that life can afford, but suffer from poor health. It is not like that with the spiritual blessings that God bestows on us – **everyone** who is *in Christ* will receive **every** spiritual blessing that God has to offer. The limiting factor is that we must be one of His saints (*in Christ*) and live in faithfulness to Him.

The word *places*, in our verse, has been supplied by the translators and does not appear in the original text. The seat of the spiritual blessings is *the heavenlies*, the dwelling place of God,¹⁴ and not the earth, nor is it from within the heart of man (we can discover no spiritual illumination or blessing by looking within, as is so popular today). These blessings are from the Lord in heaven and are available *in Christ*. This is a critically important phrase, for it identifies where we must be in order to know these blessings: *in Christ*. Jesus’ discourse on the vine and the branches finds a natural fit with this phrase (John 15:1-17); it is as we are abiding in Him (the *Vine*) and receiving of His nourishment that we are eligible for these many blessings. The spiritual blessings of God are available only *in Christ*; unless we are faithfully abiding in Him, we do not have any spiritual life so as to discern the blessings from God (1 John 2:4-6; 1 Corinthians 2:14).



4. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

This verse, and what follows, does not stand alone; it is tied to the previous verse that told us of *every spiritual blessing* that God has bestowed upon His faithful ones. The first two words (*according as*) connect the blessing of God to an eternal plan. *Every spiritual blessing* is being bestowed to the extent that God is unfolding what He has determined from eternity past. Every blessing that is conferred is not an afterthought, but is part of the eternal purposes of God. There is a surety here, a strong sense of security in what is being provided.

The word *us* can only refer to the saints who are at Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, and to Paul (as outlined in verse one). *Hath chosen (eklegomai)* describes an action that is not set in time (i.e., it is neither past, present, nor future tense) and means to be *called out for the One choosing*, with the associated concept of showing favor or kindness.¹⁵ We read that God *all men is willing to*

¹² Cathy Burns, Billy Graham and His Friends, p. 19.

¹³ Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

¹⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

save and unto a complete knowledge of the truth to come (1 Timothy 2:4); this literal translation makes it very clear that God is willing to save everyone (*all men*).¹⁶ Yet Jesus made it equally clear that not everyone will be saved, even among those who think that they have done great things for Him: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Included within the idea of choosing is the necessity of making a distinction – a basis for making the choice; in this case, the determination is between those who qualify to be among the *chosen* and those who are not. Equally clear, from this phrase, is that it is God Who does the choosing, and so He has determined the basis for His choice. However, we must understand that this does not mean that God has arbitrarily selected some individuals for salvation and the rest for damnation, as the Calvinists would have us believe. It is their contention that Christ did not die for all of mankind but only for those whom God has pre-selected (the *chosen*). Their position fails the Biblical test on two counts: 1) they do not give proper credence to the phrase *in him* in our verse that serves to establish the basis for God’s selection, and 2) there is nothing in Scripture that would suggest that the *elect* have been *chosen* unto salvation. The basis for God’s choice is this: He has chosen all of those who are *in Christ* simply because Jesus is the only Mediator Who can reconcile man with God (1 Timothy 2:5). Those who are *in Christ* by faith (a presently active believing – John 3:16) have been “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). God has not chosen some to salvation and left the rest to damnation; rather, He has chosen those who are *in Christ* unto works of service for Him! What we must not miss is that we are chosen to live according to the life of service that God has prepared for us **in Christ**; it is a fabricated doctrine that contends that God foresaw someone named John Brown whom He pre-determined to save. Jesus made it abundantly clear that He is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one is coming to the Father except through Him (John 14:6), but He also said that **whoever** is desiring to come after Him must deny himself, take his cross and be following Him (Mark 8:34). Such an open invitation from the Savior must be skewed (denied) in order to make it fit into Calvinism; yet Jesus made it clear that it would be the one who follows Him faithfully through trials unto the end who will be saved (Matthew 10:22). To those who are *in Christ* by faith comes the necessity of living (serving Him) faithfully: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – no belief, unfaithful], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).¹⁷ Contrary to Calvinism, God is *patient toward us, not desiring anyone to perish but has made room for all in repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).¹⁸

The basis for God’s choice was established before creation began (*before the foundation of the world*) – founded in the timeless, eternal purposes of God. Herein is one of the great mysteries of our faith: God has chosen us **in Christ** from before the act of creation! Can we comprehend such? Hardly. Nevertheless, this should motivate us to follow His Word so that we may be found to be *in Christ*, because if we are not in Him, then we are not among God’s chosen ones. John 3:16 tells us that *everyone who is believing in Christ is not ruined but is having everlasting life* (literal translation).¹⁹ *Believing* is in the active voice (which identifies this as something that *everyone* is

¹⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

responsible to do) and present tense (it must be presently active; a past belief does not count).²⁰ This runs contrary to Calvinism – they hold tenaciously to the total depravity of man to the extent that man cannot even choose to be saved; yet the Scriptures are clear that fallen, sinful man still bears the *image of God* (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9) – the ability to think, reason, and make choices. Moses, as he addressed the children of Israel just before he died, laid before them their options before the Lord, and then declared, “Choose life!” (Deuteronomy 30:19) – Calvinism says that the Israelites were incapable of choosing life unless God first regenerated their spirits; yet Moses, who had communed with God more intimately than any Calvinist, made it clear that every Israelite could make that choice. However, this also runs contrary to average Evangelical thinking (those who are not Calvinistic); they contend that as long as someone has prayed a prayer for salvation at some time in their life, then he is saved no matter how he has lived since. Jesus made it very clear that it is the one who remains faithful to Him through the trials of life who will one day be saved (Matthew 24:13); faithfulness to the Lord can only be expressed through obedience! Jesus also said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); if we love the Lord (an indication of our faith in Him), then it is necessary that we observe to do His commands.²¹

We now come to the purpose for God’s selection (*that we should be holy*), and the reality of what it means for God to have chosen those who are *in Christ* for Himself. The KJV translators make this holiness to sound optional: *we should be holy*; for those who are *in Christ* this is far from the case. A more literal translation is: *we, being holy and without blemish before Him, in love having foreordained us unto adoption through Jesus Christ*²² The thought that Paul develops in our text runs into the next one without interruption (as we know, the verse markers were made by man for our convenience, yet they often break thoughts that should not be broken). From this, we can understand that *holy* and *without blame (blemish)* are not options, but are to characterize on a continuous basis who we are *in Christ*. This also places the condition of faithfulness upon the *adoption* that can be ours in Christ; yet if we are *in Christ*, then we are to have replaced our sin with His righteousness (the *new man* of Ephesians 4:24).

The whole purpose of God in selecting those who place themselves by faith under the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as our Mediator with God, is that they should then be holy before Him. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul’s desire was to “be found in him [that is, in Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Being found *in Christ* demands a life-change; this is not just heaven someday, but a new life, distinct from the world, and set apart for the glory of God (*holy*).²³ Clearly, Jesus had this in mind when He said that it would be by their actions, their *fruits*, that the *false prophets* would be identified (Matthew 7:15-20); yet, just as clearly, He went on to show that not everyone would be accepted who thought that he was among God’s chosen ones (Matthew 7:21-23). God saves us by His grace when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus, yet as James makes so clear, unless our faith leads to works in keeping with that faith (a life of obedience to the Lord) our faith is dead (James 2:17). Paul goes to great lengths in

²⁰ Strong’s Online.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

²³ Strong’s Online.

Romans 8:1-9 to clarify that if we have been born-again by the Spirit of God, then we no longer walk according to the flesh – not that the struggle against the flesh has been eliminated but, rather, it affirms that the Spirit of God has entered our lives. This is the reason that God rejected those mentioned in Matthew 7:21-23 – they were never known by Him and, therefore, the Spirit of God did not abide within them. Man is naturally a religious creature (the multitude of religions around the world is evidence of that); therefore, it is possible that there will be those who will feign Christianity by doing “Christian” things, but their actions will be the product of their own efforts without the guiding presence of the Spirit of God. According to Jesus’ words just before the passage to which we referred, we must pay careful attention to the fruit that is produced in the lives of those about us (Matthew 7:16). It seems that those who are operating as wolves in sheep’s clothing will show their wolfishness (they have a veneer of Christianity but are without the Spirit of God) – they will not be able to hide this from the spiritually discerning.

Combined with God choosing those who are *in Christ* and our life-calling to holy-living and service to the Lord, we find passages that make it abundantly clear that God is not willing that anyone should perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). The Spirit of God, abiding in the hearts of the Lord’s faithful ones, is convicting men of their sin (John 16:8-9), yet not everyone will yield to that conviction and place their faith in Christ. Once again, the ways of God are higher than ours; He has prepared a way for all of mankind, but not everyone will place his faith in the Way Who was prepared from before the foundation of the world. The last phrase, *in love*, tells us that all of this has been done in the love of God (1 John 4:9-10, 15-16). What is the love of God? It is that we should walk in obedience to His commands (John 15:10; 1 John 5:3).



5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Predestinated comes from a Greek word that means to *define or mark out the boundaries or limits for*, and then the concept of doing so *before hand*.²⁴ In the Greek, the timeless form is used here (aorist); indeed, we have just seen that there are some things that God has established in eternity past.²⁵ God, in His infinite wisdom, has destined *us*, the faithful in Christ Jesus (verse one), for a life that has been specifically defined or determined. Jesus said that if we are loving Him (an obvious prerequisite to being found *in Him*) then we **must** be living in obedience to His commands (John 14:15) – this is what God has pre-determined for us from eternity past (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:9). Lest we view this in terms of salvation (as the Calvinists), we must not lose sight of the fact that God’s choice is that we should be holy and blameless before Him, which can only accomplished through obedience to Him. The matter of critical significance throughout is the concept that all of this is possible only *in Christ* and the reciprocal truth that none of this is possible outside of Him – Jesus said, “**I am** the way, the truth, and the life ...” (John 14:6); there is no other way! We live in a day of exponential interest in spirituality, but none of that will hold any weight when standing before God, for it all lies outside of Christ.

²⁴ Strong’s Online.

²⁵ Ibid.

Despite Paul's strong emphasis on our being *in Christ*, there are Evangelicals today (like Billy Graham and Robert Schuller, for example) who have plainly stated that there are those who will enter heaven who have not known Christ; however, there is no room for such heresy here. There is only one Mediator between God (with Whom we all have to do) and man, and that is Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5); it's not Buddha, or Mohammed, nor is there any other way to God but through Jesus (John 14:6). We must be wary and vigilant to identify, or *mark*, those who have departed from the narrow truth of the Scriptures (Romans 16:17), those who skulk about in sheep's clothing appearing to be what they are not. Unfortunately, Evangelicals today have taken a positive-only approach and, at best, will only speak of the wolves in such obscure terms that it is virtually impossible to identify them, or, more likely, the subject is not open to discussion at all.

Paul goes on to identify that for which God has predestined us – *adoption*. Adoption is the process by which those who are not part of a family are brought into one, with the full benefits of natural children. However, in this case, not only were we not a part of God's family, but we were also dead to Him (Ephesians 2:5); yet, in His vast grace and mercy, God predetermined that if we are found to be *in Christ*, then we are considered to be children in His family! Clearly, it is vitally important that we understand how we come to be *in Christ* and the Lord's expectations of us when we are there.

In our relationship with God, there is no place for arrogance; we see that our adoption is *by Jesus Christ to himself*. The Lord Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection, completed all that was necessary for our *adoption*; it has nothing whatsoever to do with any personal merits or good works. Paul understood this very clearly, and warned against haughtiness regarding our position in Christ – we have been grafted into Christ by faith, but if that faith should fail through faithlessness, then we will be cut off (Romans 11:17-22; cp. Hebrews 3:12).

Underscoring the concept of having been chosen *in Christ* for Himself (v.4), it has been eternally determined that those, who by faith place their trust in the finished work of Christ and remain faithful to Him unto the end (Matthew 10:22), will be established as part of the family of God. Finding favor with God has never changed: it has always been by faith in what He would do to pay the price for sin; whether foreshadowed (in the OT) or realized (after Christ's resurrection), all of mankind has looked to the Lamb of God Who was slain from the beginning of creation (Revelation 13:8). It is of those who remain faithfully *in Christ* that God has extended adoption as His children!

According to the good pleasure of his will – herein lies the reason for all of this; God did it out of sheer delight. He adopted us as His children through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son, and it was a pleasure for Him to do it for us. If anything tells us that God desires to have a relationship with those whom He created in His own image, this has to be it! Through all of this, His action (or His delight) was still in accordance with His will; there was a plan, and this was part of it. In a day when we are pressured by everything around us to be self-consumed, to “look out for number one,” sometimes it is difficult to realize that we, as individuals, are not the sole reason for God's eternal purposes, and that His purposes are far higher than ours ever will be in this life. This fixation with “number one” even finds its expression within Evangelicalism; how many times have we heard

variations of “Jesus would have died for one person, for one sinner,”²⁶ where the intent is to show how important we are to God. Yes, God has demonstrated His love for man by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, but that does not provide us with license to swell with pride, and become arrogant in our sin. Teresa of Calcutta, who made the quoted statement, did not even believe that Jesus was the only way to God: “My own faith will lead me to God, ... So if they have believed in their god very strongly, if they have faith, surely they will be saved.”²⁷ Within the reasoning of Teresa, Jesus did not have to die; salvation, for her, is through faith – faith in anything! Man has become so important in his own eyes that he can create his own way of salvation! Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6). Within the salvation that God has provided for mankind, there is no room for any pride in who we might think that we are. Through faith in Christ, we have been *bought* with a price, *purchased* out of the death camp of sin, and now our purpose must be to bring glory to God (1 Corinthians 6:20), and be holy before Him (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:16). Our focus, as we journey through life, must be on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2), and not on ourselves; the former will lead to a life that will bring glory to God, the latter to a preoccupation with who we are (or think that we are), which will ultimately lead to rejection by the Lord Whom we might still claim to serve (Matthew 7:21-23).



Teresa of Calcutta

 6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

The fact of God’s predetermination that we, *in Christ*, are adopted into His family as children, should incite in us joy and praise to the Lord. It is God’s grace that permits the full working of His mercy and justice in the saving of a sinner through the completed work of Jesus; His grace is glorious, beyond comprehension. His mercy desires that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9); His justice acknowledges that there is no one who is righteous (Romans 3:10); it is through His glorious grace that He can say that, if we abide in Jesus, then are we accepted by Him.

It is through this marvelous grace of God that we have been made acceptable to Him through the finished work of Christ. There is nothing within us that merits God’s grace; it is only through abiding in the Vine, through our faithful continuance in Christ, that we will be saved. We are *accepted*: honored with blessings, surrounded with favor.²⁸ Once again, the critical phrase that we must never lose sight of is “in the beloved.” Nothing that we can do will ever serve to merit God’s favor – the work is complete in Christ, and in Him alone; we must simply depend upon Him (faith), and faithfully persevere in obedience to Him.

 7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

²⁶ Kathryn Spink, *Mother Teresa*, p. 87.

²⁷ https://www.mmoutreach.org/aberrant/universalism/influence_of_universalism2.htm.

²⁸ Strong’s Online.

When we think of *redemption*, its root, *redeem*, is what typically comes to mind, and, as a result, we arrive at the concept of buying something back.²⁹ However, in this instance, the transaction is much more complex than we might first realize. When we are born, we are sinners; we are not sinners because of what we do, we sin because we are born with a sinful nature. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5); through Adam sin and death have entered into the world, and it is the destiny for all who are born (Romans 5:12). Nevertheless, God, in His mercy, as ascribed to mankind a time of innocence – a time when we do not know right from wrong. Jesus made it very clear that infants and small children are a part of His kingdom: “Suffer little children [*paidion* (*pahee-dee’-on*)], and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). Upon birth, God writes our names into the Book of Life that He is keeping; this is in keeping with the *little children* being a part of His kingdom. However, the Lord is also very clear that the one who sins has his name removed from the Book of Life (Exodus 32:33), which means that this applies to everyone who enters the age of accountability (understanding) and remains unrepentant before God. The very young child can neither accept nor reject what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross, for he has no ability to understand anything (hence, his innocence). However, once he comes to know right from wrong, then he stands in need of a Savior from sin. At that point, his name is removed from the Book of Life, and it will only be re-entered through personal faith in the blood of Christ to bring salvation – until we come to the Lord in faith, our names remain blotted out of the Book of Life.

Therefore, if we think in terms of *redemption* for the sinner (as in buying back), it must be within the terms of the sinner being purchased out of sin to become a *little child* of God. Jesus clarified this: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted [literally, if you should not be turned around], and become as little children [*paidion*], ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).³⁰ The only correct application of the word *redemption*, within salvation, is that in our innocence we belonged to the Lord, and now, through our active faith in the payment for sin that Jesus made, we are returned to that child-like position before Him. We are bought out of sin by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our names are written into the Book of Life by that same faith. In ourselves, we can do nothing to have our names written into the Book of Life; “for the wages of sin *is* death” (Romans 6:23) – being a sinner automatically carries a death sentence. The price that hangs over the head of every person on earth is death! However, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, that price has been paid; however, it is only applied to me when I, by faith, personally accept what He has done for all of mankind. *In Christ*, we have been ransomed out of sin; He paid the price (death) for our sin so that we are able to consider ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). Therefore, when we see the word *redemption*, within this context, we must understand all that it represents, and our obligation to live in faithfulness to the Lord. Jesus stated very plainly, “he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [an emphatic pronoun in the Greek that means “this one!”] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).³¹ It is only as we remain faithful to the Lord that we will one day enjoy the splendors of heaven with Him. What we must not miss

²⁹ Noah Webster, American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828 edition.

³⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

³¹ Ibid.

is that just as surely as faith in the Lord Jesus places us *in Him*, so becoming unfaithful will see that relationship broken. “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [unfaithfulness], in departing [to fall away, or become apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).³² We are warned; therefore, let us *take heed!*

Through His shed blood, Christ fulfilled forever the sacrificial practices so carefully prescribed in the Law of Moses.³³ “... Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [deliverance] *for us*” (Hebrews 9:12).³⁴ The deliverance from sin that Christ paid for at the cross is eternal, unlike the OT sacrifices that could never completely bring freedom from the penalty of sin (death), which is the reason that they were required on a continual basis – they merely foreshadowed what the Lord would accomplish. Even though Christ can provide eternal salvation for everyone, it is only available through Him, and we must remain faithful to Him or we will lose it. Jesus said, “Abide in me” (John 15:4); the necessity of remaining *in Christ* cannot be over emphasized. “²¹And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²²In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: ²³**If ye continue in the faith** grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel ...” (Colossians 1:21-23a). The Scriptures are so clear on this matter, yet so many professing Christians fail to comprehend this important truth. We have been reconciled to God by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross; as long as we continue to hold our faith in Christ, He will present us to God the Father as *holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable*. “For we are made partakers of [we share in] Christ, if we hold [should keep a firm hold on] the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14).³⁵ We will share eternity with Christ if we retain our position in Him unto the end, and we’ve already seen that to become faithless means to depart from God, and to become apostate (Hebrews 3:12).

We have the *forgiveness of sins* in Christ; our deliverance from sin means that we have been forgiven. We, who were once dead in our sins, have been made alive, and the penalty for our sins has not only been paid, but our offenses have been forgiven! It is not that we are delivered from sin, and then must spend the rest of our days paying for the price of our deliverance (which we could never do since we cannot buy our freedom to begin with); we are forgiven the debt of sin that we could never pay. As we have already seen (v.4), we are to live lives that are holy and blameless before God (which means we must be *in Christ*); however, this cannot in any way be thought of as repaying God for the freedom from sin that He has accorded us – rather it is a life lived out in gratitude for the wondrous work that He has accomplished for us in Christ. Because of the deliverance and forgiveness that is ours, can we do any less than walk in obedience to the commandments of God? This is not legalism; this is heartfelt, life-changing gratitude for what God has done for us through the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. If we abide *in Christ*, our sins are forgiven, and we are seen by God as being holy – why would we consider anything other than obedience to His commands? Jesus said: “If ye love me, keep [to attend to carefully] my

³² Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

³³ To reduce confusion in my own mind, and to draw an important distinction that many people miss, I refer to the Ten Commandments (specifically written by God) as being the **Law of God**, and the other regulations for the sacrifices, the priesthood, daily living, etc. as the **Law of Moses**.

³⁴ Strong’s Online.

³⁵ Ibid.

commandments” (John 14:15); the Apostle John declared: “And he that keepeth [to attend to carefully] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth [abideth] in him [God], and he in him” (1 John 3:24a). Obedience is critical to remaining *in Christ* – it the evidence of our faith in the Lord (James 2:17).

It is out of God’s rich storehouse of grace that He has brought our deliverance from sin and accorded us His forgiveness. There seems to be a sense in which these acts should not be considered as either extraordinary or surprising, but rather as a natural product, an expected end of God’s rich grace. The most significant act of *redemption* is the product of God’s equally significant grace.



8. *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

The grace that God has extended to mankind has been done so with liberality; His grace does not just barely provide for the plan of salvation for mankind, but rather it does so with full measure and more. Not only is this grace extended immeasurably, but it is also done according to a wise plan, which God has made. There is nothing haphazard about the grace that God extends to man, but His grace is in accordance with His wisdom, and is the product of His forethought. It is this grace, the perfect blend of God’s mercy and justice, that modern Evangelicals would seek to skew on the side of mercy through their unnatural overemphasis of His love for us; consequently, perhaps without realizing it, they have destroyed God’s grace altogether. There can be no room for easy-believism (i.e., believe, pray a prayer, and then claim eternity in heaven) without first raising the mercy of God above His justice. There is no other way to rationalize the inclusion of those who propagate error and blasphemy within the company of the saved. Such carelessness is only possible through a focus on the mercy of God while turning a blind eye to the demands of His justice. We cannot judge the heart of any man, but we are called to be discerning of his works – “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). Why are we to identify them? “Now I beseech [to call to one’s side, to summon] you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).³⁶ “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We must exercise discernment; we must judge the works of others according to the standard of the Word of God; if we fail in this, then we not only walk in disobedience to the exhortations of Scripture, but we place ourselves in jeopardy of being caught in the snare of error (2 Thessalonians 3:6). “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). We are not to place ourselves in proximity to error indefinitely, for Paul’s charge to Titus was that “A man that is an heretick [a follower of a false doctrine] after the first and second admonition reject [avoid]” (Titus 3:10);³⁷ our priority must be to remain faithfully *in Christ*.

³⁶ Strong’s Online.

³⁷ Ibid.



9. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

The word *mystery*, within our modern understanding, means *knowledge withheld*, but, within the context of Scripture, it means *truth revealed*.³⁸ The Greek word comes from a root that means *to shut the mouth*.³⁹ It carries less the concept of being incomprehensible, and more the idea of something that requires the touch of God in order to understand. Jesus told His disciples, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables” (Mark 4:11). Elsewhere we read: “But the natural man receiveth [accepts] not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [come to understand] them, because they are spiritually [by the aid of the Spirit of God] discerned [judged]” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Greek word for *discerned* (*anakrino*) is in the passive voice – which means that we receive the discernment, it is not something that we derive through our own efforts; no wonder the natural man cannot understand the things of God, for he does not have the Spirit of God abiding within to guide him into all truth (John 16:13).

After expounding on the great grace of God, which is extended to man, Paul notes that through this, God has lifted the veil just a little more on what His will is. It was inconceivable to the Jewish mind of Paul’s day that God would extend deliverance from sins to the Gentiles; yet God’s infinite grace did that very thing. An error of the Jews was that they limited God’s grace to those under the Law of Moses – yet God’s grace was always been extended through faith alone (Romans 4). Throughout the Law of Moses, there was the expression of God’s grace and mercy to the faithful foreigner – “One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you” (Exodus 12:49). No differentiation was made between the Israelite and the Gentile who desired to know God. In His mercy, God was not willing that any man should perish – and this is fully demonstrated in the grace that He still extends to all of mankind. Today we accept, without question, the rich grace of God that is extended to those outside of the Jewish nation, to the point that Evangelicals and Liberals alike trample the grace of God underfoot in their zeal for unity. It appears that anything is acceptable except the narrow way that leads to life, a way that only a few will find (Matthew 7:14). It seems that God’s desire in the area of unity is being veiled; not that God is hiding what He has revealed, but, generally speaking, the eyes of men are growing dim toward the truths of God, and it is very evident in this area. There are those who speak loudly of the need for unity within their assembly, yet they seem to be blind to the Word of God, which shows that the unity of His design is realized only in Christ.

Again, we see God’s delight in the grace that He has extended to all of mankind, with an additional note that all of this lies within His eternal plan. God was not influenced by the plight of Adam and Eve after they had sinned; in His foreknowledge, He knew the choices that would be made – there was no outside aid in the development of His plan for mankind. The sinfulness of man did not catch God off guard, nor did it foil the plans that He had put into place from eternity past. We are not living with God’s Plan B today, but, rather, we are living in the wonder of the fulfillment of His perfect plan for us in Christ.

³⁸ Vine’s “mystery.”

³⁹ Strong’s Online.



10. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

We hear much of the “dispensation of grace,” yet God’s grace found expression in the Garden of Eden, and it will continue to the end of time. The word *dispensation* has to do with the management of things – normally applying to the management of household affairs.⁴⁰ It includes administration or stewardship, basically the handling, or dispensing, of things needed to carry on a prescribed work. In this case, what is being administered, or handled, is the *fulness of times*. There will come a day when all things related to time will be wrapped up; time as we know it will someday be no more. God created us within the framework of time, and so we have great difficulty grasping what eternity will be like. However, at a specific point in the future, a time that has been set eternally in the foreknowledge of God, eternity will swallow time up. We’ve seen the plan of God for mankind stretching from before the foundations of the world were laid, and now we see that it is extended to the end of time itself – a future when all will be brought to completion within the plan of God. This is a concept that is well beyond our comprehension, for we are inextricably tied to time.

Here is foretold a gathering together, a summing up of everything both individually and collectively (nothing will be left out that should not be left out). Everything will be brought together in Christ; there will be complete unity one day. However, this has nothing to do with the unity movement that is so prevalent among Evangelicals today. This unity will be accomplished at the fullness of times, a future that is known only to God; a unity that will be accomplished by God, for He will do the gathering, not man! The word *things* is a neuter term in Greek, and so the *all things* refers to everything, not just people, or angels. Sin has impacted all things, not just mankind, and there is a sense here that all things will one day be restored in Christ. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22).

We are given clarification as to what the *all things* really are – things *which are in heaven, and which are on earth*. There will be a unity of things in heaven and things on earth, a coming together



Tony Campolo

of all things under the leadership of Christ. There is coming a day when the will of God will be done on earth, even as it is now done in heaven. As Albert Barnes points out, there is no mention of hell in this verse, and therefore, there is no place for universal salvation, for hell is not included in this gathering in Christ.⁴¹ Universal salvation, which sees everyone making it to the glories of heaven, is a concept that even those who are considered to be a part of the Evangelical community are accepting wholeheartedly – Robert Schuller, Billy Graham, C.S. Lewis, Chuck Colson and Tony Campolo, to name a few, have embraced this heresy to varying degrees. We must be on guard lest we succumb to the false teaching of those who really should know better.

⁴⁰ Vine’s “dispensation.”

⁴¹ Barnes’ Notes, Ephesians 1:10.

Now comes the capstone to it all, emphasized twice in this verse alone – for all of this will be accomplished *in Christ*. When God is prepared to wrap up His dealings with mankind, when He is ready to gather all things into one perfect unity, He will do so *in Christ*. Christ will be the means, the reason, and the active ingredient in accomplishing all that God has planned at the end of the age. All of creation (angels, redeemed men, and nature) will be united in worship and praise to God, and Christ as their Head (Revelation 5:9-13).



11. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

In whom, once again, refers to Christ, the One in Whom all things will one day be brought together. Paul underscores that it is *in Christ* that all of these things come to be: it is *in Christ* that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings (v.3), it is *in Christ* that we have been chosen from before the foundation of the world (v.4), it is *by Christ* that we are predestined for adoption (v.5), it is *in the Beloved* that we have been made accepted before God (v.6), it is *in Christ* that we have redemption (v.7), it is *in Christ* that we look forward to a day when all things will be gathered together in perfect unity (v.10), and, now, it is *in Christ* that we have an inheritance. The “abiding in the vine” of John 15 takes on greater significance in the light of this passage, and the depth of our dependency upon Christ is delineated, even as Jesus declared that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Notice that we have already obtained the inheritance referred to here; it is a present possession. Young’s literal translation is, “in whom also we did obtain an inheritance”; for those of us who are the “faithful in Christ Jesus,” this is an accomplished fact! An earthly inheritance is generally thought of as that which is obtained upon the death of another. In reality, the same can be said of the spiritual inheritance that we have in Christ – it was through His death that our salvation was purchased, and so it is through appropriating the reality of what His death and resurrection accomplished, that we obtain this inheritance. If He had not died, we would have no inheritance for we would have no salvation. Do we realize the full benefit of this inheritance in this life? Clearly not, for we look forward to that day to come when He will gather all things together into perfect unity! John understood this when he said: “now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). It is because of this hope, which we have in Christ, that we will purify our lives in obedience to His commands.

We are reminded that all of this is done in accordance with the eternal purposes of God. It is God’s eternal purpose that all that we are and have is *in Christ*; apart from Him we are lost and without hope. This is why it is so vitally important that we continue to abide in Him; if we fail to remain in Him, then we will wither (spiritually), dry up, and be cast into the fire to be burned (John 15:6). However, if we remain in Christ, then our inheritance, the extent of which we cannot fathom in this life, has been determined in the mind of God before time began.

Here we catch a glimpse of the extent of God’s working – *all things*. Everything in the universe is subject to God’s orchestration; there is nothing of which God is not aware, nothing that is out of His control, and all of this is done in accordance with His will. God does not seek the counsel of

man to determine His course of action; yet in the mystery and wisdom of God, He longs to respond to the petitions of His children (Psalm 145:18-19, Matthew 7:7-11). Even in this, we are called to ask in accordance with His will; our perspective of what is taking place around us is so limited that we must defer our requests to the far greater plan and wisdom of God, Who sees all things (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15).



12. *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

This is a difficult verse. The *we* to this point has always been the writer, the saints in Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, and there would not seem to be anything to change that. However, the phrase *first trusted* is literally *to hope before*. Young's Literal reads, "for our being to the praise of His glory, *even* those who did first hope in the Christ"; he supplies the word *even* to provide a cumulative effect, which I can't find in the original text.

As just indicated, this must apply to all of us who hope in Christ; we are to give glory to God, and our very existence should be to bring glory to His name (Matthew 5:16). The whole thrust of our being is to declare the glory of God for all that He has accomplished on our behalf. The literal rendering of this latter phrase seems to draw special attention to those who first hoped in Christ, but not exclusively so. If ever there should be those who live to bring glory to God, it should be those who first hoped in Christ; i.e., those who were taught by Him directly. The Old Testament (OT) saints, who looked forward to His coming, could also be counted among those who first hoped in Christ.



13. *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

After drawing special attention to those who first hoped in Christ, those who knew Him personally, and the OT saints who longed to see His day, it is clear that this is the same Christ in Whom the "saints" and "faithful" (v.1) have placed their hope. The difference is that we have *heard* about Christ but have not seen Him, not unlike the OT saints. The message that we have all heard is the Gospel, the *good tidings*, described as the "word of truth." Romans 10:17 states, "so then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Lord lamented the rebellious heart of Israel to Ezekiel, and declared that they "have ears to hear, and hear not" (12:2). Jesus, on numerous occasions, called out "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The message that the Apostles took wherever they went, was one that had to be heard, it was declared, but more than that, it was the word of truth. Captured in the Bible is the message that is empowered by the Spirit of God, a message of truth – God's Word that contains the truth for our salvation!

By its very nature, truth is an exclusive term. If something is true, then variations of it cannot be entirely true, and something that is completely different is not true at all. Herein lies the fallacy of much of modern thinking; modern philosophy would have us believe that truth is a very personal thing, a subjective reality that we cannot apply to anyone else. The first thing that becomes evident under this line of reasoning is that the Scriptures can no longer be considered to be the inerrant Word of God, Who is objective, omnipotent, and a holy Being with Whom we all have to do. God

is no longer a God with thoughts that are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9), but, rather, He has become one of us, or, He is merely a product of our imaginations. This is the foundation of sand upon which the higher critics of the 18th and 19th centuries built their new understanding of the Bible; in their liberated thinking, the Bible could be handled like any other piece of ancient literature, and, thereby, they dismissed God’s inspiration and promised preservation of His Word.

Unfortunately, the edge of this philosophy has penetrated the thinking of Christians today so that the truth of the Word of God is no longer declared with power and conviction; there are various views of many doctrines, and the feeling is that we must be tolerant of them all. The foundation for this departure is the infusion of rationalism. Man is capable of rationalizing almost anything so as to ensure his own comfort of conscience. Hence, the Evangelical Free Church (EFC), in their founding days, could state: “if Scripture alone is the rule, and Scripture is open to various interpretations, and believers are free in conscience to interpret it as they feel ‘led’ by the Holy Spirit, it follows that they may be led to different views.”⁴² The flow of logic that the EFC has used (rationalism) has led them to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the doctrinal confusion that exists today. Can God have different meanings for the same Scripture? Did He speak ambiguously? Paul’s admonition to Timothy would seem to indicate otherwise, for he was to study to show himself approved unto God, “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15); from this we can conclude that an incorrect dividing, or interpretation, of the Word of God would result in God’s disapproval. In our own human frailty, we will not all arrive at the same understanding of the Scriptures concerning a given matter, but that is very different from laying the blame for differing interpretations at the feet of the Holy Spirit – God Himself!



In whom – once again, the means for what follows is “in Christ.” Here we have something else that is accomplished through faith in Christ: we are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit as promised (John 16:13). Notwithstanding the EFC’s understanding of the Spirit’s role in bringing confusion, Jesus said that the Spirit would “guide [us] into all truth”; this involves a process of leading and guiding us into rightly dividing the word of truth – not a one-time revelation, but a life-long process of instruction. We are sealed, or marked,⁴³ by the Holy Spirit; therefore, the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives should be evident. The ancient seal was used to confirm the authenticity of an item, and to affirm its approval under the authority of the owner of the seal; even so, we have been given the Holy Spirit by God to affirm that we are His. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [the Seal of God], he is none of his” (Romans 8:9).

Can the seal be removed? Is our eternal destiny eternally secured? In Romans 11:13-22 we read:

¹³For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: ¹⁴If by any means I may provoke to emulation [jealousy or envious rivalry] them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. ¹⁵For if the casting away of

⁴² David V. Martin, *Trinity International University 1897-1997*, (TIU, 1998), p. 19.

⁴³ Strong’s Online.

them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ¹⁶For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; ¹⁸Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. ¹⁹Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. ²⁰Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. ²²Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue [carries the possibility of not continuing] in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.⁴⁴

We, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been grafted into the Root (Christ) by faith; this passage teaches that if we set this saving faith aside (which is unbelief), then we face the fate of being cut off. The admonition given here is that we must *continue*; we must steadfastly remain *in Christ*.

Hebrews 3:12-14 – “¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God [which requires being in fellowship with Him first]. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened [*to become stubborn*; the purpose of *exhortation* is so that no one will *become stubborn* (a purpose clause)⁴⁵] through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if [on the condition that] we hold [includes the possibility of not holding] the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end . . .” This is proclaimed to *brethren*, those who were earlier called *holy brethren* (3:1), and stands as a warning to us that we must take heed to our hearts; “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

John 15:1-2 – “¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ²Every branch **in me** that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Jesus goes on to say, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are [literally, it is⁴⁶] burned” (John 15:6). The final state of a broken-off branch is to be burned.

Matthew 10:22 (Mark 13:13) – “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved [will be saved].” *Endureth*, in the Greek, is an emphasized form of the word *abide* (*hupomeno*), as it is translated in Jesus’ words, “Abide in me” (John 15:4), and carries the idea of remaining faithful under difficult circumstances.⁴⁷

Matthew 24:11-13 – “¹¹And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ¹²And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” This is a reiteration of the thrust of Matthew 10:22.

⁴⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁵ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁴⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁷ Strong’s Online.

Hebrews 3:6 – “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence [possibility, not certainty] and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” We are of Christ’s house IF we hold fast to the hope that we have in Him.

Matthew 13:19-23 – “¹⁹When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. ²⁰But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon [or immediately] with joy receiveth it; ²¹Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [or immediately, same Greek word translated as *anon*] he is offended. ²²He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke [to choke utterly] the word, and he becometh unfruitful (see John 15:1-2). ²³But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”⁴⁸ Too often, the *fruit* is thought to be the salvation of souls. However, consider this carefully. When a seed of wheat is planted, it grows into a plant; if all that it produced was a proliferation of more plants, we would be very disappointed – rather, it produces seed. The seed, in the parable, is the Word of God, and so when the fruit is evident, it will reflect the Word, which has taken root within us. In other words, it will be the fruit of the Spirit that will be evident in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). If a branch of an apple tree simply produced more branches, we would prune it (cut it off); our expectation is that the branch will produce apples in keeping with the tree to which it is inextricably linked. In like manner, we will produce fruit in keeping with the Spirit of God abiding in us, and Christ into Whom we have been grafted by faith.

Hebrews 10:23-29 “²³Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. ²⁶For if we sin wilfully after that we have **received the knowledge of the truth**, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ²⁹Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” It is undeniable that the one who sins willfully was truly born again; he received the *knowledge* of the truth (i.e., a precise and correct knowledge), and he was *sanctified* (made holy) by the blood of Christ.⁴⁹ Within the Evangelical community, it is commonly held that those who fall away, or become apostate, never truly believed – they only appeared to be Christians; the Scriptures do not support this comfortable error.

Those who hold to an eternal security, without the possibility of ever being lost, endeavor to wrest this teaching from the Scriptures. For example, in John 10:27-29 Jesus says: “²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, which gave

⁴⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." They appeal to the *never perish* and *no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand* as the basis for being "once saved, always saved." *Never*, in the Greek, is comprised of the two negatives *ou* and *me*; when these are used together with a subjunctive verb, rather than presenting a possibility (as would be normal for a subjunctive verb) they form a very strong negative.⁵⁰ Therefore, this could be translated as *will absolutely not perish*; however, it needs to be understood to whom this is being addressed. The one who will *never perish* is the one who *is hearing* the Shepherd's voice and *is following* Him (both verbs are in the present tense, which means that both are a continuous action); it is to these attentive and obedient ones that Jesus says that He *is giving eternal life* and they will *never perish*. The promise that no one will be able to pluck His sheep out of the hand of the Father is a wonderful assurance that we are secure from external attacks. No external force is able to snatch us out of His hand, but that does not exclude the possibility of our hearts being hardened through unbelief so that we turn our backs on the Lord (Hebrews 3:12-14). Passages like Romans 8:38-39 all deal with external forces coming against us, but we still carry about with us a heart that is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). There is nothing here to support eternal security, if one takes the time to look carefully.



14. *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

The Holy Spirit is the down payment or deposit (*earnest*) toward the day of our complete deliverance from sin, at which time we will enter into the fullness of our inheritance in Christ. He is the present assurance that God will complete what He has declared concerning our future with Him. A down payment, or deposit, does not confirm the completion of a transaction; it only confirms the intention to complete an agreed upon transaction. We are assured that it is God Who has accomplished this in us; ²¹...God; ²²Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest [same Greek word] of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). God has placed His Spirit within us to assure us that He is able to accomplish what He has declared. As much as it lies within God, our salvation will be completed one day; He has promised our protection from external foes (Romans 8:38-39); we must seek His enablement to guard against a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-14).

Until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. A literal translation of this reads: "... to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory."⁵¹ Here we have two purposes delineated for this Down Payment: the Spirit of God has been given 1) to assure us of God's desire for our complete deliverance, and 2) to bring praise to the glory of God. We are a purchased, or acquired, possession (that's an accomplished fact), but we still live in a fallen world, and strive against our fallen natures. However, there will come a day when God will deliver us from these, and we will be with Him forever; the Spirit has been given to us to confirm the potential for that future reality (since the Scriptures do not teach eternal security, it is necessary to say *potential*). The Spirit has also been given to bring praise to God; all

⁵⁰ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm.

⁵¹ Young's Literal Translation.

is to the praise of the glory of God. He alone has made this possible; we are recipients of God's merciful salvation – it is all of Him and nothing from us. It is our sin that was the reason that He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to die for us; as such, it is certain that we could have no part in our own redemption. As much as this conflicts with modern spirituality, so be it!

We've already noted that Jesus said that the Spirit would guide us into all truth (John 16:13; John 17:17 says, "Thy word is truth," therefore we should not expect special revelation from the Holy Spirit, and we should be suspicious of those who say that they have received such). This Down Payment for our future salvation is our Guide into the truth of God's Word; He is the alongside One, leading us in an ever-deepening understanding of Scripture. Coupled with this understanding will come obedience to the truth. ²³"And this is his [God's] commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. ²⁴And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3:23-24). The abiding Spirit of God will let us know if we walk in obedience to God, or if we err – unless we give way to an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), at which point He will depart from us.



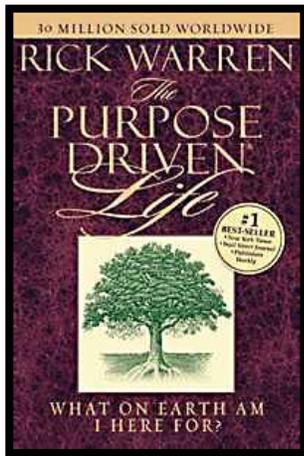
15. *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,*

What follows now is specifically related to what has just been outlined; the *wherefore* is literally *because of this*.⁵² This is very common in Paul's epistles, one thing builds upon that which has come before; there is a progression of thought. Paul specifically refers to the Ephesian Christians here, for he had evidently heard of how they were living out their faith after he had been with them. Their faith in Jesus was such that it was evident to those about them. How they lived must have obviously demonstrated their trust in the Lord.

And love unto all the saints is probably one of the ways that the faith of the Ephesians was so evident in their daily living – they demonstrated a love for all of the saints, or holy ones. Today we hear much about love; couched within the modern concept of love is the idea of acceptance. At one time, we called for tolerance of those who advocated a different faith from that declared in Scripture; we would permit others to hold their beliefs no matter how strange they were. Today, however, this is no longer enough. We are to accept all beliefs as equally tenable; there is no longer a concept of right and wrong, and all beliefs that are held as truth are to be given equal credence. In the name of "love," truth has become subjective; it is whatever anyone determines it to be – and we are not to try to dissuade anyone from their error, for it is advocated that there is no real error, only differing shades of truth. The thin edge of this wedge has found its place within Evangelicalism as well; there has been a move toward positivism, with a comparable move away from anything that could even remotely appear to be negative or judgmental. In essence, we are to tolerate error within those who profess to be Christians, lest we demonstrate anything other than this pathetic form of *love*, which finds no voice in Scripture. Out of this mindset flows the movement toward ecumenical unity with its unbalanced emphasis on all that is positive, its acceptance of *good* in the midst of what is clearly *evil*, and its siren call for all flavors of faith to

⁵² Strong's Online.

come together, while turning a blind eye to error. This mindset contravenes the Scriptures that call us to be those who are “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).



A classic example of this today is Rick Warren. He “defines sin as acts of people ‘sabotaging their own success’”.⁵³ He goes on to claim, “God won’t ask about your religious background or doctrinal views.”⁵⁴ This is a fundamental principle for Rick Warren, for he has deliberately set sound doctrine aside for a philosophy of life and ministry that does not adhere to the Word of God. Richard Bennett quotes Warren, “‘The best use of your life is to serve God out of your shape. To do this you must discover your shape, learn to accept and enjoy it, and then develop it to its fullest potential’ (p. 249 [of *The Purpose Driven Life*]). This equates exactly with the Hinduism [sic] in its teaching, ‘By understanding your true Self, by coming to know one’s own undying soul, one then arrives at the knowledge of Brahman itself’”⁵⁵ By failing to hold to sound doctrine, Warren, and the thousands who swallow his words without thinking, have wandered into territory that is under the guidance of Satan himself.

From those who advocate such things, you will never hear anything about holy living! In reality, then, they are not concerned about loving all those who are living holy lives before God (the “love unto all saints”), but rather loving all those who **profess** to know God (the profession becomes the standard for acceptance, even to the point where they can determine their own definition of Who God is). Yet, despite their best efforts to apply guilt to those who seek to live Biblically, those who advocate an ecumenical unity (which is synonymous with *love*, in their minds) as the primary focus for Christians, do so to their own peril, for they stand in opposition to the clear teaching of Scripture. God has called us to separate from that which is not of Him – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17); what could be more spiritually *unclean* than a perversion of the true Gospel? The Ephesians were known for their love for those who were abiding in Christ, for those who obeyed His commandments with joy, for those who demonstrated the presence of the Seal of God in their lives – *the saints*. There is no room for the acceptance of those who profess Christ but adhere to an aberration of the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). This was emphasized to the Israelites (and, hence, given as our example) “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). It is little wonder that Timothy was instructed so carefully to hold to the teachings that had been given to him by Paul (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:13, 16; 2 Timothy 1:13; 3:14-15; 4:2-4).



16. *Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

Paul is overjoyed at what he has heard about the Ephesians, he does not stop giving thanks for them; he would be like a new mom or dad who cannot stop glowing about their new baby. Here

⁵³ Richard Bennett, “The Adulation of Man in the *Purpose Driven Life*.”

⁵⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Bennett.

was a group of believers who were living out their faith in the Lord Jesus – a cause for Paul to be thankful for them.

Despite the joy and thankfulness that Paul had for the Ephesian saints, they were still in his prayers – *making mention of you in my prayers*. What comes to mind is Paul’s comment to the Corinthians, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Even though the Ephesians received Paul’s commendation for their living, he did not stop praying for them. How often I cease to pray (or don’t even begin to pray) for someone who has their act together, so to speak, only to discover later that their lives were falling apart. Perhaps, in a real sense, those who seem to be doing so well may need additional prayer, for they may be the specific targets of the enemy of our souls. Lord, help us to be more faithful in this area.



17. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:*

Paul is careful to tell the Ephesians to Whom he is addressing his prayer. He is petitioning the God of our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of glory for them. This brings together the tremendous omnipotence of God (Who raised Jesus to life) and God, our Father, Who desires to have a relationship with His created, sinful creatures.

May give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him – this is an overview of Paul’s specific prayer for the Ephesians, something on which he is about to elaborate. Paul’s prayer is that God would, first of all, give to these holy ones of Ephesus a spirit of *wisdom and revelation*; our translation includes the word *may*, but the Greek construction does not support this: the intent of Paul’s prayer is that God **will** give them this *wisdom and revelation*.⁵⁶ This has nothing to do with intellect, for God takes pleasure in reversing what we would consider to be the normal order of things: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Luke 10:21). Clearly, the spirit of wisdom, that Paul petitions God to bestow upon the Ephesians, has nothing to do with an Ivy League degree or high scholastic achievements. Rather than simply intellect, this is a wisdom that comes from God: a “wisdom that is ... first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). New Evangelicalism is based upon (among other things) a “need” to increase the Evangelical intellectual standing in the eyes of the religious Liberals and the world at large. This was Harold Ockenga’s primary goal in helping to found Fuller Seminary,⁵⁷ and as their intellectual standing rose, their adherence to the Word of God declined. Likewise, the *revelation* is not



Harold J. Ockenga

⁵⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁵⁷ Harold’s name is pronounced *Ock-in-gay* (<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Ockenga.cfm>).

something that comes through applying our intellect, but, rather, it is God opening our eyes so that we can come to a better and fuller understanding of Who He is – that guidance into all truth (John 16:13). This is spiritual wisdom and spiritual revelation – a work of God’s Seal in the lives of His holy ones. As the Spirit of God has the freedom to mold us, instill His wisdom in us, and open His Word to us, we will become increasingly aware of God’s work in our lives, and our responsibility to Him.

Perhaps herein lies some of the danger that lurks within Evangelicalism today; much of what is formulated within the theological circles of the movement is based entirely upon man’s intellect and logic. What we fail to realize is that God’s ways are still higher than our ways, and His thoughts are still higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9) – even in this day of man’s astronomical advances in science. Man’s intellect will never bring him closer to understanding the ways of God; only the Spirit of God can do that. Yet theologians today, without hesitation, appeal to reason in delineating their theology. Clark Pinnock, an apostate Evangelical theologian (is that an oxymoron?), uses what has been termed the Wesleyan quadrilateral to describe his theology: the Bible, tradition, experience, and reason.⁵⁸ However, it has become clear from his downward slide, that anytime you add reason to the mix, it will soon become the dominant factor. One of the pillars of the New Evangelical movement (which began in the late 1940’s) was participation in the theological dialogue of the day – a felt need to enhance their scholastic standing in the eyes of the world and Liberals. The result is a philosophy of Christianity that has become sterile, having lost the reality of Christ and gained the credence of human reason. Out of this has flowed a non-confrontational, positive-only hybrid of the Gospel: something that is really another gospel, and what Paul would unhesitatingly call *anathema* (Galatians 1:8-9). Hence, we have an even greater need today to measure what we hear against the Word of God, for it must remain exclusively our guide – the Standard against which man’s reasoning must be held.

The spirit of wisdom and revelation will find its framework *in the knowledge of Him*. The Greek word translated as *knowledge* is *epignosis*, a word that describes a precise and correct knowledge.⁵⁹ The wisdom and revelation that God will provide is not instilled in a vacuum; it comes in a full knowledge of Who God is. Jesus said that when the Spirit of truth would come to abide within us, He would guide us into all truth (John 16:13); Jesus also said, “I am ... the truth” (John 14:6). It is as we permit the Spirit of God to transform our lives that we will grow in our understanding and knowledge of the One Who has paid the price for our sin (Romans 12:2; 2 Peter 3:18).



18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

In broad terms, this is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians; it is that they would come to see, or understand, spiritual truths with eyes that have been opened, not by the efforts of man, but by the Spirit of God. This phrase (*the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*) is tied directly to what came before, that God would grant to them spiritual wisdom and a revelation of Himself. The

⁵⁸ David Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p. 173.

⁵⁹ Strong’s Online.

enlightenment of our spiritual understanding will not come through our own efforts – it is only through the Spirit of God at work in us! We have been called from darkness into light (1 Peter 2:9): spiritual understanding, which is based on our intellect alone, is darkness, no matter how wonderful it may sound. Today, we hear much of being spiritual; ten to fifteen years ago, spirituality was left to the fanatics and crackpots, but today there is a form of spirituality that is very much in vogue. Oprah is a guru of this fad that has become a strange mixture of all religions, a potion that can be custom blended to meet the felt needs of anyone; it calls for a little of everything: some Bible, a little mysticism of any variety, and, frequently, a generous helping of psychology to hold the whole thing together. There are no rules as to how this blending takes place, and only one rule as to its effectiveness: we must all accept each person's blend as valid and true, even if it is only true for them. Any concept that there is only one way that is right is regarded with scorn; there is no longer a place for objective truth. This serves to place the Bible on an equal standing with any other secular literature; however, this is nothing new. The very philosophy that saw the development of the modern Greek text of the New Testament, which underlies all modern translations, sprang from this falsehood. Society has succumbed to the mind-numbing opiate of relativism: truth is whatever we want it to be, and we are to consider all the different forms of "truth" that result as equally valid. Consequently, the monotheistic faiths of the world (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) become the fly in the ointment; yet today we are seeing even these erode so that they, too, can be made to fit into this relativistic model. Ever since 9-11, there have been great efforts made to make Islam palatable to the western mind: Allah has been deemed to be the same as the God of the Bible (Schuller and the late Pope John Paul II both touted this lie), and Islam is being falsely portrayed as a religion of peace and tolerance. There is a gradual but definite eroding of the fundamentals of our faith within the minds of those who, at one time, knew better; could this be the falling away of which Paul spoke (2 Thessalonians 2:3)?

However, when the Spirit of God touches our spiritual eyes, we will come to understand things that are hidden from the worldly wise – "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). A dead person cannot see the things about him, and likewise, neither can a spiritually dead person perceive the spiritual truths of the living God; for until we are made alive by the Spirit of God, we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Therefore, someone who is spiritually dead (no matter how religious they might be) will never be able to understand the Word of God.

That ye may know what is the hope of his calling. This is the first of three things, which Paul delineates, that form the core of his prayer for the Ephesians. First of all, what is the *calling* of God for the believer? In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul declared that God has "called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12), and further, "called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). We have been called to one day participate in God's kingdom, which He is preparing to last for eternity, and to enjoy the glory that has been bestowed on the risen Lord Jesus. Herein lies our hope, not just that the presence of God is with us throughout our lives here on earth, but that He is preparing a work for us to do in His eternal kingdom, which He will establish one day. Our hope in God is not limited to the here and now, but extends into eternity! The wonder of it all is that this is something that we do not merit on our own, but God has "called us with an holy calling, not according to our works,

but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9). This is a holy calling given by a holy God to an unholy people who are made holy through the blood of Christ, and sealed with the Holy Spirit; there can be no doubt as to the centrality of holiness. We were called by God when He raised us from death unto life and sealed us with “that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13)! Even as His calling does not rest upon our efforts, so our hope is not in ourselves, but in God. Paul’s prayer is that, through the work of the Spirit of God in us, we would come to know, with great certainty, the tremendous hope that we have in God’s calling us to His eternal glory and His eternal kingdom.

The second thing that Paul would have the Ephesians (and us) to know is the infinite greatness of God’s glorious inheritance that He has in the saints. Here is something we do not hear much about: there is a double inheritance spoken of in the Bible; there is an inheritance that the saints of God have through Christ, and there is an inheritance that God has in the saints. Consider these passages, a mere sampling among many:

⁸And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.
⁹And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and **take us for thine inheritance** (Exodus 34:8, 9).

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his [Saul’s] head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over **his inheritance**? (1 Samuel 10:1).

For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, **to be thine inheritance**, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD (1 Kings 8:53).

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and **the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance** (Psalm 33:12).

The Hebrew term translated as *inheritance* “refers to a ‘possession’ to which one has received the legal claim.”⁶⁰ Although we typically think of an inheritance as coming through the will of someone who has died, the definition of the term also includes, “to receive as one’s portion.”⁶¹ We often hear of the saints as being the Body of Christ, but we hear little of them as being God’s inheritance. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Satan showed Him, in a moment of time, all of the kingdoms of the world, and declared, “All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it” (Luke 4:6). Jesus never disputed Satan’s claim that all of the kingdoms of the world were his; this is a reality because of Adam’s sin. First Peter 5:8 calls us to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;” even today, Satan has free rein to wander throughout the world, for it is still under his general control. The reality is that only a remnant of mankind will turn their hearts to God: consider the time of Noah, only eight people survived the judgment of God; Isaiah declared that only a remnant of Israel would return to God (Isaiah 10:20-22), and Paul likens the present remnant to those who did not bow to Baal in the time

⁶⁰ Vine’s “To Inherit.”

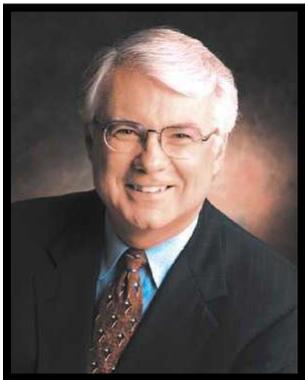
⁶¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/inherit>

of Elijah (Romans 11:5). Therefore, passages like Ephesians 6:11-12 take on greater significance: “¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” All of the protection that we need against external attacks is available to us, yet we must also guard against a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), against that which the armor cannot protect. Jesus declared that it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles a man, for it is evidence of what is in the heart (Mark 7:20-23).

It was made clear in Ephesians 1:4 that we were a people chosen by God *in Christ* before the foundation of the world. As His people we: 1) have received an inheritance in Christ (v.11), and 2) become an inheritance to God (v.18). When we think of riches, it is generally in terms of wealth in this life; but when God speaks of riches in this context, it is far beyond our comprehension. His riches will be reflected through those who are chosen **in Christ**, His holy ones, His inheritance – those who are the beneficiaries of His grace! I say, “reflected,” for any glory that will come from the faithful in Christ Jesus will be a direct result of the work of Christ and our abiding faithfully in Him. Those who have had their debt of sin paid can take no credit for the payment that was made by Christ!

 19. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

Here is the third thing that Paul prays that we will come to know – the greatness of the power of God, which has been exercised toward us. We really have no idea of the power of God. Charismatics, like Benny Hinn, believe that God is a miracle-worker, and then they try to harness



Bruce Wilkinson

that power in a formula, or an evangelistic methodology, in order to call miracles down at their whim. Bruce Wilkinson, as well, is convinced that God can do anything, and he, too, seeks to place God’s miraculous abilities within the confines of the prayer of a little known OT man, Jabez. Evangelicals, on the other hand, seem to have reduced the power of God to a doctrine that can be compromised or rationalized into oblivion. Each of these fails to recognize, to any degree, all that God has done in bringing us to salvation, His great protection that assists us to walk faithfully with Him, and His omnipotence that will one day change our mortal into immortality, if we remain faithful to Him. The Christian life is really the power of God in action! Even

though God will display His wondrous creative energies when He establishes a new heaven and a new earth, what He has done for us in providing salvation is by far the greatest example of His marvelous power. In six days, God spoke the universe into being (in all of its intricate uniqueness). Yet that pales in significance when compared to what He has done to take a sinner (who is **dead** in sin), make him alive in Christ, make him His own child (complete with an inheritance that is beyond description), and then call that child His own inheritance! For all that He has done, can we do anything other than bow before Him and walk in obedience to Him? How carefully we need to guard our hearts against a deadly root of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12)! What price could our obedience

to Him possibly cost us that could even begin to compare with what He has done for us, and is prepared to do for us for all of eternity (Romans 8:18)?

Just in case we didn't catch it the first time, Paul reiterates that this is according to the working of God's almighty power. Once again, we realize that the magnitude of all that God has prepared for us does not depend upon anything that we can do – it is God Who has worked to open the way for man to fellowship with Him, and it is His gift to us!



20. Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

In the previous verse, Paul was underscoring the power of God that has been shown in the lives of believers. Now, coming back to one of the themes that he has been developing, Paul reminds us that this power has been evidenced through raising Christ from the dead; all that we enjoy as believers has come through Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. God demonstrated His mighty power by physically raising His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead, thereby gaining victory over the death that Satan had introduced into the world through Adam and Eve. The OT saints looked forward to the day when the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15), and deal him a fatal blow; they died, in faith, anticipating that day (Hebrews 11:13). Jesus' death and resurrection completed what the OT saints had looked forward to: He is "the author [or chief leader] and finisher of *our* faith"⁶² (Hebrews 12:2), and their faith. Satan labored, from the promise that God made in Genesis 3 through to the work that Jesus finished on the cross, in an effort to avoid what God had promised him. Knowing that his destiny has been sealed, Satan now goes about like a roaring lion looking for those of mankind whom he might devour, or destroy (1 Peter 5:8). His work now is to blind, confuse, and otherwise keep mankind in the dark concerning what God has accomplished by the way of the cross. The warning, which Peter gives, is addressed to Christians; we must take heed that we do not fall prey to the wiles of Satan. As believers, we are not immune to his destructive activity, and perhaps one of the most destructive crafts of the devil is today's push for tolerance and openness. Tolerance and acceptance is considered far more important than doctrine and truth; the former is inclusive and friendly, the latter is exclusive and narrow. Unfortunately, we are not speaking of the world here, but of those who would consider themselves to be Christians.

An associate editor of *Christianity Today* (Agnieszka Tennant) wrote an article in 2005 titled "How the Pope Turned Me into an Evangelical."⁶³ In it she says, "Before my conversion to the religion of Billy Graham ... I had never been to a home that didn't display the retouched images of Poland's holy trinity. I'm talking, of course, about Mary (commonly referred to as the Queen of Poland), the fruit of her womb Jesus Christ, and a devoted follower of theirs, the pope."⁶⁴ She goes on to say:

⁶² Strong's Online.

⁶³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/aprilweb-only/12.0.html>

⁶⁴ Agnieszka Tennant, "How the Pope Turned Me into an Evangelical," <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/aprilweb-only/12.0.html>

I met Christ in an Evangelical way, and soon shed my devotion to Mary and the pope, forgetting how much I owed both of them.

But now I return to them.

I return to Mary as to a sister whose obedience I wish I had. And I return to the late pope, with a prayer of gratitude. ...

And I thank God for [the pope's] ecumenism, which gave me permission to explore the religion of Billy Graham ...⁶⁵

Here is an associate editor of a leading Evangelical magazine touting the fact that she has returned to Catholicism, yet still finds sanctuary within the confines of New Evangelicalism. The pope has a religion, Billy Graham has a religion – and clearly, there is no difference between the two; in that, there is much truth. Neither one adheres to the Word of God; both compromise the clear instruction of the Scriptures. *Christianity Today*, the voice of the New Evangelical movement, has made its compromise abundantly clear.

There have always been those who claim that Christ did not die, but simply swooned, or went into a coma; however, this verse leaves no doubt that when it says that Christ was raised from the dead, it means that He was dead, and that there was no physical life in Him. The root of the Greek word used for *dead* comes from the word for corpse – a body that has no life in it.⁶⁶

The power of God not only raised Christ from the dead, but also brought Him up to heaven, and set Him at the right hand of the Father. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is seated in His glorified body with God, the Father. Jesus, eternally with the Father and the Spirit, took on the physical form of man in order to pay the debt for sin that man owed, so that He might make salvation available to all of mankind by shedding His blood. Having taken on the body of a man, He will carry the scars of His sacrifice to eternity in His glorified body, even as He showed them to Thomas (John 20:27).



21. *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

Paul endeavors to get across to the reader just how exalted Jesus really is. God has taken Him to the pinnacle of all that is possible to consider or imagine. The Greek word for *principality* is most frequently translated as “beginning” and carries the concept of origin, or the active initial cause, and often refers to the supreme magistrate particularly in angelic or demonic realms.⁶⁷ Clearly, Jesus is raised above the highest angel, which is not surprising since He is the Son of God. *Power (exousia)* speaks of “authority,” often related to the ability to make a choice, or the authority of government.⁶⁸ *Might* is most often translated as “power”; the Greek word is *dunamis* (from which comes our word *dynamite*), and it refers to strength or inherent ability.⁶⁹ *Dominion* is more

⁶⁵ Agnieszka Tennant, “How the Pope Turned Me into an Evangelical,” <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/aprilweb-only/12.0.html>.

⁶⁶ Strong's Online.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

of a governmental term, and speaks of lordship.⁷⁰ When Satan tempted Jesus, he offered Him the kingdoms of the world in return for Jesus' submission (Matthew 4:8-9); yet here we see that Jesus has been raised far above all that Satan offered to Him. He has been placed higher than any one else – any *name that is named* – no matter who it is, Jesus has been exalted higher; that's not just those in this world, but it applies equally in the world that will come. He will be supreme in the new heaven and the new earth.



22. *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

Paul summarizes the position of Christ, Whom God has raised far above all things in this world and the next, by stating that ALL things have been put under His feet. When Adam sinned, he surrendered his God-given dominion over the earth to Satan (Genesis 1:28; Jesus did not dispute Satan's right over all the kingdoms of the earth, Luke 4:6-8); through Christ's sacrifice, He not only procured salvation for lost mankind, but He (as the perfect Man) also regained the right to rule over the earth. Christ's exalted position has been emphasized over and over. Can there be any doubt as to the supremacy of Christ?

And gave him to be the head over all things to the church – we have just seen that God has placed Christ over all authorities and powers, and now it is clarified that He has also been placed as the Head of the called-out ones, His Body (1 Corinthians 12:27). This is a very interesting phrase; Young's Literal Translation (YLT) renders it: "and did give him—head over all things to the assembly."

The Greek word translated as *church* is *ekklesia* (*ek-klay-see'-ah*), and, literally, it means an assembly of called-out ones. The Greek word for *church* is *kuriakon*, which means *a temple of God*, or *god*, and comes from *kuriakos* meaning *pertaining to a Lord*.⁷¹ We often hear that "the church is the people," and, within our modern context, that is true some of the time. However, the Greek word (*ekklesia*), which has been translated as *church*, speaks **only** of the people, and not of the building, nor of the system of doctrine or authority that today might define a "church." Interestingly, the Greek word (*kuriakon*), which would have logically been translated as *church*, does not appear anywhere in the text of Scripture. Unfortunately, we often associate the word *church* with the building and/or the organizational structure that we have become accustomed to, rather than recognizing that it is really God's called-out ones, with a very limited organization that Scripture outlines for us. I am convinced that we have inherited much from the Roman Catholic Church – an inheritance that has nothing at all to do with what God desires for His inheritance.

Christ is the protector of the saints; He will guard the spiritual welfare of those who are His. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17). What is abundantly evident from Isaiah's words is that the OT saints enjoyed this same spiritual protection. We are not invincible in and of ourselves, but, as we abide in the Vine, we are assured of His protection from every outside foe –

⁷⁰ Strong's Online.

⁷¹ Webster's 1828 Dictionary, "church."

not necessarily physically, but spiritually. Jesus' words were that He would build His assembly of believers, and that the gates [or counsels] of hell would not prevail [be strong] against them (Matthew 16:18).⁷²



23. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The assembly of believers in Christ is described here, and in many other places in the NT, as being the body of Christ. Christ is the Head, and all believers make up His body.

This body of believers is, in a mysterious way, the fullness of Christ. Perhaps it is because, from eternity past, it has been in the foreknowledge of God that He would call out a people for Himself – a people who would be in a special relationship with Him, their Creator and Savior. YLT correctly does not place a period at the end of verse 23, but uses it as a bridge to what is, for us, the beginning of Chapter 2: "... head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fullness of Him who is filling the all in all, also you – being dead in the trespasses and the sins...." There is a clear sense of Christ filling the ALL of the assembly; the presence of Christ is in all things pertaining to the Body; He is omnipresent.

⁷² Strong's Online.



Chapter 2 – Made One in Christ

 1. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

Our KJV translation shows this as a new sentence and a new chapter, thereby placing a significant break between the closing thought of Chapter One and the beginning thought of Chapter Two. YLT, in accordance, uses a comma to link the two more tightly together. It appears that, due to the disconnection made in the English translation, the translators inserted “hath he quickened” in order to complete the thought. However, if you tie this to what comes before it, the thought is that the power of God, which was demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead, has also made us to be the Body of Christ; the enormity of this power becomes clear in what follows. Christ is the head over all things to the Assembly, but, more specifically, He is also the head over all things to each of us who believe. This is a truth that touches us where we are in life; it should bring us great peace and assurance to know that, even during those times of great difficulty and testing, He is our All in all, He is our along-side One (our *Comforter* – *parakletos*, the One called alongside to intercede for us).⁷³ We have not been abandoned – His presence is with us (Romans 8:9). It should also challenge us to remain faithfully in Him; our spiritual life is inextricably linked to Christ. Without Him, we are nothing.

At this point, Calvinism would say that man is unable even to repent and believe the Gospel without God first doing a work of regeneration in him. They hold that, unless God first does a work of regeneration (of bringing life), man cannot exercise faith to believe and accept, through repentance, the gift that God has extended to all of mankind. Nevertheless, even though they advocate that man is totally without any ability to repent and accept God’s proffered gift, they still contend that man is accountable to God for not accepting it. Nowhere does the Bible limit God’s gift in this way. Paul went about “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Jesus said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink ...” (John 7:37). The invitation is open to everyone. The Calvinist’s mind is closed to every teaching that does not fit with his theology; even the plain text of Scripture is twisted in order to conform to his thinking.

Who were dead in trespasses and sins, begins a passage that reminds us of who we were before Christ purchased us out of sin, thereby emphasizing God’s ability to work on our behalf. Lest we forget where we came from, and the undeserved sacrifice that Christ made to redeem us, Paul balances the picture that he is painting by reminding us of where we were before Christ. Just as we were reminded in Chapter 1:20 that Christ died a literal death, so we see here that before Christ became our All in all, we were dead! However, we were not passively dead (lifeless); we were dead in trespasses and sins. *Trespass* means to fall beside something, or a lapse of uprightness, implying an offence that is not deliberate in nature (committed in ignorance) – nevertheless, not where one should be.⁷⁴ *Sin*, on the other hand, means to miss the mark – implying

⁷³ Strong’s Online.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

an effort, but a failure to measure up nonetheless.⁷⁵ Therefore, we were dead in every respect – in our attempts at doing right, we failed, and, even when we weren't aware of it, we still dwelt in failure. Isaiah was correct when he wrote, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).



2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

There was a time when all who are now called *saints* and *faithful* ones were, spiritually speaking, walking dead-men – dead in trespasses and sins. For each of us, there was a time when we walked according to the path of this world; this is the essence of declaring all men to be sinners (Romans 3:23). We are born with a sin nature, and there is no escaping the reality of it, or its consequences.

Incredibly, there is an ever-growing element within Evangelicalism that seems to be obviously walking in the ways of this world. Rick Warren uses techniques that were developed by the world in order to grow a successful business, to build a church; he continues to walk according to the pattern of this world (the way of sin that was established with the fall) even while boasting of doing God's work. Warren has "hired Ken Blanchard ... to come to Saddleback to help train people how to be effective leaders There is countless evidence to show that Blanchard sits on the New Age/mystical/contemplative bandwagon. Blanchard believes in the benefits and use of mantra meditation, yoga and has no trouble borrowing from Buddhism."⁷⁶ Robert Schuller (the Hour of Power) built his work the same way, and Bill Hybels (Willow Creek Community Church) follows this pattern as well. The more that men who follow the ways of the world, are emulated within Evangelical churches, the greater will be



Ken Blanchard



Rick Warren

the compromise, and the falling-away in the lives of individuals. Amos 3:3 – "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" No! If Warren, Schuller, and Hybels are using the marketing techniques of this world, they must be in agreement with the underlying philosophy, and a philosophy of this world cannot be in agreement with God's standard for His people (1 John 2:15-16). By using the world's marketing techniques, these men have reduced the Gospel to a commodity that needs to be sold to the people by creating a felt need for it within the minds of a target audience. This stands in sharp contrast to the Scriptures:

²²For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: ²³but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto

⁷⁵ Strong's Online.

⁷⁶ <https://www.wayoflife.org/database/purplehaze.html>.

the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. ²⁵Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: ²⁷But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹that no flesh should glory in his presence (1 Corinthians 1:22-29).

How can Warren, Schuller, and Hybels do the work of God by using the methods of the devil? Very simply, they cannot! Their success is measured in numbers: the larger the numbers, the greater the success; God's success is measured by a remnant of holy ones who will be saved, those who have entered the narrow way that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). The sad reality is that most of those within Evangelicalism today have given mental assent to a watered down message, and have not experienced the "come out from among them" of the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:17). They remain on the broad way of religiosity that leads to death, having "a form of godliness" that leaves their sinfulness intact – "from such [we are to] turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We are reminded that there is no middle ground; before we placed our faith in Christ, we lived *according to the prince of the power of the air*. Before we were recipients of the saving grace of God, which was made available through Jesus Christ, we walked in accordance with Satan, described here as the *prince of the power of the air*. There is some debate among theologians as to what this means, but consider Satan's response to God in Job 1:7 and 2:2 of his activities: he came "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Peter warned: "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Clearly, the earth is the domain of Satan and his fallen cohorts, and since we cannot see them with our eyes, they are like the air to us – invisible, but very present.

Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Jesus made it abundantly clear that there is no middle ground between following Him and being aligned with Satan. For quite some time, Evangelicalism has harbored an element who have disassociated the idea of Jesus as Savior from Jesus as Lord, and effectively made these two separate events in a believer's life (the *lordship* is viewed as being optional). This same error is propagated through the "easy-believism" that has been popularized through mass crusades and rallies, as well as through the ecumenical thrust, which says that you can be saved and stay among those who promote heresy. Billy Graham has practiced this since the early 1950s by turning his Catholic "converts" back to the Roman Catholic Church, and Liberal "converts" back to their Liberal churches; he mistakenly believes that you can enter the narrow way that leads to life, and still walk the broad way that leads to death; these are two different roads with totally different destinations. The Scriptures make it very clear that you are either with Jesus, which means granting Him complete lordship, or you're not with Him at all; you either receive the light, and no longer walk in darkness, or you do not have the light, and continue to walk in darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14ff; 1 John 1:5-7). This, in modern terms, would be considered unnecessarily harsh and judgmental, yet neither the Scriptures, nor the God of the Scriptures, will cower before the criticisms of modern thinking – and neither should we.

Paul then goes on to add another aspect to describe Satan – that one whom we followed before we experienced the saving grace of God. He is called the spirit that is working in the *children of disobedience*, the spirit that is exerting effectual power in the descendants of Adam who are obstinate against God.⁷⁷ It is clear that the sinner cannot justify himself by saying, “The devil made me do it;” Eve tried this (Genesis 3:13), and was unsuccessful. Those in whom Satan is working are called the “children of disobedience,” which simply means that without Satan’s specific influence, they were still in opposition to God; they are still children of disobedience! “There is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10; Psalm 14:1).



3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Paul goes on to include himself, and all other believers, as having been among these *children of disobedience* at one time; we have all walked contrary to God’s desire, and lived outside of God’s grace. The word *conversation* is used metaphorically to refer to our lives, how we conduct ourselves. The guidance system that is used when we dwell outside of God’s saving grace is our own desires – which, incidentally, unless the Spirit of God influences us who believe, we will continue to abide within the realm of Satan’s workshop! It is interesting to hear talk-show host, Dr. Laura, expound on the necessity of “religion” to make a difference in a life, that there needs to be a standard that is bigger than us, against which we can measure the decisions that we



Dr. Laura Schlessinger

make – else our decisions are simply what we think that we want at the time. Unfortunately, “religion,” as Dr. Laura understands it, is also under the control and influence of Satan. Only a personal relationship with God, brought about through Christ’s finished work on the cross and the indwelling Holy Spirit, stands exclusively outside of Satan’s direct control. Yes, there is a need to have a guide beyond our own lusts, but “religion,” no matter how positive, still does not reach beyond Satan’s dominion.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind describes the life of those outside of Christ. Fulfilling the desires of the flesh would consist of those things that bring about physical gratification, however temporary, and would include such things as gluttony, position and power, sexual sins, and all sorts of self-indulgent pleasures. The desires of the mind would be where most religions and life-philosophies would come in; they apply a mental salve to provide a temporary “I’m OK” perspective on life and the hereafter. Modern spirituality, like that encouraged by Oprah, looks deep within to build upon the good that they are sure is there; the devil cares not what is used to build self-justification, for he knows that anything outside of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is really his territory.

Paul gives us a glimpse of what this is in Colossians 3:5-7: “⁵Mortify [*put to death*] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication [*porneia – any illicit sex*],

⁷⁷ Strong’s Online.

uncleanness [*immorality, impure motives*], inordinate affection [*vile or evil passions*], evil concupiscence [*longing, lust*], and covetousness [*greedy desire to have more*], which is idolatry: ⁶for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the **children of disobedience**: ⁷in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."⁷⁸ This is who we were outside of Christ; some characteristics are perhaps developed more than others, being more socially acceptable. For example, covetousness, within Evangelical circles, is often paraded as success, and is acclaimed; it may even be accompanied by an apparent generosity that serves only to mollify the conscience to overlook the presence of impure motives. ⁵“For they that are after the flesh do mind [to strive for] the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally [fleshly] minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6).⁷⁹ If we are *in Christ*, we will then be free from the snare of the devil, and will be spiritually alive.

Prior to being delivered out of sin by Christ, we were no different from anyone else in humanity – as sinners, we were all destined for the wrath of God – *children of wrath*. Our very nature, what we were without any influence, destined us for His wrath – for we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s desire for us (Romans 3:23). What Paul has made abundantly clear is that there was nothing special about us before we were saved; we were the average, run-of-the-mill sinner on the broad road to destruction! Additionally, there is nothing that we can do in and of ourselves, that can take us beyond the status of sinner. After describing the magnificent provisions that God has made for the believer (in Chapter 1), the contrast drawn, as to where we have come from, is sharp! This realization should be humbling, and raise a heart of renewed thanksgiving for what God has done for us.



4. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

We have often heard of the great “but God” passages in Scripture, however, the Greek word translated as “but” here, can just as easily be *and, moreover, or then*.⁸⁰ So, rather than focusing in on the *but God*, it would probably be more appropriate to focus on the words that follow, and what they say about God. We have just heard Paul describe who we were without Christ, and now he begins to explain what God did for us while we were in our hopeless state – there is nothing less hopeless than being *dead* (Ephesians 2:1). The foundation, upon which God’s actions toward us are built, is His mercy; God is *rich in mercy*. His abundant store (*rich*) of mercy was the basis for Christ’s willingness to suffer, die, and be raised again in order to offer mankind a way of escape from the His wrath – our sure destiny outside of Him! Jeremiah understood the mercy of God when he declared that it was through “the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed” (Lamentations 3:22). It is through His rich mercy that He withholds His just punishment of all mankind; it was His mercy (and His eternal plan for our deliverance from sin) that provided Adam with the opportunity to restore his relationship with God that he had lost through his disobedience (sin).

⁷⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

The word *for* in this case is a preposition that denotes the channel for an action; YLT uses the word *because*. Either way, what follows is the basis for an action that will be made plain as we read on. The foundation for the exercise of God’s mercy is the great love that He has for us – for us, who had no ability to please Him, who were under the condemnation of His wrath, who are without hope outside of His mercy. There can be no doubt that the love of God is directed toward all of mankind (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9), yet Calvinists would seek to limit the love of God to the *elect*, by which they mean those individuals whom God has chosen from eternity past to enjoy His pleasures for eternity future. However, even though God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice were truly made for all of humanity, it is equally clear from Scripture that only a remnant, a few, will accept His abundant provision (Matthew 7:13-14, Romans 9:27; 11:5).

What we must not lose sight of while we consider the mercy and love of God, is that this mercy and love flows out of His holiness and alongside of His judgment. Evangelicals typically are keen to hear of God’s love and mercy, but are much less enthusiastic about the holiness and justice that He requires of us. It is through the Lord’s mercy that we are not all consumed (for “in Adam all die,” 1 Corinthians 15:22), yet His justice demands that we pay for our fallen state unless we appropriate the salvation brought about through Christ (“in Christ shall all be made alive,” 1 Corinthians 15:22). God is love (1 John 4:8), yet this love flows through His holiness, which cannot look upon sin (“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity,” Habakkuk 1:13). Hebrews 12:14 – “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” By ignoring God’s holiness, Evangelicals have embarked on the road of pragmatism, which says, “if it works, it must be right”; the *end* holds greater priority than the *means*. Yet God says, “be holy as I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15) – this is a call to attend to the *means*, and leave the *end* to God.



5. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

When did God love us? – when we were dead in our sins! Paul wants to ensure that we do not miss the reality of what God has done for us. After describing our state before Christ, before speaking of God’s rich mercy and great love, he again reminds us that we were at one time dead. We lived in the dominion of Satan, and our best actions could not reach beyond Satan’s realm – we were dead to God! Yet while in this condition, God still loved us! Amazing!

Something we hear little of from the pulpits of today is our original condition before God – dead in sins. There is a greater desire to placate the guilt that we might have, to emphasize the goodness of mankind, and to extol the positive things in life – yet none of these will bring us to understand the position that we have outside of God (something that Paul wants the Ephesians, and us, to know). With the inordinate emphasis on the positive, comes a corresponding neglect of the need for repentance before God. The holiness of God is ignored, and He becomes something that we add to our already “good” lives – our “assurance” of a place in heaven, while we live out our “good” lives as we please. Today’s church leaders bear a tremendous responsibility for providing such a false hope – a false gospel!

'Twas a Sheep, Not a Lamb

'Twas a sheep not a lamb that went astray
In the parable Jesus told.

'Twas a grown sheep that wandered away
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

And out on the hilltop, and out in the cold,
'Twas a sheep that the Good Shepherd sought.
Back to the fold and back to the flock,
'Twas a sheep that the Good Shepherd brought.

Now, why should the sheep be so carefully fed
And cared for even to-day?
Because there is danger if they go wrong,
They will lead the lambs astray.

The lambs will follow the sheep, you know,
Where'er they wander – where'er they go.
If the sheep goes wrong, it will not be long
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.

So still with the sheep we must earnestly plead,
For the sake of the lambs to-day.
If the lambs are lost, what a terrible cost
The sheep will have to pay!

--*Author Unknown*⁸¹

We now return to the reoccurring theme of the first chapter of Ephesians – *with Christ*; we are made alive with Christ. The thought is that God, Who is rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ. After ensuring that we understand our condition before God saved us, and after emphasizing and reemphasizing that we were dead, Paul declares that it was God Who made us alive in Christ. There is no question, or at least there shouldn't be by this time, that there is no merit within us that would have caused God to make us alive. The critical thought here is that the life that we receive from God is a result of what He has done for us through the sacrifice of Christ, and through His resurrection! When Christ rose from the dead, He made new life possible for the believer.

By grace ye are saved – what is understood here is that the *grace* is God's grace, and it is through God's rich grace (His favor extended to an undeserving people) that we are saved. It is through God's rich mercy that we are not judged immediately and consumed; it is through His

⁸¹ <http://www.mybrethren.org/poetry/cp09retr.htm#sheep>

grace that we can experience new life in Christ! His mercy withholds what we deserve; His grace provides us with what we don't deserve.

The death of the Passover lamb did nothing to protect the family for which it was slain; the blood had to be applied, in faith, to the doorposts and lintel in order to provide protection from the death angel (Exodus 12:6-10). Even so, Christ's death is of no effect until the blood is applied, by faith, to the hearts of individuals. I must believe (the application of the blood through the exercise of faith) in order to be saved (John 1:12; Acts 16:31); by faith we must receive, or accept, the gift of life that God offers to all of mankind; we can do nothing to earn it.



6. *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ*

Jesus:

God has raised us up together with Christ, as it follows from verses 4 and 5. By placing our faith in Christ and the work that He accomplished for all of mankind, we are effectually raised up together with Him – we are identified with Him in His resurrection. As we enter the waters of baptism, we are identifying with Christ in His death, so are we are raised out of the water, we are identified with Him in His resurrection. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Once again, the critical factor that must not be overlooked is that this is only available *in Christ*; it is together with Him that all these things come to be.

Our way of life, how we live in this world, is to reflect this “newness of life.” One of the heartaches of today is that, to a large extent, the life of the average Evangelical is a greater reflection of the world than of the Savior. Lip service is paid to the need to live our lives for the Lord, but no consideration is given to, and certainly little teaching underscores, the holiness of God; we hear little of our old lives being crucified with Christ so that we might live after the Spirit of God and not after our own flesh (Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:8-13). Rather, we hear that it's what's in the heart that matters, our manner of living is not that important; support for this line of thinking is gathered from Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:25-28:

²⁵Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

This might seem to provide some support for such a position, at first glance; the scribes and Pharisees are condemned for their neglect of their spiritual lives, the inner man. Unlike the Pharisees, the Lord will not condemn the modern Evangelical for having cleansed the outside while leaving the interior corrupt; He will simply proclaim, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus' condemnation will be that they have declared the inside of the cup to be clean while neglecting the outside, not realizing that the exterior is a reflection of the interior. They have missed the principle that Jesus identified right within the passage quoted: “... cleanse first that

which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.” If their lives do not reflect the new life in Christ characterized by holiness (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:15-16), then indications are that they have not been cleansed within (Matthew 7:13-20) – it matters not what they profess. There is a general failure to recognize the principle laid out in Matthew 15:18-20 – “¹⁸... those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” The Pharisees were careful to fulfill the smallest requirement of the Law, yet they neglected their hearts before God – the whole reason for the Law. Today’s Evangelical endeavors to convince everyone that their heart is right with God, even while they turn a blind eye to their own worldliness and sin, which is an evidence of their heart attitude (1 John 2:15). The Pharisees sought to clean the outside of the cup in order to impress others; today we try to convince others that the inside is clean, when the outside remains untouched; it is simply hypocrisy of a different stripe, and will also receive the Savior’s condemnation.

God has made us to “sit down together” (*sit together*) with Christ in the heavenlies – the same place where we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings (1:3). Yet, equally clear, is the fact that none of this can be done other than through the work of Jesus Christ. None of this is based on any merit of our own – without Him, we remain dead in our sins (v.5). One of the mysteries of our faith is that as we abide *in Christ*, and He is at the right hand of the Father, we have a presence in the heavenly realm.

I am reminded of Jesus’ words: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus emphasized the very same two things that Paul has been underscoring in his letter to the Ephesians: 1) we are helpless and hopeless without Christ (dead), and 2) we must be “in Him” to have the fruitful life of which Jesus spoke (the spiritual blessings are only found *in Christ*). To become a Christian (even without the consideration of living the Christian life) requires the action of God, and certainly the blessings that God has in store for the believer cannot be obtained without first abiding in Christ. Jesus made this abundantly clear: a branch that does not bear the fruit of the vine is removed, and a branch that is no longer drawing from the life source of the vine is cast out and burned (John 15:2, 6). In a day when the simple declaration by a wolf that he is a sheep is all that is needed to gain access to the sheepfold, it is good to have a reminder that the fruit of a life bears testimony to the life within. Unless our lives demonstrate obedience to God’s Word and the fruit of the Spirit of God, we cannot assume that praying a prayer or walking the aisle has led to our salvation. In the same way, we must watch for the same signs of a new life in Christ in the lives of others, lest we inadvertently harbor wolves masquerading as sheep.



7. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

What follows in this verse is one of God’s purposes for extending His grace to those who are dead in sin, for making us alive, raising us up, and seating us with Christ in the heavenlies. We will be part of a host of called-out ones who will stand as a monument to the grace and goodness of God, a testimony, to all who follow, of the greatness of God. This great company are those who

were without hope and dead to God, yet through the mercy that He has extended through the finished work of Christ on the cross, they have been made alive to stand before Him as blameless and holy (1:4). Indeed, God’s grace is exceeding; it is beyond our comprehension that He would save us, and fashion us into new creatures who are pleasing in His sight (2 Corinthians 5:17). Could it be that some day the host of the saved will stand as testimony to God’s efficacious grace to the condemnation of those who have spurned God’s grace, and devised their own religions? It seems clear that we, as God’s holy ones, will be a testimony to His great grace, and we must begin that testimony in this life by living a life that is changed – not by our own efforts, but by the grace of God working through us. We are encouraged to “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” (Romans 12:2a); the word *transformed* is in the passive voice, which means that it is something that we must permit the Spirit of God to accomplish in us – we cannot do it ourselves.⁸²



8. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Salvation coming through God’s grace has been reiterated from verse five – a concept that Paul wants to ensure that we have firmly in mind. However, he now goes on to add the phrase *through faith*. This is the gate through which God’s saving grace makes its entrance into the heart of man.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). Abraham placed his faith in God, and acted upon that faith; his life demonstrated his faith for he walked in obedience to God. “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13). God’s promise to Abraham, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (a Messianic promise), was made not on the basis of the Law of Moses (for that had not yet been given), but, rather, on the basis of Abraham’s obedience – the exercise of his faith (Genesis 12:3). Paul clarifies that God’s promise that Abraham would be heir of the world was not through the law, but through faith – if it were through the law, then the promise would be void, but it was made on the basis of faith alone (Romans 4:14). “Therefore [because the heirs of Abraham are heirs by faith and not the law] it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16). The spiritual seed of Abraham are those who are made righteous after the manner of Abraham: faith placed in the promises of God! “²⁶For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26,29).

There are many Evangelicals today who believe that God has set Israel aside, and His focus is now on the “Church,” a new entity that was introduced at Pentecost. However, Paul makes it clear that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,” that is, not all those who are of the physical lineage of Abraham are the true Israel – being born a Jew does not automatically place you within the promises made to Abraham (Romans 9:6). Those who were saved while under the Law of Moses were made children of God through faith – in exactly the same way as Abraham, and just

⁸² Strong’s Online.

as we are today. Their faith was in the promise of God that there would come a Savior Who would fulfill the prescribed ceremonial rituals, and the Law was there to teach them of their need for such a Deliverer (Galatians 3:24). The clarity of the matter is that there is a spiritual Israel (a true Israel, i.e., the seed of Abraham through faith), and there is an Israel that is dependent upon tracing their ancestry to Abraham. When he wrote to the Roman believers, Paul made it evident that the true Israel is very much alive and well:

¹⁶For if the firstfruit *be* holy [the Israelites were to present an offering (not a sacrifice) to the Lord of the first of their dough for use by the priests, Numbers 15:20-21], the lump *is* also *holy* [the principle is that if the portion given as an offering is considered holy, then the rest of the dough from which it came is also holy]: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches [this is the reciprocal principle: if the source is holy, so will be the portions]. ¹⁷And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; ¹⁸boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. ¹⁹Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. ²⁰Well; **because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.** Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹for **if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.** ²²Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness [not a hypothetical statement, but one that carries the possibility of not continuing in His goodness]: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off [this is the certainty of not continuing in His goodness]. ²³And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief [carries the possibility of them believing], shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. Romans 11:16-23.

Therefore, the spiritual Seed of Abraham (Jesus Christ) is the root, or trunk, into which we are grafted through faith (Galatians 3:16), for the root's very existence sprang from the faith of Abraham. The Galatian Christians erred in that they sought to place themselves under the Mosaic Covenant, but Paul clarified for them (and for us) that they were not under the Law but under the Abrahamic Covenant – the covenant of promise that is entered into by faith. “⁶Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.** ⁸And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-9). If our faith has been placed in the finished work of Christ for our salvation, then we are of the spiritual seed of Abraham; we are the spiritual Israel!

And that not of yourselves – there is some difference of opinion as to whether “that” refers to faith or to the salvation by grace, or whether, in fact, either would make a difference theologically. However, the point is made that since *faith* is a feminine noun, and *that* is a neuter pronoun, the reference is being made to our salvation by grace. Clearly, in all aspects of our salvation, we are the beneficiaries and not the initiator; for salvation, we respond to God, not vice versa; it is a gift from God to us, and we bring nothing of merit.



9. Not of works, lest any man should boast.

To ensure that we understand that our salvation is a gift and not a product of our efforts, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, spells it out very clearly for us. There is no place for works within the salvation that God offers to mankind. Although the Catholics agree that salvation begins by God's grace, they are also insistent that works form a part of salvation – they consider salvation to be a life-long process that is begun by grace but completed by good works that impart additional saving grace. This is not unlike the endeavors of the Galatians whom Paul took to task for their acceptance of a gospel that was not the Gospel: “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). To this the Catholics would have to answer “yes,” despite their insistence to the contrary; however, Paul is asking a rhetorical question to which the understood response is that it is impossible to begin in the Spirit and then to complete the work of the Spirit through the efforts of the flesh (Romans 8:13-14). Not unlike the Pharisees of Jesus' day, the Catholics have reduced their salvation to a shopping list of liturgical acts, which they are required to complete in order to be acceptable to God; Jesus made it clear that this would not work for the Pharisees, and we can rest assured that it will not work for the Catholics!

However, this is not to say that good works are not to be part of the Christian life! To the Philippians Paul wrote: “¹²Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). Even as we, as the saints of God, are to seek to live in holiness, so Paul is calling the Philippians to *work out* their salvation through a life of obedience. Why? Because it is God Who is working in them (and us) to do those things that are pleasing to Him (Romans 8:9-12). Once again, we face the reality that the fruit of a life will declare the allegiance of that life! Is this always going to be clearly evident? No! Jesus spoke of wolves masquerading as sheep (Matthew 7:15), and Paul speaks of the devil wearing the guise of an angel (2 Corinthians 11:14). There is a need for discernment and dependency upon the Spirit of God to unveil the error and deception that will wear the clothing of spirituality.

Truth and Error went swimming. Error got out first and stole Truth's clothes. Truth got out, but was too proud to wear Error's clothes. That is why whenever you see error, it will always be clothed with some Truth ... but Truth is always the naked Truth.⁸³

There is a need for sound judgment, and a will to stand against those who desire to be lauded as men and women of God, but who do not follow the precepts of Scripture: “Now **we command you**, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Within this context, *tradition* is not defined as the way we've always done things, but rather means “a giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing.”⁸⁴ The *tradition* in this case is the teaching that is received from the mouth of the Apostles, or through the written Word, the Word of God. We are to withdraw ourselves from anyone who professes to be

⁸³ Ralph G. Colas, *The Review* Vol. VIII, No. 3, May 1999, “Perspectives,” p. 9.

⁸⁴ Strong's Online.

a Christian (*every brother*), but does not follow the clear teachings of Scripture. It is at this point that New Evangelicals made their fatal error back in the late 1940s, for they determined to engage the Liberals in dialogue. As a result, they did two things: 1) they set aside the clear direction of Scripture for their own purposes, and 2) they made themselves vulnerable to accepting what they had hitherto considered to be unacceptable by exposing themselves to error (again in contradiction of Scripture, 1 Corinthians 10:12). The consequence is that today's average Evangelical stands where the Liberal stood fifty years ago.



10. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Here is new light shed on the place of good works in our lives. First of all, we are the *workmanship* (“that which has been made”⁸⁵) of God – the creation of God made in Christ Jesus. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Knowing salvation by faith, a new creation has been made within us; we still have our body of flesh, but a new life has begun where before there was only death! Unlike the modern thought that there is a spark of the divine within all of us, Scripture makes it clear that the spiritual life, which begins at the time of our salvation, is a new creation. We do not become more like God by yielding to the spark of divinity that is within us (as New Age and Mormon teachings would have us believe); rather, God creates a whole new life within us! It is God’s work in us, accomplished through the completed work of Jesus on the cross! We are brought from death unto life (John 5:24).

This also speaks against those who would hold to a progressive salvation experience: a salvation that may not include a submissive yielding in all things to the Savior – merely a deliverance from hell, but no required change of life. Unless there is an “old things are passed away,” there has not been a new life created, and we still abide in our sins. Unless we demonstrate a new life in Christ, we do not possess that new life; for clearly, how we live our life reveals the life or death that is within (Matthew 7:15-20).

The second thing that is obvious here is that the purpose of this new life is obedience to God – we have this new life within so that we can live in holiness before God. It is precisely this new life that will not permit the child of God to live in a manner that is characterized by sin and disobedience. Once again, the fruit will be in keeping with the life (or lack thereof) within. We hear so little today of holy living, yet this is the purpose that God had for creating new life within us! In a day when the world is enamored with *self*, and the average churchgoer is no different, we bear a great responsibility to be *selfless* before God and man.

There is a thought rampant among Evangelicals that says: “It’s what’s on the inside that matters; how we live is not important.” The Spirit of God would differ on this thought. We have been created for good works; if our lives do not demonstrate obedience to the Word of God (1 John 2:3), if others cannot see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16), then, without a doubt, there has not been a new life created within us. Holiness of life is not an

⁸⁵ Strong’s Online.

option for the Christian, it is a command of God that we are to be holy even as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

It was God’s original purpose in offering a way of salvation for mankind that we should walk in holiness of life; this is what God prepared beforehand. There is no new life without a change of life – we cannot continue as we were, for we were dead in our sins, and now we have been made alive in Christ. We easily understand the difference in the physical realm – a corpse is unquestionably different from a living body; but we are more inclined to fudge in the spiritual realm. When the line between the Christian and the world becomes decidedly blurred, we are less likely to call for a distinction of living; yet the Scriptures know no such compromise. If the line of separation is becoming difficult to see, rest assured, the world is not becoming more “Christian,” but the Christian is becoming more worldly – the sheep is beginning to look and sound more and more like a wolf – and this is a world without mirrors! Our mirror must be the Word of God; we must guard against worldly compromises.

God chose us in Christ from before the foundation of the world that we should be holy before Him (1:4), and it is reiterated here that God has prepared beforehand the good works in which we are to walk – works of holiness and righteousness (Ephesians 4:24). It is the eternal purpose of God that we who are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will live out the works that He has prepared for us. The subjunctive mood of *walk* must be viewed within the context of it being part of a purpose clause: it is God’s intent that we walk in keeping with His predetermination (in holiness and righteousness) – this is a reality, not merely a possibility.⁸⁶ There are numerous commands in Scripture: to *abide* in the Vine (John 15:5), to be *vigilant* (1 Peter 5:8), that we *be not deceived* (2 Timothy 3:13-14), and that we not succumb to an *evil heart of unbelief* (Hebrews 3:12), and all of these are given so that we will remain faithful to the Lord in our daily walk. Jesus said: “... he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13; *endure* (*hupomeno*) speaks of remaining faithful through the trials that will come our way – Jesus clarified that it is the faithful one who will one day be saved (future tense).⁸⁷ The reality of our text is that unless we are walking in keeping with what God has prepared for us, we will **not** be among those who are being saved *by faith*, and so God’s intent will not find fruition in us. Perhaps because of his ignorance of the Scriptures, many Evangelicals think that walking in the way that God desires is automatic: once we’ve said the required prayer, then God will look after the rest – we can relax, for all of the work is done. What a delusion of Satan to keep the would-be Christian in the dark concerning the sins that they have **not** left behind; if he can keep them out of the Word and thinking that they are okay, then he has won! There is a generation today of religious Evangelicals who have grown up thinking that their eternal destiny is secure, even while they carry on living their lives according to their own lusts – a generation who will one day hear an “I never knew you” from the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23). These are not even those who tasted of the heavenly way and then fell away (Hebrews 6:4-6) – these have never even tasted, yet they live under a cloud of delusion that they have secured their eternal destiny in heaven (James 1:22).

⁸⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁸⁷ Strong’s Online.



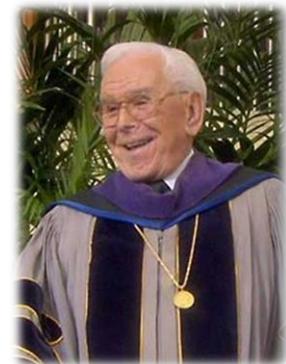
11. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

Understanding what God has done in providing us with a salvation that is entirely His gift, Paul commands the readers to remember, to think back to, the way things were. What simpler way can there be to gender a sense of humility and unworthiness than to recall the way things were, to ponder those times when we walked in disobedience. There is no room for pride or arrogance, only humility and thankfulness. For first generation Christians, which the Ephesian believers were, this recollection would be particularly moving; yet for each of us who has been renewed by the Spirit of God, there must be an understanding of the reality of our position before our salvation. We may not have walked in gross heathenism, yet our spiritual state was no different from those who did – we were dead!

I wonder if this realization is something that has been lost among Evangelicals (speaking generally). If they do not accept a proper view of who they are without Christ, then it only follows that they will not understand the necessity for repentance. If they perceive themselves as *good* sinners (to be too negative would damage their self-esteem), they are then free to attach the precepts of Christianity onto their already *good* lives, and carry on. Within this scenario, it would be very easy to be accommodating concerning the doctrines of Scripture since there has not been a proper understanding of the concept of being spiritually dead. Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Could there be a root of Evangelical righteousness that prevents many from understanding their need for repentance? Could this be the root from which we get easy-believism – pray this prayer, and you’re in? Jesus spoke of counting the cost (Luke 14:28-33), of denying yourself and taking up your cross (Mark 8:34), and of being servants (Matthew 20:27); Paul testified that he considered all of the benefits of his life as rubbish compared to knowing the Lord Jesus (Philippians 3:7-8). There is a cost to naming the name of Christ, but we hear nothing of this in today’s average Evangelical church.

Robert Schuller, in an interview with *Christianity Today* (published on October 5, 1984), noted the following:

I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise, than the often crude, uncouth and un-Christian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.⁸⁸



Robert H. Schuller

This is a man who has defined sin as a lack of self-worth, someone who continued to be a public figure within Christian circles for more than 20 years after this revealing declaration in *Christianity Today*, and he continues to enjoy enormous popularity within the Evangelical community. How can this be?

⁸⁸ <http://letusreason.org/Curren13.htm>.

Schuller, like many of today's Liberal (and Evangelical) pastors, has a strong desire to avoid the "S" word. In *Self Esteem, the New Reformation*, Schuller writes, "Salvation is defined as rescue from shame to glory. It is salvation from guilt to pride, from fear to love, from distrust to faith, from hypocrisy to honesty."⁸⁹ Schuller never uses the word *sin*, and says nothing about repentance. This kind of misleading verbiage actually leads people away from salvation, for without acknowledging sin and the need to repent of sin, there can be no salvation. Clearly, the Evangelical crowd has abandoned the teaching of the Word of God in favor of fables that appeal to their itching ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4); else, they would have long ago forsaken Schuller for being the apostate that he is. There is a grievous malady in Evangelicals today that will see many walk into eternity with false hope, blindness, and deafness; they refuse to see and hear the truth that could set them free, and they harbor an ignorance of the Scriptures that has numbed their minds into believing a lie. Satan loves religion, and the positive-only religion of today has become a feel-good anesthetic tossed out by Satan to deceive many. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Jesus said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). The false prophets of today are preaching a feel-good, positive-only message that cannot be found in God's Word; it is a deception that has been devised by the father of lies himself in order to deceive the average, pew-warming Evangelical into hell.

Paul now begins on what he would have these Ephesians remember. The Ephesians were those whom the Jews took pride in calling the *uncircumcision*, those whom they saw as unclean and untouchable – Gentiles. However, Paul draws an interesting parallel here: even though those who are of the *Circumcision in the flesh* (the Jews) call the Ephesian believers, who were once *Gentiles in the flesh, Uncircumcision*, notice that both are *in the flesh*, and really not that different from one another. Paul made his position on circumcision very clear to the Corinthians, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping [obeying] of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19).⁹⁰ To the Romans, he declared that not all those who are of Israel (the circumcision in the flesh) are Israel; in other words, not everyone who is a Jew is of the faith of Abraham (Romans 9:6) – not all Jews will benefit from the spiritual heritage that could be theirs. Colossians 2:11 says "In whom [that is, in Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision **made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." This was the struggle that Paul had with the Galatian believers who desired to retain the Mosaic Law, to whom the Spirit of God declared, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15). The old circumcision is not sufficient, and so in Christ there is made a whole new creature! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the circumcision of Christ: a new life in Him! However, it is also clear that "in the flesh" stands in contrast to the new life that has been instilled within us through the Spirit, a new life "in Christ"; it is "in Christ" that we are made to be new creatures – no other way.

⁸⁹ <https://ezinearticles.com/?Is-There-More-Than-One-Way-to-God?&id=1966796>.

⁹⁰ Strong's Online.



12. *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

Here is the condition of those who are “in the flesh” (whether Gentiles in the flesh or the circumcision in the flesh): they are without Christ; they are “apart from Christ.”⁹¹ There is a clear mark of separation indicated here, and, with that separation, there is spiritual death (which has just been shown in vs. 1-3). “⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:8-9). Despite how the Evangelical landscape may appear today, there are no varying shades of Christianity. Jesus stated, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). There are only two positions: we are either for Christ, or we are against Him; there is no fence to straddle, and no approval for a Christian walk with one foot in the world – it simply does not work! “Ye cannot serve God and mammon [or riches]” (Matthew 6:24); these occupations are mutually exclusive, they have nothing in common; “what fellowship hath light with darkness” (2 Corinthians 6:14). With the Word of God as our guide, we are called to be discerning, to test the spirits in order to determine if they are for Jesus or against Him (1 John 4:1). We may not always be able to spot the wolf under the sheep’s coat right away (their fruits may not be obvious to us, after all, Satan himself likes to appear as an angel of light), but we may rest assured that God knows those who are His, and He will reveal the deceiver as we endeavor to walk in obedience to His Word. It is critical that we are familiar with the Scriptures, for that will be the means of identifying those who are not walking according to God’s Standard (the Word of God), and those who have pulled a religious coat on in order to appear righteous before men. It is at this point that modern Evangelicals are most vulnerable – along with a significant de-emphasis on doctrine has come a corresponding decrease in familiarity with the Word of God.

From here, Paul goes into a brief overview of what “without Christ” really means.

Being Gentiles, the Ephesians had not been a part of Israel so that they would have heard of the coming Messiah, and experienced the foreshadowing of the temple ordinances. Many of the Jews may have lost their way, and become dependent upon their ritualistic adherence to the Mosaic Law and their prescribed interpretation of that Law for their “salvation,” but for those outside of the nation of Israel, there wasn’t even the glimmer of hope that their eyes would be opened to the spiritual reality of God’s dealings with Israel. Despite the general blindness of the Jews to what God really desired of them, they still held the truth that could set them free. Although most of them were oblivious to God’s truth, having succumbed to an empty ritualism that left them in their sins, nevertheless, contained within many of their rituals was the truth that could point them to God and salvation, if they would see it. This is not unlike some liturgical churches today, where the truth may be present, but is lost in the rituals; it is quite unlike New Evangelical churches that have virtually removed the Word of God, and diluted the Gospel – however, the result is the same for both. For those outside of the nation of Israel, even this hope was missing. Although Israel was to be the light to the Gentiles (Simeon understood this when he blessed the infant Jesus and called Him a “light to lighten the Gentiles” [Luke 2:32]), the light that was to have shone out from Israel had been buried under a basket of legalism; it was largely hidden to the children of promise, let

⁹¹ Young’s Literal Translation.

alone shining to those outside of their nation. Lest we be unduly critical of the Israelites for their neglect of the Light, we must realize that the denominations that came out of the Reformation (Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, etc.) and, it would be safe to say, many of the present-day Evangelical denominations, hold more truth in their statements of faith and creeds than they do in their lives and hearts. There is a fleeting mental assent given to the Word of God and many of the truths that it contains, even while walking about in spiritual darkness – a religiosity without repentance before a holy God, a mental nod without a heart change.

God’s covenant of promise had been delivered to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a covenant that included His promise that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through them (Genesis 12:3; 26:4; 28:14). Although this saw ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Christ as the Savior of mankind, this was to have been an ongoing process worked out through the descendants of Abraham. This was demonstrated through the provisions that were made within the Law of Moses for the stranger who lived with the Israelites (Leviticus 19:34; Isaiah 56:6-7), and through the inclusion in the genealogy of the Lord of those who were not descendants of Abraham (Matthew 1:5 includes the detail that Rahab, of Jericho, and Ruth, of Moab, were a part of the lineage of Christ as marked through Joseph). Although there were those outside of Israel who were brought into fellowship with God during OT times, this was clearly the exception rather than the rule. Typically, Israel’s contact with the heathen nations around them was to become involved with their heathenism, rather than drawing them to the worship of Jehovah. With our sin nature, it seems that it is always easier to become a part of the darkness than it is to shine as a light in that darkness – we are no different from Israel of old; hence, the accounts of their struggles are included in Scripture, by the Spirit of God, for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:6). Unfortunately, in the minds of most Evangelicals, there has been an artificial segregation made between the Old and New Testaments to the point that we typically ignore most of the OT; after all, we say, we are under “grace,” not under the “Law,” thereby confirming our ignorance of God’s dealing with mankind, and thereby securing our blindness.

The source of this error comes from a misapplication of Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Let us look at this statement very carefully and seek to understand it, so as to remove the stumbling block that this passage has become. If we are honest, we will acknowledge that this passage is often used as a feeble attempt to provide self-justification for something we should or should not do, most often in an area that we see as being gray (as opposed to black or white), but which God does not see as gray. Satan may confront us with an opportunity that might appear to be of great benefit to us, but it sets an alarm off in our heart of hearts; we remind ourselves that we are under grace, and so we simply consider the determined outcome and take advantage of the opportunity. Most often, this is a step downward, perhaps a first step onto the slippery slope of compromise, or, perhaps, another step taken to quicken the slide downward. On the other hand, we might be faced with a matter that will require something of us, and we would rather not pay the price; this is an opportunity to remind ourselves that we are not under the law – we don’t have to do it. In essence, what this becomes, and has become for most Evangelicals, is an excuse to permit pragmatism to be our guide; like the Israelites of old, we no longer hear the “thus saith the Lord.” The question simply becomes – is the anticipated end generally beneficial to us? When you combine this pragmatic approach with a

growing unfamiliarity of the Scriptures, you have a deadly team – to the joy of Satan, and the destruction of the average, self-proclaimed Christian.

What is so very important to understanding any passage of Scripture is its context, and this passage is no exception. If we look back to Romans 6:3, we can begin to unfold the proper context and understanding of this verse, which has become a real problem within the Christian community. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Baptism is our identification with Christ in His death, our “old man is crucified with *him*” (verse 6). “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ...” (verse 8) – we not only identify with Christ in His death, but also in His resurrection, through which we anticipate a new life in Him. Because of this, we are to consider ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verse 11). Earlier, Paul declared, “... the law entered, that the offence [or sin] might abound” (Romans 5:20). With the entrance of the written Law of God (upon two tables of stone) and the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai, sin shone forth in all of its misery; it was no longer possible to excuse the failure of mankind before God. However, when, by a living faith, we identify with Christ’s death and resurrection, we are now dead to sin – the spotlight of the Law’s condemnation is turned off, and we now stand in the grace of God (Romans 5:1-2; 8:1). For the Israelite under the Old Covenant, this came when, by faith, he identified with the lamb that was slain for his sins (a God-instituted foreshadowing of the sacrifice that was to be made by the promised One); by this faith (which is the same faith as ours), he also stood in the grace of God. “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). In Christ (whether looking forward to His coming, or back on the salvation that He accomplished), the condemnation of the Law has no power over us; we abide in God’s grace by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). No one is ever justified through the Law, yet God has declared that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption [deliverance] that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).⁹² However, what we must not miss is that the Law of God has not been removed from our lives so that we should live unto ourselves. To the contrary, Jeremiah spoke of a coming day when God would write His Laws (the permanent Ten Commandments) upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33) “²⁴And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. ¹Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 3:24-4:1). We are called to a life of obedience to God’s commands (John 14:15), the Spirit of God working out the righteousness of the Law of God in our lives (Romans 8:3-4; James 1:25).

Reading on to complete the context: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). This is not advocating a salvation by works; on the contrary, it is calling us to a life of obedience to the Law of God as so clearly declared in 1 John 3:24: if we are keeping His commandments, we are then dwelling in Him. The reality is that we could not live a life of “obedience unto righteousness” without the enablement of the Spirit of God (Galatians 2:16; Romans 8:4). The question that we are faced with is this: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1). In other words, because of God’s infinite grace, do we continue as we were so that we might behold the grace of God abounding to cover our sin? The answer is very

⁹² Strong’s Online.

clear: “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2). If we are *in Christ*, which means that we have died to sin, then it is impossible for us to carry on in a life of sin. Will we fail? Yes, for we carry our sin nature about with us (Romans 7:22-23), but a way has been made for dealing with our failures. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What Paul is making abundantly clear is the importance of obedience to the commands of God (and this is corroborated by John in 1 John 3:24). When we are born anew by faith in Christ, we have accounted ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin” (Romans 6:11); if then we have identified with Christ in His death, how can we live any longer unto sin? If we continue in a lifestyle of sin, then we have not identified with Christ in His death – we remain in our sins. However, if by faith we have made that identification with Christ in what He has done for mankind, then we will yield to the Spirit of God to lead us in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3; Romans 8:4).

“We are not under the law” – through faith in Christ, we are no longer under the **condemnation** of the Law of God (Romans 8:1), and the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances has been replaced by the New Covenant instituted through the shed blood of Jesus (Ephesians 2:15; Luke 22:20). However, to say that we are not under obligation to be obedient to the Law of God is to contradict Scripture; therefore, we must understand this to mean that we are no longer subject to the penalty of sin (the result of the Law on sinful man) as long as we continue **in Christ** (Hebrews 3:14). However, (and this is a caveat of which most Evangelicals today will not abide) if we become faithless and turn away from Christ (Hebrews 3:12), there is then no way to be restored to faith in Him again, for we have spurned the only Way to life (Hebrews 10:26; 2 Peter 2:20-21). If we abide in Christ (John 15:4), then we will obey His commandments (1 John 3:24) – beginning with those Ten Commandments that God has written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

“We are under grace” – in truth, everyone, who comes to God by faith in His promised One, stands in His marvelous grace. Whether we looked forward to the coming of the Fulfillment of God’s promise made in the Garden of Eden, or back on the deliverance from sin that was accomplished by Christ on the cross, it matters not, for we are equally recipients of God’s grace – for we are all looking to the same Savior. The expression of God’s grace toward mankind did not begin at the cross – it began before the world was formed (Revelation 13:8), and it shone forth when Adam sinned. Salvation has always been the same – by faith in the grace of God. Today’s average Evangelical stumbles at this simple truth, and this same truth caused the Judaizers and the Galatians to falter; works have never played a role in the salvation of mankind! The Law of Moses came to guide the children of Israel to faith in the promised Deliverer so that they might be “justified by faith”; it was never intended to be incorporated into the New Covenant (Testament) that was instituted by Jesus with His disciples (Luke 22:20; Galatians 3:19). Man, from Adam onward, has always been the recipient of God’s grace; however, under the New Covenant, God has taken a different approach to dealing with us. Since the Law of Moses, with its complex system of sacrifices, priestly duties and personal requirements, ended at the cross, it is only fitting that God would see fit to work in a different manner in us. Jesus declared, “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13). As we come to faith in Christ, God writes His Law (the Ten Commandments) upon our hearts (in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33), and the Spirit of God enters our hearts to guide us into all truth. Jesus said, “I am ... the truth,” therefore, it is evident that the Spirit will lead us into a full understanding of Who Jesus is. We are no longer

under the condemnation of the Law (because we are in Christ); the Spirit of God has been given to lead us into living in a manner that will express the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:1-4). Jesus also said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); it is not all grace and no Law – rather, it is grace expressed through obedience to God’s Law. What could be more marvelous?

Having no hope – being outside of the promises of Israel isn’t the worst; a person without Christ means that he is without hope! Christ is our only hope, the true Hope for all of mankind; from the day that man sinned, God made a promise of deliverance from sin. From the very day that sin entered into the heart of man, there has been genuine hope – a hope in God’s provision of a Deliverer. From Abel’s sacrifice to Simeon’s declaration of the arrival of the Messiah, the Light of the world, that hope lived on – a true hope that could only be accessed by faith in God, the One Who had made the promise. By faith, the OT saints believed the promises of God and had hope for a coming Savior; by faith, we believe in the Messiah Who came and paid the price for our deliverance, and we live in hope of that final salvation when we will be with Him in glory. First Corinthians 13:13 declares, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three:” *faith* in the God Who promised, *hope* in the promises made by God, and a two-fold *love*, 1) the love of God for mankind on which this faith and hope are based, and 2) a love that we have for God and mankind as a result (Matthew 22:37-40).

It is not that those outside of Christ are without all hope; it is only that their hope is ill founded, or it is in vain. Cain offered his sacrifice with the hope that it would be acceptable to God, yet his hope proved to be empty, and his offering was rejected (Genesis 4:3,5). Most religions offer some form of hope: the hope of reincarnation, the hope of universal salvation, the hope of salvation through good works – these are all hopes, which may well be held in all sincerity, yet they are all futile. There is only one hope that carries with it the assurance of fulfillment: our hope in the promises of God, and His provision for the purchase of our souls out of sin.

Before Christ touched our lives through His Spirit, we were without hope and without God, living in a world that is Satan’s domain. Our former state was eternally hopeless, for we were part of a world that is hostile toward God – a world of sinners under the influence of the great deceiver. Hell was a certainty, for we were ignorant of the possibility of faith in the God of mercy from Whom we were separated, and against Whom we had sinned. Paul instructs the Ephesians to remember this former reality – to call to mind what once was, not so that they would dwell on their former state and be immersed in misery, but that the grace, which God extended toward them, might shine forth in greater glory! This call to reminisce follows on the heels of the triumphant “for by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God!” Faith in God opened the door of salvation – a salvation, established by the sacrifice of Jesus, that brought us from the depths of hopelessness into union with Him. Israel of old was instructed from time-to-time to remember when they were slaves in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15; 24:22) in order to contrast present blessings with past miseries, resulting in joy by keeping the Lord’s instructions. There were times when Israel felt that the Lord’s commands were burdensome; a good dose of recollection was the Lord’s antidote to such feelings. Even so, for the Ephesian believers, as for us today, a reminder of what once was will only serve to increase the joy and rejoicing in the salvation that was brought about by God through Christ.

This is so unlike the “remembering” that is done in Recovered Memory Therapy (humanistic, psychotherapy based), or even within the Theophostic (meaning “God-light”) ministry (a “Christian” psychotherapy based work). In these, the individual goes back in their mind to “painful” memories, and relives the experience that caused the pain. Out of this has come “memories” of abuse, which have subsequently been found to be untrue, but only after they have destroyed the lives of others. Although the Theophostic process claims that they do not focus on the event of the memory as much as the emotional response to the memory (the “lie” that needs to be replaced by the truth as spoken to the individual by the Spirit of God), the net result is the same. In both of these systems, the memories are specific, and the purpose is to release the individual from personal responsibility and blame for something that may or may not have occurred. Both systems seem to apply to anyone; there is no thought of whether or not the individual has been born again of the Spirit of God, and so the process has no comparison to what the Spirit, through Paul, is asking the Ephesian believers to do. Only the believer can look back to a time when they were without Christ, to a time when they were without hope, separated from God by their sin. The Spirit asks us to recall when we were without hope so that we might rejoice in the “but now” of being joined to Christ!



13. *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

But now in Christ Jesus – here is that key phrase that has been repeated over and over again! The difference between once being without hope and now being saved by God, is Christ!! The blood of Christ has brought us near – we who were once a long way from God. A way has been made to bring us from a place of no hope to a place of eternal hope in Christ. This is not something that we can add onto our “good lives” in order to become righteous before God; this is a radical change in direction, a transformation from death to life! We cannot drape the righteousness of God over our filthy rags and expect to appear cleansed before God. Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees was that they said, “we see”; it was because of their self-righteousness that Jesus said, “your sin remaineth” (John 9:41). The Pharisees clung tenaciously to their own laws and ordinances, which they had carefully extrapolated from the Law of Moses; because their focus was on applying their rules and defending their positions, they had no part in the work of Jesus, Whom they considered to be a threat – they had no part in His kingdom of righteousness. We must not delude ourselves into accepting a façade of righteousness in place of His righteousness. Unless we have been made new creatures in Christ, we yet abide without hope; our sin still clings to us. There is no way to become a new creature in Christ and leave one’s self-esteem intact; there is no room for self-esteem in the salvation that is offered by Christ – the Pharisees retained their self-esteem (pride) at the sacrifice of cleansing their souls of sin! I would adjure that it is no different today; if you wish to preserve your self-esteem, you do so at the peril of your eternal destiny.

Robert Schuller has redefined sin as “any act or thought that robs myself [*sic*] or another human being of his or her self-esteem.”⁹³ James Dobson is quoted as saying that if he could prescribe one thing for the women of the world it would be “a healthy dose of self-esteem and

⁹³ Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, p. 14.



James Dobson

personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.”⁹⁴ Here are two men of prominence within Evangelicalism who hold self-esteem up as essential to life. Yet we fail to find such teaching anywhere in Scripture; we are told to consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3), that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), and that all our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). You cannot retain a lively self-esteem, and at the same time die to self so that you might live by the Spirit. “For if ye live after the flesh [in the realm of self-esteem], ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). The question, which we all must face at some time in life, is this: will we accept the plain teachings of

Scripture, or will we accept the teachings of men? Unless we are prepared to follow the example of the Bereans of Acts 17, we will inevitably be swayed by the rhetoric of learned men. This is plainly evident within the Evangelical movement today, where the justification for listening to these men is that there is good in what they say. There is nothing so deadly as poison that appears to be a healthy drink – we must be wary of wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15-20)!!

Returning to the passage at hand, the Ephesians were at one time a long way off (those who were called the Uncircumcision, aliens and strangers, without hope and without God), now they have been brought near by the blood of Christ. The phrase *far off* comes from a Hebrew manner of speaking: the Jews, who lived in Jerusalem, close to the temple of God, were considered to be particularly privileged; those who lived further away were thought of as *far off*, and often irreligious and wicked.⁹⁵ Yet from the perspective of the heathen, the Jews were always “near,” for God had placed, within their culture, His Word and the Law, which outlined for them His reality, His holiness, and the need of man in his sinfulness. The Object of their faith was declared openly for all to accept or reject; this was not the case for those outside of Israel – those who were aliens and strangers. Now this is all changed! The aliens and strangers, those who were *far off*, have been brought into the presence of God in Christ Jesus; through the blood of Christ, all barriers have been removed. Even as the Jews were brought into a relationship with God through faith in the blood of the sacrifices, so Christ became the Sacrifice, once for all time, that we might be brought into fellowship with God.

Even though God made provision within the Law for the stranger who was within the Israelite community, through the years the religious Jews had raised the barriers to exclude those outside of the physical line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What God provided, as a demonstration of His holiness, the Jews used to exclude those who could have had a part in God’s salvation plan. Now, through the sacrifice of Christ, the way had been changed, and the path to salvation was the same for Jew and Gentile; for the Jews, the Way was a stumbling block (they had to accept the crucified Jesus as their Messiah, their Promised One), and to the Greeks, it appeared as foolishness (alongside of their numerous philosophies, the message of the cross seemed ludicrous): “...we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Both the Jews and the Gentiles faced similar hurdles in coming to the Christ,

⁹⁴ Martin and Deidre Bobgan, James Dobson’s Gospel of Self-Esteem & Psychology, p. 99.

⁹⁵ Barnes’ Notes, Ephesians 1:13.

the Messiah of God, for their salvation; the ground at the cross is indeed level. However, today we see Evangelicals shrouding the cross in a fog of philosophy and psychology, which only results in people losing their way to the Savior; they have them bowing before the gods of self-esteem, of purpose-driven growth, of easy-believism, of emotionalism, and of unity – all to their own eternal detriment. It is God’s provision plus nothing; it is the simple truths of Scripture, without the trappings of man’s thinking, to which we must adhere; the narrow way, which leads to life, has been opened for all of mankind. We must know God’s Word in order to ensure that the path that we are walking is the pathway to life eternal. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).



14. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

The word *peace* comes from a Greek root that means *to join*, and gives the idea of harmony.⁹⁶ Jesus, as our Peace, within the context of this passage, has brought together the Jews and the Gentiles, those who have placed their faith in Him, and has made the two into one. The distinct separation that had existed for many years was largely the result of the Jews regarding the Gentiles as unclean, and wanting nothing to do with them. It seems that, after their time in Babylonian captivity, the Jews had finally learned that God would punish their syncretistic practices (mixing heathen customs with their God-given requirements), and so their response was to show disdain for anyone who was not Jewish. They overlooked the fact that God had intended for them to shine the light of His glory on the nations about them, and not cut them off altogether. It seems that the pendulum had swung the other way. First, they mixed with the nations about them, taking on their ways, and, consequently, felt God’s punishment; now they became isolationistic, but no less failed to comprehend what it was that God desired of them. It was through the seed of Abraham that all of the nations were to be blessed, yet the Jewish practice was to glory in what they perceived to be their special position before God. Jesus changed this; He brought those who were far off and those who were nigh, and He made the two into one. However, we must not consider this to be an oil and water mixture; He is our *peace*, He is our *harmony*, our unity (Jew and Gentile as one) rests in Him alone. Jesus brought the two together – how did He do this? He did not abolish the Law of God (the Ten Commandments), for we are clearly told that He came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17). What He did was to bring the Gentiles in; He opened the way for the Gentiles to receive the mercy and forgiveness of God – we (as Gentiles) have been grafted, by faith, into the tree of spiritual Israel (Romans 11). Yet in a marvelous way, He has done more than simply make everyone a Jew, for in Galatians 3:28 we are told, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”; as we have already seen, in Christ all is made new: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Galatians 6:15). “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ is our *peace*; He is our unity.

⁹⁶ Strong’s Online.

We hear much about unity among Evangelicals, and there are many who echo the words of Chuck Colson: “We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church.”⁹⁷ Although it is true that unity is the essence of the church, for Christ is our unity, this is not something that we are to strive after. We are to strive, or labor, for many things –

- To enter the strait gate (Luke 13:24),
- For those things that will endure into eternity (John 6:27),
- In prayers to God (Romans 15:30),
- For the faith of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27),
- Lawfully, lest we be disqualified for the prize (2 Timothy 2:5),
- To enter into the rest that God has prepared for us (Hebrew 4:11), and
- Against sin (Hebrews 12:4).

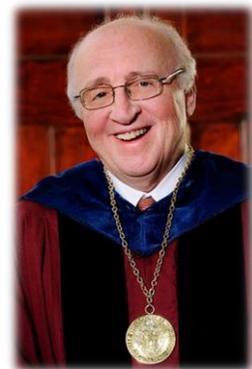
However, nowhere do we see an admonition to strive for unity. Ephesians 4:3 states, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Even here, it is not the unity that we are to strive for, rather, we are to make every effort (*endeavor*) to attend carefully to, or guard (*keep*) the unity of the Spirit – this unity is already existent in the Spirit of God; this is the true, pure unity that can only be from God.⁹⁸ What Evangelicals seek is a physical cooperation among those whom they determine to be believers; there is little consideration given to the guidance of the Spirit of God – it is much more a matter of successful negotiations between men. The thrust of the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, after the pattern of the World Council of Churches, is determining the lowest common denominator (that minimum level of doctrine) where there is complete agreement, and then glorying in the unity that man has achieved. Since it is clear that the Roman Catholic Church will not budge from their age-old position, the essence of modern Evangelical unity is a continuous downplaying of doctrine to the place where eventually all denominations will return to their mother church (Rome).



Bill Bright

Roman apostasy. Yet as the Reformers began to establish their followings, they did not stray far from the example of their mother church in the persecution of God’s people who had never bowed to Rome. There are those today who will recognize the Roman Catholic Church for the apostate religion that it is, but there is a rapidly increasing Evangelical acceptance of Roman Catholics as brethren in Christ. Billy

We often laud the Reformers for coming out of the Catholic Church, yet Luther never set out to separate from Rome, only to correct some of its errors. The separation that took place through men like Luther and Calvin did not leave the traditions of Rome behind. What we so easily overlook is that, all through this period of Reformation, there were believers who had never been a part of the Church of Rome; we often forget this, and naively think that true Christianity was preserved through the efforts of the Reformers. All through the dark ages of Rome’s oppression, God had His people – and they were never part of the



Richard Mouw

⁹⁷ Charles Colson, *The Body*, p. 102.

⁹⁸ Strong’s Online.

Graham, Chuck Colson, James Dobson, Philip Yancey, the late Bill Bright (of Campus Crusade for Christ), J.I. Packer (Regent College, BC), Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), the Promise Keepers movement, and numerous other influential individuals and movements have all played a part in removing the barriers between Evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism. When Biblical separation was removed as an Evangelical conviction in the late 1940s, the doors were opened to error and apostasy; subsequently, the allurements of unity have proven to be too great to resist. What New Evangelicals failed to acknowledge at the time, and what Evangelicals for the most part continue to ignore, is that setting separation aside strikes at the very heart of God. “Among all His infinite qualities, God’s holiness is paramount. Among all other things, He must be known as perfectly separated from the world as we know it, separated unto perfection as we do not know it. He is and, must be seen by man to be, separate [*sic*].”⁹⁹ Habakkuk 1:13: “[God] Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” All of the attributes of God flow through/from His holiness; when we ignore, or discount, separation, we show our ignorance of and disdain for God’s demand that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter :15-16). Holiness demands separation!

Before God chose Abraham to be a father of a nation of people who were to be blessed and to be a blessing, there were those who, through faith in God, were declared righteous (Abel, Enoch, and Noah are specifically identified in Hebrews 11). The path of righteousness has always, and only, been entered onto by faith, but the Jews were chosen to receive the special revelations of God (the OT Scriptures), and to be the family line for the promised Redeemer. Through being chosen by God for a special purpose, they eventually came to look with disdain on those who were *far off*. Jesus came to fulfill the Scriptures, and, with the fulfillment, to open a way that no longer centered on the ceremonial traditions to which the Jews had become accustomed. The symbolism of the Mosaic laws and ordinances of the OT were fulfilled in Jesus; the foreshadowing contained therein was fulfilled in Christ. For example, we are no longer dependent upon the sacrifices of the priests for the forgiveness of sins; we no longer keep feasts that speak of the coming of Messiah. However, part of the Law, which was delivered to Moses, included commandments that are not ceremonial (the Law of God, the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue), and Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the prophets has in no way affected their commandment status (Luke 16:17). The faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, et al, was always exemplified in action; James 2:17 declares that “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” 1 John 5:3 – “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

That which separated the circumcision from the uncircumcision has been removed (*hath broken down the middle wall*) – and it is Christ Who did it! The wall of separation was not simply breached – it was broken down entirely. By implication, this indicates that it will not be erected again; it has been removed, destroyed, done away with. The allusion, it is felt, is to the temple that had a wall to separate the court of the Gentiles from the area into which only the Jews were permitted to go, the purpose of which was to demonstrate the holiness of God to everyone. Even as the Gentiles were excluded from casual entrance into the temple area, so the Jews could not enter the holy place, nor could all of the priests enter the holy of holies. However, rather than it being recognized as an indication of God’s holiness, it became a barrier, a means of exclusion. YLT refers to it as the “middle wall of the enclosure.” In Jesus, the barriers have been removed –

⁹⁹ John McKnight, “The Holiness of God: The Root of Ecclesiastical Separation,” 1998 ACCC.

but that does not mean that everyone can simply walk into the presence of Jehovah and be accepted; God is still holy, and He is still just. Unless we come to God through Christ, our great High Priest after the order of Melchisadec, unless we appropriate the sacrifice that Christ made once for all time for our sins, God will not find us acceptable. Both Jews and Gentiles now have the same access to God. Their salvation is found in the same Savior, Messiah Jesus – the One Who was foreshadowed has come, and, thereby, the wall of separation has been removed, and we share the same hope and the same faith.



15. *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

The enmity, or hostility, that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles was *abolished*, or replaced, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. What was *abolished*? – the law of commandments contained in the Jewish ordinances (the Greek word is *dogma* – “the rules and requirements of the law of Moses; carrying a suggestion of severity and of threatened judgment”¹⁰⁰). The things that had set the Jews apart before all of the nations of the earth, their numerous rituals and teachings that governed the details of their everyday life were fulfilled in Christ and replaced by a New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20). The ceremonial rites and temple practices of the Jews were ended; that to which they had clung, that which had become their identity, was over. Jesus *abolished* these by fulfilling them; all that they alluded to was fulfilled in Christ through His death and resurrection. “⁸... when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein* [a reference to Psalm 40:6]; which are offered by the law; ⁹then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*” (Hebrews 10:8-10). Jesus fulfilled and ended the activities of the priests under the Law of Moses; Jesus has been made a “high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 6:20; 7:11-19). There is no place for further sacrifice, for Christ offered Himself once, as the perfect Sacrifice, and “entered once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal** redemption [deliverance] *for us*” (Hebrews 9:12, emphasis added).¹⁰¹ The Jewish high priest would enter the Holy of Holies once every year to make atonement for his sins and the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7); Christ entered once, destroying the veil (Matthew 27:51), and forever completing the sacrifice for sin (Mark 15:38). The Catholics miss this major point of doctrine, and, through their mass, they sacrifice Jesus over and over again, and worship the wafer as Christ. When a Catholic says that they have received Jesus, they mean that they have eaten the wafer during their mass, which they believe to have become the physical body of Christ through the incantations of the priest.

The Law is typically divided into three broad categories, with the first two belonging to the Law of Moses: 1) those pertaining to worship, or the ceremonial laws (our actions toward God [Exodus 25-40; Leviticus 1-10,16,23]), 2) those that govern daily life, or judicial laws (our actions toward others [Exodus 21-24; Leviticus 10-22]), and 3) those that laid out the standard for us as to

¹⁰⁰ Strong's Online.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

who we are to be in relation to God and to our fellow man, the spiritual laws, the moral laws, or the Ten Commandments (the Law of God or the Decalogue) (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).¹⁰² Jesus made it clear, early in His ministry, that His purpose was to fulfill the law: “¹⁷Think not that I am come to destroy [a compound word which, in the Greek, means to *destroy utterly* or to *overthrow completely*¹⁰³] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [to *complete, to carry through to the end, or bring to realization*¹⁰⁴]. ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18). The fulfillment of the law was guaranteed by Jesus’ words, and was realized throughout His life: the law was kept perfectly in spirit and holiness, not just in letter. That middle wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles was none other than the ceremonial and judicial laws – the Law of Moses. In the Jewish temple, there was a court of the Gentiles beyond which only the Jews could go. In Jesus’ day, this court surrounded the temple proper and its inner courts, which, in turn, were enclosed by a stone wall that contained “stones with inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding non-Jews from entering on the pain of death.”¹⁰⁵ This was a physical wall of separation; Jesus fulfilled the ordinances of the Law of Moses completely and forever, and so this wall was removed. This part of the law (the ceremonial part of the Law of Moses) has been done away with, as our verse clearly states. What about the other aspects of the law?

The judicial or social laws of Israel were applicable to Israel as a nation; they were there to provide the judges and rulers of Israel with a standard by which they were to govern the Jewish people. When Israel ceased to exist as an independent nation under God, they became subject to the laws of whatever nation ruled over them. At Jesus’ trial, the Jews recognized that they were not permitted to put anyone to death, even if their laws might require such; they were forced to defer to the laws of the governing nation, Rome. Jesus nowhere advocated that they rebel against the laws of the Romans, which was one of the areas that the Jews tried to get Jesus to condemn Himself (Matthew 22:16-22). The principle that Jesus taught was this: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:41). To expedite the quick transmission of the Roman ruler’s messages, the Romans had developed a system of posts along major highways, and the messages were taken from one post to the next. It was the custom that the personnel at these “post offices” could compel anyone or anything into service along the way, and they frequently forced fellow travelers to carry their load for them – customarily for a distance of a thousand paces (roughly a mile). The Jews of the day chafed under this requirement, but Jesus says to submit to this law, and to volunteer to carry the load a second mile. Peter confirms this further: “¹³Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; ¹⁴or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. ¹⁵For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: ¹⁶as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (1 Peter 2:13-16). We are to submit ourselves to the laws of the country in which we live, with the understanding that our first responsibility is to God, not to man (Acts 5:29). These laws were distinctly for Israel and, along with the ceremonial laws,

¹⁰² “The Mosaic Law Fulfilled,” <http://biblia.com/jesusbible/leviticus4.htm>

¹⁰³ Vine’s “destroy.”

¹⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

¹⁰⁵ Merrill C. Tenny, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, “temple,” p. 835.

were set in place by God to underscore His holiness, and His desire for Israel to be a holy people. Together these laws form what I, for the sake of clarity, like to call the Law of Moses.

So how does the moral law, or the Ten Commandments, fit into this? Although the law that was given to Moses by God had various aspects to it, most often we do not find a distinction made between various areas of the law; it is simply referred to as “the law.” So, when we read that “Christ is the end [the *end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose*¹⁰⁶] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4), we cannot begin to split the application of the word “law” to refer to only a certain segment of the law given by God. The whole of the law found its culminating fulfillment in Christ; He kept it ALL without sin. As the sinless Son of God, He came into the world and lived under the law without sin, thereby being the perfect Lamb of God Who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world. Our sinless High Priest offered Himself once for the sins of the world; and we, by faith, can appropriate the sacrifice that He made for us and, thereby, appear before God as righteous. The Law of God (the Ten Commandments) and its demands remain in force today; it has not been done away with (Matthew 5:17-18). “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law [you are made *dead in relation to the law*¹⁰⁷] by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to [or become] another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:4). When we are joined to Christ through faith in His finished work, we become dead to the law, no longer striving to keep the law in our own strength. Paul explains further:

⁶But now we are delivered from [separated from] the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve [or obey] in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

⁷What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ... ¹²Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good [they flowed from a holy, just and good God].

¹⁴For we know that the **law is spiritual**: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

⁶For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is **not subject to the law of God**, neither indeed can be (Romans 7:6-7, 12, 14; 8:6-7).

²⁴Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster [the law] (Galatians 3:24-25).

¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh [we are carnal], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴that the **righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).

¹⁰⁶ Strong's Online.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The Law of God and the Law of Moses were instituted for a dual purpose – 1) to prove to man that he was unable to be righteous before a holy God (“I had not known sin, but by the law” Romans 7:7), and 2) to point him to the necessity of faith in the promised Messiah (the law as a schoolmaster – Galatians 3:24). The Law of Moses (particularly the ceremonial laws) pushed Israel to faith so that they might exercise the same saving faith as was expressed by Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham before them (Hebrews 11:4ff). The law serves to show us the sin that permeates our lives so that we might turn to God in faith, and accept the provision that He made for our sins from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). When we accept what Christ has done on our behalf and permit His righteousness to be ours, we, thereby, appropriate His fulfillment of the law for us so that we no longer need to strive to fulfill the righteousness of the Law through our own efforts. By contrast, we are to walk in obedience to Him by His Spirit (Who now lives within us) (Romans 8:4).

Paul declares the law to be spiritual (Romans 7:14), and if we have been born again by the Spirit of God through faith in the completed work of Christ, then we are no longer carnally minded, but spiritually minded, and new creatures in Christ. We have been rescued from the condemnation of the law, for “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (Galatians 3:11). “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29); if we are Christ’s, then we have been saved by faith, according to the promise, not by works according to the law. ²⁰Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances ²²... after the commandments and doctrines of men?” (Colossians 2:20, 22). This is the condemnation that Jesus heaped upon the scribes and Pharisees: they laid the commandments of God aside in favor of their own traditions; they followed the carnal, and ignored the spiritual (Mark 7:5ff). This is the same error as the Catholics today, who have also twisted God’s Word to support their traditions; Evangelicals are equally prone to set the Word of God aside in favor of their own doctrines.

You might say that since we, who are in Christ, are dead to the law, and Christ came to fulfill the law, then we are free! Indeed, we are made righteous in Christ apart from the law: ²¹...the righteousness of God **without the law** is manifested, being witnessed [or testified to] by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...” (Romans 3:21-22). We are free from sin and from the penalty of the law, but this is not a carnal freedom. ¹⁶Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ¹⁷...ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [or made slaves] of righteousness. ... ²²But now being made free from sin, and become servants [or made slaves] to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:16-22).¹⁰⁸ Although Christ is the fulfillment of the law, it is equally clear that the **righteousness of the law** is to be lived out through us (Romans 8:4) – what *law* is this? This is nothing other than the Law of God, which the Lord has promised to write in our minds and place on our hearts (Hebrews 10:15-16, cp. Jeremiah 31:31-33); we are to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Each of the Ten Commandments (the Law of God), finds reiteration in the epistles with the exception of the fourth commandment (remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...), which does not find its origin in the Ten Commandments, but

¹⁰⁸ Strong’s Online.

rather in the declaration of God as He completed creation (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11). Many of us see a great gulf between the grace of God and the Law of God – unfortunately, it is a chasm of our own making. Are we free from the law? Yes, we are freed from trying to fulfill the requirements of the law through our own efforts (the “carnal” trying to keep the “spiritual”), and have been freed to walk in obedience to Him by His Spirit within us – freed to walk in His holiness! “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). His commandment is: “³⁷Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart [*kardia* – seat of morality and spirituality], and with all thy soul [*psuche* – seat of will and purpose], and with all thy mind [*dianonia* – thinking through, reflection, meditation][this encompasses the first four of the Ten Commandments].¹⁰⁹ ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself [here are the last six Commandments]. ⁴⁰On these two commandments [Deuteronomy 6:15 and Leviticus 19:18] hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus did not come to do away with the law or the prophets (Matthew 5:17) but to keep the law so that we, through the Spirit, might have the righteousness of the Law of God fulfilled in us – i.e., His holiness (Romans 8:4). The Ten Commandments (the Law of God) are as relevant today as they were the day that they were written by the hand of God (the first four Commandments deal with our heart toward God, the last six with our heart toward our fellow man); it is spiritual (Romans 7:14) and holy, and we must walk according to the law of the Spirit Who now lives within us (Romans 8:2). “¹...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2); our eyes must be fixed on Jesus, our Righteousness.

In Christ, two separate peoples (*twain*) have been made into one: those who were *far off*, and those who were *nigh*; this is the reason that the Mosaic Law (the *middle wall of partition*) was removed through Christ. There is “⁵one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:5-6). In Christ, there is unity, but this is not something that has been accomplished by man’s efforts – it is realized **only** through the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection. This unity comes by being new creatures in Christ; conversely, there can be no unity (as it is expressed here) between someone *in Christ* and someone who is *not in Christ*. Hence, the unity sought after by Chuck Colson and Richard Neuhaus, in the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, is not the unity spoken of here; redefining terms to arrive at an accord of compromise is simply forsaking the Lord of unity for the god of pragmatism. Their goal is unity (results), and their preoccupation is with relationships.¹¹⁰ They may arrive at a *unity* of sorts, but what they fail to realize is that it is no longer the unity that comes from being *in Christ*. The unity of being *in Christ* cannot be achieved through the efforts of man, whether Christian or not.

Through the unity that Christ works in us, we are not only brought into peace and harmony with the Jews who accept their Messiah, but we are brought into peace with God Himself. Although the direct context of this passage is clarifying that we are all one people in Christ, it is no less true that being *in Christ* brings us into fellowship with God, the Father. John declared this: “ye also

¹⁰⁹ Vine’s “heart,” “soul,” “mind.”

¹¹⁰ Paul Procter, “The Test of Faith.”

may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship¹¹¹ is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). This is the unity that Jesus spoke of in His prayer in John 17: “²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ... [true fellowship found *in Christ*].”



16. *And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

Not only did Christ break down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, He also brings reconciliation with God for both (this continues the purpose that Christ had in removing that *middle wall*). With the work that Christ accomplished on the cross, He instituted a New Covenant in His blood (1 Corinthians 11:25); by fulfilling the requirements of the law, Christ brought in a new order – He established the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24a). The rituals and ceremonies of the Jews foreshadowed the day when the Messiah would come to put all things in order; now that that day had come, the Jews were no longer to rely on their outward ceremonies to symbolize their inward faith in God (the commandments in ordinances were abolished – v. 15). Christ had accomplished forever what the ceremonies could only look forward to; however, the Jews need to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and place their faith in Him, even as Abraham believed God, and was reckoned to be righteous. For the Gentiles, the way to God was now exactly the same as for the Jews – through Christ as our Mediator.

Through the cross, Christ is reconciling both believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. The Greek word for *reconcile* means to restore to a former state of harmony, which could only refer to the fellowship that once existed between God and man before the fall.¹¹² Although *reconcile* (and *make* in the previous verse) is in the subjunctive mood, it is part of a *purpose clause* that means that it is to be taken as a fact – Christ removed that *middle wall* with the full intention of making one of two (verse 15), and reconciling this *one* unto God!¹¹³ These are factual presentations of God’s purpose for removing the Law of Moses as that barrier between the Jew and Gentile. This is not a universal reconciliation; hence man’s need to place his faith in the finished work of Christ in order to bring about that reconciliation. Although salvation is available to everyone, not everyone will take the offered gift. The Old Testament saints placed their faith in God, looking forward to the day when a Deliverer would come into the world to fulfill the promise that God made to Adam and Eve; and, later, they looked for a Messiah Who would fulfill the foreshadowing contained within the ceremonial practices instituted by God through Moses. New Testament saints look back to the completed work of Christ as Savior and Messiah on their behalf, and forward to His promised return. Paul states clearly here that these (both the Old and New Testament saints) comprise one body through the cross of Christ; the cross was the means by which

¹¹¹ The Greek word is *koinonia* – which speaks of community, intimacy, of one heart (Strong’s Online). Today, fellowship has been reduced to having lunch with a friend, or something similar – a significant shift away from intimacy at any level.

¹¹² Strong’s Online

¹¹³ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

the unity of the faithful ones was accomplished. This unity is a fact, a reality – not a goal for which we are to strive.

Having slain the enmity thereby – looks back to verse 15 where it is stated that the enmity (identified as the ordinances of the Law of Moses) has been *abolished* by Christ. We are reminded that the enmity has been ended – slain! This was accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross; what Satan had hoped would ensure his victory, became his defeat. Through His death as the perfect Lamb of God and our High Priest, after the order of Melchisadec, Christ became the supreme Sacrifice that opened the way to God for all of mankind (albeit a narrow way!), and He fulfilled the promise of Genesis 3:15 by sealing the defeat of Satan. With the breaking down of barriers and the reconciliation of sinners to God, the power of Satan was broken, and his final destination secured. The cross is the way to new life for both the Jew and the Gentile, and it is the sentence of defeat for Satan – the fulfillment of the promise of God in Genesis, AND the promise in which the OT saints placed their faith. A permanent Mediator was established through Whom the whole world could come to God (1 Timothy 2:5); yet this reconciliation can only take place when man places his faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ: “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it**” (Matthew 7:14).



17. *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

It is Christ Who came and preached this reconciling peace to both those who were afar off (the Gentiles), and to those who were nigh (the Jews). When Jesus was born, the angels announced peace on earth – and indeed Jesus did bring peace to earth: the peace of reconciliation with God through His sacrifice. Interestingly, the *peace* spoken of carries the thought of *joining* and *harmony*, and, indeed, such is the case, for a peace has been secured that has seen a way opened to God for all of mankind, and we have seen the unity (harmony) that is in Christ. Yet Jesus also said, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51). The peace that Christ brought was a spiritual joining, or harmony, and not earthly. Even as this spiritual peace brings peace with God (for those who place their faith in Christ), just as surely this peace has brought division here on earth. It was not the peace that the Jews of Jesus’ time so desperately wanted; they were brought a peace with God when they really only wanted peace from their Roman enemies. Even so today, the call of Christ is for peace with God, and even though we are to seek to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18), rest assured that the narrow way of life through Christ will bring division. As a matter of fact, if there is no division brought about by our walk with Christ, then we need to carefully contemplate our spiritual status lest we deceive ourselves (1 Corinthians 3:18).

Even as the Israelites of old, through their rituals and ordinances, were to come to understand something of the holiness of God, so we must realize that God’s call for holiness has not changed, and we are to reflect His holiness through changed lives. “¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship [sharing, communion – NOT *koinonia*] hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion [*koinonia*, intimacy] hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord [agreement¹⁴] hath Christ with Belial [a name for Satan that means

¹⁴ Strong’s Online.

worthless or wicked]? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel [someone who is unfaithful]? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them [involves forsaking], and be ye separate [“to mark off from others by boundaries”], saith the Lord, and touch [to fasten one’s self to or cling to] not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)¹¹⁵. We are called to a life that is separate from the world, and from all forms of ungodliness. “¹⁷Now I beseech [or exhort] you, brethren, mark [look at or keep your eye on] them which cause divisions [or, dissensions – literally, from “twice” and “an insurrection”] and offences [“the trigger of a trap,” translated elsewhere as *stumbling block*] contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [to turn away, shun] them. ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [harmless, fearing no evil from others]” (Romans 16:17-18)¹¹⁶.

We are also called to separate from those who may profess to be Christians, yet their message is not according to Scripture: the Roman Catholics, the Liberals, Robert Schuller, etc. Those within this group are increasing in number daily: men like Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, Chuck Swindoll, Ravi Zacharias, Rick Warren, et al., men who at times may say things with which we might agree, but overall their message is filled with compromise and confusion – a dangerous mixture of truth and error. These men, whose steps are wayward, have lost sight of the holiness of God, and serve the god of pragmatism. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw [or remove] yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition [the substance of teaching¹¹⁷] which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We are to separate ourselves from those who may be genuine believers in Christ, yet they walk in a way that is not in accordance with Scripture, perhaps by keeping company with, or supporting, those who teach false doctrine; not to separate is to cause confusion in the minds of those who might observe our actions against our beliefs. God is holy, and, if we would desire to walk in accordance with our call to God’s holiness (Leviticus 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16), then we must be prepared to separate from everything that is not according to Scripture, whether the world, professors of Christianity who deny its doctrines by word or action, or believers who have strayed from the Scriptures. If there is no division, there will be no holiness; the essence of separation is a desire to live a holy life before a holy God.



Chuck Swindoll



18. *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

Here we see the Trinity at work: Christ is our Mediator to God the Father, but the access that we have is through the Spirit of God. As we are grafted into the spiritual root of Israel (Romans

¹¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

11), the Spirit of God, the Comforter promised by the Lord (John 14:26), indwells us so that we should no longer live to the flesh (Romans 9:11), but to the praise of the Father Who has saved us through the blood of Christ (Matthew 5:16). Indeed there is “⁵One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:5-6); the way is narrow, and there is only one way! Billy Graham’s error (one of them) is that he endeavors to broaden the way to include those who never knew Jesus, which is contrary to Scripture. Jesus said, “I am **the** way” (John 14:6), not **a** way, or one of many ways. The drafters of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT) document quote this passage as well, but they have redefined the terms to such an extent that they can fit the apostate, and the one who holds to doctrine contrary to Scripture, into this oneness. Here is a quote from their document:

However imperfect our communion with one another, however deep our disagreements with one another, we recognize that there is but one church of Christ. There is one church because there is one Christ and the church is his body. However difficult the way, we recognize that we are called by God to a fuller realization of our unity in the body of Christ. The only unity to which we would give expression is unity in the truth, and the truth is this: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4) We [defined earlier as Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics] affirm together that Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired Scriptures, which are the infallible Word of God.¹¹⁸

This unity leaves the unity that we have in Christ unscathed, for theirs is a man-made unity outside of Christ, despite their rhetoric.

It is through Christ that both the Jew and the Gentile (those who were once *nigh* and *far off*) have access to God the Father by the Holy Spirit. The Jew and the Gentile stand on equal footing before the cross of Christ – our eternal destinies are sealed in exactly the same way. Herein is the cause of stumbling for the Jews (their unwillingness to accept Jesus as their Messiah), and a source of foolishness to the Greeks (they struggle with Jesus’ resurrection from the dead) (1 Corinthians 1:23). “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).



19. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

Referring back to verse 12 when there was a time that the Ephesian believers were strangers and foreigners without God, here is a reiteration of verse 13 that those who were once *far off* have been brought *nigh* by the blood of Christ. Through the reconciling work of Christ (the *therefore*), those who were once considered to be outcasts by the chosen people, are now on equal standing before God with those who are Israel in the flesh. The Greek word used for *strangers* here is the

¹¹⁸ <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html>

same as in verse 12, and simply refers to those who are *outside of* or *without a share in*.¹¹⁹ The Greek word translated as *foreigners* is one that carries the idea of *being near at hand, yet without any rights* that would be enjoyed by a citizen.¹²⁰ Because of what Christ has accomplished, and because we have accepted the gift of salvation offered by God, we are no longer those who are outside looking in, no longer living in the midst of those who know God, yet having no access to Him.

In sharp contrast to being *foreigners* without the rights of a citizen, we are now *fellowcitizens*, possessing the same citizenship rights as others! The former brings to mind loneliness and isolation, even in the midst of community; the latter speaks of participation within community, of being an active part of a larger group. The Ephesians were once foreigners to Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise that came through Abraham (v.12); now, however, by contrast, they have become part of this larger body of saints! Having broken down the middle wall, Jesus reconciled the believing Jew and believing Gentile into one body (v. 16). We must notice that those Christians who have come to faith in Christ since the cross do not form a new body distinct from the saints of the times before the cross, but rather, Christ has drawn all the saints, from Adam onward, into one body. The Ephesian believers, first generation Christians since the cross, became fellow citizens with God's holy ones from OT times. Romans 9:6 declares that all who are born Israelites are not of Israel; that is to say, they may be Israelites in the flesh, but they are not of spiritual Israel. Romans 11 clarifies that we are grafted into the spiritual root of Israel; Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and came to fulfill the promises made to Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, promises that later found their expression in the laws instituted through Moses. Christians today are not a new body, something unique and separate from spiritual Israel, but we are fellow citizens, members of the family of God, which began with the faithful from the days of Adam.

Our *fellowcitizens* (“a citizen of the same state or nation”¹²¹) are not simply the fellow-believers of today (although they are included), but the first generation of believers (first after the completed work of Christ) are included in the existing citizenship of the holy ones of God from all ages. If this were not the case, why would the Spirit of God, through Paul, go to such lengths to identify the separation that existed before Christ's work, and show that as a contrast to the present situation? If the saints since the cross became a whole new body of believers, distinct from the OT saints, why paint the picture of the Ephesian believers as having been foreign to Israel's covenants, but now being made fellow-participants with spiritual Israel through Christ? If the believers after Christ's coming formed a completely new body, why confuse the matter with the emphasis of being made into one body (v.16)? The plain reading of this passage would support one body of believers from all ages (Matthew 26:28 cf. Jeremiah 31:31-37).

The Greek word used for *saints* is actually an adjective, and describes those with whom we are now *fellowcitizens* – the *holy* ones. No longer strangers, now we are most holy citizens of the kingdom of God! However, this is not of our doing (so we have no basis for being high-minded [Ephesians 2:9]); this is the state to which God has called us, as His purchased ones. There are no saints apart from God; man may designate saints to his heart's content (something that has become

¹¹⁹ Strong's Online.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Webster's 1828, “fellowcitizens.”

a Roman Catholic tradition), but they are not saints unless their lives have been made pure and holy by God. If we have been sanctified by God (made most holy by being *in Christ*), then we have been set apart, called out from the world and from sin, and called to a life of holiness and purity before God. God's dealings with Israel, through the implementation of the laws and commandments, should underscore the holiness of God, and the purity of life that He desires of us. Even though these laws and commandments found their fulfillment in Christ, the holiness of God has not changed from Isaiah's description of the heavenly exclamations: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). God has not changed, but we have become careless in handling the holy things of God; Evangelicals have bred an attitude of familiarity that often borders on blasphemy – something from which we must separate ourselves if we would be holy before God. The essence, or foundation, of separation is the holiness of God. Scripture calls us to separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), from professors of Christianity who deny Biblical doctrine or promote doctrine not found in the Scriptures (Romans 16:17-18), and from believers who walk disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Not only are we citizens together with the saints from all ages, we are also part of the household of God – i.e., sons and daughters of God! The Greek word for *household* is also an adjective, and develops a further description of the term *fellowcitizens: belonging to the family*.¹²² The conjunction *and*, as it appears in our text, is from a Greek word that can be translated in various ways: sometimes simply as a connecting word (*and*), or it can be a conjunction that carries a cumulating impact (such as *even*). It would seem to me that this would be an ideal opportunity to bring in the cumulative emphasis, and have it read: "... but fellowcitizens, a most holy thing, even belonging to the family of God." *Fellowcitizens* is a term which conjures up a rather remote relationship with other believers (since we would naturally think of the term within the earthly context); however, the Spirit of God removes any such picture by immediately describing it as a family – God's family! This is the only place in Scripture where this phrase is used (Galatians 6:10 speaks of the *household of faith*).

I believe that this relationship is unique to the New Covenant that Jesus instituted; we have received the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15), which brings us into a completely new relationship with God. This is quite understandable, for the saints of Old Testament times looked forward to a time when the promised Messiah would come; the promises and rituals all foreshadowed the Messiah. However, when Messiah came, it would only seem right that the relationship with God would change – the promises were fulfilled, the ceremonies and rituals saw their end; Messiah was on hand, and nothing could remain as it was! Now that Jesus has returned to Heaven to prepare a place for those who abide in Him and has sent His Spirit to abide in us, the relationship cannot return to what it was; it is necessary for the presence of the Spirit of God to make all things new and different. Whereas the OT saints lived by faith in the promises that God had made, and Israel worshipped Jehovah in Jerusalem, we are indwelt by the very Spirit of God (John 15:26; Romans 8:9) – we are not unique in God's economy, but we are His temples (1 Corinthians 3:16), and so our earthly lives are much different from the faithful of the OT. Worship is no longer centered in the temple of Jerusalem; we, as believers, have the Spirit of God dwelling in us; we are God's temples – sanctified and holy in Him. Indeed, we have been brought into a whole new relationship with God – 2 Corinthians 5:17: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!"

¹²² Strong's Online.



20. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

Although there were prophets within the New Testament (NT) gatherings (Acts 11:27; 13:1), it is my personal belief that, in this case, the Spirit would have us look to the OT prophets. I have two reasons for taking this position: firstly, the context of this passage deals with God removing the wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles, and, through the cross, making one Body in Christ; therefore, it would only be fitting to include the two roles that brought God's message to the people with power and conviction: the OT Prophets and the NT Apostles. Secondly, the OT Prophets filled a role more comparable to the NT Apostles, one of authority and power in the declaration of God's truth. The prophets of the NT did not carry such authority (unless they were also Apostles), but were subject to the careful scrutiny of others, and their messages could be interrupted (1 Corinthians 14:29-32). Although there was a role for prophets in the NT (1 Corinthians 12:28 makes that clear), it was not comparable in authority to the OT Prophets. Other passages, like 2 Peter 3:2, also seem to point to the Prophets of old and the Apostles of the present time.

Once again, there is a clear drawing together of those from the time prior to Jesus' coming with those after the institution of His New Covenant. The foundation upon which we are built is the message of the Apostles (those specially chosen to proclaim the Gospel after Jesus' ascension) and the message of the Prophets (those Old Testament saints specifically chosen to declare the truth of God and speak of the coming Messiah). It is one foundation! Jesus declared that He would build His assembly upon the reality of Peter's declaration that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16-18). The sense here is not that the Apostles and Prophets make up the foundation, but rather that they proclaimed the foundation: it was their teachings, their doctrine, that formed this foundation. Even as we understand that Peter (the man) was not the foundation upon which Christ would build His body of believers, so it follows here that the foundation is not made up of the Apostles and Prophets (the men), but rather the truth that they declared. The Roman Catholic Church is a prime example of what happens when the building is founded on men; they have built upon the "successors" of Peter (the man), and have greatly deviated from the truth.

Once again we see the truth of the declaration in Romans 11 of being grafted into the root of Israel; there is a coming together, a breaking down of the middle wall between the true Israelite and the born-again Gentile – we are one! Together the Apostles (of the NT) and Prophets (of the OT) have declared the truths of God that make up the foundation upon which the assembly of God from all ages is being built. God did not start over again with "the Church," but rather, continued to build what He had ordained from the foundation of the world – the Prophets of old are as much responsible for the foundation as are the Apostles – there is no distinction; the message is the same – Christ! Second Peter 1:10-11 speaks of the kingdom of Jesus being "everlasting"; the word *everlasting* means without beginning or ending.¹²³ Most Evangelicals and Fundamentalists would contend that the "Church" was established when the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah; the message of this section is that we are all one – the saints of God are all one Body.

¹²³ Strong's Online.

The voice of the Greek word translated as *built*, clarifies that we are not doing the building. Jesus promised that the Spirit of God would come to abide within us to guide us into all truth (John 16:13); we are being built by the Spirit upon the doctrines and teachings of those chosen by God to be Apostles and Prophets. Clearly, God’s hand is in what is being done: both the Apostles and Prophets were chosen by God, the message that they declared came from God, and the ongoing building upon that message is being done by God. Carelessness and self-projects will find no fit here; they will have no part of the work that is being done. Much of Evangelicalism is not being built upon the foundation that God has established; Evangelicals are expending energy on a building that will not stand. What greater challenge could there be than to attend to our doctrine in order to ensure that it lines up with the doctrinal foundation established by God through the Apostles and Prophets – the foundation as declared in the pages of Scripture. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them [a command to *persevere* in them, to *abide* in them]: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).¹²⁴ We must not miss that there is no salvation in a message that has departed from the teachings of Scripture.



“... narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life ...” (Matthew 7:14). God’s way is exclusive, it is narrow, and Jesus said, “I am the way ...” (John 14:6). Yet man continually attempts to broaden “the way” to make it more accommodating for those who do not like the narrow way. The Evangelical Free Church (EFC), for example, prides itself in declaring that it is “inclusive not exclusive.” They explain that they are “intentionally leaving out non-essential issues that have been debated throughout Christian history.”¹²⁵ As they read the Scriptures, they decide what is essential and what is non-essential – which really places them in the position of judging the Word of God. They have deliberately not taken a stand on

such things as predestination, eternal security, baptism, and separation (they have openly admitted to the first three, I’ve added the fourth based upon their actions). In essence, they would rather set the Word of God aside than to take a position on a matter of Scripture that might be debated by men. What the EFC has proclaimed openly and proudly, I would venture other Evangelicals hold to as well.

We now come to the answer as to how the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets can form the foundation upon which we are being built – Jesus Christ is the *chief corner* stone. In ancient architecture, this stone was critical to the stability of the whole building; if the corner stone was secure and well founded, then the rest of the edifice was in good standing. Additionally, if there were any important documents that needed to be secured within the building, they were placed within the corner stone. This was also a critical stone that saw the joining of two walls (hence it being a *corner* stone), and would be the first stone laid down. Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, is likened to being the chief corner, established securely before the foundation of the Prophets was ever added (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 2:5-8). Jesus said, “I am Alpha and

¹²⁴ Strong’s Online.

¹²⁵ Bill Taylor, “The EFC ...,” “The Pulse,” Fall 2001, p. 2.

Omega, the first and the last” (Revelation 1:11); He is eternal God, the Foundation established before the world began. The earliest Prophet built upon the foundation of the promised Messiah; the hope was alive from the very first child born to Adam and Eve: *Cain*, “I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1). The purposes of God are sure, they have been established from before the foundation of the world: the Word (Jesus), Who is God, has been laid as the chief corner – the security and pattern for all who would follow. God is building one structure whose stability and strength rests in Jesus alone; the foundation laid by the Prophets of old and the Apostles of the New Covenant is one. God’s plan is not something new; it was there before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Jesus said, “I will build my church,” My *ekklesia*, My called-out ones (Matthew 16:18); here we see the foundation upon which we are being built – Christ, the Son of the living God, being the chief Cornerstone, the Rock that holds the building solid!



21. *In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

Here we have a double confirmation as to Who is responsible for what we are reading about: *in whom* (referring back to Jesus Christ), and *in the Lord* (emphasizing in Whom we are abiding). What fitting parenthesis for what lies between!

The *building* referred to within this context is not the structure itself, but rather the process of construction. The same Greek word (for *building*) is translated elsewhere as *edify*, or *to build up*.¹²⁶ The *all* is more than simply *everything* – it carries the thought of every little piece; there is an individuality to the building up. *Fitly framed together* means *to join closely together*, there are no gaps, no holes, only a perfectly fitting structure.¹²⁷ In Christ, every individual is being perfectly joined together according to the established pattern.

All of this is growing, or increasing, toward a *most holy thing* – a temple in the Lord; the Greek word used here for *holy* is exactly the same word that is used to describe the *fellowcitizens* of verse 19. *Temple* comes from the Greek root *to dwell*, therefore the dwelling place of God.¹²⁸ The end of this will be a most holy dwelling of God; we are individually being fit together with the most holy ones of all ages into a dwelling of God. “¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:11-13). To the degree that our lives exemplify the holiness of God, to that extent we are conforming to the pattern established by God; this is not so much what we do, but who we are and how we live in light of eternity.

The importance of being **in Christ** must not be missed or minimized; however, Jesus made it clear that the responsibility to abide in Him rests with us – we are **commanded** to abide in Him; it is something that we are to do (John 15). Jesus’ words in John 15:1 are: “*You* abide in me,” this is a command (imperative mood) on which we are to take action (active voice where the subject [you] is to carry out the action [abide]), and this is not a one-time action, it is in a timeless tense

¹²⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

(not past, present, or future), which English cannot truly translate; hence Jesus' words, "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). One of His commands is that we abide in Him; but we are not alone in our obedience, for He has promised that He will abide in us (John 15:1) – this in no way minimizes our responsibility of abiding in Him, but it serves to secure the relationship, for it could never be secured through our own efforts. If we seek to obey His command to abide in Him, then He is abundantly able to keep us, and promises that nothing external to us will ever be able to snatch us out of His hand (Romans 8:35-39). If we do not abide in Him, then His Word will be to us like the seed that fell along the path, or among the rocks, or in the weeds – being snatched away, dried up, or choked out. If we are obedient and abide in Christ, then He promises to abide in us: the perfect situation to being a part of this holy dwelling of the Lord – a dwelling made up of saints from all the ages!



22. *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Here is a similar parenthesis: *in whom* (in Christ) ... *through the Spirit*. Lest there be any doubt as to the inclusion of the Ephesian believers in this marvelous building program of God, Paul clarifies that they, too, are being built on this very same foundation. God's working with mankind was not interrupted by the cross of Christ, rather, it was gloriously advanced at the cross! There are those who would have us to believe that the cross of Christ caused an interruption in God's program of dealing with mankind, that the believers since the resurrection of the Lord are somehow unique in God's overall program. It is plain from this passage that the Ephesian believers were assured that they, too, were being built upon the foundation that was established by the Prophets and Apostles – that foundation that was laid before the world began (Revelation 13:8), and that they would be fitly joined together with the saints of all ages to form an eternal dwelling of God, accomplished in Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, by the working of the Spirit of God! The Spirit of God has been at work through all of the ages: before the flood, God said that His Spirit would not always strive with man (Genesis 6:3), and Peter assures us that Prophets of old spoke according to the prompting of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

What an amazing sentence! We are no longer outsiders, but are most holy fellowcitizens with all who are **in Christ**, even to being members of the family of God, who are being intricately joined together upon the foundation laid by the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ being the eternally established Chief Corner, the surety and pattern for a most holy dwelling for God. Truly, this could only be *in Christ* and *through the Spirit of God!*



Chapter 3 – The Mystery Revealed

 1. For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

This letter to the Ephesians was evidently written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome, but just as evident is the reality that he was there because of his faith – he calls himself a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*. Although he was being kept in prison by the Roman authorities, he was not there because he was in violation of Roman law, but because of the message of life that God had given to him. “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:20). The Apostle, called to minister to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), who were once *far off*, with the news that they were now *made nigh* by the blood of Christ, was in prison because of the message that he had for the Gentiles. As Paul made his defense before the Roman captain and the Jews who sought to destroy him, the Jews allowed his defense until he declared his God-given mandate to go to the Gentiles:

²¹And he [the Lord] said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

²²And they gave him audience **unto this word**, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live” (Acts 22:21-22).

It was his call to the Gentiles that escalated the Jews’ hatred of him.

Paul now goes on to provide the Ephesians with a glimpse into how God is using him in the proclamation of the Gospel. His Hebrew name was Saul, which means *desired*, but he became known as Paul, which means *small or little*;¹²⁹ having received the mandate from the Lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, he set his Hebrew name and heritage aside.

 2. If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

Paul has been entrusted with the stewardship of the grace of God toward the Gentiles – another way of saying that he was made an Apostle to the Gentiles by the will of God (1:1). The word *if* is not used to inject a sense of doubt into the thought; it would probably have been better translated as *since*. Lest they be unduly concerned about his imprisonment, Paul launches into a description of how God chose him to reveal mysteries and open the way to the Gentiles, to proclaim the destruction of that middle wall of separation. The bulk of chapter 3 is taken as being parenthetical; in chapter 4:1 he picks up the thought of his being in prison and carries on.

¹²⁹ Strong’s Online.

Paul has been entrusted, by God, with the management, or dispensing, of the message of God’s grace to the Gentiles. What immediately follows is a sketch of the Gospel of God and Paul’s role as the messenger of God. It would seem that Paul never overcame the awe that he felt at being called by God to be a minister of the Gospel, and being named an Apostle, considering his purpose for going to Damascus, is a testimony to the effectual grace of God in a life.



3. *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,*

This is not just any mystery referred to here, but it is **the** mystery; the Greek includes the definite article in this passage. What was evident in God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3 – “... in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”), and what was evident through the message of the Prophets of old (Isaiah 42:6 – “... a light of the Gentiles”), had been lost to the Jews of Jesus’ day – God’s offer of salvation was open to all people. What was hidden to the Jews was opened in great clarity through God’s revelations to Paul. Acts 15:1 and 5 are testimony to the fact that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem struggled with the freedom from Jewish traditions that God initiated through the completed work of Christ on the cross. It is clear that they still maintained their traditions (even though the temple sacrifices would have been forsaken), and they sought to impose these on the Gentile Christians. What had remained hidden for years, and what was slowly coming to acceptance among the some of the Jews of Paul’s day, God had made known to Paul, and he had become a minister of this revelation to all who would hear. In 2 Corinthians 12 he gives just a glimpse into what God took him through. It would seem evident that if God had not laid claim to Paul for this special task, the Apostles of Jerusalem would have been very slow at bringing the message to the “uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This letter is evidently not the first one that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, the first one being a brief note explaining how he came by his insight into the mysteries of God.



4. *Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)*

Paul’s earlier, brief note was given to them, so that they might be strong to understand the knowledge that Paul had been given into the mysteries of Christ. What we miss in our English is the Greek word *dunamai* (from which we get *dynamite*, but shows up in the KJV as *may*) and means *to be capable, strong and powerful*, and is used to describe the reading; this was not to be done casually, but, rather, carefully so that they would be able to understand.¹³⁰ The Greek word that is translated as *read* is *anaginosko* – which means primarily *to know certainly*, and is a compound word bringing together *ana* (again) and *ginosko* (to know).¹³¹ It means to *distinguish between, to recognize, or to know accurately*;¹³² it is used of reading since that is the means of identifying characters or letters that make up words, sentences, etc., but with accuracy, else the

¹³⁰ Strong’s Online.

¹³¹ Vine’s, “read.”

¹³² Strong’s Online.

reading would be meaningless. It was Paul's desire that they know with certainty the authority given to him by God for the presentation of the Gospel.



5. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

The Greek word used for *ages* (*genea*) is generally translated as *generation*; here it refers to the generations of those who came before, those to whom the reality of the Messiah was foretold.¹³³ There was always an aura of mystery surrounding the coming of the Messiah, the Deliverer Who was promised to Adam and Eve; the timing of His coming was elusive to the Jews, and what He would come to accomplish seemed to be a mystery to them, and even became a source of stumbling. His disciples did not comprehend the purposes of God for Jesus' coming, even after His death and resurrection, for their question to the risen Lord was, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). What the Jews longed for was a Messiah Who would restore their national identity, and Who would free them from the tyranny of their Roman conquerors. What they failed to see was that the hopeless plight of mankind was of far greater importance than their earthly kingdom, and the Messiah came to provide a way of deliverance for everyone. God has a schedule for time, and "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). It is plainly declared here that the hidden things of the Messiah were not revealed to prior generations of believers; although there was no mistaking the coming of a Deliverer (for that had been clear since the fall), the details of the revelation was a different matter. When the timing was right for God, He sent Jesus to fulfill the promises of freedom from sin, which were given to Adam, to Abraham, and, through the foreshadowing of the law, to Moses. With the plan of redemption for mankind now completed and in place, God continues to call out a people for Himself but with new power and clarity.

Jesus told His disciples that, after He had ascended to the Father, He would send the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, Who would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). There is a difference in God's revelation in the past, and what He was now doing through the apostles (those commissioned to go out representing the Sender) and the prophets (those given specific insight by the Spirit of God into the truths of His dealings with mankind, and who make those truths known). There is a new unveiling and openness into the mystery of the Messiah Who came to pay the price for the sins of all of mankind. Paul is not alone in declaring this new insight, for he freely includes all of the *holy apostles and prophets* of his day who are in the Spirit. There is a double qualifier used here: 1) the apostles and prophets are called holy, or set apart unto God, and 2) the apostles and prophets must be in the Spirit of God. We are told later (4:11-13) that these positions, along with others, were established in order to bring the holy ones to perfection, or completion, until we all arrive in "the unity of the faith." It is noteworthy to realize that it is the individual who is to be perfected and changed, not the message of the Gospel. What we find today among Evangelicals is a changing message, with little or no consideration for the perfecting of the saints. By whittling away at the pure doctrine of Scripture, modern Evangelical thinkers are demonstrating a unity of faith – but this is not the faith for which we are called to contend, "the faith which was once

¹³³ Strong's Online.

delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Today there is a spurning of this new disclosure made by the Spirit of God in favor of the old lie of Satan that we are really not that bad; why do we need to change? When Evangelicals turned their back on God’s call for separation, one of the first things to come into question was the integrity and infallibility of the Word of God in all of its details; once Biblical infallibility was no longer a concern, the falling away took place very quickly, for now anything that Scripture declared could be questioned. We are once again faced with the question, “Yea, hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1), and, rest assured, it is still Satan who is asking.

Satan’s ploy has not changed; if he can get us to question God’s Word, then he has opened the door to sin. When New Evangelicalism made its voice heard, it said, “Yea hath God said” that we are to separate ourselves from error? Their answer was a resounding, “No!” They set out to make themselves socially sensitive, theologically accommodating, and intellectually admired by their worldly counterparts. Once they had called the Word of God into question, they zealously ate the forbidden fruit, and shared it with all of those around them.

One way that Evangelicals have accomplished a “watering down” of the Word of God is through the plethora of translations with which we have been inundated. In the late 1800s, modern textual critics began to call the basis for the translation of the King James Version into question. They refused to acknowledge that the Scriptures, the very words of God, demanded to be handled differently from worldly, ancient literature; they no longer accepted the doctrine of God’s promised preservation of the Scriptures (Psalm 119:89, 152; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25), and they placed greater emphasis on the worldly credentials of the translator than on his submission to the clear teachings of Scripture. During this time, the modern critics compiled a new Greek Bible based on their new criteria, a text that underlies ALL modern translations. Their translation team included several Unitarians who openly denied the Triune God and that Jesus is God come in the flesh. The latest tactic has been to depart from making a literal word-for-word translation of the Greek text, but, rather, to translate only ideas and thoughts, which simply means that the final product becomes a translation of what the translator thinks that the underlying text means. We refer to our Bible as the Word of God; yet those who hold to modern translations, such as the New International Version, cannot say that and be correct, for, based on the translation methods that were used, they only have a more general interpretation of the “thoughts” or “ideas” of God. This method of translation, referred to as dynamic equivalency, is what is used today by Wycliffe Bible Translators in working with the numerous languages of the world; they are no longer translating the words of God, words which God has promised to preserve, but, rather, are translating interpretations of those words (the thoughts that the translators understand to be there). Combine this with the fact that they are using a text that has been mishandled by those who deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have a recipe for modern Evangelical accommodation.



This is clearly demonstrated in the teachings of Rick Warren. He will use any and all modern translations and paraphrases to establish his position – if one translation does not support his point, then he simply finds another one that does. This is the modern way – since God has not promised to preserve His words for us (which is a lie upon which modern mistranslating is based), then it simply does not matter how the Scriptures are translated, and all are equally acceptable. It is small wonder that there is a growing dumbing-down of the average Evangelical as to what God’s

Word is for today's world. It's not that some modern translations don't contain enough truth to be still used by God, but there is an erosion of the support for some of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, and there is a breakdown in identifying God's Word as the sole authority for living.

Not unlike the temptation with which Eve was faced, today many of Satan's wolves in sheep's clothing call us to question God's intent in making His commandments known to us. The rationalization is that God surely could not have meant what He said to us in His Word. We have been warned that there will be false prophets among us; we are to be alert and discerning lest we fall under their spell (1 John 4:1). "Evaluate something, not by how much good is in it, but by how much error is in it."¹³⁴



6. *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

This begins a summary of what this new uncovering or unveiling is. Just prior to this, Paul called the Gentile believers *fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God* (2:19), the middle wall of separation having been removed by Christ when He fulfilled the ordinances of the Law of Moses. Now these non-Jewish believers are called *fellowheirs* – the inheritance of the faithful is shared by all of the faithful, regardless of race. Hebrews 11 confirms this by including the names of the faithful ones who lived before Abraham.

When Jesus removed the middle wall, He made one new body out of two (2:15-16). Those who were *afar off* and those who were *nigh* were brought together into one in Christ. There is only one! This is the unity of the faith that Paul will discuss in chapter 4:5 and 13; this is the one body spoken of in 4:4 and again in 5:25-27. The Greek word used for "of the same body" is *sussomos*, which means *united in the same body*.¹³⁵ In Christ, there is perfect unity; it can be nothing else for there is only one body. If Evangelicals today could grasp this truth, they would be much less likely to chase after every whim and apparition of unity. Our unity is secured in Christ.

We live in a day of "experts," and we have learned to defer to them, after all, we reason, they should know! Consequently, we are prone to leave the interpretation of Scripture to the "experts," those New Evangelical theologians who have set aside the "thus saith the Lord" for a theology that will find acceptance by a broader audience. "Unity" has become their god, and they have removed the fences of separation that God established, so that they can enjoy pasture with a greater number. What they fail, or refuse, to realize, is that those fences were placed there by God for a purpose. In many respects, the average Evangelical today is quite similar to the average Catholic during the dark ages. Throughout the dark ages, the Catholic Church kept the Word of God from the people so that they could impose their own interpretation of truth on the people. Today, the average Evangelical willingly sets the Word of God aside, and accepts the teaching of the "experts" in the Scriptures without any further thought. The end for both is the same: a general neglect of the Word of God, and a perpetuation of error by those who become self-appointed spokesmen for God's truth.

¹³⁴ John E. Ashbrook, *New Neutralism II*, p. 82.

¹³⁵ *Vine's* "body."

Not only have we learned to defer to the experts in our understanding of the Word of God, we have also become pragmatic in our approach to life, as opposed to being Biblical. If the desired results are achieved, then, it is reasoned, how we got there must be okay: i.e., the end justifies the means; we have become “results oriented.” Jesus said to obey His commands (John 15:10), to expect to be persecuted (John 15:20), and to leave the results to Him (John 14:2). Today’s New Evangelical expert says, “Look at all of the good that we do, look at our love and unity, how could anything with such positive spirituality be wrong; come join us, but leave your narrow thinking behind.” The focus has become what we achieve, how we appear, and how accepting we are of others, rather than our obedience to God’s Word. There is a softening of our reading of what God requires of us, in essence, “thus saith the Lord” has become “yea, hath God said?” There has been a turning away from the Truth of God, and an insatiable appetite for the contaminated teachings of Satan. The devil is too clever to teach pure lies, for that would be too easily recognized and rejected – no, he loves to put forth a mixture of truth and error so as to ensnare the unsuspecting. Just as counterfeiters do not produce three-dollar bills, but do their best to duplicate the real thing, so Satan makes his deadly potions of religion to appear authentic, even using the Scriptures to justify what is done and taught. This should not be surprising since he used the very Words of God when he sought to derail Jesus’ ministry on earth (Luke 4:10). We MUST NOT accept the words of men without holding them against the standard of the Word of God; if they fall short, then they must be rejected, and we need to carefully consider turning away from their messenger as well (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

The Gentile believers have been made fellow-partakers of God’s promise in Christ; the Greek word for *partaker* means “joint partaker.”¹³⁶ “And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). “¹³For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁶Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the **promise might be sure to all the seed**; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:13,16). God’s promise was first made to Adam and Eve, a promise of a Son Who would crush the power of the devil; this promise was made much more specific with God’s call of Abraham. By choosing Abraham, God established the human family through whom the Messiah of the world would come – however, it is important to remember that the promise to Abraham was larger than just his physical family line (Genesis 12:3). As we heed the message of the Gospel, as we exercise faith in the finished work of Christ, and as we abide in Christ, through God’s infinite mercy and grace, we become participants in the fulfillment of God’s promise to Adam and Eve. The promise that God made at the time that sin entered into the world was fulfilled in Christ; by making it to the parents of all of mankind, God made the promise to everyone. It is God’s promise; it is His Provision that we accept as a gift, an unmerited gift – a truth that we must not lose sight of lest our hearts be lifted up in pride (Ephesians 2:8-9).



7. *Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*

¹³⁶ Strong’s Online.

Paul now begins to elaborate more fully concerning the work that God has given to him. *Minister* is from the Greek word *diakonos*, which is also translated as *servant* or *deacon*, and means someone who executes the commands of another.¹³⁷ It is the word used by Jesus, “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*]” (Matthew 23:11). The word speaks to the relationship of the individual to the work being done; as opposed to *doulos* (bondservant or slave) that focuses on the relationship with the master.¹³⁸ It is a work of service to which Paul has been called; even as an Apostle, he is a servant. How many ministers in today’s churches would qualify as servants, called to a work that requires them to do a work of service? Their service is to be such that the saints are perfected (4:12); they are to “preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2) – they are to proclaim **the Word**, not their words, and this is to be done with patience and with careful instruction, adhering to the teaching that has been established, not inventing their own doctrines.

How did Paul, who at one time set about persecuting those who placed their faith in Jesus, become obedient to the Gospel message, which he had worked to stamp out? It was through the power of God working through His gift of grace. Paul was called, saved, and commissioned in one day.

Paul did not become a minister through his own efforts, or through the desire of others, but through God singling him out for a special ministry. Paul thought that he was already working for God when he made his way to Damascus that day; he was certain that he was doing the will of God, after all, he had papers from the religious leaders of Jerusalem for the mission. Yet his work was in opposition to God’s desires, and, through the gift of God’s grace, the persecutor became the persecuted. The phrase *effectual working* comes from the Greek word *energeia*, which is applied only to superhuman power – primarily of God, but also the power of the devil.¹³⁹ It took the power of God to impart the gift of grace into Paul’s life; however, that is no less the case with each of us, for, within ourselves, we do not desire the things of God. “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11).



8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

Paul never forgot that he was once a persecutor of Christians; even though he was now an Apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, that did not erase what once had been. Although there is forgiveness in Christ, and He will restore us to usefulness for Himself, there are still consequences for our actions before we find His forgiveness. However, these things should not drag us down, but should encourage us to faithfulness and holiness. The grace of God was given to Paul so that he should become a minister, or servant, for God. Of all of the people in Jerusalem, Paul was undoubtedly one of the least likely to become an apostle of the Way, yet the grace of God, administered through the power of God, turned Paul’s life around. Even as Paul never forgot his

¹³⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹³⁸ Vine’s “deacon.”

¹³⁹ Strong’s Online.

role as persecutor, he never ceased to marvel at the power of the grace of God that worked in his life.

What is also clearly evident here is that there is an equality before Christ that transcends all personal giftedness, talents, or station in life. Paul, perhaps the most prominent of the Apostles, refers to himself as *less than the least of all saints*; once again, we must realize that, in Christ, the leader is to be the servant of all. What is normal protocol in the culture of this world, has been turned upside down within the Body of Christ; we are to each look out for the needs of others, not just our own (Philippians 2:3-8). It is this principle that runs contrary to what we find in modern psychology, and what we hear from many within the Evangelical community. James Dobson has perhaps become the leading proponent of the need to build up a *healthy self-esteem*. “For Dobson self-esteem, self-worth, self-acceptance and their related self-words are crucial, not only for the individual but for society as well. He contends that ‘... low self-esteem is a threat to the entire human family...’”¹⁴⁰ Martin Bobgan, who has written on Dobson’s errant philosophies, declares:



Martin & Deidre Bobgan

The self-esteem movement began in the third chapter of Genesis. Initially Adam and Eve were God-conscious and aware of one another and their surroundings rather than be self-conscious. Their awareness of themselves was incidental and peripheral to their focus on God and one another. Adam realized that Eve was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but he was not self-aware in the same sense that his descendents would be.

Self was not the issue until the fall.¹⁴¹

For the Christian, self must be rendered crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20), deemed to be dead (Romans 6:11), and we are to live in the righteousness of God through His indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:4-7). If we exercise a lively self-esteem, then we are yet carnally minded – which is enmity against God. Within genuine faith in Christ, there is no room for the self-esteem advocated by James Dobson, yet this doctrine finds a haven among Evangelicals today. “Christian” colleges teach psychology as a science (when it is more correctly defined as a humanistic religion), and will go to great lengths to justify their teaching as Biblical. Much of the “Biblical counseling” emphasis today (again demanding a deferral to the experts) has its foundation firmly set upon the humanism of psychology, and not the Word of God. Psychology has tremendous appeal to our fallen natures, for the focus of our thinking turns inward, yet we are warned in Scripture to not permit such thinking to ruin us: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). Psychology specifically fits that warning, for it is the brainchild of various atheists, some of whom deliberately worked to discredit God and everything Christian; it has flourished under the philosophy of humanism, which is equally anti-God. Yet Evangelicals continue to forage through the dregs of human philosophy in search of a fragment of shattered truth, rather than turning to the convicting Word of God to discover Truth that will endure for

¹⁴⁰ Bobgan, Martin and Deidre, *James Dobson’s Gospel of Self-Esteem and Psychology*, p. 46.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

eternity. Only Satan could have formulated such a philosophy that would entice those who, with the one hand hold the very words of God, and, with the other, so tenaciously grasp such a lie.

There was a purpose in God's choosing of Paul; His grace was administered with power so that Paul might bring the good news of Christ's completed work to all people, specifically those outside of Israel, to those far off. The other eleven Apostles seemed oriented toward the Jews, and centered in Jerusalem; even after the persecution that arose after the stoning of Stephen, they were still found in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2). It was Philip, one of the seven appointed to "wait on tables," who took the message of the Gospel to the Samaritans (north of Jerusalem), and to the Ethiopian returning to Africa (Acts 8). Yet even this was within the area of Israel. It was Paul who took the Gospel to those in far off places.

It's interesting, if you follow the ministry of Paul as revealed in the book of Acts, that he always began in the synagogues (Acts 13:5,14,44; 14:1; 17:1-2,10,17; 18:4,19; 19:8). This might almost seem to be a contradiction since he was commissioned by God to be a minister to the Gentiles (Romans 15:16), yet out of these synagogue beginnings came an established group of believers within the Gentile community. The synagogues were not a teaching center strictly for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well – but clearly, the Gentiles who would have attended these meetings would have been those who deliberately desired to know the God of the Jews. It seems clear that Paul began his work by seeking those who exemplified a desire to know God; out of this would come an assembly of the saved, both Jews and Gentiles, who recognized that they were one in Christ.

What was Paul's message? – the *unsearchable riches of Christ*. These riches are not unsearchable in that we are not permitted to dig into them, but rather that no searching will plumb the depths of them; they are beyond our comprehension – our finite minds will never grasp the fullness of the riches of Christ. Paul has already outlined some of these marvelous riches in the earlier portion of his letter:

1. In Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings (1:3)
2. In Him we are chosen by God from before the world began (1:4)
3. In Him we are to be holy and blameless before God (1:4,6)
4. By Him we are adopted by God as His children (1:5)
5. In Him we are saved and forgiven (1:7), and it's a gift (2:8,9)
6. In Him we have obtained an inheritance (1:11)
7. In Him we have been made alive (2:5)
8. In Him we are created to walk in good works (2:10)
9. Through Him we have access to the Father (2:18)
10. In Him we are being made into a habitation of God (2:22)

Do we understand these things? – not fully. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).



9. *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*

Here is another purpose to Paul's ministry. The words *make* and *see* come from one word in the Greek: *photizo* (*fo-tid'-zo*), which means *to enlighten, to inform, to instruct* or *to give understanding to*.¹⁴² This contains no concept of cramming things down people's throats, but rather providing instruction and teaching with the intent of enlightenment and understanding. However, just as surely, this does not mean tailoring the message so as not to cause offense. "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." (Galatians 5:11). Paul realized that if he preached a message that the Jews found acceptable, his persecution from them would cease, yet he would not in any way alter the message that he had been given – it was the message of the cross that brought him persecution. Modern Evangelicals, on the other hand, have bent over backwards to eliminate the offense of the Gospel, and in so doing have stripped the Message of its power. The sinners are being entertained and loved under the pretext of luring them into the kingdom; yet, not unlike the Israelites of old, the allurements of the worldly entertainment is proving to be too great for the "saints," for they are becoming increasingly worldly, while the sinners being entertained remain in their sins. Jesus' words come to mind: "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39). What a fiasco of blindness modern Evangelicalism has become!

Possibly, there are those who would use this verse to justify a doctrine of universalism, yet it is clear that the *all* here cannot mean everyone (the rest of Scripture forbids such an interpretation). The word is used in a collective sense, namely that there will be some of all kinds who come to a proper understanding of what Christ has done. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands..." (Revelation 7:9). There will be no people group left out; even from the civilizations that have ceased to exist, there will be a representation among the called-out ones of the Lord; the Lord has never been without His witness, His remnant.

Here again we have reference to *mystery*. That which has been hidden in God has been revealed to His own. In Colossians 1:25-27, Paul speaks of this mystery: "25Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory..." Here is the mystery of God, hidden for the most part from the OT prophets and the Jewish leaders, now proclaimed openly to the Gentiles: **Christ in you!!**

Our passage speaks of the *fellowship of the mystery*. Fellowship is a word that has been severely downgraded through excessive use over time. Today we see it as simply getting together in a friendly fashion; yet the roots of the term translated as *fellowship* rest in the Greek *koinonia*, which carries the thought of community, of communion, and of intimacy.¹⁴³ When we consider the *mystery* as being "Christ in you," clearly the fellowship of this mystery demands intimacy. This is more than sitting down to have a cup of tea together; it is, "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5), and "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,

¹⁴² Strong's Online.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). John understood this when he wrote, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3); there is an intimacy here, a oneness, a unity that precludes the concept of fellowship as we might understand it today.

Here is the theme of Paul’s ministry: Christ in you, you in Christ – God has opened a personal access to His grace and mercy through Christ’s death and resurrection. The Jews gave Stephen their attention until he identified them as the murderers of Jesus, the Just One spoken of by the prophets (Acts 7:52-54); Paul held the attention of the Athenians until he spoke of the resurrection (Acts 17:32). In Paul’s day, these were the two points that caused many to turn away: the Jews did not want to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah, and the Gentiles, who were versed in humanistic philosophy, had to open their minds to accept the reality of the resurrection. Modern Evangelicals have no problem accepting these two pillars of the faith, but they run amuck by settling for a misrepresentation of the freedom that we have in Christ. Lip-service is paid to the authority of the Word of God and the necessity of standing for the truth, yet life-styles, activities, and choices-made would not affirm this. Chuck Colson refers to himself as a Fundamentalist, even while he reduces the fundamentals of the faith to five cryptic phrases, which seemingly open the floodgates to his misguided concept of the “narrow way.”¹⁴⁴ Rick Warren pushes the need to reach out to those about us, even while using the techniques of the world to create a worldly atmosphere, and pointing to the large numbers that he attracts as a sign of his success. The freedom that we have in Christ means to be empowered by the Spirit of God to live a life of holiness and righteousness (Romans 8:4; Ephesians 4:24) – something that we cannot do outside of Christ (Romans 8:8), no matter how successful we might appear, or how logical our reasoning.

From the beginning of time, or literally “from eternity,” God’s plan to pay the price for the sins of man had been kept hidden in God.¹⁴⁵ There were promises made: Adam and Eve heard the promise, and understood that God would deal a death blow to Satan (“bruise his head,” Genesis 3:15); Abraham believed the promise of God that through him would come blessings on all of the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3); Moses wrote the words of God and heard that there would come a day when One would arise Who, though like unto him, would be greater than he (Deuteronomy 18:17-19). David experienced fellowship with God and was called a man after God’s own heart, yet he spoke of a Priest Who was to come, a Priest after the order of Melchisedec – even while the Levitical priesthood was in full operation (Psalm 110:4). All through the ages, there were glimpses of the reality that God had planned, snatches that together laid the foundation for Who was to come; yet it seems clear that each purveyor of those glimpses really did not comprehend the full magnitude of what they spoke. Why God chose to withhold the full light of His plan in this way also remains hidden in God. Isaiah understood this when he declared that God’s ways are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:9). Even though the extent of God’s plan for salvation was not revealed, His grace reached those who believed Him and walked in obedience to Him. Abel believed God, and he is counted among the

¹⁴⁴ Colson, Charles, *The Body*, p. 186. He lays out the “nonnegotiables” as 1) the infallibility of Scripture, 2) the deity of Christ, 3) the Virgin Birth and miracles of Christ, 4) Christ’s substitutionary death, and 5) Christ’s physical resurrection and eventual return. Yet even in these, he uses broad brush strokes to keep the Roman Catholics and Evangelicals on the same page.

¹⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

faithful even though it cost him his life; Hebrews 11 recounts some of those of old who are numbered among the faithful – the point being that God has saved some throughout all of the ages.

Who created all things by Jesus Christ – this almost seems to be an intrusion into the flow of the passage, yet the Spirit of God has included it. What is clear from this is that Jesus is the Creator – the One Who brought all things into being according to the creative thoughts of God the Father. There are many passages that clarify this for us: John 1:3 (the Word [Jesus] made all things), 1 Corinthians 8:6 (Jesus, our Creator), Colossians 1:16 (including things visible and invisible, i.e., principalities, powers, etc.), Hebrews 1:2 (He made the worlds). In keeping with being the Creator, Jesus, through His death, burial and resurrection became the Creator of new life within the heart of the believer in accordance with the plan of God, which was kept hidden from the time that creation began.



10. *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*

Principalities is from the Greek word *arche*, which means *beginning*, and, therefore, *the first place, or rule*;¹⁴⁶ here it has reference to the holy angels.¹⁴⁷ *Powers* is from the Greek word *exousia*, and carries the thought of authority, the right to act, and here, again, refers to angels.¹⁴⁸ The reason why we can say that these refer to the angels is that these principalities and powers are in the heavenly realms, the “abiding place” of God and the angelic hosts. This could not include Satan and his host of fallen angels, for they have been cast out of the heavenlies (Isaiah 14:12, 2 Peter 2:4).

Here is one of the mysteries of God’s working in us: He is using us to teach the angels. *Might be known* means to *gain knowledge of*,¹⁴⁹ therefore, one of God’s purposes for having Paul preach the Gospel to all men is so that the angelic hosts will come to understand something new. Clearly, the angels are observing us, and they are watching God work in us, the assembly of believers. What is God teaching them? He is instructing them in His *manifold wisdom*, His multi-variegated or multifaceted wisdom. The wisdom of God, which is being exercised through the saints of God, is something that the angels do not understand, something that they have never seen before; this is a new demonstration of God’s wisdom that they are witnessing.



11. *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

Once again, we see the *eternal* plans of God. His desire to use believers to provide the holy angels with instruction is one of the eternal purposes of God. This is not a spin-off of His dealing with us; this is one of the purposes that He had from the very beginning – all founded in Christ Jesus, Who is to be our Lord. After having just referred to the angelic hosts as the *principalities and powers*, we are reminded that these eternal purposes are in Christ, to Whose authority we are

¹⁴⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁷ *Vine’s* “principality.”

¹⁴⁸ *Vine’s* “power.”

¹⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

to willingly submit. We live under the authority of Christ (if, indeed, He is our Lord), and He has been raised to a place far above all principality and power (1:20-21); we have been raised up together with Christ, and sit with Him in heavenly realms (2:5-6). All of this was planned by God before the foundation of the world (1:4); this is not our reward for good behavior (2 Timothy 1:9), this is the grace of God expressed in all fullness through Christ's salvation – a deliverance from sin that is sufficient for all of mankind (2 Peter 3:9), and was set in place before the world began (Revelation 13:8).

Something that we often miss when contemplating the working of God among mankind is the eternity of His plans and purposes. God is timeless and all knowing – concepts that we cannot begin to understand; He is eternally sovereign, there are no surprises to Him; His Word will not fail – yet we are so easily swayed by the opinions of men. It seems that we would much rather place a question mark over the Word of God than to jeopardize a relationship with a friend, or question the teaching of someone who is more educated than we are; we would prefer to set the declarations of God aside in favor of not rocking the boat. As the Lord began to open the eyes of my wife and me to a proper understanding of the doctrine of Biblical separation, one of the things that took me a little time to get past was that there are many, many men who are better educated than I am, men who have spent years studying the Word of God yet have not come to the same understanding of what seems so evident from the Bible. How could this be? Surely, I must be mistaken. How could anyone study God's Word for so long and not come away with a right interpretation of it? Today there is a spirit of delusion that has gripped Evangelicals, a spirit that has bound them to the fallacies of New Evangelicalism, a spirit of ecumenism that seeks to unite everyone under one banner. With this thoroughly engrained in their thinking, and with an accepted systematized theology (of whatever persuasion), there is little room left for the Spirit of God to speak to their hearts. These are men who hold a shallow understanding of the Word of God within the parameters of holding forth a positive message to ease the guilt of the sinner, men with the answers to every Biblical question (hence we have Hank Hanegraaff as the *Bible Answer Man*), yet who have overlooked the holiness of God and the unshakeable, eternity of His plan for mankind. God is the same yesterday, today and forever; He has not and will not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), and, just as assuredly, His plans have not altered from the day that He spoke light into existence.



Philip Yancey

There are those today who proclaim the doctrine of “progressive omniscience,” or “open theism.” They hold that God cannot know the future for it has not happened yet; therefore, God is learning from what is taking place and responding to it, even as we are learning and responding; in other words, God is bound by time. Philip Yancey, a very popular author within Evangelicalism, and one of the editors of *Christianity Today*, is a proponent of open theism. What these men fail to recognize is that God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last (Revelation 1:8,11); He created time; He is the “I AM,” the One Who is ever “now” (Exodus 3:14). In our intelligence and sophistication, we may not carve idols out of gold or silver, but we do not hesitate to carve out a philosophical god who is no greater than man – a god who cannot save, and cannot hear. Isaiah 59:2, “But your

iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” The God of the universe has hidden Himself from those who have sought to recreate Him after their own likeness. They face two difficulties: 1) the God of the universe will not hear them, and 2) the god that they have fashioned cannot hear them. They are lost and perceive it not; “²For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... boasters, proud, blasphemers ... ⁵having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:2,5). We must have no part with the likes of Philip Yancey.

The major components of the theology of open theism are outlined as:

1. God is not sovereign. He is not always and necessarily in control. His will can be thwarted.
2. God is at risk. God responds to our responses. While God is endlessly resourceful, He can make mistakes. He can drop the ball in our lives. Our actions can so affect God as to frustrate His plans and force Him to seek alternatives. To some degree God is at the mercy of His creatures' choices and actions.
3. God is limited in knowledge. Since God does not know the future He seeks input from His creatures to help Him make decisions. He does not know the future because He is subject to time as we are. He is not infinite in knowledge; He is constantly learning. He is not immutable but is constantly changing, not in essence but in understanding. God truly does not know what anyone will do until they do it.
4. God's ultimate purpose is not to glorify Himself but to give and receive love. His greatest and central attribute is love, around which all other attributes revolve.¹⁵⁰

The author, Gary Gilley, goes on to conclude:

The supporters of open theism have posited it as a paradigm that offers a real relationship between God and His people. Rather than an all-knowing and all-powerful sovereign God, we are presented with a God of give-and-take. Since this God does not know or control the future, the future is open to both Him and us. The Lord really does not know what will happen until it happens - He is experiencing life in the present along with His creation. As a matter of fact, He, like us, is enduring pain and heartache, frustration and disappointment, in a similar manner as ourselves. The open God can drop the ball too. He can make mistakes, after all He is only human (oops!) divine. But we can be assured He is doing His best and would not lead us astray or into an ambush if He had more information. On the positive side, the open God loves to respond to our prayers and is often influenced by them to the extent of changing His own plans to accommodate ours - even though in His wisdom He knows that our plans may be foolish. And you can't pin evil and tragedy on this God because He is as helpless in the face of catastrophe as we are. God may be weak but at least we can rest assured that He is a God of love. We may not be able to trust Him but at least He cares.

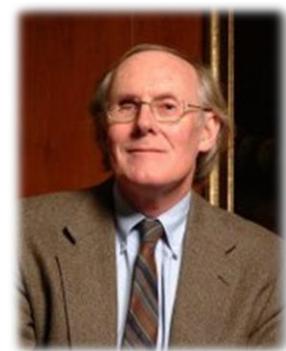
¹⁵⁰ Gary Gilley, “Open Theism,” <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/23-doctrine/550-open-theism-part-1>

These are some of the issues being served on the table of open theism. It might be asked, however, what has motivated these theologians to trade the classical view of God for this insipid version. [Bruce] Ware's opinion is worth pondering, "The culture in which we live, including much of the Christian subculture, has drunk deeply at the well of self-esteem. Where the Bible enjoins unfettered but deeply humble 'God-esteem,' we have been conditioned to think that we should have some of that esteem for ourselves. So, when a theology comes along that says, 'God often doesn't make up his mind what to do until *he hears first from you,*' or God and *you together* chart out your course for the future as *both of you learn together* what unfolds,' or, 'Sometimes God *makes mistakes* but we need to realize that he was doing his best,' such a view plays well with many in our culture. We feel like we are almost peers with God."

Perhaps the Psalmist put his finger on the real problem of open theology when, in another context, he penned God's accusation upon a wayward people by saying, *You thought I was just like you* (Psalm 50:21). This is openism's problem; their God is too human. (Italics in the original).¹⁵¹

In 2000, the Baptist General Conference declared that open theism falls "within the accepted bounds of the Evangelical spectrum."¹⁵² Greg Boyd was espousing this view as a member of the faculty of Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul, MN (which is associated with the Baptist General Conference). Although Boyd resigned from Bethel in 2002, clearly, it had nothing to do with the heresy that he believed and propagated. This is also the school where Paul Ferris and Robert Rakestraw continue to teach (as of this writing), both having been a part of Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, AB in the past.

Clark Pinnock has promoted open theism for quite some time; a course on modern theologians at Briercrest Biblical Seminary, Caronport, SK, presented his teachings without exposing the error of his thinking. In 2002, Clark Pinnock and John Sanders were charged by the Evangelical Theological Society ("a professional society of Biblical scholars, teachers, pastors and others involved in Evangelical scholarship"¹⁵³) for their views on open theism. However, not surprisingly, after the case was carefully reviewed, the membership of the Society voted to drop the charges; in other words, this Society of Evangelical "thinkers" saw no problem with them holding and promoting this heresy.



Clark Pinnock

It is this aversion to heresy that is the downfall of most modern, professional theologians. They are so carefully carrying the banner of their particular denomination or their well-honed theology that they are unable to clearly see the teachings of Scripture. Unless we are prepared to embrace the Word of God as our personal final authority for spiritual instruction, we run the risk of reading the Scriptures through the lenses of someone's doctrinal persuasion – rather than

¹⁵¹ Gary Gilley, "Open Theism," <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/23-doctrine/553-open-theism-part-4>

¹⁵² http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TasteAndSee/ByDate/2000/1156_We_Took_a_Good_Stand_and_Made_a_Bad_Mistake/

¹⁵³ <http://www.etsjets.org/>

permitting the Spirit of God to guide us into His truth (John 16:13). I am slowly learning to not be impressed by educational credentials.

Again, we are reminded that all is *in Christ Jesus our Lord* – “Lord” means “he to whom a person ... belongs, about which he has power of deciding.”¹⁵⁴ When we call Jesus our Lord, we are saying that we belong to Him, and that He has the power to decide what is best for us. Therefore, when things happen to us (not something that we choose) we must rest assured that it has come through the permissive hand of the Lord Jesus. Scripture reminds us many times to persevere, to endure (Ephesians 6:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5; Hebrews 12:7, James 1:12; 5:11), and if we understand what it means for Jesus to be our Lord, then our faith will be strengthened to endure what comes our way.



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

In Christ, we have *free and fearless confidence (boldness)* to come before God; but it is only through the faithfulness of Christ.¹⁵⁵ If there has been anything that is obvious in the study of Ephesians so far, it is the emphasis on all things being available *in Christ*. It is not due to anything that we might do, or who we might be – it is only by means of what Christ has done that we can have access to the Father. Christ remained completely faithful throughout His life on earth; His trust in the Father, even while in His limiting body of flesh, was perfect.

By the faith of him is a phrase that caught my attention; it seems to be one of those things that we pass over quickly, and do not really understand. There are many verses that make reference to the faith of Jesus Christ; here are a few:

Romans 3:21-22, “²¹But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by [through] **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference ...”

Galatians 2:16, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ ...”

Galatians 3:22, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by [out of] **faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe.”

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

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

As I read these verses and others like them, it becomes apparent that it is the faith of Jesus that is central to securing our salvation. What is the faith of Jesus? Here it is, demonstrated for us:

⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no

¹⁵⁴ Strong’s Online.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11).

Jesus, eternally with the Father and the Spirit, and Creator of the universe, became a man, and placed unwavering faith in God, the Father, and His eternal plan – a faith that took Him to the cross for the eternal deliverance of lost mankind. It was the faith of Jesus that became our means of justification before God (Galatians 2:16); it is through the faith of Jesus that we can claim the righteousness that comes from God (Romans 3:22). We place our faith in Christ and the finished work on the cross, which is the express demonstration of the faith that Christ had in God the Father. We take God at His word, and believe Him even as “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3). As we believe God, and place our faith in Christ and His finished work, His faith becomes effective in our lives. Jesus said that if we should have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed we would be able to accomplish great things (Matthew 17:20); however, our grain of faith must be well placed – to be effective it must be in Christ. As we place our faith in Christ, as we believe God, the righteousness that has been established through the working of Christ’s faith in God’s eternal plan becomes our righteousness (Philippians 3:9).

Returning to our passage, our boldness and confidence to come before God has nothing to do with our great faith, but it has everything to do with where our small faith has been placed. As we believe God, the righteousness that Christ purchased for us through the exercise of His perfect faith, becomes ours, and, thereby, we can come before a holy God with confidence. All of this simply underscores the theme of Ephesians: all that we have before God is through Christ; it is only in Him that we are united with the saints of all the ages to show forth His glory, to be His inheritance. What a great loss for those duped by the subtlety of New Evangelicalism as they bring the eternal Word of God into question; yet they seem unaware of their loss as they fashion a god after their own designs.



13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

Wherefore – a word that draws on what has come before in order to make a final point. Paul has covered several things that are included in this *wherefore*: 1) the Gentiles are full participants in the salvation that Christ secured by the cross, and now offers to all men (v. 6), 2) he was made a minister of this Gospel despite his unworthiness (v.7-8), 3) the angels are learning from how God is dealing with His saints (v. 10), and 4) our confident access to the Father was accomplished by the faith of Christ (v. 12). The preceding verses give us an overview of Paul’s message, his ministry, and the effects of his ministry. Because of all of this, he now expresses his desire for the Ephesians.

Faint not means to not *be utterly spiritless*.¹⁵⁶ Clearly, Paul was facing tough times for these people; *tribulations* is from the Greek word *thlipsis*, and literally means *pressing together* or *pressure*, and metaphorically speaks of oppression, distress or affliction.¹⁵⁷ Because of these things, Paul says, “don’t lose your strength because of what I’m going through for you.” This is coming from Paul, the prisoner; the one who is experiencing the *pressing together* is begging them to not become disheartened at his trials.

How would the trials that Paul is facing be the *glory* of the Ephesian believers? The Greek word for *glory* is also translated as *honor* and *praise*, in addition to meaning the splendor and majesty of God.¹⁵⁸ It seems that Paul’s desire was that they should view his tribulations as an honor; he was willing to suffer persecution for them. Paul declares in Romans 5:3, “... we glory [or boast] in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience ...”; we also read that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). This is not a comforting thought to our soft North American way of life, to which we have become accustomed; yet persecution can take many forms. For my wife and me, it has been our personal experience that since we have endeavored to follow the Lord more fully, as we have sought without reservation to do what His Word says, many friends and family have forsaken us. Indeed, we have found the way to life to be narrow, and often steep.



14. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

The action here is of Paul bowing before God in worship and adoration, but also in supplication for the Ephesian believers. Bowing indicates a submission to God, a willingness to come under His authority and command. There will come a day when every knee will bow before God (Isaiah 45:23; Philippians 2:10), even those who deny His very existence will bow before Him, and acknowledge His supremacy. How much better to willingly bow before the Lord today, and accept His provision for the deliverance of our souls, than to wait for the day still coming when the unwilling knees will bow before Him only to experience His righteous judgment, rather than His grand salvation.

For this cause draws what follows to Paul’s desire that the Ephesians accept his persecution and trials as a sign of honor for them.



15. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*

The family to which we belong has been named after Christ; hence we are referred to as the Body of Christ (Romans 7:4; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). The word *family* speaks of lineage or a common origin,¹⁵⁹ and our lineage, as the Body of Christ, is through Christ, the Deliverer Who was promised from the beginning. All of saved mankind has been purchased by Christ: those before His coming to earth, and those after His resurrection. This family, of which

¹⁵⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Christ is Head, abides in heaven and upon earth; this family is made up of saints from all the ages, as Hebrews 11 so clearly illustrates – those who have passed on, and those who are still living here on earth. Ephesians 1:10 declares that God set out to sum up the whole in Christ, both in the heavens and upon the earth. This is specifically within the context of expounding all that God has done for us in Christ; in Christ there is a bringing together of those who have gone before and those who are coming after. God is the God of the living, as Jesus so clearly declared to the Sadducees (Mark 12:27), and so those who have been declared righteous before God through faith after the manner of Abel, Enoch and Abraham are united with those who, through the very same faith, have been declared righteous by believing in the finished, saving work of Christ. There is only one family made up of all those who have placed their faith in Christ, the righteous Savior (both as promised and as fulfilled).

Once again, it is clear that the focus of our faith is Christ; it is His name that we bear; we must abide in Him in order to realize the riches that God has prepared for us.



16. *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

We return here to the main, beginning thought, namely that Paul is bowing his knees before God for a purpose. *That*, or *in order that*, is the sense here; now he begins to outline his purpose for bowing before God as it relates to the Ephesian believers and the faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1)

Paul has a specific desire of God for this group of saints – something that he longs for God to give (*grant*) them. Therefore, what follows is why Paul willingly bears tribulation for the Ephesians; it is written as a fact (it is his purpose) and it is an expression of what he desires the Lord Jesus to give unto these saints. Paul is confident that the Lord will open these riches to His saints. We have come out of the context of the trials and tribulations that Paul had been facing, and his expressed hope that the Ephesians would consider his trials to be to their glory or honor; he did not fear the tribulation that was for their benefit. Paul's request to God is that they would move past his trials and begin to move in the direction that he is outlining for them.

Paul's petition is all of God, and its measure is the immeasurable splendor of God – *the riches of his glory*. Therefore, Paul can present his purpose without a doubt as to the fulfillment of his desire; his request is couched in the infinitude of God's glory, and therein is the hope of seeing it fulfilled in the lives of the Ephesians.

This is the first in a series of four specific things that Paul desires for the Ephesians and for us – *to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*. His request is for God to give them the power that would see them strengthened through the Spirit of God in the *within* man.¹⁶⁰ Jesus said: “¹⁸those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰These are the things which defile a man ...” (Matthew 15:18-20). It is that inner cleansing that is needed to live a life of holiness before God, and this can only come through being in Christ, by appropriating His faith and His righteousness as our own.

¹⁶⁰ Strong's Online.

Romans 8:9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If the Spirit of God is dwelling in us, then we carry about with us the very Spirit Who is able to strengthen us from within so that we may live as we are commanded. However, this does not necessarily mean that life will be easy – the Scriptures do not teach the prosperity gospel of health and wealth that some today seek to use to dupe many out of their money. Paul declared, “...though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). The prosperity gospel has its roots in the doctrines of Satan, which were first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden; the forbidden fruit was declared to be beautiful, good for food, and able to make one wise. The lie has changed little with the passage of time: the message is still the same, and the appeal is just as strong. The way to life is narrow and lonely, for there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14), yet we are challenged to walk this path of godliness, and to expect affliction and persecution along the way (2 Timothy 3:12). Modern Evangelicals would have us believe that the way to life is broad, but God has not, nor will He ever change.



17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

Here is the second request presented by Paul. It would seem that these petitions, although individually identifiable, are also cumulative in nature; i.e., each builds on the one(s) that came before. The first, that they would be strengthened in their inner man by the Spirit of God, provides a basis for the second – that Christ would abide in their hearts. The request is that Christ would inhabit the essence of their (and our) spiritual being, that He would pervade or saturate it and govern it.¹⁶¹ Contained here is the spirit of Jesus’ instruction to “abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4) so that we might bring forth spiritual fruit.

Paul clarifies here that the mechanism for this indwelling Christ is *faith*; however, not just any faith – the Greek includes the definite article to make it *the* faith. There is much faith in the world today, but it is not *the* saving faith. “Watch ye, stand fast in **the faith**” (1 Corinthians 16:13), is not an admonition to have faith, but to be on the alert and to persevere in *the faith*. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from **the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). We live in just such a day: *the faith* once delivered through the Apostles, and carefully recorded for us in the Scriptures by the Spirit of God, has fallen into disrepute. Evangelicals have determined that there is a better way, one that holds greater appeal to more people, a way that demands less of us and seeks to broaden the narrow way; so they speak forth words of deception – inaccurate words that mislead the unsuspecting. Our practice of deferring to the experts has caused the error of New Evangelicalism to spread like wildfire; even those whom we would consider to be elderly saints, those who supposedly have walked in the Christian faith for many years, have been duped into accepting the doctrines of today as being Biblical. How can this be? The process is gradual; the changes in course are minor so as not to rock the boat. A charted course that is set one degree off, over a mile, will mean a variance of a mere 92 feet. If we take that same error over 100 miles, we will now be 1.7 miles off course. It doesn’t take a huge error to carry one significantly off course over a period of time. New

¹⁶¹ Strong’s Online.

Evangelicals said that they would not practice separation; this seemingly small change has produced results that have been spiritually devastating, and we have yet to realize the full extent of this departure from the path of *the faith*. The full scope of this error will come to light when the Antichrist is revealed; the siren song of unity and accommodation will lure many Evangelicals right onto the rocks of apostasy for their final destruction.

That ye, being rooted and grounded in love – this begins Paul’s third request, which carries on into the next verse. *That ye* can also be translated as *in order that ye*; again indication of a progression – the requests are inextricably linked together, and build in a cumulative manner. First, that we might be strengthened in our inner man by the Spirit of God; second, that we might experience the permeating presence of Christ within us. The result of this is that we will be *rooted and grounded in love*, which forms the basis for this third request.

Rooted means to *strengthen with roots, to render firm, to fix, establish*.¹⁶² It exudes a feeling of permanency; something that is rooted is not easily moved. James understood this when he wrote, “⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8). Someone who is *double minded* cannot be *rooted* at the same time; conversely, someone who is *rooted* will not waver or vacillate in his commitment to Christ.

Grounded means to *lay the foundation, to make stable or establish*.¹⁶³ Here Paul uses two different Greek words with somewhat similar meanings to underscore the extent of our being fixed in love, based not on our own efforts, but on our being yielded to Christ, being **in Him** and **He in us**. The Greek word used for *love* is *agape*, and denotes the love that God has, and the love that we are to have toward God and toward our fellow man (Matthew 22:37-39). John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8,16).

Unfortunately, today’s Evangelical community has so focused on the love of God that they have lost sight of His other characteristics – particularly His holiness and His justice. In the name of love, they have set a proper understanding of Scripture aside lest they cause offense; in the name of love, they accommodate error and heresy in order to display a feigned unity after the fashion of their own imagination. God’s dealings with the children of Israel have been provided for us by the Spirit of God as an example and for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:6; 2 Timothy 3:16), and what is very evident is that God’s holiness, justice and grace are conduits through which His love flows to mankind. It is by this love, which finds expression through His grace to meet the requirements of His justice, that sin is dealt with so that, in His holiness, He might have fellowship with the sinner who is saved and cleansed. We hear much of “God accepts you the way you are”; and this has become an excuse to overlook sin and our need for repentance before God. Yes, it is true, there is nothing that we can do to gain merit before God; we cannot clean ourselves up in order to be acceptable before a holy God. However, God does not accept us the way we are, or else we would all make our way to heaven; there is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father,

¹⁶² Strong’s Online.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

but by me” – the way is still narrow and very, very exclusive. God will only recognize the work that Christ did on the cross as payment for the sins of the world; our acceptance by God is not unconditional, but is entirely dependent upon our being *in Christ* by faith. We have been chosen by God *in Christ* before the foundation of the world (1:4), therefore, if we are not *in Christ*, then we are simply not among the chosen. Today it is emphasized that God understands our humanity and our frailty to the extent that repentance has been banished from our vocabulary and, too often, from our experience; there is a mindset that seems to think that if we pray a little prayer, that’s all that’s necessary to secure our eternal destiny. We have lost sight of God’s demand for a righteous life (1 Peter 1:15-16) that will make the Christian life a struggle (1 Timothy 4:10), and it will come at a great cost to our natural desires (Galatians 5:24).

We live in a day when the Word of God is subject to much neglect – and this is within the Evangelical community! Not only is there a growing neglect, but there is also a corresponding increase in the inability to discern the spiritual truths of Scripture; it is only reasonable that the latter should follow the former. Therefore, when we hear “God accepts you the way you are” we can rest assured that it has not been processed through a mind that grasps and holds the truths of Scripture in righteousness. Underlying the statement is the thinking that we do not have to change (at least not much); we certainly wouldn’t want our Christianity to cramp our style. The Spirit of God, through Paul, declares, “²⁰Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: ²¹That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 5:20-6:2). There is an attitude that glories in the fact that where sin abounds, God’s grace abounds to a greater extent; what many Christians fail to realize is that they are to be dead to sin. It’s not a matter of the overabundance of God’s grace that is greater than the sin that we commit – it’s a matter that our lives are to be dead to sin. Obviously that does not mean that we become sinless while in the flesh, for “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What it does mean is that we are no longer to live in a perpetual state of sin, the Spirit of God has not been given to us to be ignored; we are to be strengthened by the Spirit so that we are able to live in righteousness. We come to the Lord, in our sin, to be cleansed by faith in the blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, but “if we sin wilfully after that we have received the [precise and correct] knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26). These are sobering words, which Evangelicals today refuse to hear.



18. *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

Here is the core of the third request, which is based upon Christ dwelling within and being firmly grounded in the love of God. The grounding in love is necessary in order to *be able* or *to have full strength* to understand, with all of God’s holy ones, the extent of God’s love.¹⁶⁴ The saints, who have gone on before and who abide in the presence of God, understand the full

¹⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

dimensions of the love of God; yet we, who still walk in this life, are growing in our understanding (2 Peter 3:18), but the grounding mentioned will enable us to come to such knowledge one day. Indeed, our finite minds will always struggle with the infinite, but with Christ abiding within, our growth is ensured.

The dimensions of this love (breadth, length, depth and height) are interesting in the Greek: *platos*, *mekos*, *bathos*, and *hupsos*. *Platos* is correctly translated as breadth, and it includes the idea of a great extent.¹⁶⁵ *Bathos* has the same root as used for *deep*, and is used to refer to the sea; the implication is that this is a great depth. Paul's third request for the Ephesians, and for the faithful in Christ Jesus, is that we will be able to understand, at least to some extent, the great love of God. We will never be able to plumb its depths or scale its heights, but perhaps we may comprehend, in a limited way, the love of God as it has been expressed in bringing us, who were once far off, into the building that is not made with hands (2 Corinthians 5:1), a building that is made up of all saints from all ages (2:21-22). God's love is so great that even when He knew the price that it would take to pay the penalty of sin for fallen mankind, there was no change in plans.



19. *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Here is the fourth request, or desire, of Paul expressed for the Ephesian believers – and for all of “the faithful in Christ Jesus” (v. 1), which means that it is for us as well. Once again, this is built upon that which has come before: 1) strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God, 2) Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith, and 3) we may come to some understanding of the immensity of God's love. The phrase *to know* carries with it the concept of a process, as in *to come to know* or *understand*, rather than a completed achievement.¹⁶⁶ Peter understood this when he wrote: “but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). This is really a lifetime project, for as long as we abide in the flesh, we will never comprehend, with any measure of completeness, the greatness of our Savior and God. As Paul expresses it here: *and to come to understand the love of Christ that is surpassing wisdom* (literal);¹⁶⁷ this is the essence of Paul's fourth request.

The reason or intent of Paul's fourth request is this: *in order that ye, with all the fullness of God, have been filled* (literal).¹⁶⁸ *Filled* is in subjunctive mood, but because it is contained within a purpose clause, it expresses the fulfillment of Paul's request;¹⁶⁹ this is not a possibility (as per a normal subjunctive) but is the reality that comes through growing in our understanding of the love of Christ that is beyond comprehension. Paul's desire is that we will experience the fullness of God that comes through the love of Christ. There will come a day when this will be a reality, if we remain faithful to Him. “²Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-

¹⁶⁵ Strong's Online.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

3). This is the hope of those who are abiding *in Christ*; the mystery, whereof Paul has been made a minister, is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) – a present reality through the abiding Spirit of God, mingled with the hope of glory that will be realized when we abide forever in the presence of God.

As you pause to reflect on these requests of Paul, on behalf of the Ephesians and all who are faithful in Christ, it becomes readily apparent that this is a life-changing commitment. There is no room for a half-hearted assent to the tenants of Christianity while living a self-centered life – a life that is upheld as being righteous even while it appears to be no different from the world. “Christ in you” precludes any demonstration of the world’s values, its goals, or its pleasures; we are to fix our eyes only on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of saving faith (Hebrews 12:2). What we see so much of today is custom-designed faith: a faith that will not offend, a faith that will meet my needs, or a faith that will bring great numbers together in unity. Yet we are reminded that there is only “one Lord” (4:5), the same Lord Who desires to live in us, to be our hope of glory – not our hope for earthly prosperity. It is the same Lord Who, through Paul, said that if we will live godly in this life, then we can rest assured that we will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Today we would rather hear of prosperity than persecution, yet we must not neglect the Word of God in favor of the words of false teachers; there is a cross to be born, and we must not fail to bear it up, and follow the Lord (Luke 9:23).



20. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

Here, Paul breaks into an expression of praise to God. It’s as though his heart is so full of gratitude to God for all that He has done that he can’t hold it in any longer. In this verse, *able* and *power* are verb and noun forms of the same Greek word – a word that describes an **inherent** ability to act with strength; God is not enabled to act, but is capable of acting because of Who He is.¹⁷⁰ It seems that Paul had some difficulty expressing the full extent of God’s ability to act, for the Greek carries this sequence of words: *above, beyond measure*.¹⁷¹ There is a double thrust at God’s actions being beyond anything that we could *ask* (or desire) or *think* (or consider).¹⁷² It is this “beyond-understanding” power of God that is at work within us! God help us to submit to this wonder-working power!



21. *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Unto God are the splendor and the majesty shown forth in the gathering of the called-out ones, a glory that will only be exemplified by the effectual working of Christ in our lives. Young’s Literal gives the following for the last portion of this verse: “to all the generations of the age of the ages,” which is indeed a literal translation of the Greek. However, it seems that the Greeks

¹⁷⁰ Strong’s Online.

¹⁷¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁷² Strong’s Online.

used the word translated as *age* and *ages* to stand in contrast to a defined period of time; in other words, the word translated as *age(s)* really means an undefined amount of time or *forever*. Here is a declaration that God's glory will be demonstrated in the assembly of believers, by Christ Jesus, to all generations forever.



Chapter 4 – Worthy of Our Calling

-  1. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

As indicated earlier, chapter three seems to be somewhat parenthetical, and Paul now returns to phrasing that is very similar to the beginning of the third chapter: “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ ...” (chapter 3); “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord ...” (chapter 4). Now he hastens on into further instruction.

Vocation is from the Greek word for *a calling*, the implication being that it is the call of God to salvation. The Greek words translated as *beseech*, *vocation*, and *called* all contain a common root: *call* or *calling*. Therefore, Paul is saying, “I call on you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” We are to live according to the call of God on our lives; what is that calling? ¹¹“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, ¹²That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath **called you unto his kingdom and glory**” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12); “[God] Who hath saved us, and **called us with an holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9). We have received a holy calling; God has called us to holy living, therefore our walk must be a holy walk according to the power of the Spirit of God Who now abides within us. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9).

Could it be that it is at this point that New Evangelicalism has missed the mark, which has led to the present dramatic Evangelical failure? We have been called with a holy calling by a holy God; therefore, we must endeavor to understand what it means to live in holiness. The OT Scriptures are provided for our example (1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Hebrews 4:11) so that we can learn about God’s dealings with mankind. One of the things that should come through very clearly is that God is holy and cannot abide sinfulness (Habakkuk 1:13). Israel suffered much for neglecting God’s instructions to not mingle with the people of the land, and to not learn their ways (Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Yet one of the declared goals of the New Evangelicals was to dialogue with the Liberals and the heathen, so as to appear to be as intellectually limber as they; but God has declared that we are to be separate from them, lest we be rejected by Him (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). God has not changed; the teaching given to the Israelites is exactly the same as that which has been given to us! By setting this one clear instruction from Scripture aside, Evangelicals have placed themselves under God’s judgment (2 Corinthians 6:17); by following this one principle of their creed, they have established the precedent for abandoning the Word of God, and of ascribing greater value to their own understanding than to the instructions of a holy God. As they stepped out onto the slippery slope of compromise, it was only a short time before they brought the whole of Scripture into question, and soon the inerrancy of God’s Word was denied. Even though some within the New Evangelical movement recognized

the downgrade in doctrine, particularly dealing with the inspiration of the Bible, they seemingly failed to distinguish the reason for this or were unwilling to return to the position of separation to which God has called us.¹⁷³ “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25); the way of New Evangelicalism seemed so right to so many, yet, after sixty years, the product of this shift away from the clear instruction of Scripture has meant spiritual death for millions. Leaders of this movement will be held accountable for selling their birthright of heaven for a mess of pottage here on earth. However, it was not just their birthright that they sold, they created another gospel that is being presented today as life-giving when, in reality, it is nothing more than another knockoff marketed by Satan (Galatians 1:6-9), and, for that, they will receive the “anathema” of the Spirit of God.



2. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Here follows a brief overview of what should characterize our walk, before Paul launches into a lengthy explanation of the calling of God and how it is worked out in this “building fitly framed together” (2:21) – a growing Building whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ.

Lowliness means, “having a humble opinion of one’s self.”¹⁷⁴ This stands in stark contrast to the teachings of men like Robert Schuller and James Dobson who advocate the necessity of a healthy self-esteem for successful living. Once again, we are faced with the option of taking the Word of God or the word of man, for they cannot both be right. Sadly, Evangelicalism has been sold out to those who promote the teachings of men above the clear instruction of God; yet Evangelicals are without excuse, for they love to hear words that soothe their consciences, and take the edge off their guilt before a holy God. “³For the time will come when they [speaking of those within the assembly of believers] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [or stories. The Greek word is the one from which we get our word *myth*.]” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Today there is a great acceptance of mythological tales: *Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, and *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien are two that have gained great prominence of late, especially within the Evangelical community. C.S. Lewis is hailed today by Evangelicals, not only as a great writer of fantasy literature, but as one of their leading theologians – despite the fact that he promoted a form of universalism and purgatory, and, at the end of his life, was in the process of converting to Catholicism. J.R.R. Tolkien, on the other hand, was staunchly Catholic – yet Evangelicals today are ecumenical enough to turn a blind eye to the blatant error of these men and swallow their writings without a second



C.S. Lewis

¹⁷³ “Harold Lindsell wrote two books documenting the downgrade of the doctrine of inspiration among Evangelicals, but he never renounced the repudiation of separatism (*The Battle for the Bible* [1976] and *The Bible in the Balance* [1979]). He never went to the heart of the matter to call for strict Fundamentalist-style separation from all forms of Liberalism. As a result, his books had no impact on stemming the apostasy of the New Evangelical movement. The books were largely ignored and were never republished.” (“New Evangelicalism,” David Cloud, FBIS)

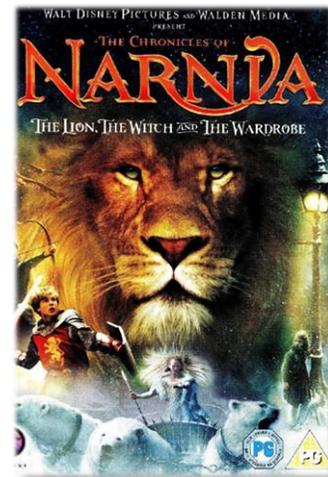
¹⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

thought (and, even worse, they feed these lies to their children). Even the likes of *Harry Potter* is being promoted as literature that is acceptable within Evangelical circles, and the movies are suitable viewing for children; there is such a blindness to error today that almost anything is acceptable – it seems that the worst possible error can be given a positive spin. We will forage through the garbage looking for one small nugget of good, not realizing that the longer we dig, the more we begin to look and smell like the garbage in which we are digging. We are called to separation, yet Evangelicals will go to great lengths to ignore this clear instruction in the Word of God.

Consider C.S. Lewis, since he occupies a prominent place among the theologians of Evangelicalism:

... a quote from one of Lewis's Narnia series, 'The Last Battle,' from the chapter 'Further up and Further in.' Note the following very carefully:

'Then I fell at his [Aslan, the Lion – representing God] feet and thought, Surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion (who is worthy of all honour) will know that **I have served Tash [the devil] all my days** and not him. ... But the Glorious One bent down his golden head and touched my forehead with his tongue and said, **Son, thou art welcome**. But I said, Alas, Lord, I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me. Then by reasons of my great desire for wisdom and understanding, I overcame my fear and questioned the Glorious One and said, Lord, is it then true, as the Ape said, that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled so that the earth shook (but his wrath was not against me) and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted. Dost thou understand, Child? I said, Lord, thou knowest how much I understand. But I said also (for the truth constrained me), Yet **I have been seeking Tash** all my days. Beloved, said the Glorious One, **unless thy desire had been for me thou shouldst not have sought so long and so truly**. For all find what they truly seek. (emphasis added)¹⁷⁵



¹⁷⁵ Cloud, David, "Beware of C.S. Lewis," <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/cslewis.htm>

It is clear from the emphasized portions of the above quote that C.S. Lewis is promoting heresy within this children's fantasy literature. He declares that it is possible to seek Satan all of your life, and end up with God. By contrast, the Scriptures tell us that "... without faith *it is* impossible to please [God] ..." (Hebrews 11:6). Lewis is promoting a works salvation where, if you do good deeds in the name of Satan, your works will be accepted by God. Yet to those who have done wonderful things in His name, yet they did not do the will of the Father, Jesus said that He would say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). The good works that these people did in the name of Jesus are called "iniquity," but Lewis would consider them to be the key to heaven. The error that C.S. Lewis promotes within this one small sampling of his children's literature is significant, yet today's Evangelicals embrace his writings without a second thought.

In one of his highly acclaimed treatises on theology, *Mere Christianity*, Lewis declared, "There are three things that spread the Christ life to us: baptism, belief, and that mysterious action which different Christians call by different names – Holy Communion, the Mass, the Lord's Supper."¹⁷⁶ This is not a slip of the pen for Lewis, for, as we have already noted, at the time of his death, he was in the process of converting to Roman Catholicism. This is not a bastion of theological fundamentalism, but a theological heretic who retains great admiration and popularity among Evangelicals today.

In the same book Lewis goes on to say, "There are people in other religions who are being led by God's secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and **who thus belong to Christ without knowing it**" (emphasis added).¹⁷⁷ This is heresy, but we have already seen that this very same doctrine is being promoted by men like Billy Graham; is it any wonder that C.S. Lewis has found approval within the Evangelical community?

Another one of today's influential Evangelicals who shouts Lewis' accolades from the rooftop is James Dobson. In the May 1999 issue of *Focus on the Family* magazine we read this endorsement of Lewis' Narnia: "Why read Lewis? Primarily, his Narnia tales would provide a means of thinking about the character of Jesus."¹⁷⁸ Then a mere year and half later, the same magazine carried this explanation of Lewis' writing: "Lewis never allowed his theology to usurp a good story. According to his many letters and reports from his friends, Lewis didn't begin with a theological point of view and then try to write a story around it. He wrote the stories out of his love for the genre and allowed the themes to bubble to the surface."¹⁷⁹ Even though these thoughts run contrary to Titus 2:1 (where we are commanded to speak "the things which become sound doctrine") it is extremely unpopular today to reject either Lewis or his writings. It is more acceptable to reject the Word of God than to hold Lewis up to the light of God's Word.

Lewis wrote the following ...: "Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it Really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering it is God's myth where the others are

¹⁷⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 53.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 176.

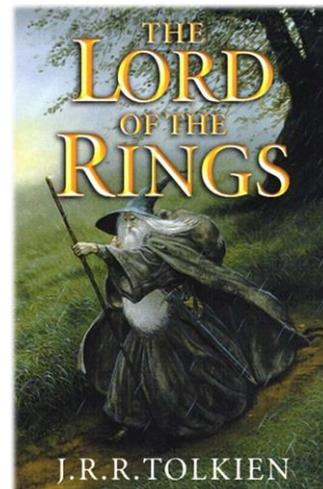
¹⁷⁸ Erhardt, Gretchen, "Lessons from a Lion," "Family," *Focus on the Family*, May 1999.

¹⁷⁹ McCusker, Paul, "The Chronicles of Narnia: Great Stories and Great Theology," "Family," *Focus on the Family*, December 2000.

men’s myths; i.e. the **Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of the poets**, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call “real things” ... namely, the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.”¹⁸⁰

Rather than these things reflecting badly on C.S. Lewis who is unquestionably not a Christian, and, therefore, is writing from the perspective of a pagan, it is in reality a reflection on the state of the modern Evangelical who will embrace the fantasy ramblings of a heretic as Biblical, allegorical literature.

Now a brief look at J.R.R. Tolkien, more because his “Lord of the Rings” is unduly popular among Evangelicals than because of his position as a theologian (being a Catholic):



Once again, we have to include James Dobson and his *Family* magazine: “‘The Lord of the Rings’ is of course a fundamentally religious and Christian work,’ he [Tolkien] wrote to a friend. ‘Unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision.’”¹⁸¹ The article goes on to say, “As a Christian, Tolkien understood that we’ve been in a tale, too. Like the adventure of his hobbits, he saw the adventure of our lives as part of a story that begins ‘once upon a time’ and moves toward its eventual ‘ever after’ – a tale full of meaning and purpose, composed by the grandest Author of all.”¹⁸² There, Dobson has published the declaration that Tolkien is a Christian, thereby setting up many who read his literature to take the bait, and swallow the lie. Yet, how could we expect anything else when Dobson holds an honorary doctorate from a Catholic university, and has gone out of his way to meet with the Pope. Rather than his declaration making Tolkien a de facto Christian, it calls the faith of James Dobson into question.

A mere glimpse into Tolkien’s thinking reveals much: “Man is not ultimately a liar. He may pervert his thoughts into lies, but he comes from God, and it is from God that he draws his ultimate ideals ... Not merely the abstract thoughts of men but also his imaginative inventions must originate with God, and in consequence reflect something of eternal truth.”¹⁸³ By contrast, Genesis 8:21 gives us God’s negative description of the imaginations of mankind: “...the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth ...”

Then there is a desire among Evangelicals for *Harry Potter*, and, once again, we find support and acceptance for this within the Focus on the Family courts:

Harry Potter is a standard tale of good vs. evil, and Rowling makes sure that good always wins in the end. ...

Christian author Chuck Colson describes Rowling’s magic as ‘purely mechanical, as opposed to occultic,’ explaining that ‘Harry and his friends cast spells, read crystal balls, and turn themselves into animals – but they don’t make contact with a supernatural world.’ And after all, C.S. Lewis had a magician and a witch as major

¹⁸⁰ Kjos, Berit, “Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings,” <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/rings.htm>

¹⁸¹ Ware, Jim, “Stories Within Stories,” “Family,” Focus on the Family, December 2001.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Kjos, Berit, “Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings,” <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/rings.htm>

characters in his Christian allegory ‘The Chronicles of Narnia,’ in which children entered this other world with the help of magical rings and a magical wardrobe. ...

C.S. Lewis wrote, ‘There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. ...

So what are Christian parents to do with *Harry Potter*? The books could be a springboard to fruitful discussion to prevent children from falling into either of these errors.¹⁸⁴

It is so evident that modern Evangelicals are ripe for anything but the pure Word of God; there is an epidemic of itching ears within Evangelicalism today, and they will stop at little in order to scratch their itch (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Here is an example of hearers who have turned from the truth to fables, in fulfillment of this Scripture; the response of Evangelicals to Lewis, Tolkien, and Rowling is very troubling. It’s incredible, but true!

Meekness speaks of *gentleness*, not to be misconstrued as weakness.¹⁸⁵ “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3), and although he was reluctant to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, to the point that God provided Aaron, his brother, as a spokesman, it would seem that it was not long before Moses found his voice. Here was a man who accepted leadership reluctantly, yet who was used by God to demonstrate His power before two nations. Jesus describes Himself as being meek: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). Meekness is one of the evidences of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:23); we, who are believing in the Lord Jesus for salvation, are to put meekness on (Colossians 3:12), and we are instructed to follow after meekness (1 Timothy 6:11). Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5); our society, on the other hand, is filled with those who will step on anyone who gets in the way of their goals, and meekness has come to be regarded as the makings of doormat material. Yet God’s ways are still higher than ours, and we must accept His instruction as right and good; although it may not see us gain ground in this life, it will prepare us for eternity with Him.

Longsuffering brings together *patience*, *endurance* and *slowness in avenging wrongs*.¹⁸⁶ This is something that requires a big-picture view of life, a paradigm that sees our short span of time in light of the vastness of eternity. It seems to be a certainty that we will be maligned, misunderstood, and persecuted in this life (Scripture has indicated that this will be normal if we desire to walk in God’s ways – 2 Timothy 3:12), yet we are called to persevere in following what is right. We live in a day of instant gratification, where most people seem to know what they want, and they want it now; we must stand in contrast to this.

Forbearing can mean to *hold up*, *sustain*, or *endure*.¹⁸⁷ So here, we can have holding one another up or enduring one another; or, perhaps, it is both. Consider the charge in Galatians 6:1 – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit

¹⁸⁴ Beam, Lindy, “Exploring Harry Potter’s World,” “Family,” Focus on the Family, May 2000.

¹⁸⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” This would be a case of holding one another up, of being that helping hand to lift up someone who has stumbled. Notice that in both cases (Galatians and Ephesians) the context reminds us of the necessity of meekness; there is to be no place for pride here, no room for arrogance, only gentleness – lest we be tempted, and fail in like manner.

We are also cautioned to consider our weaker brother and to conduct ourselves in a manner that will not cause him offense; this would be more of an enduring or bearing with someone. “⁹But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. ... ¹²But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1 Corinthians 8:9,12). There is a real sense in which we are to bear with those who are weaker in the faith, lest we become a hindrance to their spiritual growth; not that we are to cater to their weakness in not obeying what God requires of us, but rather holding under restraint the freedom that we may have in our spiritual maturity as we live before those who have not yet learned this freedom. The crux of the matter is that we are to be continually looking out for the good of our fellow believer, rather than simply doing whatever we feel that we have the freedom to do (Philippians 2:3-4). If we fail to take into account the weakness of our brother or sister in the Lord, and wound them thereby, we have sinned against Christ Himself. However, even while we are to live in consideration of those who are weaker in the faith, this does not become an excuse for the weaker brother to remain weak; there is to be instruction and exhortation that focuses on the truths of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13), there is to be growth and a deepening understanding of spiritual things (Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).



3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We must not lose sight of what has just come before this exhortation: we are to walk in humility of mind, in meekness, in patience, always looking for the good of the other person. With this in mind, we now receive a challenge to action, which is to flow from this self-less attitude. *Endeavoring* carries the idea of *exerting one's self* or to *give diligence* to.¹⁸⁸ We are to expend energy in order to achieve what follows, and give it careful consideration; this would indicate that it may not always be easy, but the effort is to be made. What is it that we are to do? We are to *keep the unity of the Spirit*. To *keep* means to *attend to carefully* or to *guard*,¹⁸⁹ hence the idea is that we are to be diligent to protect, to fend off those who would seek to undermine or rob us of the unity of the Spirit. This is a unity that already exists, a unity that does not need to be created, but rather defended; this unity is to be kept in the *bond of peace*. The word *bond* speaks of *that which binds together*,¹⁹⁰ and comes from the same Greek word that is used for the ligaments, which hold all parts of the body together. This bond is peace or harmony; we are to do our utmost to guard the oneness of the Spirit in peace.

This is something that Evangelicals have twisted into the pretzel of Ecumenism. Consider the thinking of the late Charles Colson, a leading proponent of Ecumenism in his day:

¹⁸⁸ Strong's Online.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

Holding the church to its historic faith, both in its practices and institutions, is a necessary corrective [against a poor testimony before the world]. But shouldn't it be done in love and with understanding, showing grace instead of rancor?

Rancor not only destroys witness, it also exposes weakness of conviction. The less secure people are in their beliefs, the more strident they become. Conversely, the more confident people are of the truth, the more grace they exhibit to those who don't agree. "Tolerance is the natural endowment of true convictions," wrote Paul Tournier. [Paul Tournier was a Swiss physician born in 1898 who sought to integrate Christianity with psychology, and who advocated universalism; who sought to ascribe greater value to maintaining good relations with fellow Christians than accuracy of doctrine – an excellent resource for someone like Colson.¹⁹¹] ...

Can there really be "one body and one spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism" and at the same time be divisions or separations between Christians? The Scripture is clear on this; unity is a matter of obedience.

We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church.¹⁹²



Chuck Colson

Notice the progression of thinking here: 1) a lack of unity is a poor testimony to the world, and a lack of unity will display animosity (*rancor*); 2) disagreement is evidence of unsure convictions (and this is presented as a fact, when in reality it is simply an opinion that smacks of a psychological philosophy); 3) tolerance of others exhibits possession of the truth (again, an opinion presented as fact, and supported by a liberal theologian); and 4) unity is really obedience (a fact declared to be supported by Scripture, but the Scripture that he quotes does not support it). Colson errs in several of his conclusions while presenting his case: 1) he assumes that a lack of unity means animosity; 2) he accepts as fact that the less we know for sure, the more strident we will be in our arguments; 3) he agrees with a liberal Universalist that tolerance is a godly quality; and 4) he twists a passage of Scripture to wring out a conclusion that does not fit. It is interesting to note that all through the progression of his reasoning, Colson does not bring Scripture in until right at the end when he tries to make the point that "unity is a matter of obedience"; then he endeavors to make the Word of God fit the philosophy that he has been spinning. However, what is clear from the passage that he quotes is that the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" is a present reality – it is already an existing and determined truth; it is not a product of our obedience! The foundation for the verse that Colson quotes lies in the verse that we are now considering, "keep the unity of the Spirit" – we are exhorted to guard or to keep something that is already in existence, and not something that we are to bring into being. This is the error that is prevalent among Evangelicals today; there is a push for unity because, like Colson, they see it as the essence of the church.

¹⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Tournier

¹⁹² Charles Colson, *The Body*, p. 102. Colson goes on to quote from Wolfhart Pannenberg, a Lutheran theologian who advocated that truth was something that we could never know for sure, and from Richard Neuhaus, a Catholic friend and fellow-author of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* document.

Yet amazingly, Colson is also critical of the World Council of Churches. He claims not to advocate a unity that is based on the lowest common denominator (as does the WCC); rather, he states, “True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share.”¹⁹³ Therefore, unlike the WCC, Colson will admit that there are differences, but chooses to focus on “the great orthodox truths all Christians share,” thus creating his own lowest common denominator. The net result is very similar to the WCC, for any differences, which arise, are simply ignored – is ignoring differences much different from pretending that they don’t exist? The greatest mistake made by Colson, and all others of like mind, is ignoring the many passages of Scripture that call on us to separate from error.

There is a dichotomy in the minds of most Evangelicals today. On the one hand, they advocate adherence to the Word of God; they accept that the Scriptures are infallible and believe that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. Like Colson, they declare that the Holy Spirit “can never lead believers into disunity.”¹⁹⁴ Yet, on the other hand, they join themselves with spiritual infidels, and enjoy great “fellowship.” How can they advocate that the Holy Spirit will guide them into all truth and hold the Word of God as infallible even while they ignore the clear teachings of Scripture? Their actions declare their words to be a lie. They do not hold to the infallibility of Scripture – for they do not obey its teachings. They, like Colson, have reduced the Scriptures to essentials and non-essentials – the former being the determined lowest common denominator that will permit them to join with those who believe another gospel; the latter being everything else, which they feel justified to simply ignore.

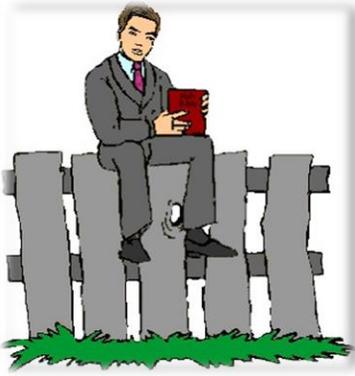
A Preacher on the Fence

From out of the millions of the earth
God often calls a man
To preach the Word, and for the truth
To take a royal stand.
'Tis sad to see him shun the Cross,
Nor stand in its defense
Between the fields of right and wrong:
A preacher on the fence.

Before him are the souls of men
Bound for Heaven or Hell;
An open Bible in his hand,
And yet he will not tell
All the truth that's written there,
It haveth an offence-
The joys of Heaven, the horrors of Hell-
A preacher on the fence.

¹⁹³ Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.



Now surely God has called the man
To battle for the right.
'Tis his to ferret out the wrong
And turn on us the light.
And yet he dare not tell the truth,
He fears the consequence.
The most disgusting thing on earth
Is a preacher on the fence.

If he should stand up for the wrong,
The right he'd not defend;

If he should stand up for the right,
The wrong he would offend.
His mouth is closed, he cannot speak
For freedom or against.
Great God deliver us from
A preacher on the fence.

But soon both sides will find him out
And brand him as a fraud,
A coward who dares not to please
The devil or his God.
Oh God, free us from fear of man,
From cowardly pretence;
Cleanse out the dross and fear of loss,
And keep us off the fence.

~ Unknown

 4. There is *one body*, and *one Spirit*, even as ye are called in *one hope* of your calling;

Following on with the thought of the unity that there is in the Spirit, it is declared that there is *one body*. First Corinthians 12:27 states that we are the Body of Christ: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular [or in part].” So what is this Body? The dispensational, systematic theology of Evangelicalism declares that Israel has been set aside by God (because they rejected their Messiah, Jesus), and God has established the “Church” as the Body of Christ, a Body of believers made up of those who are saved within this “Age of Grace,” or the “Church Age” (which they define as being from Pentecost through to the return of Christ). The implication in this theology is that if Israel had not rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they would have gone directly into the millennial kingdom, the “Church” being merely a parenthetical insertion into God’s dealings with Israel; a further implication from this is that Jesus’ death would not have been necessary if the Jews had accepted Him as their Messiah. Nothing could be further from the truth, for Jesus’ sacrifice for the sins of mankind was foreordained by God before the world began (Ephesians 1:4-5; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 13:8); His sacrifice was illustrated through the

ordinances of sacrifices that were instituted within Israel at the time of Moses; spiritual victory was promised to Adam and Eve, and anticipated immediately after the fall (Genesis 3:15 and 4:1).

So then, if it is not a parenthetical institution by God, an afterthought in His dealings with Israel (and the evidence would indicate that it is not such), then what is this Body? Hebrews 10:8-10 helps us bridge the gap in our thinking:

⁸... [Quoting from Psalm 40:6] Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; [This passage of the Word of God was written at a time when the sacrificial system was in full force, yet there is a recognition within the Psalmist's words that it was neither the ordinances nor the ceremonies that were of significance before God.]

⁹Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. [The first part is a quote from Psalm 40:7-8, a Messianic Psalm. The Writer of Hebrews goes on to explain that Jesus, the Messiah, came to take away the ordinances of the Law of Moses (the first) that He might establish forever the will of God (the second).]

¹⁰By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. [By the will of God, which Jesus came to do, we are *sanctified*, which means to set apart, and is from the same Greek root word used for the word *saint*.¹⁹⁵]

From this, we can clearly see that Jesus' crucifixion was not a result of the Jews rejecting Him as their Messiah, but was the fulfillment of the foreordained plan of God; it was God's plan that a sacrifice for the sins of mankind would be made, and He used the Jews' rejection of Jesus to accomplish His plan. Hebrews 10:8 tells us that Jesus removed the first (the ordinances of the Law, the sacrificial system that was established through Moses) in order to establish the will of God in a single act of reconciliation for all those who believe. Hebrews 10 goes on to express the necessity of a persevering faith in the offering that Christ made in order to secure our eternal life (vs. 19-23,38); immediately following this passage of instruction comes the "faith chapter" where we read of the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, et.al. There is no call to separate chapter 10 from chapter 11; therefore, there is no basis to say that the saints of all the ages are not one body, the Body of Christ, Who is the promised Deliverer from sin for all of mankind. Christ made one sacrifice, which was for all; He is the only Mediator between man and God – there is no other. Then, why would we try to separate those whom God has purchased out of sin into two categories? We have already seen that Christ has removed the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14), yet dispensational Evangelicals seem intent on rebuilding that wall.

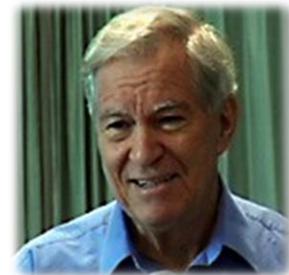
In harmony with the unity of the Spirit (v.3), it is affirmed that there is only one Spirit; so there is a oneness in the one Spirit, the Comforter sent by the Father and the Son (John 14:16; 15:26).

Despite the waffling of today's Evangelicals, there is only *one hope*, and that is Jesus. This runs contrary to modern thinking, which demands an acceptance of all beliefs no matter how bizarre. We've grown up in what has been termed a pluralistic society, which means that we've

¹⁹⁵ Strong's Online.

demonstrated tolerance to those about us in the area of beliefs and religion; although we may not have agreed with another person's beliefs, we've permitted him to hold them – and this has been supported by the laws of the land. However, things have changed, and continue to change. It is no longer sufficient to be tolerant of others (to permit them to believe whatever they like); it is now becoming increasingly important that we accept their beliefs as equally true with our own. In other words, everything has become subjective, and, although we are permitted to hold our own truths (as under pluralism), to tell someone that their view of truth is incorrect is no longer tolerated. Today, what may be truth for me may not be truth for you, but that's okay; however, I must accept your truth as being truth for you, and that your truth is just as valid as my truth. The bottom line is this: there is no longer room for absolute truth; we must be accepting of everyone's version of truth. Nevertheless, there is one exception to this rule: tolerance will not be extended to the person who says that he has absolute truth and everyone else is wrong. Most faiths in the world have no problem with this exception, for they are generally inclusive – the problems arise with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which are all monotheistic. However, it is amazing to watch the efforts that are being made by those within each of these faiths to become inclusive; there is a movement away from anything that could be construed as being black-and-white, and a shift toward a grayness, a fog of confusion, tolerance and compromise. As today's Evangelicals pull the shades ever lower to block out the revealing, convicting light of the Word of God, they create a world apart from God where they can practice the accommodation and compromise that God has warned them to avoid. Even as Israel of old mixed the teachings of Moses, and the judges who followed him, with the religious practices of the nations that they were to have displaced, so today's Evangelicals have managed to reduce the light to the point where they feel comfortable setting the Scriptures aside as they reach out to those who hold opinions contrary to God's Word. The slide of compromise for both Israel and today's Evangelicals began the same way: they turned their backs on the separation from error that God demands.

When our local Evangelical Free Church, in which we were very involved, sought to bring in a group of Pentecostal Indians to show us how the North American Indians were incorporating their native customs into Christianity, I protested to the pastor and Board. For support in my position, I sought the counsel of Don Richardson, of *Peace Child* fame, thinking that someone who had dealt with heathen customs so intimately would surely understand the danger being foisted upon us here in Three Hills. Yet when I presented my case, including the fact that the Pentecostal pastor was “reintroducing cultural dancing and drumming (with regalia) to his congregation”¹⁹⁶, here was the response that I received:



Don Richardson

Many Christian churches in Canada and the U.S. and probably 100,000 churches in Africa use drums in worship services. I urge people who ask me, do not throw chilly water on these new emerging Native North American Christian leaders. We have been waiting a very long time for their emergence. I am confident you will sense the Holy Spirit bearing His witness thru [sic] them.

¹⁹⁶ Aiden Schlichting Enns, “Where the Spirit Lives,” *Faith Today*, July/August 2000.

We whites have an incredible amount of historical sin to atone for. Harsh judgmental attitudes will only add to that hill of unwisdom.¹⁹⁷

Where I had anticipated steadfastness on the Word of God, and hoped for a word of wisdom on how to handle the accommodation that I faced, I found compromise already present. There has been a massive shift to become flexible in our understanding of Scripture, lest we cause offense. However, Jesus caused offense to the extent that He was unable to work miracles among those who saw Him grow up (Matthew 13:57-58), and He certainly offended the religious of His day (Matthew 15:7-9,12). If the Word of God causes offense, then we must be prepared to hold to the Bible and bear the offense.

Our *calling*, and by implication this is God’s calling to salvation, is based on one Hope, and that is Christ. There is no other way; Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). That is an exclusive statement, which is not readily accepted today, not even within the Evangelical community. Billy Graham has fudged on the exclusivity of this statement, as has Joel Osteen, Robert Schuller, and many others of like mind. The Evangelical Free Church has segmented Scripture into “essentials” and “non-essentials,” and anything that might result in separation from someone who says that they are a Christian is deemed to be “non-essential.”

The test to determine if someone is a Christian is no longer the Word of God; they simply have to say that they are, and that is accepted. Today we have a lethal combination of an obsession to be united with other “Christians” and an overarching “judge not” (which really means, “discern not”). Within this atmosphere, it comes as no surprise that Evangelicals are joining with those who call themselves Christians (whether they are apostate Liberals, Catholics or Mormons). When the spiritual standard that we use is no longer the Word of God, the measure can easily be adjusted to meet the current requirements.



5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

The exclusivity of Christianity continues to be underscored here. There is one Lord – the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the best efforts of Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, and all of those who follow in their paths, there is only **one** Lord; there are **not** many paths to God, there are **not** many spiritual leaders to sincerely follow to eternal life, there is only **one** Mediator between God and man, and that is Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

There is one faith – the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), the faith for which we are to contend, the faith described in the eternally preserved and indestructible Word of God. Although Charles Colson would quote this verse in his discussions to bring Evangelicals and Catholics together, the one faith to which he held, along with his Catholic friends, is not the faith of the Scriptures. The essence of Colson’s position (and all of those who endeavor to join hands with the Catholics) is to set aside everything that conflicts with Catholic doctrine and deem them to be insignificant issues – those “non-essential” Scriptures. The Catholics will not change their teachings (to do so would violate the principle of the infallibility of the Pope’s utterances); therefore, the only option is for the Evangelicals to reduce their theology to those few things they

¹⁹⁷ Personal communication from Don Richardson, October 15, 2000.

hold in common with the Catholic faith. There is no denying that Catholics hold to some common beliefs with us (it would go without saying, since their faith is derived from that which was once delivered to the saints), but it should be equally clear that their faith is based upon another gospel, which is no Gospel – and, therefore, it is a false faith, and a deception of the devil. Second Corinthians 11 speaks of “¹³... false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” The Pope is a false apostle who falsely claims to be a successor of Peter, and, thereby, an apostle of Christ (Revelation 2:2).

There is *one baptism* – an external act of emersion that publicly identifies us with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Yet even the Evangelical Free Church will not take a stand on the matter of baptism, and continues to recognize any form. The Catholic and Reformed churches all hold to infant baptism; the Catholics see it as a part of salvation, the others as a seal of being one of the *elect*. This is not the baptism of which Paul wrote in Romans 6. The word *baptize* means to “immerse.”¹⁹⁸ “Christian baptism originally consisted in [*sic*] full immersion.”¹⁹⁹ Clearly, the word is used for activities that are in contradiction to its actual meaning.



6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

What we must not do, as we look at this verse, is divorce it from the earlier part of this same sentence: *there is one body*. The context of this declaration is not the world in general, but those who have been purchased out of sin, the saints of God, that one Body of Christ. This is not a verse that supports Universalism, but, rather, one that describes God’s relationship with His children. He is our God and Father; He is the Creator of all, yet He fills the role of Father for each of us. He is greater than anyone or anything – *above* or *over* all. God is evident through creation (Romans 1:20); He is teaching the angels through His dealings with us – we are an object lesson of His grace to the angelic hosts of heaven (3:10); and He is in us – the theme of Ephesians: *Christ in you*. The use of the word *all* (as used the first time in this verse) is not to be applied to all of mankind, for that would be a direct contradiction of other passages of Scripture. Yet the theme of Mormonism and New Age thinkers is that God is in all of us, and it is only needful that we permit the god within to grow and flourish. The Mormons hold that “man is ... a God in embryo.”²⁰⁰ However, that does not deter Evangelicals from seeking to build bridges with the Mormons; Ravi Zacharias, a leader among Evangelicals, has recently taken the lead in this tragedy. In similar fashion to the Roman Catholics, Mormons will not change their doctrines or beliefs, but Evangelicals will focus on what they determine to be the “essentials” of faith in order to give themselves license to hobnob with infidels in direct contradiction to Scripture (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Man is working on “one faith,” not the faith once delivered to the saints for which we are to contend earnestly (Jude 3), but, rather, a faith that will bring other faiths together under one banner in preparation for the work of the Antichrist. It would seem evident that we are living in the day when a “falling away” from the faith, as declared in the Scriptures, is in full progress; we must

¹⁹⁸ Strong’s Online.

¹⁹⁹ www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=b&p=2

²⁰⁰ Covey, Stephen R., *Spiritual Roots of Human Relations*, p. 74.

make every effort to not be swayed into complacency or the error of Ecumenism (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).



7. *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

*Grace is that which affords joy, pleasure, delight.*²⁰¹ God's delight was to provide a way for sinful mankind to once again enjoy fellowship with Him so that man might be purchased out of his sinfulness in order to live in the holiness for which he was created. The context here is walking *worthy of the vocation*, or calling, that we have received. We have been called to walk in holiness, and here we are assured that we have all been given a measure of grace – sufficient to walk worthy of God's call on our lives. What is the *measure of the gift of Christ*? Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing [or a gift], that there shall not be room enough to receive it."²⁰² If we would but render to God what He desires of us, if we would walk worthy of the holy calling that we have received from Him, then we would be overwhelmed with the measure of His blessings! Notice that it is the windows of heaven that will be opened, not the vaults of earth – we cannot construe this to be the health, wealth and prosperity gospel that is peddled by some charlatans today. We are called to a spiritual walk of holiness; a fleshly walk is not pleasing to God (Romans 8:4,8), and a fleshly mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7).

We are "given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" – but what is His gift? The Greek word for gift here is *dorea*, which "denotes a free gift," specifically a spiritual or supernatural gift.²⁰³ Jesus said to His disciples:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall **give you** another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ... (John 14:16).

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send **in my name**, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

But when the Comforter is come, whom **I will send** unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me ... (John 15:26).

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, **I will send him** unto you (John 16:7).

God has bestowed His grace upon those who believe, through the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit's working and influence, we are given the ability to walk in a manner that is worthy of a holy God, to live a life of holiness as we have been called to live. A way has been made for us to walk worthy of the calling to which God has called us.

²⁰¹ Strong's Online.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Vine's "gift."

This Gift has been given to “us,” the saints of Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1); we have been marked by the Holy Spirit (1:13) if we have trusted in Christ. It is through this indwelling Spirit of God that we receive the measure of the grace that He determines to apportion to us. We can rest assured that this grace is sufficient for the life to which God has called us, sufficient to walk in a manner that is worthy of His calling.



8. *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

This is a quote from Psalm 68:18, which is thought to have been written on the occasion of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant (the visible presence of God) up to Jerusalem. Paul gives this passage a Messianic meaning by applying it to Christ. When Christ ascended to the Father, He took *captive* the *captivity*. This is an unclear passage, but perhaps it refers to the saints from Adam to the time of Christ’s ascension who were held in the “bosom of Abraham” (Luke 16:19-31), unlike those after Christ ascended (and the Spirit of God descended) who are now “absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). If all of the saints were taken by Christ into the presence of the Lord when He ascended into heaven, He would have indeed captured those who were held in captivity (albeit a pleasant one), and have led them into glory. Even while He was accomplishing this, He also gave gifts unto men: the first and primary gift is the Comforter, the Spirit of God, Who was sent to guide us into all truth (John 16:7,13); however, there were more gifts and these will be identified beginning in verse 11.



9. *(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)*

This begins a parenthetical passage – that is, it breaks into the main flow of thought. The Spirit would have us recognize that Christ not only ascended to the Father, but that He also came from the Father to earth. However, it was not simply a matter that Christ came from heaven to earth, but He took on the body of a man and then, humbling Himself, bore the sin of the world, lowering Himself even further to die on a cross (Philippians 2:5-11). There is some disparity of view as to what the *lower parts of the earth* refers. There are those, like Albert Barnes, who believe it is simply speaking of Jesus’ incarnation; indeed, in the Hebrew, what is often translated as *lower* (or *lowest*) *parts* figuratively may refer to the womb. “¹⁴I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. ¹⁵My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the **lowest parts of the earth**” (Psalm 139:14-15). However, the more usual application speaks of the depths of the earth²⁰⁴, or the lowest places of the earth.²⁰⁵ “Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye **lower parts of the earth**: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel” (Isaiah 44:23). This would obviously exclude Hades (the place of the unrighteous dead), for no rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord will come from those who face an eternity outside of the presence of God.

²⁰⁴ Strong’s Dictionary, *ESword* (<http://www.e-sword.net/index.html>).

²⁰⁵ Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

According to Jesus' own words, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40), He places Himself in the depths of the earth for three days and nights.²⁰⁶ We are not told what was transpiring during these three days and nights, but we can be sure that Jesus was in the depths of the earth for that time – He said so.

We cannot comprehend the descent that Jesus took in coming to earth to bear the sin of the world in His body (1 Peter 2:24). This same Jesus, Who came from heaven's glory and the presence of the Father, has now ascended above all to sit at the Father's right hand (1:20-23). Even as His descent was part of His saving action for us, so, too, His ascension is a vitally important part of our salvation.



10. *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

Christ ascended *that he might fill all things* or *so that He did accomplish all things*; He ascended to the very presence of God so that He could fulfill the payment for the sins of all of humanity (Hebrews 9:11-12). It is because of this that it is declared that there is one Lord (1:23), and that "¹⁰... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).²⁰⁷ Here Paul identifies two additional results from Christ having been *highly exalted* by the Father: *every knee will bow* at His name and *everyone will confess* that He is Lord! Although both *bow* and *confess* are in the subjunctive mood, they form purpose clauses that tell us why God has "highly exalted him [Christ], and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9); as such, the subjunctive mood no longer suggests possibility, but is handled as the indicative mood – a statement of fact.²⁰⁸ The ultimate expression of Christ's authority (when all who come before Him will acknowledge Him as Lord) will be at the final judgment when everyone whose name is not in the Book of Life will be banished to the Lake of Fire to spend eternity with the devil and his minions (Revelation 10:12-15). It is because of Jesus' full payment for the sins of humanity that God has *highly exalted Him*, while it is still today we can bow before Him as our Lord and have our name recorded in the Book of Life (2 Corinthians 6:2). This is another glimpse of Who Christ is, and what He has done, before Paul launches into a listing of the gifts that have been given to us, besides the Comforter.



11. *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

Here is a delineation of gifts that Christ has given to us. It would seem from 1 Corinthians 12:28 that there is an order to the bestowal of these gifts: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." A simple comparison of the two lists gives indication

²⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

that this is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather a presentation of **some** of the gifts from the Holy Spirit. In our passage, God “gave” these as gifts; in the Corinthian passage, God “set” them into place – in both cases, they find their origin in God, not man. It is generally accepted that the letter to the Corinthians was written about 5 years earlier than the letter to the Ephesians; it is also evident that the thrust of the two letters is quite different – the former being corrective in nature, the latter more instructive.²⁰⁹ God “setting” these gifts into the Body would be language more fitting for a corrective letter, whereas emphasizing the “giving” aspect is instructive in demonstrating God’s benevolence to His own.

What is clear from both passages is that not everyone bears all of the gifts presented, and that God is the One Who is the giver. If we understand that these are gifts from God given to individuals as He chooses, then we must accept that there is nothing that we can do to promote ourselves from one gift to another. God, Who knows all things, has apportioned to each a gift for His glory, and we must determine to walk in what God has ordained for us.

⁴Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [‘to bear together’²¹⁰]. ⁸For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; ⁹To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; ¹⁰To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: ¹¹But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

It is God Who determines the gift that is needed; it is our responsibility to walk worthy of the vocation to which God has called us (Ephesians 4:1).

It would seem that the gifts listed here are not general in nature, but, rather, are given for a specific purpose (which is outlined in the following verses). These are gifts from God focused particularly on those who filled leadership roles within the Body. Not every local expression of the Body of Christ will necessarily have all of the gifts, but we can be assured that what is needed will be there. What is important to note is that these are gifts, and that they are given by God.

Apostle – the Greek word means, “one sent forth.”²¹¹ We typically think first of the Lord’s twelve disciples as the Apostles, and, indeed, when Jesus chose the twelve, they were called Apostles (Luke 6:13). If we use this as the criteria for determining apostleship, then today there are only twelve; Judas lost his position, and Paul was called by Jesus to His work and ministry. The Scriptures give no indication that anyone else was called in this way. There are others in Scripture who are referred to as apostles, but they were always sent out by a group of Christians. For example, Barnabas is referred to as an apostle (Acts 14:14), but he was commissioned by the believers at Antioch, and not by a direct call from Jesus; depending on how you interpret 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Silas and Timothy could be included as apostles, but again, they were commissioned by others, not directly by the Lord. The names of the twelve Apostles will be

²⁰⁹ <http://bible.org/seriespage/pauline-epistles>

²¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

²¹¹ Vine’s “apostle.”

inscribed in the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14), thereby limiting the apostleship to twelve; there cannot be a multitude of Apostles. However, that does not mean that there will not be those who would attempt to take on the mantle of Apostle (not recognizing that it is a gift from God), and indeed the Catholics today believe that the Pope fills the role as a successor Apostle to Peter. There is evidence that, even before the canon of Scripture was closed, there were those who sought to assume this role, and then were properly judged as frauds. In the note to the Ephesian messenger, the apostle John wrote, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Revelation 2:2). The role of Apostle carried great weight among the early believers, and it seems evident that there were those who sought that influence. Are there Apostles today? Clearly, there are those who may be “sent forth” by a group of believers, but that does not make them apostles after the manner of those who were chosen by our Lord; within this context, this is a closed gifting.

Prophet – “one who speaks forth . . . , a proclaimer of a divine message.”²¹² Couched within this is the concept of proclaiming the hidden truths of God, an element of inspiration that produces revelation. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 13:8 that there will come a time when prophecies will cease – perhaps an indication that when the canon of Scripture was completed, we should no longer look for special revelation. 2 Peter 2:1 declares: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you . . .”; this would seem to indicate a transition from a time of false prophets to a time of false teachers, from a time when there would be those who would portray themselves as divinely inspired when they were not, to a time when there would be those who would endeavor to make Scripture say what it was never meant to say. Are there prophets today? – not in the full sense of the word; we may have those who will speak forth the truth, but they will not claim to be speaking revelation from God; if they do, they will not be speaking forth truth from God. Much error has been brought into the Flock by those who purport to have a revelation from God. Many of the cults, which lay claim to Christianity, have come about through just this means.

Evangelist – this is a “bringer of good tidings.”²¹³ It would seem that this was someone who would declare the Gospel, but who would not necessarily hold responsibilities of leadership within a local body of believers. Very possibly this could be someone who traveled about proclaiming the Gospel – a preacher of the Word of God, but not an overseer of a local flock.

Pastor – this word is “shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them).”²¹⁴ The responsibilities of a shepherd are 1) to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep, 2) to defend the sheep, 3) to heal the wounded and sick, 4) to find and save lost or trapped sheep, and 5) to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust.²¹⁵ It doesn’t take much contemplation to realize that most who call themselves “pastors” today fall short of the work of a shepherd. Today we have redefined the enemies of our souls as friends of the faith, so that there is no longer a perceived need to be on the alert for those who were once considered to be enemies, and, in reality, still are. Healing is left to the professionals, whether medical or psychological, thereby freeing the shepherd from any responsibilities in this area. We have resurveyed the

²¹² Vine’s “prophet.”

²¹³ Strong’s Online.

²¹⁴ Vine’s “pastor.”

²¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

sheepfold to include the wild and rugged terrain where the sheep may become lost or trapped, so there is no need to seek those who are in trouble, for the widened sheepfold already includes them. We are all far too busy to have time to share our lives with anyone, and so the shepherd expects the sheep to fall in line because he is the shepherd, not because he has invested his life into theirs and has earned their trust. Today's shepherd misuses Hebrews 13:17, which says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves"; he uses it as a stick to keep his sheep in line. Although the word *obey* is a command, it does not simply demand blind obedience, but rather submission that is based on earned trust (something that may take time). Vine's says, "the obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion."²¹⁶ "Pastor" is not an office that includes authority to which we are to submit; this is the gift of shepherding, given by God; there is no inherent authority residing within this gift.

Today the pastor is defined as "a Christian minister or priest in charge of a congregation,"²¹⁷ which sounds more like the president of a company than a shepherd who is to earn the trust of his sheep. However, when you consider that most "pastors" don't stay with a congregation for longer than a few years, it is easy to realize that most of the responsibilities of a shepherd remain unfulfilled, to the detriment of the Flock. We have become very worldly-minded in how we govern a local body of believers. "Pastors" come and go, and expect the people to obey them implicitly, even though they may make no effort to demonstrate their trustworthiness. Elders are elected by the "membership" for a period of time, often without consideration being given to the Biblical qualifications for the position. We have resorted to a democratic form of government for the appointment of elders and the call of "pastors," something that has no Biblical basis. We hold to our own traditions over the Word of God.

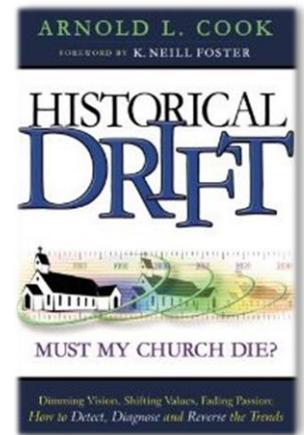
Teacher – This word is what it is. However, we are warned to be diligent, to be on the alert for false teachers (2 Peter 2:1) who are clearly not a gift to the Body of Christ. These would be Satan's counterfeits, those who will proclaim things that we might like to hear (2 Timothy 4:3), perhaps even demonstrating a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:2-5), but we are to be spiritually discerning and turn away from such as these; they may be highly educated yet are "never able to come to the knowledge [precise and correct knowledge] of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).²¹⁸ Today there are many well-educated men and women presenting their teachings on the radio, over TV, or through print, who may demonstrate a form of godliness, but are entangled in the web of their own philosophies, and are unable to understand the simple truths of Scripture. Watch their associations, for that will often betray their true position; "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). We must be alert, for there may be much truth in their message, but it is for the error, which is mixed in, that we must turn away from them.

²¹⁶ Vine's "obey."

²¹⁷ Encarta Dictionary, "pastor."

²¹⁸ Strong's Online.

Take, for example, the book *Historical Drift* by Arnold Cook, former Canadian president of the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, who received his doctorate from Fuller Seminary. In it, he makes the statement, “Doctrinally sound and morally pure – that’s what Christ was and is looking for.”²¹⁹ That is a good statement and one with which we could heartily agree. He also makes the observation that “standing for doctrinal truth will place us in situations where we will be perceived as breaking Christian unity,”²²⁰ and, once again, we would have to say, as we ponder the thrust of this comment, that this is clearly accurate. Yet in the midst of these good statements, he says, “Every Christian organization must balance its unswerving alignment with God’s revelation with its commitment to communication through relevance.”²²¹ In other words, we must hold our commitment to the Word of God on equal balance with what we understand to be the relevant communication of God’s Word; he advocates giving an objective reality (the Word of God) equal weight with a subjective determination as to what is relevant today. Additionally, he has no hesitation in using the sciences of sociology and psychology, despite their humanistic foundation, as tools to assist in determining what a group of believers needs to do in order to remain relevant.²²² It is this strange mixture of truth and error that is so characteristic of Evangelical teachers today. We must be on guard at all times, and be prepared to turn aside from those who may say many very good things, but will mix things in that are contrary to sound doctrine: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). We are told to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to [alongside of] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).²²³



12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

This is the first of three reasons for God giving these gifts to the Body of Christ (or three results that will be realized from these gifts). *Perfecting* carries with it the thought of “completely furnishing” or “equipping.”²²⁴ Later on in chapter six, Paul speaks of putting on the whole armor of God – these gifts (as apostles, prophets, etc) were given by God to us (the faithful in Christ) so that we may be properly equipped, and that we may understand and be prepared to withstand the enemy. We may be the saints of God, but that is more a reflection of who we are in Christ than how we live from day-to-day; this *perfecting* involves a process over time – one that will be ultimately fulfilled when we are with Jesus. We are challenged to seek those things that are above (Colossians 3:1), to resist the devil (James 4:7), to hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:13), and to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12); our life with Christ is not a walk in the park; it is a battle – there are foes to face and an enemy for whom to be on the

²¹⁹ Cook, Arnold, *Historical Drift*, p. 138.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180-181.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²²³ Strong’s Online.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

alert. Our walk with Christ through this life is to be characterized by growth, an upward progression – not an instantaneous arrival (Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:18; Romans 7).

Again, we are faced with the reality that we must adhere to the Word of God over everything else that may beckon us. Unlike Arnold Cook, who advocates balancing the Word of God and social relevancy, we must be prepared to stand on God’s unalterable Word whether we are deemed to be relevant or old-fashioned, accepting of others or narrow-minded. God has not called us to win a popularity contest within the Evangelical community; He has called us to be salt and light in a decaying and darkening world, whether that is within a godless context or a so-called Christian context. There will be no *perfecting of the saints* if we compromise the truths of Scripture; indeed, we live among a people who profess Christianity but who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).

Secondly, God has provided these gifts to the Body of Christ *for the work of the ministry*. The word *work* carries the idea of employment, that which occupies our time, what we do.²²⁵ The Greek word translated as *ministry* bears the root from which we get our word *deacon*.²²⁶ This is not an ecclesiastical function, but merely day-by-day attending to the mundane needs of those about us. The Christian life is not about great exploits of grandeur carried out by learned men of great renown; it is each of us doing our small part to be an encouragement and challenge to those about us, and bearing the cross of Christ with integrity before mankind (Matthew 10:42). The ministry dealt with here is not limited to the work that is carried out by the elders and deacons within the local Body of Christ, but is the work that is undertaken by every member of the Body. “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16). There is no hierarchy of position within the Body, simply differing functions and roles: “⁴²But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. ⁴³But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister [word for *deacon*]: ⁴⁴And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant [or slave] of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45). The Lord Jesus lived His life as an example to us – a life of ministry, of serving sinful mankind when He was the Creator of the universe. What humility, what service! Each of us has been given an area of work, which we must not evaluate as great or small; we must simply strive to walk worthy of the calling that we have received, through the enabling of the indwelling Spirit of God.

The final reason or result cited is *the edifying of the body of Christ*; the gifts have been given to build the Body of Christ up.

There is neither idleness nor stagnation indicated in these three results. Although each of these will stand alone, there also seems to be a progression here. First, there is a foundation of individual growth, followed by work that exercises this growth, and, lastly, there is a general building up of the Body of Christ. God is not content to have us saved and shelved (which seems to be the attitude of many Evangelicals), but desires us to grow and mature in our understanding of His Word:

²²⁵ Strong’s Online.

²²⁶ Ibid.

¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:12-14

It is clear from this that God is not satisfied with simply a barren belief; milk is fine for its intended use, but it must lead to growth and development to the place where more solid foods can be handled. The word *unskillful* carries the thought of inexperience, which is to be expected for someone who is a baby; however, someone who stays as a baby, and does not grow, has a serious illness. Yet, within the community of believers, there is a general tolerance of such an illness (spiritually speaking); actually, it would seem that there has been a general backward trend among the average Evangelical, a growing sense of being unsure of spiritual matters – a movement from meat to milk, due to a neglect of our God-given responsibility to test everything by the Word of God (Matthew 24:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). It seems that we have lost our spiritual teeth, and have returned to trying to receive spiritual nourishment from that which is meant for the very young. We have capitulated to the professional theologians, and have forgotten that the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14) and are not attained through training the intellect (2 Timothy 3:7) – this is one of the many errors into which Evangelicals have fallen.

Hebrews 5:14 speaks of “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” *Use* here speaks of “a power acquired by custom, practice, use”; and *senses* refers to the “faculty of the mind for perceiving, understanding, judging.”²²⁷ We often think of our senses as being touch, sight, smell, hearing and taste, but these are simply the gates through which our mind receives information for processing. No wonder common sense is so uncommon these days; we have divorced the thought processes from what our physical senses bring to our minds. Those who have moved on from milk to meat continually exercise their minds vigorously so that they will be perceptive, or alert, to what is taking place around them; they will be ever learning so that they will understand what they have perceived; they will have the effectual Spirit of God within so that they will be spiritually discerning and make right judgments about what they have seen and understood. Average Evangelicals today are not meat eaters; they seem content to sit idly by and accept the interpretations of the so-called experts; they have cast aside God’s armor, which we are told to wear, in favor of an open acceptance of everyone – including those against whom we are to guard. Anyone exercising discernment or judgment is considered to be a troublemaker, a narrow-minded pessimist who always sees the glass as half-empty.

The reason for this alertness and discernment is so that we may be able to distinguish between good and evil. The words for *good* and *evil* in Greek are *kalos* (good) and *kakos* (evil). The words are very similar – there is only one letter difference; someone who was not discerning and alert might easily confuse them. This is exactly the problem within Evangelicalism today – there is a blurring of the difference between good and evil; we’ve grown weary of being on the alert, and have simply expanded our definition of what is good and acceptable. I am reminded of the word of the Lord to Ezekiel:

²²⁷ Strong’s Online.

²Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: ³If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; ⁴Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. ⁶But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. ⁷So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. Ezekiel 33:2-7

Evangelicals today have rendered the role of the watchman as obsolete, or, at the very least, have reduced the list of enemies for whom we are to be on the alert. The Lord set Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel, and his responsibility was to hear the word of the Lord and warn the people. Today we have the Word of God, which is filled with many warnings and calls for discernment, yet like Israel of old, there are closed ears and eyes to the truth. Jesus said, ¹³“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive [Isaiah 6:9]: ¹⁵For this people's heart is waxed gross [dull or insensitive], and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:13-15).²²⁸ The Lord told Ezekiel, too, that there would be a lack of interest in the things of God: “Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house” (Ezekiel 12:2). This is God's description of His chosen people, Israel; likewise, this is an apt description of Evangelicals today – they hold in their hands the very words of God, yet, as they read the words, their minds do not comprehend the meaning. Their hearts have been made fat (*waxed gross*), their minds are no longer exercised by what their senses perceive (Hebrews 5:14), and too often their very senses have been rendered of no effect. ¹“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

When we think of the Body of Christ being edified, we must bring to mind our calling by God to a walk of holiness. God has not changed. If the path that we walk has changed, then one of two things is evident: we were wrong before and we have stepped onto the Lord's way, or we're wrong now and have departed from His way.



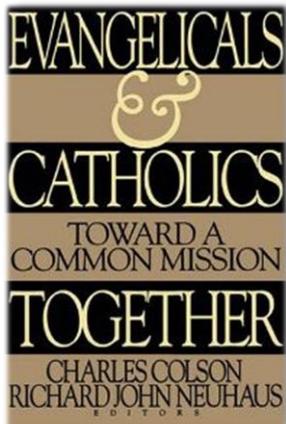
13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

²²⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

Once again, we must keep in mind the thrust of the passage within which we find this note on unity – it is the oneness that we have in God, not a oneness of our own creating. What is missed in the translation here is the subjunctive mood of the verb translated as *come*, which makes this a possibility but not necessarily a certainty: *until we all **should** be come into the unity of the faith.*²²⁹ If we recall from verse 3, there is an effort to be made on our part to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit; Jude 3 affirms that we are to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Here is a product of the edification of the Body of Christ; this is a natural flow from what has just come before. The fruit of the perfecting, working and edifying (v. 12) is being unfolded here; it is so that we may all come to that which is outlined in this verse. Here is our goal that we are to expend our energies in attaining; “I press toward the mark [or goal] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Since this is outlining our focus for living the Christian life, we would do well to endeavor to understand these truths.

Through the gifts of God, which are given to the Body of Christ, comes a growth and maturity that will see us all united in one faith (v.5). However, the *all* is not all of mankind – we must not lose sight of the context of this passage. There is no unification of all religions here, no coming together of all faiths into one great and glorious unity; this is applicable **only** to the Body of Christ. This will not include those who are doing great exploits in the name of Christ, but who neither know Him nor are known by Him (Matthew 7:21-23). The focus of this unity is Christ, it is only through Christ that we have access to this unity, and it is only through continuing in the faith once-given that we will remain as part of this unified Body of Christ (Colossians 1:21-23a).

Within Evangelicalism, there is a broad movement today that seeks to place the emphasis on the *unity* rather than on the *faith*; it is the faith that will result in the unity to which Paul refers. By so doing, there is a general shift away from sound teaching to a more positive, less offensive message – an all-out effort to attain unto unity, but, alas, they have lost the faith without realizing



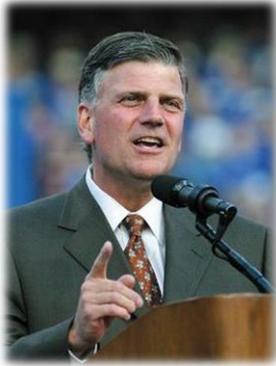
it! They have arrived at a unity, but not the unity of the Spirit, which we are to guard; theirs is an effort to extend the sheepfold of the Savior in order to include the very enemies of our souls. It is not popular to check fruit, yet our Lord admonished us to be attentive lest we be devoured by wolves masquerading as sheep; the only way to discern the difference is to be sensitive to the Spirit of God, and observe their words and ways – that we may “by reason of use have [our] senses [vigorously] exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

Contemplation of the push today toward a massive coming together of all religions confirms that the focus is clearly on unity, and the faith involved is different – it is not Biblical. Consider Colson’s *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*; great emphasis has been placed on the common features of the faith to which Evangelicals hold compared to that held by Catholics. There is a desire to overstate those common elements and downplay the differences. Interestingly, Colson makes no effort to hide this fact: “True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences ... but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while **focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share**” (emphasis added).²³⁰ Although he criticizes the

²²⁹ Stehanus 1550 NT.

²³⁰ Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

Ecumenical bodies for ignoring the doctrinal differences, he acknowledges them and then spends all of his time fixated on the commonalities – however, the end result is the same; there is no difference, it’s just semantics.



Franklin Graham

essence. This is what we agree on and we can work together on and can build on.”²³¹

We find the same emphasis on unity coming from the Catholic Church as it endeavors to become the controlling church of the 21st century:

In 2001, Lutherans and Roman Catholics invited the Methodists and Reformed to a consultation on the theme "Unity in Faith * The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification [JDDJ] in a Wider Ecumenical Context." At this forum the question was raised how other Christian world communions could relate to the agreements reached in the JDDJ. Currently the World Methodist Council is preparing a theologically substantiated affirmation of the JDDJ.²³²

There is a general movement today to return to the Roman Catholic Church, a movement to undo the work of the Reformation. However, if you consider the Reformation, in the broad sense, it really was not the needed cleansing from the errors of the Catholic Church. For the most part, the Reformation movement retained much Catholic tradition and doctrine; although they were forced to separate from the Church to a certain extent (since Luther was excommunicated²³³), they did not set all of its errors aside. “The Council of Trent solemnly defined that there are seven sacraments of the New Law ... Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.”²³⁴ Although most Reformation churches would not hold to these, the Free Reformed Church, for example, still holds to two **sacraments**: namely, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They refer to them as sacraments, not as ordinances, unlike the Baptist and Evangelical movements. The difference is that a sacrament is a means of God bestowing grace



Sean Hannity

²³¹ <https://rainhadocanto10-evangelicalchristian.blogspot.com/2011/07/franklin-grahams-unscriptural-ecumenism.html>.

²³² <https://www.christianpost.com/news/lwf-and-vatican-urged-churches-worldwide-to-celebrate-the-fifth-anniversary.html>.

²³³ <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/martin-luther-excommunicated>

²³⁴ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm#IV>

upon the participant; an ordinance is simply something that is done because it is prescribed, not that it holds spiritual merit in and of itself. “To us [the Free Reformed Church] the sacraments are means of grace having a real although not an automatic efficacy.”²³⁵ Even today, the root of Catholic tradition remains alive and well within the Reformation churches – that which the Reformers did not leave behind when they were forced to separate from the Roman Catholic Church.

In our minds, we often associate the resurgence of true Biblical faith with the Reformation, yet there were believers who held to the true faith all through this time, and who were persecuted equally by the Protestant Reformers and the Catholics. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that those who never truly departed from the Catholic faith should return to it, particularly at a time when apostasy has made their eyes dim and their hearts callous to the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We must be alert to the subtleties of the enemy who would seek to soften our guard against his wiles, and have us fail to “keep the unity of the Spirit” (v.3).

We now come to a second aspect of our goal; along with the *unity of the faith* is the *knowledge of the Son of God* – the intent is for us to come to a precise and correct, or full, knowledge of Jesus Christ.²³⁶ Through the proper expression of the gifts, which God has given, will come an accurate understanding of Who Jesus is. This is another place where many Evangelicals are failing the test today. Although they retain much of the traditional teaching, which they have inherited from generations past, the teaching has become head-knowledge (theory) with no impact evident in their daily living. James says, “shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18); he goes on to say that faith without works is dead (v. 20). So then, modern Evangelicalism that looks like the world is, according to the Spirit of God through James, dead! All their rhetoric about “it’s what’s in the heart that matters” is really a mask behind which they endeavor to hide their spiritual nakedness. With all of their learning, they have failed to come to that precise and correct knowledge of Jesus.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2: “¹Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ²That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand [is now present or has already arrived]. ³Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away [or an apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” We might like to think that the *falling away*, or apostasy, spoken of here will be those who have not truly been Christians – those professors of faith who never really came to a precise and correct knowledge of Jesus, even if we couldn’t tell the difference. Yet to truly fall away from, or forsake, a belief, means that you would have had to believe first; we understand that someone cannot forsake a life of crime unless they have actually been living it; saying that one is a criminal, but never doing anything illegal, doesn’t count. Yet for some reason, we like to think that those who fall away, or apostatize, will be those who claimed to be righteous, but never really were. Second Peter 2 speaks to this: “²⁰For if after they have escaped [or fled away from] the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [that precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹For it had been better for them not to have known [again, that

²³⁵ <http://www.frcna.org/WhoWeAre/Believe.ASP#11>

²³⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

precise and correct knowledge] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it [the same precise and correct knowledge], to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”²³⁷ The many admonitions in Scripture to be diligent are there for a reason – we must be alert, we must hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:13) lest we be lured away, and become part of the great movement into apostasy that we see all around us today.

Here is a third part of this goal – we are to become *a perfect man*. *Perfect* is defined as “wanting nothing necessary to completeness.”²³⁸ This is not a “that’s perfect, but ...” situation – it is complete, finished without anything to be added for improvement. The product of the working of the gifts given to the Body of Christ is to be our completeness someday. But once again, the admonitions of Scripture are there for a reason – we are not to simply sit idly by with the attitude that one day we will be perfect; spiritual growth is to be our lifelong project here on this earth (1 Peter 2:2), so that we may be able to stand against the enemy of our souls (Ephesians 6:10-11). We are participants in a battle, not spectators. “¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13). If our life is free of trials, perhaps we have only deluded ourselves into thinking that we’re heavenward bound. “⁵... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:5-7). Most people would acknowledge the necessity of discipline in the lives of children, yet as adults it seems that we think that life should suddenly become problem free. Even though we would accept the fact that we are not perfect before our fellow man (let alone before God), we chafe when things go wrong, and, rather than looking for God’s hand in our lives, we look for the easy way out. Hebrews 12:11 says, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [vigorously] exercised thereby.” If we permit the Lord to work in us through our trials, then there will be a growth in our walk with Him so that we will increasingly walk worthy of God’s calling on our lives.

Jesus declared, “he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38); and, again, “If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). We do not hear much today about the cross that we are called to bear for the Lord; many would find that offensive and negative. We hear more that God “loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.”²³⁹ This feeds our desire to live a life of ease – pain-free and trouble-free; it falls in line with today’s premise that we must only present a positive message. This positive-only message has deluded many into believing that, by becoming a Christian, they have embarked upon a life of ease, when they should be warned that they are about to enter a battle where there are no prisoners – it is a fight to the finish.

For many within Evangelicalism, entrance into the Christian life has been reduced to praying a prayer and you’re on your way to heaven. Yet Jesus, the One Who opened the only way to heaven through His sacrifice on the cross, said to count the cost before you commit to being His

²³⁷ Strong’s Online

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ “Four Spiritual Laws,” Law #1, <http://www.greatcom.org/laws/>

disciple (Luke 14:26-33). There is a cost; our commitment to Jesus is to be greater than any earthly relationship that we might have; we can expect to suffer persecution as we seek to follow in Jesus' steps. Since Jesus said, "Count the cost," why do we not hear this today? The cross, which Jesus calls us to bear, has been removed from the Gospel message, and, thereby, the message has been rendered as something other than the Gospel that was once delivered to the saints. Inasmuch as most who call themselves Christians today are either ignorant of our calling to take up the cross that we have been called to bear, or they have no desire to shoulder it, and they are not worthy of Christ (according to Jesus' own words, Matthew 10:38). The Scripture makes it clear that if we live Biblically, there will be a cross to bear – "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). There is a burgeoning façade of Christianity today, a phenomenal growth of a shallow, pseudo-Christianity that has been declared to be a mighty revival in the Church! However, the average Evangelical has been duped; they fail to recognize that the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ has been corrupted in order to make it acceptable to the masses. We must not shrink from persecution, but we must ensure that the armor of God is in place and that our faith stands on the unalterable Word of God. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:11). This is not a persecution because of our faulty living, but one that will fall upon us as we endeavor, by the enablement of the Spirit of God, to live a godly life before our fellow man.

We must not forget that the persecution that Jesus suffered during His earthly ministry came from the religious Jews. He was not persecuted by the Romans; in fact, Pilate endeavored to get the religious Jews to see that Jesus was not worthy of death; the average Jew had just days earlier tried to make Him their King (John 12:12-13). It was the religious elite, the Pharisees, Sadducees and the scribes – those who spent their lives reading and studying the Scriptures, those who saw themselves as righteous, who brought persecution upon Jesus' head. These "righteous ones" kept the Law with great flourish and careful attention to each minute detail, yet they received Jesus' condemnation for they had lost sight of the spirit of the Law, which included justice, mercy, and faith. Today the religious elite of the Evangelical movement have done the exact opposite: they are enamored with God's mercy, His grace and, above all, His love, but they have lost sight of the necessity of walking in a manner worthy of the holy calling of God. The Pharisees made righteousness a matter of keeping the smallest details of the Law, rather than teaching the holiness of God and His mercy as demonstrated through the sacrificial system of the Law, thereby making access to God a burden too large for anyone to bear. Listen carefully to Jesus' words to the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees for carefully keeping the details of the law, but for failing to keep the whole Law, which included judgment, mercy and faith; they omitted the part of the message that dealt with the heart and could bring spiritual life. Today, Evangelicals major on God's love, mercy and grace, thereby making access to God appear to be as easy as saying a few words at a time of emotional vulnerability, and then declaring that to confirm an eternal surety. There is a subjective focus on the heart where the only criteria to being a Christian is to say that you've prayed a prayer; spiritual growth and holiness of living are completely subjective and are relegated to the shelf of "non-essential" issues that are not discussed. Whereas the Pharisees and their cohorts kept an external façade of religiosity and ignored the weightier heart issues, today there is an internal pretense of attending to the heart issues while completely ignoring the working out of our faith. Jesus'

judgment is clear: “²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). As long as we think that it’s only what’s in the heart that matters, we remain under a delusion that the heart can be right with God without there being any external evidence. It is clear that Jesus requires more from us than simply a mental assent, and we then continue on our way. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3); “for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3; cp. John 14:15). Probably the most common error among Evangelicals today is to set aside God’s command to separate from error (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) – from those who propagate error (Romans 16:17-18), and from associating with those who will not separate from those who propagate error (2 Thessalonians 3:6). If we have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have been called to holiness and purity (1 Peter 1:15; 1 Timothy 5:22), and this is to be demonstrated through how we live our lives.

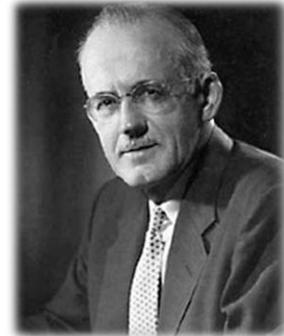
Paul’s charge to Timothy deserves a closer look in this regard: “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). This is a series of three commands: 1) do not be quick to appoint someone to a ministry (looking back to 4:14); 2) do not join together, or fellowship, with those who are in error (this might relate to some degree to the first command, and thereby becoming party to their error); 3) carefully guard, or keep, your purity. The Greek word for *keep* is the same as used in Ephesians 4:3, where we are told to guard carefully the unity of the Spirit. The Greek word translated as *pure* shares the same root as that from which we get our word *saint*; there is to be a setting apart unto holiness. Contained within these two verses (Ephesians 4:3 and 1 Timothy 5:22) is the Biblical antidote to much of modern Evangelical thinking; our efforts, through the power of the Spirit of God, are to be expended in living a life of purity, and, as we do so, we will discover that we are carefully guarding the unity of the Spirit of God. **The unity of the Spirit is a present reality**; a pure life will give evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God and our abiding in Christ (John 15). Pursuing unity after the fashion of Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, James Dobson, et al, will only lead to sin; they seek unity with those who have departed from the faith that was once delivered to the saints, the faith for which we are called to contend, not compromise (Jude 3). We are commanded to separate from these promoters of error, not join with them. By not giving careful attention to the doctrine that they teach, many of today’s Evangelical leaders have lost the saving element of the Gospel, and are left with words that appeal to the desires of the masses – words that no longer contain life. These men proclaim their messages loudly and widely, but, like Samson of old, they are not aware that the Lord has departed from them (Judges 16:20).

We now have a description of what that “perfect man” is to be – *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. The gifts have been given to the Body of Christ so that we may all come *unto a measure of maturity of the fullness of Christ*, or, more plainly, the goal is to be like Christ.²⁴⁰ First John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he

²⁴⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

is.” The *fullness of Christ* will be realized when “we shall be like Him.” In our finite limitations, can we comprehend this? Not really.

The Evangelicals look forward to the glory of which the Scriptures speak; yet they will not recognize the cross that Jesus called us to bear for Him. This is the essence of the Evangelical error today: they desire the glory, but not by the way of the cross. A.W. Tozer is quoted as saying, “... the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it.”²⁴¹ By removing the offense of the cross from their message, Evangelicals have inadvertently removed the saving element of the Gospel, thereby being condemned to preach delusion and confusion among those who might seek to learn of the Way. Consider carefully Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15). How can this be? Second Peter 2:21 reads, “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Evangelicals today hold forth the Word of God, but their preaching does not include God’s full message to man, and so they instill a false hope into the hearts of their converts. Which is more pitiful: the one who is destined for hell, and may or may not know it, or the one who is heading for hell, but thinks that he is going to heaven? Paul’s words to Timothy come to bear, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).



A.W. Tozer

 14. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

The phrase, *that we be no more children*, is in the subjunctive mood and, being part of a purpose clause, expresses the result of *unity* of faith, a *full knowledge* of Jesus, a spiritually mature individual enjoying the *fullness of Christ*. All of the gifting and edification was for our growth in Christ, and now we have the demonstrated maturity outlined here. As already noted a subjunctive verb within a purpose clause (like this one) does not carry the thought of possibility but is like the indicative mood – a statement of fact.²⁴² It is as we mature in Christ that we will *be no more children*. As we walk in obedience to God’s commands to us, the possibility of leaving our spiritual childhood behind will become a reality. However, it is equally clear from Scripture that if we do not walk in accordance with God’s commands, then we are in deep eternal trouble. The experiences of Israel have been recorded for us as an example so that we might learn that God is holy and is serious about His desire that we should walk in purity and holiness in this life; this is not a “someday” reality; this is to be a journey of struggle and growth toward the fullness of Christ.

²⁴¹ <http://www.acts17-11.com/cross.html>

²⁴² https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

We are no longer to be *children*; this means that we are not to remain unskilled, immature and untaught. A product of God giving these gifts (apostles, prophets, etc.) to His saved ones is that there might be growth and maturity. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2); there is a place for being a baby, but we are not to remain as babies; we are to grow and mature. The Spirit of God is critical of those who do not grow: “¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses [vigorously] exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14). The average Evangelical today clings to the words of their teachers, whether from the pulpit or through books, but does not hold these words against the standard of the Word of God. The Bereans of Acts 17 were called “more noble” than those of Thessalonica for they took the words of the Apostle Paul and went back to the Scriptures to ensure that what was said was in accordance with the Standard, which does not change. A pathetic pall of lethargy has fallen over Evangelicals today, and they have set themselves up for terrible deception. “¹...there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1-2). Even the surety of false teachers has done little to stem the tide of Biblical illiteracy among Evangelicals; apathy keeps them content to take what they hear as truth, without examining it in the light of Scripture.

There are many teachers today who may have good things to say, but we must not be lulled into complacency and accept everything without examination. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). *Vigilant* means “to take heed lest through remission [not acting] and indolence [laziness] some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one.”²⁴³ This is one of God’s commands to us – it is not an option, or something that we do only when we feel like it. Saying many good things must not qualify anyone to receive our endorsement – we must diligently examine their doctrines in light of God’s Word to ensure that their foundation is Biblical.

Paul goes on to outline several characteristics of being children; the first is being *tossed to and fro*. This is one word in the Greek, and means to be *tossed by the waves*.²⁴⁴ Something that is at the mercy of the waves will be going up and down, and back and forth, and from side to side – thus demonstrating complete instability. Even with all of the stabilizing techniques today for ocean liners, the waves still have an impact. Within the spiritual realm, there is a real tendency toward faddism today; the latest book to hit the market, or the latest captivating preacher on the airwaves, becomes the wave to ride. We live in a generation that demands instant gratification, and fads come and go very quickly; this is a sharp contrast to the God Whom we are called to follow Who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Ephesians 5:1; Hebrews 13:8). However, we cannot limit the concept of being tossed about by the waves to simply being rocked to sleep on gently undulating ripples on a quiet lake. Many ships lie at the bottom of the ocean because of being damaged by the waves that they faced. There is also a damaging element to being someone who

²⁴³ Strong’s Online.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

is so unstable as to be tossed about so easily; considering the eternal stability of God, it is not difficult to realize that such unsteadiness has no place in a healthy, growing walk with the Lord. We are called to stability (Matthew 7:24-27).

Another characteristic has to do with instability in the face of various teachings that we may hear – *every wind of doctrine*. The word *wind* does not mean a gentle summer breeze, but rather “a very strong tempestuous wind.”²⁴⁵ The Greek word translated as *carried about* conveys a real sense of being unstable; it means “to be driven,” or “to carry here and there,” or “in doubt and hesitation to be led away now to this opinion, now to that.”²⁴⁶ Today, the winds of teaching are blowing strongly from all different directions, and unless we have the truths of Scripture settled in our minds, we will be driven all over the map. Clearly, there is a need to understand the Bible sufficiently in order to have its teachings established in our hearts, so that we will have convictions that we will not forsake at the drop of a hat. Not that we have a closed mind, but we must exercise discernment, and weigh what we hear and read against Scripture; we will not always be right, but we must not give our convictions up without first being convinced that we have strayed from Scripture in our understanding. It is said that someone who stands for nothing will fall for anything; that would be an apt description of today’s average Evangelical.

When the doctrines of New Evangelicalism were introduced back in the 1940s, the erosion of the foundation for Evangelical convictions escalated (they advocated re-examining some of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture that had stood for many, many years – thereby opening the door to bringing the infallible foundation of Scripture into question). It was not long before the Scriptures were no longer considered to be truly inerrant, resulting in God’s Word no longer being considered the infallible Guide for life. As a result, Evangelicals are now at the mercy of the teachings of men; unless we adhere to Scripture, and are prepared to take the unpopular position of examining the teachings that we hear against the eternally established standard of the Bible, we could well become a casualty of the latest doctrinal gale. The average Evangelical today knows more about the teachings of the latest popular speaker or writer than they do about the teachings that have come to us from God Himself; they have relinquished their convictions in favor of following after those whom they assume to have a better understanding of Scripture. Evangelicals have stepped off the Rock of all ages, and committed themselves to the destructive waves and winds of the devil. The devouring adversary is alive and well today, and is working through those who preach a modified gospel to create a false sense of security in the hearts of their hearers. Jesus said that He did not come “to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17); if Satan can convince us that our eternal destiny is secure through the half-truths of today’s preachers, then he has accomplished his goal – for the righteous (i.e., the self-righteous) will not hear Jesus’ call to repentance. Paul identified a modified gospel as not being the Gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-9); we must do no less.

Take Reformed theology for example. Are there only a few doctrines that differ from what we believe Scripture to declare, or do they, in fact, hold to another gospel? Paul advocates that we are to offer prayer for those in authority, and then says, “³For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴Who will have **all men** to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Peter wrote that God is “not willing that **any** should perish, but

²⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

that **all** should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). It seems evident that it is not God’s desire to condemn anyone to a lost eternity; it is His desire that men should repent and be saved; yet Reformed theology openly declares that God has chosen, from eternity past, some individuals to eternal life and banished the rest to eternal damnation. Article 7 in the First Head of Doctrine of the Canons of Dort (one of the foundational documents that underlie Reformed theology) reads, “Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he has ... chosen ... a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ.”²⁴⁷ It goes on to say, “And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, so the election made by him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.”²⁴⁸ How do the elect know that they are the elect? “The elect in due time ... attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election ... by **observing in themselves** with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God - such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc. (emphasis added).”²⁴⁹ Their assurance that they are numbered among *the elect* whom God has chosen from eternity past is based on a subjective observance of their own righteousness. Yet God’s Word tells us, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), and the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) – how can we be assured of our eternal standing with God by this means? They declare: “That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness.”²⁵⁰ When you ponder this eternal selection of individuals by God (to the exclusion of all others), in light of Matthew 7:21-23, there can be no assurance by looking to your own righteousness, for we all recognize within ourselves our tendency to failure.

In keeping with their belief in God’s eternal determination of who is saved and who is not, believers of Reformed theology hold to a limited atonement; i.e., Christ did not die for the whole world, but only for the elect. Although they hold that, “The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world,”²⁵¹ they do not stop there. They go on to declare, “the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them **alone** the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross ... should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, **and those only**, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father (emphasis added).”²⁵² Therefore, even though they admit that Christ’s death was sufficient for the redemption of all of mankind, they claim that it was only intended for the elect. They state that it is the will of God that Christ’s redemption extend only to those who are elected to salvation from eternity past; yet we see that Scripture declares that God is not willing that any should perish. It is not that those adhering to Reformed theology cannot say many things that are both good and true, but we must

²⁴⁷ Canons of Dort, First Head of Doctrine, http://www.frcna.org/Creeds/Canons/1st_head.ASP

²⁴⁸ Ibid, Article 11.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, Article 12.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, Article 6.

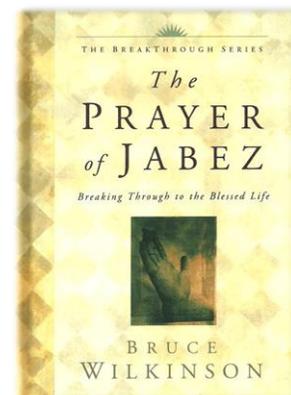
²⁵¹ Canons of Dort, Second Head of Doctrine, Article 3.

²⁵² Ibid, Article 8.

be careful to weigh what we hear against the unalterable Word of God. They have taken the sovereignty of God to the extreme by saying that He has chosen only the elect for salvation from eternity past. Yet we see so clearly in Ephesians the repeated emphasis that we must be **in Christ**. Ephesians 1:4 does not say that God has chosen us before the foundation of the world (which Reformed theology would have us believe), but that God “hath chosen us **in him** (that is, in Christ) before the foundation of the world.” There is a vast difference between these two statements. If the foundation of Reformed theology is in contradiction to some of the plain truths of Scripture (and these examples are only a couple that are easily identified), then we can be assured that what they build upon this foundation will bear evidence of its faulty underpinnings. How cautious we must be, and how carefully we must weigh what we hear against the counsel of Scripture lest we be drawn away from being *in Christ*. We need to adhere to 2 Thessalonians 3:6 that commands us to withdraw from those who walk in a disorderly manner – it seems clear that Reformed theology is disorderly, and it is equally evident that they promote a different gospel.

By the sleight of men – the Greek word for *sleight* means playing dice or gambling, and metaphorically came to mean trickery or deceit. Within the context of this verse, we are not to be children who are caught by the latest teaching fad that comes through the deceitfulness of man. The charlatans will proclaim “a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). There seems to be a double thrust here. Firstly, the game of dice is a game of chance, and we are not to be so unstable as to base our convictions on the throw of a dice, or a whim of the moment. This is actually a contradiction, for we cannot firmly hold a belief (a conviction) and base it on chance. We’ve all heard of those who close their eyes, open the Bible and point to a text in an effort to determine their direction in life; we are not to be this way; our convictions must be founded upon an eyes-open search of the Scriptures. We are not to live like a flag, at the mercy of every gust of wind that comes along, but more like the flagpole, which is not influenced by either the direction or intensity of the wind. Secondly, there is the metaphorical thought of the deception of man – we are to be alert so that we are not taken in by those who are simply out to deceive. I am reminded of the likes of Benny Hinn who purports to have a ministry of healing, yet, when his work is examined, he is found to be fraudulent and deceptive.

Cunning craftiness is one meaning for the Greek word so translated, but it can also mean “a specious or false wisdom;”²⁵³ in either case the purpose is to deceive. The thought of trickery is one thing, but the concept of a wisdom, which appears to be true but is really false, adds an element to this that fits closely with what is happening today. Rick Warren has become the latest shooting star of Evangelicalism to disseminate a teaching that is taking the world by storm. I say “the world” because that’s exactly what is happening. Both the believer and unbeliever alike are being mesmerized by the “wisdom” that he propagates and that might well appear to be true; however, when it is held up to the light of the Word of God, the flaws of humanistic thinking show through. Before him, there was Bruce Wilkinson and his “Prayer of Jabez” philosophy, which also found inroads into both the secular and



²⁵³ Strong's Online.

“Christian” worlds. Following that, the Promise Keepers movement has drawn in hundreds of thousands of men, and fed them a steady diet of rock music, Ecumenism, and psychology, all under the guise of making men to become more like Christ. What a contradiction! With such broad exposure, you would think that more would see through the deception, yet, when the philosophy is so attractive, it seems easier to go with the flow than to evaluate the doctrine, which is being presented, in light of what God has said. The subtlety of this is that neither Rick Warren, Bruce Wilkinson, nor the leaders of Promise Keepers would for a second say that they are deceiving people; they sincerely believe that everything being said is true – the subtly is that not everything that is said is false! This only serves to make the deception doubly dangerous, for it can appear to be true in many respects, yet the truth is interwoven with deadly error, which may remain almost



hidden. How careful we must be in this day of deception to weigh what we hear against the Word of God. Through their craftiness (this pseudo-wisdom), these false teachers seek those who will become followers of their philosophies; they, in turn, feed on their massive followings. If they only appealed to a small group, they would soon change their methodology so as to gain a larger hearing. They hold workshops and seminars in order to spread their message of deception far and wide, and we live in a day when most people are eager to go to such seminars to hear what the latest guru has to say. The sad thing is that Evangelicals demonstrate such a lack of discernment that they become enthusiastic supporters of the newest, solve-all-your-problems philosophy.

Our problem is that we are not being challenged today to think Biblically – and we can only do that if we are a people of the Word. With a growing deferral to theologians to decide what God’s Word says, there has been a corresponding increase in the spiritual ignorance of the average Evangelical. As their understanding of the Scriptures becomes increasingly fuzzy and their convictions more pliable, Evangelicals turn out to be fair game for the latest philosophy that may blow their way, and are less willing to judge what they hear or read according to Scripture.

To complicate the problem further, we have become extremely shortsighted; we make our decisions based on what is in front of us; we live in the midst of a generation that demands instant gratification. This can be attributed in part to the rapid changes that are taking place within our society; the explosion of technology has contributed to a short attention span and a growing inability to reason – there is a greater ability to react than to think. Combine this with a philosophy of pragmatism, and you have an effective recipe for fads of all kinds, and general instability. Pragmatism says that if it works, it must be right – the end justifies the means; therefore, the Rick Warrens of this world build on this godless philosophy and find favor with men of all stripes. Under this way of thinking, it is only logical to temper our Christianity so as to become successful, which simply means that we do two things: 1) we alter the faith that was once delivered to the saints in direct contradiction to God’s Word, and 2) we conform our understanding of success to the world around us. Yet the Word of God says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). We will never discover the will of God through compromise and worldly success.

This false wisdom is what the charlatans use to lead others into their way – an empty way of error and deception. They love to speak of freedom, by which they mean the freedom to do as they please. As I read recently from an Evangelical missionary, “We need reminders to continue

to reflect back to the students the tremendous value that God places on them as individuals and the love and acceptance He freely offers us no matter who we are or what we have done.”²⁵⁴ This statement is not untrue, but when you consider that this is the only aspect of God’s dealings with us that sees the light of day, it becomes evident that this is a skewed view of God’s desires for us. His ceaseless call to holiness finds no voice; His declaration that if we love Him, then we will keep His commandments, and if we don’t, then we never knew Him (1 John 2:3-4) becomes buried under the rush to be positive and supportive of sinners. We major on “love and acceptance” to the neglect of justice and obedience. God is not willing that any should perish, but that does not mean that He has lowered His standard for acceptance – it can only come through being found **in Christ**. Yes, God freely offers love and acceptance, but that is not the whole story; we must be careful to include His justice and required obedience when we communicate the Gospel message. As said before, we must count the cost, take up our cross, and follow Christ.

Whereby they lie in wait to deceive – this deception and trickery comes through the various winds of doctrine that blow our way, and they are there for one purpose: to deceive us and lead us astray. Those who propagate these winds of doctrine will not admit that, but they do desire to accumulate a following, and those who follow them are being led astray. How appropriate Paul’s command to Timothy: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me” (2 Timothy 1:13). How can we do this? – by, first of all, establishing the Bible as our final authority for life and doctrine, and then by taking all that we hear and read back to God’s Word to determine its veracity. Unfortunately, it seems that we have things backwards today. We listen carefully to the teachers of the day and allow them to interpret Scripture for us; rather than holding the teacher’s words against the Word of God, we come to understand (or misunderstand) God’s Truth in light of what the teacher says. Therefore, the final authority for us becomes the teacher, and not the Scriptures. We have neglected our responsibility to “try the spirits” of those declaring many things (1 John 4:1). This is not to be a superficial testing, but is a command for us to examine what it is that influences an individual. Once again, we are to exercise discernment lest we be taken in by the good things that we might hear; we are called to check out carefully the principles upon which someone bases their thinking and teaching, and not just the words that they use.



15. *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

Here begins a contrast – we have looked at what we are not to do (to go with the flow, and be deceived); now we look into what we are to do. Paul describes the Body of Christ as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), and those who perish do so “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Jesus, in His prayer of John 17, declared that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Ephesians 6:14 says that we are to wear truth as part of the protection that we will have against the enemy.

In contrast to what we have just looked at, namely being deceived and carried from pillar to post by the various teachings that come our way, we are to speak the truth to one another, but it is to be done in love. We are not to compromise the truth that we speak, or water it down so that it is easier to take, but we are to couch the truth in love for the person to whom we are speaking. It

²⁵⁴ Personal correspondence, December 2005.

is not so much the words that we say, but how we say them that can often cause great harm. Paul, to the Galatians, made this point: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). We are neither to overlook the error, nor to come down on the individual like a ton of bricks – we are to speak the truth in meekness, reflecting love and consideration for that person. After all, if we are not attentive, then we might find ourselves in the very same situation at some time.

As we have indicated, this *truth* is not subject to our determination. Jesus said that God’s Word is truth. Once again, we are called upon to weigh everything that we hear and read against the unalterable truth of the Word of God. Today the world around us has determined that, within their thinking, truth is whatever someone thinks it to be; it has become subjective, and so we cannot ever say that someone is wrong – they are only expressing what is true for them. Under this regime, truth becomes as fluid as water, and will take the shape of the container that holds it, but that is not the truth that is contained in the Scriptures, nor is it the truth that is to characterize our manner of living. We are to stand firmly, no matter how the winds of doctrine are blowing around us; we are to be the flagpole that is uninfluenced by the winds, and not the flag that turns according to the direction of the wind. By compromising their position on the Word of God (the Truth), New Evangelicals undermined the very foundation of their faith. What we see today is the wreckage that came when they stepped off of the Rock and committed themselves to the waves.

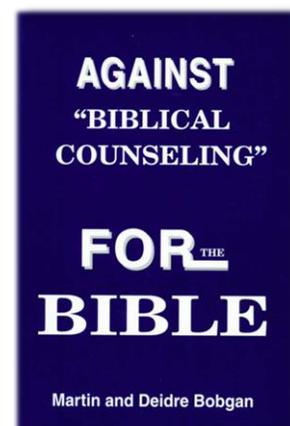
May grow up in him expresses the purpose for speaking the truth in love. Again, we see that we are not to remain as those who can only drink milk, but we are to grow and mature in Christ. Christians are to be characterized by spiritual growth. If there is no growth, the question follows: is there life? In the physical realm, a baby is born and we have no other expectation than that the child will grow to maturity; if this does not take place, then we immediately recognize that something is seriously wrong. In the spiritual realm, upon being born-again in Christ, our anticipation should be no different: we should expect growth and maturing. The Scriptures are clear that this is also what God expects – we are to mature through the Spirit of God opening our eyes to the truths of His Word. Jesus said, “¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷*Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17). “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13). Two things are clear if we carefully consider these words of Jesus: 1) the truth, which the Spirit of God will reveal to us, will be a truth that the world cannot know, and 2) all of the truth that we need to know will come through the guidance of the Spirit of God. However, it is evident that this is no longer accepted by Evangelicals.

Rick Warren, Bill Hybels and the rest of the church growth movement have discovered that they can build and propagate large gatherings of people using the techniques tried and proven within the marketing arm of business. By using the wisdom of business savvy, they establish what it is that their target market wants in a church, what would bring them through the doors and keep them there. Once they have made that determination, they simply lay that grid over the Word of God and come up with a Christianized version of the business marketing techniques. They have taken a humanistic, self-focused, worldly marketing scheme, dabbed on a thin veneer of Christianity and discovered that they can “do church” in a whole new way. In their enthusiasm to bring in ever-larger crowds, they fail to recognize that they have lost the message that God has for

lost mankind; they have become blind watchmen who are no longer able to discern the guise of the enemy of our souls – they see an angel of light, and fail to detect the presence of Satan. We are told explicitly that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19), yet we see Evangelicals clamoring after this wisdom: whether it is the church growth movement that is enamored with the marketing techniques of the world, which are based on fleshly desires, or the likes of James Dobson who subjects the Word of God to the philosophies of psychology, which spring from the humanistic, godless “wisdom” of atheists. Speaking generally, we have permitted the popular leaders within Evangelicalism to lead us into their “truth,” and have failed miserably in permitting the Spirit of the living God to guide us into all truth. We sold our birthright for a mess of pottage, and then went away rejoicing at the bargain that we struck!

Of these two (church marketing and psychology), it seems apparent that the latter has made the greatest inroads into Christianity, and those who call themselves Fundamentalists are not exempt. There is a movement today that leads us away from judging matters according to the Scriptures, and prods us toward a more tolerant and acceptable method of working through difficulties according to prescribed techniques. Through this, “biblical counselors depart from the fundamental truths of the Gospel by using the unproved and unscientific psychological opinions of men, rather than having complete confidence in the biblical truth of God. They have chosen to combine dregs from the broken cisterns of man-made ideas with the fresh springs of living water and thereby serve mixed drinks that poison the soul.”²⁵⁵ By all appearances, there are only a few who still hold confidence in God’s truth; counseling programs are now a significant portion in most seminary programs today. Northland Baptist Bible College (now more impressively known as Northland International University) and Bob Jones University (considered by many to be Fundamentalist schools) both offer programs in counseling that include courses in psychology. This is one area that has been propelled into prominence within Evangelicalism through the general deferral to the “experts.” It seems that those who are trained in handling the Bible are no longer qualified to offer discernment in matters of life; such things must be referred to those who have been specifically trained in counseling and psychology. Those who have been influenced by a godless philosophy that has been mixed with superficial references to Scripture, are given higher regard in the matter of judging what is right than those who have only studied the Word of God. This is an area of blindness with Evangelicals; there is a general acceptance of psychological counseling as a legitimate framework for the interpretation of Scripture. Once again, things are backwards: instead of the Scriptures being the grid through which we view all things, godless philosophy now provides the framework by which the Bible is interpreted – the final result can only be confusion and error.

We are told that we are to grow up into Christ *in all things*. Yet the modern Biblical counseling movement has set this aside as they seek to supplement the Word of God in those areas where they have become “experts.” Although they will not admit to setting the Scriptures aside, counselors continue to study and use techniques and philosophies that are based on humanistic thinking. Evangelical seminaries continue to seek to integrate the Bible with the pseudo-science of psychology, and fail



²⁵⁵ Bobgan, Martin & Deidre, Against “Biblical Counselling” – for the Bible (pdf format), p. 100-101.

to recognize that light and darkness have nothing in common, and are to remain that way (2 Corinthians 6:14, founded upon Genesis 1:4). Our difficulty in handling what the Lord brings our way in life has less to do with our lack of expertise in the philosophies of Sigmund Freud, and more to do with our lack of understanding the Word of God. We have been given the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth, so why would we look for guidance to the ramblings of someone who sought to eradicate God from our thinking?

Here Christ is referred to as the *head*. In 1:22 we learned that Christ has been established as Head over all things, but here He is very specifically identified as the Head of the Body. Colossians 1:18 says, “He is the head of the body, the church,” the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones. We are to grow up into Him, in keeping with the charge, in John 15, to abide in Him.

All of this upward growth into Christ comes through speaking the truth in love; we have been told by Jesus that the words of God are truth (John 17:17), and that He would send the Spirit of Truth to guide us into all truth (John 14:17; 16:13). Why would we seek to supplement such a promise with humanistic thinking?



16. *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

From whom ties what follows in this verse to Christ, as mentioned in the previous verse. Once again, the theme of Ephesians comes through: *in* (or, in this case, *from*) *Christ*. As Head of the Body of Believers, Christ exercises control over the Body, and provides what is needed for it to function as it ought.

This Body is *fitly joined together*. The same Greek word is used here as in 2:21, which speaks of the building growing into a holy temple in the Lord, and carries the thought of being joined closely together.²⁵⁶ The Master-builder is at work, and He will not build anything that is not perfect and holy. Hence, if we are not growing in Him, what basis do we have to include ourselves in the construction project on which He is working? Will He be pleased to use the teachings of godless philosophers in His building program? I think not; this joining together flows from Jesus Christ, not Sigmund Freud, James Dobson, or Chuck Colson.

The Greek word for *compacted* carries the thought of being united or joined together,²⁵⁷ and serves to reinforce the *fitly joined together* just mentioned. The Greek word translated as *joint*, does not mean a joint (such as the knee or elbow), but rather a ligature that acts as a connection or a means of joining together.²⁵⁸ The thrust here has nothing to do with flexibility, and everything to do with inter-connectedness. Again, we must not lose the context for this, namely, that the source is Christ. In this Body, we are inextricably joined to Christ (see John 15 – the vine and branches is one picture of our relationship).

I have read that the brain is more than a storage place for memories and a processor of sensory perceptions and thoughts. Scientists are discovering that the brain is the great control

²⁵⁶ Strong's Online.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Vine's "joint."

center of the body and seeks to keep all operations in balance, calling for compensating functions when something goes wrong.²⁵⁹ In essence, the brain is connected to every part and function of the body and seeks to coordinate and control all of these functions. This would be the analogy that Scripture would have us to understand when it refers to Christ as the Head of the Body of those whom He has purchased out of sin. As we make every effort, with the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, to walk worthy of His calling, we strengthen our connection with our Savior, and our union with Him grows. The essence of this phrase, *fitly jointed together*, is that we are united by that which comes through every connection that we have with Christ. There is no room for Colson's *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. Our unity comes only through our union with Christ; He must be the focus in order for there to be a union that will receive His blessing. All of our efforts at unity are as straw, which will not survive the test of fire, and will only lead to compromise and the Lord's displeasure.

If we understand that the unity that we have as the Body of Christ comes through our union with Christ, and that it is strengthened and sustained through being joined to Him through our continual abiding in Him, then we will realize the futility of our efforts that are expended in order to achieve unity. When Colson says, "we must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church,"²⁶⁰ it is very clear that he has misunderstood the truth of this verse. The compacting, or close unity of the Body, does not come through our efforts to make it happen, but from that which flows from Christ, our Head, through our connectedness to Him. It is all of Him, and nothing of us.

January 25, 2008 ended what has been called the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a joint venture of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This "week" began in 1908 when an Episcopalian, Paul Wattson, saw unity as a command of Jesus, and felt that this could only be achieved by Christians returning to the Catholic Church (which he demonstrated by personal example the following year). What is clear from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and from the efforts of men like Colson, is that these are fleshly efforts in order to bring about an external unity, and have nothing whatsoever to do with the unity of which Jesus spoke. A careful consideration of the past ten to fifteen years within the Evangelical movement will show that there has been a subtle but steady movement in the direction of Rome. This is the product of soft-peddling the clear teachings of Scripture in favor of a more positive message that endeavors to give everyone a heavenly glow. Satan knew that without the pure truth of Scripture, it would not be long before the Evangelicals would be eating out of his hand.



Paul Wattson

The Greek word that is translated *effectual working (energia)* is used in the NT only in regard to superhuman power.²⁶¹ Within the context here, that can only refer to the working of Christ; this is not just each of us doing our part, but it is the work of God, which comes through our interconnectedness to Christ as the Head of the Body. The Body is united, or joined together,

²⁵⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brain>

²⁶⁰ Colson, *Body*, p. 102.

²⁶¹ Strong's Online.

not through the efforts that we might expend, but through the working of Christ in us by our being joined to Him. We must **be** the work of Christ before we can **do** a work for Christ. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Jesus stated, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). This last phrase, *without me ye can do nothing*, is the culmination of what Jesus is saying here. This is a very emphatic statement in the Greek, making use of a double negative so as to underscore the message: separate or apart from Me you have no ability to do absolutely not even one thing!²⁶² However, in order to provide a balanced understanding of this strong declaration, it is necessary to consider Jesus’ words from Matthew 7:21-23: “²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” It is plainly evident from this passage that there will be those who will do many things in the name of Jesus, and yet receive His condemnation. Although they did great exploits (from the human perspective), their works were not recognized by the Lord. Jesus said that without Him we could do absolutely nothing; evidently all these great works were done without the Lord; they did many wonderful things but the Lord was not in them energizing the work – “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1a); unless the Lord is building the Body of Christ, we labor in vain to build it on our own. Even though we may do great things, and even do them in the name of the Lord, unless we permit the Spirit of God to work in us to accomplish these things, they are done in vain for they hold no eternal value. An unknown poet sought to capture this concept (in keeping with the passage that we have just looked at, I have noted one small change to the poem):

Only One Life

Two little lines I heard one day,
 Traveling along life's busy way;
 Bringing conviction to my heart,
 And from my mind would not depart;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
 Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
 Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
 And stand before His Judgement seat;
 Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
 Gently pleads for a better choice
 Bidding me selfish aims to leave,

²⁶² Strong's Online.

And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its clays I must fulfill,
Living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done ~~for~~ by Christ will last.

We looked at Matthew 7:21-23 where Jesus warned that not everyone who did marvelous things in His name would be accepted by Him. Consider the context of this warning: it follows on the heels of, ¹⁵"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-16a). After declaring that we would be able to recognize the wolves by their fruits, even when they appeared to be sheep, Jesus goes on to reveal that there will be those who will do great things in His name, but they will be condemned for He does not know them. So how can we know the wolves when they are disguised, and if the works that they do, in the name of Jesus, are rejected by Him? Jesus explains that the one who will enter heaven is the one who is doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21); in other

words, we must walk in obedience to the commands of God. John wrote, “³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4). Ponder this! John declares, by the Spirit of God, that there will be those who say, “I know God,” and yet do not keep His commandments; they are described as being without the truth, not simply that they haven’t come to a full understanding of the truth, but the truth is not there – they are living a lie! The lie is this: they profess to know God, yet they do not obey His commands; therefore, to know God is to walk in obedience to His commandments. Most Evangelicals today call those who desire to walk according to God’s commands, legalists. Make no mistake – obedience is NEVER legalism! Legalism says, “If I do these things I will gain salvation, or I will appear more righteous before God.” The sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, and many of the Reformation churches, are considered to be essential to salvation (in their eyes) and that without them you are lost – **that is legalism**. To desire to walk through life in accordance to God’s Word to us, out of a heart of gratitude for the provision that He has made for us in Christ – **that is obedience!**

Consider Paul’s words to the Thessalonians: “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10); he is speaking of those in the end times who will be deceived by the working of the Antichrist (Satan’s man of the hour) done with “all power and signs and lying wonders,” and their deception will come because of their disregard of the truth. Jesus declared the words of God to be truth (John 17:17); therefore, it seems obvious that unless we are prepared to live in accordance with the Scriptures, we will be declared to be liars, and will also become fair game for the deception that will take place in the end times. I fear that this will be the end for many within Evangelicalism; there is an ever-growing number who claim to “know God” but their lives clearly indicate that they are not walking in obedience to His commandments. We are to be very careful that we do not join ourselves to them or walk with them, lest we be overcome by the message of positivism, and succumb to the deception of Satan. “¹Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2). The ungodly are not just those who frequent the red-light districts of our cities; they are also those who, week-by-week, mindlessly fill the pews of today’s modern churches, and those who proclaim a skewed gospel – a positive-only message of God’s love. We are not to walk in their ways! Their positive message of a different gospel will result in them standing with sinners – Colson is a classic example of that, for he stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the Catholics and is one with them. Finally, there is a growing scorn among Evangelicals for those who advocate adhering to the teachings of Scripture, and avoiding their Ecumenical acceptance of all who call themselves “Christian” – we are considered to be too narrow and too negative. There is a progression in Psalm 1:1 of which we must not lose sight: first there is walking with them (after all, we might rationalize, they’re not bad people, and they say that they love God), then there is a stopping to stand with them (after all, they’re working for a good cause, and why shouldn’t we support them in it – this is Dobson’s line for joining with the Catholics in the defense of the family), and then there is the final capitulation – sitting with them and criticizing those who walk a more narrow way. It all begins with walking with them, doing things with them, attending their meetings, listening to or reading their teachings, etc. By contrast, Psalm 1:2 calls on us to delight in the law or commandments of the Lord, and to seek our direction from there. If we see ourselves being drawn into walking in the way of the modern Evangelical, whether frequently or on occasion

(for that is the greatest temptation today), then we must stop immediately, and return to the Word of God. We must be alert, for the temptation is subtle.

Paul’s admonition to the Thessalonians was that they “prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This requires more than a cursory evaluation, and calls for careful examination and testing to determine if something, or someone, is genuine or not. Effort is to be expended in making the determination of authenticity! Paul’s letter was not addressed to the chief leader or overseer of the group, but to the “called-out” ones at Thessalonica; this is not a charge reserved for those who bear the responsibility of oversight, but for everyone. John, in his epistle, calls us to exercise discernment: “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The Greek word for *try* is the same word translated as *prove* in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – we are to exercise careful examination and testing before we believe someone. The Bereans of Acts 17 were considered to be more noble than those at Thessalonica, for they took the words of the Apostle Paul and examined them in light of the Scriptures. The Bereans were not gullible, they tested what they heard to determine whether or not it was genuine; they demonstrated a love for the truth by examining all things against the truth. This is virtually unheard of among Evangelicals today.

Returning to our passage, the *effectual working* is not our working, but, rather, the working of Christ as Head of the Body, in the *measure of every part*. This is a difficult phrase to understand, so let’s approach it carefully, keeping the context in mind. *Measure* is from the Greek word *metro*, and it means a determined extent or limit.²⁶³ The Greek words translated as *every part*, also include the word for *one*, adding an element of singular precision – every part is included, in this case, not one is left out. As we bring these together, what we find is a declaration that is in keeping with the metaphor of the body that began this verse: Christ is working according to the extent, or limit, of each single part of the Body. Two things bear consideration here: 1) this is Christ working, as we have already seen, and 2) we are all different. Christ is working according to the determined limitation of each one of us within the Body; we are not all the same, and Christ is working in accordance with our uniqueness. Psalm 103:14: “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Once again, there is no place for our fleshly efforts to fit into what we perceive to be the Body of Christ – it will only lead to disaster.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul illustrated this very clearly when speaking of the gifts of the Spirit which we have all been given. “¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? ¹⁸But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (1 Corinthians 12:13-18). It is God Who has placed us within the Body of Christ – and we have not all be given the same interests, abilities or roles. This is why it is so important that we not parrot those around us – God has prepared a specific role for us, and so we are not to compare ourselves with others: “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves

²⁶³ Strong’s Online.

among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). Indeed, since God has placed us within the Body as it pleased Him, why would we discredit His wise placement by comparing ourselves with anyone else. If we walk worthy of the calling of God on our lives, then our relationship with Christ as our Head will be strengthened, and His power will work through us to see the fulfillment of His desires for us. Paul’s confidence in the worthy walk of the Philippians was such that he declared, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). We will not find fulfillment in God by trying to emulate someone else; we must permit God to work His pleasure in us, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

We now come to the culmination of this verse; here is what everything that has been outlined pushes toward – the growth of the Body of Christ that results in the building up of itself in love. As we maintain our relationship with Christ, the Head, we will grow and mature, and become a source of edification to those around us. Not comparing ourselves with anyone else, but being encouraged and challenged in our walk with the Lord.

All of this comes through God having given apostles, prophets, etc. to the Body of Christ (v. 11). Through the ministry of those who fill these roles worthily, we will grow in spiritual maturity, have a oneness of faith, experience stability in our walk, and enjoy an intimate connectedness to Christ as the Head.

However, as we look about us today, we see the opposite: we see immaturity, instability, and fleshly indulgence. It would seem that there is little doubt that wolves are filling the roles of leaders and teachers, and they are speaking enticing words of comfort for the itching ears of listeners who demand to be consoled and assured that they are okay. A spiritual blindness has settled over the average Christian; he has turned away from the truth and has embraced a falsehood that assures him of a place in heaven without repentance, without walking in obedience to God’s commandments, and without separating from the world and error. Unfortunately, this is not just a generational malady – an affliction of the new generation coming up; this blindness has settled over all generations alive today, those who have walked 40, 50 or even 60 years in the Christian faith are just as likely to hold liberal, unbiblical views as the generation of rockers who are creating their own version of Christianity, so-called. Paul, in many of his letters, wrote against error and the new gospels that were flooding the world of his day; why would we think that our day would be any different?

Today, the message is that confrontation is to be avoided at all costs, even at the expense of adhering to God’s declared truth (this might not be admitted to, but it is what happens). Yet we are called to battle, and must be prepared for it (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Timothy 1:18, 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7). When New Evangelicalism launched itself in the late 1940s, it did so by laying down its weapons, removing its armor, and pulling up a chair to dialogue with the enemy; they were tired of fighting, and sought a peace agreement with the enemy of their souls, which only served to clinch their spiritual apostasy. Christ defeated Satan at the cross through His death and resurrection; the victory is sealed – yet they have sold out to the evil one just so they can relax, let their guard down, and enjoy life. Unfortunately, the terms of peace were so enticing that their example spread like wildfire, and many Fundamental preachers also laid their weapons down and chose apostasy over remaining true to the Word of God. Jack van Impe is a classic example of this in our day. For many years, he preached a fundamental message, which called for separation and

adherence to the full message of the Gospel, even standing against the compromises of Billy Graham. Then, one day, he became weary of being so negative; he laid his message of truth down, picked up a so-called message of love, turned around and embraced the enemies of the Gospel as his brothers. However, we should not be surprised at this, for Jesus said, “false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect” (Mark 13:22). These wolves in sheep’s clothing will be so effective that those who are **in Christ** will also be tempted to turn away. This verse does not say that those in Christ **cannot** be seduced. The Greek word translated as *possible* means to be strong, mighty or able.²⁶⁴ Therefore, the conditional statement is a reflection on the degree of effectiveness that the false christs and prophets have in plying their seduction; if they are mighty at what they do, it is possible to lead those who are in Christ astray. We must be alert, always measuring the message and life of any man against Scripture; we are to keep our eyes on Jesus, the “author and finisher of *our* faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Beware of following a man or his message, no matter how good it sounds or how many good things he might say – we must continually measure what we hear against the Word of God.

This is the error of those who elevate the role of a so-called pastor or leader above that which the Word of God declares. Those of this mindset look to Hebrews 13:17 as their basis for deferring to the man because of the role that he fills within their group of believers. Yet that is not what this verse is saying: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves” This is a command, but it is not a command to submit to someone in authority, as it is in 1 Peter 2:13. The Greek word translated as *obey* means to be persuaded, and is most often translated as *persuade* or *trust*.²⁶⁵ This does not mean that we are to permit ourselves to be talked into trusting someone, but, in keeping with 1 John 4:1, we are to test and prove someone before we are persuaded. If a leader is not willing to be tested and proven in this Scriptural manner, then he is immediately disqualified. Just because a man is a leader in a local assembly does not mean that we must submit to his leadership – we are to test him, and then, being persuaded that he is trustworthy, we submit ourselves. Given the subtlety of the seduction of the enemy of our souls, we must remain alert; there is to be a continual testing lest we be drawn away from the truths of Scripture. There is never a time when we can spiritually put our feet up and relax; we must always be vigilant. It is only as we remain alert and abide in Christ that we will be a source of edification to the rest of the Body of Christ. No edification comes from someone who lives a life of compromise, but only a temptation to follow their departure from the Scriptures. The way is narrow; compromise, by its very nature, seeks to broaden the way – the way is not of our making, so we cannot alter the strait or narrow gate that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).



17. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

Once again, we have the word *therefore*, which serves to connect that which follows to what has come before. This is a signal for us to be conscious of the context of what we read, and should be a warning not to take what follows in isolation.

²⁶⁴ Vine’s “possible.”

²⁶⁵ Strong’s Online.

Although this portion does not take the form of a command, the structure demands that we give it careful attention. Paul does not merely speak these words (or write them), but underscores their importance by inserting *testify in the Lord*. The Greek word translated as *testify* carries the thought of bringing a witness forward,²⁶⁶ thereby making the declaration that much more solemn and significant. In this case, Paul is testifying in the Lord; he is calling the Lord as witness of the truth of what will follow.

We are no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk (*walk* refers to how we carry out our lives, our use of opportunities that come our way²⁶⁷). There is to be a marked difference between how we conduct our lives and how the heathen conduct themselves. We have here a simple statement of fact that there is to be a difference. One of the things that the fathers of New Evangelicalism determined was to place a new emphasis on “the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.”²⁶⁸ Their endeavor sounds noble – what could be more appropriate than applying the reality of the Gospel to where we all live from day-to-day. However, their focus was more on the social and political aspects of the application than on the Gospel message, and, consequently, the message became increasingly blurred as they sought ways of integrating it into a society that did not recognize the authority of Scripture. What we have today is Evangelicals presenting another gospel that bears little resemblance to the Gospel message of the Bible – a gospel that is readily accepted by society, for it places few demands on them to forsake their ways. In contravention of Paul’s declaration that we are not to walk as the rest of the world walks, professing Christians today bear a striking resemblance to the world: they dress the same, talk the same, and do the same things – the only difference is that they may gather with others of like mind on Sunday mornings to be reminded that they are okay. The basis for Biblical separation goes right back to creation. On the first day, God created light; but more than that, He separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:4). So when Paul, by the Spirit of God, asks the question in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “what communion hath light with darkness?” – the Biblical answer is, “Nothing!” God, from the time of creation, separated light from darkness! Jesus called us the light of the world, and even as God, in His infinite wisdom, separated light from darkness, so we, too, are to be separated from the darkness of this world. Yet New Evangelicalism sought to bring the light into communion with the darkness – the end result has been darkness.

How does the rest of the world walk? - *in the vanity of their mind*. *Vanity* no longer carries the full weight of the word that is used in Greek, which means, “what is devoid of truth and appropriateness,” or “perverseness, depravity.”²⁶⁹ This stands in stark contrast to the life that we are to live in Christ; this is the darkness from which we are to separate. The *mind* includes “the faculties of perceiving and understanding and those of feeling, judging, determining.”²⁷⁰ The basis that the world uses for making its judgments is not the truth of God, although today, many times it seems that those of the world exercise greater integrity and wisdom than those who profess to be Christians. The fog, which has settled in the minds of Evangelicals today, causes a greater blindness than often demonstrated by the ungodly who do not have Spirit-guided Biblical understanding.

²⁶⁶ Strong’s Online.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, Foreword.

²⁶⁹ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul was critical of them for taking their internal disputes to the ungodly judges for resolution (chapter 6). It is not that these judges could not make wise decisions, but more the fact that we are to have a different basis for our decision-making. The element of “Thy word is truth” is missing from the understanding of the worldly judge, something that must be present within the believer. Again, there is a need to draw a line between the light and the darkness, and not try to merge the two. The positive-only approach of New Evangelicalism has endeavored to mingle light with darkness. When they shed their armor of protection and sat down at the table with the Liberals and Apostates to discuss theology, in essence they said, “Let’s see what we can learn from the darkness that will enhance the effectiveness of the light.” What folly! In their zeal to win the Liberals over, they sought to impress them with their intellect – yet the Lord has openly declared, “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19). The result has been a gray haze of confusion characterized by compromise and, ultimately, spiritual death. The light of God’s Word has been replaced by a shroud of darkness created by the wisdom of man; they say, “We see!” yet they walk in the ways that lead to death and destruction. We are not to follow in their footsteps; we are to identify these hewers of broken cisterns, and avoid them! The Evangelicals of today call forth the same condemnation from the Lord as the people of Israel in Jeremiah’s day: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). That is a precise summation of the thrust of the New Evangelical movement (which is the bulk of Evangelicalism today); they have forsaken the God of the Bible and have created a new gospel for themselves that holds no life.



18. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

Here we continue with a description of the walk of the worldly, and we must not forget that this will include those who do marvelous works in the name of Jesus, but who are not known to Him (Matthew 7:21-23). The Rick Warrens and Robert Schullers of our time would vehemently claim that they are working in the name of Jesus, yet, when you look carefully at their work and doctrine, it is evident that they do not fall in line with Scripture. Will they hear, “Depart from Me” from the Lord? That is not our determination, but what we are responsible for is ensuring that we do not follow them in their heresies. It is our personal duty to hold tenaciously to the teachings of the Word of God, and avoid those who propagate a message that does not fit with its teachings.

The rest of the world has their *understanding darkened*. The Greek word for *understanding* means, “A thinking through, or over, a meditation, reflecting,”²⁷¹ and is a process that takes place within the mind (from previous verse). Through the past several decades, the world has spoken much of meditation, but it is not that which is of God. Their meditation is *darkened*, that is, it is covered with darkness.²⁷² Their deepest contemplation and their most profound meditation will be vanity – devoid of the truth. Consider this from the Word of God in light of the many Christians who follow after the principles of psychology today. Men, who were devoid of any knowledge of God and who actively went about denying God, through deep reflection and much study, came up

²⁷¹ Vine’s “mind.”

²⁷² Strong’s Online.

with the principles that undergird modern psychology. Based on this passage alone, we should understand that, at best, their reflective thinking is darkness, and we are to have no part in it. Yet many who profess to know God today follow their philosophies, and seek to blend this darkness with the Word of God.

Here we have an explanation for the darkness that covers their understanding – *being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them*. They have been estranged from, or are outside of, the life of God through their lack of knowledge; the word *alienated* means “to be shut out from one’s fellowship and intimacy.”²⁷³ I am reminded of Romans 1:20 that declares the creation to be a testimony to God’s eternal power and authority, yet, today, we see the darkness of man’s understanding reaching out to embrace the tenets of evolution rather than acknowledging God’s creative power. Modern man looks at creation and envisions eons of time being necessary in order to move from simple to complex life; the fact that evidence within the natural records, which they have examined, points in another direction does not deter them in the least. The whole basis for evolution came into being in the minds of those who sought to find answers to life in science, without God. Since these men are outside of, or alienated from, the life of God, it is completely understandable that they would seek answers where they are at – what is not reasonable is that Christians would be so naive as to accept their proposals. Yet we see Christians today falling for the evolutionary fallacy, and seeking to integrate it with the truths of Genesis. This is another product of New Evangelicalism – one of their founding tenets was “the reexamination of theological problems such as ... God’s method of creation.”²⁷⁴ Unfortunately, their reexamination of God’s account of creation, as given to us in Genesis, was made from the perspective of the evolutionist, which has resulted in such things as progressive creationism, the gap theory, etc. All of these had one purpose: to integrate theology with evolutionary scientific thinking. As with any mixture of truth with error, the result is never truth, but rather a more dangerous potion of error – one that can appear to be true to the undiscerning. Therefore, even while many scientists are beginning to regard evolutionary theories with suspicion, Christians, and the rest of the general population, continue to look upon evolution as the product of scientific discovery and indisputable fact.

Along with the movement away from the inerrancy of God’s Word came a growing darkness – an increasing ignorance of the Truth that God has given to us. As Evangelicals have taken great strides in their acceptance of the thinking of modern man, it has led to a corresponding movement away from walking in a manner worthy of the calling that we have of God (Ephesians 4:1). When God created light, He separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:4); yet Evangelicals seek to integrate the light of God’s Word with the darkness of man’s philosophies – despite being warned specifically in 2 Corinthians 6:14ff against this very thing. As a matter of fact, Paul tells us that unless we practice this principle of separation, God will not receive us (2 Corinthians 6:16-17). Yet in the name of “love” (falsely so-called), Evangelicals today practice an acceptance and tolerance of all kinds of things that are contrary to the Word of God, and deride those who practice Biblical separation. They now sit in the seat of the scornful (Psalm 1:1). They are beyond walking with the wayward, and way past standing together with sinners; they are now comfortable enough with error so as to rest in its midst. Be wary; be vigilant against the error that enshrouds Evangelicalism today.

²⁷³ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁴ “New Evangelicalism – It’s History,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fundamen1.htm>

Our passage tells us that the rest of the world is shut outside of the life of God *through the ignorance that is in them*. This *ignorance* is “a lack of knowledge, especially of divine things.”²⁷⁵ We can easily understand that the world has a lack of knowledge of spiritual things, but what is most disconcerting is that this is becoming an increasingly apt description of the Evangelical community; there is a rapidly rising lack of understanding of spiritual truths, and a growing rationalization of the commands of Scripture so as to open the doors of acceptance to the ways of the world. In essence, the Evangelical community is moving into the same category as the rest of the world, the “other Gentiles.” Evangelicalism is quickly becoming a religious movement that is devoid of life; their understanding is growing ever darker, and they are being alienated from God through their increasing ignorance. It all began by setting the commands of Scripture aside and embracing compromise – how careful we must be to avoid compromise, no matter how innocent that it may seem.

We come now to a bit of a mixed metaphor (*blindness of their heart*), since the heart is not considered to be the seat of vision. The Greek word for *blindness* that is used here is translated elsewhere as *hardness*, and means to cover over with a callus.²⁷⁶ The root of the word is a kind of stone, so hardness would seem to be a preferred translation. This darkened condition of the rest of the world, and their alienation from the life of God comes down to their heart that has been covered over with a callus, which has reduced their sensitivity to spiritual light. They cannot see because they will not.

Jesus said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). If someone appears righteous in their own eyes, then they will not seek the Lord’s pardon. In this day of tolerance and the acceptance of any and all beliefs as being equally valid, there is a proliferation of self-righteousness. With the growing darkness within Evangelical circles, this self-diagnosed righteousness is spreading rapidly among those who should know better. Yet if we look at an illustration from the life of Jesus, we should not be surprised by what is taking place among Evangelicals today:

¹And he [Jesus] entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. ²And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. ³And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. ⁴And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. ⁵And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. ⁶And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. Mark 3:1-6.

It was the religious elite who persecuted Jesus the most, so it should not come as a surprise to us that it will be the religious ones who will give us the most grief as we endeavor to live a life of separation unto the Lord. They will use terms like “Legalist” or “Pharisee” to describe those who seek to follow the Lord’s teaching in areas of separation. The Pharisees saw Jesus’ miracles and heard His teachings, yet, in their self-righteousness, they refused to be moved beyond their seat of

²⁷⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

power over the common people and their influence within Jewish leadership. According to their definition of righteousness, they were okay, and they were not about to hear of anything that would discount this. This is precisely where Evangelicals find themselves today in relation to those who still view the Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God; they may use terminology that sounds Biblical, but they have subtly shifted the definitions of many terms in order to provide greater latitude of application.



19. *Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

The Greek word translated as *past feeling* means “to become callous, apathetic.”²⁷⁷ This would build on the hardness of their hearts, just mentioned; the callus, which has formed, has reduced their sensitivity to spiritual truth. Once again, I am reminded of the Evangelical community: first of all, there are those who have become insensitive to the truths of God’s Word; they no longer have any stab of conscience about associating with, or even adhering to, error (they have become callous); secondly, there are those who bite their tongue and put up with the error (they have become apathetic). It is interesting that both, the hardened and the apathetic, are lumped together; although the apathetic may still have some twinges of conscience, they are not prepared to do anything about it, and so they become like unto the hardened. Those who remain among the apostate, even though their conscience may whisper that they are in the midst of error, for some reason fear to stand against error and, therefore, become one with the apostate.

Our verse goes on: these, both the callous and the apathetic, have *given themselves over* to lasciviousness. They did not stumble into it, nor were they trapped in it; they have handed themselves over to this lifestyle. The action (in the case of the callous ones) or the inaction (of the apathetic) is theirs; they can lay the blame at no one else’s feet.

Lasciviousness, within our modern definition, has to do with sexual excesses. However, the Greek word so translated “denotes excess, licentiousness [aggressive pursuit of desires without regard for morality], absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness [without inhibitions].”²⁷⁸ This is an apt description of our world, and, within today’s society, the application of the term to sexual excesses definitely fits; however, we should not place such a limitation on this word, for there are many ways where excess can reveal itself. The world is becoming increasingly prominent within Evangelical circles, and there is a corresponding lowering of the guard against selfish excesses. In their pursuit of accommodation, acceptable behavior and lifestyles are becoming increasingly comparable to the world; the line of separation has become blurred, at the very least. Extravagant living has become the envy of many, and whole “ministries” have been built upon the heresy of prosperity being the right of every child of God. The temptation that Eve faced in the Garden of Eden is alive and well within our “Christian” communities today, and many continue to fall for the bait (cp. Genesis 3:16; 1 John 2:16).

The lascivious excess within the Evangelical heart today is evident in their demonstrated right to do whatever they please – they declare a freedom in Christ, which they use to justify their worldliness. Truly, in His discussion with the Jews, Jesus declared, “If the Son therefore shall

²⁷⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁸ Vine’s “lasciviousness.”

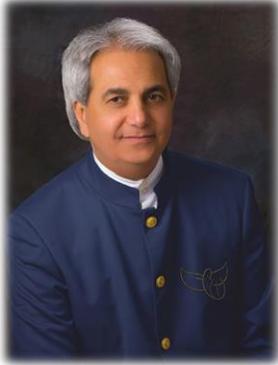
make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36), but the Spirit of God also made it clear through Paul, “ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). The freedom that Jesus spoke of was a freedom from sin that would come through abiding in His Word, thereby permitting the Truth to set us free from the bondage of sin (John 8:31-32). In their servitude to their religious system, the Jews saw themselves as carrying on after the pattern of their father Abraham, whom God proclaimed to be righteous. They sought the righteousness of Abraham through works, but forgot that Abraham “believed in the LORD; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). The Jews neglected their heart response to God, and focused on doing the right things, which is the very thing that drew Jesus’ condemnation of their hypocrisy. Jesus called them hypocrites, and quoted from Isaiah concerning them: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). In like manner, today many seek to cache in on the righteousness of those who have gone before by following their external example: they become members of their church, religiously attend all of the meetings, and become involved in the charitable activities of their particular group. As long as they stay busy doing good things, they seem to be able to keep their consciences quiet, until such time as their consciences no longer work. By eating of the fruit of compromise, they are under the impression that they have become wise to discern between good and evil (without God’s Word); they appear to be righteous in their own eyes, and see no need for repentance before a holy God.

Paul warned Timothy that there was coming a time when there would be a falling away: “¹Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2). The phrase *seared with a hot iron* is from one word in Greek which means, “To mark by branding,” with the further explanation that these are those “whose souls are branded with the marks of sin.”²⁷⁹ Once again, we are reminded that these things will not only characterize the godless, who have never understood the faith, but this is also the end of those who will withdraw themselves from the faith; their conscience will bear the identifying mark of sin! How can this be? Psalm 1:1 tells us that it will begin by walking with those who do not adhere to the full counsel of the Word of God. The Pharisees should be our example: they were not without the Scriptures; they were the religious ones who taught the Jews the commandments of God, yet they were condemned by Jesus. It is not enough to hold to parts of God’s Word (like the Pharisees), while completely ignoring, or distorting, other portions. Evangelicals have discovered the road that the Pharisees walked: they seek to honor the Lord with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

Uncleanness, as used here, carries the thought of moral impurity, “the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living.”²⁸⁰ Once again, this cannot be confined to a sexual context, for it describes any extravagant and wasteful lifestyle with an element of impurity. This is lived out by the heads of “ministries” who live lavish lifestyles with several multi-million dollar homes and vacation homes, and owning numerous luxury cars and planes. Benny Hinn is an example of this today: he heads up a “ministry” that fleeces people of millions of dollars every year, which allows him “to maintain a \$3.5 million home, and to spend \$8,000 on airline fares and stay in \$2,000/night

²⁷⁹ Strong’s Online.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.



Benny Hinn

hotel rooms.”²⁸¹ He flies his flag under the banner of Christianity, claims to honor the Lord with his words, yet his heart is far from the Lord – one example where his fruits clearly demonstrate that he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

However, we must not limit this excessiveness to material things. There are those who live to hear the acclaim of others. The Oprahs, Dr. Phils, Billy Grahams and Rick Warrens of this world thrive on the “well done” of their fellowman; they will push all of the right buttons to hear the accolades of those who follow them. Even though their personal lifestyles may be modest by worldly standards, their drive is to be held in high regard by the movers and shakers of this world. A brief look through Billy Graham’s autobiography, *Just As I Am*, reveals the importance that he places on his rapport with the US Presidents, as well as with the heads of many nations around the world. Bill Clinton did much to encourage the gay-rights movement in the US, yet Billy recalls a time spent with Clinton in these words: “it was a time of warm fellowship with a man who has not always won the approval of his fellow Christians but who has in his heart a desire to serve God and do His will.”²⁸² Clinton’s life and these words are completely incompatible, yet this is how Graham has adopted a see-no-evil view of life. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14) – the answer is supposed to be, “None.” We would do well to keep the words of Jesus in mind, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

Our passage tells us that they do not pursue this life of extravagance and wastefulness with casual interest; no, they follow it *with greediness*. An insatiable lust for more drives them; their lives are characterized by an unquenchable covetousness, whether it is for material possessions or acclaim, it matters not. “⁹Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither ... idolaters ... ¹⁰nor covetous ... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). *Greediness*, from our text, is a derivative of the Greek word for *covetous* used in 1 Corinthians 6:10. God’s pronouncement is clear!



20. *But ye have not so learned Christ;*

Paul now begins to develop a contrast to the life of the *other Gentiles*. He makes the statement that the Ephesians and the faithful in Christ Jesus (which includes us) have not learned about Christ in this manner. We have not learned of Christ in the vanity of our minds, being devoid of truth and depraved; we will not grow in our knowledge and understanding of Christ by walking after the manner of the ungodly, whether they are professors of Christianity or affirmed atheists.

This would almost seem to be a self-evident statement – there is no way that we can learn about Christ, and what He desires for us, through exercising the lasciviousness of our sinful hearts. Yet the statement is here, and for good reason. As we look around at the Evangelical community, as we have said numerous times already, identification with the world is becoming standard fare for most churchgoers today. As the average pew-warmer seeks to adopt the ways of the world in

²⁸¹ <https://www.coursehero.com/file/116902000/Benny-Hinn-criticdoc/>.

²⁸² Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 656.

their so-called freedom, there is a need to make the statement that Christ will not be understood through such pursuits. There will be no growth in our knowledge of Who Christ is (and what He desires of us and for us) through the pursuit of excesses of any kind (whether material, the “well done” of our fellowman, or physical pleasures). Consider Jesus’ words: “³¹Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³²(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31-33). The Gentiles look for those things that are seen; we are to set God’s eternal kingdom and His righteousness as our priority, and permit the Lord to provide us with those things that He knows we need. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). Our focus needs to be heavenward – not on the world around us, nor on what it offers.



21. *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:*

This is a conditional statement that qualifies the reality of what came before. You have not so learned of Christ *if* you have heard Him and been taught by Him. The thrust is that if you have heard His voice and received His instruction, then you will not walk as the rest of the Gentiles do; you will not emulate the world and its values. This is a foundational truth for the Christian life, yet it is being scorned within Evangelical circles today. When we transfer our allegiance from the world to Christ, there is to be a change: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6). Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” The Scriptures are very clear – if there is no change of life, then there has been no change of heart. Jesus’ words to His disciples are so appropriate here: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). One of the purposes of the coming of the Spirit of God upon us is that He might guide us into all truth (John 16:13), and there is no reason to believe that this purpose has changed.

Our verse includes the phrase *taught by him*. There are probably many ways for the Lord to teach us, but as it pertains to Jesus, there are fewer possibilities. Based on the passage that we have just studied, the gifts, which God has given to His saints, are one key way: the *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors* and *teachers* as outlined in 4:11. Through the faithful ministry of the Apostles and Prophets, we have the Word of God in our hands today, which is a key Tool used by God to teach us of Christ. However, considering the exhortations of Paul to Timothy and Titus to cling to the teaching that had been given to them, it is equally clear that only the ministry of teachers, who are faithful to the Scriptures, will be acceptable to God. He will use individuals who are faithful to His Word. As we have already seen, the primary Teacher is the Spirit of God: whether opening the eyes of our understanding as we read the Word of God, or speaking through the words of faithful ministers of the Word. In either case, we are being taught by Him!

We are also reminded that *the truth is in Jesus*. Jesus stated, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). This is a very exclusive statement – Jesus is the Truth, not a truth, or one truth, but THE Truth! Yet today there are those on every front who seek to wiggle their way around this exclusivity. Norman Vincent Peale declared: “It’s not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God, I have mine. I found eternal peace in

a Shinto shrine.”²⁸³ Notice the contradiction to God’s truth that Jesus is **the** way, not **a** way or **one** way. It is disconcerting when we find Billy Graham, during a speech before a meeting of the National Council of Churches, giving Peale this accolade: “I don’t know anyone who has done more for the kingdom of God than Norman and Ruth Peale, or have meant any more in my life -- the encouragement they have given me.”²⁸⁴ As alarming as this might be, it should not be surprising since Billy Graham declared openly in a 1997 interview with Robert Schuller, “... that’s what God is doing today, He’s calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they’ve been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don’t have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they’re going to be with us in heaven.”²⁸⁵ What departure from the exclusive truth of God’s Word!



Norman Vincent Peale

Consider this from the Roman Catholic Catechism: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.”²⁸⁶ Billy Graham’s years of hobnobbing with the Catholics are producing a harvest; he has learned their language and is following their doctrines – thereby sowing confusion and compromise among Evangelicals. Professing Christians today have great difficulty with the exclusivity of Jesus’ statement, and they will use many spiritually sounding words to try to maneuver their way around it.

This is of grave concern. There is a growing apathy to the error that is pervading Christianity. Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, and even Norman Vincent Peale are held in high regard among professing Christians today. This is a serious violation of the Word of God, which calls us to separate from error, to mark those who depart from the doctrines of the Scriptures and avoid them (Romans 16:17-18). How does this happen? It takes place when we choose to walk with them while their errors are only in small things (easily overlooked), when we stand with them in apparently good causes (brothers in a cause), and, ultimately, when we sit down with them, accepting them as honorable Christian men (Psalm 1:1). It all begins by exhibiting apathy toward the commands of Scripture; we are reaping the harvest of the seeds sown by the founders of New Evangelicalism. They called some of the clear teachings of Scripture into question, desired dialogue with the apostates, and sought to impress the world with their intellect – and, through this subtle means, they have sold-out to the world. We are called to stand firmly on the Word of God that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and must be prepared to reap the scorn of those who have departed from Jesus, the narrow Way Who leads to life.

²⁸³ <https://libquotes.com/norman-vincent-peale/quote/lbr4c0e>.

²⁸⁴ https://www.inplainsite.org/html/norman_vincent_peale.html.

²⁸⁵ <https://www.cuttingedge.org/news/n1141.cfm>.

²⁸⁶ <http://www.catholicdatabase.com/?page=catechism> , paragraph #847.



22. *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;*

Although this does not carry an imperative or command tense, it is a statement of what is to be taking place. The Greek word translated as *put off* carries a sense of separation; it is not merely to put something down, but rather calls for a separation from it.²⁸⁷ We are to separate ourselves from the manner of life that we had prior to coming to know the truth of Jesus, that life that we had while outside of Christ, living after the manner of the rest of the Gentiles. No matter how good we may have been (in our eyes or in the eyes of others), there will be a setting aside, a separation from the ways of the *old man* that will be required. This *old man* can be none other than the sinful nature that we have inherited from Adam. When Adam sinned, he knew that things were not as they were before, for he attempted to hide himself from the presence of God. Today, however, the sense of sinfulness seems to have been lost, and there is an arrogant and a presumptuous attitude toward God; it appears that the *old man* does not hold the same stench of death that it once did, or we have lost our sense of smell. Jesus has become something that we seek to attach to our already “good” lives, and then carry on as before. It is clear, from this passage, that this is not possible. There is to be a separation from that *old man*; it is to be reckoned as being dead (Romans 6:11); that body of sin is to be destroyed, not coddled (Romans 6:6).

We now come to a brief description of the *old man* – *which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*. In our English translation, the word *corrupt* appears to be an adjective referring back to the *old man*. However, in the Greek, the word is a present-tense verb, which would indicate a present action; the *old man* is not corrupt only because of the inherited sin of Adam, but there is a present action that renders it increasingly corrupt or destined for destruction. The *old man* is “morally decaying, on the way to final ruin.”²⁸⁸

This *old man* is the source of many marvelous things. We must not be lulled into thinking that he is incapable of doing good things, for even sinful man still bears the image of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). However, we cannot make these good things into a means of salvation; there are not many ways to God, only one, and that is Christ. To put it any other way is to add to the Gospel, which will only lead to your own destruction. “⁵Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6). Nevertheless, what we find today are Christians who redefine the Gospel message according to their own understanding, and base their eternal destiny on what they have determined to be reasonable – rather than on what God has declared to be true. The Roman Catholics have added seven sacraments that must be kept in order to inherit (or is it, earn?) salvation. They declare, “There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.”²⁸⁹ For many years, Evangelicals have maintained a separation from the Catholic Church, and have had no part in its practices, but we are now in a day when it is becoming increasingly popular to be open-minded and accepting of Catholic traditions. On the other hand, although the Reformed churches came out of the Catholic Church, they did not leave all of its trappings and traditions

²⁸⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁸⁸ Vine’s “corrupt.”

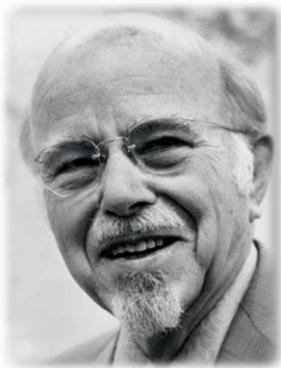
²⁸⁹ http://www.catholicdatabase.com/?page=catechism_paragraph_1113.

behind – and the necessity of various sacraments is something that they have retained, even if they do not recognize all seven.

Billy Graham is once again an example of this open acceptance; we do not pick on him because he is an isolated example, but because he is a leader within Evangelicalism and has a great following. In 1961, during an interview with the associate editor of *The Lutheran Standard*, Billy made this statement: “I do believe that something happens at the baptism of an infant, particularly if the parents are Christians and teach their children Christian truths from childhood. We cannot fully understand the mysteries of God, but I believe a miracle can happen in these children so that they are regenerated, that is, made Christians through infant baptism. If you want to call that baptismal regeneration, that's all right with me.”²⁹⁰ That was Billy Graham’s position over 45 years ago! Ruth Graham (Billy’s wife) was baptized as an infant (in keeping with her Presbyterian heritage), and all of the Graham children (except the youngest) were also baptized as infants.²⁹¹ Where can you find, in Scripture, that the baptism of an infant makes it a Christian? You can’t!! Billy is guilty of adding to the words of God, and, to that extent, we have the affirmation of Proverbs 30:6 that he will be found to be a liar.

The Greek word for *lusts* means a strong desire of any kind, and depends on its modifier to determine if it is good or bad. Paul uses the same word in a positive sense in Philippians 1:23 when he says that he has “a desire to depart...” In our verse, there is a modifier and it is the word *deceitful*. Young’s Literal Translation shows this phrase as “the desires of the deceit.”²⁹² Deceit has been at the heart of sin from the time of Eve’s temptation by Satan. Satan made the forbidden fruit appear to be something desirable and good; he created, in the mind of Eve, a false impression in order to disguise the reality of disobedience to God, which would really be central to taking the fruit. He made disobedience appear to be something beneficial, something to be desired. Today, being gracious, open-minded, and desiring unity are all held up as positive dressings to cover compromise and disobedience; the Scriptures will be used carelessly in order to provide “support” for this error. Simply because someone uses Scripture to support what they are doing, does not make it right; do not forget that when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he used Scripture, too.

We see here that the strong desire is qualified as being formed in the lap of deceit; this is the age-old ploy of Satan to distract us away from the narrow way that leads to life. We are



Donald McGavran

commanded to “... exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). Sin does not come to us labeled “SIN” in bold letters and flashing lights – no, it comes as something good for us, something that is desirable, and something that will make us wise. It will come as something that can be rationalized, justified, and, perhaps, even supported by Scripture verses (taken out of context, of course). Sin will often fall under the category of pragmatism – that is, the end result will appear to be good and beneficial. Pragmatism has become the standard by which most people today weigh what they do – if the final

²⁹⁰ <http://bbcinternational.org/believers/english/articles/topical%20research/ecumenical/billy%20graham.htm>.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Young’s Literal Translation.

results of their actions appear to be good, then what they have done is okay. You add to this today's self-centeredness, and the end results only have to be good for you!

The church growth movement (CGM) is a classic example illustrating the significant influence of pragmatism, and one where we can see the results of another (a different) gospel that has been created to appeal to the masses. CGM, although most commonly identified with Rick Warren, actually has its roots in the thinking of Donald McGavran, a missionary to India. He is described as “not theologically oriented. His thinking was quite pragmatic and results-oriented. He argued ... the only barriers to conversion were social, such as class and ethnicity.”²⁹³ McGavran formulated his theories in the 1930s, but they remained largely dormant until the publication of his book, *Understanding Church Growth*, in the 1970s. The formation of the Institute for American Church Growth, and the acceptance of his ideas by several faculty members from Fuller Seminary served to popularize his philosophy and launch church-growth concepts into the Evangelical community. The growing decline of Biblical thinking coincided with this new theory for church growth, and the pragmatic approach won out. Robert Schuller has unequivocally stated, “My particular job as senior pastor is, hopefully, to deliver messages that will bring great crowds to church on Sunday morning.”²⁹⁴ The measure of the success of his message is whether or not the building is full! How shallow; how empty!! Yet Schuller is not alone in such blatantly empty statements; Rick Warren has said, “I contend that when a church continues to use methods that no longer work, it is being unfaithful to Christ!”²⁹⁵ According to Warren, if our methods do not produce measurable results (results that would be in keeping with his church-growth mentality) then we are being unfaithful to Christ by continuing to use them. He will use a diluted gospel (which is no gospel) to lure the ungodly into his church, and has no difficulty with this approach; however, if someone is remaining steadfastly loyal to the Scriptures and is not drawing ever-increasing crowds, then they are being unfaithful to Christ. I am reminded of Samuel's words to Saul, “Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). The principles of Scripture, which is the word of God to us, have been glazed over with humanistic reasoning to the point where men, like Warren, can carry out their own agendas and feel justified; obedience to the Word of God has taken a back seat to the programs and theories of man.

Jesus said that some of the Word of God will fall among the thorns where “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). In this day of selfish focus and pragmatic thinking, it is easy to do what is right in our own eyes, and even to carry it out in the name of Christ; yet these efforts are unfruitful in God's eyes. Once again, we must heed the many admonitions to be diligent and alert lest we be taken in and fall prey to the wiles of the devil; he loves religion and will be happy to devise one for any individual. This is precisely where we are in today's world – as long as what you are believing works for you, everything is OK. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). There is life in remaining or abiding in the teachings of Scripture, and we are

²⁹³ David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), p. 69-70.

²⁹⁴ Robert H. Schuller, *Your Church has Real Possibilities* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, 1974), p. 60.

²⁹⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 65.

commanded to give special attention to ensure that we do not depart from them. We must be alert to the lure of results-only thinking – God is more interested in how we live (our daily holiness of life) than our achievements. When the leaders of churches participate in a local ministerial association (I’m speaking of those who should know better), they are enamored with the concept of unity, and have lost sight of the fact that they are participating with error in direct contradiction of Scripture; pragmatism justifies their compromise but does nothing to cover their guilt before a holy God.



23. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*

This continues the thought developed in the previous verse; we have been told what we are to *put off*, now we find out what we are to put on. We are to put off the old man, and we are to be made new in the essence of our minds; our thinking is to be different. The old man is a great justifier of compromise, and a great rationalizer of waywardness – but this is to be put off; it is no longer to have any part in our thinking! “And be not conformed to this world [the way of the old man]: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Being *conformed to this world* and being *transformed by the renewing of your mind* stand in sharp contrast to one another; they are mutually exclusive, i.e., they absolutely cannot occur at the same time. The renewing of the mind is to result in a transformation, a metamorphosis; there is to be a change that will stand in contrast to conformity to the world. Unfortunately, what we see today is a push within Evangelicalism for syncretism – a melding of the two concepts into one aberration that finds no support in Scripture. Syncretism is a ploy of the devil to lure Christians into becoming involved in what they are to have set aside, thereby corrupting their thinking and destroying any possibility of a life of holiness before God.

Transformed, used in Romans 12:2, is from a Greek word (*metamorphoo*) that means to “change into another form.”²⁹⁶ This is the word that is used to speak of Jesus’ transfiguration. Our English word *transform* is also used to describe false apostles making themselves appear as true apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), and Satan and his demons making themselves appear to be angels of light and ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), but the Greek word used in these cases (*metaschematizo*) speaks only of a “change in fashion or appearance.”²⁹⁷ The word used in Romans 12:2 speaks of a genuine transformation, whereas the word used to refer to the false appearing to be righteous speaks only of a façade; this is a difference that we do not notice in English. Once again, we recognize the necessity of discerning and testing to ensure that we are not taken in by a wolf in sheep’s clothing. There is a saying, “as a man thinks, so is he.” It would seem that Romans 12:2 would confirm this, for it is only through a renewed mind that we will be able to live in obedience to the Lord’s commands. However, this renewal is not a work that we can do; *renewing* comes from a Greek word meaning a “complete change for the better,”²⁹⁸ and is the same word as used in Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and **renewing** of the Holy Ghost.” *Renewed*, in our text, is in the passive voice, which describes an action that is done for us,

²⁹⁶ Vine’s “transfigure.”

²⁹⁷ Strong’s Online; Vine’s “fashion.”

²⁹⁸ Strong’s Online.

underscoring the fact that we cannot do it on our own. This is the work of the Spirit of God, and is to result in a complete change in how we live.

Yet within Evangelicalism we see a growing conformity to the world and its standards (or the lack thereof), in direct violation of this command of God! At the same time, we see an increasing disdain for those who desire to adhere to the Word of God and its instruction. The rationalization is that we make the world comfortable to be around us so that we can then reach them with the Gospel message. What we fail to realize is that by doing so, we have inadvertently destroyed the life-giving message of the Gospel. Paul declared, "...the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). To make today's preaching something other than foolishness to the world, the cross has to be removed; once the cross has been removed, then the offence to the world is gone, but, alas, the power of the Gospel has also been destroyed. This is the argument that Paul used on the Galatians who sought to add some Jewish rites to the Gospel message. He said, "...if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased" (Galatians 5:11). Paul knew that if he added circumcision to his preaching, the persecution from the Jews would stop; however, he also realized that if he did so, the cross would have to be removed from his message. Today the cross has been reduced to a religious symbol, which can be worn by anyone – the offence has been taken away. A.W. Tozer said, "If I see aright, the cross of popular Evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it."²⁹⁹



24. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Along with the renewed mind comes the new man; these are together – both are the work of the Spirit of God: the former is the direct work of the Spirit, the latter is the evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God within us as seen through our walk of obedience. This is the transformation to which Paul referred in Romans 12:2 – a transformation that begins within, but finds external expression. There is to be a metamorphosis from the old man to the new man – a change in who we are. Within nature, we recognize the changes that take place within the process of metamorphosis, and we accept that a butterfly holds little resemblance to the caterpillar from which it came. Yet, within the spiritual realm, we seem to neither expect nor desire such a change; however, this is what is to take place. Would it not be completely within reason to expect a change when our feet have been removed from walking the broad way, which leads to destruction, and have been placed on the narrow way, which leads to life? The change will always be dramatic (from death to life) even if the external changes may vary depending upon the kind of life lived before the working of the Spirit of God.

The source of our new man is the Spirit of God: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:9). We were at one time "without Christ," but now we are "in Christ" – "we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto

²⁹⁹ A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*.

good works” (Ephesians 2:10, 12-13). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). “Walk as children of light” is in the imperative mood – it is a command to be obeyed, not a suggestion that we can weigh and follow or not, at our discretion. We have moved from darkness (from walking the broad road that leads to destruction) to light and walking the narrow way that leads to eternal life with the Lord. If we are light, then we are to walk accordingly. A butterfly does not fold its wings tightly to its body and walk about on its legs; it unfurls its wings and flies as befitting the transformation that has taken place! Someone who calls himself a Christian yet walks in the ways of this world, for whatever reason, has not experienced the renewing of the mind that the Spirit of God will do: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). This does not advocate sinless perfection in this life, for 1 John 1:9 clarifies that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”; rather that we will no longer live a life of perpetual, or continual, sinfulness. If we are born of God, then the Spirit of God dwells in us, and the spiritually renewed mind will not permit us to rest (when we sin) until we have confessed it before God and restored our relationship with Him. Matthew Henry rightly says, “... those who persist in a sinful life sufficiently demonstrate that they are not born of God.”³⁰⁰

Lest we misrepresent what this new life in Christ (this *new man*) looks like, we are told: *after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. This new man is crafted in accordance with God’s design; it is not a “new leaf” that we can turn over in an effort to make ourselves better people – that is the worldly version, and the old leaf is not so far away as to rear its ugly head at the slightest provocation. By contrast, this “new man” is *created in righteousness and true holiness*. The Greek word translated as *created*, in Scripture, always refers to an act of God.³⁰¹ The Spirit of God, through Paul, has left no doubt as to the source of this new man. This confirms that the *new man* is created by God in accordance with His plan. This new man is created *in righteousness and true holiness*. Our word *righteousness*, or *righteous*, comes from the Old English word “rightwise,” which was a combination of *riht* (meaning “morally correct,” or “just, good, fair, proper, fitting, straight”³⁰²) and *wis* (meaning “wise, way, manner”³⁰³). Matthew Henry sees *righteousness* as being active toward others, as encompassing our actions, our manner of living – and hence the last six commandments of the Decalogue.³⁰⁴ Likewise, he sees the *holiness* as being active toward God, and the fulfillment of the first four commandments of the Decalogue. The English word *holy* originally meant that which “must be preserved whole or intact, that cannot be transgressed or violated,”³⁰⁵ from which would come the idea of purity. Whether Matthew Henry’s application of this phrase is correct or not, it is fitting. The *new man* has been created by God according to His desire that we demonstrate righteousness and characterize holiness. This is a message that most preachers and teachers today will not voice; the focus has become the felt-needs of mankind, while their real need has been shelved as being too narrow and divisive. We must attend to the commandments of Scripture, which are nothing other than the commands of God, and give less heed to the teachings of men. If we would just weigh what we hear from the lips of men

³⁰⁰ Matthew Henry’s Commentary on 1 John 3:9, Volume 6, p. 1077.

³⁰¹ Vine’s “create.”

³⁰² <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=15>, “right.”

³⁰³ Ibid, “righteous.”

³⁰⁴ Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Ephesians 4:24, Volume 6, p. 707.

³⁰⁵ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=15>, “holy.”

by the Word of God, we would be more likely to walk in righteousness and holiness than in compromise and accommodation. When God commands us to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walked disorderly” (2 Thessalonians 3:6), then that is what we are to do. If a group of believers joins with others who do not adhere to the teachings of Scripture, then they are being disobedient to the commands of 2 Corinthians 6 and Romans 16:17, and their walk is disorderly – we are commanded to withdraw from them! Our local ministerial association includes the United, the Anglican, the Catholic, Victory and Evangelical churches; therefore, to be obedient to the command to withdraw, my wife and I cannot participate with any of the local Evangelical churches. The Scriptures are that clear! These Evangelicals have set the clear directive of God aside in favor of unity – they are *disorderly* in their walk. We will never grow in our love for the Lord and we will never become more holy before God by joining ourselves with the godless and disobedient! What will happen is that we will become less and less sure of who we should be, we will be tempted to measure the Scriptures by the words of men, and we will become generally unstable and hesitant in our spiritual walk. This is the exact opposite of what God desires for us – and it all begins with a small act of disobedience, a simple question of “Yea, hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1).



25. *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

Here we have another of those connecting words (*wherefore*) – what follows is inextricably joined to what has come before. What follows flows from putting off the old man, and, by the Spirit of God renewing our minds, putting on the new man in a demonstration of righteousness and holiness. We might think it somewhat odd that the first thing to follow is a command to speak the truth. Yet this is probably the primary means of the old man rearing its ugly head; lies can take many forms.

When Jesus confronted the Jews about the truth of His words, He declared, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). This identifies the father of all lies as the devil, the master liar who can make a lie appear to be the truth. Our propensity to embellish the truth is great and, within the world, lies are commonplace – particularly what are called *white lies*, those “harmless” ones that won’t hurt anyone. Colossians presents the same thought as our verse: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9). A product of putting off the old man is that truth is to characterize our speech with those about us.

The verse goes on: *speak every man truth with his neighbour*. This is a command, and it is directed at those who have put off the old man, who have had their minds renewed by the Spirit of God, and who have put on the new man in righteousness and holiness. We are to speak truth, and we are to do this with our *neighbor*. There are those who see *neighbor* as referring to those within the family of faith, yet there is nothing here to justify this conclusion. A Jewish lawyer asked this question of Jesus: “who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29), and Jesus responded by presenting the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Greek word for *neighbor*, as used by Jesus, is exactly the same one used in our verse, so there is no basis for restricting the meaning to a spiritual brother or sister. We are to speak truth with everyone whom we meet from day-to-day.

One of the qualifications of an elder in the assembly of believers is that “he must have a good report of them which are without” (1 Timothy 3:7); this would mean that his neighbors (those who live about him, whether in the faith or in the world) would have no occasion to lay blame on him. Deacons, likewise, are not to be “doubletongued” (1 Timothy 3:8), “saying one thing with one person another with another.”³⁰⁶ If one’s story doesn’t remain consistent, then lying has entered in – this is not to be a part of those who are either elders or deacons. The reason that Paul explicitly lays out the qualifications for leadership within the Body of Christ is given for us: “...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the *ekklesia* [assembly] of the living God, **the pillar and ground of the truth**” (1 Timothy 3:15). Truth is to set those saved by God apart! We are to be a pillar (a column that supports a building) and ground (a support, prop or stay) of the truth. We, as those who have been purchased out of sin by the Lord, are to be characterized by truth!

This would not, nor could it ever be, truth as it is defined by the world today – something that now is subjective. They claim that we all have our own truth; what may work as truth for you may not be truth for me – but that’s okay, for they consider truth to be a subjective reality that will vary from person to person. This is nothing other than the fruit of pragmatism: if it works, then it must be right. What the world fails to recognize, and, indeed, refuses to recognize, is that there is an objective Truth to which we must all be subject, and that is God and His Word. However, this attitude of openness has not remained in the world alone; its deadly poison has infiltrated the thinking of the professing Christian as well. How could this be? Let us consider six ways in which this shift in attitude towards truth has come about in the minds of the average Evangelical today, so that we can be sober and vigilant, lest we be caught in the very same traps:

1. **New Evangelicalism** – This represented a significant paradigm shift in thinking and has done much to give compromise and accommodation an attractive façade. When the leaders of this movement began to promote their doctrines in the mid-to-late 1940s, they draped their error in the finery of social consciousness. Their emphasis on dialoguing with the Liberal and heretic was so that they could show them the way of life; their desire for greater scholarship was to engage the world’s academics in debate so that they might hold their own among the elite of the world, and thereby defend the Way of Life. Their disregard for Biblical separation was so that they might demonstrate their love for all of mankind so as to win a greater number to saving faith. Unfortunately, their whole philosophy was saturated with pragmatism. With these lofty goals firmly in mind (after all, they were doing all these things with the goal of reaching a greater number with the Gospel), they were prepared to justify any process that would allow them to get there. However, what they failed to recognize was that by embracing pragmatism, they had fallen captive to the devil masquerading as an angel of light. They thought that they were achieving great things for the Lord, when all along the Lord was not pleased with them. If anything, the error of New Evangelicalism is much more profound and firmly entrenched today than when it began 60 years ago.

2. **Academic Priority** – Along with the steady infiltration of the New Evangelical mindset into Christian thinking, we have seen a capitulation to the academics of our day. This has taken place within Christian Bible colleges that were founded a century or more ago, and that remained solidly Biblical for many years, and it has happened within the mind of the average Christian. The

³⁰⁶ Strong’s Online.

colleges surrendered to the academic emphasis and began to seek parity with their worldly counterparts, all under the guise of providing their students with a greater ease of transfer from a Bible college to a secular university. Such a noble task became the reason for joining Associations that were setting the standards for making this possible. The result has been a growing emphasis on scholarship (requiring faculty to hold ever higher academic degrees), and a need to offer a wider variety of courses in things other than the Bible (worldly things like psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc.). The product of this has been a more highly educated graduate (by the world's standards), but one who knows less about what God has said to us in His Word. Not only is there less teaching of the Bible, but what teaching there is, has now been mixed with the poison of humanistic thinking.

For the average Christian, there has come a growing sense of inadequacy to read God's Word with understanding. We have swallowed the lie that because we are not highly educated, we cannot be expected to interpret the Scriptures for ourselves; we must learn from the scholars, after all, they hold a doctorate in theology, or have some other officious sounding degree. Not long ago this was a real deterrent to me – why should I think that I am able to read and interpret Scripture more accurately than someone who does this on a daily basis, who has their doctorate in such studies, who teaches the Bible, and who has written numerous books. However, as I have come to understand the irreversible damage that the New Evangelical movement has done to today's so-called Biblical scholarship, I realize that they read and interpret Scripture through the eyes of those who have bowed before the pragmatic thinking of a movement that has long since proven its failure to follow the Word of God. The truths of the Scriptures are spiritually discerned, and will not be apprehended by the scholarly tactics of the world. However, the average Evangelical today has submitted to the idol of scholarship, and no longer seeks the insight of the Spirit of God in order to understand what He desires of them. The Scriptures have become a closed Book – we are rapidly returning to the spiritual blindness of the Dark Ages. At that time, the Roman Catholic Church withheld the Scriptures from the common people; today, the common people hold the Scriptures in their hands, but they have closed their minds to its message. Nevertheless, the underlying reason is the same in both cases: the interpretation of Scripture must be left to the scholarly elite; also, in both cases, the scholarly elite have become corrupt.

3. **Growing Ignorance** – The longer that we bow before the idol of scholarship, the more ignorant we become of the message of God to us through His Word. The reason for this is twofold: 1) By bowing to scholarship, we limit our understanding of the Scriptures to what we are told – what these highly educated men determine to be the correct interpretation of the Bible, and 2) we neglect our personal responsibility to weigh what we are told against the Scriptures. We cannot lay the responsibility for our ignorance of the Word of God, which is so prevalent today, entirely at the feet of those who are sold-out to the error of New Evangelicalism; really, none of it can be laid there. If we were as diligent as the Bereans of Acts 17, we would not be carried away into error by the teachings of modern scholarship. It is our personal neglect of God's Word that has permitted the educated philosophies and teachings of Scripture to take hold in our thinking. Yet these two errors together have proven to be a deadly combination; today's Evangelical is much more likely to read the latest book by the most recent shining star of scholarship than to open the Bible to read what God has to say.

4. **Eternal Security** – Probably one of the most devastating teachings to come along has been the concept of once you are saved, you are saved for all of eternity, no matter what. To

compound the problem, Evangelical scholarship has reduced the message of the Gospel to “accept Jesus and you are saved.” They will quote Scripture to support their position: “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Therefore, who are we to judge as to who is a Christian and who is not; although that is not our ultimate judgment to make, the Lord also told us that the fruits of a life will tell us its true allegiance (Matthew 7:15-20). Another passage that they like to use is: “³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). They declare, “Look! We are secure in Christ!” Yet they fail to recognize the amazing truth of this passage, and that it does not contradict other Scriptures like:

- Jeremiah 17:5 – “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth [to be removed] from the LORD.”³⁰⁷
- Matthew 10:22 – “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”
- Romans 11:21 – “For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 – “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions [substance of teachings] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”³⁰⁸
- Hebrews 3:6 – “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”
- Hebrews 3:12 – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”
- Revelation 2:25 – “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.”

Why would we need to hear the Spirit of God warning us to “watch ye,” “hold fast,” “take heed,” etc. if the warnings were not necessary? We are to endure, to faithfully persevere to the end – Jesus stated this truth, and it is just as clear that we can depart from the Lord. Jeremiah declared it, the writer of Hebrews penned it, and, by example, Israel lived it. We would do well to heed Paul’s warning to Timothy: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). Although we are secure in Christ from external foes, it is equally clear that we can fall away from God through the devices of our own deceitful hearts. We must heed the many warnings of Scripture to be on the alert.

5. Error is Acceptable – Compromise and accommodation of error have become increasingly acceptable, justifiable, and normal. The process is really quite simple and in keeping with the story of the frog and hot water: if you drop a frog into hot water, it will jump out, but if you put it into cool water and gradually heat it, the frog will stay put even while it is cooked. The process of compromise and accommodation has been a gradual one, for the most part. One by one, the clear teachings of Scripture have been eroded through a new focus on scholarship. From its very beginning, New Evangelicalism determined to revisit some of the controversial doctrines of Scripture, those that would never fit with the scholarship of the Liberals and the world. By placing

³⁰⁷ Strong’s Online.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

a question mark over such teachings as the six-days of creation and the worldwide flood, New Evangelical scholars opened the door to less restrictive interpretations of other passages of Scripture. Like a small hole in a dam, it was not long before the whole structure collapsed; from simply “reexamining” creation, it was only a short step to questioning the inerrancy of all of Scripture – after all, if the words of the Bible are not correct for creation, then perhaps they are incorrect in other areas as well. Once the inerrancy of Scripture was called into question, the door to accommodating Liberal theology was wide open, and a flood of error poured through to the itching ears of those whose minds would no longer endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2-4). We live in a day when Evangelicals will solemnly state that they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, yet, at the same time, they follow the teachings of modern scholarship; the modern mind seems capable of embracing opposing teachings and, seemingly, not to be aware of the contradiction that it holds.

6. Separation is Neglected – Through all of this has sprung a flagrant disregard for Biblical separation. When New Evangelicalism set their course in opposition to separation, they chose to heed the example of Israel – not by learning from them and heeding God’s instruction, but by following them into error.

When Moses reviewed the commandments of God with the people of Israel before they crossed over the Jordan, he declared: ²⁶Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; ²⁷A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: ²⁸And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). In chapter 28 of Deuteronomy, the blessing and the curse are expanded: verses 1-14 elaborate on the blessings that will come through obedience, and verses 15-68 outline the curses that will come through disobedience. The children of Israel were told, “ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44); even as we have been told: “be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). God’s desire for us is the same as it was for Israel – holiness! Yet we read this of Israel: ⁷And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. ...¹⁰and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which [God] had done for Israel. ¹¹And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: ¹²And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers” (Judges 2:7-12).

The Lord spelled out clearly for Israel what He expected of them, the Ten Commandments (the Law of God) forming the central foundation; but God also provided them with specific social laws, ceremonies, and festivals to reinforce and clarify His desire for their holiness of life (the Law of Moses). All of these drew Israel away from the nations that surrounded them, away from the people who still lived in their midst, and unto the Lord. As long as they walked in obedience to the Lord’s commands, they would maintain fellowship with the Lord and receive His blessing. However, the difficulty always seemed to stem from their failure to obey the first of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). When the Lord communed with Moses at the end of his life, He declared, “For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant” (Deuteronomy 31:20). And Joshua, at the end of

his life, stated to the people that “When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you” (Joshua 23:16). The central difficulty that the Israelites, as a nation, seemed to have was in serving the Lord only; for some reason, the gods of the surrounding nations always seemed to hold an attraction for them. Satan was alive and working during those days, too; he has always done his utmost to make sin appear to be attractive and good.

Earlier I made the comment that today’s Evangelical has followed the example of the Israelites and wandered into error, rather than learning from their example and forsaking the ways of sin. We might be tempted to think that we do not have the problem of Israel in our day, but we must not limit a god or an idol to a graven image sitting on a shelf. A god can also be “something that is so important that it takes over somebody’s life.”³⁰⁹ Most of today’s Evangelicals have bowed before the idol of unity. Chuck Colson has declared, “We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church,”³¹⁰ and this has been echoed throughout the Evangelical community. As we have considered the beginnings of the New Evangelical movement, it is easy to recognize that unity was central to their thinking, even if it wasn’t specifically spelled out. They sought to forsake the weapons of warfare, which had characterized Evangelicalism to this point, in favor of dialogue and seeking common ground with the Liberal and the heretic; they desired to join with them in social programs and doing good for mankind; they longed to be academically fit so as to gain the recognition of the educationally elite of the world. It was their desire to fit in with those who had been out there for so long. It was lonely being a soldier, and they desired to be friends with the enemy – after all, the Liberals used the same words to describe their faith, so why couldn’t there be sufficient teachings in common to draw them together? The Evangelicals began to look about them at the gods of the Liberals and the idols of the heretics, and to search out those things that they held in common. Rest assured, Satan made sure that there was a lowest common denominator, and with the standards lowered, their lives suddenly became so much easier. The battle was over!

What happened to Biblical separation? Has God changed His standards in order to permit what is happening among Evangelicals today? God has not changed; from the day of man’s creation until today, God is still the same (Malachi 3:6). “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). The God Who dealt with the children of Israel, and warned them against falling in with the gods of the nations around them, is the same God we face today – He has not changed, He will not change! Therefore, God’s call for separation has not changed!

What is Biblical separation? It is not separating from the things that we don’t like; it has everything to do with God’s desire for us to live in purity and holiness before Him. If God is still calling us to be a separate people, then we must understand what that means, or we will inevitably walk in the same paths as the Evangelicals around us, and as the Israelites before us. Through the pervasive influence of New Evangelicalism (which has really taken over all of Evangelicalism), the subject of separation has been virtually banished from sermons and teaching. If Evangelicals are forced to discuss Biblical separation, they will speak vaguely about separating from the world

³⁰⁹ Encarta Dictionary, “god.”

³¹⁰ Colson, Body, p. 102.

– although even that is falling into disrepute. Biblical separation does involve separation from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-16), but it is much more.

God has also made it clear that we are to be separate from error. Jesus warned us to identify the false prophets who appear to be godly and righteous – those wolves who lurk about as sheep (Matthew 7:15-20). They may appear to be righteous, but they hold to teachings that are contrary to Scripture. Some who might immediately come to mind in this category are the Jehovah’s Witnesses (who do not hold Jesus as being the Son of God), and the Mormons (who say that God was once a man as we are, and we may become gods as He is). Although most Evangelicals today might admit that these people teach error, there is a growing movement to bring them into the fold; they say that we have sufficient in common so as to accept them, and, thereby, the snare of unity has been laid. God calls us to mark those Evangelicals who seek to resurvey the limits of Christ’s fold, to identify them, and then avoid them (Romans 16:17). Second Corinthians 6:14ff clearly warns us that we are to have no part with unbelievers, and this does not change, even if they happen to use a form of God’s Word! We must be alert; we must be students of the Scriptures lest we be taken in by error that presents itself under the guise of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

In His desire that we live in holiness before Him, God does not stop here. There is also a clear call for us to separate from those of the family of faith who walk in disobedience (2 Thessalonians 3:6). This is certainly not popular today, yet it is an emphatic command in God’s Word; this is not optional, it is not something that we can do when we feel spiritual, and neglect the rest of the time. We are to be vigilant so that we will recognize the disobedience when it shows itself, and then we are to withdraw ourselves from it. We may be agreeable when we consider the disobedience of men like Billy Graham, Chuck Colson and James Dobson; we may find it acceptable and relatively simple to withdraw ourselves from them – we won’t support their organizations, nor will we attend their meetings or listen to their broadcasts – and rightly so! However, what happens when disobedience is demonstrated by those much closer to home? What do I do when I see the Board of our local Evangelical Free Church choose syncretism with ancient Indian rituals over obedience to the Word of God? When I see the Church Board approve the participation of their youth pastor in the local worldly dances, what is my response? What do I do when I find the man filling the role of “pastor” at the local Baptist church refusing to teach the people how to live Biblically? What do I do when I see the leadership of a conservative Evangelical church actively participating with heretics in the local ministerial association? How do I respond when I see the head of the Canadian Sunday School Mission for Alberta (now One Hope Canada) presiding over a memorial service along with a priest from the Roman Catholic Church? All of these things are disobedience; all are representative of compromise, that first seemingly innocent step toward apostasy! All of these things call me, and you, to use our Biblical discernment and obey God’s command to withdraw from them! If we would be obedient to the Word of God in this matter, then we have no choice but to separate from them. God does not say that it will be easy, as a matter of fact, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet we must recognize God’s calling to separation, and practice it! May the Lord grant us wisdom and strength to be obedient to His Word.

Returning to our passage, we are to be truth to those about us. We’ve heard it said, “what you do speaks so loudly that I can’t hear what you’re saying.” It is critical that our speech (which is to be characterized by truth) be supported by our living; otherwise, we have succumbed to the

folly of hypocrisy. We are to be both obedient to God’s Word and free of hypocrisy; may it be so in the matter of Biblical separation!



26. *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

We continue on with those things specifically linked to putting on the new man (from v. 24). Both phrases here are in the imperative mood – they are commands! This makes it very evident that anger, in itself, is not sin. However, it would seem clear that there could be a real possibility of anger leading to sin if we are not alert; there is a genuine need for us to hold these two things in balance. In Psalm 94:1, the Psalmist pleaded, “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.” Romans 12:19 says, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” If we seek retribution, we have fallen into sin. God has clearly declared that vengeance belongs solely to Him; therefore, if we seek revenge for an act done against us, then we have taken on a role that is reserved exclusively for God; we have lifted ourselves up to be as God in this matter. If we have been unjustly dealt with, then our response must be, “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.”

The latter part of this verse indicates that we are not to harbor anger. We have all heard of or seen someone who has coddled anger over a matter and been consumed by it. We are not to permit this. The end of the day is to see the end of our anger; it is to find no resting place in our hearts. If we have properly relinquished the vengeance to the Lord, there may remain sorrow for the sin that caused such hurt, and, perhaps, even a lingering hurt as the result of such sin, but the anger will have dissipated.



27. *Neither give place to the devil.*

Couched among the shadows of harbored anger is the devil seeking to establish a claw-hold within us. By dealing with anger in this way, the devil will have one less opportunity to gain access to our lives. Realizing that anger is not sin, but that our reaction can certainly lead to sin, we must be alert as to how we handle it.

Perhaps one of the things that we need to keep in mind as we contemplate being angry, but not to sin, is the lot that we are called to bear as the saved of Christ. The Spirit of God gives us this insight through Peter:

¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial [a term that comes from the refiner’s fire] which is to try [or prove] you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice [a command], inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy [or blessed] are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of [or blasphemed], but on your part he is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters [a command]. ¹⁶Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed [a command]; but let him glorify God on this behalf [a command]. ¹⁷For the time is come that judgment [the condemnation of wrong] must begin at the house of God:

and if it first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not [to refuse to believe or obey] the gospel of God? ¹⁸And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? ¹⁹Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God [as indicated through the commands of Scripture] commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing [a course of right action – obedience to the commands of Scripture], as unto a faithful Creator. 1 Peter 4:12-19.³¹¹

This provides us with an insight into the bigger picture. God, in His omniscience, has prepared trials and testings for us, realizing that a life of ease will not cultivate spiritual growth or a dependency upon His care. Peter understood what it was to suffer. Earlier he wrote: “¹⁹For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure [or bear patiently] grief [or sorrow, pain, affliction], suffering wrongfully [undeservedly, without fault]. ²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults [or sins], ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:19-20).³¹²

There are a few key components in all of this: 1) we are destined for trials in this life, therefore we are not to be shocked when they come our way, 2) we must be sure that the trials, which we face, are not due to our sin – our own failure to walk in accordance with the commandments of the Lord, and 3) if our steps are in keeping with God’s Word to us, and we are diligently studying His Word so that we may be alert to what He desires of us, then we are to bear our suffering with patience, for this brings joy and delight to God (it is *acceptable* to Him).

So how does this fit with anger? First of all, anger is not a sin – for God tells us many times when He was angry. We read of the anger of the Lord against the children of Israel when they sinned, and when they refused to walk in the specified ways of God (Exodus 4:14; Numbers 11:10; Judges 2:14). God’s anger was roused by sin and hard-heartedness, and a refusal to believe His Word. We read of Jesus being angry: “And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand” (Mark 3:5). Our anger, then, in order to follow this pattern, should be stirred by the sinful stubbornness of those about us, not directed at the sinner, but at the work of the devil, who has so successfully blinded the minds and eyes of sinner and apostate alike. If we become angry over something that has happened to us, then we have given place to sin. If we have sinned and it brings judgment, then we have no basis for anger, for we have only received our just reward. If we have walked worthy of the vocation to which God has called us (in obedience to His holy Word) and suffer reproach, we are still not to be angry, but to bear this reproach with patience, for then we bring joy to the heart of God.



28. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Here is another product of putting on the new man (v. 24): we are no longer thieves. We are to labor, to become physically exhausted so that we may have something to give to those in need.³¹³ However, there is also a qualification to what we are to work at – it is to be that which is

³¹¹ Strong’s Online.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

good. This challenges the principles of pragmatism, which says that if the end is good, then the means doesn't matter. Pragmatism, in this case, would say that since the end is providing for those who are in need, then how we arrive at accomplishing this good end is not of great concern. Now, clearly, today's Evangelical would not condone illegal activity in order to provide for the needy (and most of the worldly would concur). However, most Evangelicals would choose to ignore Scripture's clear teachings in order to provide for the needy, thereby placing humanitarian efforts above God's Word. So, what would cause God more displeasure: setting His plain teachings aside, or violating man's laws? Even though we are called to live in obedience to man's laws (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14), should there be a conflict between the laws of man and the Law of God, we are to be obedient to the Law of God; this was clearly demonstrated in the lives of the Apostles (Acts 5:29). God's Word tells us emphatically to not join ourselves unto those who are in darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1), yet today, those who profess to be Christians in good standing before God refuse to obey this commandment, and Satan will provide them with as many good reasons as they need for doing what they are doing.

We see this with organizations like World Vision and Samaritan's Purse. World Vision still declares that they are a Christian organization, yet they work closely with the United Nations, have a UN official on their Board of Directors (along with others from Liberal and apostate denominations), and spend all of their resources meeting the physical needs of people. Samaritan's Purse is even more subtle, for this is headed by Franklin Graham – the heir apparent to the Billy Graham legacy, and they have a much more Evangelical Statement of Faith. However, they also



declare: "For over 35 years, Samaritan's Purse has done our utmost to follow Christ's command by going to the aid of the world's poor, sick, and suffering."³¹⁴ Herein lies the subtlety of such organizations: they make statements that

sound very spiritual (*follow Christ's command*), but are really twists of the truth so as to favor their work and garner favor in the eyes of potential supporters. This stems from the influence of the New Evangelical teaching that began in the late 1940s. Christ did not command us to go to the aid of the world's poor;

when the righteous young man came to Jesus and asked what more he could do, Jesus told him to "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and follow me*" (Matthew 19:21). Giving aid to the poor is secondary to Jesus' desire that he would follow Him; this young man was obsessed with things – Jesus was saying, "Get rid of what is consuming you, and focus on Me." Jesus also declared, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). There is an order of priority here, and the first order is not our physical needs but our spiritual standing before God. Samaritan's Purse openly proclaims that evangelism is at the heart of their ministry, yet it is always last in the order of what they do – and we can be assured of the ecumenical emphasis of any evangelism that they would carry out.



³¹⁴ http://www.samaritanspurse.org/WhoWeAre_Index.asp

Clearly, from our verse, we are not to neglect the needy – we are to work so that we have something to give to those in need. Proverbs 19:17 says: “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” However, we are not to partner with those who are apostate, or those who work with those who are apostate, in order to facilitate meeting the needs of the poor; in other words, we cannot violate one command of God in order to obey another. Our focus must be on Christ. When the disciples criticized the woman for spending so much on ointment for the Lord’s head when it could have helped the poor, Jesus said: “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always” (Mark 14:7). We can help those in need anytime, for they will always be there; our primary focus is to be on the Lord and His commandments to us. This is where many Evangelicals today are failing; they endeavor to keep some of God’s commands even while they blatantly violate other commands in order to do so. God still delights in obedience more than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). However, we must be wary of the commandments of men that may sound like the commandments of God. This is not new, for Jesus dealt with this in the Pharisees of His day: “⁹Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. ¹⁰For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: ¹¹But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban* [an offering], that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. ¹²And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; ¹³Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:9-13). By consecrating to God what might otherwise be of help to his parents, the individual was relieved of his obligation to them; this was a way to appear to be righteous even while setting God’s commandments aside. We must be students of the Word, so that the Spirit of God can guide us in our obedience to God’s commands.

This is now the third thing that is to characterize the one who has put on the new man. Firstly, there is to be no lying (our words are to be truth, v.25); secondly, our anger must not lead us to sin by seeking retaliation (our emotions must be kept in check, vs. 26-27); thirdly, we must work for what we get so that we can give (our actions must be above reproach, v.28).



29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

This first phrase is in the imperative mood – it is a command that we are to obey.³¹⁵ The word *corrupt* means rotten or putrefied, worthless for use.³¹⁶ Our first thought, as we consider this term applied to speech, would be to turn to the conversation of the worldly – filled with cursing, swearing, and all kinds of evil and depraved thoughts. It is true; these are not to be part of our speech. However, consider the rest of this verse:

Our speech is to be that which will build up (*edifying*), to encourage growth in the one to whom we are speaking.³¹⁷ This takes it way beyond the conversation of the worldly, and expands the understanding of the word *corrupt* to be anything that does not build up, that which does not

³¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

benefit the hearer. We must be diligent to keep our hearts in tune with correct teaching, for if our doctrine is no longer in keeping with the Scriptures, then we have succumbed to uttering *corrupt communication*. We would do well to weigh our words lest we be found guilty of corruption, not of worldly filthiness, but of false teaching. As hearers, worldly conversation is easily identifiable, however, to identify false teaching calls for spiritual discernment and the guidance of the indwelling Spirit of God.

What does it take to make a teaching false? Is it false only when it is 100% untrue? Clearly not! Jesus said that false prophets would come to us in sheep's clothing; i.e., error will come dressed in the clothes of truth. Yet this does nothing to change the error – it is still error; otherwise Jesus would have said, "As long as they look like sheep, they are okay." This is the very reason for God calling us to a life of separation; like Israel of old, if we rub shoulders with error long enough, then we will forget that it is error and accept it as truth. God has called us to purity and holiness, and we must avoid error when it is pointed out to us. We cannot expect to bring glory and honor to God's name if we succumb to compromise; edification departs when compromise and accommodation enter in. We must not lose sight of the fact that error will never present itself for what it is – else, we would all reject it immediately. Rather, it will come dressed as truth, that which is honorable and desirable; Satan will do his best to point out the good in compromise, even as he did to Eve in making the forbidden fruit to appear as something good for food, something beautiful to look upon, and something that would make one wise (Genesis 3:4-6). His strategy has not changed – he will still dress error up in the garb of truth, compromise in the coat of good, and accommodation in the covering of love. God has called us to be discerning, and has provided us with His Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). As we obediently walk in the light that He has given to us, He will continue to open His way before us; however, if we are unwilling to obey the commands that we have understood, then we cannot expect Him to give us more light. Psalm 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." If we understand the Word of God in a matter, it's because He has given us His light to guide us. However, if we fail to walk in that light, then we have erred and turned away from the light that He has given. We must then repent (1 John 1:9) and return to walk in His light on the path that He has laid out for us (1 John 1:5-7); to do otherwise is to enter into the darkness of a deceitful heart and into jeopardy of forsaking what we have in Christ (Hebrews 3:12-13). James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."



30. *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

This is a command to not cause the Spirit of God sorrow, with a reminder that the Spirit of God is holy. Just before the account of Noah, we read this: "⁵And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5-6). The wickedness of mankind caused the Lord sorrow, and the admonition of our verse is that we are not to grieve the Spirit of God; we are not to permit wickedness to have any part in our lives; we have been called to purity and holiness, and that is to characterize our living. Of the children of Israel we read, "Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways ..." (Psalm 95:10). The Lord was grieved by a whole generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt

under His mighty hand, yet were not prepared to follow Him into the land that He had promised them. These were people who had been told the way of God, yet they chose not to walk in it – they were rejected by God from ever entering the land that He had promised to give them. We must be careful to walk in obedience to the commands of God. When Jesus faced the Pharisees, we are told that He was “grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5).

It seems evident that what grieves the heart of God is wickedness (not to walk in His ways: to be disobedient) – the things that have just been enumerated in the preceding verses: lying, an abiding anger, stealing, and corrupt speech. Evangelicals today are grieving the heart of God, for they have put off purity in favor of unity; they seek the favor of the Liberals, the apostate, and the godless even while they ignore God’s clear call to obedience and holiness. God’s call for separation from error is rationalized away, and the self-justifying excuses continue to the point of apostasy. One of the pillars of New Evangelicalism propounded in the late 1940s was the repudiation of separation; at the very outset, these men set aside God’s unmistakable call for separation in favor of a social mandate. Is it any wonder that it was not long before the inerrancy of the Word of God was brought into question? You cannot set some of the commands of God aside, and expect obedience to a few other commands to be sufficient; you cannot embrace a lie wrapped in a veneer of truth and not expect to reap the judgment of God. James clarified this for us: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Martin Luther declared, “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”³¹⁸ We are to endeavor to walk worthy of the calling of God on our lives (Ephesians 4:1), yet if we choose to ignore some of God’s commandments, then we are guilty of disobedience, no matter in how many other things we might be obedient. We must cultivate a love for God’s Word lest we fall for the lies of Satan and be deceived. Paul warned the Thessalonians about those who will be duped by the devil, “They received not the love of the truth [Jesus identified Himself as being Truth (John 14:6) and the Word of God as truth (John 17:17)], that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Paul’s admonition to Timothy is most appropriate: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). We must be careful to examine, according to the Scriptures, what we hear and read lest we be taken in by the charlatans who appear to be righteous, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15).

The Spirit of God is the mark (*seal*) that we have received looking forward to the day of our salvation, a day when we will finally be delivered through the price that has been paid on our behalf. If we have been so marked, then the Mark, or the Spirit of God, must be evident in our lives. The ancient seal was a confirmation of the authenticity of an item, a sign that whatever bore the seal was under the authority of its owner. It was used as a means of security to keep the contents that bore the seal, hidden. This wax seal, which typically carried the signet of the sender, would remain intact until it was broken by the receiver, or the sender, should he desire to change the contents of the document. We have the assurance of Scripture that God, the Sender, will not change His mind: “¹⁶For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end

³¹⁸ http://www.gracegems.org/4/if_i_profess_with_the_loudest_voice.htm

of all strife. ¹⁷Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: ¹⁸That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to **lay hold upon** the hope set before us: ¹⁹Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; ²⁰Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 6:16-20). The Hope, of which we have laid hold (Christ), is sure; our hope is an anchor of faith firmly fixed in Christ Who will not change – the Spirit of God has declared it so. The hope that is available to us in Christ is a sure hope, an established hope, one that will not fail – God has guaranteed it. As part of a purpose clause, *have* (in verse 18) becomes a statement of God’s purpose for declaring by oath His own immutability; this is not a mere possibility (as *might* suggests) but it carries forward the assurance that we have in Christ without any doubts. We are to lay hold of this hope, or to hold fast to this hope. Second Thessalonians 2:15 says: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions [doctrines] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”³¹⁹ This is a command given by the Spirit of God through Paul to the Thessalonians – they are to hold (same Greek word as used for *lay hold upon*) or hold fast what they have been given. We live in a day when what has been given to us in the Scriptures is being abandoned, yet God’s command remains – we are to hold fast to that which has been given to us in the Scriptures. Everything that we hear and read we are to take back to the Word of God, where we are to weigh it according to the Standard that God has given to us. Hebrews 4:14 uses the same Greek word (*hold* or *lay hold upon*) in a different way: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.” In this case, the *hold fast* carries the sense of possibility: *of the confession may we be holding fast*;³²⁰ therefore, we must be clinging to that which we openly profess: Jesus, Son of God, our High Priest! As much as it lies within God, we will be kept. Adam, perfectly created in the image of God and without sin, chose to sin; so we, still bearing the image of God, albeit with the inherited nature of the old man that struggles against the Spirit of God within us as believers, can choose. Adam chose to sin, even though he did not have a sin nature that would drag him in that direction; however, when we are faced with the convicting presence of the Spirit of God, we must also choose – either to yield to the Spirit or to turn away. Paul understood this struggle (Romans 7), and saw the victory through being in Christ and walking after the Spirit (Romans 8:1). Our propensity to choose sin is much greater than Adam’s, hence the dependency that we must develop on the Spirit of God to keep us in the way, so that we might walk worthy of the calling that we have in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:8-11). We read throughout Scripture of the remnant that will be saved; this is confirmation that we have a tendency to make the wrong choice – we must remain alert!

Romans 8:9 declares, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [the Seal of God], he is none of his.” As we saw in Ephesians 1:14, the Spirit of God has been given as a deposit, or a down payment, for our inheritance in Christ. Yet we realize that the Scriptures are full of exhortations for us to give careful attention to what we believe, and replete with warnings to hold fast unto the end; failure to do so will result in being disqualified (Hebrews 3:6). There are numerous passages that warn us of the possibility of being cut off from God (Romans 11:13-22; Hebrews 3:6, 12-14;

³¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

³²⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

John 15:1-2; Matthew 10:22), and (returning to our passage) we have a warning here to not bring sorrow to the Spirit of God. These warnings have been given for a purpose, and that is to keep us walking worthy of the calling of God on our lives in all purity and holiness, through the energizing enablement of the Spirit of God. James 4:17 says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”; if we know a commandment of God expressed in the Scriptures (and there are many), but we refuse to obey it – we are in sin. Yet such sin is easily attended to, for God has declared, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This is not complicated; God still desires obedience above all else, and out of obedience will flow a life lived in accordance with His desires, a life of holiness – a light in a dark world.

We are sealed, or marked, with the Spirit of God *unto the day of redemption*. The word *redemption* speaks of “a releasing effected by payment of ransom.”³²¹ The price has been paid; Jesus declared it so while on the cross when He cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30). However, it is equally clear that “²²... the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22-23). There is an aspect where the transaction has been completed (the deliverance is sure), and another where it is evident that it has not been completed (for it has not yet been fulfilled in us). We have been marked by the Spirit of God in anticipation of the day when our salvation will be completed, yet that must not be misconstrued to be once-saved-always-saved. God’s dealings with Israel have been recorded for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11), and we read of the glory of the Lord being removed from the midst of Israel because of their rebellious nature (Ezekiel 10:4,18; 11:23; 12:2). They grieved the Spirit of God, and He departed from their midst – it did not disrupt their religious ceremonies, life continued on as before; they did not even recognize the difference. What a serious admonition for us today when there is much religious activity, yet that is not necessarily a sign of the Lord’s presence; all the busyness of Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, and Billy Graham does not preclude the Lord’s presence in any of it. The Spirit of God will guide us into all truth (John 16:13), yet we see those, who would consider themselves as great proponents of God’s work, departing from His Word and walking in their own ways. Most of Evangelicalism could bear the name Ichabod – the glory has departed (1 Samuel 4:21). The mark of the Spirit of



God is holiness of life; if we do not bear that mark, then it would follow that the Spirit of God is not present. If the Spirit of God is not present, then we are not God’s (Romans

8:9). The US Center for World Mission proclaims 115,000 new followers of Jesus every day;³²² yet a careful consideration of Scriptures tells us that the Lord has always saved a remnant, a small surviving group. When the Lord destroyed the earth with water, it was Noah and his family who were saved – eight people out of the entire world (1 Peter 3:20). When the Lord rained fire and brimstone on the cities of the valley, it was Lot, his wife and two daughters who were saved – only to have Lot’s wife join the dead through her disobedience to the Lord’s command (Genesis 19:15). Paul assured the Romans that, even while he was spreading the Gospel, it was only a remnant (not a majority) who were being saved (Romans 11:5). There are many, many commands that tell us to

³²¹ Strong’s Online.

³²² “Catch the Vision,” 2000, uscwm.org

be careful of how we walk in this world, even as Israel received numerous commands as to how they were to live in the land of promise. Yet Israel failed to be obedient, and the Lord left them; we must learn from their example and endeavor to walk in obedience to the Lord, lest we grieve the Spirit of God and He should depart from us. As believers, we have received the Spirit of God as a mark unto the day when God will complete the salvation of His people; let us walk worthy of the calling of God on our lives (Ephesians 4:1).



31. *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Here we have a list of things that we are commanded to remove from our lives. Coming on the heels of verse 30, it would seem evident that these are things that will grieve the Spirit of God – things that would not be in keeping with demonstrating the evidence of the Seal of God in our lives.

Bitterness speaks of a bitter hatred, a sharp, intense hatred, or of extreme wickedness.³²³ *Wrath*, in this case, is a sudden and intense outburst of anger as an expression of indignation, as opposed to a condition of anger for a long period of time.³²⁴ *Anger*, as used here, is less sudden in its rise and longer lasting; it is also more likely to have revenge as a goal. *Clamour* comes from a Greek word that imitates the cry of a raven, and means outcry, particularly in this case, in the tumult of controversy.³²⁵ *Evil speaking* is from a Greek word that is most often translated as *blasphemy*, and means speech that is slanderous or injurious to another.³²⁶

Within Evangelical circles today, most would say that *evil speaking* is not a problem. We live in a day when we hear only positive things; preachers rarely move into the field of exhortation – which, by the way, is a violation of Hebrews 10:25. There is such a focus on “assembling” together that no one sees the rest of the verse, which calls us to exhortation. There is a fear of offending, yet Jesus is referred to as the “Rock of offence” (Romans 9:33), and Paul said that he would not compromise the Gospel message lest the offence of the cross be removed (Galatians 5:11). We are not to cause offence, to be a stumbling block to others (1 Corinthians 10:32; 2 Corinthians 6:3; Philippians 1:10), yet we are not to stray from the teachings of Scripture (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:2-4). The balance is this: “¹But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine ... ⁷In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, ⁸Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you (Titus 2:1, 7-8). The Evangelical pattern today is to not cause offence to the Liberal and apostate, and they do this by whittling the message of God in the Scriptures down to that with which even the Liberal is comfortable; the exhortations of Scripture are downplayed and watered-down so as to be less offensive, or they are ignored and set aside altogether. The result is a deadly mixture of truth and error that is ever increasing in its error content – a lukewarm product that is offensive to God (Revelation 3:14-22). Joel Osteen demonstrates this most effectively as the leader of the largest congregation in the USA, Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. Even the world recognizes that

³²³ Strong’s Online.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Vine’s “clamour.”

³²⁶ Strong’s Online.

he preaches a “‘Christianity lite’ — no sin, no suffering, no sacrifice, replacing fire and brimstone with a motivational message.”³²⁷ He openly declares, “My message is that God is a good God. And if we all ... have the right attitude, he'll take us places that we've never dreamed of.”³²⁸ Osteen has been rewarded for this heresy by being chosen as one of Barbara Walters’ 10 most fascinating people in 2006 (his Cheshire grin probably helped his cause). He joins an array of actors, music and sports figures, businessmen and even a politician; what a fine group of the worldly famous with whom to be associated. It is good to recall Jesus’ words: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). Osteen may be flying high at the moment, but he is not winning the approval of God (Matthew 23:15).

Returning to our text, all of these things are to be removed from our lives, along *with all malice*. This speaks of ill-will, or of intent to bring injury on another.³²⁹ Romans 12:18 says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” If we live peaceably with all men because we have compromised the Gospel of God, then we have failed miserably and stand condemned of violating God’s desire for us. When New Evangelicalism sought to dialogue with the Liberals and heathen, they sought peace with all men, but did so at the cost of purity and holiness before God. We cannot deny that they have achieved what they set out to accomplish, but we can also see (if we are willing) the havoc that has been wreaked in the lives of the average professing Christian today. This havoc ranges from confusion (caused by the disparity between Biblical and modern teachings) to perceived license – all of which produces a life that is not pure before God.

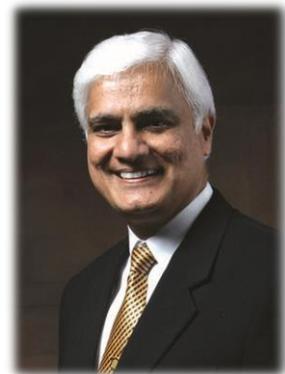
When Ravi Zacharias preached in the Mormon Tabernacle on November 13, 2005, the reaction was of short-lived surprise, even among many Evangelicals. Here is how it was reported:

On Sunday night, Evangelical apologist Ravi Zacharias gave one of his frequent messages on defending Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in a culture that rejects truth claims. But the pulpit differed radically from Zacharias's usual lecterns, for it was in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. ...

Asked to speak on "Who is the Truth?" Zacharias was not expected to highlight many differences between historic Christian theology and Mormonism, but apparently he did mention them. *The Deseret Morning News* reports:

He spoke of the "exclusivity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ," noting that he asserted an exclusive truth claim in his declaration as "the Way, the Truth and the Life." While he acknowledged that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differ in many of their views from historic Christianity, he emphasized much of what they share in reverence for a being both consider the divine Savior of mankind. ...

But Zacharias, who spoke elsewhere in Utah last week, wasn't the only Evangelical on the platform.



Ravi Zacharias

³²⁷ <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=2716887&page=2>

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Strong’s Online.

Michael Card led music, and Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw gave an introductory sermon.

And it'll be Mouw, not Zacharias, that Utahns will remember, says *The Deseret Morning News*.^[sic] He offered "a stunningly candid apology to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and [noted] that 'friendship has not come easily between our communities.' He dubbed the evening 'historic' and apologized that Evangelicals 'have often misrepresented the faith and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints.'"³³⁰

As is clearly evident, there is an expectancy of bringing the Mormons and Evangelicals together; there is a desire to major on those things that are held in common – reducing the commandments of Scripture down to a few concepts that are acceptable to the pagans. Yet Zacharias and Mouw did not plow new ground; in 1871 D.L. Moody preached in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, and in the same Tabernacle as Zacharias in 1899, something that is not widely reported.³³¹ Can the Lord bless such activities when the clear command of the Lord is to come out from among them and touch not the unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17)?

It is not that we would wish the Mormons ill, for all malice is to be put away from us, but what Mouw and Zacharias (and Moody before them) have done is create an acceptance of



D. L. Moody

Mormons within the minds of many Evangelicals that can only lead to further apostasy. Instead of sounding the alarm at their false teaching, they have embraced the wolves and spoken of those things that they hold in common. This is nothing short of blasphemy – the “evil speaking” that we are to have put away. The evil speaking of today is not against error, but against God and His holy Word.



32. *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Here begins a command: the word *be* is an imperative. *Kind* comes from a Greek word that means useful, good or pleasant.³³² The thrust is that amongst ourselves (as believers) we are to be useful or benevolent; there is to be reciprocity of kindness, of seeking the good of another (Philippians 2:3-4). This is not the positive-only mindset of modern Evangelical thinking, but it does include the Biblical mandate of exhortation. Our coming together is to be for the purpose of exhortation: Hebrews 10:24-25 – “²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke [or, to stimulate] unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner



**Mormon Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah**

³³⁰ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/146/11.0.html>

³³¹ <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2004/novemberweb-only/11-15-11.0.html>

³³² Strong's Online.

of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”³³³ We are called to exhort one another; this is one of three things to which Paul commands Timothy to give special attention (1 Timothy 4:13). There are many who use this Hebrews passage to underscore the importance of meeting together, of having “church” – but that is not its main thrust; it is primarily a challenge to build one another up spiritually, which can only happen when we are coming together. The overarching exhortation of this passage is that we are to give close attention to one another as to how we might stimulate or, literally, to sharpen toward love and good works.³³⁴ It is incredible that the assembling together has become the focal point of this passage, when the challenges on either side of this phrase bear a far greater significance in the life of the believer. Perhaps it is because we can “assemble” far easier than we can challenge to love and good deeds, or go so far as to exhort one another in the love of Christ – the focus has become the one thing out of this passage that can be done in the flesh, and yet we so often hear it stated with such “spiritual” fervor.

The second command, in our passage, is to be *tenderhearted*, which means, literally, to have strong bowels.³³⁵ The Hebrews regarded the bowels (the internal organs including, but not limited to, the heart) as the seat of the more tender affections, so we are to have compassion and mercy toward our fellow believers. The same Greek word is used in 1 Peter 3:8, where it is translated as “pitiful,” but the thrust of the verse expands on Paul’s command here in Ephesians: “Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous” There is to be a looking out for one another, a desire to see our fellow believers grow in their walk with the Lord, that we might be drawn onward and upward as we live out our faith in the Lord together.

Thirdly, we are to be *forgiving* in the same way that God, in Christ, has forgiven us. As a means of investigating this subject of forgiveness, let us consider several passages from God’s Word to us.

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 (Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37-38): ¹²And forgive us our debts [that which is owed], as we forgive our debtors. ... ¹⁴For if ye forgive men their trespasses [to fall beside, a lapse in truth or uprightness], your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In the model prayer, which Jesus gave to His disciples, we see a correlation between the forgiveness that is afforded to us by God and the forgiveness that we extend to our fellow man, and Jesus immediately followed this with an expanded explanation of this relationship. God will extend His forgiveness after the pattern of our forgiveness of others. *Forgive* is from the Greek verb *aphiemi*, which means, “to send away,” and so denotes to remit or forgive – to cancel an obligation or debt.³³⁶ This would appear to be an aspect of God’s forgiveness about which we do not hear much. The clear statement of the Lord is that if we forgive men their failures, or sins, against us, then our Father in heaven will forgive us; if not, then not. The act of forgiveness that is ours (*if ye forgive men ...*) is in the subjunctive mood, which simply means that it is a possibility

³³³ Friberg Lexicon.

³³⁴ *Vine’s* “provoke.”

³³⁵ Strong’s Online.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

but not a certainty – there is a choice involved. The model prayer implores (*forgive us our debts*; actually commands, since *forgive* is in the imperative mood) God the Father to forgive us on the same basis as we forgive others. This is a sobering reality that most who recite the Lord’s Prayer rarely stop to consider.

Let us look further to some additional comments that Jesus made on this subject:

Matthew 18:21-35: ²¹Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²²Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

²³Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. ²⁴And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. ³¹So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. ³²Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: ³³Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. ³⁵So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

This is even more sobering, for here we find someone who had his enormous debt forgiven only to have it reinstated when he refused to extend the same forgiveness to his fellow laborer. The culminating comment is, “so likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” This is a hard saying, yet these are the words of the Lord, and we dare not glibly gloss over them. Matthew Henry, as he has endeavored to tackle this prickly passage, has stated, “Those that do not *forgive their brother’s trespasses*, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is *taken away* is only what *they seemed to have ...*” (italics in the original).³³⁷ He uses Luke 8:18 as supporting evidence (which says, “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have”). However, this passage in Luke comes in the context of secret things being revealed, and the practice of placing a lamp on a lampstand rather than under a covering (Luke 8:16-17). The parallel passage in Mark 4:21-25 bears the same context, but expands on the explanation of the “hearing”; a spiritual dimension is added, namely that attending carefully to the words of Jesus will bring increased understanding. A second parallel verse in Matthew 25:29 is placed in Jesus’

³³⁷ Matthew Henry, Volume V, p. 266.

explanation of the parable of the talents, where the unprofitable servant loses what the master gave to him; what little he had he loses as well. In neither of these passages is there any indication that this is to be applied to the subject of forgiveness; in fact, when Matthew Henry deals with the passage in Mark 4 (the parallel to Luke 8) he ties it to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and not to the passage on forgiveness in Matthew 18! Therefore, based upon his own commentary, it seems that he missed the essence of this passage.

Let us return to Matthew 18 and give careful heed to what is said here. The Greek word used for *ten thousand* to describe the amount owed by the servant in question actually means *innumerable*; the outstanding balance due to the king was beyond counting. Although it can be translated as the definite number 10,000, it is the Greek word *murioi* that is used, which primarily signifies something as being a myriad or numberless; rather than *deka chilies* (as used in Luke 14:31) which is literally *ten thousand*.³³⁸ However, if we use the specific figure of ten thousand talents, the servant's debt to the king was equivalent to about 60,000,000 workdays or over 192,000 years, working 6 days per week – clearly more than anyone could ever hope to repay. This was an exorbitant amount, indeed, beyond counting – the ultimate example of an investment gone wrong. In verse 27, this outstanding amount is referred to as *a loan (daneion)*,³³⁹ which would indicate that the servant did not squander the king's money (as in Luke 16:1-13), but that the king had loaned it to the servant to be repaid. However, when the loan was due, there was no money left; according to the custom of the day, he and those of his household were to be sold to offset the amount owed (see 2 Kings 4:1). The servant prostrated himself before the king, and “worshipped him,” – he gave him the honor that was due, even while petitioning him for more time to repay the debt. There is nothing to indicate that the servant was not sincere in requesting additional time to repay a debt that he could never hope to pay off. We are told that the king responded to him with compassion, and he dismissed and forgave his loan; these are stated as facts giving no indication that this was anything other than what it is declared to be. When the king called the servant back after hearing how he had dealt with his fellow servant, he reiterates, “I forgave thee all that debt”; again, there is nothing to indicate that there was anything other than a complete eradication of what was owed – the servant had a clean slate before the king.

Now, this same servant went out from having just received such a great release, and showed no mercy to a fellow servant who owed him the equivalent of 100 days wages. No doubt, the servant left the king's presence rejoicing in his newfound freedom, and was grateful for the king's mercy. The word of the king had gone forth, and it had been received by the servant with joy, and why not? His wife and children, as well as he, had been saved from being sold! This was all through the mercy of the king in extending forgiveness and release to him. Yet this great salvation from a virtual eternity of misery was forgotten when he faced the reality of daily life. We are told that when he saw a fellow servant who owed him, he grabbed him by the throat and began to choke him. Interestingly, this is exactly the same word as used to describe what took place when the seed from the sower fell among the thorns; it says “the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches” choke the word (Matthew 13:22). That is precisely what took place here: the servant received the word of the king that cleared his great load of debt, yet when he saw someone who owed him some money, his new lease on life from the king was choked out in favor of the money that he was owed.

³³⁸ Vine's “thousand.”

³³⁹ Strong's Online.

This action was duly noted, and brought to the king's attention; this is where the parable becomes rather knotty. The king called the servant in and reminded him that his debt had been cleared; then he canceled the forgiveness that was granted to the servant, reinstated the debt, and sent him to the tormentors to repay what he owed. The Greek word for *tormentors* bears the same root as the Greek word used to describe the eternal habitation of the devil in Revelation 20:10. Inasmuch as the debt of the servant was beyond counting, it is evident that the time that the servant would spend with the tormentors would also be without measure.

Jesus presents us with the application: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." This is not an obscure verse; it plainly states that this will be our lot if we do not extend forgiveness to those about us who fail us, who show a lapse in good judgment, and thereby sin against us. Our forgiveness is to extend to "seventy times seven," not calling us to keep forensically accurate records, but to underscore the necessity of forgiving countless times. The phrase *seventy times* is one word in the Greek and bears the idea of "the absence of any limit."³⁴⁰ This forgiveness is to come from our hearts, from the seat of our rational and emotional beings – one of the elements that we are to use entirely to love the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37). According to this parable, forgiveness is to be coupled with a cancellation of any recourse: if we forgive, then we must never seek revenge or recovery; when the king forgave the servant's debt, it was cancelled, cleared – at that moment in time, the servant owed the king nothing. That is our position with God when we come to Him in repentance – His forgiveness and the cancellation of our debt of sin is put into place and is complete! Yet if we fail to walk in the ways of the Lord, our God of Deliverance, then we may rest assured that the cancellation of the debt of sin will be lost to us. I realize that this runs in the face of modern theology with its once-saved-always-saved view of salvation, and the increasingly popular Calvinism, but our first concern must be to the Word of God and what it says, not the surmisings of men who continually seek to justify themselves in their own eyes. Most theologians today have fallen into the trap of interpreting Scripture from the perspective of their own systematic theologies, rather than weighing their theologies by the clear declarations of Scripture.

The Word of God tells us that the recording of the activities of Israel of old are given for our example (1 Corinthians 10:6), so let us consider how God, Who changes not, dealt with Israel (Malachi 3:6). There is a passage from Deuteronomy that very clearly tells us of this. The Lord God said:

⁸Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it; ⁹And that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. ¹⁰For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, *is* not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst *it* with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: ¹¹But the land, whither ye go to possess it, *is* a land of hills and valleys, *and* drinketh water of the rain of heaven: ¹²A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God *are* always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. ¹³And it shall come to pass, if ye shall

³⁴⁰ Vine's "seventy times."

hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,¹⁴ That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. ¹⁵And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. ¹⁶Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; ¹⁷And *then* the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and *lest* ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

¹⁸Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. ²⁰And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: ²¹That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. ²²For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; ²³Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. ²⁴Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. ²⁵There shall no man be able to stand before you: *for* the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

²⁶Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; ²⁷A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: ²⁸And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. Deuteronomy 11:8-28.

The message of the Lord is clear: obey my commandments or you will perish quickly from the land promised to you; more specifically, the command to be obeyed is to not serve any other god: “Take heed, to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them” (verse 16). This is reiterated in Hebrews 3:12 – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Just as with Israel, we are called to endure; we are to apply ourselves with perseverance. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14); this is a conditional statement – we are partakers of Christ; we will be “in Christ” if we hold the foundation of our faith firm to the end. This is not referring to the sin that so easily besets us (a sin which we are to set aside – Hebrews 12:1), for which a means of cleansing has been provided (1 John 1:9; 2:1), but, rather, to a heart that has been corrupted by unbelief, and has turned away from God (Hebrews 3:12) and obedience to His commands (John 14:15). Hebrews 6 tells us the end of someone who has succumbed to this heart of unbelief: “⁴For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy

Ghost,⁵ And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.” Based upon the warnings given in Deuteronomy 11 (which are for our example) and Hebrews 3, this is not a hypothetical situation, but a reality against which we are being warned.

Again, if we look to the example that we are given through Israel, we see this born out. Numbers 15 declares:

²⁷And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. ²⁸And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. ²⁹Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, *both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.*

³⁰But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [with a high hand, i.e., willfully and openly³⁴¹], *whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [or blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.* ³¹Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.

God’s provision for atoning for the sin of error was the same for both the Israelite and the foreigner within their community; His judgment on those who would sin with a high hand (presumptuously) was also the same for both – death! There was a clear distinction made between the sin by ignorance or error and the sin committed with full knowledge and intent. Compare God’s dealings with the scribes and Pharisees to His dealing with Ananias and Sapphira; although the scribes and Pharisees maligned Jesus, the very Son of God, they acted out of blindness and ignorance, whereas Ananias and Sapphira conspired to deceive the Apostles into thinking that they were wholly committed to the group of believers when they were not. In the former case, there was still provision for atonement (as evidenced through the conversion and life of Paul); in the latter case, God judged them immediately with the prescribed judgment.

²⁶“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.... ³¹*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10). The Bible is the Word of God, infallible, and His complete revelation to man. All of these passages come together to draw the exact same picture: there is complete forgiveness with God, but faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Unless our lives reflect God’s forgiveness, we stand in jeopardy of paying for all eternity for the sins that He is willing to forgive. From the very beginning, this forgiveness was available to all men; the promise of a Savior was given to Eve before Cain was born (Genesis 3:15); the promise of forgiveness to Israel extended equally to the stranger who was among them (Numbers 15:29); God is a God of mercy to all of mankind, Who “will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The challenge that we face is this: “Take heed to yourselves, that your

³⁴¹ The same Hebrew word is used here that described the way the children of Israel left Egypt in Exodus 14:8. F.C. Cook, in his notes on this passage in *Barnes Notes*, says, “in the case of sin against God it implies that the act is committed ostentatiously and in bravado.” The sin committed is not only willful, but is brazen, an affront to God.

heart be not deceived ...” (Deuteronomy 11:16); “Take heed that no man deceive you ...” (Matthew 24:4); “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16); and “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). We must “take heed”; we must guard our hearts and minds against the enemy of our souls. We must give careful attention to Jesus’ words to His disciples: “³Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. ⁴And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). Forgiveness is freely received from God, but it must also be freely extended to those who sin against us.

The Ephesians passage just completed (4:25-32) contains the practical application of the charge given in 4:1 to “walk worthy” of our calling. There are actions that are not to characterize God’s holy ones; we are to be truthful, angry without sin, honest, gracious in our words, kind and forgiving toward our fellow saints. The interconnectedness of the Body of Christ to the Living Head provides us with the active Spirit of God whereby we are renewed in our minds. God has not set the standard of holiness for us and then left us to labor to achieve it on our own; He has provided His Spirit by Whom we grow and mature in our walk with Him.



Chapter 5 – The Life in the New Man

 1. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Here a command is given, based on what has just come before. The Greek word for *followers* is *mimetes* (*mim-ay-tace*'), and simply means to imitate.³⁴² Elsewhere in Scripture we are told, “ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy” (Leviticus 11:45), and “be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The understanding is that we are to mimic God, our Father. We often see this demonstrated in families where the children will try to be just like Mom or Dad – they try to walk like them, talk like them, and generally seek to be like them in all things. So we, as the children of God, are to seek to emulate God in our daily living; we are to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called” (Ephesians 4:1). We have been called of God to be “holy and without blame before Him” (Ephesians 1:4), and, in order to walk worthy of this calling, we are commanded here to be imitators of God. There is no higher calling.

However, what we see far too often within Evangelical circles is the attitude that Jesus becomes our buddy, and we lose the fear of the Lord, which is still the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10). Too often, it seems, Jesus is Someone Whom we accept into our lives, and then we can carry on living as we always have, only now we’ve got Jesus along to make sure that we get to heaven. What heresy! What delusion! This thinking flows out of the idea that everyone is basically good – all that we have to do is tack Jesus on, and all is okay. That is attempted syncretism! What did God command Israel before they went into the land of Canaan? “¹³Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. ¹⁴Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; ¹⁵... lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 6:13-15). There is no room for syncretism here! Yet today we find men like Don Richardson who, when commenting on the Indians of North America mixing their ancient spiritism with Christianity, glories in the “work” that God is doing among them – when all that they are doing is masking their ancient traditions of drumming, dancing, etc. (all of which the Indians openly admit to being spiritual practices) under a Christian façade. We have lost, or are rapidly losing, our fear of the Lord; we mix the principles of life with the practices of death and glory in our accomplishments. Then we cover it all with, “Harsh judgemental [*sic*] attitudes will only add to that hill of unwisdom” (by which he means the “incredible amount of historical sin [that the whites have] to atone for”).³⁴³ “²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ... ²⁵who changed the truth of God into a lie ...” (Romans 1:22,25). We are told that, in the last days, men will be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). As much as we might like this to

³⁴² Strong’s Online.

³⁴³ Don Richardson, in commenting on the syncretism actively being pursued within the NA Indian culture today, personal correspondence.

refer exclusively to the godless world, the modern religion of Evangelicalism is rapidly entering this sphere of condemnation as well. By stretching the truths of the Word of God in order to make the tenets of heathenism acceptable, professors of Christ have changed the truth of God into the lie of Satan. Job recognized that the fear of the Lord is wisdom (Job 28:28); yet what we see removed from the hearts of men within Evangelicalism today is the foundation for wisdom – the fear of the Lord. We have raised the idol of our own arrogance, and the reward for such is spiritual death.

We are to be followers of God, *as dear children*. The Greek root of the word *dear* is *agape*. This is the word translated as *beloved* when God spoke of His “beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). It is a word that is unique to the Bible, not one that was in common use in the language of the day.³⁴⁴ It is a word that is used to speak of God and of His attitude toward His Son and mankind, and is used to convey God’s will to His children concerning their attitude toward God and one another, and mankind in general.³⁴⁵ This is one of the evidences of the Spirit of God in a life (Galatians 5:22). From our passage, we see that this is to characterize who we are; there is no room for syncretism here. We must set aside the “¹... sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and ... run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith ...” (Hebrews 12:1-2). God’s warning to the children of Israel was: “Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee ...” (Exodus 34:12); His warning to us is: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). There is no room for compromise, no permission to mix God’s eternal truths with the philosophies of men, and certainly no place to glory in the syncretistic practices of the religious heathen today (i.e., the ecumenical movement). We must be vigilant lest we fall into the trap of rationalizing our compromises as times of fellowship, or as opportunities to share God’s love; if we fail to obey the Word of God, it is sin (1 John 2:3-6). We can never experience true fellowship nor extend God’s love to anyone if we are disobedient to God’s Word – it will not work.



2. *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

Walk, in this case, does not refer to placing one foot in front of the other, but rather to our living and conduct. This is in the imperative mood – it is a command, another of the many commands of Scripture to which we are to be obedient, since they are the commands of God. If we would walk worthy of the calling that we have of God, then we must walk in obedience to Him. The command, in this instance, is that our lives be characterized by *love* (again, the root of this word is *agape*). John 13:35 - “By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” However, the love in our passage is not qualified as that expressed to fellow disciples of Christ, but rather something that is to characterize our walk in all respects. The qualifier for our walk of love is that it is to be after the pattern of Christ’s love for us.

We can rest assured that Christ demonstrated this walk of love while here on earth; as the sinless Son of God, He is the pattern for our lives. He did not stray from this walk of love when he

³⁴⁴ Vine’s “love.”

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

spoke to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and pronounced eight “woes” against them. He continued to walk in love while He called them “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” “fools and blind,” “serpents,” and a “generation of vipers.” This is strong language, yet, in love, Jesus identified where they had erred in their walk with Jehovah. They had developed a religious system that placed them at the pinnacle, yet, in so doing, they had lost sight of the God Who had called them unto holiness of heart; they had reduced God’s calling to a set of rules and practices (idolatry). Professing themselves to be wise, they had become fools before God (Romans 1:22). Modern Evangelicals differ little; even among those who would claim to be Fundamentalists, there has come a systematization of their understanding of Scripture that has become cold and methodical. “We are Baptists,” or “we are Presbyterians” becomes a mantra that is used to declare their understanding of the Word of God; in Jesus’ day, the mantra would have been “we are Pharisees,” or “we are Sadducees.” There is no difference other than in the names used. When did we lose sight of the need to adhere to God’s Word, to seek out the hidden truths that elude modern-day theologians? When did we learn to rest on the laurels of those who have gone before us as though they had an infallible understanding of Scripture and the edge on God’s desire for us? Jesus’ condemnation of the religious of His day was not that they were doing wrong things, but that they had lost sight of the heart from which these deeds were to flow; they had a veneer of righteousness, but had lost the heart that would have made them righteous before God. They prided themselves on being the descendants of Abraham, yet they failed to grasp the faith of Abraham, which made him righteous before God. Today we might have pride in our Baptist heritage, or in our understanding of Reformed theology – but have we lost sight of the faith of Abraham? Our righteousness before God does not come through understanding either Baptist or Reformed theology, but through the Lord Jesus Christ!

How did Christ love us?

Christ demonstrated His love for us by atoning for our sins on the cross, thereby becoming the fulfillment of the sacrificial system that God gave to Israel. There are numerous times in the explanation of the sacrificial system that God referred to the sacrifice made as being a “sweet savor unto the Lord” (Leviticus 1:9,13,17, etc.). This can only mean that, because it looked forward to the sacrifice that God would one day make for the atonement of man’s sin through Jesus Christ, it was sweet before God; it showed Him that this man was walking in obedience to what He had commanded. Yet this did not start with God’s instruction to Israel, for in Genesis 8:21 God used the same phrase in speaking of Noah’s sacrifice after leaving the ark. If we go back even further to the sacrifice made by Abel, God’s acceptance of his sacrifice declares that it was a sweet savor to the Lord. From the time of man’s sin, the only acceptable covering for sin has been through shed blood (Hebrews 9:22), and this saw its final fulfillment in the sacrifice made by the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God Who was slain from the very foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8). This was Christ’s declaration of His love for us: He freely gave Himself in fulfillment of the sacrificial system, and became the Ultimate Sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

As you read through the OT passages that deal with the process of sacrifice, which animals were to be slain for the various types of sacrifices to be made, the blood that was shed during these ceremonies, and the burning of flesh and hair, “sweet savor” would not be our description of the smell that hung over the altar. The Hebrew word translated as “sweet” in passages like Exodus 29:18 does not mean sweet flavored, as a flower would be described as smelling sweetly. Rather, the word means *soothing, quieting*, so the aroma would be a quieting, or soothing, of God’s wrath against the sinner. It was through the sacrifices that there was a restoration of the communion with

God; sins were once again atoned for before Him. Although the sacrifices of the OT had to be carried out on a continual basis, through them there was an expressed acknowledgment of Who God is, of man's need to make atonement before Him for his sins, and of his desire to walk in obedience to Him. Even under the sacrificial system of Israel, it was a personal matter; when someone committed sin, it was to be atoned for through a sacrifice brought to the priests. When Christ fulfilled the foreshadowing of the sacrificial system, the continual atoning work of the sacrifices was ended; He was the Sacrifice made once for all time (Hebrews 10:10), yet His sacrifice must still be applied personally. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, but that does not mean that everyone in the world is headed for heaven. The Calvinists hold that Christ did not die for the whole world, but only for the elect, for those who will be saved (and that is God's choice to make). However, the Apostle John knew no such heresy, for the Spirit of God declared through him: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation (the covering) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:1-2). Christ's sacrifice is adequate for and available to the whole world, even as the sacrificial system of Israel was equally available to the foreigner and the stranger (Leviticus 24:22), so Christ's fulfillment includes everyone. When Jesus cried, "It is finished," it meant that His sacrifice was completed so that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Jesus' words in John 3 make it clear that there needs to be a believing heart in order for salvation to take place ("whosoever believeth"); the faith of Abraham, Noah, and Abel must be active in the individual for the work of Christ on the cross to be made effective.



3. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;*

In contrast to being followers of God and walking in love, here is what we are not to be. Let's consider the listed items carefully.

Fornication comes from the Greek word *porneia* – from which we obviously get our word *pornography* and all related words – it means any illicit sexual intercourse: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, etc.³⁴⁶ As an aside, it is interesting to note that Strong's includes



Barack Obama

sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman in its definition of *porneia*, and cites Mark 10:11-12 in support of this. This is a much broader application of the term *fornication* than we typically use, particularly in this day when every effort is made to not offend. This would include the modern day shacking up and all homosexuality, no matter how it is dressed up, both of which are becoming increasingly acceptable to those within "Christian" circles. Even those within the prominent echelon of Evangelicalism are contravening Scripture in this area. On December 1, 2006, Rick Warren invited Barack Obama into the pulpit of Saddleback Community Church to address his congregation. Obama is a US senator (presently seeking presidential nomination) who stands in contradiction to most of the Scriptural

³⁴⁶ Strong's Online.

values that Christians should be tenaciously holding onto in this day. He has promoted the right to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy (including the controversial and cruel partial-birth abortion), has opposed those who would seek to provide aid to surviving babies of abortions, has strongly promoted the homosexual agenda and the redefinition of marriage, and is a supporter of the “hate crimes” legislation movement that will ultimately bite Christians who promote Biblical morality.³⁴⁷ Why would Warren have anything to do with a man who openly supports fornication? How could Warren permit such a godless man to address his congregation? Could it be future political influence as Obama clearly has high political aspirations? Their feigned mutual concern for the AIDS epidemic in Africa is the public reason given, but the clear compromise that Warren has made is inexcusable before God. Warren is governed by expediency; pragmatism has become his guide, if not his god and his bible. However, he continues to experience wide acceptance and popularity within Evangelical circles, and goes shamelessly on in his compromise and heretical ways. It seems very evident that those who are Biblically discerning are becoming an extinct species among Evangelicals – the day has come when we must heed God’s Word: “... come out from among them, and be ye separate ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Uncleanness means to be impure, either physically or morally. For the Jews, it included being ceremonially unclean. As believers, we are called to a life of holiness – so uncleanness would be those things that tarnish God’s holiness in our lives. This has been emphasized with the word “all,” signifying that every type of uncleanness is included.

Covetousness is defined as a greedy desire to have more,³⁴⁸ and the Greek word used always carries the negative sense of its use. Paul told the Corinthians to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (I Corinthians 12:31), but the Greek word used here means “to be zealous for,” and is translated by the compound “covet earnestly.” The word that is in our text refers more to an insatiable craving for more – there is no satisfying this desire.

Three things are named here: any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, any kind of impurity, and all kinds of greed. None of these is to be even named among us, the faithful in Christ Jesus; this is a command (imperative mood), and calls for our attention. We have been reminded, of late, as to how casually the Christian community regards such matters; Ted Haggard permitted these things into his life while he continued to maintain a high profile position within Evangelicalism. He was forced to face his uncleanness when he was named as a client by a homosexual prostitute. Satan takes great delight in the sins of Christians, especially those who are high profile. However, even as Ted Haggard goes through the embarrassment of facing his immorality, men like Rick Warren continue to flaunt their disdain for the commands of Scripture, and still remain popular. It is evident that Evangelicals have less tolerance for sexually oriented failure than for major compromises with error and a wholesale disregard for Scripture; yet the latter is far more dangerous since it continues to wear the garment of spirituality and doesn’t draw the condemnation of the average Evangelical. There is a growing level of comfort with sin –



Ted Haggard

³⁴⁷ Kevin McCullough, “Why is Obama’s Evil in Rick Warren’s Pulpit,”

http://www.townhall.com/columnists/KevinMcCullough/2006/11/19/why_is_obamas_evil_in_rick_warrens_pulpit

³⁴⁸ Strong’s Online.

especially when we can see the “good” that results. Evangelicals are rapidly becoming first-class pragmatists who are following the world in calling good evil, and evil good (Isaiah 5:20), and will become the recipients of Jehovah’s woe!

Paul addressed his letter to the “saints which are at Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1), and he reminds them here that there is a conduct that is not acceptable to saints. As we have stated earlier, saints are the holy ones of God, and here we have been reminded of things that are to have no part in the saint’s life. This is a command that we are to obey, not an option to consider.

 4. *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*

Paul now goes on to expand the list of things that are not to be a part of our lives, as saints. Let’s consider these more closely as well.

The Greek word used for *filthiness* has its roots in the idea of shame or dishonor, and means obscenity, or all that is contrary to purity.³⁴⁹ Now here is something that our modern generations are losing sight of – shame. Most would probably agree that there is little shame left among moviemakers, yet Evangelicals will still flock to the movies in support of an industry that constantly demonstrates its disregard for God’s standards and, more often than not, flaunts its shamelessness. Things that are pure are more likely to be the butt of jokes than upheld as ideals; this is not altogether unexpected among the worldly. What is often surprising, and discouraging, is to find professing Christians as co-participants with the world in such entertainment and frivolity. There is nothing more grossly expressive of this than the modern Evangelical music industry. Most Evangelical recording musicians today do not understand Biblical purity; they use the world’s music as a vehicle to promote an insipid and, often plainly, false form of Christianity.³⁵⁰ You have the ever popular Bill Gaither posing with the “Christian” lesbian artist Marsha Stevens (although in his backpedaling, Bill called it a snapshot that someone took of them), and Mark Lowry heartily endorsing her. However, the “Christian” music industry does not have the edge on compromise – it is everywhere that you look with Biblically discerning eyes. There is a growing softening of the general Evangelical attitude toward homosexuality – consider Rick Warren’s recent invitation of Senator Obama, a vocal supporter of the homosexual agenda, to his pulpit. For what purpose? The two of them agree that there needs to be a concerted effort to fight AIDS, and that is evidently enough for Warren to ignore Obama’s pro-homosexual and pro-abortion position. Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1 makes it abundantly clear that Warren (if he is a true Christian) is to have nothing to do with the workers of darkness, let alone invite them to speak at his



**Bill Gaither and Mark Lowry
with Marsha Stevens (second from left)
and her then “partner.”**

³⁴⁹ Vine’s “filthiness.”

³⁵⁰ David Cloud, “The Anti-Fundamentalism Rebellion of CCM,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/antifundamentalismrebellion.htm>

venue; yet it is equally clear that Warren has his own agenda that does not include obedience to the Word of God. The line between the world and the Christian is increasingly absent; this is definitely a move that is contrary to maintaining the purity, or holiness, to which Christ has called us (1 Peter 1:15-16), and, as such, it is described in our passage as *filthiness*.

Foolish talking and *jesting* – in the Greek, these two are connected more directly than they appear to be in the English translation. Both *neither* and the first *nor* are translated from a Greek conjunction that indicates an accumulated effect – it is more than simply a connecting word. However, the *nor* between *talking* and *jesting* is simply a connecting conjunction, which places these two terms used on a more equal basis. *Foolish talking* is translated from one Greek word but the KJV translation carries the lightest of the Greek meanings; the other meanings for the “foolish” part of the term are *impious* or *godless*.³⁵¹ This is more than simply being silly in conversation; there is a sinful component here that is not picked up in our English word *foolish*. *Jesting*, on the other hand, comes from a Greek word used for wit, or facetiousness; through use it came to carry a dark or a course connotation.³⁵² Although the Greek word literally means, “to turn well,” it came to refer to those smooth words used to harbor a piercing barb.³⁵³ Psalm 55:21 describes this well: “*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*” The equality of the terms used here is evident, for both carry sin.

Which are not convenient sounds like an understatement, but it actually means that such things are not befitting the Christian.³⁵⁴ These are not to have any part in the saint’s life. Once again, as we have noted in our study of these qualities, they are increasingly becoming a part of the average Evangelical’s life. There is a compromise rampant among Evangelical church-goers that sees the worldliness of yesterday lived out in the church of today; Evangelicals continue to keep pace with the world, albeit a few steps behind. The Warrens and Gaithers of today will not heed the warnings of Scripture, but will continue on in their error, receiving the accolades of the world and the condemnation of God.

Sooner than all of these negative things, we are to demonstrate thankfulness – *rather giving of thanks*. We must have gratitude to God for what He has done for us, gratitude that we have been bought from being dead in trespasses and sins (2:1).



5. *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Paul now goes on to describe a matter of which the Ephesian believers were aware, and, perhaps, of which the faithful in Christ Jesus should also be aware. Here is a listing of those who will have no part with Christ, not that any of these kinds of people cannot be saved, but rather that those who live a life characterized by these things will not have any part with Christ. To live according to what is described here, eliminates these individuals from being Christians. Within our modern thinking, that is being judgmental. Yet Paul shows no hesitation in describing these

³⁵¹ Strong’s Online.

³⁵² Vine’s “jesting.”

³⁵³ Vincent’s Word Studies.

³⁵⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

people, and, what’s more, this is considered to be common understanding (*this ye know*)! Modern Evangelicals have absorbed the world’s fascination with political correctness, and it is unacceptable to suggest that anyone who professes to be a Christian will not find a place with Christ in eternity, no matter how he lives. The Scriptures are clear that we are to judge and have no part with those who live in contravention of the Word of God. Will we always be able to discern the godly from the wicked? Not likely, for it is equally clear that Satan loves to wear the disguise of the saintly, and wolves will seek to portray themselves as sheep – but, nevertheless, we are to be on our guard; we are to be alert to the fact that deception and false teaching will be prolific.

This term *whoremonger*, is applied to men only, and is someone who is a fornicator, a frequenter of prostitutes, or a male prostitute. Whichever way, it is a man who engages in illicit sexual practices as a lifestyle.

The *unclean* person is someone who is ceremonially unclean, or whose thoughts and life are characterized by uncleanness.

Covetous is described as “one eager to have more, esp[ecially] what belongs to others,” or someone who is “greedy of gain.”³⁵⁵ Clearly, this would be someone whose mind is occupied with the things of this world, how to get ahead, and with an insatiable appetite for accumulating more and more things and money. Perhaps a generous seasoning of jealousy also fits this description – the motivation to stay ahead of the Joneses. Such a person is equated with being an idolater (*who is an idolator*), a worshipper of a false god (in this case, Mammon or riches), which is in direct contravention of the first Commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). The rich young ruler of Jesus’ day was such a man whose heart was bound by his wealth. As Jesus observed him, He said to His disciples, “²³Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:23-24). From our passage, it is evident that a man like this rich young ruler is an idolater, someone who has raised the wealth of this world into the place of God.

In Ephesians 1:11 we learned that we have an inheritance in Christ. Here we are told of those who can be identified by their living as having no part in Christ’s inheritance prepared for those who walk in His ways. Yet do any of these things characterize modern Evangelicals? Sadly, the answer must be, “Yes.” How many leaders among Evangelicals have fallen in the last number of years due to sexual improprieties, only to have it come out that this had been their hidden practice for many years? Ted Haggard is just the latest in a long line of such leaders. Satan does not care how sly or deeply hidden the practice is, just as long as it is there, he has won that life over. How many Evangelicals today attend the movie theatres and fill their minds with the best that Hollywood has to offer, and wonder why their lives begin to reflect the filth of the world? How many wealthy Evangelicals pay lip service to God’s blessing on their lives, even while investing their whole beings into gaining wealth? The children of disobedience who practice these things are not far removed from the Evangelical community – or, perhaps, are they among us? We must take heed lest we be deceived by the great deceiver, the father of lies, the spirit that now works among us to destroy and uproot all things Biblical. We must be attentive lest we be snared by the good things that the devil will use to draw us away from the best that God has to offer. The choice is often not between what is best and worst, but simply between what is best and what is

³⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

good; if we can be conned into accepting good over best, it won't be long before we are choosing fair over good, and the devil's claw-hold on our lives has been firmly established.



6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

Here is another command – do not be deceived! Do not be deceived by words that do not hold the truth!³⁵⁶ Within the context of our passage, the challenge that we are given is to not be deceived into thinking that these sins are not so bad. We are to be Bereans, weighing the words that we hear against the truths of Scripture in order to determine their veracity. Within a time of great compromise (such as ours), it is easy to become enamored with words that are softer than oil, yet contain death (Psalm 55:21); we must be on guard against being caught up in a movement that is turning away from the truth unto lies (2 Timothy 4:4). Modern preachers may have words that fall softly on our ears, and their message may even be one that contains much truth, but we must guard against being taken in by their soft words and fair speeches (Romans 16:18), for by this means they deceive those who trust without examining (*simple*). The modern contemplative prayer movement, or Emergent Church, is just one example of what we are being warned against here. They cultivate a veneer of spirituality that hides the barb of mysticism and heresy; yet we see many of the leaders within Evangelicalism obviously embracing these teachings without any qualms. The seeds of New Evangelicalism are producing a harvest: there has been a move from dialoguing with the enemy, to standing with them, and, finally, joining with them to propagate their errors as truth (Psalm 1:1). God had many warnings for Israel against bowing to the gods of the land of promise – Israel refused to heed His warnings against idolatry, and they were destroyed as a nation. We may scoff at Israel's failure to heed God's warnings, yet are we any different? The enemy of our souls comes knocking at our door, dressed in the garb of a deeper spiritual experience, and we welcome him in without a moment's hesitation. The prince of this world has no problem wearing the cloak of Evangelicalism, and as he comes in, we find a reduction in concern for the truth, a greater acceptance of those who practice error, and a general discomfort with anything that might be construed as judgmental. The average Evangelical today has followed Israel in their example of disobedience and compromise; God's judgment will surely follow!

The phrase, *these things*, refers to the sins that have just been delineated. God's wrath is aroused by such things, and is directed at those who practice them. Who practices these things?



Henry Blackaby

They are characteristic of the children of disobedience. Earlier Paul mentioned that “in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). There was a time when we were numbered among the children of disobedience, but no more! If we are counted among the “faithful in Christ Jesus,” then we are to walk worthy of the vocation to which God has called us (Ephesians 4:1), as obedient, and not as disobedient, children. If God's Word is clear about a matter, why do we hesitate to do it? Biblical separation is one of those difficult things that

³⁵⁶ Strong's Online.

Evangelicals refuse to practice. It makes them feel like they are being judgmental – a modern-day anathema.

Ecumenism and unity have become the practice of most Evangelicals, whether acknowledged verbally or not. Consider the Canadian Revival Fellowship whose focus is to bring spiritual renewal by “assisting God’s people to restore their spiritual passion.”³⁵⁷ Yet we see them holding their meetings in churches that have departed from following the Word of God – the Alliance, Presbyterian, Evangelical Free, as well as holding “joint-church” meetings, which could mean almost anything. They include leaders such as Ted Rendall, who is very ecumenical, and feature speakers like Henry Blackaby. Blackaby is a Southern Baptist who is quite popular and advocates such things as:

1. “After spending time alone with God, reflect on your feelings.”³⁵⁸ We are to use our feelings to evaluate our walk with God and our prayer life. *Feelings* have nothing to do with it; Scripture should always be the basis for evaluation.
2. In the first book *Experiencing God*, it was said, “With God working through His servant, he or she can do anything God can do. Wow! Unlimited potential.”³⁵⁹ This is blatant heresy; we are human beings, not God! With the revised edition of this book, this has been toned down dramatically to appear more acceptable and less heretical: “When God works through His servant, that person can do anything God chooses to do through his or her life. The potential is unlimited.”³⁶⁰ It would appear that the first format for this thought brought criticism.
3. “... when God prepares to do something in our world, He reveals to His people what He is about to do.”³⁶¹ Not true – we are told, when the Son of Man will return, no one will know the day or the hour – and we never will (Matthew 25:13).
4. “You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.”³⁶² He speaks much of making “adjustments” for God – but nothing of repentance or confession of sin.

How can the Canadian Revival Fellowship expect to cultivate a deeper passion for spiritual things when they harbor and promote things that are contrary to the Word of God? They can’t!

When we fail to practice Biblical separation from the world, doctrinal error, and disobedient brethren, we are setting ourselves above God’s Word. God has made it clear that we are to separate from all such things – yet how many times do we rationalize our activities? How often do we disobey this one command just so we can be a testimony to those in error – what kind of testimony is it to walk in disobedience to God’s explicit teachings? That is New Evangelical thinking! Samuel’s words to a disobedient Saul come ringing down through the ages: “Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). We may fool some people some of the time, but we fool God none of the time – His desire is for our obedience. Will we walk accordingly, and commit the results of obedience to Him? “...strait *is* the

³⁵⁷ <http://www.revivalfellowship.com/objectives.html>

³⁵⁸ Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby & Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Revised & Updated), p. 99.

³⁵⁹ <https://truthwithsnares.org/2012/02/22/a-mysticism-primer-henry-blackaby-and-experiencing-god/>.

³⁶⁰ Blackaby, p. 43.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 52.

³⁶² *Ibid*, p. 60.

gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14); “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Is the path that we find ourselves on lonely? Perhaps that is simply because there are only a few who find the narrow road that leads to life. May God give us a heart for obedience to His Word, no matter the cost!

 7. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

The Greek word translated as *partakers* is used only twice in the NT, and both times in Ephesians. It first appears in 3:6, where it is used to indicate that we, as Gentiles, have been made joint-partakers with spiritual Israel in the promises of God, which are made manifest in Christ. This is a positive use of the word, and demonstrates the joint-participation that now exists – the middle wall of separation having been removed by God’s mighty act of fulfillment in Christ. In our passage, we are told that we are not to be partakers with the children of disobedience. Two things are evident from this: 1) this is a command that we are to obey, and 2) because Paul included it, it would seem clear that there is a possibility that we could be drawn into participation with the children of disobedience.

There is a deception that is active in the world that would seek to draw us into the ways of the evil one. Today, sin and error are too often downplayed to the point that we no longer recognize them as disobedience to God’s Word. Everything is positive; truth has been drawn and quartered in order to fit the mold of everyone individually; there is a desire for everyone to have the right to do what is right in his own eyes, and to feel justified in doing so. The acceptance of a truth to which we all have to submit is no longer a popular concept; God’s truth has been replaced by “my” truth, which simply places man at the pinnacle of his own little world. The reality of Satan’s lure to Eve is alive and well today; although it may not be popular among Evangelicals to call themselves gods, it is clearly demonstrated on every hand that this is exactly what is happening. The new age of spirituality is that we must look within ourselves to find meaning, to discover the reality of who we are, and that we must feed what we find there in order to achieve ultimate fulfillment. That is nothing short of the original lie of the devil: “then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5)! We are living in a day when man



Shirley MacLaine

has a very high opinion of himself and his abilities; man is soaring intellectually and spiritually (in his own eyes), and there is little that is not within his reach. Men like Henry Blackaby do nothing to discourage this by declaring, “With God working through His servant, he or she can do anything God can do.”³⁶³ We may scoff at Shirley MacLaine standing on the beach facing the Pacific Ocean and crying out, “I am god,”³⁶⁴ yet here we have a man who is openly accepted and promoted within Evangelical circles who is basically saying the same thing. This sounds much like another time in history when man said, “...let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). Babel stands as a

³⁶³ <https://truthwithsnares.org/2012/02/22/a-mysticism-primer-henry-blackaby-and-experiencing-god/>.

³⁶⁴ http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/bog_bogi_e.htm

monument in time to the high-mindedness of man and the sovereignty of God. We live in just such a day of arrogance – a day when unity is upheld at all costs, even though God and His Word have not changed; we may rest assured that God is still sovereign. The command in our passage is that we are not to be partakers with those who are disobedient to God.



8. *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

This is a simple statement of fact. We were formerly darkness – “without Christ ... having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). By contrast, now we are light! However, there is a source for this light – it is not a light that we have within ourselves – we are light *in the Lord*. Here again is the theme of Ephesians: it is *in Christ* that all of these good things come to fruition. Jesus openly declared that we are to abide in Him (John 15:4); He is our source of life and light.

By contrast, the Eastern religions see the light as an indigenous part of who we are; they have bought into the lie that Satan first gave to Eve. Consider their teachings:

If you prepare yourself to know the higher knowledge, then you will deserve. To deserve means to increase your capacity. You want to put the entire ocean in a bucket. The ocean is there. You can have it, but you do not have the capacity. When you deserve, you will have the capacity. The Lord, the Reality, the Truth, is always within you. You simply have to become aware. You can make sincere efforts to work with yourself.

Don't be disappointed with failures. When you start to make sincere efforts and start to practice, you will find light on the path. The light itself will guide you. **The light of consciousness is within you.** If you ignore that light, the guide outside you, the external teacher, will be of no use to you. He will make you a slave. (Bold added)³⁶⁵

Within their convoluted impression of reality, they advocate first following the guide within, thereby making everything else subject to that inner guide. They speak of “the Lord, the Reality, the Truth” but these are all within the unregenerate man; these are terms with which we are familiar, but their meaning is not the same. Our passage says that we were in darkness before – **that** is the “light” of the inner guide of mankind. Consider Jesus' words: “But if thine eye [a metaphor for knowing or knowledge] be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23). We just read of the knowledge and wisdom of Eastern religious thought; how tremendously dark is the light of the Eastern gurus. They see light in the heart of man, yet Paul openly declared, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing ...” (Romans 7:18). As the message of God comes to the one who has bought into the inner-light concept, the light of God is made subject to the darkness of their “inner light,” thereby rendering it of no effect. This would not be unlike the seed that fell by the wayside, and the birds came and snatched it away; the Word of God comes to the

³⁶⁵ <http://www.swamij.com/swami-rama-guru.htm>

heart of an individual, but the messengers of Satan (the prince of the power of the air [Ephesians 2:2]) snatch it away, and that person remains in his darkness.



Richard Foster

Yet what do we find today? We have the spiritual formation movement (or the Emergent Church) sweeping through Evangelicalism, even though it draws on the mysticism of the ancient Catholics and from the techniques of Eastern religions to demonstrate its spirituality. “What communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Today the answer to this rhetorical question needs to be stated openly to be understood: NOTHING!! However, we see men like Richard Foster and Dallas Willard doing their utmost to draw darkness and light together, and to promote it as a new spirituality, and Evangelicals, in their spiritual apathy, are embracing it, and seminaries are promoting it; on every hand this error is flourishing and creating a whole new concept of unity. Through this new emphasis, whether you call it spiritual formation, contemplative or centering prayer, or the Emergent Church, a new bond is formed with all those who practice its techniques – and they will be professing Christians, Catholic mystics, Buddhists, and anyone in the world today who speaks of being spiritual. Satan has devised a doctrine that will reach around the world and draw anyone and everyone into its fold; we must be alert and forewarned to be on our guard,



Dallas Willard



Jim Hammacher

for this error is being pedaled within Christian circles with great success. Despite how we might like to dress them up, yoga techniques (often a part of the spiritual formation thinking) still have their roots in Eastern religion, and such darkness is to have no place in the lives of the saints of God. Yet we find a Southern Baptist preacher (Jim Hammacher³⁶⁶) who rationalized that “bringing relaxation and meditation techniques into the church might help to revive a strain of spirituality that had been filtered out of Christianity over the years.”³⁶⁷ At the same time, a professor of Hinduism at the University of Virginia says, “he has seen many Christians whose faith has been strengthened by their yoga practice.”³⁶⁸ This same Hindu goes on to say, “Yoga means joining together. It's the joining of the individual spirit with the Universal spirit, ... No matter what religion you practice, you become a better person if you follow the principals of yoga.”³⁶⁹ So we have those, who should know better, openly practicing syncretism (merging darkness and light, and still trying to call it light), and, those who are pagan, encourage the practice. There is truly something wrong with this picture.

We now have another command – *walk as children of light*. Since we have moved from darkness to light in the Lord, we are to live as children of light. What could be simpler? The

³⁶⁶ It was while leading Parkwood Baptist Church of Annandale, VA that Hammacher introduced yoga to his group. Parkwood Baptist is a functioning member of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Hammacher has since gone on to be the Executive Director of Middle District Baptist Association, still a part of the SBC.

³⁶⁷ Alexandra Alter, “Yoga Stretches Traditional Christian Boundaries,” <http://www.veda.harekrsna.cz/connections/Christianity.php>

³⁶⁸ <http://www.letusreason.org/current81.htm>.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

concept is quite straightforward indeed, but the working out of this reality is much more complex. Paul understood the conflict that wages within us, the spirit against the flesh (Romans 7), yet that does not provide us with license to live as children of darkness. This is a command from God, and the Spirit of God will provide enablement for us to live as we have been commanded. Christianized yoga has no place in the walk of a child of the Light, so we must guard against such as the spiritual formation gurus.



9. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

Here is that phrase *fruit of the Spirit*; exactly what is the fruit of the Spirit? The Greek word for *fruit* is singular and means, “that which originates or comes from something, an effect, result.”³⁷⁰ So, very simply, the fruit of the Spirit is that which comes from the Spirit of God – such things as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Spirit is a holy life.

While we are on the subject of *fruit*, permit me to digress just a little. I have heard it said, and perhaps you have, too, that the fruit, which Christians are to bear, is other Christians; in other words, souls saved are to be the fruit that we bear – Galatians 5 refers only to the fruit of the Spirit. Let’s consider this for a moment in the light of Scripture. You will recall that one of the difficulties in the Corinthian assembly was their divisiveness along the lines of who was instrumental in leading them into the Christian faith: “... I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:12). They were condemned for this attitude, and Paul instructed them very clearly: “⁵Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? ⁶I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. ⁷So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). What does this tell us? Our role is to be a servant as the Lord has gifted us, for it is God Who gives the increase, or saves the soul. If our role in the saving of a soul is watering, so be it, if it is reaping, so be it – either way, we are only ministers of the Lord, and we cannot claim the honor of saving the soul. Saved souls are a tribute to the working of the Spirit of God; we cannot claim them as trophies of our own acumen, for to do so would require violating meekness, an evidence of the Spirit of God.

In John 15, Jesus taught His disciples about the vine, the branches and fruit. He said, “¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” What kind of fruit would we expect a branch to bear? Within the context of a vine, we would expect that it would bear grapes, and not another branch. The branch that does not bear grapes is purged; it is cut off and cast aside. If a branch only produced more branches, it would be deemed worthless, and would be removed. The purpose of the branch is to bear fruit in accordance with the vine in which it is abiding. Therefore, we, as branches abiding in Christ, are to bear fruit that is in keeping with abiding in Christ – namely, the evidence of the Spirit of God: love, joy, peace, etc. Jesus goes on to say, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8). The test for discipleship – is it souls whom we can claim as trophies (to the glory of God, of course), or evidence of the Spirit of God working in and through us so that we

³⁷⁰ Strong’s Online, BDB.

might be effective ministers of God as He has gifted us? Within the context of this passage, the test is clearly the fruit of the Spirit; we are to show forth goodness, righteousness and truth (our verse in Ephesians).

Jesus goes on to tell His disciples: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain ...” (John 15:16). As we consider the vine and the branches (the context of this verse), it can only mean that His intent is that the branches are to bear the fruit of the Spirit – He’s already said that if they do not bear fruit, they will be removed (John 15:2). Jesus is telling His disciples that He has ordained them, or set them aside, for a specific purpose: so that *ye are going, bearing fruit and your fruit is remaining*. As you may have already guessed, this is another purpose clause where the verbs *go, bring* and *remain* are in the subjunctive mood, but are understood to present the factual expectation of what Jesus has done (*chosen and ordained*).³⁷¹ Within the context of abiding in the Vine, we understand that the life is in the Vine (Christ), and we must pay particular heed that we not permit this life-giving relationship to falter; we are to guard against a heart prone to deceitfulness, and we are to strive for a life that will bring glory to God. Philippians 1 says, “⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; ¹⁰That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; ¹¹Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” This is exactly that of which we have been speaking; this is Christ living through us; this is abiding in the Vine so that we might produce the fruit of the Spirit of God working in us. Paul’s prayer was that these Philippian Christians would show forth the righteousness of Christ, that by their fruits they would be recognized as being in Christ (Matthew 7:15-20) – for the fruit is not only the test for the false prophet, but also for the true child of God. As we walk faithfully with God through life, He will use our words and our actions to accomplish His purposes in the lives of those about us. Yes, our hearts should be burdened for the lost, but they should be even more burdened with our need to walk worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:1), a walk that we will only accomplish through the Spirit of God working in us.

Goodness is “uprightness of heart and life”;³⁷² the Greek word used in our passage is exactly the same as that used in the listing of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. *Righteousness* is a “state of him who is as he ought to be, the condition acceptable to God.”³⁷³ Clearly, this requires the work of God, for it is only God Who can make a man righteous. Ephesians 4:24 describes the new man, whom we are to put on, as being “created [by God] in righteousness and true holiness.” Here we are adjured to walk as children of light, which will evidence the fruit of righteousness from the Spirit of God. *Truth* refers to that which never changes; Jesus declared the Scriptures, the Word of God, to be Truth (John 17:17). Unlike today when truth has been given a subjective twist (which really makes it an untruth), there is a timelessness to truth that makes it equally applicable in all situations, and at all times. I am reminded of Paul’s words in Romans 1:18: “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” Although Paul is beginning his discourse on God being revealed to all of mankind through the evidences that are everywhere to be seen, it seems that there is growing evidence of many within organized churches who are holding the truth in

³⁷¹ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

³⁷² Strong’s Online.

³⁷³ Ibid.

unrighteousness; how many professing Christians hold in their hands the very Word of God, yet fail to heed it, for they fail to believe it. A “pastor” of the Center Street Church in Calgary has said that Christians today differ little on interpretation, but more on inspiration (meaning that if the Scriptures are not held to be the Word of God, then interpretation holds little influence)³⁷⁴ – but I would contend that they differ most on application (rationalization has even rendered the right interpretation based on God’s inspiration to be of no effect). Despite holding the Truth of God in their hands, they do not permit it to enter their hearts and minds so as to be lived out in reality, but continue to hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is clear that this truth does not accomplish anything in the lives of those who hold it in unrighteousness.

We are told that the fruit of the Spirit is in all of these things (*goodness, righteousness and truth*); indeed, all of these things in their truest sense can only come from God. Jesus said, “there is none good but one, *that is, God*” (Matthew 19:17); therefore, all true goodness can only come from God. Romans 3:10 reminds us that “there is none righteous, no, not one”; but this is followed by: “²¹... the righteousness of God ... is manifested ... ²²*which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ...” (Romans 3:21-22). It is clear that we have no righteousness in ourselves, but it is equally apparent that God’s righteousness is available to us. As we have already seen, God’s Word has been identified as truth. *Goodness, righteousness and truth* all find their source in God; anything that may appear to be good, right and true (but is not of God) will fail. That is why we are told to be fruit watchers, for thereby we will be able to identify the wolves who seek to portray themselves as sheep (Matthew 7:15-20).



10. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

This continues the thought from verse eight: we are to walk as children of light *proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*. *Prove* comes from a Greek word that means to “test ... with the expectation of approving.”³⁷⁵ This tells us that even if we anticipate something to be right and good, we are to test it anyway; if we know that it is not good, then there is no call to test it; it must simply be discarded. In our day of compromise and feel-good preaching, we are called to exercise genuine discernment in accordance with God’s Word. Even if something or someone appears to be good, we must examine all things according to Scripture and then determine our position. It is not enough to simply listen to what is said; we must examine their associations, and the things of which they approve. Whom we associate with is very important, for Scripture makes it clear that we are not to join ourselves with those who are not walking in the way of the Lord; associations will more readily expose the heart than will the words spoken.

Accepting things at face value is not to be our lot as Christians. Ours is not to be a life of ease, of relaxing and taking in the teaching that we receive without another thought about it. We are to be diligent students of the Word; we are to take what we hear and what we read back to the Word of God. The better a teaching sounds, the more carefully we need to examine it, lest we be snared by the deceitfulness of the devil. The end never justifies the means; we must be examiners of the means. It is often said that the devil is in the details – so true; as much as we might like to be enthralled with the good end of something, we must never ignore the path taken to get there.

³⁷⁴ Taken from a taped message by Henry Schorr.

³⁷⁵ Vine’s “prove.”

As believers, our lot in life is to walk in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord, and to do so, requires diligence on our part and attention to the details of life.



11. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

This is another of Scripture’s commands – actually two of them!

Here is that word *fellowship*, again. As we noted before, this is a term that has fallen into some misuse, for it has come to be known as simply visiting with someone. However, in this case it is translated from a Greek word that is based upon *koinonia*, which speaks of communion, partnership, of sharing together.³⁷⁶ There is a far greater intimacy and close association tied to the word than our present-day use would indicate. In our passage, this fellowship is given a negative emphasis, which means that we are not to have communion, partnership or such close sharing with *the unfruitful works of darkness*. What would these be?

Works speaks of those things that occupy our time, the things that we do; *unfruitful* works are those things that are barren, that yield no advantage.³⁷⁷ We have just looked at “the fruit of the Spirit” that is in “all goodness and righteousness and truth” (v. 9); now we are faced with unfruitfulness. Being a spiritual exhortation, the unfruitfulness spoken of here must bear a spiritual application, not a physical one. Therefore, these *unfruitful works* must be activities that do not bring forth spiritual goodness, righteousness and truth; perhaps they bear wealth, prestige, power, influence, and worldly recognition. Unfortunately, these works are not limited to the unregenerate, but are as often as not found within many areas of Christianity as well. I am reminded of Joel Osteen, who preaches a feel-good message of exhortation to have a more positive attitude, and things will be better for you, for God wants you to be healthy and wealthy. He uses the Scriptures very sparingly, and then only when a proof-text can be used to support his feel-good philosophy of life – Osteen does not demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, but rather the unfruitful, barren works of spiritual darkness. Consider God’s instruction to Israel: “But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak [this would be someone who is speaking in the name of the Lord, but whose message is not Biblically valid], or that shall speak in the name of other gods [perhaps the message exalts wealth or personal achievement – popular gods of this age], even that prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20). Anyone with a message that was not from God died; yet we must realize that it was the Israelites who were called upon to carry out this execution – they were called to make the judgment. We do not live under the Law of Moses, or most televangelists today would have died long ago; they have departed from the clear message of God’s Word to vain ramblings in a philosophy of their own design – God is not pleased, yet we too often demonstrate acceptance when we should be trying them by the text of Scripture. Even though these works are being carried out under the guise of Christianity, and, supposedly, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are called



Joel & Victoria Osteen

³⁷⁶ Strong’s Online.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

upon to judge them. First John 4:1 says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”; this is an imperative – we are commanded to put them to the test! Jesus’ words to the Pharisees are equally appropriate for men like Joel Osteen: “... woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in ...” (Matthew 23:13). This is a serious charge, for Jesus is saying that the Pharisees were obstructing the entrance to heaven. How were they doing this? They were proclaiming a message that was not from God, yet holding it forth as being from God – in other words, if people believed their message, then they would be steered away from access to heaven rather than being drawn into a relationship with God. This is precisely what Joel and a myriad of other televangelists are doing today – they propagate a gospel that would receive an “anathema” from the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1:8-9). Through barren preaching, Joel is showing thousands how to be comfortable on the broad way that leads to hell. Because they spread a gospel message that is not of God, we can say, “Woe unto you, [Joel Osteen, Bill Hybels, Billy Graham, and Rick Warren], hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men’s* bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:17). Jesus told us plainly that we would know the false prophets by their fruits, and we are called upon to judge the fruit of men like Joel Osteen who preach a gospel that is not the Gospel, but rather a lie from the devil to blind the eyes of multitudes. Our local newspaper has again openly exposed the error of our local ministerial: the Catholics, the Charismatics, the Evangelicals of all stripes (Evangelical Free, Missionary, Alliance, and independents like the Manor Gospel and the Prairie Tabernacle) all came together to celebrate Easter (that pagan holiday that has been given a veneer of Christianity). These have all shed the life of holiness and purity for unity; they have abandoned the clear commands of Scripture for a message that is not pleasing to God, one that is a generous mixture of error and truth. As such, it is no longer the message of life from God, but rather a message of error that can often appear tantalizingly like the truth. These are far more dangerous than the Muslim, the Hindu or even the Satanist, for they speak of God, Jesus, and a love for the Word of God, and thereby mix a deadly potion of Biblical terms and Scripture with their own poisonous, vain philosophies. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

However, in the day in which we live, we must also take note that we are to avoid the workers of darkness who do not profess any vestige of Christianity. There is a worldwide movement to unite all religions, and the battle to accomplish this is being waged on many fronts. It has been incredible to watch the change in attitude toward Muslims, for example, since September of 2001. The December 27, 2003 issue of *Christian Century* carried this clip: “To encourage cordial contacts between Evangelicals and Muslims, Fuller Theological Seminary has received a federal grant for a \$1 million project to craft an ethics code rejecting unfair accusations, to recognize a mutual belief in one God and to share like-minded peacemaking goals.”³⁷⁸ Fuller Seminary seems bent on plowing new ground in the area of apostasy and heresy, yet they retain their status among Evangelicals as a respectable Seminary. How can this be? It happens when Christians, who know better, fail to raise their voices in protest so that, at the very least, those who are close by will hear and beware. Unfortunately, we have opted for a religious system that places all of the authority in the hands of the educated, and there is a strong hesitation to question those

³⁷⁸ http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_26_120/ai_112131080

who bear the title of “Doctor.” There is no common ground to be found between the religions of the world and God’s message to us in the Scriptures; when Evangelicals hail the discovery of common ground, rest assured that they have only exposed their own compromise of God’s Word.

Command one, in our passage, tells us that we are to have no fellowship with such; we are to have no part with them – whether the workers are bearing the name of Christ or not. The second command tells us to *reprove* them. This word, in our case, means “by conviction to bring to the light, to expose.”³⁷⁹ Now this is something that today’s Evangelical finds very difficult, if not abhorrent. We’ve seen Fuller Seminary’s stance when it comes to the Muslim faith; they will not condemn anyone – they will always look for that common ground. However, it is one thing to avoid someone, particularly when they are high profile people like Billy Graham, Rick Warren and Joel Osteen – but to actually expose their error for all to see, that’s another story altogether. Yet, here we have Scripture commanding us to do just that. It is not enough to shun those who are propagating error; rather, we are to expose them actively, to show forth the error of their teachings. This is not a smear campaign against them personally; we need to do our part in making others aware of the hypocrisy and heresy of these men in order to prevent them from being drawn into their schemes. Naming names is not a popular thing today, not only in the world at large, but even less so within the broad spectrum of Christianity. When you quietly avoid someone, that does little to draw attention to yourself; however, when you name the names of those against whom we need to be on guard, then you immediately expose yourself to the ridicule and criticism of those who are more ecumenically minded. Yet this is not optional; we have here the direct command of God to expose the workers of darkness, and, as we have seen, these may very well be those who are flying the banner of Christianity.



12. *For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*

The focus here is on the activities, whether physical or mental, of those who work the unfruitful works of darkness. Is there a contradiction here? First, we are told to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness; now we’re told that it’s a shame even to speak of what is done in secret by those who do such. The word *shame* speaks of “that which is opposed to modesty or purity.”³⁸⁰ What we are told to do is to shine the light of the Word of God on these workers of darkness, and permit the light of God to expose their error; what we must not do is delve into their hidden lives, those things that they do not want everyone to know – for therein is that which is shameful. Jesus openly declared, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20) – the fruits being the evidence of the heart. So if Joel Osteen promotes a message that is contrary to the Word of God, that is evidence of a heart that is not right with God; our task is to openly reprove him for his message of health, wealth and feel-good psychobabble, not to delve into the hidden philosophies of his life that produce this false gospel. Our responsibility is to expose the evident fruits for what they really are – heresy, not the hidden ramblings of the heart that produces this heresy.

Clearly, these hidden aspects are contrary to purity (they are a shame); God has called us to purity and holiness, therefore, anything that results in a message contrary to the Word of God

³⁷⁹ Vine’s “reprove.”

³⁸⁰ Vine’s “shame.”

cannot flow out of God’s holiness. The Spirit of God will never oppose the Word of God – therefore, if there is a contradiction to the Scriptures, the Spirit of God has not revealed that message. Therefore, when we see the leaders of our local Evangelical Free Church and the Prairie Tabernacle joining with the Catholics and Charismatics to celebrate Easter, we can rest assured that we have just seen the fruit of a message that is not in accordance with God’s Word. Do we call them unbelievers? No, for God alone knows their hearts, but we do know that they are, at the very least, grieving the Spirit of God by their flagrant disobedience of Scripture – their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (those who are unbelievers). “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). These men, who fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, may yet be our brothers, but they are brothers with whom we are not to fellowship because of their disobedience to the clear instruction of God’s Word. Romans 8:9 says that “... if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” We must shine the light of God’s Word on their teachings in order to expose their error for what it is; we must warn others of the heresy and danger that is present, and then permit God to attend to the secret things in their lives that produce such disobedience. It is enough that we expose their teachings.



13. *But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

Here is a tie to verse 11 where we were commanded to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. As we accept the responsibility to expose the works of darkness to the light of Scripture, Paul now clarifies what is to take place. We are told that everything that is reproved is *made manifest*. This verb means to uncover, lay bare, to reveal.³⁸¹ As we saw earlier, the action of reproof is not without its consequences – for, by exposing the works of darkness, we identify ourselves as being opposed to such. This is acceptable within Evangelical circles if the subject of scrutiny is generally considered to be abhorrent; unfortunately, such targets of reproof are becoming increasingly few in number. However, to address the error of men like Rick Warren, Billy Graham, Joel Osteen, et al, is considered to be nigh unto sacrilege.

What is the error of Rick Warren?

1. His entire focus is on success, and he promotes the pragmatism of “the end justifies the means,” or “if it works, then its right.” Scripture says: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).
2. He ignores God’s call to separation from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14), from error (Romans 16:17-18) and from brethren who accommodate error (2 Thessalonians 3:6). On the very first count (separation from the world) he is found wanting. On December 1, 2006, Warren had Barack Obama in his pulpit – a man who openly and actively



**Barack Obama at
Warren's Saddleback Church**

³⁸¹ Vine’s “manifest.”

supports abortion in all nine months of pregnancy, and the radical homosexual activists' agenda.

What is the error of Billy Graham?

He, too, has neglected God's call to separation. From his earliest crusades, he has worked with the Roman Catholics and Liberals who are all apostate. Those who would come forward at a crusade who had a Catholic background, were sent back to the Roman Catholic Church. Billy is quoted as saying, "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics ... We only differ on some matters of later church tradition."³⁸² Romans 16:17-18 says that we are to withdraw from those who have departed from the doctrine of Scripture – Graham is in violation of this, and based on 2 Thessalonians 3:6, we must withdraw from him.

What is the error of Joel Osteen?

Joel preaches a health/wealth message – you hear nothing of "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The command of Romans 16:17-18 is clear; the charge in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 is equally clear.

The result is that you become the target of criticism and/or shunning – the reward for obedience to the Word of God. We must ask ourselves, are we prepared to accept criticism for obedience to God's instruction?

Notice though, as we reprove the works of darkness, their reality is laid bare by the light. Our reproof is the means by which the light of God exposes these works for what they really are. This will probably result in one of two things: 1) the exposure by the light of God could bring sharper criticism of us, the reprovers, or 2) the Lord will use our reproof to prick the heart of the hearer and restore him to a proper understanding of Scripture. Obviously, it is not ours to choose the response, but simply to faithfully reprove with the light of Scripture so that the Spirit of God might use the reproof to restore hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The latter part of the verse uses many of the same words as the first part, but it brings a different emphasis to light. In the Greek, *all things* and *whatsoever* are the same, and simply mean *everything*.³⁸³ The first portion says that everything that is reproved is laid bare by the light; this says that everything that lays bare is light.

Now many modern Evangelicals will argue that they are light; in their minds, they are explaining the Scriptures so that others will better understand what is being said. However, do they open the Word of God, or simply elaborate on their own approved theologies? Herein is our responsibility – we must take what we hear and what we read back to the light of the Word of God and let His Word expose its truth or its error. It is in this simple task that modern Evangelicals have been abysmal failures, so that today we see a hurried approval of the latest teachings of men of higher learning. Having cast God's Word aside, there is a broad acceptance of men's doctrine, for the Scriptures are deemed far too difficult to understand without much learning. However, the Spirit of God, promised to all who actively believe, is here to guide us in the ways of truth. Three

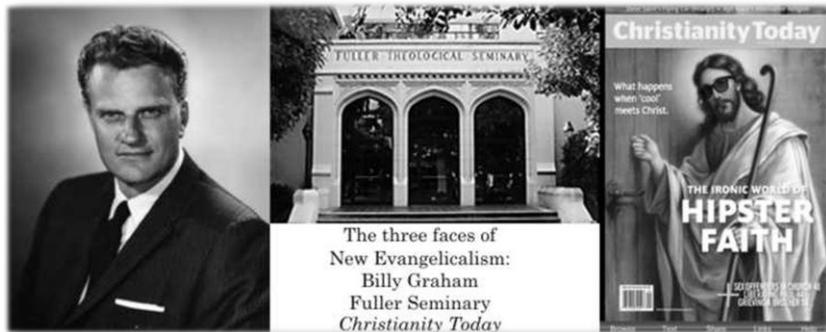
³⁸² David Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*, p. 84.

³⁸³ Strong's Online.

times Jesus referred to the Spirit of God as the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and He assured us that the Spirit would guide us into all truth. Therefore, that which is contrary to Scripture cannot be of the Spirit of God, for it is a departure from truth (John 17:17). Paul wrote, “⁹...as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ... ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:9-14). Herein is the difficulty with modern theologians: they have succumbed to their own learning without the guidance of God’s Spirit, and consequently have become heralds of error. Although they would profess to dispense light, in reality they mete out confusion and heresy.

The Evangelical climate of today grew out of the teachings of men like Harold Ockenga and Donald McGavran who sought to change the focus of Christianity from purity before God, to unity with the educated scholars of this world and liberal Christianity – from a desire for right teaching to an emphasis on numerical growth. By means of schools like Fuller Seminary, publications like *Christianity Today*, and evangelists like Billy Graham, the word got out. Evangelical concern was soon drawn to scholarship (and the re-examination of Biblical doctrines),

to social projects (and a de-emphasis of the message of Scripture), and to dialoguing with men of other belief systems. Their emphasis on scholarship has resulted in many of the doctrines of Scripture either being subject to re-evaluation or set aside



altogether. Out of this has come a burgeoning apostasy, a light-gospel (which is no Gospel) that makes no demands and ensures a place on the broad road that leads to hell. The focus on social projects has resulted in an emphasis on redeeming the culture, and these lightly Christianized people endeavoring to influence all areas of society. Consequently, there has flowed a renewal of the movement to establish the kingdom of God on earth (often referred to as reconstructionism or kingdom-now theology) through the massive efforts of man; this is something that only the Lord Jesus will be able to do when He returns. Their push for dialogue has produced a renewed effort to join together with all faiths in order to save the world. From this has come the false teaching that unity is God’s top priority; we see Evangelicals seeking to form ties with the Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, and the world. A product of this has been schools like Briercreech Biblical Seminary, which has negotiated an educational agreement with the University of Saskatoon,³⁸⁴ and Prairie Bible Institute doing the same with Bow Valley College, Olds College, Northern

³⁸⁴ http://announcements.usask.ca/news/archive/2007/04/university_of_s_27.html; while I was a student at Briercreech, this was proclaimed as a proud moment in the School’s history.

Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and Lethbridge Community College.³⁸⁵ In clear contravention of the Word of God, these “Christian” schools have partnered with the world in an effort to make their educational offerings more compatible with the world’s standards, or to open the doors for programs that they would otherwise not be able to offer. Is this pleasing to the Lord? Clearly, not (2 Corinthians 6:14)!



Ralph Winter

Through their pursuit of scholarship, social projects and continuous dialogue with infidels, modern Evangelicals have reduced the message of the Bible to an anemic gospel that has permitted them to proclaim massive revivals taking place all around the world, but because their message has been compromised, the revivals are not Biblically based. The US Center for World Mission, founded by Ralph Winter, a faculty member of Fuller Seminary, was established to function as a watchdog of world missions with an eye to improving the effectiveness of the worldwide project. Winter, editor of *Mission Frontiers*, a magazine put out by the US Center for World Mission, stated in the May-June 1998 issue: “... missions is essentially the restoration of God’s kingdom and rule and power on this earth. It involves the reestablishment [sic] of His glory, of His honor of His control of things. When anyone ‘becomes a Christian’ he yields his life to that new Kingdom, and Jesus Christ becomes his LORD as well as Savior (not just Savior).”³⁸⁶ Notice that Winter has redefined what becoming a Christian is – it is yielding to that “new Kingdom,” the one that men are endeavoring to restore on this earth for God, and through this, Jesus becomes your Lord and Savior. Does this mean that Paul and Silas had it wrong? When the Philippian jailor cried out, “³⁰Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” they responded, “³¹Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ...” (Acts 16:30-31). Ralph Winter would have them say, “Yield to the kingdom that we’re working on for God and be saved!” With this twist, it becomes evident that Winter, and everyone like him, MUST believe that God will be bringing about great revivals in our day. If they actually believed the Scriptures that tell us that there will be a great falling away before Christ returns (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3), they might see the futility of their efforts. Through their re-evaluation of many of the doctrines of Scripture, they have developed their own theology quite apart from God’s Word, and have managed to spread that word far and wide.

Is the US Center for World Mission a source of light? Clearly, not! Do they consider themselves to be light? Of course they do! Their stated purpose is: “The U.S. Center for World Mission ... is a place dedicated to making the glory of God known, and to bringing all the people groups on the earth to obedience and worship of Him (as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ).”³⁸⁷ There is no mention of salvation, only obedience and worship of God – two things that are essential for their kingdom to be successful. From their own website they declare that in 1976, missionaries focused on “saving individuals,” today they focus on “planting churches.”³⁸⁸ There has been a subtle shift from the need for the salvation of individual souls, to the establishment of monuments to the success of spreading the kingdom of God. After all, if these people are attending the

³⁸⁵ <http://www.prairie.edu/pcaat/pcaat.htm>

³⁸⁶ <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1998/0506/mj981.htm>

³⁸⁷ <http://www.uscwm.org/>, under “Frequently Asked Questions.”

³⁸⁸ <http://www.uscwm.org/>, under “Impact.”

churches, then they must be bringing glory to God – right? Wrong!! The churches in North America may be full, but most of them do not bring glory to God, so why should it be any different in a foreign country? Beware of what you hear and always look for the source – find out who it is and what they believe; we cannot relax our guard for a moment! Peter understood this very well and warned us: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Peter 3: 17).



14. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

This first phrase (*wherefore he saith*) would seem to indicate that Paul is going to quote someone or something, yet the words that follow cannot be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. However, they are similar to Isaiah 60:1-3 that reads: “¹Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. ²For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. ³And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Isaiah had just spoken of the Messiah coming to Israel, and it is clear that the light of God will be evident to all, including the Gentiles. The phrasing that the Spirit of God used in Ephesians is very interesting, as we will see. The word *wherefore* links this verse with what just preceded it; there is a connection here that must not be forgotten, *on account of (wherefore)* what has just been stated, the Spirit now goes on.³⁸⁹

Awake is in the imperative mood, it is a command, and means to rouse.³⁹⁰ The command is given to the one who is sleeping. Now, clearly, this is not physical sleep that is being spoken of here, for we have been looking at those things that should and should not be a part of the believer’s life. *Sleepest* is from the Greek word that is used for natural sleep, but, in this case, it is used in a metaphorical sense to describe a “carnal indifference to spiritual things,”³⁹¹ or to “yield to sloth and sin.”³⁹² The Spirit of God is commanding the believer who is indifferent to the things of God, or who is permitting sin to slide into his life, to rouse himself and shake off the grogginess of sleep. In Romans 13:11-12 we are told: “¹¹... now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. ¹²The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” If the first century believers needed to be called to awaken out of sleep for their salvation was closer than when they first believed, how much more appropriate is this for us today, nearly two thousand years later! Notice that Paul encourages the Roman believers to “put on the armor of light,” the very thing that Paul is telling the Ephesians about – the light that reveals and lays bare what it shines upon (v. 13). We are to wear this light as a garment of protection (Ephesians 4:20-24).

There are two aspects to this sleep that we need to consider: 1) the indifference to spiritual things, and 2) the entrance of sin and sloth into our lives. Let us look at the first of these – the indifference. Of the two, this is perhaps the most subtle, but if left unchecked will undoubtedly lead to the second. It is interesting to realize that believers can be asleep and unaware of the reality

³⁸⁹ Strong’s Online.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Vine’s “sleep.”

³⁹² Strong’s Online.

of what is taking place around them. When we are sound asleep, we are largely oblivious to what is happening around us, and, within the natural sense, this is a good thing for it permits physical rest and rejuvenation. In the spiritual realm, the sleep takes place while our eyes and ears are wide open, but there is a numbness that has entered into the heart, and a failure to comprehend the implications of what is occurring around us. The Spirit's command here is to awaken from this spiritual slumber! Jesus warned us that the pathway to life is a narrow one that few will find (Matthew 7:13-14). Paul warned the Thessalonians that, before the Lord returned, there would be a great falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). Why do I bring these two thoughts together here? Simply because they are very appropriate within today's Evangelical scene. We find professing Christians strenuously working to broaden the way to life (Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, and Rick Warren just to name a few), and there are many who are advocating that a massive revival is taking place around the world (the US Center for World Mission works tirelessly to track such). These are not two separate movements, but are actually two parts of the same Evangelical thinking. What does this do? It does two things: 1) it sets aside the clear instruction of Scripture that Jesus is the only way to life (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5), and 2) it unbiblically moves the landmarks established by the Lord (Deuteronomy 27:17; Proverbs 22:28) so that Evangelicals can ascribe salvation to many more people than God does. It is this setting-aside of Scripture that permitted Billy Graham to state to Robert Schuller in 1997: "I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. ... They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something they don't have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven."³⁹³ There is a tremendous indifference to the Word of God and to spiritual things. Jesus' words to the Pharisees are so appropriate for the efforts of many Evangelicals today: "...ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). Does this seem to be a bit harsh? Consider that today's Evangelicals skew the Gospel message to their own desires and philosophies, and then gather the multitudes to that false message – can those multitudes possibly come to salvation when the message is not true? Evangelicals no longer accept the narrow truth of God's Word, and they propagate their vain philosophies as God's truth – how can eternal salvation come from this?

The fables, which are being promoted today as Christian teaching, can only result in spiritual sleep and inertia. This spiritual sleep, from which many will not awaken, can only lead to deeper deception for the professing Christian, and apostasy or spiritual death for a true believer caught in the snare. When we looked at the definition of *sleep*, Vine's said that it spoke metaphorically of a carnal indifference to spiritual things; the Spirit of God tells us, "... to be carnally minded *is* death" (Romans 8:6). There is death in this sleep that we have been looking at – not physical, but spiritual death. Paul sought to encourage the Thessalonians to vigilance: "... let us not sleep [because we are children of the day], as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Paul includes himself in the use of "us"; we must all be alert lest we be drawn into error. Romans 16:17-18 says, "¹⁷Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The *simple*, as it is used here, does not refer to the simple-minded, but rather to those who are blindly trusting of others, who fear nothing from other

³⁹³ <https://www.cuttingedge.org/news/n1141.cfm>.

people. I am reminded of someone who, after changing churches, said that she was so happy to be able to relax and take in the messages without having to be on guard. That is the identification of the *simple* as used here – someone who is having his heart deceived by “good words and fair speeches” because he refuses to be on guard. You see, spiritual sleep is seldom from exhaustion, but most often due to carelessness or deliberate neglect. We are called to be awake, to be alert, to watch, so that we are not lulled into deceit.

The second aspect of *sleep* is the entrance of sin and sloth into our lives. James tells us “¹⁴... every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15). He follows this with the command, “¹⁶Do not err ...,” and then goes on to elaborate that “¹⁷every good gift ... cometh down from the Father of lights ...,” Who does not change (James 1:16-17; Malachi 3:6). There is strength to be gained by studying the Word of God – God does not change; His Word does not change! People change and philosophies change, but if God said something in His Word, it is forever!! How many find themselves entrapped by sin because it all began with something that they thought was good, or at least acceptable; there may have been a doubt or two at first, but everyone was doing it. God does not change, and His Word is ever the same! God’s Word states: “... to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17); “for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...” (Hebrews 10:26); “...the wages of sin *is* death ...” (Romans 6:23); “and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14). Carelessness can lead to death! We are called on to “exhort one another daily ... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). We must hold fast the confidence that we have in Christ’s salvation (Hebrews 3:6); we must watch and stand fast in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13). There is no room for inattentiveness within the Christian walk; we are in a spiritual battle and must be ever vigilant.

Arise comes from a Greek word that means to stand up.³⁹⁴ This is another command given; *arise* carries the imperative mood – we are commanded to stand up! *From* translates as *out of*, and Robert Young, in his literal translation of the Scriptures, uses the phrase *out of* in this passage. Therefore, the command is for us to *stand up out of* – but out of what? The next words are *the dead*. The Greek word used here is *nekros*, which means dead, lifeless; it is preceded by a definite article, hence our translation of *the dead*. Once again, this is not physical but spiritual. There is a similarity between spiritually sleeping and being spiritually dead; like the dead, the sleeping are unaware of their surroundings. If we consider the context of this command, which follows on the heels of being commanded to awaken from sleep, it would seem appropriate to say that we are to stand up out of the dead; if we do not attend to our spiritual sleepiness, we soon will become like the dead who surround us. There is a relationship between the sleeping and the dead – the sleep, if permitted to continue, will lead to death. This is a call to action, lest we succumb to sleep and never waken. We have already noted that spiritual indifference and a subtle creeping in of sin can lead to spiritual sleep and ultimately, if left unchecked, to death.

We come now to the last phrase of our verse – *Christ shall give thee light*. This final promise is subject to the fulfillment of the first two conditions being met. IF we awaken from spiritual sleep, and IF we arise out of the dead, then Christ, our Savior, will give us light; or, more

³⁹⁴ Vine’s “arise.”

literally, Christ will shine upon us.³⁹⁵ We learned in verses 11 and 13 that the unfruitful works of darkness are to be reprov'd, and it is the light that reprov's them. The light is clearly identified as coming from Christ, and it states that Christ will shine upon us – here are two reasons for this light: 1) if there are things in our lives that need to be corrected, His light will shine upon us and reveal those things that need to be identified, and 2) the light of Christ will provide us with the needed illumination to reprove those things that come across our pathway, things that need to be brought to light. “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105); the light of Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-5), will give us light so that we can be sure of where we stand, and it will illumine the path ahead so that we may walk in truth and not be drawn away from the narrow path that leads to life. Herein is the difficulty in which the majority of Evangelicals find themselves today. The Word of God has largely been set aside, either through general neglect, or through the development of theologies that have sprung up because of this neglect, or through the multitude of translations that take away from God’s Word to us; through these means, the light of Christ has been abandoned for the darkness of man – philosophies and deceits that are devoid of truth, built after the tradition of men (Colossians 2:8). Without the Word of God, there is no light to ensure that we stand on the Rock of our salvation (2 Samuel 22:47), and there is no light to show us the path upon which we walk; how great is the darkness that has descended upon many who purport to hold the Word of God yet fail to respond to its clear teachings. Those who seek to broaden the way to life (which would be anyone involved in promoting the unity message of New Evangelicalism) have turned their backs on God’s Word. “Awake thou that sleepest” is God’s word to them today!



15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

The Greek word translated here as *see* appears elsewhere as *take heed* or *beware*, and it carries the imperative mood – it is that which makes this first phrase a command. *Then* draws what has come before as the reason for the command; the groundwork for this command has been laid – it is what has just been covered. *Walk*, as we have seen before, has to do with our living, our conduct. *Circumspectly* is a word that we don’t use much anymore, but it is an old English word that means to be “cautious, prudent, or watchful on all sides.”³⁹⁶ The Greek word from which it is translated means “exactly, accurately, diligently.” As you can see, there is a difference; the Greek word demands an attention to details, which the English word leaves out – there is a purpose to being cautious, namely, for accuracy in the matter at hand. So what do we have here? Because we have just been given the promise that Christ will give us light, we are to take heed that we live with diligence lest we become careless and succumb to sleep, or, even worse, spiritual death.

This is so unlike what we see about us today. Consider Rick Warren. While speaking at the 2005 congress of the Baptist World Alliance, he is quoted as saying, “I see absolutely zero reason in separating my fellowship from anybody.”³⁹⁷ So what is the Baptist World Alliance that Warren would feel so free to make this declaration? In their own words, “One important BWA ministry involves theological conversations with other world Christian bodies. It is important to meet and talk with Christian communities to better understand the similarities and differences and to explore

³⁹⁵ Strong’s Online.

³⁹⁶ [American Dictionary of the English Language \(1828\)](#), “circumspect.”

³⁹⁷ <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/006/pd-deception.htm>

areas where Christians can agree to be in fellowship and to cooperate together.”³⁹⁸ They have identified the other bodies with whom they want to dialogue as “Christian,” so let’s permit them to explain to us what they mean by that term: “Over the last 20 years the BWA has had conversations with the Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Mennonite Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity [a Roman Catholic product of the Second Vatican Council]. Preliminary discussions have been held with the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.”³⁹⁹ All of these are either participants with the World Council of Churches, have members who are also members of the WCC, are Roman Catholic, or are in active conversation with the Roman Catholics to discover common ground. Two things show up immediately: 1) Rick Warren, if he adhered at all to the Scriptures, had no business speaking at a BWA congress, and 2) by making this statement to a congress of ecumenical zealots, he is indicating that he will not separate from these people. Warren has demonstrated the exact opposite of the command of our verse – rather than exercising caution and endeavoring to follow the Word of God with great precision in matters relating to heresy and heretics, he has chosen to raise his voice against God and arrogantly declare his allegiance with the enemies of our faith. Rick Warren is presently riding a wave of popularity; his message and materials are being heard and read around the world by Christian leaders in third world countries where there are few resources to expose Warren’s errors, and by thousands of congregations who are being led through his materials by those who have been duped into believing what he says, or are too lazy to check him out according to Scripture. It is evident that Warren is a key player in the movement of the Evangelical community today – a movement into apostasy that was predicted in the Scriptures: Christ will not return, “except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). I don’t see Warren as that prophesied “son of perdition,” but it is evident that he is paving the way for that puppet of Satan.

If we are to heed the warning and command of our text, we must beware of men like Warren who propagate a soft message of lies and deceit. We are to walk with precision in the commands of the Word of God. There is no excuse for compromise; it is to have no place in the life of the believer: in the word of our text, beware!!

Then, we are to beware lest we walk as fools and not in the accuracy that this text demands (*circumspectly*). Rick Warren and all who follow his lead are walking as fools; they are not regarding the Word of God nor attending carefully to its instruction. We, on the other hand, are to walk as those who are wise, giving heed to the Lord’s instructions in His Word. The Greek word translated as *fools* is the word for *unwise*; the parallel that is created here is that we are not to be unwise (*asophos*), but wise (*sophos*) – a word that means “skilled, expert.”⁴⁰⁰ This fits so well with the admonition to walk circumspectly. It is often very discouraging to look out over the multitudes who fall under the umbrella of Evangelicalism – there is little heed given to the Lord’s instructions, there is a tremendous neglect of His Word, and a growing zeal for unity. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3); “for this is the love of God, that



³⁹⁸ <http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=400>

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Strong’s Online.

we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [or burdensome]” (1 John 5:3).⁴⁰¹ Separation from the world, from error and from believers who are caught in error are all commands of God; despite the best efforts of Evangelicals today to gloss over these, these commands are still in the Word of God and we are still warned to follow them with great accuracy and diligence – as wise, and not as fools.

 16. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Simply put, this tells us to buy up every opportunity that comes our way, because the times that we live in are evil.⁴⁰² The purpose of this alertness is to shine the light of Christ on the works of darkness – the natural outcome of walking “circumspectly.” The Word of God is the light that shows us where we stand, and illuminates the path that we walk (Psalm 119:105); however, if we do not walk circumspectly in the light of God’s Word, then we do not have light for our pathway. When Rick Warren, who neglects the Word of God, says, “Here is a path; walk in it,” he is shining the darkness of his own philosophical thinking onto that path; there is no light to show the way that leads to life. “²²The light of the body is the eye [a metaphor for knowing or knowledge]...²³if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness” (Matthew 6:22-23). What a picture of modern Evangelicalism! Today Evangelical leaders have become very learned men; they excel in philosophical thinking and developing great and marvelous theologies, yet they have failed to cultivate the fear of the Lord, which is “the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). They have stripped the Word of God of its inerrancy, and subjected it to the same analysis that they would ascribe to any piece of ancient literature; they have reduced the commands of God to culturally sensitive suggestions that have little or no bearing on our lives today. Yet they purport to hold to the Truth, they still quote the Scriptures (however bent they might be from the hands of modern translators), and they still call themselves Christians and claim to walk in the ways of God. In reality, they have perverted the Gospel of Christ, their understanding is evil, and they are full of darkness! “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship [partaking together] hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion [intimacy] hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).⁴⁰³ The answer to both of these questions is, absolutely nothing! Despite this, modern Evangelicals seek to circumvent the truth of God’s Word through ecumenical cooperation, whether on the larger scale of Billy Graham commending the pope, or on the smaller, seemingly more insignificant front of participation in local ministerial associations. The scale of involvement makes no difference – both are a violation of the Word of God! When an organization, which says that they are Christian, cultivates associations with those who are apostate, or propagates doctrine that is not Biblical, they are in violation of the Word of God – they are unrighteous. If we desire to walk circumspectly before God, then we must not support



Billy Graham with Pope John Paul II

⁴⁰¹ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

them in any way; we are to reprove their deeds and separate from them. The teaching of Scripture is clear; all we need is the will to make it a reality in our own lives.

The one who walks wisely will seize the opportunities that the Lord sends his way. There have been times when it is clear that the Lord has given me the right words for the moment, but I fear that there have been many more times when my mind has gone blank and I have missed those opportunities – when they are missed, they are gone. We must take every occasion that we have to shine the light of Christ; He has promised to give us light – but we must be awake spiritually in order to be used by Him to expose the darkness to His light.



17. *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

This is a small commandment – simple, yet with far reaching implications. The Greek word translated as *unwise* is not the same as that translated as *fools* in v. 15 (which we noted as *unwise*). There, *wise* meant skilled or expert, and so the Greek word translated as *fools* means unskilled or inept.⁴⁰⁴ However, here the Greek word translated as *unwise* means “without reason or senseless, foolish, stupid.”⁴⁰⁵ Because of what has been said, we are commanded not to be stupid but to understand the will of the Lord. Today, the will of the Lord has become a mysterious unknown to many, and to others it is whatever they want – both are problematic. Some appear to be stalled in life because they can’t determine what the will of the Lord is for them. Others accomplish many things and say that the Lord gave it to them, or that the Lord showed them what to do – when many times their accomplishments are contrary to the Scriptures. Can we know the will of God? “... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). It seems clear that the will of God can be known through a renewed mind, and being conformed to the world would stand in antithesis to the will of God and a renewed mind.

When we drive down the highway and see a sign that says, “Maximum 100,” we rarely debate the meaning of the sign. The message is clear and concise – the maximum speed on that highway is 100 kilometers per hour; the will of the law of the land is that everyone who drives that highway not exceed that speed. However, when we look into the Word of God, and read, “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17), we struggle with understanding the will of the Lord. Perhaps our struggle is less with what we know the will of the Lord to be, and more with our unwillingness to obey what the Lord has commanded. God’s desire is that we be a holy people unto Him, and this will only come to pass through our obedience to the commands of Scripture – the expression of God’s will to us, His people. Another prerequisite is that we must be His people, born again by His Spirit (John 15:1-5). If we set the clear teachings of Scripture aside, we do so to our own peril. Jesus’ words are as true today as they were the day that He spoke them: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Evangelicals today have focused their attention on many things, but what they have set aside is God’s call to holiness – yet, above all

⁴⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

else, we are to be holy before Him. This will only find fulfillment through the working of the Spirit of God within us, and our obedience to His commandments.



18. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

The first part of this verse states simply: do not become intoxicated with wine in which is riotousness.⁴⁰⁶ Elsewhere, the Greek word for *excess* is translated as “riot,” and brings to mind the life of the prodigal son, before he came to his senses (Luke 15:13), or the life lived “according to the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2). The Greek word used to describe drunkenness specifically marks the process of becoming drunk, rather than pointing solely to the final state;⁴⁰⁷ so the admonition here is not to enter onto the pathway that leads to intoxication. This might seem to be an odd thing to say at this juncture (after the charge to understand the will of the Lord), but consider what wine does. Someone who has had too much to drink no longer has full control of his thinking, his speaking, or his motor skills; the drink has gained control, which is really an overall lack of control. This is not to take place within the believer, but, by contrast, he is to be filled with the Spirit of God: “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5-8; cp. Colossians 2:8-9).

Incredibly, one of the “sign gifts” within the Charismatic movement, for being filled with the Spirit, is what they call being “drunk” in the Spirit. Rodney Howard-Browne, from Tampa, Florida, calls himself a “Holy Ghost bartender” who dispenses the ‘new wine’ of charismatic fervor.”⁴⁰⁸ It seems incredible that Charismatics would use drunkenness to characterize what they believe to be the filling of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps even more incredible, they will use Ephesians 5:18 to justify their actions – claiming that this verse indicates that there is a correlation between drunkenness and being Spirit-filled. They also go to Acts 2 for support for their drunken behavior, claiming that when the apostles were filled with the Spirit of God at Pentecost, they appeared to be drunk. The Charismatics expose their lack of Biblical discernment by not reading the passage carefully. It was the mockers who said that the apostles were drunk with new wine; the rest of the people heard the message that God had for them, each in his own language, and were convicted.



Rodney Howard-Browne

What does it mean to be “filled with the Spirit?” First of all, we need to note that this is a command to be obeyed; the word *filled* is in the imperative mood, and means to be made full.⁴⁰⁹ In Galatians 5:16-21, Paul lists many works of the flesh, and then in verses 22 and 23 lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These stand in contrast to the works of the flesh, and we read further, “...they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24). So then, if we are

⁴⁰⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰⁷ Vine’s “drunk.”

⁴⁰⁸ https://jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Doctrines/Charismatic%20Movement/unholy_laughter.htm.

⁴⁰⁹ Strong’s Online.

in Christ, we are to have crucified the flesh, and if we “walk in the Spirit, ... [we] shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Jesus said, “Abide in me ... as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4). Through this abiding relationship will come fruit, not the fruit of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said, “¹⁵If ye love me, keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:15-17). There is both a command and a promise here. The command: *keep my commandments*; the promise: God will give a Comforter Who is prepared to be with us forever. What is the contingency? – our obedience. We can again use Israel as an example: the positive promises of God to them were sure, but they were dependent upon their obedience to His commands. Nothing has changed, God is still the same – there is the promise of the Spirit Who is committed to abiding with us forever, **if** we will but live in obedience to His Word. The filling of the Spirit of God is sure, but we must walk in submission to His commands – which, Jesus says, you will do if you love Me.

So what is the correlation between not being drunk with wine, and being filled with the Spirit? We are NOT to permit wine to gain control over our mind, words and actions, but we ARE to be filled to the brim with the Spirit of God so that we will produce words and works in accordance with righteousness. “...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24); “...O man of God ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:11; Romans 6:19).

Is Rodney Howard-Browne filled with the Spirit of God when he dispenses “drunkenness,” laughter, and animal noises on his listeners? To be filled with the Spirit of God requires obedience to God’s Word – is Rodney Howard-Browne obedient to the Word of God? The short answer is, “No.” First of all, we read, “God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace ...” (1 Corinthians 14:33), which is an admonition given to the Corinthian believers who were failing in the area of spiritual gifts. It is clear from a brief observation of Rodney at work that he promotes confusion and bedlam wherever he goes; he has the same problem as the Corinthians regarding the gifts of the Spirit of God. Secondly, his church (called The River) is led by six couples and two women, and all, including the wives, carry the title “pastor.”⁴¹⁰ Setting aside the misuse of the term “pastor” these days, simply equating this term with the Biblical bishop or elder, places the Howard-Browne ministry in sharp violation of Scripture without even looking at their aberrant doctrine of being filled with the Spirit. Unfortunately, this sacrilege is not limited to Rodney, but is characteristic of the Charismatic movement to varying degrees – a movement that is long on compromise and accommodation, but short on adherence to the Word of God; they emphasize love to the sacrifice of holiness. God is not pleased!



19. *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

This is a continuation of the previous verse that ended with the admonition to be filled with the Spirit; therefore, it is reasonable to consider what follows here is illustrating what will flow out

⁴¹⁰ <http://www.revival.com/pastoralstaff.54.1.html>

of a Spirit-filled life. *Psalms* comes from a Greek word that primarily means a striking or twanging, as in to play a musical instrument, and later came to mean a sacred song sung to a musical instrument.⁴¹¹ The Greek word *humnos*, translated as *hymns*, speaks of a song of praise addressed to God.⁴¹² Lastly, we have *spiritual songs*: the Greek word for *songs* is a generic term, hence the qualification of them being *spiritual* songs. Therefore, we have here songs that are played or sung and accompanied, specifically songs of praise to God, and then general songs of spiritual value, probably of encouragement or challenge in the Christian life. Our verse says that we are to use these in *speaking to yourselves*. This is not saying that we are to talk to ourselves – the word *speaking* means to give voice to, or to utter.⁴¹³ These would be those things that are used to communicate with one another about the spiritual life that we have in God and an expression of our gratitude to Him. All of these will characterize the life that is lived in conformity with the Spirit of God; there is variety here, but it is also clear that there is a focus on God and our living.

You will notice that there is no provision here for including the songs of the world. All of the Scriptures that call us to separation, make it clear that we are to separate from the world, and this would have to include their music as well. The excuse used by Christians today for filling their minds with the dregs of worldly music is that music is neutral; however, the promoters of the world’s music are very open about the fact that they know that their music is of the flesh and that it is used to promote a sinful lifestyle. Keith Green, a well-known name in Christian music circles said, “I believe music, in itself, is a neutral force.”⁴¹⁴ Yet a rock musician openly confesses, “Rock is the total celebration of the physical,” and another that “rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body’s rhythms.”⁴¹⁵ So we have Evangelicals desperately hanging onto the badly frayed thread of “music is neutral,” while those musicians to whom they like to listen, openly declare their music to be rebellious and anti-church. The world identifies their music for what it is – despite this, professing Christians will ignore this reality and vainly cling to their baseless philosophy to justify their fleshly habits. We cannot profess separation from the



Keith Green



Michael W. Smith

world while embracing its music; many “Christian” musicians today, however, have no qualms about confessing their love of worldly music and its musicians. For example, Michael W. Smith, in an interview with *Inside Magazine*, openly admitted that his music is influenced by Alan Parsons, probably “one of the most occultic rock musicians.”⁴¹⁶ “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?” (James 3:11), the understood answer is,



Alan Parsons

⁴¹¹ *Vine’s* “psalm.”

⁴¹² *Vine’s* “hymn.”

⁴¹³ Strong’s Online.

⁴¹⁴ “The Heresy of Claiming that Music is Neutral,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/heresyofclaiming.htm>

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/81730171/Replacing-Hymns-With-Contemporary-Praise-Music>

“No!” If professing Christian musicians feed on the dregs of worldly music, can the Lord be honored by their music, which is patterned after the world? No! In the selection of types of songs, from our verse, there is no place for the songs of the world, which is fitting since these are tied to being filled with the Spirit of God.

The Greek word translated as *singing*, describes a song of praise, which in the Scriptures is always used to indicate a song of praise to God.⁴¹⁷ The Greek word translated as *making melody* is *psallo*, which means to “twitch, twang, then, to play a stringed instrument with the fingers,” and in the NT to “sing a hymn, sing praise.”⁴¹⁸ The correlation of this to the word *psalms* is evident, and the understood application of the term again directs our attention to praise to the Lord. The focus of this phrase is that these songs of praise find their place in our hearts; these would be the songs that we might hum or sing to ourselves, or the music that we have in our heads as we go through the day. Once again, there is no room here for the ditties of the world; our minds are to be filled with those things that edify, that draw our thinking to the Lord – those things that will support the renewing of our minds by the Spirit of God (Romans 12:2).

We have here the songs that we share with one another, and the songs that we take with us through the day: both are to be spiritual in nature and uplifting in praise to God. There is no room permitted for the godless music of the world that is filled with debauchery and excess. Today’s musicians do not exercise discernment in that with which they fill their minds. Popular “Christian” music artists like Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith all admit to enjoying the rock music of the world, and being influenced by it;⁴¹⁹ their lack of discernment is evident in the shallow, compromising presentation of their faith. I say “their faith” because it is not the faith that we find described in Scripture. Unfortunately, this anemic music flows into the lives of Evangelicals like a flood, and has become another avenue for ecumenical ties. The Catholic Church has become a big promoter of the so-called contemporary music style, and there are numerous cases of Evangelical and Catholic singers coming together to produce music albums, do concerts, or simply promote the growing theme of ecumenism.⁴²⁰ We have become so undiscerning today that no one ever takes the time to look at who is singing, what he believes, and to actually examine the lyrics of his songs in order to discover how shallow they really are. Rather, Evangelicals have bought into the whole “worship” music fad that has become nothing more than a promotion of shallow theology in the form of what has been kindly termed “7-11” choruses (the repetition of 7 words 11 times). The Evangelical youth of today are in rebellion against the hymns and spiritual songs of years gone by; they have set their faces against this Scripture that charges us to set our hearts on spiritual music and praise to God, and have instead filled their hearts and minds with ditties and rock music of all shades to their own spiritual undoing. Such music has no place in the heart and mind of the obedient saint of God.

⁴¹⁷ Vine’s “sing.”

⁴¹⁸ Vine’s “melody.”

⁴¹⁹ We’ve already seen Smith’s failure in this area; Grant has said that she enjoys “Billy Joel [a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame], Kenny Loggins [a twice-divorced soft-rocker] and the Doobie Brothers [an American rock band]” (http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evils%20in%20America/CCM/amy_grant-exposed.htm)

⁴²⁰ “Smith ... became good friends with U2’s Bono [the principle writer for this rock band]. The two have joined forces in a number of performances for Bono’s DATA Organization” (<http://voices.yahoo.com/michael-w-smith-one-christian-musics-legends-124630.html>)



20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Here is something else that is to characterize those who are filled with the Spirit of God – they are to be thankful. Ingratitude has become a common trait of our world today (2 Timothy 3:2); the attitude is that society owes us something, and thankfulness has taken a back seat. Yet the life that has been impacted by the Spirit of God is to exemplify gratitude for all things – for all things? “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Romans 8:28) – for the purpose of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, the One Who suffered for us (Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). This is a gratitude that is founded upon faith in God – faith that God will orchestrate trials, which we may be going through, for our good. We are often shortsighted; we have a perspective on life that is bound by the restraints of time. God, on the other hand, views time from timelessness and can see the end from the beginning – He knows our frame, and He knows exactly what we need in order to bring about His purposes in our lives. Do we understand this all of the time? Clearly not. However, our faith in God must be sufficient so as to permit Him to work in us that which will ultimately bring Him glory and accomplish our good.

Will this be easy? Not at all, as a matter of fact, it can be extremely difficult. For example, my wife has struggled with physical illness for many years with no diagnosis that could result in restoration of health. This has taken its toll on us; are we to be thankful for this? This would be one of the “all things” for which we are to be thankful to God. Our faith in God must be such that we trust Him to use this in our lives to accomplish what He could not do any other way. Peter speaks of “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). Our faith is tried so that we might bring praise and honor to God; do we always understand this eternal perspective? No, but we must trust the One Who holds our future in His hands. Another example is our son who has disowned us and cut us off from seeing three of our grandchildren. Does this verse mean that we are to give thanks to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for this? It can mean nothing else. How can we be grateful for something so hurtful and baseless? Our gratitude must come from our belief that God knows about this experience, and that He can use it to bring about good in us. Do we understand this? No, but it is not our place to understand the ways of God, for His ways are so much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9); it is our place to accept this from the hands of a loving God Who desires His purposes to be accomplished in our lives.

This attitude of thankfulness is to characterize those within whom the Spirit of God abides. We may not be able to rejoice and be grateful for the circumstances in which we find ourselves, but we can express joy and thanks that we still rest in the hands of God and can commit our trials to Him. Our gratitude to God is to be proclaimed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we name the name of Jesus, this should reinstate a proper understanding of this life for us. It is Jesus Who left the splendors of heaven to take on the body of a man, and it is Jesus, the pure, sinless Son of God, Who died a brutal death for my sins. “²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [or trials⁴²¹]; ³Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James

⁴²¹ Strong’s Online.

1:2-3). “¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13). “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). What is the will of God? It is that we obey His commands; if we suffer through our obedience to His Word, then we are to commit ourselves to Him through the suffering (2 Timothy 3:12). As we do so, we will find the strength to endure: Jesus said, “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mark 13:13). It is only as we gain an eternal perspective on our lives and the troubles therein, that we will discover the patience to endure in the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22 – “longsuffering”).



21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

We have now a third evidence of being filled with the Spirit – subjecting (*submitting*) ourselves to one another.⁴²² Here is the accountability of the Body of Christ. Keeping in mind the *fear of God*, we make ourselves subject to one another. This is a glaring failure within the independent Baptist churches, and is downplayed within all churches, which hold to a clergy/laity form of functioning. Within the independent Baptist economy, the “pastor” is the undisputed authority on all matters; if he says it, then it must be right. There is a passing acknowledgment of the need to examine all leaders, according to Scripture, to determine their faithfulness, but the broader understanding is that you submit to the pastor and walk in obedience to him (and they will abuse Hebrews 13:7 and 17 to support their position⁴²³). However, this is contrary to our verse, which demands a mutual submission among all of the saints. Rather than seeking a mutually beneficial submissiveness, independent Baptist pastors simply exclude those with whom they do not agree so that they will leave. If we believe the thrust of this verse (and we must), then to do other than submit to one another is to demonstrate pride, which is sin, and is contrary to being filled with the Spirit of God. “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). In many cases, I think that it is easier for the *elder* to submit to the *younger*, whether through growing weary of striving, or through intimidation by the youth’s greater learning and/or energy. However, the exhortation is that the younger is to submit to the elder (the novice in life to the veteran), and then the admonition of mutual submission is given. “Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). If we truly believed that we are the Body of Christ, and that “... whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26), we would have less difficulty humbling ourselves and submitting to one another in Christ. As one independent Baptist constitution puts it, the pastor will “carefully use the advice of the deacons and church leaders ...”;⁴²⁴ however, this is

⁴²² Strong’s Online.

⁴²³ The word *rule* in these verses means *to lead*; and the word *obey* is not a blind submission, but rather the result of being persuaded to follow after examination. There is no Biblical concept of submission to someone based solely on their position; rather, this obedience follows obedience to God’s call to test all spirits (1 John 4:1).

⁴²⁴ Constitution and Guidelines of the Emmanuel Baptist Church (1998 edition), p. 10.

not even close to what the Spirit of God is instructing here. The Holy Spirit says that where He is active, there will be submission one to another, without regard for MANufactured positions.

First Peter 2:9 says, “But ye [that believe (from verse 7)] *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” Here is the basis for NOT falling into the clergy/laity distinction: we, who are born again by the Spirit of God, are ALL priests before God, we each bear responsibility to Him. We cannot hide behind the pastor when we stand before God; if he propagates error, then we must hold him accountable so that he will change, or, we must leave. When we stand before God to give an account, “the pastor said it” will not suffice as a reason for believing or doing anything. We love to proclaim that we can individually come to God with our needs (as priests), but we, too often, fail to recognize the fact that we are also individually accountable to God. We criticize the Catholic Church for their practice of placing the priests between God and the people, but, within Evangelicalism, it is evident that the pastor often fills that very same role for the laity. Evangelicals may not go to confession, but neither do they spend time in the Word of God, studying it to learn what God has for them – they depend on a twenty-minute pep talk on Sunday mornings to bring them to spiritual maturity. The failure of this is evident in the deplorable state of modern Evangelicalism: the so-called saints of God looking, by all accounts, identical to the world, which abides under the rule of the Satan. These things ought not to be.

Before the Lord gave Moses His instructions on Mt. Sinai, He asked Moses to declare to the children of Israel: “⁵... if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: ⁶And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). This was never accomplished, for the foundation of obedience never took place. Now we, who are born-again by the Spirit of God through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, are called a “royal priesthood,” and a “holy nation.” However, once again, the contingency upon which this will be made a reality is our obedience to the Word of God. Romans 11 makes it clear that we have been grafted into the root of spiritual Israel, and this is another confirmation of this reality. The promise of God is still the same, and the basis for its fulfillment is still obedience.

Note, from our verse, that this is not a blind mutual submission; it is a submission that is done “in the fear of God.” Herein is the key that keeps this from becoming anarchy; if everyone blindly submitted to everyone else, nothing would be done. We are told that “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*...” (Psalm 111:10). We do not blindly submit to someone because they have an opinion of what we are doing or should do; rather, we measure their comments by the Word of God and evaluate their teaching according to God’s instructions to us. Neither do we blindly submit to someone because of a position that they might hold; therein is the massive error that is being perpetuated among Evangelicals today – they have capitulated their responsibility of measuring what they hear against the Word of God in favor of simply heeding the words of their “pastors,” and “learned theologians.” Although one independent Baptist church rightly acknowledges that, “every believer today is a priest of God and may enter into His presence We all have equal access to God-whether we are a preacher or not,”⁴²⁵ another independent Baptist church has openly declared the more common practice: “The Pastor shall be the executive head of the church and the president of the corporation. He shall have the general oversight of the entire church and shall perform all

⁴²⁵Extract from “Baptist Distinctives” of Bethel Baptist Church, http://www.bethelbaptist.ca/baptist_distinct.htm .

necessary duties relating to such oversight.”⁴²⁶ Once again, it seems that practice has departed from doctrine – the “pastor,” as they love to be called, is still held in excessively high regard and given almost unlimited authority.

In the message of Jesus to the elder of the assembly at Ephesus, He said, “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (Revelation 2:6); to the elder at Pergamos, He said, “¹⁴But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. ¹⁵So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate” (Revelation 2:14-15). In both of these, mention is made of the Nicolaitanes, and it is clear that this group was to be avoided. Names are always of interest in the Word of God – consider Balaam, whose name in the Greek means “perhaps,” and in Hebrew, “not of the people.”⁴²⁷ What an appropriate description of Balaam; his commitment to Balak was always “perhaps I can curse them,” and even though he spoke the words of God, he was not of God’s people. “Balac,” on the other hand, means “devastator or spoiler” in both languages,⁴²⁸ and this is an apt description of his action against Israel. Then we come to the name “Nicolaitanes.” There are those who claim that the Nicolaitanes were followers of Nicolas, one of the seven who were appointed to oversee the needs of the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5), however, this is largely in dispute; it is also claimed that they were those who were lovers of pleasure, and were indifferent to immorality and things sacrificed to idols.⁴²⁹ However, if you read Revelation 2:14-15 carefully, it is clear that those who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes were **in addition to** those who ate things sacrificed to idols and committed fornication. Therefore, we come back to the meaning of the name for insight. It is made up of two words in Greek: *nikos* which means “victory,” or “to utterly vanquish,” and *laos* which means “people.”⁴³⁰ When these are brought together (as they are in this name) it means, destruction of people,⁴³¹ speaking of those who lorded it over or had gained the victory over the common people. Jesus said unto His disciples, “²⁵... Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was in direct contravention of both the words and example of the Lord. Yet what do we find today in most churches? We have the clergy and the laity, the professional religious leaders and the average pew-warmer who is taught to look to the clergy for direction and spiritual understanding. We live in a day when the sin of the Nicolaitanes is rampant throughout Baptist and Evangelical tradition – an inheritance from the Roman Catholic Church, which has perfected the clergy-laity separation through their layers of hierarchy from their pastors (or parish priests) all the way to the Pope. In Jesus’ words, “... it shall not be so among you”; yet it is so among us!

⁴²⁶ Extract from the “Constitution” of Foundation Baptist Church, <http://www.foundationbaptistchurch.com/constitution.html> .

⁴²⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ These were put forward by Iranæus in his “Against Heresies,” Chapter 26.

⁴³⁰ Strong’s Online; <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/nicoltn.html>

⁴³¹ Strong’s Online.

Our verse is a warning to those “pastors” who set themselves (or permit themselves to be set) above those in their assembly simply because of their assumed position, thereby opening themselves to failure through pride – something that God says He will resist or “to range in battle against”⁴³² (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). If someone has proven to be careless in their handling of the Word of God in the past, we would give less heed to their comments; however, if they have proven to have a heart for God and a sincerity of faith, then we would do well to give particular attention to their words and weigh them carefully against God’s Word. This is the precedent to the obedience referred to in Hebrews 13:17, which must never be overlooked. We must continually test all things and everyone, against the principles of Scripture.



22. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*

Having just cited the need for mutual submission, Paul now goes into a section explaining that there are differing roles within marriage, as there are differing roles within the Body of Christ. This does not negate what has just been said about mutual submission, but rather places it within a context – again, to prevent what could deteriorate into anarchy, or at least confusion. We have already noted that the first context is the fear of God, and we must not lose sight of that, as we look further into what lies ahead.

The first earthly relationship with which Paul deals is that of husband and wife, and he begins with the wife. *Submit*, in this case, is from the same Greek word as used in verse 21 when speaking of submitting to one another. However, there is a change in the mood of the term; this time it is in the imperative mood and is a command. The wife is to be under submission to her husband, not anyone else’s husband, and this is to be a submission like unto the Lord. There are two qualifiers to this submission. In the context of mutual submission (from v. 21), one man cannot tell another man’s wife how to conduct herself (he can tell her, but her obligation for submission is to her own husband, not to another man). Ultimately, in any case of submission, it cannot be beyond what would be demanded of her by the Lord; the guiding rule, even with her own husband, is that her submission must be as unto the Lord. Nothing that her husband might require of her can be outside of the guidelines of what the Lord would require.

It is of interest to note that the Scriptures here do not contradict, in any way, God’s pronouncement to Eve: “... thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). It is further reinforcement of the fact that God does not change. What society finds fashionable may change, but God and His Word do not. Feminism in general has sought to undo the decree of God, and to set women and men on an equal basis concerning their roles in society. Although God’s mandate contains nothing that indicates that women are inferior to men, within many cultures that has happened; God’s desire is that there be equality but differing roles. Yet the feminist movement has sought to turn the tables, and, in many cases, they have endeavored to make the woman superior to man, undoubtedly to the joy of Satan. What is sad to note is the infiltration that this thinking has had into the Evangelical mind; the differing roles that God designed for the man and woman have been set aside in an effort to pursue what is expedient, or perhaps what is deemed to be a personal dream. God is not pleased with this, for it shows a failure on the part of both the man and the woman to understand what God’s intent is for each of them.

⁴³² Strong’s Online.



23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Just in case we missed the significance of the wife being submissive to the husband, the thought is restated in terms that would be most offensive to today's feminist: "the husband is the head of the wife." Once again, this has nothing to do with equality or value, but everything to do with the roles that God intended for the man and the woman within the context of marriage. Feminism is defined as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes."⁴³³ The outworking of this theory has taken many forms, but one thing that has remained consistent is its focus on making the man and the woman equal in all situations, with total disregard to any distinction of roles. The fact that there is a thing today called "Christian



Pope John Paul II



Feminism" tells us that the thrust of feminist thinking has entered

the Christian arena. How do Christians get around God's words to Eve that her husband would rule over her? Pope John Paul II said that the "disorder caused by sin has now been

overcome in Christ,"⁴³⁴ thereby casting God's roles within marriage into the *disorder caused by sin*, and setting the feminist agenda within the reach of all Roman Catholics. Within Evangelicalism, we have the "Christians for Biblical Equality" (CBE) movement that declares their belief in the "equality and essential dignity of men and women."⁴³⁵ However, "CBE members are extraordinary advocates for Christ's liberation from human limitations imposed by gender, ethnicity or class,"⁴³⁶ and therein we see the tentacles of the devil's philosophy. The roles that God, as our Creator, has imposed on men and women for their own good and His glory are deemed to be *limitations* that have been imposed by generations of men in leadership. Therefore, although the CBE presents itself as being Christian, they advocate that the Bible when it is "properly interpreted" will yield the fruit of Christian feminism.⁴³⁷

Earlier (4:15-16) we saw the use of the metaphor of the body to illustrate Christ's relationship with His own; Christ is the head and we are His body. Elsewhere in Scripture, we see the same language – both Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18 underscore that Christ is the Head of the assembly of the faithful. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we read, "...the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God." There is an order to what God has designed, and we need to give attention to it. After the pattern of Christ being the

⁴³³ Merriam-Webster Online, "feminism."

⁴³⁴ As quoted in "True Christian Feminism," Richard John Neuhaus, *National Review*, (April 2, 2005), <http://www.nationalreview.com/flashback/flashback200504021648.asp>

⁴³⁵ http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/who_we_are.shtml#statement

⁴³⁶ http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/membership/ind_family.shtml

⁴³⁷ CBE has been endorsed by such men as Tony Campolo (general heretic at large), Gordon Fee (Regent College, Vancouver), Richard Foster (Renovaré – spiritual formation guru), as well as professors at Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Seminary (Walter Kaiser), and those with the Salvation Army, YWAM, and InterVarsity.

Head of the assembly, so the husband is to be head of the wife. Perhaps if the women who object to this delineation of roles could get past the husband being head of the wife, and realize that this is to be in accordance with Christ as Head of the assembly, they would object less to what God has ordained. On the other hand, perhaps it is because they are unwilling to submit to Christ as the Head of the assembly that they, therefore, cannot or refuse see the delineation of roles that have been established by God.

However, the verse goes on to add the reminder that Christ is the Savior of the body. The Greek word used for *savior* means “a savior, deliverer, preserver.”⁴³⁸ We are reminded of Christ’s relationship to the assembly of all of the saints: namely, He is Savior to all who are the faithful ones, those who make up His Body. We have here another clear declaration of Christ being the Head of the Body, the *ekklesia*, and within this context, it is particularly interesting.

In the previous verse (22), wives have been exhorted to live in submission to their husbands as unto the Lord, and now it is declared that the husband is the head of the wife in the same way that Christ is the Head of the assembly, with the reminder that Christ is also its Savior. Therefore, for the husband to fulfill his God-given role to his wife, he must be willing to sacrifice of himself for the preservation of his wife. Listen to God’s pronouncement of punishment upon the man: “¹⁷And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:17-19). The man would have to labor in order to provide food for his helpmeet; it was now going to cost him dearly to make provision for his wife – she, who was now to desire or stretch out after her husband,⁴³⁹ who was to have the rule over her (Genesis 3:16). God’s order for the roles of man and woman within marriage is really quite clear from the very beginning, and that order has been the target of Satan’s attack from the beginning as well. In the sin that took place in the Garden of Eden, Eve was deceived by the smooth talk of Satan, but Adam submitted to his wife and took the forbidden fruit that she offered to him. Today, the roles of husband and wife have been blended to the point where the authority in the home is often assumed by the wife (and, just as frequently, relinquished to the children), provision for the family is most often shared, and then we stand back in amazement at the failure of today’s “Christian” family. The amazement should be that we didn’t realize that failure was destined when we set aside the roles God that had prescribed for the man and the woman. The thrust of Christians for Biblical Equality is not to return to the God-intended roles for the man and woman, but to provide a “Christian” veneer for the worldly elimination of the difference in roles; or, more plainly, they are there to promote Satan’s agenda within the Christian community.



24. *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

⁴³⁸ Vine’s “Savior.”

⁴³⁹ Strong’s Online.

Now we have arrived at a verse that the CBE, and all those who would support its agenda, will not spend a whole lot of time on, for it runs contrary to their philosophy. Since this is so diametrically opposed to modern thinking, permit me to illustrate how this is handled by several modern translations.

New International Version: “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

New Century Version: “As the church yields to Christ, so you wives should yield to your husbands in everything.”

The Message: “So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.”

New American Standard Bible (NASB): “But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

Contemporary English Version: “Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first.”

There is a theme of variance here; did you notice it? The correct translation of the Greek leaves no doubt as to what should take place between the wives and their husbands – there is to be a submission like unto the assembly’s submission to Christ as its Head; however, every translation noted reduces the certainty of this by introducing words such as “should,” or “ought to.” Even the NASB, which is generally considered to be a good translation, albeit from a corrupt Greek text, reduces the thrust of this text to something that is optional. This is evidence that the devil has his finger in the plethora of translations that are hitting the market today – if a passage bothers you, wait a moment for there will soon come a translation to fix that. It is no longer a matter of submitting to the authority of God’s Word; the Word of God has been subjected to the ravages of modern man and twisted, cut, and enhanced to support whatever philosophy is desired. Two tools that the devil has used to accomplish this are the philosophies of modern textual criticism and modern dynamic equivalency translation techniques. The former has resulted in a compromised Greek text that is used by all modern versions of the Scriptures, so even though the NASB, for example, uses a literal method of translation, they use a corrupted text, which can only produce a tainted product. Virtually all other modern translations use the dynamic equivalency method of translation, which simply means that they translate thoughts rather than words (thereby imposing interpretation at the same time), as well as using the corrupted texts for translation (in essence, a double whammy for a much compromised final product). There is no longer any regard for the words of the Word of God.

The first word of our verse has been translated as *therefore* in our KJV, however, the Greek word is actually *but*, or some similar contrasting conjunction.⁴⁴⁰ These are two very different conjunctions; the former implies that what follows is a result of what has come before, whereas the latter establishes a contrast between the two. What has come before? The wives have been called on to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, because the relationship of the husband to the wife is likened to that of Christ and His assembly. By contrast, the metaphor is now set aside, and plain language is used to describe the reality of the relationship of the wife to her husband.

⁴⁴⁰ Strong’s Online.

Young's Literal puts this verse as: "but even as the assembly is subject to Christ, so also *are* the wives to their own husbands in everything." Within God's order, the wife is subject to the husband; when God pronounced His judgment on Eve, one aspect of that pronouncement was that she would be ruled by her husband (Genesis 3:16). Satan has worked in women to make that seem as oppressive as possible, for if he is able to get the woman to throw this admonition off, he has destroyed the home that God desires. As we have seen, all the primary modern translations soften the requirement at this point.

That is not to say that women have not been oppressed by men through the years, for they have. However, what has taken place with the rise of feminist thinking was not a correction of the errors of the past but a general tossing aside of the roles that God had ordained for men and women. Women looked at society and its oppression, and decided that it was due to the patriarchal system; consequently, the required corrective action was to throw the mantel of male domination off. In essence, the error of the men has been replaced by the error of the women – neither is correct. The men failed to recognize the value and equality of women before God, and women have now failed to recognize the roles that God has ordained for each – roles designed by our Creator for our own good. When we throw off the role restrictions, which God has ordained, we do so at our own peril. Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly common for women to occupy roles of leadership within churches today – roles that, by God's Word, are set apart for men only (keep in mind that the clergy/laity distinction is unbiblical as well). This is all justified through the misinterpretation of some Scriptures and the avoidance of others. Once again, the difficult task is to remain balanced.

How is the assembly subject to Christ? Perhaps if we understood this, we would have less difficulty with this admonition, which most modern translations endeavor to downplay. Let's begin with Who Christ is, for if we have a firm understanding of this, then our relationship with Him will be placed into its proper perspective. First of all, Jesus Christ is eternal God. In His discussions with the Jews, Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Because the Jews immediately picked up stones to stone Him, it is clear that they understood the full implications of what He said. Firstly, He clarified that He preceded Abraham, and, secondly, He used the name of God in reference to Himself. When Moses met God at the burning bush, he asked God what name he should use for Him when he went to the children of Israel. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). The literal translation of this phrase from John 8:58 is: "before Abraham came into being, I AM."⁴⁴¹ Jesus clearly identified Himself as being eternal God, and the Jews were prepared to stone Him for doing so.

In Jesus' prayer in John 17 He declares, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (v. 5). This is clear evidence that He was eternally God, and abode in the presence of God the Father. As John began his record of Jesus' ministry, it is no mistake that he wrote, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus is the eternal Word, the *Logos*, Who took on the form of man. John goes on to say, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). The repeated phrase from the Genesis account of creation is, "and God said"; this is none other than the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus, the everlasting *Logos*, bringing all things into existence. The Creator of all things left the glory of

⁴⁴¹ Jay P. Green, Editor, [The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament](#).

heaven to take on the form of man (“the Word was made flesh” John 1:14) so that He might be the fulfillment of the sacrificial system of Israel, and once, for all time, open the way for mankind to be reconciled to God. The Creator of the universe subjected Himself to death on a cross that He might purchase mankind out of the grasp of sin, all in accordance with the plan that had been laid down before He began creation itself (Ephesians 1:4; 3:9,11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).

We have looked briefly at Who Jesus is; now, who makes up the assembly? These are none other than the faithful ones, the saints, those who are actively believing in the Savior to draw them out of the pit of sin. There are no unbelievers in this assembly; all unbelievers are condemned, and remain condemned unless they repent and believe. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Notice that I have placed the faith of the saints in the present tense; this is not something that we can look back on and say, “On this date I accepted Jesus, and now all is okay.” That is not our lot. Hebrews 3:6 says that we are of the house of Christ, “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”; clearly, if we do not hold fast our hope, then we will no longer be of the house of Christ. A few short verses later, we are warned, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). Lest we missed verse six, we are reminded, “...we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14). There is a perseverance that is required of the saint in order to be included in the assembly – unlike modern Evangelicals who promote a pray-a-quick-prayer-for-eternity concept. So, who makes up the assembly? It is made up of the saints of God who are persevering in their walk of faith. Today there is a modern application of the “Yea, hath God said?” used by the devil on Eve (Genesis 3:1). Herein lies the great deception of Satan: modern churches are filled with those who think that they are on their way to heaven, when, in reality, they have only swallowed the lie of Satan that their eternal destiny in heaven is secured by pointing back to a day when they prayed a little prayer. Unless we hold fast to the faith of Christ, we are fallen away. Today, churches are filled with four kinds of people: 1) those who are living an active faith in Christ and are grieved by the apostasy around them, 2) those who once held a living faith but no longer hold it fast, and are at some stage of apostasy, 3) those who have prayed a little prayer and think that they’re on their way to heaven, and 4) those who make no pretense of faith in Christ but attend because it is expedient or expected of them. To the first group the Scriptures say, “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). The second group is falling prey to the lies of apostasy, and are challenged to “hold fast, and repent” (Revelation 3:3); the latter two are unbelievers, some deceived by modern rhetoric and some aware of their destiny, but unconcerned.

Let us return to our question: how is the assembly subject to Christ? Based on what we have just looked at, let’s expand the question and perhaps the answer will become obvious. How are those who are living an active faith in our eternal Creator and Savior subject to Him? The obvious answer is that we are subject to Christ in all things, and our desire is to walk in accordance with His Word to us; He is our provider of all things that we need, our Head; there is a complete dependency upon Him to supply all things (Philippians 4:19). As we have learned so far in Ephesians, we, as saints of God, are “in Christ.” We have been called unto holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16), and we are charged to “walk worthy of the vocation” wherewith we are called (Ephesians 4:1); we are to have put off our former ways, and “put on the new man, which after God is created

in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24), therefore, it is only fitting that our lives must be permanently changed. “...if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The saints of God are totally dependent upon Him, for it is only while we are *in Christ* that all things are new. It is only as we abide in Him that we have the life-giving supply that we need (John 15:4-5). After this manner, wives are to be subject to their own husbands. However, lest we panic at this, the Spirit of God did not stop here.



25. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

The focus now shifts to the responsibility of the husband. Whereas the wives are told that their submission to their husbands is to be like unto the assembly’s submission to Christ (a command), the husbands receive a direct command of a very different nature. What we cannot miss, if we are open to the Spirit of God, is that the roles of men and women are not the same; no matter what logic or rationalization that the feminists use, God does not deal with the roles of men and women interchangeably. The feminists see red when they hear the admonition to submit to their husbands, yet if they would permit the Spirit of God to open their understanding of what follows for the husbands, perhaps their ire would abate.

One might think that after reading of the command to the wives to submit to their husbands after the pattern of the assembly submitting to Christ, that now we would read of how the husbands are to rule over their wives, but that is not the case. The relationship that God planned for the husband and wife is not simply rule-and-be-ruled. After God created Adam, He said, “*It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). From the moment of creation, woman was made to be a help to man, to be alongside – not as one inferior, but someone who would be a companion and helper. Even within the perfection of the Garden of Eden, the man and the woman filled differing roles; however, with the advent of sin, there would come new tensions within these roles. To Eve, God said, “thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). What does this mean? Consider a very similar phrasing: “⁶And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Genesis 4:6-7). The word *desire* means “desire, longing, craving,” and expresses a very strong feeling; *rule* means “to rule, have dominion, reign.”⁴⁴² Here God has personified sin so that Cain will understand his situation: sin “lieth at the door,” sin shall desire you, and you are to rule over sin. God had already made provision for the covering of sin (Abel recognized this and prepared his sacrifice accordingly), but it required a submission to the authority of God. Cain refused, and his sin of anger at his brother’s righteousness led him to murder – Cain did not rule over sin, sin had dominion over Cain. It is interesting to consider the “Christian” feminist movement whose goal is to raise the lot of women within Christianity (through ordination and positions of leadership), within marriage (by removing any role differences, to make room for the pursuit of personal goals and a career), and within the assembly (through removing all restrictions on a woman’s involvement). Their goals stand in stark contrast to the Word of God, and, like Cain, they are refusing to submit to the instructions of God

⁴⁴² Strong’s Online.

(let alone submitting to their husbands). Here is a branch of feminism that is seeking to work within Christian circles to accomplish the overthrow of what God has ordained as the roles for women and men, and they are making great strides in attaining their goals.

The woman was created as a helper to the man, yet, in the transgression, she took on the leading role, and man submitted to her; sin entered the world through a reversal of the roles that God had established. Under God's judgment, the woman's role is reiterated, clarified, and pronounced for all to hear: her husband was to rule over her. However, God's judgment on man says nothing about his rule over the woman; what is clear is that, because he submitted to the woman in the transgression, the ground would no longer yield its produce in abundance, but, through toil and sweat, he would have to labor in order to sustain life for himself and for his helper (man is the provider within God's economy – Genesis 3:17-19). Man was never told that he was to rule over the woman – she was to continue to be his helpmeet; the woman, because of the role that she took in the transgression, was to submit to the man. Mankind's perception of God's desire for the husband and wife has become very blurred through the ages; there have been times when man regarded the woman as mere chattel – a slave to do his bidding, and times, like today, when men are often regarded by women as unnecessary. Both of these are a desecration of what God desires for us – cases where the pendulum has swung too far in either direction.

The command of God to the husbands is very simple, yet incredibly profound: love your wives! It would have been weighty if the Spirit of God had stopped there, but, without pause, the admonition goes on to cite the example of Christ and the *ekklesia* once again. However, this time the perspective is a closer look at what Christ has done for this assembly of faithful ones. The husband is to love his wife just as Christ loves the *ekklesia*, and gave Himself for it. Again, we see the role of provider placed upon the husband, but that is incidental to the sacrifice that Christ made for the assembly – a pattern that is laid out for the husbands to follow in their relationship with their wives.

How did Christ love the *ekklesia*? Our verse says, He *gave himself for it*; He handed Himself over in order to pay the price for sin. Jesus said, "...No man taketh it [My life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). When Jesus was on the cross, He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46); He did not succumb to the natural progression of death on the cross (which could take up to several days⁴⁴³) – He laid His life down. Christ **gave** His life for the assembly.

Lest the Calvinists take this phrase as proof that Jesus died only for the elect, and not for the sins of the whole world, we must briefly look at the bigger picture. Before the world was created, it was established that the eternal Word would come to this creation as Jesus, born by God of woman, to make a perfect and final payment for the sins of lost mankind (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20). When man sinned, God immediately covered their sin with coats made of animal skin; through shed blood, provision was made for man to be reconciled to God – a foreshadowing of the ultimate reconciliation that was accomplished by Christ on the cross. The ability to choose is an inherent part of man being created in the image of God; even as sinless man chose to sin, so sinful man has always had the ability to choose God's provision to cover his sin. The first two children of Adam and Eve understood this clearly, and Abel's obedience to God's requirements cost him

⁴⁴³ Wikipedia, "crucifixion."

his life at the hands of his jealous and angry brother, Cain. God's desire was not for a people who would love Him because they have no other choice, but rather a people who would choose to love Him because of the cleansing that He has made available for them, realizing that they were created to have fellowship with Him. Abel chose to accept God's provision (through the example of the shedding of blood), and his sacrifice was acceptable to God; Cain likewise chose, but determined to do things his way (after the pattern of the coverings of fig leaves), and experienced rejection by God. God's provision for the covering of sin was open to both Cain and Abel – the choice was theirs; yet God held Cain responsible for making the wrong choice. We read in John 3:16 that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son as the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of this fallen world. From Adam and Eve through to the death of Christ on the cross, God's provision for the covering of sins was open and available to any who would choose to accept it; from Christ's sacrifice forward, the payment for the sins of the world is complete, and it, too, remains open to any who would choose to accept it.

The reason that the focus of this verse is on the assembly of faithful ones, is that Paul is providing instruction on the relationship that the husband is to have with his wife, his chosen one. The full infusion of Christ's blessings are not rained down upon all of mankind, but are available only to His faithful ones, to those who are the chosen *in Christ*; likewise, the relationship of the husband to his wife is exemplified in Christ's relationship with the assembly, and not with the world. From the very beginning, it was established that "a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This instruction comes on the heels of the description of how God created the woman for the man, and Adam's declaration, "This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). There is a leaving and a cleaving involved in the marriage relationship; both are the responsibility of the husband. To cleave means to "cling closely, steadfastly, or faithfully to ... someone."⁴⁴⁴ The husband is to provide security for the wife in their relationship; the wife is to have no reason for doubting her husband's enduring commitment to her as his wife. The husbands are commanded to love their wives and the wives' are admonished to submit to their husbands – as these two commands come together, there will be a strong bond that will hold the relationship steady through life's storms. After the pattern of Christ loving the faithful and giving of Himself to them, so the husband is to love his wife and give himself to her. The toil and sweat required to provide for his wife will seem as nothing to the man – for he loves her. We see this in the life of Jacob: "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her" (Genesis 29:20). There are God-established roles within the marriage relationship; as we begin to understand the significance of the parallel to Christ's relationship with His faithful ones, it becomes increasingly evident that we cannot, we must not mess with what God has ordained. Today, the almost understood obligation of the wife to have a job and work to help the husband support the family undermines all of this. The husband no longer has to give himself to provide for his wife – she has her own job and is quite independent. This has been a subtle shift in thinking that has been the work of the devil; what better way to destroy the family than to raise havoc with the roles that God has ordained. We have seen God's desire for the husband-wife bond, and we need to be very careful of the excuses that we use to tamper with it. The feminist agenda, whether "Christian" or not, strikes at the very foundation of this relationship.

⁴⁴⁴ Encarta Dictionary, "cleave."

The love that Christ has for the assembly of saints is not without purpose, and that purpose is explained now (keeping in mind the application of the metaphor to the marriage relationship).



26. *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

Here are two things that Christ purposes for his assembly: sanctification and cleansing. The root of the Greek word translated as *sanctify* is *holy*. Therein is the essence of sanctification – it means to set apart as holy, “to separate from profane things and dedicate to God.”⁴⁴⁵ In beginning this letter to the Ephesians, Paul referred to them as “the **saints** which are at Ephesus.” The word *saint* carries that same root of holiness, which, in turn, carries with it the thought of separation. Notice Strong’s definition of sanctification: it involves a separation *from* sinful things, and a separation *to* God. Although the concept of sanctification may be spoken of within Evangelical circles today, it is not defined as precisely as it ought to be, despite the fact that we are called by God to walk *circumspectly*, or with precision (Ephesians 5:15). Yes, we are separated unto God, but we are also to be separated from the world, from heresy and error, and from fellow believers who refuse to separate from the world and/or error. The call to separation is just as clear as the call to holiness, for they are really one; sanctification is both, for we cannot be holy unless we are Biblically separated. Those who refuse separation are already living in disobedience to God, and are numbered among those who are falling away, unless they awaken from their sleep (Ephesians 5:14). As we have seen, New Evangelicalism deliberately set Biblical separation aside at their inception, and that exclusion is very deeply entrenched in today’s Evangelical mind.

As we know, Christ gave His life for the sins of humanity, and so He is the only Savior for all of mankind. However, even though He is the only means of cleansing from sin for the whole world (1 John 2:2), for those who are His through faith, He has a much more specific vision. It is not only salvation from sins, His reason for saving them is so that they will also be *sanctified* and *cleansed*. The word *sanctify* (*hagiazō*), although it is in the subjunctive mood, provides the reason that Christ *gave Himself* for the *ekklesia*; as part of a purpose clause, it no longer presents a possibility, but an actuality (like the indicative mood).⁴⁴⁶ We must be careful to understand this correctly: Christ did not give Himself so that the *ekklesia* **might** be separated unto Him, He gave Himself so that His *ekklesia* **will** be holy (Ephesians 4:24); His *ekklesia* **is** holy (separated from the world and evil) – this is without question! Therefore, if our pattern for living is not in holiness and separation from all that is not of Christ, then we must understand that we are **not** a part of His *ekklesia*. “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love [*might be loving*] the world, the love of the Father **is not** in him” (1 John 2:15);⁴⁴⁷ someone who has a love for the world (that which is not *of Christ*) means that God’s love is not present in him. Jesus said that if we do not bear fruit in keeping with abiding in Him (the Vine), then we will be removed (John 15:2). As we bring all of this together, we must recognize two things: 1) Christ gave Himself so that we will be holy before Him, and 2) He will not force us to accept His holiness, but we must understand that to do so is to isolate ourselves from Him! He has commanded us to separate ourselves from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14ff), from error (Romans 16:17-18) and from those who refuse to separate from error (2 Thessalonians 3:6), yet we are able to refuse to do so – we

⁴⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁴⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁴⁴⁷ Strong’s Online.

can live in disobedience to God’s commands! The proof of this is rampant among Evangelicals, who claim to be destined for heaven; many cling to the world’s ways: its music, its entertainment, its philosophies, its learning – they refuse to separate themselves from it. However, by doing so, they find themselves outside of the Father’s love and becoming one with the world; that is not sanctification, but desecration. Many seek to build bridges to those who propagate error, only to find themselves becoming party to the same error; that is not sanctification, but capitulation. Others refuse to part company with those who call themselves Christians and engage in the forbidden practice of bridge-building; this is not sanctification, but disobedience. They profess to be Christians, yet remain ensnared in the devil’s web of deception. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ...” (Romans 1:22). Christ’s love for His assembly (*ekklesia*), and the fact that He died so that they might have holiness of life, does not make sanctification a certainty. The resources are in place to make it happen, but we, to our own spiritual peril, can refuse.

Cleanse is a word that is akin to *purge*, and means to make clean or to purify.⁴⁴⁸ Christ will accomplish this cleansing by the “washing of water by the word.” This is a difficult phrase. *Word* does not specifically refer to the written Word of God, but to a declaration or spoken word. *Washing* is actually a noun, and comes from the Greek word for *a laver* or *a bath*.⁴⁴⁹ Exodus 30:17-21 outlines the significant use of the laver and the water for purification by the priests of Israel. Perhaps Paul is using a word picture that harkens back to the ceremonial cleansing that the priests were required to go through each time they approached the tabernacle. First Peter 1:25 says, “the word of the Lord endureth forever;” this is the same “word” as used in our passage. Peter goes on to state, “And this is the word which by the gospel is preached [or, which is the good news declared] unto you” (1 Peter 1:25). The words of Scripture are there for our cleansing; as we hear or read them, they become to us the purifying waters like unto that used by the priests as they entered the tabernacle. This is significant; the audible Word of God is not without impact: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). With the banishment of the Bible from the educational classroom, there has come a corresponding decline in the moral consciousness of society. As we have rationalized its removal under the banner of separation of church and state, perhaps we have also witnessed the removal of the cleansing influence of God’s Word within society.



27. *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

There is a purpose for Christ’s sanctifying and cleansing work within the assembly, and He will accomplish what He desires to do! His goal is to present it to Himself a glorious assembly. The word *present* means to “place beside,”⁴⁵⁰ and provides us with a glimpse of where the assembly will be in relation to the Lord – we will be beside Him. *Glorious* speaks of a splendor that would be attributable to the majesty of God, and, therefore, must refer to its Provider when it is used to speak of the gathering of the saints. If we permit the Lord to work in us, to accomplish His sanctifying and cleansing work, then we will be clothed with the purity of the Lord (Revelation

⁴⁴⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁴⁹ Vine’s “washing.”

⁴⁵⁰ Vine’s “present.”

3:5; 7:9). Even as Adam and Eve were clothed with garments from God (Genesis 3:21), so we must clothe ourselves in the Lord’s purity and holiness – the “new man” of Ephesians 4:24.

The faithful ones will be without *spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. There will be no stain or wrinkle, nothing that would indicate anything other than perfect purity; God’s desire is for the assembly to be holy and without blemish. The lamb, within the sacrificial system of Israel, had to be perfect in order to be acceptable to God. It had to be without blemish for it was to take on the sins of the people so that they might be made whole before God – a foreshadowing of Jesus, Who, as the sinless, perfect Lamb of God, took on the sins of the world, so that through faith in His sacrifice, we might be made whole before God. Christ’s desire is to sanctify and cleanse us so that we might be pure and holy, fit for eternity with Him. The purpose of the shed blood, both within the sacrificial system and in its culmination in Jesus Christ, is so that the subjects of salvation might be made acceptable before God; there is to be a cleansing from sin, a purification of life. God has not changed – He still requires cleansing and purification, which can only come through faith in the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ.

Today there is a carelessness, a recklessness, an arrogantly casual attitude toward God and matters of spiritual concern. Israel was judged for their careless living, and even so will the judgment of God come upon modern Evangelicals – they proclaim a form of godliness, but there is no change of life. Psalm 111:10 reads, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments* . . .” Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.” Look at these two verses. They both affirm (as do other passages) that the *fear of the Lord* is the foundation for wisdom; rather than learning a proper reverence or fear for the Lord, today we are taught that Jesus is our Buddy, our tolerant Friend Who is happy when we are happy – Someone Whom we can add to our lives, but Who would not deny us anything that we might want. Yet here we see that a *good understanding* comes through obedience to the commands of the Lord (Psalm 111:10); and Proverbs tells us that *understanding* is a knowledge of the Lord. As we bring these two parallel verses together, we see the common foundation of the fear of the Lord, followed by obedience to Him, which will yield a knowledge of God. Israel’s failure, and ours, is that they had the rituals down pat, but personal obedience to the commandments of God never entered their thinking (Judges 2:7-19). Israel followed Jehovah as long as they had a godly leader, but individually they failed to make Jehovah their Lord; consequently, when the leader was gone, they fell apart, for they, individually, had no relationship with the Lord. We must not fail to recognize that God has always dealt with individuals. We’ve seen this with Cain and Abel; the sacrificial system, implemented by God through Moses, dealt with the individual. Today we love the routine of “church,” but what most people fail to recognize is God’s **personal** call to purity, to sanctification through the working of His Spirit. We are individually accountable to God; the branches, which abide in the Vine, are individuals (John 15:6), and the crux of meeting God’s approval rests on our obedience to His commands (cp. Matthew 7:14 [the narrow way for the few] and 21 [only the obedient will be admitted to the kingdom of heaven]).

It is worthy of noting that the first step that Christ takes with the faithful is toward our sanctification: our separation **from** the world, from error and from those who mix with error, and our separation **unto** God. When New Evangelicalism determined to repudiate separation, they set their faces against God and His desire for us; by declaring their refusal to separate from error, they immediately curtailed God’s sanctifying work in their lives. The present-day state of Evangelicals

(with their worldliness, their compromise with error, and their accommodation of those who propagate error) is the legacy of those who laid down the first plank of this movement. Biblical separation is the essence of purity before God; without separation, there is no purity, no holiness, and no obedience to His Word. There is no sanctification without separation.

Christ's purpose for the assembly of the faithful is that He might make them holy, that they would be a Body of cleansed and spotless perfection; the husband's love for his wife is to follow this pattern. The husband must give himself for his wife; he is called to leave and to cleave. Jesus left the glories of heaven to pay the price for sin once for all time, and, for all who will heed His call, He is eternally committed to bringing them into His glory. The husband is to ever seek the best for his wife; he is to be the provider of all things necessary for her wellbeing, after the pattern of Christ, Who is the Provider of all things necessary for the sanctification and purification of the saints (1 Corinthians 11:3). The prerequisite for the husband to fill the role adequately is to have a secure and living relationship with Christ, for as this spiritual relationship flourishes, he will have the resources necessary to fulfill his responsibilities to his wife. If the husband fulfills his responsibility adequately, the wife will have little problem with submitting to his leadership role within the marriage. Feminism, generally speaking, is the result of sin, and men and women not fulfilling their roles that God has ordained; when it rears its ugly head within Evangelicalism, it is no different – it is still sin. Could it have begun with the rejection of separation and holiness before God? Perhaps, but one thing is sure: we will never grow in our understanding of the Lord without first embracing Biblical separation – the essence of which is our purity and holiness before God, our sanctification. God's call to separation flows out of His holiness; our obedience to His call will lead to our sanctification.



28. *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*

So is a connecting word that could also be translated as *thus* or *in this manner*,⁴⁵¹ and it ties what follows to what has just come before. Our use of the word *ought* has been reduced to an equivalent of *should*, carrying the idea that it would be good, but certainly not obligatory to do something. However, the Greek word that is used here and translated as *ought* means “to owe.”⁴⁵² The Old English primary meaning of *ought* is “to be held or bound in duty or moral obligation”;⁴⁵³ and even a modern dictionary shows its primary meaning as “a duty or obligation to do something.”⁴⁵⁴ Perhaps I am the only one who's degraded the proper understanding of *ought*, but there is very clearly more than a casual responsibility indicated by the use of this word – we, as husbands, are in debt to love our wives as our own bodies. To whom is this debt owed? To Christ! In Ephesians 4:12, the saints are referred to as the Body of Christ, and in 4:15-16 the metaphor of the body is used to illustrate Christ as our Head and our interconnectedness with Him. In 5:25, we are told that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves His faithful ones, His saints, His Body. Herein is our obligation as husbands – our pattern for loving our wives is to be Christ and His love

⁴⁵¹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁵² Vine's "ought."

⁴⁵³ American Dictionary of the English Language (1828 ed.), "ought."

⁴⁵⁴ Encarta Dictionary, "ought."

for those who are His; therefore, we are under obligation to Christ, in obedience to the command of Scripture, to love our wives as our own bodies, even as Christ loves us, His Body.

Now, lest wives fear that their husbands will only love them because God has commanded it, there are a few additional things to keep in mind. If our pattern is to be Christ's love for the saints, then this love will flow from the very heart of God, and will come from our desire for the best for our wives. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Our obedience to God places us in His love. Even as the husband loves his wife in obedience to the command of God, this command of God is not burdensome – it's not a heavy weight to bear; not only that, but it opens us to the love of God! Jacob served Laban an additional seven years for Rachel, yet they seemed to him but "a few days" (Genesis 29:20). Jacob served Laban out of obligation or debt, but because of his love for Rachel, fulfilling the obligation was not grievous. As we (husbands) endeavor to love our wives after the pattern of Christ, we will then find that Christ will infuse us with His love so that we will love our wives "as Christ also loved the church."

Now we come to this summarizing statement: *He that loveth his wife loveth himself*. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This is the mystery of marriage that speaks of Christ and His Bride, the faithful saints of all ages; there is a mysterious individuality, yet a oneness. As we start to understand the depths of the spiritual picture of marriage, we can see why the Christian marriage bond is such a target for Satan. Here on earth, it is a picture of the relationship that Christ has with His saints: a bane to Satan, and a target worthy of his best efforts. Marriage will never be a perfect reflection of its divine model, for we are still sinful creatures, yet we live in a day when the rate of divorce among professing Christians has matched that of the world at large. Undoubtedly, this is due to a failure to recognize the roles that God has ordained for marriage, a failure to cultivate a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and a failure to comprehend the spiritual significance of the marriage bond as being patterned after Christ's relationship with the assembly of saints. With the increasingly shallow spirituality held by Evangelicals has come an increasingly worldly view of life; the example of Jack van Impe makes it clear that we are living in a day of apostasy, and that of Robert Schuller shows us that professing Christians are often totally ignorant of the Bible to which they claim to hold.

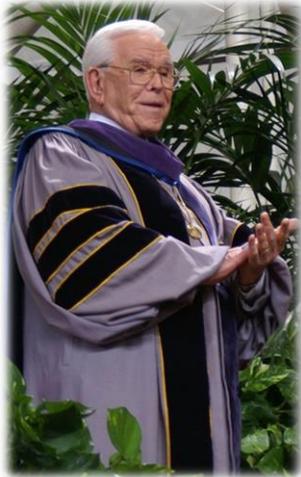
Jack van Impe: He once warned against Billy Graham, but now upholds him as the one who taught us how to love; he now embraces the Roman Catholic Church and calls John Paul II a defender of the faith. "Much of his life was spent as a fierce proponent of the fundamentalist Biblical doctrine of Biblical separation. This teaching is that we, as a church, are to be removed from those individuals who promote doctrinal error. However in late 1970s Van Impe made a shift towards the inclusiveness of Ecumenism and Evangelism. His break with the fundamental church came in 1984 with the publication of *Heart Disease in Christ's Body*. In it, he disapproves of the lack of love and unity among so many Christians. His remedy for this was for the relaxing of the fundamentalist definition of a Christian. He called for the acceptance as a 'true Christian' of anyone who believed in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the Deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Substitutionary atonement, and the physical resurrection of Christ and His personal,



Jack van Impe

bodily return to earth. Furthermore, he sought to redefine the very concept of Biblical separation. In his new formulation, anyone who disagreed that the conditions above fully defined a ‘true Christian’ was himself in doctrinal error and thus subject to isolation [all errors in the original].”⁴⁵⁵ Jack has made a 180° turn to embrace that from which he had once separated himself. Has the Bible changed? No, but Jack has, and he now applauds Catholicism with the same vigor that he once used to warn against it. Has he forgotten Paul’s warnings to the Galatians?

Robert Schuller: This is the man who has exercised tremendous influence on the work of Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. “What do I mean by sin? Answer: Any human condition or act that



Robert H. Schuller

robs God of glory by stripping one of his children of their right to divine dignity. I could offer another complementing answer, ‘Sin is that deep lack of trust that separates me from God and leaves me with a sense of shame and unworthiness.’ I can offer still another answer, ‘Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem’” [all grammatical errors are in the original].”⁴⁵⁶ He has openly declared, “I don’t think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.”⁴⁵⁷ Could there be anything further from Biblical truth? Yet Schuller remains popular among Evangelicals today even while holding to doctrine that is a total aberration of the Scriptures.

This part of our verse might seem to be a bit of an anomaly in our day of increasing self-focus; we might recall Paul’s words to Timothy concerning the end of the age when men would be “lovers of their own selves” (2 Timothy 3:2). You will notice that the husband loves himself by loving his wife, which is a far cry from someone who is self-absorbed – so characteristic of today and the last days.



29. *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

We read here that no one to this point in time has ever hated his own body. Perhaps the ascetics come close, but even they deny their bodies for a purpose, and unless they preserve life, their lives of self-denial would cease. The Greek root of the word *nourish* is to feed or to bring up to maturity, and *cherish* is to warm – both normal activities that we do every day to maintain our bodies, and this is only right and proper.⁴⁵⁸ In keeping with the Lord looking after His Body by providing spiritual sustenance and protection from the cold blasts of evil, so we attend to the needs of our bodies.

⁴⁵⁵ <http://www.biblicist.org/bible/vanimpe.shtml>

⁴⁵⁶ Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, p. 14.

⁴⁵⁷ <http://letusreason.org/Curren13.htm>.

⁴⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.

Within the context of this passage, it is clear that the husband is to be the provider for his helpmeet – nothing has changed from the creation of Adam and Eve through to this day. Once again, we are reminded that God is the same yesterday, today and forever – He is without change. The husband is to provide the food and support, and the warmth necessary to meet the needs of his wife. Unfortunately, in our day of personal independence, this relationship, as designed by our Creator, has been virtually discarded. We even hear of cases where the roles are completely reversed, not of necessity, but by choice – the woman becomes the provider, and the man the nurturer and, in essence, the helpmeet to the woman. We hear of this most often when the wife can bring in a larger income than the husband, and rather than making do with the husband’s income, they reverse the roles for a more affluent lifestyle. Rationalism, pragmatism, and expediency are the by-words of today’s citizen, and professing Christians are not far behind. The truth is that the marriage relationship is to be a picture of Christ and His faithful ones; yet, without hesitation, the roles within marriage are reversed with no consideration given to God’s designed desire for marriage. The husband is to provide for his wife (his body) in the same way that Christ provides for His called-out ones, His Body.



30. *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*

As living saints of God, we are members of Christ’s body – we have seen this in Ephesians 1:22-23 and 4:12-16, where Christ is called the Head, and we His Body. First Corinthians 12:12-27 goes into detail on how we are all a part of the Body. There are various metaphors used throughout Scripture to describe this vital relationship. Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches” (John 15:5), again a description of intimate connection. Our verse includes “of his flesh, and of his bones,” perhaps harkening back to Adam’s declaration when he saw Eve: “This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh ...” (Genesis 2:23); or, perhaps this is in keeping with the Lord’s words to His disciples after His resurrection: “...a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). There is an emphasis here on the vital relationship between Christ and His faithful saints.



31. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

We have here a reiteration of Genesis 2:24, except now there is a much more significant context for this instruction. In Genesis, God created a helpmeet for Adam, and the husband/wife bond was to be unique. Our passage says that they will be “joined” – the word, in Greek, is in an intensive form meaning to “glue or cement together.”⁴⁵⁹ There is a permanency to this that is not given much consideration today; divorce, even among Christians, has become an accepted part of life, and the rationalism for divorce knows no bounds. However, Jesus made it very clear that this was not the way that it should be. When the Pharisees queried Him: “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” – Jesus had a response that inevitably cut through their traditions, even as it does ours today (Matthew 19:3-9). Notice that the Pharisees’ question is not unlike the “no fault divorce” of today, where just cause is no longer required. Jesus’ response included this

⁴⁵⁹ Vine’s “join.”

bold statement: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). Indeed, marriage is not to be entered into lightly, for the man and woman, who are united in marriage, are united by God, and no man is to separate those who are so united (this is a command!). The Pharisees misrepresented Moses by saying that he **commanded** a divorce be written and the woman put away; clearly, their traditions had gone well beyond the original instruction. Jesus clarified for them that it was due to the hardness of the hearts of Israel that **permission** was given for a bill of divorcement, but this was not how it was from the beginning – in other words, this was not how God had designed marriage. The original intent of marriage did not include provision for breaking the bond that God had ordained.

If we grasp the God-designed intent for the marriage relationship, then it is easier to see that divorce is a desecration of this model. Out of two, God creates one. In Romans 11:17, Paul explains the grafting that God does to bring us into the righteousness and holiness of the Root, that we might be branches that are abiding in the Vine, Jesus Christ (John 15:4). The reality is that as we abide in the Vine, we are in unity or oneness with Christ and God, the Father, through the abiding Holy Spirit (John 17:21). We are joined with a glue that will withstand any outside assault; what we need to guard against is a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). Interestingly, it was the hardness of heart of the people of Israel that led Moses to provide them with guidelines for divorce, and, for the same reason, we can depart from the living God. From the beginning, no provision was made for divorce, for that was not God’s desire for mankind; likewise, it is God’s desire that we hold fast our confidence unto the end so that we not depart from Him (Hebrews 3:6). However, because man was created with a will to choose, divorce was permitted, and because of that will to choose, all of the provisions that God has made to protect the Vine-branch relationship can be set aside by the wayward, unbelieving heart of man.

Recognizing the God-designed relationship within marriage, and that it was through the hardness of man’s heart that divorce was permitted, let’s take a brief look at the Biblical attitude toward divorce. Jesus, in Matthew 19:9 says, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” We have a clause with the modifying phrase *except it be for fornication*. If we remove the phrase and consider the import of the statement made, it is this: if someone divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery. If we now reinsert the noted phrase, we appear to have a situation that if the wife commits fornication (any sexual sin) then this is the one time when it is permitted to divorce her and remarry without bearing the guilt of adultery. However, we must also allow Scripture to interpret itself.

1. If we consider Deuteronomy 24:1 (where the principle of divorce is laid down), it is clear that the permission for divorce is given when a man takes his wife to himself and finds in her some “uncleanness” (of a sexual nature); it seems that this would be a preexisting condition, something with which she came into the marriage. Keep in mind that during the betrothal period in the Jewish custom, the man and woman are considered to be married, and the betrothal can only be broken by divorce. This is not a case of, after 10 years of marriage, he’s tired of her and decides to divorce her because she was unfaithful before they were married; nor does it mean that he can divorce her for any petty excuse when they come together, as the Pharisees had come to practice and as we see today. Additionally, we must keep in mind that the Hebrew does not have Deuteronomy 24:1 as a complete thought, but rather the

sentence continues on through verse four. The more complete thought is that if a husband finds some “uncleanness” in his new wife, he may immediately divorce her; however, if another marries her and then divorces her, or even if her second husband dies, her first husband is not permitted to take her again as his wife. There is a warning here to not be hasty in drawing up a divorce, lest, after the divorce, regret sets in.

So, adding the context and warning of Deuteronomy 24:1 to Jesus’ words, it would seem that the exception of divorce for fornication must be for something that was preexistent to the marriage, and this divorce would not be permitted to take place years after the marriage. In other words, the husband cannot use his wife’s previous sexual failures as a threat over her until he is finally tired of her, and then use it as the basis for divorce years later; nor is he to use her failure during their marriage as an excuse for divorce.

2. Another approach to this “exception” clause in Matthew 19:9 is 1 Corinthians 6:16. If the wife was guilty of fornication before marriage, then based on this text she was already one with the other man. Therefore, the husband, who takes a wife who already was made one with another man, is automatically guilty of adultery before God; in which case, he would not have to remarry in order to be guilty of adultery.

The last statement (Matthew 5:32; repeated in Matthew 19:9) makes it clear that anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. The word *adultery* means, “to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife,” or, more generally, another’s spouse.⁴⁶⁰ We might question how this could be considered as unlawful, since they are married to each other. It is clear that when God said that a man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will be one flesh, He meant just that – they are one flesh. Divorce does not nullify what God declares to have taken place. Mark’s Gospel carries a comment that Jesus makes on this subject: “⁸And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. ⁹What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:8-9; repeated in Matthew 19:6). It is absolutely clear that the two are made one, and Jesus ends with a command that what God has yoked together, let no one divide. Therefore, in God’s eyes, marriage is for life – only death can sever the obligation to the other person. Romans 7:2-3: “²For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” Death is the only release from marriage.

Just in case we missed it, or rationalization sets in, Jesus explained the matter further to His disciples: “¹¹... Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. ¹²And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:11-12). The same principle applies to both men and women: marriage is for life. God’s intent is to preserve the marriage relationship, but just as clearly, we realize that Christians today are destroying their marriages.

⁴⁶⁰ Strong’s Online.

If we hold in our minds for a moment the marriage relationship as being a metaphor for Christ's relationship with us, His faithful ones, and realize that marriage within God's economy is not to be broken, then we have a picture of the security that we have in Christ. However, even as we recognize the reality of divorce within the Christian community, we must also accept the reality of possibly turning our backs on Christ and being joined to another spiritually (i.e., committing spiritual adultery, namely, apostasy). A falling away is possible; we are fully protected from outside attack, but we must guard against an "evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:12). We read in Hebrews 6:4-6: "4For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame." This is in keeping with the principle of divorce as it is laid out in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 – after falling away and being joined to another, there is no returning. Second Peter 2:20-21 reiterates this thought; Romans 11:20-21 warns the grafted branches against being "high-minded" lest they be cut off as well.



32. *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

Indeed, there is great mystery in the relationship that Christ has with His assembly of saints, even as there is much mystery in the marriage bond. The Creator of marriage has made it much more than we will know on this earth – it has been patterned after the greatest relationship of all time. We have seen God's design for marriage, its life-long endurance, and the unbreakable bond that God determined should characterize it.

Genesis 2:24 states that the man "shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh;" what mystery is contained in this eternal statement! Jesus reiterated this by declaring "a man [shall] leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:5). There is no room here for polygamy, as practiced in OT times and in some cultures today; the word is *wife* (singular), and it is of the two that God makes one. Jesus is not preparing numerous brides – only one. Neither is there room for polyandry (having more than one husband); there are only two whom God makes into one. Spiritually, we see much polyandry taking place within Evangelicalism; by simply adding Jesus to their lives without any repentance, Evangelicals are in essence saying that they can be married to the world and to Jesus at the same time. Through a careless handling of the Word of God, and a neglect of obedience (disobedience) to God's instructions, Evangelicals have created a message that fails to support the metaphor of our passage. God is not fooled by their arrogance, nor is He impressed with their intellectual acumen; in fact, He plainly warns us about being deceived by those who create great and wonderful philosophies (Colossians 2:8).

We read in Ephesians 5:27 that Christ is preparing for Himself a "glorious church" without spot, "holy and without blemish." If we, with repentance, claim His sacrifice as payment for our debt of sin, then we are part of that glorious, holy assembly of saints. What greater reason can there be than this to separate from all things that are contrary to God's commands? Biblical separation flows out of the holiness of God, and since we are to be holy and without blemish before Him, it is clearly our responsibility to separate ourselves from anything that would stain us, and to walk worthy of the calling that we have from God. Discernment and Biblical separation (from the

world, from error of all sorts, and from those who profess Christianity but walk in error) is to be common fare for the true believer; there is no provision for a day-off from diligence, for “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8) – and you may be sure that the day in which you relax will be the day that he is there to destroy. Evangelicals today are so comfortable with their ecumenical philosophies of Christianity that the devil doesn’t need to bother them anymore; they are so deceived and so under the spell of their learned leaders that they no longer question anything against the standard of God’s Word. They have exchanged purity for unity; the truth has been replaced with a truth-error hybrid – that wolf dressed in sheep’s clothing against which Jesus warned us.

We are here reminded that the basis for this whole discussion on marriage, and the importance of having the roles within marriage properly defined, is because the pattern is none other than Christ and the assembly of saints. We understand that Christ is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Satan (in the serpent) in the Garden of Eden, that there would come One Who would bruise or crush his head (Genesis 3:15). We see that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, with its numerous sacrifices and rituals that pointed forward to One Who would come to make that ultimate sacrifice – once, for all time, providing cleansing for the sinner to be reconciled with God (Matthew 5:17). We recognize Christ as the One Who is the Provider of all that is necessary for the saints (John 15), and Who is the example for the husband in all things as the provider for his helpmeet. We acknowledge that the wife is to pattern her marriage relationship after the assembly of saints’ submission to their Head, even to Christ – recognizing that this role requirement is contrary to all that our world would press upon us (Ephesians 5:24). We have seen the mystery of marriage where God takes two and makes one, after the pattern of Christ and the assembly of saints from all ages. We understand the desecration that divorce makes of the mystery of marriage, and the pattern for marriage, and that within God’s economy, marriage is for life (Romans 7:2-3). We acknowledge and submit to the realization that, within marriage, God has ordained differing roles after the pattern of Christ and His saints, and, further, within the Body of Christ, we are all on equal footing before the Savior. There is no hierarchy within the Body of believers; there are only differing roles and different giftings as determined by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 18; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Here is the reason that I do not like to use the word *church* in reference to the Body of Christ. In my mind, and I would expect it is the same for most, the word *church* conjures up a picture of the local gathering of professing Christians with their structure, their hierarchy of authority: pastor – deacons – laity, or pastor – elders – deacons – laity, depending on your persuasion. Jesus said, “²⁵Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). First Timothy 3 defines for us the only two roles of responsibility within the assembly of believers: bishop or elder, and deacon; from Jesus’ words we have seen that this does not mean a hierarchy of authority – no one is superior to another. The elders carry the oversight of the assembly to ensure that it adheres to the doctrines of the Word of God (“teach no other doctrine,” 1 Timothy 1:3). Acts 14:23 indicates that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders (plural) in every assembly that they established, and Paul’s assignment for Titus was that he ordain elders (plural) in every city (Titus 1:5). However, there

are many giftings within the assembly: we read of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (*pastors*), and teachers (Ephesians 4:11); those who have the gift of miracles, healings, helps, governments, and languages (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Consider how far modern churches have departed from the Biblical mandate. There is no doubt that we have a clergy-laity separation of importance and entitlement; we see it everywhere, and accept it without question. We have faltered in our understanding of Scripture by equating the Biblical term *elder* with *pastor*, when they are not the same. The former is a role prescribed by Scripture for those who have the oversight of the local assembly of saints (Titus 1:5-7); the latter is a specific gifting that the Spirit of God bestows on certain people for the express purpose of “perfecting the saints” (Ephesians 4:12). Within today’s context, the pastor is, for the most part, the chief, the professional spiritual leader, the one to whom is given the ultimate spiritual authority (and often, complete authority) within the assembly, and if there is more than one pastor, then this is given to the senior or lead pastor. This is an error. The one who is gifted as a pastor (and he may or may not be an elder) should be permitted to practice his gift, but he is in no way superior to anyone else within the assembly. Furthermore, the pastoral gift is one of shepherding (NOT oversight), caring for those who have needs, and coming alongside to draw them ever upward in their walk with God. The preacher (a herald or declarer of God’s Word) would be someone who is gifted as a teacher or an evangelist. Yet we have somehow wrapped these three together (elder, pastor, preacher), come up with our own job description, and then elevated the position above the average person who is to sit in submission to this individual, and Hebrews 13:17 is often severely abused to enforce this.

From Scripture we see Paul, Barnabas and Titus ordaining or appointing elders within the assemblies; yet today we depend upon the majority vote of the people. This error has been exacerbated by the common clergy-laity separation. With a growing dependence upon the spiritual elite to provide doctrine that is easily understood, the average churchgoer has succumbed to an ever decreasing understanding of Scripture to the point where most churches are depending upon the spiritually anemic (the laity) to provide spiritual direction for their leadership (the clergy) – therein lies the flaw of congregational government. The elders are to be appointed by those who have spiritual understanding (other elders?), and they are not appointed for three-year terms, but for life – as long as they remain spiritually pure.

We have observed the Lord’s condemnation of the Nicolaitanes (Revelation 2:6,15), who elevated the position of leadership over those who were deemed to be followers; in essence, they promoted the clergy-laity definition within the assembly contrary to Jesus’ words that this was not to be. Yet despite the clear condemnation of this activity, both from the words of Jesus to His disciples and from Jesus’ words to the seven assemblies of Revelation, this is exactly what we find in virtually every church today. We have the church growth movement that thrives on this very thing – without a strong hierarchical system of government, these massive gatherings of people would never be able to function. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that those within these very large gatherings are, for the most part, the most spiritually duped. We look at the leadership of men like Robert Schuller, Rick Warren and Bill Hybels and immediately recognize their departure

from the faith; yet, for the majority within the realm of Evangelicalism, these men are the giants of their feel-good, non-judgmental faith.⁴⁶¹

We must not forget Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-23. It is evident from Scripture that God has always preserved a remnant, not a majority. Noah and his family survived the flood that destroyed the world – that was eight out of probably millions. Abraham was the only one called out of Ur to follow the Lord. Lot and his two daughters were the sole survivors of God's judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Out of all of the Israelites at the time of Elijah, there were only about seven thousand who remained true to God (which was seven thousand more than Elijah realized – 1 Kings 19:18). Likewise today, there is a remnant whose desire is to follow the instructions of God, while the vast majority of those who profess His name walk in their own ways. I fear that we have embraced tradition more than the Word of God; unfortunately, our traditions are laced with the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. We would do well to be greater students of the Scriptures than of church history, for then we will learn more of our Head, Christ, and of His expectations for His Body, the assembly of saints from all ages.

The mystery of the marriage relationship is indeed great, it is a metaphor, an imperfect picture of the relationship that Christ has with His faithful ones. What a challenge it is to live in holiness within our marriages! What a challenge it is to live as true saints of God, pure and holy before Christ – abiding in the Vine so that we might have spiritual life and grow in our walk with the Lord.



33. *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

Lest we be prone to say that all of this is really about Christ and His assembly of saints, Paul summarizes here the principles for the husband and wife: the husband is to love his wife, and the wife is to revere her husband. Considering what has come before, we might accept that as an adequate synopsis and move on, but there is a greater significance here than might first appear to us in the English. The admonition to the husband is that he is to be loving his wife – a present-tense command (imperative mood) that requires a continual obedience; *love* is from the root *agape*, a love that is a product of the will, not the emotions – the husband is to be loving his wife all of the time regardless of the situation.⁴⁶² The result of this unending love from the husband is the respect of the wife: *and the wife so that she is respecting the husband*.⁴⁶³ The center of this *purpose clause* is *respecting* (*reverence*); although being in the subjunctive mood, it is also part of a purpose clause that makes it a statement of the result of the preceding situation – i.e., the husband's continual love for his wife. Yet there is more: *phobeo* (*respecting, reverence*) is also in the middle voice, which means that the wife is not only performing the action (in this case, *respecting*) but she is also the recipient of the benefits of that action.⁴⁶⁴ The reality is that with the husband loving his wife and the wife respecting her husband, together they provide a proper illustration of the relationship between Christ and His bride: the wife showing respect to her loving husband places

⁴⁶¹ For an expanded study on the *ekklesia* (the church), see <http://www.thenarrowtruth.com/the-ekklesia-of-christ.html>

⁴⁶² Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁶³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁶⁴ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm#AORIST.

her where the Lord is pleased with her – what a marvelous benefit! Our reverence for the Lord must be much more than simply a fear of His awesome power: a fear of bringing displeasure to the One Who has bought us at great price. Likewise, the wife's *reverence (respect)* is not to be a dread or terror on the physical plane, but rather a fear of disappointing or bringing displeasure to someone who loves her so completely. What an overwhelming responsibility the husband has to love his wife even as Christ loves the assembly (without regard to his wife's response); it is a reality that can only be realized through the indwelling presence of the Lord. The increasingly blurred line between the male and female roles within society (let alone within marriage) is making it extremely difficult for God's people to receive His blessing – we can no longer passively live according to the society around us, we must be prepared to live contrary to the dictates of our culture. We cannot change our culture, but we must seek to pattern our marriage relationships after what Paul has laid out to the Ephesians.



Chapter 6 – Relationships and God’s Protection for Us

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

Here is a command (*obey* is in the imperative mood) that is addressed specifically to *children*. The question that must be given some consideration is this: who are children, when does one cease to be a child? We live in a day of extremes in this regard. We have those who advocate a child is subject to the parents until they leave home (particularly girls); on the other hand, we have parents who are, in fact, in subjection to their children. This latter is sheer folly, for the Scriptures are clear that “Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). To permit the child to be the decision-maker is foolishness, something that the parents are responsible to remove from the heart of the child through discipline. Yet this has become the common rule for far too many of today’s households. However, there are still families where the father will rule with a rod of iron and will not permit his children (particularly daughters) to function as adults until they marry or leave home. Within the Jewish tradition, a boy at age thirteen goes through a Bar Mitzvah, and the girls at age twelve through a Bat Mitzvah, at which time they are considered personally responsible to fulfill the law.⁴⁶⁵ A boy, after the age of thirteen, would actually qualify as one of ten men required to establish a synagogue.⁴⁶⁶ Clearly, that is a rather arbitrary application of responsibility, but the point that is evident is that there is a time when the parents’ authority must be tempered, a time when the parents’ instruction and input into their child’s life must decrease to permit them to function as an adult.

The obedience advocated here is not unqualified; i.e., it is not blind submission. The qualification is that the obedience must be *in the Lord*; it must not be in contradiction to the Scriptures. A child’s obedience to his parents within the framework of godliness is called righteous (*right*). The Scriptures never advocate a blind obedience; i.e., because someone says to do something does not mean we are to do it just because of the person’s apparent position of authority. This has been the failure of most independent Baptist churches. They take Hebrews 13:17 as the command that the people within the church are to submit to the pastor in charge, which often leads to abuse of position. First of all, the gifting of “pastor” (Ephesians 4:11) does not carry any authority within the assembly of believers; it is not a position, but rather a gift given by the Spirit for the perfecting of the saints. Secondly, the word “obey” (which some of these “pastors” love to emphasize) does not advocate blanket obedience, but rather a submission that comes through testing those who hold responsibility for the assembly (the elders) and finding them worthy of trust.

⁴⁶⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coming_of_age

⁴⁶⁶ Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), p. 51.

Obedience is a very important theme within Scripture, but it must be within the framework of godliness and righteousness. Young children must learn obedience so that they will understand what it means to follow the Lord, and parents can demonstrate their submission to the Lord before their children to support what they are endeavoring to teach them. Permitting children to determine their own lives only establishes their self-centeredness, and it will make it very difficult for them, later in life, to understand what it means to walk in obedience to the Lord. As a matter of fact, it is preparing them to be in rebellion against the Lord, for they will determine to go the way they desire rather than the way of righteousness – in accordance with the pattern established by their parents. Catering to the whims of a child will only serve to establish the foolishness that is bound up in his heart, and places the parent in the position of being disobedient to the Lord.

Scripture is also very clear about our obedience to the governing authorities, yet this, too, is not without qualification. Romans 13:1-7 underscores the importance of being in submission to the authorities that God has placed over us, to which 1 Peter 2:13-17 concurs. However, verse 17 of 1 Peter 2 places the fear of God before our requirement to honor the king. Once again, we are not to blindly do whatever the governing authorities tell us, but we are to weigh the demands made against the words of Scripture to ensure our compliance will not result in disobedience to God, Who placed them there. The difficulty today is that those who profess Christianity do not know God’s Word, which only serves to entrench the pragmatism of the day into the hearts of those who profess to know God. The Biblical ignorance of the average church attendee plays right into the hand of the devil, for they have lost the only means they had to be discerning. As it is, they place all their trust in a clergy who have been tainted by all the modern philosophies and liberal thinking. I am reminded of Jesus’ words to the scribes and Pharisees of His day: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15). Those may seem like harsh words, but they are directed at those who provided assurance of heaven through a message that was not true – this is not unlike today’s clergy who have been duped into believing a lie, and spend their lives passing that lie on to the unsuspecting laity. Yet even in this, the duped laity cannot lay the full responsibility on the shoulders of the deceived clergy: “²... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4).



2. *Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*



3. *That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

Presented here is the fifth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12). *Honor* means to value or revere, and from this comes our modern understanding of showing respect or admiration.⁴⁶⁷ This is the only command within the Ten Commandments that carries with it a positive promise. Subsequent to these foundational commands, Israel received many from God

⁴⁶⁷ Strong’s Online.

that carried promises that were contingent on their obedience to God’s expressed will. The translation including the words *may be* is not correct, it should be *in order that*. The Greek structure identifies this as a purpose clause where subjunctive verbs (*be*) become statements of fact (indicative mood rather than the normal possibility);⁴⁶⁸ the Hebrew, from which this is quoted (Exodus 20:12), also carries the same thought: God’s intent for us to *honor* our parents is to provide long life.⁴⁶⁹ The understood implication of this is that God desires us show respect to our parents; indeed, there is a respect due to parents regardless of who they are, how they conduct themselves, or what they have done. This is something that is largely missing from our society today. Paul warned Timothy of these days: “¹... in the last days perilous times shall come. ²For men shall be ... disobedient to parents, unthankful, ... ³without natural affection, ... ⁴highminded, ... ⁵[yet] having a form of godliness ...” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). There is a generation looming on the horizon who have ruled their parents from their earliest days; of a truth, these promised perilous times are upon us.



4. *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The words *provoke* and *wrath* come from one Greek word which means to arouse to wrath, or exasperate.⁴⁷⁰ It is in an intensive form, which is more than making your children upset or even angry with you. Some may try to use this as a basis for catering to their children, because you’re not supposed to upset the little cherubs. This does not support that notion; parents who adopt the appeasement approach to child rearing are in violation of many Scriptures that speak of the foolishness of a child and the need for discipline. The latter exhortation of this verse would suggest that the Scriptures must come to bear upon the child. The Greek word used for *nurture* is most often translated as *chasten*, and includes everything for the training and education of a child.⁴⁷¹ Biblical discipline, correction, and guidance are to be used in nurturing a child to maturity.

It is noteworthy that this is addressed to the fathers. We have just come through a passage that has dealt very specifically with the marriage relationship, and the importance of understanding the roles that God has ordained for the husband and wife. Despite the ease with which the roles within marriage are mixed today, it does not change what God has ordained. The charge given here is to the fathers – they are not to arouse wrath in their children, but to chasten and instruct them in the Lord’s commands. One of the qualifying criteria for being an elder in an assembly is that he runs his own household well (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6). The father bears the responsibility for the obedience of the children. Yet today we see the fathers taking a back seat in the rule of their households (very often because the marriage roles have been reversed), and the mothers taking on the dominant role. God is not pleased with this shift and the shambles these homes are in evidence of His displeasure with such disregard for His Word.

There is a sense here that if the father does not provide a Biblical context for his administered discipline, it could result in the wrath or exasperation of the children. The use of the word *but* draws a contrast between what has come before and what follows. There is a command

⁴⁶⁸ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁴⁶⁹ BDB.

⁴⁷⁰ Vine’s “anger.”

⁴⁷¹ Strong’s Online.

not to provoke your children to wrath, and the contrast is to chasten and exhort them in the Lord. If the chastening is not for a purpose, then it could very easily be determined by the child to be a senseless beating; the context for any chastening must be the Lord’s instruction, not our frustrations. The wisdom of the Lord is needed by both parents in order to ensure a proper upbringing of their children.



5. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

The word *servant*, as used here, comes from the Greek word *doulos*, which is an adjective meaning “in bondage,” yet within the Greek it is frequently used as a noun signifying subjection without the idea of bondage.⁴⁷² The word *master*, the other side of the relationship, derives from the same Greek word that is most often translated as Lord or lord, and identifies one to whom service is due on any ground.⁴⁷³ Although this would not provide a basis for condoning slavery, it certainly includes the slave-master relationship, which was so common at the time this epistle was written; however, because of the words chosen, it is broad enough to include the employee-employer relationship as well. *Doulos* carries the concept of willing service rather than the idea of property ownership, as we understand it in slavery. Yet Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians to live in a godly manner included this note: “...ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). However, even in this, the concept is not the same as slave ownership; the difference is this: within slavery, the slave becomes the property of the lord against his will, for the Christian, we willingly become the slaves of Christ. The slave-market slave has no will but the will of his master, not by choice, but through a binding business transaction in which he probably had no part. We, on the other hand, are called on to count the cost of becoming the slave of Christ (Luke 14:25-33); we are very much a party to the transaction that brings us into Christ. Yet, too often today, the message is simply, “Jesus is our Savior,” without any thought that the relationship is far more than that, it is also our submission to Him as our Lord and becoming His servants to do His bidding – these two are inseparable. That is why we are told to count the cost, for there is a price to be paid.

We, who are in Christ, receive many commands to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:20), to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16), to walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1) – all given for us to obey. We willingly receive the Word of God, yet the parable of the soils teaches us of the need for endurance – the initial joy and growth is not enough (Luke 8:11-15); if we are not willing to pay the price of service to the Lord, we will either wither away or be choked out. We must not forget the admonition to guard against a heart of unbelief which will turn us away from God (Hebrews 3:12). Paul refers to himself as being a servant (*doulos*) of Christ (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1), as are all who are in Christ, for we have willingly accepted this position. However, it is necessary to count the cost before committing our lives to the Lord, lest we fall away and there be no hope left for us (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-21).

The admonition to obedience given here is a command; both the employee and the slave are to be obedient to those over them in the physical realm. This is from the same Greek word as

⁴⁷² Vine’s “servant.”

⁴⁷³ Vine’s “Lord.”

used in Ephesians 5:1, and simply means to “hearken to a command.”⁴⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that the phrase “according to the flesh” is included here; it is as much as if to say that what is being addressed is in the area of physical responsibility, not spiritual. We do not read of a slave-lord relationship within the assembly; on the contrary, we read about submitting to one another (Ephesians 4:21), of Jesus’ instruction to His disciples that there was not to be hierarchical authority among them (Matthew 20:25-28), and of the Lord’s strong condemnation of the Nicolaitane doctrine in two of the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2:6,15). The clergy-laity relationship may not be exactly like that of an owner with his slave, but there is definitely an authority given to those taking the position of “pastor,”⁴⁷⁵ and this, from my experience, is particularly pronounced within the independent Baptist movement.

In his instruction to the Corinthians, Paul puts all of this into perspective: “²⁰Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. ²¹Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. ²²For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ’s servant. ²³Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1 Corinthians 7:20-23; cp. Proverbs 22:7). If you are a slave and have opportunity to be freed, take it; if not, don’t worry about it for you are the Lord’s freed man. If you come to the Lord freeborn, don’t forget that you are the Lord’s willing slave. There is a leveling of the playing field before the Lord; the slave is free in Christ, and the one born free is the servant of Christ. Jesus made it clear that even He did not come to earth to be ministered unto, but to minister, to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for mankind (Matthew 20:28).

We are to serve with *fear and trembling*; this phrase is “used to describe the anxiety of one who distrusts his ability completely to meet all requirements, but religiously does his utmost to fulfil his duty.”⁴⁷⁶ The service is to be done with respect, as to someone who can bring retribution if you do not do what is required; for a slave, this might be physical punishment, for an employee, it could mean being fired. *In singleness of your heart* literally means, with sincerity or simplicity of your heart, but carries the understanding of “the virtue of one who is free from pretence and hypocrisy.”⁴⁷⁷ Our relationship to those who are our masters in life is to be characterized by honesty and integrity, not slacking off when no one is around, rather fulfilling responsibilities as thoroughly as possible.

Lest what we have heard to this point is not sufficient, we are to serve as “unto Christ.” This is not a popular topic for preaching within Evangelical circles, for too often we hear that the worst employees to have are the professing Christians. What a blight on the name of Christ, what a shame on the person, yet this is not as uncommon as it should be. Even within “Christian” organizations, a “they owe me” attitude can develop which results in much time being spent in visiting, coffee times, and the like. Employees, who show little commitment to the work they have been hired to do, are very punctual when it comes to having their two coffee breaks a day. This is in direct violation of this passage; we are to work as unto Christ, “and whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23).

⁴⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁷⁵ Within churches today, the pastor fills a position with specific responsibilities and authority; contrary to Ephesians 4:11 where the gifting of a pastor or shepherd is placed within the Body for our edification – there is no inherent authority with this gifting.

⁴⁷⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

 6. *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

Eyeservice refers to the work that is being done when the boss is watching, as well as to the work that is not being done when he is not watching. It would exemplify a heart of deceit and hypocrisy, as those who would seek to please and gain the favor of men with as little effort as possible. There is superficiality to this mindset that is not becoming to the heart of a Christian who is to do all things “as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). The Greek word translated as *menpleasers* means “studying to please men,” and it carries the understanding that the focus is to please men, not God.⁴⁷⁸ This is someone who would perfect the art of eyeservice, the ability to cultivate the favor of men, and who has perfected the skill of looking good while doing as little as possible. This is to have no place within the Christian’s life.

By contrast, we are to be servants of Christ; the same Greek word, *doulos*, is used here to present a relationship of subjection. We should not hesitate to be called the servants of Christ, for we have willingly become His slave (*doulos*), having counted the cost of being Jesus’ disciples. The one who does all things as unto the Lord is fulfilling the mandate of being a servant of Christ. There is no doubt about the activity of such a servant, for he is to be “doing the will of God from the heart.” What is the will of God? It is nothing other than obedience to His Word. Perhaps this is why Evangelicalism is in such a mess today, for the average Evangelical does not read the Word of God with a heart to obedience. By neglecting the Word in favor of the instruction of the “professional” theologians, Evangelicals have aligned themselves with the theologies of men to the neglect of God’s clear instruction. As Evangelical theologians have delved ever deeper into their discussions with the Liberals, their theologies have become increasingly dark and apostate. Yet, to the delight of Satan, too few recognize the slide into apostasy that is well under way; since they will not receive the truth, they will be deluded to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

 7. *With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:*

Here is the parallel to Colossians 3:23 that we have already noted. The word *service* comes from the Greek word *doulos*, a term used in the previous verse to describe one aspect of our relationship with Christ. It is not enough to be busy doing things, they must be the right things –



Benny Hinn's Malibu Mansion

those that our Master, Jesus Christ, would have us to be doing. We see much activity within modern Christianity, but activity alone is not necessarily pleasing to the Lord, even if it is done in His Name. May we be reminded of Jesus’ words: “²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and

⁴⁷⁸ Vine’s “Men-pleasers.”

in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). These workers of iniquity prophesied in the name of the Lord Jesus, although they were not servants of Christ; they cast demons out of people in the name of the Lord, yet they did not do the will of God; they did many wonderful works, but were unknown to the Lord Whom they professed to serve. A classic modern-day example of someone who would fit this description is Benny Hinn. He claims to be a man of God, to have been spoken to by God, to have a healing ministry, yet he is a fraud who lives a lavish lifestyle on the gifts of those who give to receive a blessing. If Hinn were a man of God he would live in obedience to the Word of God; he arrogantly presents himself as a dispenser of the Holy Spirit, yet all he dispenses are false hopes, empty promises, and spiritual confusion. His healings have been proven to be fraudulent, his teachings are most often in contravention of Scripture, yet within the Evangelical community, he has a significant following. Hinn’s work of service is to himself: he lives lavishly. He publicly claims that none of the money given to his ministry goes to himself personally – perhaps, but he is the primary beneficiary.

By contrast, our service is to be done to the Lord, and not unto men. Jesus called the Pharisees to task because “all their works they do for to be seen of men” (Matthew 23:5). Jesus told the Jews of His day to do the things that the Pharisees taught, but they were not to follow their example; right doctrine is not enough. Rather “he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). The Pharisees of Jesus’ day and the Benny Hinns of today love to be recognized by men; they love to enjoy the best of the best, and to be served and honored by men. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus taught by word and example, and His example to us is clear: “... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister ...” (Matthew 20:28).



8. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Here is where the ears of those who promote a prosperity gospel will perk up. They would say, “See!! Whatever good you do, you will receive the same from the Lord in return.” The Word of Faith movement, as they are known today, promotes a name-it-claim-it gospel that promises financial prosperity and health. The purveyors of this false gospel message are many.

Joel Osteen has been referred to as the “Prosperity Gospel’s Coverboy,” and some of his sermon titles present his thinking: “Enlarge Your Vision,” “Holding onto Your Dreams,” “How Valuable you are in God’s Eyes,” and “The Greatest Hindrance to Healing.”⁴⁷⁹ Joel declares, “See the Bible says that we can grow in favor I believe one of the main ways that we grow in favor is by declaring it. It’s not enough to just read it it’s not enough to just believe it. You’ve got to speak it out. Your words have creative power. And one of the primary ways we release our faith is through our words. And there is a divine connection between you declaring God’s favor and you seeing God’s favor manifest in your life... You’ve got to give life to your faith by speaking it out” (errors in original).⁴⁸⁰ The Scriptures speak of growing in favor in two cases: the first is with the boy Samuel (“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men” [1 Samuel 2:26]); the second instance is in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as a child

⁴⁷⁹ <http://www.cultlink.com/ar/osteen.htm>

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

(“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” [Luke 2:52]). In neither of these cases is there any mention of “declaring” the favor to make it happen. We are told that Samuel “grew before (or, with) the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:21), and that Jesus was subject (or, obedient) to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51). What Osteen has done is to move the focus from the Lord, or obedience to the Lord, onto something that we can do to make our lives grand. The whole prosperity gospel shifts the focus away from God and onto man; we are the ones who hold the key to making our lives what we’d really like them to be – and they are not speaking of obedience to the commands of the Lord.

Bill Gothard has done something quite similar in his book, *The Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty*. In this book, he declares, “For most of my life, I assumed that crying out



Bill Gothard

was simply synonymous with prayer. I’ve come to be amazed, however, to see the specific purposes and potential for crying out—and how this is emphasized time and again in Scripture. God hears our prayers, and the Bible’s testimony reveals that, in a special way, He particularly hears us when our requests are voiced *aloud*” (emphasis in original).⁴⁸¹ This is ascribing power to our words that is not Biblical, and is not far removed from Osteen’s “your words have creative power.” The Lord, on the night of His arrest, cried out to God the Father in great agony of soul, yet His prayer was that the will of the Father would be done. He recognized that it was for this purpose that He came to earth, yet His humanity shuddered at the thought of the pain that He would be enduring. Gothard has made a hypothetical

differentiation between prayers that are verbalized and prayers of the heart. Malachi, in his day, understood that God is not moved by our words: “Ye have wearied the LORD with your words” (Malachi 2:17).⁴⁸² Jesus said, “⁶...when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. ⁷But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:6-7). We are told “...the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). It is clear from Scripture that voicing our prayers aloud will not enhance their power with God; within our finite frame, we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit of God intercedes for us in ways that cannot be expressed in words.

Joyce Meyer says, “Why would He (God) want all of His people poverty stricken while all of the people that aren’t living for God have everything? ... I think it’s old religious thinking, and I believe the devil uses it to keep people from wanting to serve God” (errors in the original).⁴⁸³ “Joyce Meyer is one of the most popular Christian personalities in the world and her influence is growing rapidly. With sermons on receiving emotional healing, overcoming the past, freedom

⁴⁸¹ Bill Gothard, *Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty*, p. 19.

⁴⁸² The context from verses 10-17 shows that the people were covering the altar of the Lord with their tears and were crying out – yet because they had disregard for the holiness of the Lord, He hearkened not to their cries. Gothard seeks to build a doctrine on this concept, yet of the phrase “cried out” used in Scripture, twice as many times it is used to refer to those who were crying out against the Lord rather than crying out to the Lord. Clearly, a shaky basis.

⁴⁸³ http://www.rickcross.com/reference/tv_preachers/tv_preachers4.html

from condemnation, and more, Joyce Meyer has grown from an associate pastor at a local St. Louis church to a world wide speaker, author, and conference host.⁴⁸⁴ Her charisma has been magnetic for many, as she has come from an abusive past and a failed first marriage. Clearly, her amazing ministry has grown beyond the Word of God, for she fails to adhere to the restrictions that God has placed on us to fulfill her role as a godly woman. She has embraced much of the teaching of the Word-Faith movement, and has openly declared herself to be sinless: “...I didn’t stop sinning until I finally got it through my thick head I wasn’t a sinner anymore. And the religious world thinks that’s heresy and they want to hang you for it. But the Bible says that I’m righteous and I can’t be righteous and be a sinner at the same time ... All I was ever taught to say was, ‘I’m a poor, miserable sinner.’ I am not poor, I am not miserable and I am not a sinner. That is a lie from the pit of hell. That is what I was and if I still am then Jesus died in vain.”⁴⁸⁵ Yet God declares in 1 John 1:8, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Who is telling the truth? Despite such contradictions, Joyce remains very popular among Evangelicals today.



Joyce Meyer

Robert Tilton has openly declared, “Being poor is a sin, when God promises prosperity.”⁴⁸⁶ Gloria Copeland, wife of the famed Kenneth Copeland, has learned her husband’s heresy well; she is quoted as saying, “Give \$10 and receive \$1000; Give \$1000 and receive \$100,000 ... Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. ... In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”⁴⁸⁷ Actually this passage (Mark 10:29-30) comes on the heels of Jesus’ teaching on the spiritually crippling power of riches, and Gloria conveniently overlooks the requirement that all these things (house, brethren, sisters, mothers, children and lands – but no mention of money) must be left for His sake, and she omits the promise of persecution that will come with following Jesus. Leaving behind what Jesus calls us to forsake is very different from giving \$10 to the Copeland’s ministry and expecting to receive \$1000 by return. What Gloria doesn’t clarify is that this will only work if you’re in their type of ministry where you can keep the masses confused by spiritual-sounding rhetoric, and gullible enough to continue sending money in hopes of receiving the multiplied more in return.

Our verse is not a loose promise that the Word of Faith people can claim as another evidence for their selfish lifestyles. This verse is the latter part of a longer sentence, which includes an admonition to work faithfully for those over us, in the same way that we would work for Christ. The sentence charges us to do the will of God from the heart, and we are to carry out our service as to the Lord. The focus of this passage is service done for mankind, but done as unto God; whatever we do, we are to do it for the Lord. This calls for a heart that is right with God, a heart that is attune to His Word, and a heart whose focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Word of Faith people have done violence to the Word of God through promoting heresy and through focusing on the prosperity and health of our present lives. Paul’s testimony was “⁷what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yea

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⁴⁸⁴ <http://www.christnotes.org/joyce-meyer.asp>

⁴⁸⁵ <http://www.pfo.org/wan-star.htm>

⁴⁸⁶ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, p. 285.

⁴⁸⁷ <http://zedekiahlist.com/cgi-bin/quotes.pl?&id=30393647>.

doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:7-9). What Paul considered as loss, the Word of Faith heretics seek with all their might, and create all kinds of systems to ensure that they are the beneficiary of all they want. God’s words to Abraham were “*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Genesis 15:1). The Word of Faith people endeavor with all their might to make God their genie; they think God is there to serve them and provide for their every wish. What they have done is made merchandise of God; they have bottled, formulated, and tabulated God into their mold so as to dupe the masses into supporting their lavish lifestyles.

Paul’s encouragement to the Thessalonians was “be not weary in well doing” (2 Thessalonians 3:13) – don’t become exhausted in living Biblically. Our verse provides us with the assurance that our labors will not be in vain; we may not reap physical rewards in this life (as some claim), but we may rest assured that the Lord will reward us for all that we do for Him. We can become weary in living in obedience to God’s Word (*weary* carries the subjunctive mood, making it a real possibility), and wonder why we strive to remain strong in the faith when no one seems to care or have any regard for what we are doing. Yet we can be assured that the Lord is aware of the sacrifice we make in order to serve Him faithfully, and such labor will not go without His reward – this promise is open to all who serve the Lord from the heart.



9. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

After taking the time to expand on the service of the servant, the Spirit of God now addresses those who find themselves in the role of lords and masters. The summation is that they are to do the same as the servants; they are to serve those who work for them, and do it with diligence as unto the Lord. “Servant leadership” became a popular phrase in the 1970s in the leadership world through the writings of Robert K. Greenleaf who wrote a book with that title. Although many saw this as a radically new approach to leadership, they would have only had to look at our passage, or recall the words of Jesus, to realize that this is not new. Jesus, the Creator of the universe, came to this earth “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). His specific instruction to His disciples was, “²⁵Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [or, one who serves]; ²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [or, slave] ...” (Matthew 20:25-27). Those who would desire to be great (as in having position or power) are to serve, and those who would be chief, or first, among the saints, must be as a slave.

When Jesus sent His messages to the assemblies of Asia through the Apostle John, there were two which drew special instruction in this regard: the assembly at Ephesus received commendation for their hatred of the Nicolaitanes (which Christ also hates), and the assembly at Pergamos was criticized for their acceptance of the Nicolaitanes (Revelation 2:6,15). Who are these mysterious people about whom we hear nothing else? Many hold that they propagated the

doctrine of Balaam, advocating a mixing of pagan practices with Christianity. However, a close reading of Revelation 2:15 makes it abundantly clear that the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was in addition to the error of the doctrine of Balaam and not the same thing. The two primary Greek words making up the word *Nicolaitanes* are *nikos* (which means victory or to utterly vanquish⁴⁸⁸) and *laos* (which means people); so the word means “victors over the people.”⁴⁸⁹ Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of exercising authority over the people. He told the multitudes and His disciples to do what the Pharisees said, but not to follow their example (Matthew 23:3); rather, “all ye are brethren” (Matthew 23:8), and “he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11; see also 1 Peter 5:1-5). We saw earlier (Ephesians 5:21) that one of the signs of the filling of the Spirit of God is submitting to one another. Pause to consider today’s Evangelical churches: most have a man who provides the leadership – sometimes almost independently, other times through several leaders (if the group is large enough). However, the responsibility is defined; it is generally understood that those who fill this role are the clergy and the rest of the people are the laity. The clergy are those who are ordained to carry out the religious service of the group (whatever that might mean); the laity are the followers of a religion who are NOT clergy.⁴⁹⁰ There is a division here, a separation of clergy from laity. This is clearly evident within most Evangelical churches today where the spiritual interpretation is left up to the experts, the pastors and theologians; the laity is becoming increasingly ignorant of the Scriptures, the gap between the “clergy” and the “laity” is ever widening. We are rapidly returning to a situation where the general populace leaves the interpretation to those who are deemed more capable or worthy. The average Evangelical is ripe for being deceived by charlatans who bear the title “pastor.” The independent Baptist churches seem to take great pride in their exaltation of the pastor and he is often given full control, even though there is no basis for this within Scripture. To quote from their writings: “One can’t obey God without obeying his pastor, according to Hebrews 13. One can’t obey God without properly submitting himself to the authority of a born-again, independent, fundamental, premillennial preacher.”⁴⁹¹ This is heresy in that it finds no basis within Scripture – if God didn’t say it, then how can we? Actually, what we do see from Jesus’ words is that this is how things are not to be within the assembly of believers. What amazes me is that all these Bible-believing, fundamental men, with all their learning and doctorates, still cannot understand 1) that they are abusing Hebrews 13 for their own purposes, and 2) that there is no Biblical position within the assembly called “pastor.” The clergy-laity concept, and the term “pastor,” came into being from the earliest roots of the Roman Catholic Church; as much as these very same men would lament the heretical error of the Catholic Church, they have grasped onto this error and cling to it with all their might. As early as AD 190, we see Victor, the bishop of Rome, endeavoring to force his views on those who disagreed with him upon threat of having them excommunicated from the fellowship.⁴⁹² It is very evident that there were powerful clergy already in place by this time, less than a hundred years after the Apostle John penned the warnings against this practice in the book of Revelation. Yet what do we find today? For the most part, all churches have succumbed to the temptation to follow the Nicolaitane pattern firmly established by Rome.

⁴⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁸⁹ Dealt with in more detail on page 202; also in Schofield’s notes for Revelation 2:6.

⁴⁹⁰ Encarta Dictionary, “clergy,” and “laity.”

⁴⁹¹ Larry Brown, *Blowing the Whistle on the Wolves*, p. 9.

⁴⁹² Eusebius Pamphilus, *Church History* (pdf edition), Philip Schaff, editor, p. 375.

It is clear, from our passage alone, that lording-it-over others is not to be; those who are masters and lords in this life are also to leave off threatening. Threats, whether spoken or unspoken, are the way some retain their control over others, and this is often part of the “pastor’s” bag of tricks to keep “his” people in line. Even Victor, Bishop of Rome, used the promise of excommunication as his stick to silence all dissenters – a tool still in the toolbox of modern-day charlatans posing as “God’s pastor” for His people. This is to have no place within our thinking, for the Master of both lord and servant is in heaven, and we are accountable to Him Who shows no partiality.



10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

The word *finally* does not mean “at last,” nor is it used as a preacher’s signal that the end is in sight. Rather the word means “for the rest,”⁴⁹³ and what follows is a general instruction given to the saints at Ephesus, and to us, which will be of help in all those situations that were not dealt with specifically in this letter.

The command given here is to be strong or to increase in strength in the Lord.⁴⁹⁴ Herein is our ability to face life; it is the Lord Who will see us through, not our abilities. “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). God says, “. . .my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9); our weakness becomes an opportunity for the Lord to display His strength through us. One of Paul’s prayers for the Ephesian believers was that they should be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). This would be part of the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God in us, to mold us into the image of our Savior, and it fits well with the admonition to “endure hardness” (2 Timothy 2:3). “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). It is clear that the ecumenical crowd does not read the Scriptures carefully, or, perhaps, they read this from the perspective of their skewed view of the Christian faith, which is no faith at all. Paul calls on Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me . . .” (2 Timothy 1:13). To be a Biblical Christian is a call to warfare; we have entered a battle, which knows no “time-outs”: “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

When Joshua took over the leadership of the children of Israel from Moses, the Lord instructed him to be strong (Joshua 1:6-9). However, from the word of the Lord to Joshua, you will notice in the midst of these numerous commands to “be strong,” the purpose is to “observe to do according to all the law.” The admonition in our verse is to be “strong in the Lord”; this is the same instruction that God gave to Joshua – we are to be strong according to the teachings of the Scriptures, the Word of the Lord to us. Yet within Evangelicalism today we hear much encouragement (in the form of pep talks), but little instruction – this is unbalanced. Unless the two (encouragement and instruction) are given equal weight, we are simply being duped. Men like Rick Warren, Joel Osteen and Robert Schuller provide motivating speeches of positive platitudes, but they are based on the psychological reasoning of man, not the Word of God. “¹⁷Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye

⁴⁹³ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

have learned; and avoid them. ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18). There could be no more apt description of the ministry of these men (and the multitudes who emulate them), nor of those who sit under their teaching and accept it as the truth. It is not a popular thing to stand in opposition to men like Warren, Osteen or Schuller; yet we are not called to seek popularity, but to “hold fast the form of sound words” which we have in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13). Paul recognized that not everyone who spoke of Christ was Christ’s, and he warned against such people. “¹⁸For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame [they glory in what should cause them shame], who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:18-19). These men and their ministries are very earthly focused, and they seek to do only those things that will permit their work to grow – which only serves to multiply their willingness to accommodate error. There is probably no greater example of this than in the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) denomination, which was founded and focused to serve the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community a form of Christianity that accommodates their particular lifestyle. Those involved with the Toronto MCC were “key players in the legal action that ultimately brought same-sex marriage to Canada.”⁴⁹⁵ First Timothy 6:3-5 warns us about what our attitude is to be toward such: we are to withdraw from them, to have no part with them.



11. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

This begins a section on the armor of God that we are to wear. Herein is the means for being strong in the Lord; this is the key to enduring. *Whole armor* comes from a Greek word that gave rise to our modern word *panoply*, and means “a full suit of armor and equipment for a warrior,” or, more generally, “a covering that protects something.”⁴⁹⁶ However, this is not just any suit of armor, it is made by God. From time-to-time, we hear of protective gear that soldiers take into battle that fails the test, resulting in injury or death. Here we have reference to armor prepared by God that will enable us to stand against the devil – there will be no failure with this armor, but we must ensure that our hearts do not fail in the strife (Hebrews 3:12).

This armor, if worn as it was intended, will enable us to stand against the trickery and craftiness of the devil. We often hear today of the wars that are being fought with an enemy who doesn’t follow the rules of engagement – they resort to guerilla tactics. The many suicide bombings are just such a matter; these people appear to be engaged in normal activities of life, going about their business, yet when the opportunity is there, they detonate the bomb they are carrying, which often ends with deadly results. They are using deceit in order to carry out their mission of destruction; they do not present themselves as being a soldier or the enemy, else they would face immediate confrontation. Likewise Satan does not come to us appearing as the devil, but as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14); if he appeared as the evil that he is, he would be avoided and would fail to accomplish his mission of destruction. He came to Eve as a delightful serpent with a feigned desire for Eve’s good. When he presented himself to the leaders of the New Evangelical

⁴⁹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Community_Church

⁴⁹⁶ [Encarta Dictionary](#), “panoply.”

movement, it was with the good that could be done through this new approach to Christianity. What could be better than to dialogue with the Liberals, for thereby they would hear the good news of salvation; what harm could there be in revisiting some of the controversial doctrines if it was possible to increase the fold by making some minor, virtually irrelevant, adjustments; yet the result has been the rapid slide into apostasy of those who once knew the truth. Satan may present himself as an angel of light, but it is a thin disguise over the blackness of hell. If he presented himself as evil and explained the destruction that would come to the faith of many, even the leaders of the New Evangelical movement would have avoided him. By failing to uphold the Word of God, as the standard against which everything must be measured, the New Evangelical leaders succumbed to the wiles of the devil; their willingness to relax in the battle has cost them, and millions of others, their spiritual lives.

The command here is to put on the whole armor of God. It is not enough to put on some of the pieces, unless all the pieces of armor are worn, there will be exposure to harm. The promise of protection from the enemy of our souls comes only through the **whole** armor. God, Who knows our foe better than we, has prepared effective protection for us. However, for the most part, we fail to recognize that we are in a spiritual battle; we have such an emphasis on unity among professing Christians that anyone who advocates Biblical separation is looked upon as unnecessarily narrow and divisive. We can see the paradigm shift that has taken place by looking at Prairie Bible Institute: their motto used to be “Disciplined Soldiers for Christ,” but today it is “Building a Passionate Body of Christ.”⁴⁹⁷ It is clear that, in their minds, the battle is over, and it’s now time to build relationships – there could be no clearer declaration of their capitulation to the New Evangelical philosophy than that! However, the Word of God, which is the same forever (Psalm 119:89,160), openly declares that we are in a battle, and it will not be over until God has pronounced the final judgment on Satan and all who follow him. We are to be engaged in the spiritual conflict that is being waged, but most Christians today are AWOL – they have checked out of the battle, cast their armor aside, and are in dialogue with the enemy. They have so modified the terms of warfare that most of those who were once the enemies, are now their allies. Robert Schuller has openly declared that if he came back in 100 years and found his descendants to be Muslims, it wouldn’t bother him.⁴⁹⁸ This is the man after whom Rick Warren and Bill Hybels have patterned their ministries; it has been evidenced that much of what Rick Warren writes comes almost directly from the writings of Schuller.⁴⁹⁹ There is little wonder that Bill Hybels had no qualms about turning his pulpit over to a Muslim to explain his faith to those before him; or that Rick Warren welcomed Barack Obama to his pulpit, the Democratic presidential candidate who openly supports abortion (even partial-birth abortion), has opposed those who would seek to provide aid to surviving babies of abortions, has strongly supported the homosexual agenda, and is a supporter of the “hate crimes” legislation movement.⁵⁰⁰ In Saddleback’s 2007 AIDS Summit conference, Warren gave the podium to Hillary Clinton, who received a standing



Bill Hybels

⁴⁹⁷ With the recent, feigned shift back to more Biblical days, PBI has reverted to their former motto: To Know Christ and Make Him Known. I say *feigned* because they have not done anything to undo their Biblical compromises.

⁴⁹⁸ http://inplainsite.org/html/robert_schuller.html.

⁴⁹⁹ Warren Smith, *Deceived on Purpose* p. 52.

⁵⁰⁰ http://www.inplainsite.org/html/obama_and_syria.html

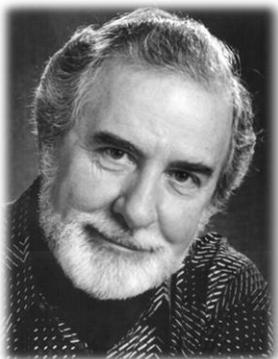
ovation from those present; five other presidential candidates spoke via video.⁵⁰¹ Clearly, both Hybels and Warren are AWOL, and yet their following is huge and their influence continues to grow. *The Church Report*, in their 2007 rating of the most influential Christians in America, ranked Hybels and Warren number 3 and 16 respectively. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1); “beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

In Ephesians 4:24 we read that we are to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” This “new man,” created by God, is to be put on so that our behavior, or manner of living, will comply with the new nature that God has given us. We have not followed the light within, as the New Age movement advocates, but through repentance from our sin, God places a new man within us, created in righteousness and holiness. This new man, this new life of holiness, comes through the planting of the Seed, the Word of God (Romans 10:17); yet we must be cognitive of the soil conditions into which the Seed falls. Jesus made it clear that not all soils will permit the Seed to flourish to maturity (Luke 8:5-15). He said that when the Seed is sown, some of it will fall by the wayside – where they hear the Word, but the devil snatches it away before they can believe and be saved (v.12) – the Word is taken away before it can find any penetration into their hearts. Some Seed will fall among the rocks, and the Word will be received with joy; they will believe for a while, but when a trial or temptation comes along, they will fall away or depart from the faith (v.13). The Word brought forth life, this is not a false profession but a genuine indication of new life, yet because the soil of the heart was shallow, there is no endurance. Jesus openly declared, “...he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13); there is an endurance we are called to that we must not miss lest we fail in the time of trial (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:3). Some Seed will fall among the thorns or weeds, and, again, there is life – the Seed brings forth evidence of life and growth. However, when these go about their daily activities, the new life from the Word of God is choked out by the care and pleasures of daily living (v.7,14). The word Jesus used for *choke* in relaying the parable (v.7) is the same word that is used in verse 33 of the same chapter to describe what happened to the pigs that ran into the lake; the pigs died, and so the new life will die through the strangulation of the cares and pleasures of the world. Modern Evangelicals would seem to advocate that the new life and worldly pleasures can grow together and coexist in the same heart, yet it is clear from Jesus’ words that this is a lie, a deception of the devil. The pleasures and cares of life will choke out the new life; the soil of the heart is not too shallow in this case, but filled with too many weeds. The final soil is a good soil and well prepared to permit the Seed to grow to bring forth fruit in keeping with the Word of God (Galatians 5:22-23). Notice Luke 8:15 – the fruit will be brought forth *with patience*. James tells us: “²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2-3). Trials, temptations, and testings are not popular themes within Evangelicalism today; they are more content with the positive-only messages of the charlatans who profess to be purveyors of the truth. However, we must consider the reception which the Lord received from the religious rulers of His day, and His reminder that “if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). Paul understood this fully, for he wrote, “... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

⁵⁰¹ http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=58959

However, the theme of Evangelicalism today is unity, brotherhood – we’re all one family; they have set the Word of God aside and joined themselves to those who profess a Christianity of their own making; the words may be the same but the meanings have been changed. The wolves have learned to speak “sheep” well enough so as to dupe the unsuspecting into believing a lie, and the falling away has been dramatic. The devil cares not if he snatches the Word away before it can take root, or if he brings a trial that causes the shallow roots to fail, or if the new life is simply choked out through the distractions of this life – the end is the same. When we have heard the Word, we must be diligent and guard against “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12) lest we become one with the apostate.

There is an interesting word picture given to us here. We are to put on the complete armor of God so that we are able to *stand* against the subtleties of the devil. This is not the picture we have of soldiers dressed in their gear; they typically do not stand to fend off the attack of the enemy, but, rather, are active in seeking shelter and in launching an offensive against the adversary. The word *stand* carries with it the concept of steadfastness.⁵⁰² Again, the idea of endurance comes to mind; the Lord has called us to endure, to persevere, but He has also provided us with the protection to do so. I am reminded of Romans 8:38-39 – “³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is often quoted as proof of the eternal security of our salvation. However, this is proof of our ability to stand, to persevere if we have put on the whole armor of God. All of these things cited are outside of ourselves, and the Apostle Paul is naming all these things which are not be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is nothing that can come against us that will be able to cause us to fall; God has provided us with all the protection we will ever need against anything that might come at us, the provision for enduring has been secured in Christ. However, we are also warned: “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia*, no faith], in departing [*becoming apostate*] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).⁵⁰³ Being addressed to *brethren*, this makes it abundantly clear that the armor of God will not protect us from an “evil heart of unbelief”; God did not design His armor to protect from a deceitful heart. A soldier, who goes to war and, through fear, becomes a deserter, cannot complain that his armor failed him; it may well have protected him from enemy fire, shrapnel, and all sorts of external forces, but it was not designed to protect him from a coward’s heart.



Charles Templeton

Charles Templeton is an example of one who professed faith in Christ, but fell away. He cofounded Youth for Christ with Billy Graham, held evangelistic crusades, had a weekly Christian television broadcast on CBS for years, and founded a church in Toronto that is still there today. However, after attending Princeton Theological Seminary, he declared himself an agnostic, and in 1995 published a book, *A Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*.⁵⁰⁴ Once again, the protection of the armor of God was adequate for all external enemies, but Templeton succumbed to an evil heart of unbelief and

⁵⁰² Vine’s “stand.”

⁵⁰³ Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

⁵⁰⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Templeton

turned away from God. How well we need to ponder the caution, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).



12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

We now find the reason for putting on the whole armor of God; our warfare is not with man. There is an anomaly here. The Spirit of God, Who elsewhere used the phrase *flesh and blood*, actually says *blood and flesh* here, not as the translators have shown it. Why in four other instances of where this phrase appears in the Bible, would the Spirit have the order as *flesh and blood*, but in this case choose to reverse them? That is an interesting question to which I have found no answer.

The understanding is that we are not in conflict with men; this is not a physical battle in which we are engaged, even though we may often face a physical foe. Rather, we are in conflict with *principalities*, which speaks of primacy or rule.⁵⁰⁵ Keeping in mind that these cannot be authorities in the physical realm, they are commonly understood to be angels. Second Peter 2:4 tells us of the angels who sinned, who were cast out of the presence of God and are bound with “chains of darkness.” Their bonds are not of restraint from movement, but rather are bonds of blackness; they left the light and glory of God to be bound with the absence of light. Yet we see from 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 that, to us, their blackness may appear as righteousness, as these ministers or servants of Satan transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. How important it is to practice the Biblical call to separation and judgment lest we be deceived by those who appear to be righteous, and do the bidding of the devil himself. It is these angels, bound by blackness, who are able to transform themselves into beings of feigned righteousness, with whom we wrestle. If we could completely understand the darkness, which appears as righteousness, and the wolf that comes to us as a sheep, we would run to embrace the narrowness of God’s calling and Biblical separation that can lead to our sanctification; we would not hesitate to exercise Biblical judgment by condemning that which is not in accordance with Scripture. In the narrow call of God, we recognize that not all who profess to be Christians are actually born-again; the call is very specific, and we are to walk worthy of that calling. In Biblical separation, we find sanctuary from the alluring philosophies of wolves; by exercising Biblical discernment, we will be able to identify those who proclaim Truth mixed with error, and avoid them.

The Greek word translated as *powers* speaks of the “power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases.”⁵⁰⁶ In the truest sense, this would be applicable to God, but in our context, it is once again applied to the spiritual forces, the angelic hosts who have followed Satan, to those who left the glory of God to be bound by blackness. This would ascribe to them the fighting tactics of guerrilla warfare; they will use any scheme, no matter how deceptive, to accomplish their nefarious goals. We are fighting an enemy who, much of the time, will not be identifiable; for they will disguise themselves as the religious and the intellectually superior, using whatever cloak necessary to make us cower under their onslaught.

⁵⁰⁵ Friberg Lexicon

⁵⁰⁶ Strong’s Online.

There is more. We are also up against the *rulers of the darkness of this world*. Paul earlier reminded the Ephesians (and us) that “in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience ...” (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is the prince of this world, and it is his domain. “And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 2:2). The Lord did not rebuke Satan for being out of his territory, for, since the sin of Adam, this has been his domain. Peter reminds us that we are to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...” (1 Peter 5:8). Even though Satan’s defeat has been fixed at the cross, he is still on the rampage today. Yet our verse uses the word *rulers*, plural. We have already seen that *powers* speaks of those who do as they please, and, being cloaked with blackness, you can rest assured that the fallen angels are mavericks and not necessarily under complete compliance to Satan, the prince of all demons. Anarchy would be the norm within the realm of utter darkness; they are fighting a losing battle (and know it), so their tactics will demonstrate desperation. Each demon will be a *ruler* within its own right.

We are also wrestling against *spiritual wickedness in high places*, or in the heavenlies. Satan has been called the accuser of the brethren. “⁹And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:9-10). Satan will find fault wherever we give him opportunity, yet we read that the brethren “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ...” (Revelation 12:11). If we understood the unseen battle that is being waged, we would give greater heed to the commands to “be sober,” to “be vigilant.” Our only hope is “in Christ,” the often repeated phrase throughout the earlier parts of this epistle.

This is a brief glimpse at the foe whom we face. We are finite creatures who, too often, live as though the visible world is all there is. Here we are reminded that we are not fighting a physical enemy, but a spiritual one; our foe is none other than Satan and his myriad of demons – all bound up with blackness. It is only the armor of God that will permit us to stand against the attacks of this enemy; we have no protection within ourselves. How contrary this is to modern philosophy, which teaches everyone to look within himself for light to guide him into his own truth. Jesus spoke of this light: “²²The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [or focused, sound], thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³But if thine eye be evil [or harassed, annoyed], thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23). When Jesus knew His time was come, He “stedfastly set his face” to go to Jerusalem; there was a determination to accomplish what He had come to earth to do. There was a singleness of purpose, and resolute determination to complete the task at hand. Within Satan, we see restlessness, a perpetual roaming about throughout the earth. There is only one way to have a *single* eye, and that is to have God as our focus, anything else will only be countless distractions, demonstrating the restlessness that comes from Satan. Jesus said “the light of the body is the eye,” so if our eyes are focused on Him, then our body is full of light, but if our eyes are distracted by all the ploys of Satan to keep us looking elsewhere, what a great darkness will fill us. Remember, Satan and his minions are bound up with blackness; we are either

for the Lord Jesus or against Him. There is no neutral, middle ground where we could go either way, no fence to straddle – it is either black or white; there is no gray. Modern Evangelicals have mixed the white of God’s Truth with the black of Satan so as to promote a spiritually deadly, gray potion called unity. Charles Colson summarizes the Evangelical error best: “Unity is the essence of the church. To be one with one another as Jesus is one with the Father is a matter of biblical obedience.”⁵⁰⁷ This error first appeared in Colson’s book, *The Body*, in 1992, and, eleven years later, he reiterated the same error in his updated book, *Being the Body*. Our unity is accomplished IN Christ, not by embracing everyone who calls themselves a Christian and accommodating their error; it is not a matter of obedience, but rather is a reality when we are **in Christ**.



13. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Wherefore – for this reason, because of what was just outlined for us in the previous verse – we are to take the whole armor of God. This is a command. After explaining to us that the foe, whom we face, is not physical, but rather spiritual (of the most devious sort), we are again admonished to take the protection which God has prepared. This is a reiteration of verse 11 – and carries the same emphasis of the **WHOLE** armor of God, and to **STAND**.



John Wimber

I am reminded of Jude 9 – “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” A mighty angel from the presence of God did not accuse Satan, but deferred to the Lord – there is here a demonstration of standing, rather than taking the offensive. Yet we find within Evangelicalism today, a group who embrace what is called spiritual warfare, where there is a direct, sought-after confrontation with Satan. John Wimber and his Vineyard movement are those who advocate confronting the Satanic powers directly; Neil Anderson, on the other hand, and those like him, have created a more systematic process for dealing with his influence. Both speak of spiritual warfare, and both advocate a confrontational approach with Satan.

Wimber founded what has been termed the “hyper-charismatic” Vineyard movement.⁵⁰⁸ He and his group were influential in the “laughing revival,” as well as the very popular, more mainline Promise Keepers movement; yet despite his close connection with the “laughing revival,” Wimber also participated in teaching church growth classes at Fuller Seminary.⁵⁰⁹ He sat on the Board of the Renovaré, the group founded by Richard Foster, which is heavily involved in new age and Eastern mysticism under the guise of spiritual formation thinking.⁵¹⁰ Wimber never lost touch with the Roman Catholics either, thereby truly demonstrating his ecumenical stance. Out of this conglomeration of hyper-charismatic experience, church growth philosophy, Eastern

⁵⁰⁷ Charles Colson, *Being the Body*, p. 75.

⁵⁰⁸ <https://faithinconsistent.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/john-wimber-is-satan/>.

⁵⁰⁹ <https://vineyardusa.org/about/john-wimber/>.

⁵¹⁰ <http://www.mediaspotlight.org/pdfs/RENOVARE.pdf>

mysticism and ecumenism, comes a man who openly confronts Satan; yet because of his clear violation of Scripture, it would seem that he and his movement would be a means to bring people under Satan’s power, rather than freeing them. Satan may not be omniscient, but he will learn from his mistakes. I would suspect that he learned something from his experience with the sons of Sceva, who thought to cast demons out through the name of “Jesus whom Paul preacheth” (Acts 19:13-17). In this case, the evil spirit declared that he knew Jesus and Paul, but not them, and turned on them, resulting in the fear of God falling on the people of the area and the name of Jesus being magnified. Such an attack proved to be counter-productive to Satan’s schemes, so you can rest assured that he would not do that again. So even though Wimber and the Vineyard movement are not properly grounded in the Word of God, the results of their actions against Satan will not result in the same response as that drawn by the sons of Sceva; they may experience feigned success, but Satan will use that to delude the unsuspecting and draw them away from God’s Word. We are called to be discerning of error, and the Vineyard group is fraught with it, therefore we are to identify them as such and avoid them (Romans 16:17).

Neil Anderson, on the other hand, has taken a more conservative or clinical approach to the matter of spiritual warfare. He has laid out a seven-step process that, if followed carefully, will result in freedom from demonic forces (he says); this includes such things as the renouncing of any involvement in occultic or false religious practices (whether actually or only possibly, by you or anyone in your family), extending forgiveness to others who have hurt you, to God, and to yourself (this is a decidedly psychotherapeutic concept that finds no basis in Scripture), and praying a prayer to break the generational demonic hold that Satan may have on you through the errors made by previous generations.⁵¹¹ In coming to his conclusions, Anderson has openly sought the integration of psychology and theology,⁵¹² which has resulted in seeing demonic influence as the primary cause of sin. There is a wholesale disregard of the fallen Adamic nature, which is still a part of every Christian; in Anderson’s view, a Christian no longer has a sin nature. He takes exception to a Christian being called a sinner saved by grace; we are to think of ourselves as saints who occasionally sin (because of demonic influence). By attributing any committed sins to the devil, Anderson ensures himself a steady stream of seekers; however, his saying that we no longer have a sin nature does not make it so. One of his books is titled *The Bondage Breaker*, yet we have seen those who become involved in this type of practice to be perpetually bound. They are trapped to repeat his method of release over and over again – a process of repeatedly praying prescribed prayers in an effort to produce freedom. Every time you sin, you must repeat the prescribed procedure of banishing the devil from your life, which seems to be more of a bondage maker than a bondage breaker. First John 1:9 is replaced with a seven-step process by which the demonic influence, as evidenced by the sin, will be removed. The freedom and power of the Spirit of God is bound by a ritual, and release is never realized because it is based on a false premise. Rather than seeking deliverance from the power of sin through sanctification by the Spirit of God, he strives to break the power of demons through ritualistic prayers and psychotherapeutic thinking. However, Anderson does have influence within



Neil Anderson

⁵¹¹ <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?id=888&rc=1&list=multi>

⁵¹² Ibid.

Evangelicalism, and there are whole ministries formed around his thinking. The very fact that he seeks to draw psychotherapy and Christianity together should immediately alert us to his error. Anytime you meld the philosophies of unregenerate men with the holy Scriptures, you can rest assured that the philosophical concepts will come out on top (Satan will do his utmost to ensure that this is the case). Thinking that such a mixture will work together is based on either an elevation of man’s thinking or a downgrading of God’s Word – in either case, the basis is man-oriented, hence man’s philosophy will always dominate. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). The word translated as *spoil* means, “to carry off booty”; and hence “to lead away from the truth and subject to one’s sway.”⁵¹³ Satan has become much more civilized in his approach to gaining the upper hand in the heart of man; we must beware!

The whole armor of God will permit us to withstand or resist the enemy, and when our work is done, we will be able to stand against the enemy of our souls. The command of our verse is to *take to ourselves* the whole armor of God.⁵¹⁴ Once again, we are reminded that this is not protection that we are to generate within ourselves or for ourselves; this is a defense that has been prepared by God for us. However, this protective gear was not designed for an offensive attack of the spiritual enemies we face; all the pieces are defensive. Herein is the error of men like Wimber and Anderson who seek to take offensive action against Satan in an effort to banish him from their lives; they view themselves as sinless, and the sin they commit is the fault of the devil – if they could banish the devil from their lives, then they could live their lives perfectly (in their minds, the sin nature we all have disappeared when we were saved – contrary to Romans 7). By holding a skewed view of who we are, and by actively engaging demons, they are opening themselves to the onslaught of the enemy in a way for which God has not provided armor. We are to resist [or stand against] the devil (James 4:7) – the same Greek word translated as *withstand* in our verse – and we are to flee from sin (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11), but nowhere are we told to actively engage the enemy in battle; it is clear from our passage that the enemy will attack us with great cunning, and for that battle God has provided protection. If Michael the archangel would not bring an accusation against Satan, why would we presume to take Satan on when God has told us to STAND?



14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

We now have a listing of the various pieces of armor, which God has provided for our protection. It is noteworthy, that even this begins with the command to *stand!* Because we are dealing with a spiritual enemy (not a physical one), and because God has provided us with armor for our complete protection, we are to stand! We are told repetition is used for emphasis – by now it should be clear, we are to stand! Wimber and Anderson – the command is STAND, not attack!

The first item delineated is truth, which is to be worn about our loins or from the waist to the hips. In keeping with the charges in verses 11 and 13, WE are to put this piece of armor on; it will not be put on for us, **we have work to do**. The action, “having ... girt,” is something that we

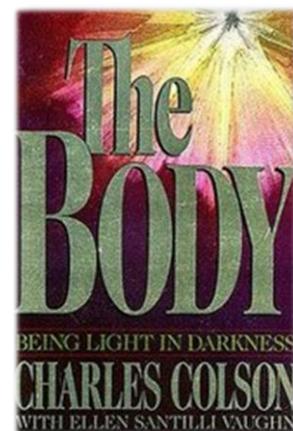
⁵¹³ Strong’s online.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

are to do; we are to wrap ourselves in God’s truth. God has made this available to us, but we must expend the effort to put this piece of the armor on. We then come to the question that Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). If we are to wear truth for our protection, then we must know what it is. Jesus has given us the answer: in John 14:6 He identifies Himself as the Truth – the only way to the Father; He also states, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); God has preserved His Word for us in the Scriptures – we must be students of the Word. Yet as we have observed from time-to-time, today’s average Evangelical is Biblically illiterate; they might speak of the armor of God, but, for most of them, they have not even picked the first piece up, let alone put it on. To the Thessalonians Paul speaks of the deceitfulness of unrighteousness in those who perish; this is the same deception that Eve experienced in the Garden. Just as Eve was convinced that what she was doing was for her own benefit (Genesis 3:6), so there are many today who have a form of godliness but it is a sham, a deception, and they remain in their sins. Even though they are within the professing Christian community, on that final day they will hear the “depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Why are they perishing? It is “... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Our very salvation is dependent upon our attitude toward God’s truth!

This is not a very popular concept today. We live in a day of pragmatism and tremendous accommodation. It is no longer sufficient to be tolerant of another person’s beliefs, no matter how farfetched; we are to be accepting of everyone’s philosophy of life, and we must permit the existence of conflicting forms of “truth.” Today the rights of the individual are of paramount importance, and the accepted question is not, “Is it right?”, but rather, “Does it work?” What is true for one may, or may not, be true for another, but we are to permit each one to come to his own understanding of truth through whatever means works for him. The only thing that is offensive, within this context, is to say that the truth of the Word of God is exclusively true; it is only mutual accommodation that is acceptable. Even within the community of Christianity, this pragmatic thinking has taken root; this is very evident within the unity movement, for they are prepared to reduce their “truth” to a few broad statements, in order to justify embracing those who believe error, yet they call themselves Christians.

Within the modern unity movement, various approaches are taken to justify their actions. Chuck Colson has declared, “True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share.”⁵¹⁵ To put it another way, he says there are differences, and it is foolish not to acknowledge them, but there are a few orthodox truths held in common, and that must be our focus. Billy Graham has stated, “I’ve found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics, for instance. ... We only differ on some matters of later church tradition.”⁵¹⁶ This is more of a see-no-differences, hear-no-differences approach – a desire to turn a blind eye to everything other than points of agreement. Then we have organizations like James Dobson’s Focus on the Family, whose VP has declared that those who



⁵¹⁵ Charles Colson, *The Body*. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 104.

⁵¹⁶ David W. Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999), 84.

work with Focus on the Family “cast their theological distinctives aside in order to achieve a common objective.”⁵¹⁷ Their approach to unity is to focus on a common goal and ignore everything else. Whatever tactic is taken, truth suffers at the hands of those who seek unity; yet how subtle their message can be, for despite their violation of the Scriptures on many hands, all three of these men (Colson, Graham, and Dobson) are held in high esteem within Evangelicalism. This can only be an indication of the failure of Evangelicals to embrace the truth of the Scriptures in purity (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

The concept of “girding the loins” is used metaphorically to speak of being in readiness, of being prepared for what will come.⁵¹⁸ Here we are told that we are to be equipped with truth firmly bound around us; we are to stand, with truth securely in place. We must spend time in the Word of God so that His truth will be our protection; it is not enough to be familiar with theological thinking, we must know what God says. Ecumenism holds much religious reasoning, but the truth of God lies tattered and torn in their hands. We must view the teachings of man through the grid of the Word of God – not the other way around. We must be watchmen, alert to the strategies of the enemy.

Then we are to put on the *breastplate of righteousness*; again, this is something **we are to do**, it will not be done for us. The Greek word for “having on” speaks of clothing one’s self.⁵¹⁹ This piece of armor covers from the neck to the navel, and protects both the front and back (in similar fashion to the truth). Therefore, we have righteousness fitly joined to truth to provide protection from the neck to the hips, in both the back and the front. In Ephesians 4:24 we are commanded to “put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Job declared, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me” (Job 29:14).

The righteousness of God will provide the protection for our hearts from all things external: “³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). There is security from all external attacks if we wear the breastplate of God’s righteousness, if we have put on the new man, which God has created in righteousness. However, as we have said before, this armor does NOT provide protection from an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). God is able to keep us if we are clothed in His armor; WE must guard against unbelief turning our hearts away from God.



15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

With the armor in place for the protection of the torso, our attention is now drawn to our feet. The word *shod* means to bind underneath, and most often referred to sandals being bound onto the feet.⁵²⁰ Here we have the good news of salvation as the security for our feet. The Psalmist declared: “When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up” (Psalm 94:18), recognizing that it was the Lord Who held him up and provided his stability. We have noted the

⁵¹⁷ <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/dobson/general.htm>

⁵¹⁸ Vine’s “loins.”

⁵¹⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁰ Vine’s “shod.”

repeated command to stand, and herein is the security for our stance: the readiness of the Gospel of peace is on our feet. We also noted the anomaly of donning armor only to stand, and here, as a part of it, is footwear that is the good news of peace. Even while wearing the armor of God (symbolizing being prepared for battle) our stance is to be secured in the Gospel of peace.

Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34), and the passage goes on to declare the splits that will come into families because of Him (the word *variance* in v. 35 means to split in two or to sever⁵²¹); even to the point that “a man’s foes [hated, hostile – most often translated as enemy] *shall be* they of his own household” (v. 36). This is reiterated in Luke 12:51 – “suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division [a parting or dissension].” Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). If we consider 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” then it would seem that we will have opportunity to practice Jesus’ words, if we put on the new man created in righteousness and holiness. The security of our stance against the enemy of our souls is the Gospel of peace, the good news of Jesus; this is the Gospel as we find it in the pages of Scripture. Whether we face the foes within our families or the enemy of our souls, we are called to wear the Gospel of peace on our feet. “¹⁸If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves ...” (Romans 12:18-19). There are many gospels out there today: the gospel of unity, the gospel of prosperity, the gospel of growth – but Paul’s words to the Galatians hold firm: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). We must hold to the message of the Scriptures and not waiver; “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).



16. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

The phrase *above all* carries with it two thoughts: 1) importance, and 2) position in relation to what has just been outlined. It is clear that the shield is an important piece of armor. The Greek word used for *shield* is one that was originally used for the stone that would cover the mouth of a cave, but came to refer to a large, oblong shield.⁵²² The root of this Greek word is translated as *door*, and perhaps provides a picture of the usefulness of the shield. Maybe you’ve seen riot police with the large shields; they can place the shield on the ground and it will form a complete protection from a frontal onslaught.

This shield is *faith*. Keep in mind that this is the armor of God, therefore, this is the faith that God instills within us, and it will be our shield. This is the faith that comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of God (Romans 10:17); it is the faith of Jesus Christ through which we are justified before God (Galatians 2:16-20). It was the faith of Jesus in the plan of the Father that procured our salvation; it is in this faith that we are to continue with steadfastness (Colossians 1:21-23; 2:6-8). Romans 3:21-23 confirms that this faith applies to all mankind. It is not a faith

⁵²¹ Strong’s Online.

⁵²² Ibid.

that man can muster up within himself, else Christ would have died in vain; without Christ we are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-1, 8-9). This shield of faith is another provision from God for our protection; **our role** is to persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13).

The shield of faith will enable us, or make us powerful, to quench the darts of the enemy. The Greek word translated as *shall be able to* is the same word from which we get *dynamite*; there is no question as to the ability of this shield to accomplish what it was meant to do. It is powerful to extinguish ALL the burning missiles of the enemy of our souls – God has made it so. Notice what the enemy will be throwing our way: not only darts, which alone could cause significant pain and suffering, but also these darts are burning; they are on fire! In days gone by, this was a favored way of inflicting maximum damage on the enemy; if an arrow missed a target, it was a wasted arrow, but if it was burning as well, it would ignite a fire that would then cause damage. The devil is not without his cunning tactics, and he is out to destroy. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). There are two things that are noteworthy here within the context of our discussion: 1) the word *devour* means to swallow up or destroy;⁵²³ and 2) there is that little word *may* of which we need to be aware. The promise of our passage is that the armor of the Lord will protect us from the cunning craftiness of the devil, and the shield of faith, which the Lord has prepared for us, will protect us from his fiery darts; however, that protection is only there if we put the armor on and raise the shield. We are called on to *be sober, be vigilant*, and part of that vigilance will be to ensure that the protection, which God has prepared for us, is in place. WE must wear His truth and righteousness, WE are to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24), and WE are to take up the faith of the Lord.



17. *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

The Greek word for *take* is one most often translated as *receive*, or to “take with the hand.”⁵²⁴ Once again, two things are obvious: 1) this is not a piece of the armor that we make for ourselves, and 2) for it to serve its purpose, it must be taken and put into place. *Helmet* is from a compound Greek word, which means about the head,⁵²⁵ so there is no question as to where this part of the armor belongs.

Salvation, here, speaks not of the salvation of our soul, but of the hope of salvation, of our future deliverance. There is both a present reality to our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and a future element, which is our hope of final deliverance from the power of sin. Our hope in Christ goes beyond this life to a life with Him in glory (1 Corinthians 15:19; Colossians 1:5; Hebrews 6:17-20). This hope of glory is Christ in you (Colossians 1:27), and, as this becomes our focus, our minds will not be alarmed by the warfare we face, and so, we STAND. The hope of glory permits us to look beyond this life to a day when we will stand with Christ in eternal glory, eternally free from the penalty, presence, and power of sin. Hebrews 12:2-3 encourages us to look to Jesus, “²who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction

⁵²³ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

[opposition or rebellion] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” The example of Christ is to look beyond the present to the future – the hope of glory to come, and to endure.

We are also to take up the *sword of the Spirit*. The *sword*, in this case, is a dagger or short sword.⁵²⁶ Revelation 1:16 speaks of a sword proceeding out of the mouth of Jesus; by contrast this is a long sword. The long sword would be more useful for an offensive attack, the short one for close combat – more of a defensive weapon. Notice that this is not just any sword, but the sword used by the Spirit of God – specifically, the spoken words of God. Again, we are faced with the necessity of knowing God’s word to us; we will not be able to utter the sayings of God if we are not familiar with His Word, the Bible. Yet herein lies the greatest failure of Evangelicals today – they have relinquished understanding the Scriptures to the “professionals,” and, when they do read the Word of God, it is without the conviction that what they are reading is life, that it is protection for their souls, and too often they are reading a Scripture that has been corrupted by the hand of man. Through the massive compromise and accommodation that characterizes Evangelicals today, there has come a complacency concerning the devil; the vigilance is gone, and the roaring lion has been made to appear to be simply another sheep to be embraced – they have been swallowed up, and don’t even know it.

This completes the armor of the Lord; it is important to notice that all the pieces are defensive in nature. This fits with the admonition, which preceded the delineation of the armor of God, that we are to stand! God’s provision is designed to ward off the attacks of the enemy: we STAND having His truth and His righteousness wrapped about us, we STAND on the good news of His peace, we STAND holding up the shield of the faith of Christ, with the hope of His salvation guarding our minds, and the weapon of His words firmly in hand. Having donned this armor, we are protected from the wiles of the devil; we need not fear whatever we face, for His protective covering is able to provide us with the defense that will see us through. What we must do is heed the warning of Hebrews 3:12 – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” The best armor in the world will never protect the soldier from a cowardly heart; what God has provided will not protect us from a heart of unbelief; for that, WE MUST *take heed!*



18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

Here is where our action is defined; after donning the armor just outlined, we are to stand (vss. 11,13,14) and pray in the Spirit! The order of the words in the Greek places a different emphasis, from what we get in English, on this first phrase: “through all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the Spirit.”⁵²⁷ In our English translation, the *always* seems to work with the *prayer* and *supplication*, but really its emphasis is on praying *always in the Spirit*. This prayer and petition is tied to our taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit – our hope of glory and the words of God. However, even in our praying, we are not alone. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [or, weaknesses]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:

⁵²⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁷ Young’s Literal Translation.

but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts [Psalm 139:1] knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Romans 8:26). “Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). When we are confused and cannot sort out in our minds how to pray, we can be assured that both the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ are making intercession for us in accordance with the will of the Father.

We noted earlier that the devil is called the “accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:10). What should be reassuring is that the Spirit and the Son are interceding for us. The Apostle John wrote, “...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ...” (1 John 2:1). This word *advocate* is what Jesus used to describe the Spirit of God Whom He would send after He had ascended to the Father, and which is translated as *Comforter* (John 15:26), and means “one who pleads another's cause before a judge,” “an intercessor.”⁵²⁸ What comfort should come to us through this realization; we are not abandoned – two members of the Godhead have come to our aid and are interceding for us. We need to focus our eyes on the further reality: the hope of glory in Christ (Colossians 1:27).

The words *prayer* and *supplication* are similar in the Greek; the former is a word used only for prayer addressed to God, and the latter carries the additional thought of need and entreaty.

The word *watching* is from the Greek meaning “no sleep.”⁵²⁹ This speaks of a continual vigilance of praying in the Spirit; this is emphasized through the use of *all perseverance*. *Perseverance* is an intensive word that means to “be steadfast,” to “continue steadfastly in a thing and give unremitting care to it.”⁵³⁰ This brings to mind God’s instructions to Joshua to “be strong” (Joshua 1:6-9). We are to be steadfast in our prayers for all God’s holy ones, His saints; we are to pray for one another (James 5:16).



19. *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

Paul here requests prayer for himself that he will be given a word to speak boldly the message of the hidden things of the Gospel. This is the Apostle who had received heavenly revelations directly from the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) asking for prayer, in order that he will receive from God a word to speak boldly. Jesus said that when we are brought before rulers because of the Gospel, we are not to be concerned about what we shall speak (Matthew 10:19), for, in that moment, we will be given the words. However, we also need the words when not being hauled before authorities – and that is Paul’s prayer request of the Ephesian believers here, that he would proclaim the Gospel with boldness and with clarity.

We have here the phrase *make known the mystery*, which would appear to be a bit of an oxymoron. *Make known* means to gain a thorough understanding of, and *mystery* speaks of something hidden.⁵³¹ Colossians 1:21-29 sheds some light on what this *mystery* is: “Christ in you,

⁵²⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Vine’s “attend.”

⁵³¹ Strong’s Online.

the hope of glory” (v. 27). In the purposes of God, this was hidden from the beginning of the world (Ephesians 3:9) but was now brought to light; what had been a mystery is now made known. The culmination of God’s salvation, which was offered to mankind since Adam, is made known in the sacrifice of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, for the sins of the world. If we are prepared to walk the narrow road which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14), then we have just seen the protection which God will provide for us. However, we must commit everything into His hands and step onto that narrow Way. In the midst of explaining the cost of discipleship, Jesus said, “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). This may sound harsh, but the Lord knows our deceitful hearts and how easily we are distracted from the way that leads to life. The foundation for this is in Deuteronomy 13:6-11, where we find an explicit warning against being enticed to worship other gods and clear instruction on the course of action that is to be taken – this is not a light matter in the eyes of God. The lure of the world is no different today; the objects of worship may have changed, but the reality of our easily distracted hearts is the same. We are called to guard against an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12).



20. *For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

The word *ambassador* is used today for someone of one country sent as a representative to another country. The Greek word means, first of all, “to be elder,” and so the word carries the thought of being experienced.⁵³² Paul’s instructions to Timothy regarding the responsibility of a bishop or elder includes the specific teaching that this individual not be a neophyte, but one who is stable and seasoned in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6).

It seems that Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians while he was being held prisoner; he was in bonds or being physically restrained. His request is that he will speak forth the Gospel with freedom, as he should, even while being in bonds for that very action. We see, through Paul’s example, that we are to be in obedience to God first, and when there is a conflict between what God requires and the laws of the land, obedience to God must always take priority. As our society continues its downward slide, it may very well soon be against the law to declare the truth of God’s Word, for it will clash with the prevailing philosophies of the day and be determined by the laws of the land to be a hate crime. More and more we see governments adopting hate-crime legislation, which will provide the framework for persecution in the days ahead. A philosophy that advocates the acceptance of all belief systems will not permit the existence of a conviction that all other beliefs are wrong; in the midst of modern tolerance is an intolerance of the exclusiveness of the Gospel.



21. *But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:*

⁵³² Vine’s “ambassador.”

 22. *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.*

Rather than filling his letter with personal information about how he is doing, Paul commits this responsibility to Tychicus, who, when he arrives in Ephesus, will elaborate on Paul’s situation, and comfort the Ephesians concerning Paul’s imprisonment.

 23. *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

 24. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*