

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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Updated 2012, 2017, 2021, 2022, 2023



## 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 having received God’s calling to be an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. He, who had persecuted the early believers with such vehemence and zealously labored to eliminate the work of God, was now a messenger (*an 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 Paul is an example of the mighty work that 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 (*an apostle*) of Jesus Christ, and frequently also identifies himself as being a *servant* (*doulos* – slave) of the Lord (Romans 1:1).<sup>1</sup> *Jesus* means “Savior” (Jehovah is salvation), even as the angel of the Lord conveyed to Joseph that His name was to be *Jesus*, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).<sup>2</sup> *Christ* means “Anointed,” just like the Hebrew word *Messiah*.<sup>3</sup> 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 (John 14:6).

Paul identifies Whom 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 (after all, he was a righteous Pharisee), 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 had been a man on a mission; he was determined to eliminate Christians wherever he could find them – all in his zeal

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

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 while on this earth, 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).

The “will of God” is often thought of as being elusive and something 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 declares that it was by the will of God that he became God's messenger – there is no question about it, and no hesitancy in declaring it. It would seem that in our desire to appear to be very spiritual, we have made a mystery out of something that is not one, created confusion where God has given us clear direction, and introduced gray where there is only black and white. We all have a Bible, the Word of God, and yet we struggle to understand the will of God; we hold the declaration of the will of God in our hands (the Bible), yet expect God to somehow show us how He wants us to live 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 while leaning heavily upon the promised guidance and illumination by the Spirit of God; if we have placed our faith in the finished work of Christ, then this wonderful promise of the abiding Spirit's guidance is ours (John 16:13). We must begin with a mind that is being continually renewed by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:23), which will lead to a transformed life (Romans 12:2) – both (*renewed* and *transformed*) are in the passive voice, which identifies these as being God's work in us (not our work).<sup>4</sup> However, God will not work in us against our wills; we must be willing for God to carry out His work in us. “... reckon ye [a command for us to *account* or *regard*] also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11); anytime that we read a command in Scripture, it forces us to make a choice – will we obey or not? With God's Spirit actively working within us, we need only willingly walk in obedience to the commands that God has given (John 14:15) – i.e., in accordance with the Spirit's leading!

However, even though this may appear to be simple, it will not be easy. God's will for us is to live in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3a), not only externally, as the

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<sup>4</sup> Strong's Online.

Pharisees sought to do (Matthew 23:27), but completely (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Such a life will require endurance and perseverance: “For ye have need of patience [*hupomone*], that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36). What we read as *patience*, the underlying Greek (*hupomone*) speaks of being steadfast (a long-enduring patience), and this in the face of opposition, trials and suffering.<sup>5</sup> One of Jesus’ promises is that we will face *tribulation* in this life: “In the world ye shall have [*are having*; present tense; indicative mood, this is a statement of fact] tribulation [*thlipsis* – oppression, affliction, trouble, distress, etc.] ...” (John 16:33b).<sup>6</sup> “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings [*ye are sharing in the sufferings of Christ*] ...” (1 Peter 4:12-13a).<sup>7</sup> What should be evident is that suffering is an integral part of our new lives in Christ (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:17; 4:19). Some of the *tribulation* may come from the ungodly, for we are told that our godly lives (lived-out 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 saw no need for change. Do not be mystified if you face opposition, and even persecution, from those who profess to be Christians; they consider walking in the will of God as being too narrow, and will frequently 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 are doing the will of God (1 John 2:17), but Jesus clarified this for us: “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). Let’s consider Jesus’ words carefully to ensure that we understand them properly. *Endure* (*hupomeno*) is from the verb form of *hupomone*, and also speaks of a steadfastness (faithfulness) in the face of trials and opposition; Jesus says that we must remain faithful to Him *unto the end* – this can only mean our death or His return for the harvest of His faithful ones (the rapture).<sup>8</sup> *The same* is from a Greek demonstrative pronoun that refers back to the faithfully *enduring* one, as in: this is the one!<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is the one who remains faithful to the Lord *unto the end* who *will be saved* – yes, *saved* is in the future tense; our salvation is conditional upon faithfully abiding in the Lord *unto the end*. Jesus does **not** present a salvation that guarantees heaven now – as in pray a prayer and your place in heaven is assured; the assurance that Jesus gives is that if we remain faithful to Him, then He will bestow His salvation upon us (*saved* is in the passive voice). We can be confident that as we live in obedience to the Lord, *tribulation* will be our lot. Paul was an apostle by the

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<sup>5</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>6</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8; Strong’s Online.

<sup>7</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>8</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>9</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



will of God, yet he faced much hardship and persecution for the Lord; there is a cost to being a follower of Christ – a cross that we must faithfully bear for the Lord (Luke 14:33)!

Paul now identifies the primary and specific audience of this letter: *the saints which are at Ephesus, and ... the faithful in Christ Jesus*. 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.

*Faithful*, within this context, does not carry what we would consider to be the usual sense of being loyal or conscientious, but rather those who are *believing* (in the full measure of what this means within Scripture) in the Lord Jesus.<sup>10</sup> *Believe* is the most common translation of the Greek root word *pisteuo*, which draws together the thought of evaluation and a resulting persuasion of the truth of a matter (or, in this case, of Who Jesus is and what He has done).<sup>11</sup> From this we can discern that if we *are believing* on Jesus, then it follows that we must be living out that persuasion (or *faith*); in other words, unless we are living in faithful obedience to the Lord, we really cannot say that we *believe*. James expressed this reality: “Even so faith [*pistis*], if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17); without a life that is in keeping with the professed *faith*, there is no *faith*, and no *believing* – it matters not what the profession might be! This is so much more than the modern concept of *believe* that is held by most Evangelicals; their *belief* is more in keeping with the devils: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). The devils acknowledge God and *tremble*; today’s Evangelical will acknowledge God (and will even express it in Biblical-sounding terms), yet unlike the devils, they do not tremble – there is no *fear of the Lord* in their hearts. The *faithful in Christ Jesus* are those who have a living persuasion that is being expressed through obedience to the commands of the Lord; Jesus said that the one who is loving Him must be carefully attending to His commands (John 14:15). This letter is directed to those who hold an active and firm faith in the Lord – there is nothing here for those who do not live faithfully for Him. Unlike many of Paul’s letters in our Scriptures, this one is largely instructive in nature, rather than corrective. The Corinthians were rebuked for not being able to bear the food that Paul desired to feed them (1 Corinthians 3:1-2), this letter contains much nourishing spiritual food.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/faithful>; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>11</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.



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 – something that the unrepentant sinner cannot appreciate. The Hebrew greeting, *shalom* (*peace*), carries the thought of being complete, fulfilled and at peace with both Jehovah and man; like so much in the OT, this, too, finds its ultimate realization in Christ.<sup>12</sup> 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 identifies the source of this *grace* and *peace* as being *God our Father* and *the Lord Jesus Christ*. Herein is the significant difference between the traditional greeting and what the Apostle uses: its 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 (everyone with whom Paul identifies: *our*). This must not be misconstrued to mean the Father of all of humanity 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 (faithful followers of the Lord Jesus), we have been brought into a unique relationship with the God of the universe through the completed work of Christ – as we remain *in Christ* (the only basis for being reconciled with our Creator), we will be adopted into His family and receive a heavenly inheritance with Him (1 Peter 1:3-5). God is identified as being *our Father* but that 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 declares that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ 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 evidence that there was no such question in the mind of the Apostle.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (BDB), *Bibleworks* 8; *Theological Wordbook of the OT*, #2401a, *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; the Greek word for *blessed* (*eulogetos*) is only applied to God, and acclaims God as being worthy of praise.<sup>13</sup> On several occasions during His ministry, Jesus spoke of Himself as *I am* (for example, John 13:19) – the eternal One (Jehovah), Who identified Himself to Moses in this way (Exodus 3:14). However, having taken on the flesh of man, Jesus also spoke of God as being His Father, and that He is 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);<sup>14</sup> even as He spoke with Nicodemus, He was also in heaven with the Father – as Jesus told the Pharisees: “I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:30). 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; 3:16; 1 John 4:9), and God the Holy Spirit, and *these, the three, are one* (1 John 5:7b, literal).<sup>15</sup> 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 well 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, and it is the denigration of the Son that John identifies as bearing the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 2:22). It was promised that, through the work of a coming Savior, Satan would be dealt a death-blow (Genesis 3:15); it was Jesus, the Son of God, Who fulfilled this promise! 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*<sup>16</sup>). 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

<sup>13</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, “blessed.”

<sup>14</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>15</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jehovah-witness-beliefs/>

Joseph Smith.<sup>17</sup> 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 many Catholics have applied to her 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 they are going to be in heaven with us.” (emphasis in original).<sup>19</sup> 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 all of those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. God has *blessed us with every spiritual blessing* (*all* and *blessings* are both singular in Greek);<sup>20</sup> there is not one spiritual blessing that God has neglected to bestow upon us. God may bless some with good health, or others with many of the good things in life, but these are only temporal in nature – **spiritual blessings** bear an eternal element and a heavenly flavor. Herein we receive our cleansing from sin, our sanctification in Christ, 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. Yes, faithfulness is required! The Lord declares that it is the one who is *overcoming* who will *inherit all things* (Revelation 21:7a) – the one who is victorious in Christ, which can only come through faithful obedience 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 blessing is *the heavenlies*, the dwelling place of God,<sup>21</sup> and not the earth, nor is it from within the heart of man (we will discover no spiritual illumination or blessing by looking within, despite how enthusiastically this is being promoted today). This blessing is from the Lord in

<sup>17</sup> <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.

<sup>18</sup> <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2021/03/once-again-pope-francis-says-mary-is-not-the-co-redemptrix/>

<sup>19</sup> Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>21</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

heaven and is available **only** *in Christ*. This (*in Christ*) is a critically important phrase, for it identifies where we must be in order to know every blessing from God: *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 every blessing from God – they are only available *in Christ*. Therefore, unless we are faithfully abiding *in Him*, we cannot know God's blessing, for we have no spiritual life apart from Christ so as to discern spiritual truth (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, is an integral part of a larger thought, and is tied to the previous verse that told us that God has bestowed *every spiritual blessing* upon His faithful ones *in Christ*. The first two words (*according as*) connect the blessing of God *in Christ* to an eternal plan – it is all unfolding in keeping with His purposes that were in place before He created Adam. Every blessing that is conferred is not an afterthought, but is part of the eternal purposes of God that are being made available to us *in Christ*. There is great surety here, for God is the One Who is orchestrating all things, and doing so through our Mediator, Christ!

The word *us* can only refer to the saints who are at Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, and to Paul, who wrote these words (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.<sup>22</sup> We read of God: *Who all men is desiring to save and unto a full knowledge of the truth to come* (1 Timothy 2:4, literal).<sup>23</sup> From this it is very clear that God desires to save everyone (*all men*), which is in keeping with: *for thus God did love* [from *agape*, love as an act of the will] *the world* [*kosmos* – humanity, not the world system] (John 3:16a, literal).<sup>24</sup> Yet Jesus made it equally clear that, despite His great love for all of humanity, not everyone will be saved, even among those who call upon 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 – there is a basis for making the choice; in this case, the deciding factor is that the *chosen* are *in Him*. It is equally clear, from this

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<sup>22</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>23</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>24</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



phrase, that it is God Who does the choosing, and He has clarified the basis for His choice.

Nevertheless, we must not be like the Calvinists who understand this to mean that God has arbitrarily selected some individuals for salvation and has determined damnation for the rest – all of this from eternity past! It is their contention that Christ did not die for all of mankind but only for those whom God has selected (the *chosen*) for salvation.<sup>25</sup> Their position fails the Biblical test on two very-evident points: 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 that would suggest that it is God’s choice that brings salvation to those who have been *chosen*. 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 humanity 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 have been chosen to live according to the life of service that God has prepared for us **in Christ**; it is a man-fabricated doctrine that contends that God has pre-determined someone named John Brown to salvation. Jesus forthrightly declared 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), yet He also made it clear that everlasting life and being His disciple is open to **whosoever** (John 3:16; Mark 8:34). Such an open invitation from the Savior does not fit within Calvinism; however, Jesus also clarified that although the invitation is open to all, it is 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 faithfully in obedience to Him, and so we read this warning: “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).<sup>26</sup> Contrary to Calvinism, God is *patient toward us, not desiring any to perish but all in repentance to come* (2 Peter 3:9, literal).<sup>27</sup>

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 those who are **in Christ** from before the act of creation! Can we comprehend such? Hardly. John 3:16 tells us that *everyone who is believing in Christ is not ruined but is having everlasting life*

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<sup>25</sup> This is the “L” of their TULIP: Limited Atonement; for more on this aberration of God’s truth, see <https://www.thenarrowtruth.com/the-tulip-of-calvinism.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>27</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



(literal translation).<sup>28</sup> *Believing* is in the active voice (which identifies this as something that *everyone* is responsible to do) and present tense (it must be presently active; a past belief holds no value).<sup>29</sup> This also runs contrary to Calvinism – they hold tenaciously to the total depravity of man to the extent that man cannot even choose to believe; 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 has communed with God more intimately than any Calvinist has, made it clear that every Israelite could make that choice. However, common Evangelical thinking also fails at this point: they contend that as long as someone has prayed a prayer for salvation at some time in his 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 also observe to do His commands.<sup>30</sup>

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 have made this holiness sound like it is optional: *we should be holy*; for those who are *in Christ*, this is far from the case. Consider a more literal translation: *we, being holy and without blemish before Him, in love He did predetermine us unto adoption through Jesus Christ ....*<sup>31</sup> 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 as a matter of convenience, yet they often break thoughts that should not be broken). As we consider the literal translation, we 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 extends the condition of faithfulness to the *adoption* that can be ours in Christ; as we are faithfully abiding *in Christ*, we have replaced our sin with His righteousness (removed the *old man* and put on the *new man* of Ephesians 4:22-24).

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 are then 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

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<sup>28</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

“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 **now** that is distinct from the world and set apart for the glory of God (*holy*).<sup>32</sup> Clearly, Jesus had this in mind when He said that it would be by their actions, their *fruits*, that the *false prophets* could be identified (Matthew 7:15-20); yet, just as clearly, He went on to show that not everyone would be accepted who was sure 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 faith-based works (a life of obedience to the Lord), it is dead (James 2:17). Paul goes to great lengths in 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 is gone but, rather, the struggle affirms that the Spirit of God has entered our lives (else there would be no struggle). This is the reason that God rejected those mentioned in Matthew 7:21-23 – although they had done many amazing things in His name, yet 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 reveal their “wolfishness” (they may 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*, actually ties more directly to what is coming in the next verse (as we saw from the literal translation that we looked at earlier). Our adoption by God through Christ flows out of His love for us – it was His love for all of humanity that brought Jesus from the glories of heaven to become the final Sacrifice for sin (John 3:16).

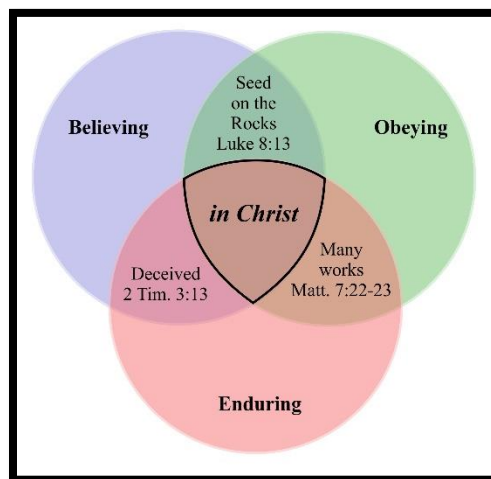
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<sup>32</sup> Strong’s Online.



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 (*proorizo*) that means to *define or mark out the boundaries or limits for*, and then the concept of doing so *before hand*.<sup>33</sup> God, in His infinite wisdom, did pre-determine some things for the faithful in Christ Jesus (including Paul and the saints of Ephesus – verse one); we have already noted that being *holy and without blame before Him* is part of what He has determined before creation for those who are *in Christ*. 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 as the only means for being *holy* (John 14:15) – this is what God has pre-determined for us from eternity past (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 eternal choice is those who are *in Christ* – **His choice does not place anyone *in Christ*!** Salvation will come to anyone who, through evaluation and believing, has placed his faith *in Christ* (John 3:18), and then remains faithful to the Lord *unto the end* (Matthew 24:13). There are several critical things that are inextricably entwined: *believing* (present condition of being fully persuaded of Who Christ is), *obedience* (without obedience to the Lord’s commands there is no basis for claiming to believe) and *endurance* (without steadfastness unto the end, all will fail). It is as these three components of being a Christian are brought together that we understand what it means to be *in Christ*, and that outside of Him is rejection by God! Jesus said: “**I am** the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); there is no other way – the *Way* to life is narrow and exclusive, which is why *few there be that find it* (Matthew 7:14). 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.



Despite Paul’s strong emphasis on our being *in Christ*, there are Evangelicals today (like the late Billy Graham and Robert Schuller, as two examples) who have plainly stated that there will be those in heaven who have not known Christ;

<sup>33</sup> Strong’s Online.

however, there is no room for such heresy here.<sup>34</sup> 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, nor Mohammed, nor Mary – access to the Father is available **only** through Jesus (John 14:6). We must be wary and vigilant to identify, or *mark*, those who have departed from this 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 wolves are not mentioned 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 within His family! Clearly, it is vitally important that we understand how we come to be *in Christ*, the Lord's expectations of us when we are there, and how we retain our position *in Christ*. Let's briefly review these to ensure that we understand the will of God in this matter.

**1. How to be *in Christ*.** As we have learned, *believing* is far more than a mental assent to something; after evaluation, we become convinced of the veracity of Who Jesus is and what He has done to buy us out of sin.<sup>35</sup> This is not just a past persuasion, but this conviction of the Truth must be a continuously present reality. We can see this by paying attention to how this word is used in passages like John 3:15-16: it is in the active voice (the *whosoever* is carrying out the action of *believing*), and it is in the present tense (the *whosoever* must be continually *believing*). *Believing* is open to anyone, but unless they adhere to the restrictive guidelines that God has placed upon it, they will be among those who are unable to find the *Strait Gate* (Matthew 7:14; John 14:6).

**2. How to live *in Christ*.** Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Our love for Him demonstrates our conviction that He is the Truth; as we are *in Christ*, His command is that we must then live in obedience to (*keep*) His commandments. Conversely, if we do not keep His commands, then it is evident that we do not love Him. We cannot be *in Christ* without obeying Him – this is what a *belief* in Christ requires. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [*are keeping* (present tense)] his commandments. He 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).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Burns, Billy Graham, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



**3. How to remain in Christ.** Jesus clarified this: “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4a); *abide* is in the imperative mood – it is a command to remain in Him, and in the active voice, which means that *we* (the understood plural subject) must do the *abiding*.<sup>37</sup> Jesus went on to explain this a little further: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ...” (John 15:10); here is the key to remaining *in Christ*: obedience to His commands! As noted earlier, when we face a command from the Lord, we have a choice to make: will we obey or will we disobey? This is why *abide* in John 15:4 is in the active voice: it is His command but it is up to us as to how we will respond to it. This is also the reason why the Scriptures warn us against being deceived (Matthew 24:4), about failing to remain steadfast (1 Corinthians 15:58), and to be alert lest our deceptive hearts turn away from faith in Christ (Hebrews 3:12).

In our relationship with God, there is no place for arrogance; we are told that our adoption is *by Jesus Christ to himself*. The Lord Jesus Christ, by means of His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection, completed all that is necessary for my *adoption*; it has nothing whatsoever to do with any personal merits or good works. Paul understood this very clearly, and warned against arrogance regarding the position that we have *in Christ*. To the Romans, he explained that we are grafted into Christ (the Olive Tree) by faith, but if we should permit our faith to fail, then we will be cut off since the basis for being *in Christ* (our faith) is no longer present (Romans 11:17-22; cp. Hebrews 3:12). Therefore, it is as we continue to abide *in Christ* that our adoption by God through Christ remains in place – all that we have is contingent upon remaining *in Him*!

Finding favor with God has never changed: it has always been by faith in Him; “But without [*apart from*] faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh [*is coming*] to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek [*are seeking*] him” (Hebrews 11:6).<sup>38</sup> Whether foreshadowed in the promises and practices of the OT or realized with Christ’s resurrection, all of humanity from all times comes to God through faith in the one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), the Lamb of God Who was slain from before creation (Revelation 13:8). God has extended adoption to those who remain faithfully *in Christ*!

*According to the good pleasure of his will* – herein lies the reason for all of this; God did it to show His favor. He adopted us as His children through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son, according to His eternal purposes. 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! In a day when we are urged by everything around us to “look out for number one,” sometimes it is difficult to realize that I am not the sole reason for God’s eternal purposes, and that His intentions are far higher than mine ever will be

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<sup>37</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

in this life. This fixation with “number one” even finds its expression among Evangelicals; how many times have we heard variations of “Jesus would have died for one person, for one sinner,”<sup>39</sup> where the expressed purpose is to show the greatness of God’s love, but what shines through is the importance of the individual. Yes, God has demonstrated His love for man by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, but that does not give us license to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and to become arrogant in our sin. Teresa of Calcutta, who made the quoted statement, did so to show the focus of her mission on helping even one person, yet she 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.”<sup>40</sup> Within the reasoning of Teresa, Jesus really did not have to die; salvation, for her, is through faith – sincere faith in anything! Man has become so significant in his own eyes that he feels capable of creating 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, and the latter to a preoccupation with who we are (or think that we are) that 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. How is it that God, Who is eternally holy, is able to bring into His family, children who have been *dead in sins* (Ephesians 2:5)? Holiness is God’s greatest attribute – proclaimed unceasingly by heavenly beings (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), and He cannot abide evil (Psalm 5:4). It is the holiness of God that requires a man to be bought out of sin, to be clothed in the righteousness of His Son, and only then to be counted worthy of coming into

<sup>39</sup> Kathryn Spink, *Mother Teresa*, p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.mmoutreach.org/aberrant/universalism/influence\\_of\\_universalism2.htm](https://www.mmoutreach.org/aberrant/universalism/influence_of_universalism2.htm).



His presence as His adopted child. God's perfect justice required that payment for sin be made, and His great love for humanity desired to have communion with the creature made in His image; both His justice and love were tempered by His holiness – the plan from eternity past was the only way to satisfy His holiness, justice, and love. It is God's grace expressed to His creation that brought *the Word* from the glories of heaven to earth in human flesh in order to pay the price for sin – a price that man could not pay! The Lamb of God came as the expression of God's grace in order to open a way for man to be reconciled with his Creator; through the completed work of Jesus, God's justice for sin was met, His holiness was not compromised, His love was revealed, and His mercy found its voice. Truly, His grace is glorious, beyond comprehension: His mercy desired that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9), His justice acknowledged that no one is righteous (Romans 3:10), and by His amazing grace He can say that, if we are abiding *in Christ*, then are we not only accepted by Him, but also become His children.

There is nothing within us that is worthy of God's grace; it is only through abiding in the Vine, through our faithful continuance *in Christ*, that we are *accepted*: honored with blessings and surrounded with favor.<sup>41</sup> The critical phrase that we must never lose sight of is “in the beloved” – *in Christ*! Nothing that we can do will ever serve to merit God's favor – the full work of salvation is complete in Christ, and in Him alone; we must simply accept what He has done for us (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;*



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

When we think of *redemption*, it is its root, *redeem*, that typically comes to mind, and as a result, we arrive at the concept of buying something back.<sup>42</sup> However, in the matter of Christ's *redemption* of us *through His blood*, the transaction is much more complex than we might realize at first. When we are born, we have a sin-nature (we are of the family of Adam: sinners); we are not sinners because of what we do, rather, 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, has ascribed a time of innocence – a time when we do not know right from wrong. Jesus made it very clear that infants

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<sup>41</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>42</sup> Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 edition.

and small children are a part of His kingdom: “Suffer little children [*paidion* (*pahee-dee’-on*), an infant or small child], and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).<sup>43</sup> Upon birth, God records our names in the Book of Life that He is keeping, and this is in accordance 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, he then 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 are not in 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 again. Jesus clarified this: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted [literally: *unless ye be turned*], and become as little children [*paidion*], ye shall not [*absolutely never*: in Greek, this is the strongest negative possible formed by two negatives (*ou* and *me*) with a subjunctive/aorist verb] enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).<sup>44</sup> 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 have returned to that child-like position *in Him*. We are bought out of sin when we place our 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 recorded in the Book of Life; being a sinner automatically carries a death sentence: “for the wages of sin *is* death” (Romans 6:23). However, this is not only physical death but also, more significantly, an eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15). Death hangs over the head of every person on earth! However, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, a way has been made to change the eternal destiny of the soul; nevertheless, it only applies to me when I, by faith, accept what He has done for me, and all of mankind. *In Christ*, we have been ransomed (*redeemed*) 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 (the price that Jesus paid to buy us out of sin), and our obligation to live in faithfulness to the Lord. Jesus stated very plainly: “he that

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<sup>43</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>44</sup> Friberg Lexicon; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-negation.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm).

shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [a demonstrative pronoun in the Greek that means “this one!”] shall [*will* (future tense verb)] be saved” (Matthew 24:13).<sup>45</sup> It is only as we remain faithful to the Lord that we will one day enjoy the splendors of heaven with Him: “He that overcometh [*is overcoming*, a present tense life of victory in the Lord (faithfully obeying Him)] shall inherit all things ...” (Revelation 21:7a).<sup>46</sup> What we must not miss is that just as surely as faith in the Lord Jesus places us *in Him*, so being unfaithful will see that relationship broken. “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia*: no faith, unfaithfulness], in departing [*becoming apostate*] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).<sup>47</sup> We have been warned – let us *take heed*!

Through His shed blood, Christ fulfilled forever the sacrificial practices so carefully prescribed in the Law of Moses.<sup>48</sup> “... 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).<sup>49</sup> The deliverance from sin that Christ paid for us at the cross is eternal, unlike the OT sacrifices that could never completely bring freedom from the penalty of sin (Hebrews 10:4), which is why they were required to be made on a continual basis – they merely foreshadowed what the Lord would accomplish (Hebrews 10:1). Even though Christ’s death and resurrection has made everlasting salvation available to everyone (1 John 2:2), it is **only** available through Him (the *Strait Gate* of Matthew 7:13-14; cp. John 14:6), and unless we remain faithful to Him, we will lose it (Matthew 10:22). Jesus commanded: *ye must remain in Me* (John 15:4, literal); the importance of choosing to remain *in Christ* cannot be over emphasized. “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: **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 death and resurrection of Jesus; 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, [what follows is the condition for becoming *partakers*] if we hold [should hold fast or should keep possession of] the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14).<sup>50</sup> We will share eternity with Christ if we retain our position in Him unto the end (through faithful

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<sup>45</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>48</sup> 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**.

<sup>49</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>50</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

obedience: *overcoming*), and we’ve already seen that to become faithless means to depart from God and become apostate (Hebrews 3:12).

We have the *forgiveness of sins* in Christ; our *redemption* from sin means that we have been forgiven! We, who were once dead in our sins, have been made alive *in Christ*; 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, we are to live lives that are *holy* and *without blame* before God (which means we must be *in Christ*) – this is God’s purpose for everyone who is *in Christ* (Ephesians 2:10). However, this must **not** be looked upon as repaying God for the freedom from sin that He has accorded us – rather, it is a life lived in gratitude for the wondrous work that He has accomplished for us *in Christ*. Because of the deliverance and forgiveness that is ours, why would we want to do anything less than walk in a manner that is pleasing to God (obedience)? This is **not** legalism; rather, this is a heartfelt, life-changing expression of gratitude for what God has done through the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. If we are abiding *in Christ*, then 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 [a command to attend to carefully to] my commandments” (John 14:15); the Apostle John declared: “And he that keepeth [to attend carefully to] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth [abideth] in him [God], and he in him” (1 John 3:24a).<sup>51</sup> Obedience is critical to remaining *in Christ* – it is the God-required 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 is a sense in which these acts should not be surprising but, rather, a natural product and an expected end of God’s rich grace. The most significant act of *redemption* is a product of God’s equally significant grace.

*Wherein (in which)* refers back to the *riches of His grace, in which He did abound to us in all wisdom and understanding*.<sup>52</sup> A reminder: the *us* includes the holy-ones (*saints*) at Ephesus, the *faithful in Christ Jesus* and Paul; there is a general grace of God that all of humanity enjoys, but this is not what is being discussed here. We read: “... pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44b-45). The grace that Paul is writing about is that by which God has brought His redemption and the forgiveness of sins to us, and all of this makes us acceptable

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<sup>51</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>52</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



before Him, but **only in Christ**. This grace **is available** to all of mankind, but is only expressed to those who place their trust in the work that Jesus completed through His death and resurrection. Therein is the marvel of the richness of God's grace – it is open to *whosoever will*! Not only is God's grace extended immeasurably to everyone, but it is all a part of His wise plan of which Paul is about to provide additional teaching.

Unfortunately, it is this marvelous grace, that perfect blend of God's mercy and justice that brings us into a place of holiness before Him *in Christ*, that modern Evangelicals skew toward mercy through their overemphasis of God's love for us; as a result, perhaps unwittingly, they have destroyed God's grace altogether. There can be no place for salvation as hell-fire insurance (i.e.: believe, pray a prayer, claim eternity in heaven, and continue as before) without first elevating the mercy of God to a place where His justice is lost. There is no other way to rationalize including 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 in light of His holiness. 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 [*identify and watch out for*] them which cause divisions [*not between brethren, but between an individual and God*] and offences [*opportunities to sin*] contrary to [*para, alongside of (the teaching does not need to be pure falsehood)*] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).<sup>53</sup> Unless we first identify those who are enticing others away from the truths of God's Word, how can we *turn away from them*?<sup>54</sup> We (those who are *in Christ* by faith) must exercise discernment; we must judge the works of others according to the standard of the Word of God (John 7:24). Contrary to modern thinking, Jesus has commanded us to *judge righteous judgment*, which can only come through a correct application of the Word of God. If we fail in this, we not only place ourselves in jeopardy of being snared by error or compromise, but we are also walking in disobedience to the Lord's exhortation. "He that believeth [*is believing*] on the Son hath [*is having*] everlasting life: and he that believeth not [*is disobeying*] the Son shall [*absolutely*] not see life; but the wrath of God abideth [*is abiding*] on him" (John 3:36).<sup>55</sup> Is obedience to the Lord important? Clearly, it is critical to continue *abiding in Christ*; it is the disobedient who are *abiding* under God's wrath. "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); as we compare Scripture with Scripture, it becomes crystal-clear that the disobedient are **not** abiding *in Christ* but *are abiding* under God's condemnation! Our priority must

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<sup>53</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>54</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>55</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

be to remain faithfully *in Christ*, as those who are *overcoming* through obedience to the Lord of grace!

The grace of God has been extended to us in abundance: “... where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). In His *wisdom*, God has made the full payment for sin without compromising His perfect justice and without tainting His pure holiness, so that He is able to show His loving mercy to sinful mankind and, thereby, restore His fellowship with those who bear His image. His *understanding* of our condition enabled Him to make a Way for us to accept His saving grace that is **only** available *in Christ*! It is God Who prepared the Way of salvation for His fallen creatures, and He did it before they were made. Christ, the eternal Word Who became flesh, is identified as having been slain “from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8); God’s plan of redemption was in place before creation began. God’s grace was ready for Adam and Eve’s sin, and He revealed it to them in the Garden of Eden: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).



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* (*musterion*), within our modern understanding, means *knowledge withheld*, but, within the context of Scripture, it means *truth revealed*, but only to those who are *in Christ* and have the Spirit of God abiding within.<sup>56</sup> Rather than bearing the concept of being incomprehensible, it carries the thought of something that requires the touch of God in order to be understood. Jesus told His disciples: “Unto you it is [*has been*] given [perfect tense, passive mood (it is God Who *has given*)] to know [*ginosko*, to come to know] the mystery [*musterion*] of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [do not believe], all these things are done in parables: That [*in order that* (Jesus now explains His purpose for using parables)] seeing they may see [*will see*; \*the subjunctive mood, in a purpose statement, acts as a statement of intent (not possibility)], and not perceive; and hearing they may hear [*will hear\**], and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them” (Mark 4:11-12).<sup>57</sup> This might seem counter-intuitive to us, but we must keep in mind that a *mystery* would only be revealed to those who were in communion with God; for most of those who heard Jesus’ parables, they could hear what He was saying but were unable to discern the truth that Jesus included in it. Elsewhere we read: “But the natural man [those who *are without*] receiveth [accepts] not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are

<sup>56</sup> Vine’s “mystery.”

<sup>57</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Strong’s Online; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).



foolishness unto him [*for to him it is foolishness*]: neither can he know [*he is not able to come to understand*] *them*, because they are spiritually discerned [*because it is being discerned spiritually*; requiring the aid of the Spirit of God (passive voice, it is the Spirit's work)]" (1 Corinthians 2:14).<sup>58</sup> Spiritual discernment comes only through the guidance of the Spirit of God – it is not something that we generate through our own efforts. The natural man (outside of Christ) cannot understand the *mystery* of God, because the Spirit of God is not abiding within him in order to guide him into all truth (John 16:13).

After expounding on the great grace of God that He extended to man, Paul notes that through this, God has lifted the veil just a little more on His will. It was inconceivable to the Jewish mind of Paul's day that God would offer 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 has always been applied by faith alone (Romans 4:16). Throughout the Law of Moses, God's grace and mercy were available 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 non-Israelite 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 offers 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 will trample His grace underfoot in their zeal for unity. It appears that anything is acceptable except that exclusive Narrow Way that leads to life – a Way that only a few will find (Matthew 7:14). It might seem that God's desire in the area of Ecumenical unity has been 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 (they see, but do not understand), and it shows up so blatantly in this area. There are those who speak loudly of the need for unity among "Christians," yet they are blind to the Word of God that presents His design for unity that can only be realized *in Christ*.

Again, we see God's favor (*good pleasure*) in the grace that He extends to all of mankind, with an additional note that all of this lies within His eternal plan (*purposed in Himself*). God was not influenced by the plight of Adam and Eve after they had sinned; in His foreknowledge, He knew the choices that they would make – He received no outside aid in the development of His plan for mankind. The sinfulness of man did not catch God off guard, 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*.

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<sup>58</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.



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:*

Today, we hear much of the “dispensation of grace” from most sectors of Evangelicalism, by which they mean the current time (or *dispensation*) in which we live: the *Age of Grace*, or also known as the *Church Age*. However, *dispensation*, as it is used here, makes no reference to, nor does it provide any support for the dispensationalist’s artificially-segmented theology; in truth, God’s grace to humanity found expression in the Garden of Eden, and it will continue to the end of time.<sup>59</sup>

This word *dispensation* (*oikonomia*) has to do with the management of things; it comes from *oikonomos*, the word for a steward, and therefore, it typically applies to running a household.<sup>60</sup> It includes administration or stewardship responsibilities – basically, the handling and dispensing of things needed to carry on a prescribed work. In this case, we are told that what is being administered is the *fulness of times* when *all things* will come under Christ’s authority. As we look ahead, we can see two separate occasions when this will come to be: the Millennium, and the New Heaven and Earth. During the Millennium, Christ will rule over all who are on the earth – namely, those who come through the time of the wrath of God and those who are born during the subsequent one thousand years. “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection [the *rapture*]: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). We are told that Jesus is *going to be shepherding all peoples with an iron staff* (Revelation 12:5, literal); *all peoples* (*ta ethnos*) speaks of foreigners (Gentiles contrasted with Jews, unbelievers with believers, etc.), and it will be during the Millennium when Jesus will *shepherd* those who do not know Him as their Redeemer (*foreigners*).<sup>61</sup> This will be a time when *all things* will be brought under the direct control of Christ (the glorified saints will reign with the Lord and will be His priests to those who are born during this time<sup>62</sup>), a time when

<sup>59</sup> Taking a broad view of history and prophecy, there are only three times when God’s grace toward humanity was/will be suspended: 1) when Noah entered into the ark and God closed the door, His grace was withheld from the humanity left on the outside of the ark as they faced the flood. 2) As Lot and his family left the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God’s grace was no longer extended to their wicked inhabitants. 3) After the Lord returns to harvest the earth of His own (the *rapture*), His grace will be withdrawn from those who are left on earth, as they face the time of the outpouring of His wrath (Luke 17:26-30).

<sup>60</sup> *Vine’s* “dispensation”; Strong’s Online.

<sup>61</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>62</sup> Those who enter the Millennium, after surviving the wrath of God, will have no opportunity to be saved; their eternal destiny was sealed when they missed the *rapture* – in the same way that those who did not enter the ark, perished in the flood.

the will of the Lord will be done on earth just as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10); yet, even during this time, sin will be present – there will be compliance but most will not accept Jesus as their Redeemer. However, the ultimate fulfillment will come in the New Heaven and Earth, when there will no longer be any foreigners (*ta ethnos*) – everything will be completed (the full meaning of *fullness* [*pleroma*]) and time will have been swallowed up by eternity. God created us within the framework of time, and so we have great difficulty grasping what eternity will be like. We’ve seen that the plan of God for mankind stretches from before the foundations of the world were laid, and now we see that it extends beyond the end of time itself – a future when all will be brought to completion within the design 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 time when *all things* will be brought together *in Christ*; there will be complete unity on that day. Today, only a small number find access *in Christ* to the Narrow Way that leads to life eternal (John 14:6); this will be an eternal day when all who are *in Christ* will be together with Him forever.

God will bring about this unity at the *fullness of times*, a future that is known only to Him, and, most importantly, He will do the gathering! The word translated as *all things* bears the neuter gender in Greek, and so it refers to everything, not just people or angels. Jesus said: “*Everything that the Father is giving to Me, to Me it will come ...*” (John 6:37a, literal); He affirmed what Paul presents here: there is coming a time when *everything* (it also is neuter) will be Christ’s.<sup>63</sup> The impact of sin fell upon all of creation, not just mankind, and this points forward to a time when all of creation will be restored *in Christ*. “Because the creature [*creation*] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:21-22).<sup>64</sup> As John beholds the New Heaven and Earth, God assures him: “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5a).

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 one*) in heaven and on earth, a coming together of *all things* under the headship of Christ. John wrote: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ...” (Revelation 21:1a); that which had been tainted by sin and sinners was forever removed. The *first passed away* as the Lord is seated upon His great white throne to render the verdict for the dead from all ages; everyone will be resurrected and stand before Him, and He will demonstrate the righteousness of His justice to all who are before Him (Revelation 20:11-15). A record of the works of each person will be consulted and a check will be made to see if their name is in the Book of Life. At this great gathering, only those who came to faith in the Lord

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<sup>63</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>64</sup> Strong’s Online.

during the Millennium will have their names in the Book of Life – everyone else will understand why they are condemned to the Lake of Fire for eternity (their record of works will condemn them). What is very apparent from this is that the Scriptures do not teach universalism, which has everyone eventually making it to the glories of heaven. Jesus explained: “And fear not them which kill [*who are killing (apokteino)*] the body, but are not able to kill [*apokteino*] the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy [*apollumi*, ruin or render of no value] both soul and body in hell [*Gehenna*, the Lake of Fire]” (Matthew 10:28).<sup>65</sup> What Jesus clarified is that the eternal element of man (the soul) cannot be *killed*, but it can be *ruined* along with his body in eternal fire (this is the *second death* that is mentioned in Revelation 20:6, also identified as the Lake of Fire in Revelation 20:14). Those of us who are *in Christ* will not be touched by the eternal fire (*Gehenna*) because God has chosen us *in Him*, and we stand before Him in the righteousness of Christ! We have seen what it means to be *in Christ*, and what is apparent to all who will see it, is that **only** those who are *in Christ* will have a part in this ultimate gathering of *all things* in heaven and earth *in Him*!

Let’s take a moment to step back so that we can see the bigger picture that impacts us today. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ...” (Hebrews 9:27-28a). This tells us that man dies only once and Christ died only once to bear the sins of humanity, but there is something more here that we sometimes miss. It is with certainty that men will *die once* and *after this* (a Greek demonstrative pronoun that refers specifically to death), *judgment (krisis)*.<sup>66</sup> When a judge renders his decision, a *judgment* has been made; in the same way, upon death, the Judge’s decision is made as it pertains to the soul of that person. We just mentioned that the soul is the eternal part of man; the body returns to the ground from which it came, and the breath (or spirit) returns to God Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). If the person is *in Christ* at the time of his death, then his soul will go to be with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8) – if not, then his soul will depart for Hades to await the day when body and soul will stand before God for the final time (Revelation 20:12-15). Physical death becomes the point of determination as to where that person will spend eternity; our response to the Lord Jesus in **this** life determines our eternal destination. Upon the death of a person, God makes the decision (*krisis, judgment*) as to where his soul will go (into His presence or into Hades); at the great white throne, the Lord provides every individual with evidence for His decision that was made at the time of his physical death, and then pronounces His eternal verdict. Yet there are those within the community of Evangelicals who do not accept the clarity of God’s Word on this matter – even those who are held in high regard by many: Robert Schuller, Billy Graham, C.S. Lewis, Chuck Colson, and Tony Campolo (to identify a few) have all

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<sup>65</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>66</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



Tony Campolo

promoted teachings that conform to some degree with the heresy of universalism. Even though the first four men noted are now dead, their influence lives on. We must be on guard lest we succumb to the false teaching of those who really should know better.

The essence of this verse is that all things will be brought together into perfect unity *in Christ*. This is not the Ecumenical unity in which those just mentioned have all been involved – a unity that comes by way of compromise and accommodation. Rather, this will be a unity that flows out of being *in Christ* – a place of holiness and righteousness. When God is prepared to conclude His dealings with mankind, when He is ready to gather all things into one unspoiled 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. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven ... the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away ... He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God ... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof” (Revelation 21:1-4, 7, 22-23). It is as we abide faithfully *in Christ* that we will be among the *overcoming ones* who will inherit all things; our obedience to the Lord’s commands is how we demonstrate our faithfulness to Him.

The last phrase of this verse, *even in Him*, is really a part of the next verse, so we will bear that in mind as we move on.



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:*

Consider a literal translation of this verse: *By Him, in Whom also we obtain an inheritance, foreordained according to the purpose of working all things according*



to the counsel of His will.<sup>67</sup> The phrase *by Him* comes from the previous verse, but is very much a part of the thought being presented here (we must not be unduly influenced by the verse breaks). Included is a reference to the *inheritance* that is prepared for those who are the adopted children of God through the work of Christ; the assurance of this *inheritance* comes through being *in Christ*! The centrality of being *in Christ* must not be missed! Paul has underscored that it is *in Christ* that we become the recipients of several things:

- 1) *in Christ* we receive every spiritual blessing (v.3),
- 2) *in Christ* we are among those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world (v.4),
- 3) *in Christ* we are predestined for adoption (v.5),
- 4) *in the Beloved (Christ)* we are accepted before God (v.6),
- 5) *in Christ* we have redemption (v.7),
- 6) *in Christ* all things will one day be gathered together in perfect unity (v.10), and, now,
- 7) *in Christ* we obtain an inheritance.

However, we must never lose sight of what it means to be *in Christ* and what it takes to remain *in Him*. *I am the Vine, ye the branches; he who is abiding in Me, I in him, this one is bearing much fruit because apart from Me ye are able to be doing absolutely nothing* (John 15:5, literal).<sup>68</sup>

We must not forget that this is an *inheritance* that is *in Christ*. *Obtain an inheritance* is one word in the Greek (*eklhrothmen*), it is in the passive voice (this is an *inheritance* that we receive), and the indicative mood, it is a statement of fact! We are assured that the *inheritance* is ours as long as we are remaining *in Christ*. 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 this inheritance that is available *in Christ*, for 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 are adopted by God and 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 coming day when He will gather all things together in 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 that we have *in Christ*, that we will purify our lives through obedience to His commands (1 John 3:3).

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<sup>67</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



We are reminded that all of this is done in accordance with the eternal purposes of God. It was God's eternal purpose that all that we are and have is *in Christ*; apart from Him we are lost, without hope and destined for eternal separation from Him in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). This is why it is so vitally important that we continue to abide in Him; if we fail to abide 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, and nothing that is outside of His control – all of this is being done in accordance with His will. God does not seek the counsel of man in order 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 (1 John 5:14-15), and to Jesus Christ, Who is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).



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

This is a more difficult verse. Once again, let's begin by considering a literal translation: *for our being to the praise of His glory, who did hope before in Christ*.<sup>69</sup> As we ponder this, we can see that the translators of the KJV may have missed the full intent of this verse. In similar fashion to verse four, we have the word *should* inserted that makes it sound like *the praise of his glory* is something to which we are to aspire; however, the Greek does not include anything to justify this.

Another area of confusion has to do with the phrase *first trusted in Christ*. As we have considered Paul's use of the pronoun *we* to this point, it has always been those to whom this letter is addressed and Paul (as its writer). However, as a more literal translation showed, this is not a reference to those who were the first to place their faith in the risen Christ; rather, it refers to those whose hope was in Christ from *before*. The hope of the OT saints had always been in the promise of a coming Messiah (the prophets wrote much of His coming), and this is somewhat of a parenthetical reflection that Paul makes as he ponders his days as a religious Jew. Even though his hope (and the hope of all of the OT saints) had been in the Coming One, the recognition of Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah did not come

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<sup>69</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

easily for the Jews of that day (and Paul was no different). Paul was very aware of his active failure to accord Jesus His rightful place as the Messiah (1 Corinthians 15:9), even while his hope, as a religious Jew, was also in this very Person! Paul could now see that even the Jews whose hope was in the Promised One, brought praise to the glory of God – this One Who was unfolding the plan that had been devised in eternity past in the counsel of the Triune God.

Although the primary application of this reflective verse is on the OT saints and the Jews at the time of Jesus, we can also learn from it. We, like those who *did hope before in Christ*, must also be to the praise of His glory – our very existence is 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. If ever there should be those who live to bring glory to God, it should be those whose hope is in Christ – the faithful *in Christ*, along with the OT saints and the Jews who first embraced Jesus as the Messiah.



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,*



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

After drawing special attention to those who *did hope before in Christ*, it is clear that Paul is continuing to teach about Him (*in whom*). The translators have added a word (*trusted*) in order to provide flow of thought. However, consider a more literal translation where such a supplied word is not necessary: *in Whom also ye who have heard the Word of Truth, the Good News of your salvation, in Whom also ye have believed: ye have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.*<sup>70</sup> The One in Whom the OT saints placed their hope, this is the One Who is central to the Gospel (*Good News*) message of salvation – the *Word of Truth* that came to the Ephesians. *Heard* (from *akouo*) is more than simply an auditory activity, it also includes understanding what is heard.<sup>71</sup> Romans 10:17 states: “so then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”; which is the exact situation with the Ephesians: they *heard* the *Word of Truth* (with understanding) and that led to their faith in the Lord (they *believed*). The Lord lamented the rebellious heart of Judah to Ezekiel, and declared that they “have ears to hear, and hear not” (Ezekiel 12:2); it’s not that everyone in Judah was deaf, but as a *rebellious* people, they had no ability to comprehend the

<sup>70</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>71</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

message from the Lord – they only heard words (they had no desire to understand). Jesus, on numerous occasions, called out, “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear”; He faced the very same problem with the religious leaders of the Jews – they had ears, they heard, but could not (*would* not) understand Jesus’ message. The Good News that the Apostles took everywhere that they went, was the *Word of Truth* that had to be heard, but more than that, it needed to be understood. Contained within the Bible is the Message of Truth that is empowered by the Spirit of God – the only Truth by which eternal salvation is possible (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)!

By its very definition, 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; today’s 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 – God, Who is objective, omnipotent, and a holy Being with Whom we all have to do. God can no longer be a God with thoughts that are higher than ours (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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries built their *new* understanding of the Bible. In their liberated thinking, they could handle the Bible like any other piece of ancient literature, and thereby they dismissed God’s inspiration and promised preservation of His Word (2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 24:35).

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 in an effort 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.”<sup>72</sup> The flow of logic that the EFC used (rationalism) 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 may not all arrive at the same understanding of the Scriptures concerning a given matter,

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<sup>72</sup> David V. Martin, *Trinity International University 1897-1997*, (TIU, 1998), p. 19.

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 have then been *sealed* with the Holy Spirit as promised; “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13). Notwithstanding the EFC’s perception of the Spirit’s role in bringing doctrinal 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 have been *sealed* by the Holy Spirit – the presence of the Spirit within is a sign that we are identified as belonging to Him;<sup>73</sup> therefore, the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives should be evident (Matthew 5:16). 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 [*this one* (a demonstrative pronoun in the Greek) *is not His*]” (Romans 8:9).<sup>74</sup>



The next question is this: is it possible for the *Seal* to be removed? Is our eternal destiny eternally secured, as most Evangelicals and Calvinists claim? This is an important matter, so let’s take a moment to consider it within the light of several Scriptures.

In **Romans 11:13-22** we read: “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation [*parazelloo* – to arouse to imitation] them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit [the *first* offering to God] be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And 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; Boast not against [do not feel superior to] the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief [*apistia* – no belief] they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue [this is the condition upon which the

<sup>73</sup> Gingrich Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

<sup>74</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

expression of God's *goodness* rests] in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."<sup>75</sup> We, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been grafted into the Root (Christ) by faith; this passage clearly teaches that if we set this saving faith aside (which is *unbelief*), then we also 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** – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God [which requires being in fellowship with Him first]. But 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)<sup>76</sup>] through the deceitfulness of sin. For 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 ....”<sup>77</sup> This is addressed to *brethren*, those who were earlier called *holy brethren* (Hebrews 3:1), and stands as a warning to us that we must guard our hearts; “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

**John 15:1-2** – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every 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 burned [literally, *it is burning*<sup>78</sup>]” (John 15:6). The final state of a broken-off branch is to be burned; this is a branch that has been *in Me* but has been removed because it produced no fruit in keeping with the Vine. The final state of those who are not *in Christ* is the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15).

**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* (future tense)].” *Endureth* (*hupomeno*), in the Greek, is an emphasized form of the word *abide*, as it is translated in Jesus' words: “Abide [*meno*] in me” (John 15:4). *Hupomeno* includes the idea of remaining faithful through difficult circumstances.<sup>79</sup>

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

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<sup>75</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>76</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>77</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>78</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>79</sup> Strong's Online.



*is the one* (referring to the one who is faithfully enduring through trials) who *will be saved* – again, future tense and passive voice (God does the saving).<sup>80</sup>

**Hebrews 3:6** – “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence [the condition] 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** – “When 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. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth [with understanding] the word, and anon [*euthos*; *immediately*] with joy receiveth it [an acceptance of the Word (believe); cp. Luke 8:13]; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [*euthos*; *immediately*] he is offended [falls away]. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth [with understanding] 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). But 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.”<sup>81</sup> Too often, the *fruit* is thought to be the salvation of souls, but consider this carefully. When a seed of wheat is sown, it grows into a plant; if all that it produced was a proliferation of greenery, 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 that 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 remove it; our expectation is that the branch will produce apples in keeping with the tree to which it is inextricably linked. In like manner, we are to produce fruit in keeping with the Spirit of God abiding in us, and Christ into Whom we have been grafted by faith; if we do not, then we are removed and are destined to be burned (John 15:5-6).

**Hebrews 10:23-29** – “Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith [*elpis* – *hope*] without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not 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. For if we sin wilfully after that we have **received the knowledge of the truth** [full knowledge of the Truth by means of faith in Christ], there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for [*only a frightful expectation*] of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three

<sup>80</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>81</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

witnesses: Of how much sorer [greater] punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot [*despised*] the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified** [made holy], an unholy thing, and hath done despite [insult] unto the Spirit of grace?”<sup>82</sup> What is undeniable is that the one who is now sinning willfully was truly born again: he received the full *knowledge* of the truth (a saving knowledge of Jesus), and he was *sanctified* (made holy) by the blood of Christ.<sup>83</sup> 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 for salvation, without the possibility of ever being lost, not only ignore the Scriptures that teach against this, but they endeavor to find support for it from God’s Word. For example, in John 10:27-29 Jesus says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *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 formed by two negatives *ou* and *me*; when these are used together with a subjunctive verb (as they are here), rather than presenting a possibility (as would be normal for a subjunctive verb) they form a very strong negative.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, this could be translated as *will absolutely not perish*; the promoters of eternal security stop there, but we need to note 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 becoming hardened through unbelief so that we turn our backs on the Lord (Hebrews 3:12-14). “He that believeth [*is believing*, present tense\*] on the Son hath [*is having*\*] everlasting life: and he that believeth not [*is disobeying*\*] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth [*is abiding*\*] on him” (John 3:36).<sup>85</sup> God has provided us with wonderful protection, but we still carry about within us a heart that is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). There is nothing in Scripture to support eternal security, if one takes the time and has the will to look carefully.

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<sup>82</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>83</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>84</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-negation.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm).

<sup>85</sup> Strong’s Online.

The Holy Spirit is the down payment, or deposit, (*earnest* – *arrabon*) toward the day of our complete deliverance from sin, at which time we will enter into the fullness of our inheritance *in Christ*.<sup>86</sup> He is the present assurance that God is committed to complete what He has declared concerning our future with Him. However, a down payment, or deposit, does not assure the completion of a transaction; it only confirms the intention to complete the agreement. It is God Who has given us this assurance: "...God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest [*arrabon*] of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). God has placed His Spirit within us to reassure 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 unbelief entering our hearts (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 possession, to the praise of His glory*.<sup>87</sup> Here we have two specific purposes for the Spirit of God as God's *Deposit* in us: 1) to assure us of God's desire for our complete deliverance, and 2) to bring praise to the glory of God. We (who are *in Christ*) have been purchased out of sin – He bought us, we are His *slaves* (*doulos*) and He is our Master! "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of [*ye have become enslaved to*] righteousness" (Romans 6:18). However, we still live in a fallen world and strive against our fallen natures (Romans 7:21-23); the fact that there is a battle raging is assurance that the Spirit of God is present – without Him there would be no struggle. There will come a day when God will deliver us from this conflict 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 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 clashes 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 tells us that God's 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 *Deposit* 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 must come obedience to the truth. "And this is his [God's] commandment, That we should

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<sup>86</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>87</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And 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 time we have departed from God and His Spirit is gone.



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



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

What follows now is specifically related to what has just been outlined; the *wherefore* is literally *because of this*.<sup>88</sup> Paul is very careful to build upon what he has just explained; there is a developing progression in his epistle. Paul makes specific reference to the Ephesian Christians, for he had evidently heard of how they were living out their faith after he had been with them (Acts 20:17, 31). 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 them to hold their beliefs no matter how strange. Today, however, this is no longer enough. Now we are expected to accept all beliefs as being 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 – 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, along 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 come together while turning a blind

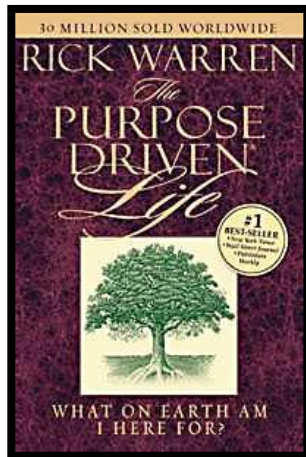
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<sup>88</sup> Strong's Online.



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’”.<sup>89</sup> He goes on to claim: “God won’t ask about your religious background or doctrinal views.”<sup>90</sup> 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 ....’”<sup>91</sup> By failing to hold to sound doctrine, Warren, and everyone who swallows his words without evaluating them in the light of Scripture, has 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 those who are living holy lives before God (i.e., a “love unto all saints”), but rather embracing all of those who merely **profess** to know God (this profession becomes the standard for acceptance, even to the point where they can hold their own definition of God). Yet, despite their best efforts to apply guilt to those who seek to live Biblically, those who advocate an Ecumenical unity as the primary focus for Christians (which, in their minds, is synonymous with *love*), 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 [*do not be holding to*] the unclean *thing*; and I [in turn] will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17);<sup>92</sup> what could be more spiritually *unclean* than a perversion of the true Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)? The Ephesians were known for their love of those who were abiding *in Christ*, who were obeying His commandments with joy, and who were demonstrating the presence of the Seal of God in their lives – i.e., *the saints*! There is no room for accepting those who profess Christ yet cling to an aberration of the Gospel. 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) – there

<sup>89</sup> Richard Bennett, “The Adulation of Man in the *Purpose Driven Life*.”

<sup>90</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> Bennett.

<sup>92</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



must not be a rounding of the sharp corners of the truth! 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).

Paul is overjoyed at what he has heard about the Ephesians, and 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 was a group of believers who were living out their faith in the Lord Jesus – a cause for Paul to be thankful.

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 how they were 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 Whom he is petitioning. He is calling on the God of our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of glory. 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.

Paul now expresses the purpose for his prayer to God for the Ephesians: *in order to give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*.<sup>93</sup> 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*.<sup>94</sup> This has nothing to do with intellect, for God takes pleasure in reversing what we would consider to be the normal order of things: "... 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

<sup>93</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>94</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

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 education 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 was pronounced because of (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,<sup>95</sup> and as their intellectual standing rose, their adherence to the Word of God declined. Likewise, the *revelation* is not 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 promised guidance into all truth (John 16:13). This is spiritual *wisdom* and *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 and technology. 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 when delineating their theologies. The late Clark Pinnock, an apostate Evangelical theologian, used what has been termed the Wesleyan quadrilateral to describe his theology: the Bible, tradition, experience, and reason.<sup>96</sup> However, it has become clear from his own spiritual downward slide, anytime that 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 has been 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



Harold J. Ockenga

<sup>95</sup> Harold’s name is pronounced *Ock-in-gay* (<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Ockenga.cfm>).

<sup>96</sup> David Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p. 173.

measure what we hear against the Word of God, for it must remain our exclusive Guide – the Standard against which man’s reasoning must be held (John 7:24).

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, or full, knowledge.<sup>97</sup> The *wisdom* and *revelation* that God will provide is not instilled in a vacuum – it comes in a full knowledge of God. Jesus said that when the Spirit of truth would come to abide within us, He would guide us into all truth (John 16:13), and He also said: “I am ... the truth” (John 14:6). It is as we permit the Spirit of God to transform our minds 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, Paul now provides the focus of his prayer: that the Ephesians’ ability to clearly understand spiritual truths would be enhanced through the work of 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. *Enlightened* is in the passive voice: it is only through the abiding Spirit of God that we can arrive at a proper understanding of the Scriptures, which are a disclosure of Jesus (Revelation 19:13).<sup>98</sup>

It is important to remember that we have been called from *darkness* into light (1 Peter 2:9); therefore, any spirituality that is based upon human intellect, is darkness, no matter how wonderful it may sound. Today, we hear much from the world about being spiritual; a few decades ago, spirituality was left to the fanatics and crackpots, but it has recently become quite fashionable. 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: a little Bible (very little), a dash of mysticism of any variety to add zest and, frequently, a generous helping of psychology to bind the whole thing together. There are no rules as to how this blending takes place, and only one rule as to its effectiveness: it must make us feel good! It is also understood that we must all be accepting of everyone’s blend as being valid and true, even if it is only for them. Any suggestion that there is only one way that is right or a truth that is exclusive, is regarded with scorn; within this *spirituality* there is no place for objective truth. Hence, all secular literature is on an

<sup>97</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

equal standing with the Bible, but then, this is nothing new. The philosophy that saw the development of the corrupt modern Greek text of the New Testament, which underlies all modern translations, sprang from this same 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 of the different forms of “truth” that result as being equally valid. Consequently, the monotheistic faiths of the world (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) became the proverbial fly in the ointment; yet today we are seeing these eroding and morphing so that they, too, can fit into this relativistic model. Ever since 9-11, great efforts have been made by non-Muslims to make Islam palatable to the western mind. Men like Rick Warren (as well as the late Robert Schuller and Pope John Paul II) consider Allah to be the same as the God of the Bible, and Islam is being falsely portrayed as a religion of peace and tolerance. There has been a gradual but definite eroding of the fundamentals of the Evangelical faith within the minds of those who are its leaders; could this be the falling away that will take place before the revealing of the Antichrist (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; until we are made alive by the Spirit of God through faith *in Christ*, 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 given to those who are His.

*For you to have come to know what is the hope of His calling.*<sup>99</sup> This is the first of three things that Paul now delineates, which form the core of his prayer for the Ephesians. What is the *calling* of God for the believer? In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul declared that God “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). God *is calling* (in the first reference, *called* is in the present tense) us to His own kingdom, and to the glory of the risen Lord Jesus.<sup>100</sup> Herein lies our hope: the *Good News* is God’s means of *calling* us to be a part of His kingdom, where He has prepared a work for us (Ephesians 2:10), and this is available to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our **hope** in God is present today, but the fact that it is *hope* means that there is an expectation of something more – indeed, it reaches into eternity! Because Christ is our Savior and High Priest, *may we be holding fast the confession of the hope*

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<sup>99</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



without wavering, for He Who did promise is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).<sup>101</sup> Our hope lies in Christ Who is eternally faithful! The wonder of it all is that this is something that we do not deserve; it is God Who *did save us and did call with a holy invitation, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal* (2 Timothy 1:9, literal).<sup>102</sup> This is a *holy invitation* given by a holy God to an unholy people Whom He *did save* through the blood of His Son: our *hope* is in God Who saves us and calls us *in Christ*, and, as we are *in Christ*, we are recipients of His grace that was prepared before time began! 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 working 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 (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

The second thing that Paul has for the Ephesians (and us) to *come 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: the inheritance that the saints of God have *in Christ*, and the inheritance that God has in the saints who are *in Christ*. In the OT, we read of Israel being God's holy possession, His *inheritance* among the peoples of the world (Psalm 78:71). The Hebrew word that is translated as *inheritance* "refers to a 'possession' to which one has received the legal claim."<sup>103</sup> The first time that Moses communed with the Lord at Mt. Sinai, He was given these words for Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure [*c'egullah*; primarily used for personal property, then a valued possession] unto me above [out of] all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6a).<sup>104</sup> Notice that the Lord's identification of Israel as being His *possession* was conditional upon their obedience. As we ponder Israel as the Lord's *possession* (subsequent to Mt. Sinai), we quickly realize that Israel did not follow the Lord very well at all! As a people, Israel never became that *peculiar treasure* of Jehovah, but the Lord did *call* them to carry the promise that He had made to Abraham: "... in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b). He clarified this to Abraham: "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad [Ishmael], and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be **called**" (Genesis 21:12). Even though Abraham had Ishmael, and several other children afterward (Genesis 25:1-2), the Lord assured him that His Seed would come through Isaac – the promised *blessing* was carried by *calling*, not merely procreation.

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<sup>101</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Vine's "To Inherit."

<sup>104</sup> Strong's Online; Theological Wordbook of the OT, #1460; BDB.



Paul elaborated on this theme in his letter to the Romans: *For the promise is not to Abraham nor to his seed by way of the Law (his seed being an heir of the world) but through the faith of righteousness. For if heirs [inheritors] by the Law, the faith has been made void and the promise has been abolished* (Romans 4:13-14, literal).<sup>105</sup> In other words, the children of Israel, as the recipients of the Law of Moses, were not the de facto heirs of *the promise* made to Abraham inasmuch as *the promise* did not spring from the Law but from Abraham's belief in Jehovah (his *faith*): his conviction that Jehovah was faithful to His word. Paul refers to Abraham's *Seed being an heir of the world*, and we have just considered the assurance that *all things* in heaven and earth will be brought together *in Christ* (v. 10). *Seed* is an interesting word: in English, Hebrew and Greek the word is the same whether singular (as in one) or singular as in a collective whole (many, yet considered as being one collective unit). Therefore, particular attention needs to be given to the context of such words. In this instance (*his seed being an heir of the world*), *seed* is singular, but the word *heir* (which does not carry the same anomaly as the word *seed*) is also singular thereby making the *seed* **One** (not a collective unit). The promise to Abraham was that through him *shall all families of the earth be blessed* (Genesis 12:3), and Paul understood this to point specifically to Christ!

It is clear in Ephesians 1:4 that we are a people chosen by God *in Christ* before the foundation of the world. As His people, we 1) obtain an inheritance *in Christ* (v.11), and 2) *in Christ* 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* within 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 deliberately use the words *will be 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, and the full reflection will only come when we are in glory with Him. Those who have had their debt of sin paid can take no credit for the payment that was made by Christ!

Before we leave the subject of the saints being an inheritance to God, we must briefly consider the impact that this has on the Calvinists' doctrine of Unconditional Election (the U of TULIP). One of the central tenets of Calvinism is their belief that God has predetermined every individual who will be saved, and that He did so from eternity past: "By election we mean the eternal choice by God of certain definite individuals in Jesus Christ unto salvation."<sup>106</sup> Although there are parts of Ephesians chapter one that they like to use in support of their theology, this is **not** one of them. Since the saints are God's inheritance, they cannot have been individually pre-selected by Him from eternity past – that is **not** an inheritance! Scripture identifies

<sup>105</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon.

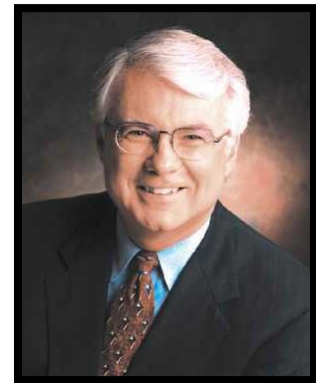
<sup>106</sup> <https://www.prca.org/resources/publications/books/saved-by-grace-a-study-of-the-five-points-of-calvinism/item/67-saved-by-grace-chapter-3>.

the *saints* as those who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and live faithfully for Him – Paul calls these God’s *inheritance*. A definition of the Greek word behind *inheritance* is this: “what is received as a gift from someone who has died.”<sup>107</sup> Within this context, it is Christ Who has died. Through His death and resurrection, we, who are faithfully abiding in Him, will inherit His kingdom and glory; at the same time, and also through Christ’s death and resurrection, those from all ages who are *in Christ* are either a *firstfruit* to His Father (OT saints), will be a part of the full harvest to God (NT saints at the rapture), or the gleanings of the Millennial saints at the end of time (God’s *inheritance* that is made possible by Christ’s atoning work). This is another in a long list of Bible texts that raises a question mark over Calvinistic doctrine. We must be alert and test all things (and everyone) against the standard of God’s Word (1 John 4:1).



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 that has been exercised toward us. We really have no idea of the power of God. Charismatic Benny Hinn, believes that God is a miracle-worker, and then he tries to harness that power into a formula, or an evangelistic methodology, so that he can perform “miracles” at his call. Bruce Wilkinson is convinced that God can do anything, and he seeks to encourage everyone to invoke God’s abundant blessings by repeating the prayer of a little known OT man, Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:9-10). Other Evangelicals have reduced the power of God to a doctrine that can be compromised or rationalized into oblivion at will. All of these fail 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 (as He did when creating this present universe), 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 willing sinner (who is **dead** in sin), make him alive *in Christ*, adopt him as His own child (complete with



Bruce Wilkinson

<sup>107</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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 exact from 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 *mighty 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 conditional 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 was evidenced when Christ was raised from the dead; all that we enjoy as believers is because of Christ's death 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 [*founder*] and finisher of [*the*] faith"<sup>108</sup> (Hebrews 12:2) – both their faith and our faith (for it is one!). 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 to 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 humanity in the dark concerning what God has accomplished by the way of the cross. The warning that Peter gives is addressed to Christians: **we** must take heed that **we** do not fall prey to the wiles of Satan, for the primary targets of his wanderings are the children of God (Revelation 12:17). As believers, we are not immune to his destructive activity – Jesus warned us: *Be watching lest anyone should lead you astray* (Matthew 24:4, literal);<sup>109</sup> perhaps one of the most cunningly destructive

<sup>108</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>109</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

crafts of the devil is today's push for tolerance and accommodation. Tolerance and acceptance are considered to be far more important than Biblically correct doctrine and truth; the former is inclusive, friendly and feigns love, yet leads to ruin, while the latter is exclusive and narrow, and leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). Many within the Evangelical community show great disdain for those who live in obedience to the Lord's commands; the Ecumenical mind has become accepted as the norm within this community of professing Christians who thrive on compromising Biblical teachings and accommodating aberrant and heretical doctrines.

An associate editor of *Christianity Today* (Agnieszka Tennant) wrote an article in 2005 titled "How the Pope Turned Me into an Evangelical."<sup>110</sup> 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."<sup>111</sup> She went on to say:

"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 ...."<sup>112</sup>

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 Billy Graham's form of Christianity (once acclaimed as being *New Evangelicalism*). The pope has a religion, and Billy Graham has a religion: clearly, there is very little difference between the two; in that, there is much truth. Neither one adheres to the Word of God, and both compromise the clear instruction of the Scriptures. *Christianity Today*, the voice of the New Evangelical movement (which is no longer *New*), has made its compromise abundantly clear.

There have always been those who claim that Christ did not really die, but simply swooned, or went into a coma. However, of this Paul leaves no doubt when he says that Christ was raised *from the dead*: it means that He was lifeless; there was no physical life in Him – when Jesus commended His spirit (breath) to the Father and

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<sup>110</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/aprilweb-only/12.0.html>

<sup>111</sup> Agnieszka Tennant, "How the Pope Turned Me into an Evangelical," <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/aprilweb-only/12.0.html>

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

*gave up the ghost, He died* (Luke 23:46)! God *raised Him out of the dead* – He was numbered among the dead, but is now raised to never die again (Romans 6:9).<sup>113</sup>

The power of God not only raised Christ from the dead, but also *did seat Him on His right in the heavenlies*.<sup>114</sup> Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is seated in His glorified body with God, the Father. Jesus, eternally with the Father and the Spirit as the *Word* (John 1:1), took on the body of a man in order to pay the debt for sin that man owed, so that He could make salvation available to all of mankind by shedding His blood (Hebrews 9:22), and break the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15). Having taken on the body of a man, He bore the punishment for sin and will carry the scars of His sacrifice to eternity in His resurrected, 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 goes on to describe the exaltation of Jesus; the fact that He has been seated with the Father in the heavenlies should say it all, but he wants to ensure that we grasp the full reality of what this means. *Far above* is from the single Greek word *huperano*: *ano* means above, and *huper* strengthens that to mean *beyond above*.<sup>115</sup> God has taken Him to the pinnacle of all that is possible to consider or imagine. Paul now elaborates on what He is *beyond above*. The next phrase comes from the Greek root *pas arche*; *pas* is in the singular and so is best translated as *every*, *arche* refers to primacy (that which is first in time or utmost in authority).<sup>116</sup> Since *time* doesn't fit within this context, we understand that Jesus has been placed in a position of authority that is *beyond above* every other authority. *Power* (*exousia*) speaks of *authority* (not *might*) with the inherent right to act without being questioned – often applied to governments in this world.<sup>117</sup> *Might* (*dunamis*) is most often translated as *power*, and refers to strength or inherent ability.<sup>118</sup> *Dominion* (*kuriotes*) carries the root word *kurios* or lord: those who hold the *might, power* and *authority* as lord over others.<sup>119</sup> 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* everything that Satan offered to Him. He has been placed higher than any other being – any *name that is named*; no matter who it is, Jesus has been

<sup>113</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>116</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>117</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>118</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.



exalted higher, and that's not just within this world, it also applies to the world that will come. As John beheld the New Jerusalem descending out of the New Heaven onto the New Earth, he wrote: "And I saw no temple therein: for the **Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it**. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and **the Lamb is the light thereof**" (Revelation 21:22-23). Jesus, the only Mediator between man and God, has been raised to a place that is above everything!



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



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

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 God did put into subjection under His feet*.<sup>120</sup> When Adam sinned, he surrendered his God-given dominion (ability and authority) over the earth to Satan (Genesis 1:28; we see that Jesus did not dispute Satan's right over all of the kingdoms of the earth, Luke 4:6-8). Through His sacrifice, Christ not only procured salvation for lost mankind, but He (as the perfect Man) also regained the right to rule over the earth, which He will exercise during the Millennium (Revelation 20:6). Paul has given Christ's exalted position great emphasis – not surprising, since He **is** God (Philippians 2:6-7)!

*And He did give Him, Head over all things, to the called-out ones.*<sup>121</sup> We have just seen that Christ has been placed beyond all authorities and powers, and now it is clarified that He is also the Head of the *called-out ones* (*ekklesia*), His Body (1 Corinthians 12:27). This introduces the subject of the *ekklesia* (most often translated as *church*), of which Paul will have much more to teach the Ephesians and us.

The Greek word translated as *church* is *ekklesia* (*ek-klay-see'-ah*), and literally, it means a gathering of called-out ones.<sup>122</sup> The Greek word for *church* is *kuriakon*, which means *a temple of God*, or god, and comes from *kuriakos* meaning *pertaining to a Lord*.<sup>123</sup> 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*) that is most frequently translated as *church*, speaks **only** of the people, and not of the building, nor of the system of doctrine or authority that today defines a "church." Interestingly, the Greek word (*kuriakon*), which would have correctly been translated as *church*, does not appear anywhere in the text of Scripture.

<sup>120</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>123</sup> Webster's 1828 Dictionary, "church."

Unfortunately, we too 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*, and the very limited organization that Scripture outlines for us. It seems evident 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 Head and Protector of the saints; He will guard the spiritual welfare of those who are His against outside attack. “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. In ourselves, we are not invincible, but, as we abide in the Vine, we are assured of His protection from every outside foe (John 10:28-29) – not necessarily physically, but spiritually. Jesus' words were that He would build His assembly of believers, and that the gates (or counsels) of hell (Hades) would not prevail (be strong) against them (Matthew 16:18).<sup>124</sup> Despite all of this protection from outside forces, we must remain ever vigilant against being deceived (internal failure) and drawn away from the Lord (Matthew 24:4; Hebrews 3:12).

*Which* is from a Greek pronoun that is feminine and singular; *ekklesia* is also feminine/singular; hence, we have: *the ekklesia, who is His body*.<sup>125</sup> Paul tells us a bit more about His body: *the full measure of Him Who is completing all things in every way*.<sup>126</sup> Ponder this: the eternal Word became the Son of God and Man, paid the price for the sins of humanity, and is now eternally as one with those who are *in Him* – His identity is now forever linked to those who are His by faith (Hebrews 2:16-17)! From eternity past, it was in the foreknowledge of God (including the Word, Who became the Only Begotten of the Father [John 1:14]) that He would redeem a people for Himself – a people who would be His, being both their Creator and Savior. Even in the New Heaven and Earth, the Word is called the Lamb – the Sacrifice for the sins of humanity (Revelation 22:1)!

Once again, we are advised that God will be gathering *in one all things* in Christ, but this tells us that Christ is already at work preparing for the day that is coming – and nothing will be left out. Yet the *full measure* of Christ is His Body (the *ekklesia*) of redeemed ones who are *in Him* – not the *all things* that will be brought together *in Him*! Christ is inextricably identified with His saints – those who are living in faithful obedience to Him.

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<sup>124</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>125</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>126</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



## Chapter 2 – Made One in Christ



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

The KJV translation shows this as a new sentence and a new chapter, thereby placing a very significant break between the last thought of Chapter One and the first one of Chapter Two. It seems that, because of this disconnection, the translators have inserted “hath he quickened” in an attempt to make a complete thought. Let’s draw these two verses together (the last of Chapter One and first of Two): *the ekklesia, who is His body, the full measure of Him Who is completing all things in every way; and you, being dead by trespasses and sins...*<sup>127</sup> *You* is a reference to those who make up the Body of Christ; the reality is that we, who are His Body and alive *in Him*, have all come from a place of being spiritually dead! “They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3), “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It was by one man, Adam, that sin came into the world, and along with sin came death (Romans 5:12), because death is the just recompense for sin (Romans 6:23). Paul is reminding the reader that those who are the chosen *in Christ*, who receive every spiritual blessing from God, who are holy and without blame before Him, and who are adopted by Him as His children and inheritance (Ephesians 1:3-5, 18), have all come from a place of death. *And God is demonstrating His love to us that we, who are yet being sinners, Christ on behalf of us did die* (Romans 5:8, literal).<sup>128</sup> If we take this thought back to Adam, then we can see that even as he brought sin and death into the world, God already had a plan of redemption in place. The Lord promised to deal with finality with Satan (the deceiver): “[*He, the Promised One*] shall bruise thy head [*Satan*], and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15b)<sup>129</sup>, and His redemptive plan was implemented through the blood that was shed by the Lord when He provided coats of skins as coverings for Adam and Eve.

It is at this point that the Calvinist says 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 brings life, man cannot even exercise faith to believe and accept, through repentance, God’s gift of salvation – without receiving life from God, man cannot accept His life through Christ. Nevertheless, even though they advocate that man is totally depraved – without any ability to repent and accept God’s proffered gift, they still contend that man is accountable to God for not

<sup>127</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> BDB.

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 from Scripture that does not fit with his theology; even the plain text of Scripture is twisted in order to conform to his thinking.

*Being dead by trespasses and sins*, begins a passage that tells us of who we were before Christ purchased us out of sin, thereby highlighting 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 has been painting by relating to us where we were before Christ. Even as we have already been reminded that Christ died a literal death (Ephesians 1:20), so our memory is refreshed that before we were *in Christ*, we were dead! However, we were not dead physically (lifeless), we were dead *by trespasses and sins* – all that we did confirmed that we were spiritually dead before our Creator. *Trespass* (*paraptoma*) means to deviate from the prescribed path of uprightness, implying an offence that although not deliberate in nature, comes from a place that is deeper than rational thinking.<sup>130</sup> *Sin* (*hamartia*), on the other hand, describes the separation from God that is characteristic of every child of Adam and Eve – it is present before the action (*paraptoma*).<sup>131</sup> Therefore, we were dead in every respect – we were in contradiction to God's standard of holiness (*hamartia*), and in our attempts at doing right, we failed (*paraptoma*). 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).

Just how dead were we? Are we as dead as the Calvinists would have us believe? Or, does *whosoever is believing* in Christ (John 3:16) actually mean that *anyone* is able to come to faith in Christ? There is one thing that the Calvinists will not acknowledge, and that is that even sinful humanity still bears the image of God. There is full acceptance that Adam and Eve, before they sinned, bore the *image of God*, for we read: "So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). There is also no doubt that sin marred God's image in man, for he was now a sinner; without God's intervention (His plan of redemption), man was destined to be eternally separated from Him. However, as Noah and his family left the ark, God implemented the death penalty and explained His reason for doing so: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6). After the Lord had just destroyed all of humanity except for eight people, He

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<sup>130</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>131</sup> Strong's Online.

establishes the importance of human life because the *image of God* was still there! The *image of God* is more than simply man being created with a body, soul and spirit – a three-part creation made by a triune God. God instilled within man the ability to think, to reason and to make choices based upon his cognitive abilities; all of the other creatures were made with physical bodies and given life (spirit). For the creation of man, God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [*lives*; this is plural]” (Genesis 2:7)<sup>132</sup> – God breathed into man his eternal soul (spiritual life) **and** his breath (physical life). Unlike all of the other creatures that God made with only life (*spirit*), He placed within man an eternal dimension: his soul. It is within the soul of man that the image of God still resides: his emotions, his cognitive abilities and, out of these, his capacity to make choices.

Sinful man cannot understand everything that God has given to us in His Word because most of it can only be understood with the aid of the Holy Spirit, Who does not reside within unregenerate man (1 Corinthians 2:14). However, despite this, the sinner is fully capable of evaluating what Christ has done to pay the price for his sin, to think about it, and to decide if he is convinced that it is true. This is the essence of the Biblical word *believe*; it includes evaluation before coming to a conviction of the truth of a matter.<sup>133</sup> This is the reason that Jesus could say: *whoever is believing in Him will not perish but is having life everlasting* (John 3:16b); *believing* is in the present tense and active voice – it is ever continuous and it is the action of *whoever*.<sup>134</sup> Through Isaiah, the Lord made this request of sinful Judah: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). The Hebrew root of *reason together* (*yakach*) carries a legal overtone, and can mean to judge or decide; because of her rebellion, Judah was guilty of breaking her covenant with Jehovah, and the Lord is calling her to make her case before Him within His court of law.<sup>135</sup> Notice two things: 1) the Lord Jehovah does not simply declare that Judah doesn’t have any hope and then condemn her – He calls on her to think about what she is doing, and 2) the bulk of the verse expresses the Lord’s ability to bring cleansing from sin – when Judah understands her sin before God, the anticipation is that she will repent and be cleansed. This is addressed to the people of Judah who at that time were immersed in idolatry and empty ritualism, yet the Lord acknowledges their ability to evaluate, reason and make a choice – the *image of God* was still present, even within these rebels!

Clearly, we were spiritually *dead*, but that must not be skewed to mean the *total inability* of the Calvinist;<sup>136</sup> the invitation is open for everyone to evaluate what

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<sup>132</sup> BDB.

<sup>133</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>134</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>135</sup> Strong’s Online; Holladay Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

<sup>136</sup> For a more complete examination of Calvinism, go to: <https://www.thenarrowtruth.com/tulip---full-study-in-one.html>



Christ has done to make payment for sin, and then to choose either to accept or reject it! Even though the invitation is open to everyone, acceptance *in Christ* only comes when the terms that God has in place are met – redemption is His plan, and we cannot presume to modify His terms of acceptance.



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 by 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 that reality, or its consequences.

Incredibly, there is a growing element within Evangelicalism that seems to be blind to the reality that they are walking in the ways of this world (*according to the course of this world*). When seeking to establish a church, Rick Warren uses techniques that were developed by the world in order to grow a successful business; 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 ...."<sup>137</sup> Although Rick Warren has officially denied this,<sup>138</sup> his connection with Blanchard is deep: his name is on the Founders Board of Lead Like Jesus, an organization that



Ken Blanchard



Rick Warren

was begun by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges!<sup>139</sup> Further to that, you do not have to look very far to discover that "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."<sup>140</sup> Both Robert Schuller (of the Crystal Cathedral and Hour of Power) and Bill Hybels (Willow Creek Community Church) built their works following this pattern as well. The more that men who follow the ways of

<sup>137</sup> George Mair, *A Life with Purpose*, p. 193.

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.lighthouse-trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=3448>.

<sup>139</sup> <https://leadlikejesus.com/leadership-team/>.

<sup>140</sup> <https://www.lighthouse-trailsresearch.com/PressReleasekenblanchard.htm>.

the world, are emulated within Evangelical churches, the greater will be 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 they must sell 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: “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 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; and 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: that 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 (the philosophy of this world)? Very simply, they cannot! Their success is measured in numbers: the larger the numbers, the greater their success; God’s success is measured by a remnant of holy ones who will be saved because they have faithfully followed the Narrow Way that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). The sad reality is that most Evangelicals today have accepted a watered down Message; they have never heard the “come out from among them” of the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:17), and most of those who have heard, prefer their status quo. They remain on the broad way of religiosity that leads to death, having only “a form of godliness” that leaves their sinfulness intact – “from such [we are to] turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).

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 is made available through Jesus Christ, we walked in accordance with Satan, described here as the *the ruler of the jurisdiction of the air*.<sup>141</sup> In the days of Job, Satan told God that he came “from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7; 2:2). 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 (Revelation 12:9), and since we cannot see

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<sup>141</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon.

them with our eyes (for they are spirit beings), 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). What is abundantly clear from Jesus’ words is that there is absolutely no middle ground between following Him and being aligned with Satan. For quite some time, Evangelicals have harbored those who have disassociated the idea of Jesus as being Lord of your life from Jesus as Savior, and have effectively made these two separate events in a “believer’s” life (*Jesus as Lord* is, of course, optional). This same error is propagated through the simple-conversion technique that has been popularized through mass crusades and rallies, as well as through the Ecumenical thrust that says that you can be saved and remain among those who promote heresy. Billy Graham 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 believed that you can enter the narrow way that leads to life, and still walk the broad way that leads to death – these are two very 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 6:14-17; 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, whom we followed before we experienced the saving grace of God. He is called *the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*, the spirit that is exerting effectual influence in the descendants of Adam who are obstinate against God.<sup>142</sup> It is clear that the sinner cannot justify himself by saying, “The devil made me do it;” Eve tried this and was unsuccessful (Genesis 3:13). Satan is on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8), looking specifically for the child of God who has let the Lord’s protection slip, so that he might work his deception on him (Revelation 12:17); the *sons of disobedience* are not of great concern to him – he will work through them to accomplish his purposes, for they are already his. To whom are they in *disobedience*? To the Lord! They are the slaves of sin, and most of them do not even realize it: *for when ye were slaves of sin, ye were free from righteousness* (Romans 6:20, literal).<sup>143</sup> Notice that *sin* and *righteousness* are mutually exclusive; *sin* is the domain of Satan, *righteousness* is of the Lord – there is no middle ground, no gray area! Unless we are *in Christ* (now understanding what that entails), we remain in the domain of Satan – regardless of how righteous

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<sup>142</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

we might appear to be to others. Carefully consider Jesus words: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because **strait** *is* the gate, and **narrow** *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it**” (Matthew 7:13-14); “**I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); *if you are loving Me, My commandments you must keep* (John 14:15, literal).<sup>144</sup>



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* (*anastrepho*) is used metaphorically to refer to our lives and how we conduct ourselves – our life and character.<sup>145</sup> The guidance system that we had when we were outside of God’s saving grace, was based upon what we wanted or whatever worked for us (*lusts of our flesh*), and unless the Spirit of God is permitted to influence us once we believe, we can easily continue to abide within the realm of Satan’s workshop (Luke 8:13)! You will



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recall that *believe* within the Biblical context, means to hold a conviction of the truth of a matter after having evaluated it carefully, and so, if we *believe Biblically*, then we have stepped out of Satan’s dominion. It is interesting to hear talk-show host, Dr. Laura, expound on the necessity of “religion” to make a difference in a life, and that there needs to be a standard that is bigger than us, against which we can measure the decisions that we make – otherwise our decisions will simply be 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. *Doing the will of the flesh* (literal) points to those things that bring about

<sup>144</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>145</sup> Vine’s, “conversation,” “behavior.”



physical gratification, however temporary, and would include such things as gluttony, position and power, sexual sins, and all sorts of self-indulgent pleasures.<sup>146</sup> The *will of the mind* is where most religions and life-philosophies enter as they apply a mental salve to provide a temporary I'm-OK-perspective on life and the hereafter – an easing of the conscience through rationalization. Modern spirituality, like that encouraged by Oprah, is founded upon a deep introspection that “finds” the good that they are sure is within all of us; the devil cares not what is used to bolster self-justification, for he knows that everything outside of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is still his territory.

Elsewhere, Paul elaborated on this: “Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication [*porneia* – illicit sex], uncleanness [the opposite of holy living], inordinate affection [vile or evil passions], evil concupiscence [longing, lust], and covetousness [a greed for more], which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the **children of disobedience**: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them” Colossians 3:5-7.<sup>147</sup> This is who we were outside of Christ; some characteristics are perhaps cultivated more than others, being more socially acceptable. For example, covetousness (identified as *idolatry*) within Evangelical circles, is often paraded as being successful, and is acclaimed; it may even be accompanied by an apparent generosity that serves to mollify the conscience in an effort to suppress the presence of impure motives. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:5-6).<sup>148</sup> If we are *in Christ*, we will then be free from the snare of the devil, and be spiritually alive.

Prior to being delivered out of sin by Christ, we were no different from anyone else in humanity – as sinners, we all remained under the wrath of God – *children of wrath*. Our very nature, as descendants of Adam, destined us for eternal separation from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23); it is only those who are *in Christ*, whose names are recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life, who will enjoy the glories of our inheritance in Him (Revelation 20:15). What Paul has made abundantly clear is that there was nothing special about us before we became *in Christ*; we were the average, run-of-the-mill sinner on the broad road to destruction! Moreover, there is nothing that we can do that can take us beyond the status of a 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; it should

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<sup>146</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>147</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>148</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



raise a heart of renewed thanksgiving for what God has done for us, and instill within us a greater commitment to walking in faithful obedience to Him!



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

We have probably all heard of the great “but God” passages in Scripture; however, the Greek word translated here as *but*, can just as easily be *and*, *moreover*, or *then*.<sup>149</sup> So, rather than focusing in on the phrase *but God*, it is better that we turn our attention to 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 to mankind a way of escape from His wrath. The just recompense for sin is *death* (Romans 6:23) – not just physical death, but the eternal ruin of the soul in the Lake of Fire (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 20:15). Jeremiah understood the mercy of God when he declared that it is 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 sinful humanity; 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 sin of disobedience (Genesis 3:21).

The word *for* in this case is a preposition that signals the reason for an action, and could be *on account of* or *because of*.<sup>150</sup> 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 remained under the condemnation of His wrath, who were without hope and 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 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).

What we must not lose sight of while we consider the mercy and love of God, is that they flow out of His holiness and alongside of His justice. Evangelicals typically are keen to hear of God’s love and mercy, but are much less enthusiastic about His holiness and justice. It is through the Lord’s mercy that we have not all been consumed (as sinners, we have earned death!), yet His justice required that the payment for sin be made (death). God is love (1 John 4:8), yet His love flows through His holiness that cannot abide sin. In the eternal counsels of God, a plan for salvation

<sup>149</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

was devised that would see the expression of His love, mercy and justice while also meeting the exacting requirement of His holiness. The plan was that God (as the *Word*) would become a man and thereby be the perfect Lamb to be offered one time for the atonement of humanity's sin and to break the power of the devil, which is death (Hebrews 2:14-15; 10:10). By ignoring God's holiness, Evangelicals have embarked on the road of pragmatism that says, "if it works, it must be right"; for them, the *end* holds a greater priority than the *means*. Yet God has always said: "be holy as I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:15), which is a call to pay particular attention 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? – while 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 outside of Christ and then speaking of God's rich mercy and great love, he again reminds us that we were at one time *dead* – a time when we lived in the dominion of Satan, and our best actions could not reach beyond his realm. We were dead to God! Yet while in this condition, God still loved us! Amazing!

Something that 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 our inherent goodness, and to extol the positive things in life – yet none of these will lead us to understand our position outside of God (something that Paul wants the Ephesians and us, to know). Along with the inordinate emphasis on the positive, comes a corresponding neglect of the need for repentance before God. The holiness of God is ignored; He becomes something that we can add onto our already "good" lives and claim our "assurance" of a place in heaven, even 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!

We now return to the reoccurring theme of the first chapter of Ephesians – *in 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 death of Christ and His resurrection! When Christ rose from the dead, He made new life possible for the believer. The resurrection of Christ is central to the Gospel message; "And if

Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

*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 grace that we can experience new life *in Christ*! His mercy withholds what we deserve; His grace provides us with what we do not 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 be believing (the application of the blood through the continual 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*; it is through His resurrection that we can become spiritually alive before God! By placing our faith in Christ and the work that He accomplished for all of humanity, we are effectually raised up together with Him – we are identified with Him in His resurrection. Baptism by immersion (Biblical baptism) provides an illustration of this: as the water covers us, we are identifying with Christ in His death, and so as 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 [*do walk*] in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).<sup>151</sup> Once again, the critical factor that must not be overlooked is that this is only possible *in Christ*; it is as we are together with Him in His resurrection that we will live a new life.

Our way of life, or how we live in this world, must reflect this “newness of life.” “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). One of the heartaches of today is that 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 the holiness of God; we hear little about our old lives

<sup>151</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

being crucified with Christ so that we might live according to the Spirit of God and not after our own flesh (Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:8-13). Rather, we hear that it is what's in the heart that matters, our manner of living is not that important; amazingly, they seek to glean support for this line of thinking from Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees: "Woe 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. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe 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. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:25-28). If you suspend all consideration for Jesus' teachings, it might seem possible to find some support for such a position; the scribes and Pharisees were condemned for neglecting 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 and righteousness (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 – "... those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These 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 that is a reflection of their heart attitude (1 John 2:15). The Pharisees sought to clean the outside of the cup in order to impress others; today the attempt is made to convince others that the inside is clean, while the outside remains untouched – it is simply hypocrisy of a different stripe, and will also receive the Savior's condemnation.

God not only *did raise us together*, but also *did seat us together* with Christ in the *heavenlies* – the same place where He *did bless us with every spiritual blessing* (Ephesians 1:3).<sup>152</sup> Yet, what remains abundantly clear is that all of this is only made

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<sup>152</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

possible 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 (Ephesians 2:5); “... without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5b). One of the mysteries of our faith is that as we abide *in Christ*, and He is in that place of honor with the Father, we have a presence in the heavenly realm!

As Jesus spoke of the Vine and branches, He said, “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 [*apart from*] me ye can do nothing [*ye are able to be doing absolutely nothing*]” (John 15:5).<sup>153</sup> Jesus emphasized the 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 (every spiritual blessing is found only *in Christ*). To become a Christian (even without the consideration of living the Christian life) requires an active persuasion in the life-giving role of the *Vine*, and certainly the blessing that God has in store for the one who is believing cannot be obtained without first abiding in Christ. Jesus stated unequivocally that 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 be accepted into the fold, it is good to be reminded 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 must not be deluded into thinking that praying a prayer or walking the aisle has led to our salvation. In the same way, we must watch for the signs of a new life in Christ in the lives of others, lest we inadvertently embrace wolves masquerading as sheep. *The one who is believing in the Son is having life everlasting, and the one who is disobeying the Son will not see life but the wrath of God is abiding on him* (John 3:36, literal).<sup>154</sup> Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep [ye must be obeying] my commandments” (John 14:15).<sup>155</sup>



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

Here we find an elaboration of God’s purpose for extending His grace to those who were 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 (the *ekklesia*) who will stand as a monument to the grace and goodness of God – a testimony to His greatness

<sup>153</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>154</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>155</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



to future generations. This great company is comprised of those who were without hope and dead to God, yet by the mercy that He extended through the finished work of Christ on the cross, they have been made alive to stand before Him as blameless and holy (Ephesians 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 a testimony to God's efficacious grace to the condemnation of those who have spurned His grace, and devised their own "salvation"? 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 in us by His Spirit. We are commanded to not be "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 this is something that we must permit the Spirit of God to accomplish in us – we cannot do it ourselves.<sup>156</sup>



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 conditional promise to Abraham ("in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" Genesis 12:3; 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. Paul clarifies that God's promise that Abraham's Seed would be the 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). *Because of this [the promise] it is from faith so that according to grace, the promise being certain to all of the seed, not from the Law only but also that from the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all* (Romans

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<sup>156</sup> Strong's Online.

4:16, literal).<sup>157</sup> The spiritual seed of Abraham are those who are made righteous after the manner of Abraham: faith placed in the promises of God! “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ... And 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 temporarily set Israel aside, and that His focus is now on the “Church” – a new entity that was brought into being at Pentecost. However, Paul makes it clear that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,” that is to say, not all of 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 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: “For if the firstfruit *be* holy [the Israelites were to present an offering (not a sacrifice) to the Lord of the first of their harvest, or produce, for use by the priests (Numbers 18:12)], the lump *is* also *holy* [the principle is that if the portion that was given as an offering is considered to be holy, then the rest of the dough from which it came, is also holy (Numbers 15:20-21)]: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches [this is the reciprocal principle: if the source is holy, then so are the portions]. And 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; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; **because of unbelief** [*no faith*] **they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.** Be not highminded, but fear: for **if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.** Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness [this is 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 for not continuing in His goodness]. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief [if the Jews come to believe], shall be grafted in:” *for thereupon* [no longer abiding in *unbelief*] *God is able to graft them in* (Romans 11:16-23, last italics is a literal translation).<sup>158</sup> It is not the branches that have been *broken off* that are grafted in, these are Jews who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus clarified

<sup>157</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>158</sup> Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

for us that the branches that are *broken off* are burned (John 15:6) – there is no “second chance” for the *broken off* branches as the KJV translators lead us to believe by including the word *again*.<sup>159</sup>

Therefore, the spiritual Seed of Abraham (Jesus Christ) is the root, or trunk, into which we are grafted by faith (Galatians 3:16); He is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham (“in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,” Genesis 12:3)! 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 of Moses but under the New Covenant – a covenant that is entered into by faith. “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham**. And 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. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-9). If our faith is in the finished work of Christ for our salvation, then we are spiritual children of Abraham: we are the spiritual Israel!

*And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, or and not from you – this, the gift of God.*<sup>160</sup> In the Greek, *this* is a demonstrative pronoun that refers to the salvation by faith that God has made possible, and it is this salvation that is His *gift*. Clearly, when it comes to the salvation that God prepared before creation, we are the beneficiaries; there is nothing that we can contribute to His salvation – it was complete and perfect before Adam was created. The *Word* (a part of the tri-unity of God – 1 John 5:7) was known as the Lamb, the perfect and complete Sacrifice for sin, before the eternal *Elohiym* began creating this world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Genesis 1:1). It is through His shed blood that we are purchased out of the empty traditions that sprang from Adam’s descendants under the influence and encouragement of Satan – the adversary who seeks the destruction of the children of God (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:17). The restoration of fellowship with the Lord comes only through the infinite wisdom and grace of God, not us! Nevertheless, we must be careful not to follow the unbiblical track of the Calvinist who declares man’s *total inability* by downplaying (or denying) the presence of the image of God within sinful man (Genesis 9:6); yes, man still holds the ability to evaluate and think about what Christ has done to pay the price for sin (and then choose to believe or not). Jesus said that it is the one who is convinced that He is the Truth (the *believing* one) who will not perish but is having everlasting life (John 3:16). However, even that *believing one must* live in obedience to the Lord’s commands or he will remain under the wrath of God (John 3:36). The Calvinist is wrong when he touts man’s inability to accept God’s gift of salvation that He offers to all of humanity, but the Evangelical is

<sup>159</sup> *Again*, as it appears in the KJV, is something that was brought forward from the Bishops’ Bible, which the translators were to follow as closely as possible.

<sup>160</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

equally wrong to assume that believing without obedience brings salvation! We must be very careful to understand God's Word to us, lest we fall victim to the many theologies that bear the marks of Satan. "Beloved, believe not [*you must not be believing*] every spirit, but try [*examine* against God's Word] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).<sup>161</sup> Peter brings this warning closer to home: *and there did come also false prophets among the people* [generally speaking, *the world*], *as also among you will be false teachers who will secretly introduce heresies of destruction, and the Lord Who did purchase them, they are denying: they are bringing upon themselves imminent destruction* (2 Peter 2:1, literal).<sup>162</sup> The *destruction* that Peter identifies uses the same Greek word that Jesus used to describe the destiny of the broad way (Matthew 7:13).<sup>163</sup>

God's salvation is a *gift* that He extends to all of humanity, yet our acceptance of that *gift* must be on His terms: a presently active believing in the work of the Lord Jesus **and** a presently active obedience to His commandments! Jesus said, *if you are loving Me, [then] My commandments you must obey* (John 14:15, literal).<sup>164</sup> God's gift in God's way yields everlasting life; God's gift in man's way yields everlasting destruction! We must be very attentive to what this means; accepting the theology of an appreciated teacher of the Scriptures is **not** the way to open the gates of heaven – our hope must be in Christ alone and based solidly upon His Word.



#### 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 own efforts, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, spells it out very clearly for us: *not from deeds in order that not anyone can boast*.<sup>165</sup> There is no place for our works within the salvation that God offers to mankind. Although the Catholics agree that salvation involves God's grace, they are also insistent that what we do forms a significant part of salvation – they consider salvation to be a life-long process that is begun by grace but completed by good works (as defined by their dogma) 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

<sup>161</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>164</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

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 concept of salvation to a shopping list of liturgical acts that they are required to complete in order to be acceptable to God; Jesus made it clear that this would not work for the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), and we can be sure that it will not work for the Catholics either!

However, this is not to say that “good works” are not to be a part of the Christian life! To the Philippians Paul wrote: “Wherefore, 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. For 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 reveal 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 of light (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 frequently wear the clothing of truth.

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.<sup>166</sup>

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 will 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* does not refer to the way that we've always done things, but rather, it points to the instruction that has been given by Paul and others of like persuasion – i.e., the teaching that is received from the mouth of the Apostles, or through the written Word of God (Biblical truth). We are to withdraw ourselves from anyone who appears to be 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. Two things came out of this error: 1) they set the clear direction of Scripture aside for their own purposes, and 2) they began accommodating what they had hitherto considered to be unacceptable (again in contradiction of Scripture, 1 Corinthians 10:12). The

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<sup>166</sup> Ralph G. Colas, *The Review* Vol. VIII, No. 3, May 1999, “Perspectives,” p. 9.



consequence is that today's average Evangelical stands where the Liberal of fifty years ago stood.



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* of God: *for in Him we are made, we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God did make ready in advance so that in them we do live.*<sup>167</sup> “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). Coming to 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 initially 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 are able to 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

<sup>167</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

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), then, without a doubt, there has not been a new life created within us. Holiness of life is **not** an 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 would walk in holiness of life; this is what God prepared beforehand. There is no new life without a change in living – 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 that distinction of living; yet the Scriptures know no such compromise. If the line of separation is becoming difficult to see, then 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 (subtle changes can often go without notice, even within ourselves)! Our mirror must be the Word of God; we must diligently guard against worldly compromises.

God chose us *in Christ* from before the foundation of the world so that we will be holy before Him (Ephesians 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 being part of a purpose clause: this is not a mere possibility; rather, it is God's intent that we live in keeping with His predetermination (i.e., in holiness and righteousness) – for those who are *in Christ*, this is reality!<sup>168</sup> 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 (*the same*) who will one day be saved (future tense).<sup>169</sup> The reality of our text is that unless we are living 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.

<sup>168</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>169</sup> Strong's Online.

Perhaps because of their 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 Christians 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 – those who will one day hear an “I never knew you” from the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23). These are not even those who have tasted of the heavenly way and then fallen away (Hebrews 6:4-6) – these have never tasted, yet they live under a cloud of delusion that they have secured their eternal destiny in heaven (James 1:22).



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;*

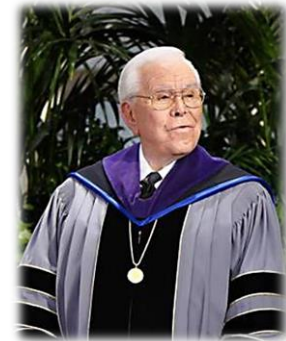
Understanding what God has done in providing us with a salvation that is entirely His gift, Paul commands his readers to remember, to think back to the way that things were. What simpler way can there be to gender a sense of humility and unworthiness than to recall how things used to be – to ponder those times when we walked in disobedience. There is no room for pride or arrogance, only humility before God and gratitude for His grace. For first generation Christians, as it was with the Ephesian believers, 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 salvation. We may not have practiced gross heathenism, yet spiritually we were once no different from the pagans – we were dead!

It appears that this is something that has been lost by Evangelicals. Since, generally speaking, they do not accept a proper view of who they are without Christ, it only follows that they will not understand the necessity for repentance. Inasmuch as they perceive themselves to be *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 is very easy to become 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). Is there a root of Evangelical righteousness that prevents many from understanding their need for spiritual healing? Could this be the root from which we get the philosophy of 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 (*doulos*, slave; Matthew 20:27);<sup>170</sup> Paul testified that he considered all of the benefits of his Jewish 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.<sup>171</sup>



Robert H. Schuller

This is from a man who defined sin as being a lack of self-worth, a man who continued to be acclaimed within Christian circles for more than 30 years after this revealing declaration in *Christianity Today*, and despite his death, his teachings continue to be very popular within the Evangelical community. How can this be?

Schuller, like many of today's Liberal (and Evangelical) pastors, had a strong desire to avoid the word *sin*. In *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, Schuller wrote: "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."<sup>172</sup> Schuller never used the word *sin* and said nothing about repentance. This kind of misleading verbiage actually leads people away from salvation, for without acknowledging their sin and their need for spiritual life, 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 forsaken Schuller long ago for being an apostate or a religious pagan. There is a grievous condition among Evangelicals today that will see many of them enter into eternity while clinging to a false hope – blind and deaf to the Word of God; they refuse to see and hear the truth that could set them free, and their ignorance of the Scriptures 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).

<sup>170</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>171</sup> <http://letusreason.org/Curren13.htm>.

<sup>172</sup> Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, p. 151.

Jesus openly declared: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible [this actually means that it is 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 right into hell.

Paul now begins on what he would have these Ephesians remember. They were among those whom the Jews took pride in calling the *uncircumcision*, those whom they considered to be unclean and untouchable – Gentiles. However, Paul draws an interesting parallel here: those who are of the *Circumcision in the flesh* (the Jews) called the Ephesian believers, who were once *Gentiles in the flesh*, *Uncircumcision*; notice that both are *in the flesh* and, therefore, 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).<sup>173</sup> To the Romans, he declared that not all of 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 of the law 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.



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:*

Although being *without*, or *apart from*, *Christ* is directed specifically to the *Uncircumcision*, there is a sense in which this is applicable to all who are *in the*

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<sup>173</sup> Strong’s Online.



*flesh*.<sup>174</sup> Paul explained this to the Romans: “So then they that are in the flesh [this is the same Greek phrase that was used in Ephesians 2:11] cannot please God. 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 8:8-9). Despite how the Evangelical landscape might 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 certainly no approval for a Christian to live 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 Spirit of God as our guide and the Word of God as our resource, we are charged 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 (his true 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 familiarize ourselves 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 so as to appear to be 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 could have heard of the coming Messiah and experienced the foreshadowing of the temple ordinances. Many of the Jews had lost their way, and become dependent upon their ritualistic adherence to the Mosaic Law and prescribed interpretation of that Law for their “salvation,” but for those outside of the nation of Israel, there wasn’t even that glimmer of hope that their eyes would be opened to the spiritual reality of God’s dealings with mankind. 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 it is buried under 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

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<sup>174</sup> Young’s Literal Translation.

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 load of legalism – it remained largely hidden to the children of promise, let alone shining to those outside of their nation. Lest we be unduly critical of the Israelites for their neglect of the Light, it is evident 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 as well, 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 change of heart.

God’s covenant of promise had been given 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 (Galatians 3:16), this was to have been an ongoing process worked out through the descendants of Abraham. God expressed this by making provision within the Law of Moses for the stranger who lived among the Israelites (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 19:34; Isaiah 56:6-7), and through including in the genealogy of the Lord 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 some 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 separation made between the Old and New Testaments to the point that they typically ignore most of the OT; after all, it is said, “We are under grace, and not under the Law,” thereby confirming their ignorance of God’s dealings with mankind, and thereby securing their blindness.

The source of this error (being under *grace* and not the *law*) comes from a misinterpretation 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 that 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 such. 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 the first 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 with the Scriptures, you have a deadly team – to the joy of Satan, and the destruction of the average, poorly-rooted Christian (Luke 8:13).

What is so very important to a proper understanding of 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 a symbol of 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 our failure 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 extinguished, 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).<sup>175</sup> 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). “And he that keepeth his [God’s] 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. 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 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 it is 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 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

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<sup>175</sup> Strong’s Online.



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 to be **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 (John 14:6; 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 the Ten 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 – we are all looking to the same Savior. The expression of God’s grace toward mankind did not begin at the cross – it was in place before the world was formed (Revelation 13:8), and it shone forth when Adam sinned. Salvation has always been the same – faith in God’s Provision (whether promised or realized, it matters not). 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” (Galatians 3:24); 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 appropriate 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 (John 14:6; 15:26). 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 God’s grace that enables us to live in obedience to His Law. What could be more marvelous?



Returning to our text, Paul identifies the Ephesians as having been those *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 (Genesis 3:15). 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 as the Light of the world, that hope lived on – a true hope that could only be accessed by faith in God, the One Who 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 and so 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 that 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 was 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 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 so that the grace that God extended toward them would 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 opens the door of salvation – a salvation that is established by the sacrifice of Jesus, Who brought us from the depths of hopelessness into union with Himself. 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 joyfully 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 is 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 that have subsequently been found to be untrue, but only after they have destroyed the lives of others. Although the Theophostic process claims to not focus on the event of the memory as much as the emotional response to the memory (the “lie” that needs to be “over-written” by the truth as spoken to the individual by Jesus or the Spirit of God);<sup>176</sup> both consider the “recovered memories” to be accurate. 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 – the facilitator must actually try to determine if he is dealing with Jesus or a demon masquerading as Jesus. This is **not** what Paul is asking the Ephesian believers to do. Only a faithful and obedient believer can look back to a time when he was without Christ, to a time when he was without hope, separated from God by his 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 (*in Christ*)! 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

<sup>176</sup> <https://www.religioustolerance.org/theophostic1.htm>.

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 are 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.



James Dobson

Robert Schuller redefined sin as “any act or thought that robs myself [*sic*] or another human being of his or her self-esteem.”<sup>177</sup> 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 personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.”<sup>178</sup> Here are two men of prominence within Evangelicalism who hold self-esteem as being 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 of 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 that 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 a poison that is promoted as being a healthy drink – we must be wary of wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1)!!!

Returning to the passage at hand, the Ephesians were at one time a long way off (being those who were called the Uncircumcision, aliens and strangers, without hope and without God), but now they have been brought near by the blood of Christ. The phrase *far off* (from the Greek word *makran*) is used metaphorically to summarize what Paul has been revealing about the Jewish attitude toward the Gentiles:

<sup>177</sup> Schuller, *Self-Esteem*, p. 14.

<sup>178</sup> Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *James Dobson’s Gospel of Self-Esteem & Psychology*, p. 99.

spiritually, they were in darkness.<sup>179</sup> In contrast to this, the Jews were always *near*, for God had given them His Word and the Law, which outlined for them His reality, His holiness, and the way for their sins to be cleansed and forgiven. The Object of their faith (the Promised One Who would put all things right) was declared openly for all to accept or reject, but this was not the case for the *aliens* and *strangers* who were outside of Israel. Paul makes it very clear that this is now all changed! The aliens and strangers, those who were *far off*, are now brought into the presence of God through the blood of Christ – all of the 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 final Sacrifice so that we might be brought into fellowship with God.

We have seen that God made provision within the Law of Moses for the stranger who was within the Israelite community (Exodus 12:49), yet 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 as a tool to exclude those who could have had a part in God's salvation plan. The Way of salvation was forever changed through the sacrifice of Christ – it was now the same for Jew and Gentile. For the Jews, the Way was a stumbling block (they would have to accept that the crucified Jesus was 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 [*skandalon*, that which gives offense or causes opposition], and unto the Greeks foolishness [*moria*, nonsense]" (1 Corinthians 1:23).<sup>180</sup> Both, the Jews and the Gentiles, faced similar hurdles in coming to the Christ, the Messiah of God, for their salvation; the ground at the cross is level.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul framed the question: *what then is the advantage of the Jew, or what is the benefit of the circumcision?* (Romans 3:1, literal).<sup>181</sup> His response for our instruction was this: *much in every way, for, indeed, they were especially entrusted with the promises of God* (Romans 3:2, literal).<sup>182</sup> What is missing from Paul's response is any indication that there is any Jewish advantage as it relates to the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ Jesus! In other words, the advantage that the Jews have is historical; they wrote and preserved the Word of God for generations (including the promises of the coming Redeemer), but now that Christ has come and fulfilled the foreshadowing of the Mosaic Law and the prophecies concerning His arrival, their advantage is ended. The Gospel message is for all people without distinction.

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<sup>179</sup> Vine's, "far."

<sup>180</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>181</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>182</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

Today we see Evangelicals veiling what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection in a fog of philosophy and psychology, which results in people losing their way to the Savior. They have them bowing before the gods of self-esteem, of purpose-driven growth, of pray-a-prayer for salvation, of emotionalism, and of unity – all to their own eternal spiritual detriment. Their condemnation is the same as for the Pharisees of Jesus' 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). It is God's Provision plus nothing; we must adhere to the simple truths of Scripture, without the trappings of man's thinking; the Narrow Way leads to life, and is available for all of mankind (Matthew 7:14; John 14:6). We must be continually growing in our understanding of God's Word in order to ensure that the path on which we are walking is the pathway to life eternal (Colossians 1:10). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25); Jesus warned about this way: "... for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13b).



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* (*eirene*) speaks of harmony and accord.<sup>183</sup> Isaiah wrote of the coming Messiah and ascribed to Him the name, *Prince of Peace*, thereby making Him the Head over all peace (Isaiah 9:6) – i.e., there can be no peace without Jesus! Within the context of this passage, Jesus, as our Peace, has brought the Jews and the Gentiles together (*both*) – those who place their faith in Him are made one, in His *ekklesia*. The distinct separation (**not peace!**) that existed between these two groups was largely the result of the Jews regarding the Gentiles as being 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 the pendulum swung the other way in that they showed disdain for everyone who was not Jewish. They lost sight of the fact that God's desire was for them to shine the light of His glory on the people about them and not cut them off altogether – in their zeal to avoid God's punishment, they overcorrected. 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

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<sup>183</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



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 (the Gentiles) and those who were nigh (the Jews) and 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*, and so our unity (Jew and Gentile as one) rests in Him alone. Jesus brought the two together – how did He do this? He did not simply declare the Law of Moses to be ended, and thereby force the Jews to abandon their traditions; rather, He fulfilled, or completed, the Mosaic Law and the prophecies (Matthew 5:17).<sup>184</sup> Paul explained it to the Galatians this way: ... *the Law [of Moses] became our tutor until Christ, in order that by faith we are declared righteous* (Galatians 3:24, literal).<sup>185</sup> The instruction that the Mosaic Law provided, followed two tracks: 1) the absolute holiness of God, and 2) the absolute sinfulness of mankind – understanding these two things brought the necessity of the priesthood and sacrificial system into sharp focus. Man has always had to approach God on His terms, and the Mosaic Law very carefully and in great detail spelled out exactly what God required for man's sins to be covered. Yes, the Mosaic Law was given specifically to the children of Israel, but as we have already noted, there was provision in it for the Gentile (Exodus 12:49). The writer of Hebrews clarifies for us the essential ingredient for the Mosaic Law to be effective: faith (Hebrews 4:2)! The Law of Moses provided the practical framework necessary for a temporary cleansing from sin, but unless the activities of the Law were accompanied by faith in the One Who gave the Law, they were of no effect (Isaiah 1:10-15). The focus of the Law of Moses was on the One Who had been promised to crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15), and the One through Whom all of the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The instruction of the Mosaic Law was that faith in the God Who had promised was essential (the faith that Abraham exercised, Romans 4:3) – without faith, the liturgies prescribed within the Law of Moses were of no value. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the Mosaic Law was fulfilled when the Object of their foreshadowing, the Prophet of Whom Moses spoke (Deuteronomy 18:15), had completed His earthly work.

Jesus, the promised Prophet, is that “**one** mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5), and replaced the mediating functions of the priests and sacrifices within the Mosaic Law. The writer of Hebrews explained this very carefully: “... now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant (the New Covenant, **not** the Mosaic covenant), which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The writer then quotes from Jeremiah 31 where the Lord promises to establish a New Covenant under which He places His Law in our minds and writes it upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12). As Jesus met with His disciples on the evening before His

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<sup>184</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>185</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

crucifixion, He made this declaration: “This cup *is* the new testament [*New Covenant*] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).<sup>186</sup> As Paul explained to the Galatians: “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” (Galatians 3:28) – Christ has *made both one*. Christ is our *peace*, and He is our unity.

We hear much about unity among Evangelicals, many echoing the words of the late Chuck Colson who expended great energy to bring Evangelicals and Catholics together: “We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church.”<sup>187</sup> Although it is true that unity is the essence of the church, it is because Christ is our unity – we are one *in Christ*. It is interesting to note how deceivers will take a truth, twist it a bit, and make it a part of their heresy. The Scriptures tell us to strive, or labor, for some 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),
- 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 – that was Colson’s personal agenda. Ephesians 4:3 states: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Even here, it is not the unity for which we are to strive, rather, we are to be making every effort (*endeavor*) to attend carefully to, or to guard (*keep*) the unity of the Spirit – this unity is already existing in the Spirit of God.<sup>188</sup> We must remain in the Vine (John 15:4), and guard against unbelief entering into our hearts (Hebrews 3:12). This is the true, pure unity that we can have with the Lord Jesus, and it has absolutely nothing to do with “unity” with other “Christians”! What Evangelicals seek is a physical cooperation and fellowship with those whom they have determined to be “believers”; there is little consideration given to the guidance of either the Spirit of God or the Word of God – it is much more a matter of successful negotiations between men. The thrust of the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (a product largely through the efforts of Chuck Colson, a professing Baptist, and Richard Neuhaus, a Lutheran who converted to Catholicism), is finding that 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 Ecumenical unity requires a continuous

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<sup>186</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>187</sup> Charles Colson, *The Body*, p. 102.

<sup>188</sup> Strong’s Online.

downplaying of doctrine to the place where eventually everyone will return to their mother church (Rome).

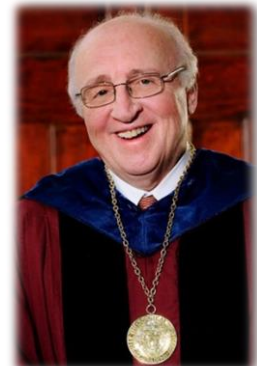
We often laud the Reformers for coming out of the Catholic Church, yet it was never Luther's purpose to separate from Rome – he only set out to correct some of its errors. Unfortunately, the separation that took place through men like Luther and



**Bill Bright**

Calvin did not leave the traditions of Rome very far behind – and really, why would they, since they were excommunicated and did not leave of their own accord. What we too easily overlook is that, all through the time of “Reformation,” there were true believers who lived by God's Word and 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 Catholic apostasy. 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 Graham, Chuck Colson, James Dobson, Philip Yancey, 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 (under the New Evangelicalism of Harold Ockenga), 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*].”<sup>189</sup> 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 out of His holiness; when we ignore, or discount, Biblical separation, we show our ignorance of and



**Richard Mouw**

<sup>189</sup> John McKnight, “The Holiness of God: The Root of Ecclesiastical Separation,” 1998 ACCC.

disdain for God's requirement 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 the Lord, were declared to be righteous (Abel, Enoch, and Noah are specifically identified in Hebrews 11). The pathway of righteousness can only be entered by faith, but the Jews (the descendants of promise through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were chosen to receive the special revelations of God (the OT Scriptures) and to be the family line for the promised Redeemer. Because they were 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 that fulfillment, He opened a way that was no longer centered around the ceremonial traditions to which the Jews had become accustomed. As we have already seen, the symbolism of the Mosaic laws and ordinances of the OT was fulfilled in Jesus; the foreshadowing contained therein was completed in Christ. However, part of what was given to Moses was the Law of God, the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue, and it is important that we recognize that Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets has in no way affected their commandment status. When tested by the lawyer of the Pharisees, Jesus identified two over-arching commands that perfectly summarize the Ten Commandments: love God with all of your being and your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:35-40) – the Law of Moses that Jesus did complete fell under these commands. 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." John understood this very well: "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ..." (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "If ye love me, [you must] 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! *Broken down* is from the Greek *luo*, which means loose, and is used figuratively to describe bringing something to an end, to do away with or undo.<sup>190</sup> The barrier of separation (*middle wall*) was not simply breeched – it has been removed



<sup>190</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.



entirely. The implication of this is that it will not be erected again; it has been removed, destroyed, done away with (Hebrews 8:13). The allusion 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, which served to demonstrate the holiness of God to everyone. Furthermore, as the Gentiles were excluded from casual entrance into the temple area, so the Jews could not enter the holy place (it was limited to the priests), nor could all of the priests enter into the Holy of Holies (it was restricted to the High Priest). However, rather than it being recognized as an indication of God's holiness, the wall of separation became a barrier and a means of exclusion. In Jesus, the barriers have been removed – 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. We can only come to Him in the manner that He has prescribed (Cain is the first example that affirms this truth, Genesis 4:4-5). Unless we come to God through Christ, our great High Priest after the order of Melchisadec, recognizing the sacrifice that He made for our sins, God will not find us acceptable. Both Jews and Gentiles now have the same access to God: Christ is our Mediator. The Jews' salvation is found in the same Savior, Messiah Jesus – the One Who was foreshadowed in the OT Scriptures, has come, and thereby, the wall of separation has been removed so that both Jews and Gentiles now 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* 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”<sup>191</sup>). *Abolished* (*katargeo*) means to render idle or useless, a non-physical destruction accomplished by replacement – i.e., the superior replacing the inferior (Hebrews 9:11-12).<sup>192</sup> The things that set the Jews apart before all of the other people on earth (namely, their numerous rituals and teachings that governed the details of their everyday lives) were fulfilled in Christ and replaced by the New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20). The ceremonial rites and temple practices of the Jews were ended; that which had become their identity and to which they had clung for generations, was no more. Jesus *abolished* these by fulfilling them and establishing something *new*; all that they alluded to was completed in Him

<sup>191</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>192</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.



through His death and resurrection. “... when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings [*to take away*] sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein* [a quote from Psalm 40:6]; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He **taketh away the first** [the sacrificial system], [in order] **that he may** [will] **establish the second** [thereby accomplishing the will of God]. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*” (Hebrews 10:8-10).<sup>193</sup> Jesus fulfilled and ended the activities of the priests under the Law of Moses; He is now the “high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 6:20; 7:11-19). There is no place for any further sacrifice because Christ offered Himself once, as the perfect Sacrifice, and “entered once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal** redemption *for us*” (Hebrews 9:12). The Jewish High Priest, according to the dictates of the Mosaic Law, would enter into the Holy of Holies (the presence of God) once every year to make atonement for his sins and the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7). As our High Priest, Christ entered once into the very presence of God in heaven (Hebrews 9:24), destroyed the veil in the earthly temple as a sign that a new access was made into the presence of God (Mark 15:38), and forever completed the sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:12). The Catholics miss this significant point of doctrine, and in their masses they sacrifice Jesus over and over again – idolatrously worshipping the wafer as Christ. When a Catholic says that he has received Jesus, he means that he has eaten the wafer during the mass, which he believes has become the very body of Christ through the incantations of the priest.

After Mt. Sinai, the Law is generally 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 living, or judicial laws (our actions toward others [Exodus 21-24; Leviticus 10-22]), and 3) those that laid out the standard upon which the ceremonial and judicial laws were based: the spiritual or moral laws – the Ten Commandments (the Law of God or the Decalogue) (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21).<sup>194</sup> Jesus made it clear, early in His ministry, that His purpose was to fulfill the law: “Think not that I am come to destroy [a compound word which, in the Greek, means to *destroy utterly* or to *overthrow completely*<sup>195</sup>] 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*<sup>196</sup>]. For 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 accomplished throughout His life: the law was kept perfectly in spirit and holiness,

<sup>193</sup> Friberg Lexicon; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>194</sup> “The Mosaic Law Fulfilled,” <http://biblia.com/jesusbible/leviticus4.htm>

<sup>195</sup> Vine’s “destroy.”

<sup>196</sup> Strong’s Online.

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 were enclosed by a stone wall that contained "inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding non-Jews from entering on the pain of death."<sup>197</sup> This was a physical wall of separation; Jesus fulfilled the foreshadowing of the Law of Moses completely and forever, and so the reason for this wall of separation was gone. This part of the law (the ceremonial part of the Law of Moses) has been *abolished* because Jesus brought in a *New Covenant* (Luke 22:20) – it was removed by replacement! What about the other aspects of the law?

The judicial or social laws of Israel were applicable to Israel individually and 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 (John 18:31). 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). The context for this charge is this: in order to expedite the quick transmission of the Roman ruler's messages, they 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 said to submit to this law and beyond that, to volunteer to carry the load a second mile. Peter confirms this: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as 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). The judicial laws were uniquely for Israel and, along with the ceremonial laws, were put into place by God to underscore His holiness,

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<sup>197</sup> Merrill C. Tenny, ed., The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, "temple," p. 835.

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? Is it a part of what the Lord *abolished* through His death and resurrection, as many would have us believe? Consider for a moment how Moses received the various laws (the ceremonial, judicial and moral). The Scriptures indicate that the Law of Moses (the ceremonial and judicial laws) came through the hands of angels (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2-3), but what do we read of the Ten Commandments? “And he [Jehovah] gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, **tables of stone, written with the finger of God**” (Exodus 31:18). There is a significant difference in the preparation of the moral law (the Ten Commandments) – they were written by the Lord upon stone! There is a definite permanency to what God has written, unlike the ceremonial and judicial laws that would find their fulfillment and end in the Promised One. Therefore, when we read “the law” in the Scriptures, we must be very careful to understand what is being referenced: the Law of Moses, the Law of God, or both. When we read that *Christ is the cessation of the law to everyone who is believing* (Romans 10:4, literal),<sup>198</sup> we can readily understand from the context that this is a reference to the Law of Moses (the ceremonial and judicial laws), and not to the Law of God (the moral law, or the Ten Commandments). The Law of God remains in full force today; it was written by God Who does not change (Malachi 3:6), and upon age-enduring stone (Deuteronomy 4:13). *So that, my brethren, ye also did become dead to the Law by the body of Christ* [through the Law comes the clarity of sin (Romans 3:20), through identification with Christ the *body of sin* is destroyed (Romans 6:6)]; *for you to be born to Another, Who was raised up from the dead so that we will bear fruit unto God*” (Romans 7:4, literal).<sup>199</sup> To which Law did we *become dead*? Clearly, we *are dead* to the Mosaic Law because it was ended through the work of Christ; in essence, **Christ made the Law of Moses dead to us**. However, Paul says here that we have *become dead* to the Law by Christ – this is **not** the same thing as the Mosaic Law being rendered dead to us through Christ! “For if we have been planted [*united*] together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection ... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ... reckon [*regard*] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive [*living*] unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:5, 8, 11).<sup>200</sup> When we are joined to Christ through faith in His finished work, we *become dead* to the Law; this can only refer to the Law of God because the Law of Moses has already been removed from the picture by Christ. Christ, the perfect Lamb, died in order to break the power of Satan (the spiritual *death* that

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<sup>198</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>199</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

separates us from the Lord) so that we can be freed from sin (Hebrews 2:14-15). Paul dealt with this quite thoroughly in his letter to the Romans:

“But now we are delivered [*freed*] from the law, [*we did die to what held us fast*]; [*with a view to us serving*] in newness of spirit [through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God], and not in the oldness of [*what is written*]. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? [*Let it not be*]. 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 [this is the tenth commandment in the Law of God] ... Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good [because they come from a *holy, just and good* God] ... For we know that the **law is spiritual**: but I am carnal [*fleshly*], [*one who has been sold under sin (hamartia: that which separates us from God)*] ... *There is* therefore now **no condemnation** to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk [*are living*] not after [*according to*] the flesh, but after [*according to*] the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. [*For what was impossible for the Law*], in that it was weak through the flesh [we cannot keep it at all], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: [*in order that the commandment of the Law will be accomplished in us,*] who walk [*are living*] not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ... For to be carnally minded [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is death; but to be spiritually minded [*the way of thinking of the Spirit*] is life and peace. Because the carnal mind [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is enmity against God: for it is **not subject [obedient] to the law of God**, neither indeed can be” (Romans 7:6-7, 12, 14; 8:1-4, 6-7; literal in italics within brackets).<sup>201</sup>

In the middle of the above, we read this: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). Notice that there is a *Law of the Spirit of life in Christ* and a *Law of sin and death*. Paul is not writing about the time before Christ came, but is explaining our relationship to the Law of God – the Ten Commandments that were written by God’s finger upon tables of stone (Exodus 31:18). When we are outside of Christ, the Law of God is to us a sentence of condemnation because we cannot keep it, particularly the first four commands that deal with our relationship with God: they expose our sinful nature, and the just recompense for sin is death (Romans 6:23) – within this context, the Law of God is certainly a *Law of sin and death*! However, when we are *in Christ* by faith, then the Spirit of God is abiding within us (Romans 8:9), His ten Laws have now been written on our minds and placed within our hearts (Hebrews 10:15-17), we are no longer under the *condemnation* of God’s Law (Romans 8:1), and through the working of the Spirit within us, we are able to live out the commands of the Lord – the *Law of the Spirit of life in Christ* (Romans 8:4)! Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep

<sup>201</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.



my commandments” (John 14:15); this can only come through our identification with Him in His death and resurrection, and the free working of His Spirit within us.

The Law of God and the Law of Moses were both given for two reasons: 1) to confirm to man that he is 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) not only foreshadowed the coming of the Promised One, but served to reveal the necessity of the children of Israel to have faith in the promises of God, the same saving faith that was expressed by Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham before them (Hebrews 11:4ff). The Law of God also serves to show us the sin that permeates our lives so that we must turn to God in faith and accept the redemption 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 are then clothing ourselves in the *new man* so that we no longer need to attempt to keep the commandments of the Law of God through our own efforts (Ephesians 4:24). The contrast is this: we are now living in obedience to His commands through the working of His Spirit 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, because we are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have been rescued from the condemnation of the Law of God, 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, and not by works according to the law. “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances ... 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 7:5-7). This is the same error as the Catholics, who have twisted God’s Word to support their traditions; Evangelicals are equally prone to set the Word of God aside in favor of their own favored doctrines.

You might say that since we, who are in Christ, are dead to the Law of God, and Christ came to complete the Law of Moses, then we are free from all law! Indeed, we are made righteous in Christ apart from the law: “...the righteousness of God **without the law** is manifested, being witnessed [or testified to] by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all



and upon all them *who are believing...*” (Romans 3:21-22).<sup>202</sup> We are made free from sin and from the penalty of the Law, but this is **not** a carnal freedom! “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? ... ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of [*became enslaved to*] righteousness. ... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to [*become enslaved to*] God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:16, 17b-18, 22).<sup>203</sup> We are now free to be *slaves of righteousness* through the guidance of the Spirit of God – something that is **not** possible apart from being *in Christ*.

Each of the Ten Commandments (the Law of God) finds reiteration in the epistles with the exception of the fourth (*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...*), which does not find its origin in the Ten Commandments, but rather in the declaration of God as He completed creation (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11). Many 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 God’s Law through our own efforts (the “carnal” trying to keep the “spiritual”), and freed to live in obedience to His commands (all ten of them) by His Spirit within us – i.e., we have been freed from the condemnation of His Law (Romans 8:1)! “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3); the Law of God is still pertinent and must be obeyed in order to express our love for God and experience His approval. His commandment is: “Thou 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].<sup>204</sup> This is the first and great commandment [this summarizes the first four of the Ten Commandments]. And the second is like unto it [is just as great as the first<sup>205</sup>], Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself [this encapsulates the last six Commandments]. On these two commandments [Deuteronomy 6:5 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 of God or the prophets (Matthew 5:17) but to perfectly keep the Law so that we, through His Spirit, might have the righteousness of the Law of God fulfilled in us – i.e., our obedience and His holiness in us (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 guide our hearts toward God, and the last six, our hearts toward our fellow man. His Law is

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<sup>202</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>203</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>204</sup> Vine’s “heart,” “soul,” “mind.”

<sup>205</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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). "... let us run with patience [*hupomone*; *endurance*] the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2);<sup>206</sup> our eyes must be fixed on Jesus, our Righteousness.

Returning to our text: *in Christ*, two separate peoples (*twain*) have been made into one: those who were *far off*, and those who were *nigh*; this was accomplished by the Mosaic Law (the *middle wall of partition*) being *abolished* by Christ. There is "one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one 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 becoming new creatures in Christ; conversely, there can be no unity (as it is expressed here) between someone who is *in Christ* and someone who is *not in Him*. 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 a god of pragmatism. Their goal was unity (an Ecumenical unity), and their preoccupation was with relationships on the physical level.<sup>207</sup> They may have arrived at a *unity* of sorts, but what they failed to realize is that it was no longer the unity that comes from being *in Christ* – this unity cannot be achieved through the efforts of men, whether professing Christians 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 (of *twain*, *one*), 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 may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship<sup>208</sup> 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: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ..." (20-21) – true fellowship is found only *in Christ*.



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

<sup>206</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>207</sup> Paul Procter, "The Test of Faith."

<sup>208</sup> 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.

Not only did Christ remove the wall of separation that was between Jew and Gentile, He also brought 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; because that day has come, the Jews must no longer rely on their outward ceremonies to symbolize their inward faith in God (the *commandments in ordinances* have been *abolished*, as we just saw). Christ has accomplished forever what the ceremonies could only foreshadow; 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 is 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* (*apokatallasso*) strictly means to transfer from one state to a very different state; within the context, this means that *in Christ* we are moved from being dead to God to being alive before Him!<sup>209</sup> The *reconciling* that takes place is between God and man, not between Jew and Gentile. 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* out of two (verse 15), **and** reconciling this *one* unto God!<sup>210</sup> These are factual presentations of God’s purpose for removing the Law of Moses as that barrier between the Jew and Gentile; by removing the barrier, Christ brings life to those who by faith are a part of the one Body, the *ekklesia*. Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule*; not of Israel]: them also I must bring [*lead*], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne*, *flock* (this is a significant translational error!)], *and* one shepherd” (John 10:16).<sup>211</sup> Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought Jew and Gentile together into **one flock** – His Body, the *ekklesia*! The writer of Hebrews affirmed this: “And these all [those who were acclaimed for their faith and the numerous others who were not specifically mentioned], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [they died without seeing the fulfillment of God’s promise]: God having provided some better thing for us, that **they without us should not be made perfect** [*complete*]” (Hebrews 11:39-40);<sup>212</sup> truly, there is only *one flock*, *one Body* and *one ekklesia* that will have all of the saints from all ages in it! 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 Satan

<sup>209</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>210</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>211</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>212</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

in the Garden (Genesis 3:15); 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 the unity of all of the faithful ones is accomplished. This unity is a fact, a reality – not a goal for which we are to strive.

*Having slain the enmity thereby* – this looks back to verse 15 where it is stated that Christ has *abolished* the *enmity* (identified as being the *ordinances* of the Law of Moses). We are reminded that this *enmity* has been done away with, *slain* (*apokteino*)!<sup>213</sup> 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. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought new life for all people (both the Jew and the Gentile), and secured Satan's defeat in fulfillment of the promise of God – the promise woven through the early Scriptures was the hope of the OT saints. A permanent Mediator was established through Whom the whole world could come to God (1 Timothy 2:5); yet this reconciliation will 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.*

*And He did come, proclaiming Good News: peace to you, to the far away and to the near.*<sup>214</sup> It is Christ Who came and brought peace with God to both those who were *afar off* (the Gentiles), and to those who were *nigh* (the Jews). When Jesus was born, the angels announced *on earth peace* (Luke 2:14) – and indeed Jesus did bring peace to the earth: the peace of reconciliation with God through His sacrifice. Interestingly, the *peace* (*eirene*) spoken of carries the thought of *rest* 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*.<sup>215</sup>

<sup>213</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>214</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>215</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.



Yet Jesus also said: “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace [*eirene*] on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51).<sup>216</sup> The peace that Christ mediated was a spiritual reconciling with God, and not an earthly peace. Even as this spiritual *peace* brings new fellowship with God (for those who place their faith in Christ), just as surely it will bring *division* here on earth. It was not the peace that the Jews of Jesus’ time so desperately wanted; Jesus 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 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; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

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. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship [*metoche*, participation] hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion [*koinonia*, close relationship] hath light with darkness? And what concord [agreement] hath Christ with Belial [a name for Satan that means *worthless* or *wicked*]? or what part hath he that believeth [faithful] with an infidel [someone who is unfaithful]? And 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. Wherefore come out from among them [involves forsaking], and be ye separate [set apart], saith the Lord, and touch not [not holding onto] the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).<sup>217</sup> We are called to a life that is separate from the world and from all forms of ungodliness, and it is only through this *separation* that the Lord will *receive* us. The *holiness* to which God has called us means to be separated unto Him; by its very definition, *holiness* requires a *separation* from all that is unholy or *unclean*.<sup>218</sup> “Now I beseech [or exhort] you, brethren, mark [look at or keep your eye on] them which cause divisions [disunity, between the *brethren* and God; NOT between brethren] and offences [an enticement to sin] contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [to turn away, shun] them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own



Chuck Swindoll

<sup>216</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>217</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>218</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



belly; and by [deceptively] good words and fair speeches [flattery] deceive [completely] the hearts of the simple [unsuspecting]” (Romans 16:17-18).<sup>219</sup>

We are also called to separate from those who 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 many: men like Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, Ravi Zacharias, Chuck Swindoll, Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, et al.; these are men who might at times say things with which we can 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 a 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 [irresponsibly: idly, lazily], and not after the tradition [the substance of teaching<sup>220</sup>] which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).<sup>221</sup> We are even to separate ourselves from those who may have been genuine believers in Christ, but whose walk is now careless and without the discipline that it takes to be a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:26-27); we must understand that unless they quickly repent before God, they are on the road to apostasy (Revelation 3:2-3). God is holy, and if we desire to walk in accordance with our calling to His 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 are casual about obedience to the Lord’s commands. If there is no separation unto God, then there can be no holiness; the essence of Biblical separation is a desire to live a holy life before a holy God.



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 by faith (Romans 11), the Spirit of God, the Comforter promised by the Lord (John 14:26), indwells us so that we will no longer live to the flesh (Romans 8:8-9), but to the praise of the Father Who is saving us through the blood of Christ (Matthew 5:16). Indeed there is “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One 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) was that he endeavored 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

<sup>219</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>220</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>221</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

many ways. The drafters of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT) document quote this passage from Ephesians 4 as well, but they have redefined the terms to such an extent that they are able to fit the apostate and the one who holds to doctrine contrary to Scripture, into their unity. 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.<sup>222</sup>

This *unity in the truth* (as they put it) leaves the oneness that we have in Christ unscathed, for theirs is a fabricated, negotiated unity that is outside of Christ, despite their rhetoric – they have redefined *truth* to the exclusion of Jesus Who is the Truth (John 14:6).

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 (they must accept Jesus as their Messiah), and a source of foolishness to the Greeks (they must believe that Jesus rose from the dead). “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved [*who are being saved*] it is the power of God ... But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, literal in italics).<sup>223</sup>



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

<sup>222</sup> <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html>

<sup>223</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

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 Jews, are now on equal standing before God with those who are Israel in the flesh. The Greek word used for *strangers* here is the same as in verse 12, and simply refers to those who are *outside of* or *without a share in*.<sup>224</sup> The Greek word translated as *foreigners* is one that carries the idea of being a non-citizen, living in a place but without the rights enjoyed by its citizens.<sup>225</sup> 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, and 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 citizens, we are now *fellowcitizens*, possessing the full rights of children of God! 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 (Ephesians 2:12); now, however, by contrast, they have become part of this larger body of saints! Having *broken down* the middle wall, Jesus brings the believing Jew and believing Gentile into one body (Ephesians 2:14, 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 is drawing all 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 by faith we are grafted into the spiritual Root of Israel (the Lord Jesus Christ); Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and came to fulfill the promises made to 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.

*Fellowcitizens* (“a citizen of the same state or nation”<sup>226</sup>) are not simply the fellow-believers of today (although they are certainly included), but these first generation of believers (first after the completed work of Christ) are included in the existing citizenship of the holy ones (*saints*) 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 wall of separation that existed before Christ's work, and show that as being in contrast to the present situation? If the saints since the cross became a whole new

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<sup>224</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Webster's 1828, “fellowcitizens.”

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 (Ephesians 2:16)? The plain reading of this passage supports one body of believers from all ages. Before we leave this, let's consider a couple of other Biblical evidences for this position. Jesus explained the matter very clearly in John 10:16 – “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule*; a reference to Israel]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne*: flock, **not** fold], and one shepherd.”<sup>227</sup> As we come to the end of the “faith chapter” of Hebrews, we read this: “And these all [a reference to the OT saints described in this chapter], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that *apart from us they will not be made complete*” (Hebrews 11:39-40, literal in italics);<sup>228</sup> in other words, the OT saints are not *complete* without the Lord's saints since the cross! Truly, there is only **one** Body of Christ!

The Greek word used for *saints* (*hagios*) is actually an adjective that is frequently used as a noun, and describes those with whom we are now *fellowcitizens* – the *holy* ones.<sup>229</sup> No longer *strangers*, now we are *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]); as His purchased ones, this is the state to which God has called us. There are no *saints* apart from God; man may designate “saints” to his heart's content (something that has become 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 holy by being *in Christ*), then we have been set apart, called out from the world and from sin, and brought into a life of holiness and purity before Him. God's dealings with Israel, through the implementation of the laws and commandments (the Mosaic Law), underscored the holiness of God, and the purity of life that He desired of them. Even though these laws and commandments found their fulfillment (and end) 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 are often 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 Biblical 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

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<sup>227</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>228</sup> Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>229</sup> Strong's Online.

from those who seem to be believers but who are too lazy to be faithful to God's Word (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*.<sup>230</sup> 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 an accumulating 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 with the holy ones, even belonging to the family of God*."<sup>231</sup> *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 (*household of God*) 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 that brings us into a completely new relationship with God (Romans 8:15). 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 Mosaic Law all foreshadowed the coming Deliverer. However, when Messiah came, it would only seem right that the relationship with God would change – the promises were fulfilled, and the ceremonies and rituals saw their end: Messiah was on hand, and nothing could remain as it was! The writer of Hebrews explained this: "For the priesthood being changed [from the Levitical priesthood as described in the Law of Moses to Jesus, Who came from the tribe of Judah], there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:12). Under the Mosaic Law, the priests filled a central role in the atonement for sin, and with the significant change from earthly priests to a heavenly, eternal Priest and Sacrifice, it is only reasonable that God's Covenant with humanity would also change. 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 fitting that the presence of the Spirit of God makes all things new and different. Whereas the OT saints lived by faith in the promises of God and in the animal-blood sacrifices, with Jerusalem being their center for the worship of Jehovah, we are now indwelt by the very Spirit of God (John 15:26; Romans 8:9). We are not unique in God's economy, but **we** are now 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

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<sup>230</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>231</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



in the temple of Jerusalem, which was also the hub for all of the ceremonial traditions; we, as faithful believers, have the Spirit of God dwelling within us; we are God's temples (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) – sanctified and holy in Him! Indeed, through faith in Christ we have been brought into a completely new relationship with God – 2 Corinthians 5:17: “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!”



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 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, by way of Christ's sacrifice, making one Body in Him. Therefore, it is fitting to refer to the two roles filled by those who brought God's Message to the people with power and conviction: the OT Prophets and the NT Apostles. Secondly, the OT Prophets were more comparable to the NT Apostles in their authority and power in proclaiming 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 place for prophets in the NT (1 Corinthians 12:28 makes that clear), it is not comparable in authority to the OT Prophets. Likewise, Peter draws a distinction between the words that came *before by the holy prophets* and those from *us the apostles of the Lord*, and yet he brings them together for our *remembrance* (2 Peter 3:1-2).

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 secured in the *Chief Corner*! 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 are the foundation, but rather that they proclaimed the foundation: it was their instruction and their doctrine that forms the 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 upon 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 Lord Jesus (the Root); there is a coming together, a breaking down of the middle wall between the true Israelite and the born-again Gentile – we are one *in Christ*! Together, the Apostles (of the NT) and Prophets (of the OT) have declared the truths of God that form the foundation upon which the assembly of God, from all ages, is being built. God did not start over 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: the Promised One, Christ! Most Evangelicals and Fundamentalists contend that the “Church” began at Pentecost, after the Jews had rejected Jesus as their Messiah; however, the message of this section is that we are all one – the saints of God, from all ages, are all one Body with Jesus as the Head (Ephesians 5:23), He is the Shepherd of one Flock (John 10:16)!

The voice of the Greek word translated as *built* (passive), 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 instruction 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 continual building upon that message is the work of God. Carelessness and self-projects will find no fit here; they will have no part in 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 that was established by God through the Apostles and Prophets 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).<sup>232</sup> We must recognize 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 explained that by declaring: “**I am the way** ...” (John 14:6). Yet man continually attempts to broaden *the Way* in an attempt to make it more accommodating for those who do not like the narrow way. The Evangelical Free Church (EFC), for example, prides itself in being “inclusive not exclusive,” explaining that they are “intentionally leaving out non-essential issues that have been

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<sup>232</sup> Strong’s Online.

debated throughout Christian history.”<sup>233</sup> As they read the Scriptures, they decide what is essential and what is not, which really places them in a 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 am sure that many 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 into 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; 1 Peter 2:5-8). Jesus said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” (Revelation 1:11); He is eternal God, the *Corner* 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 Message of 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, Who is the chief Cornerstone, the Rock Who holds the foundation solidly together!

<sup>233</sup> Bill Taylor, “The EFC ...,” “The Pulse,” Fall 2001, p. 2.



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* (*oikodome*) referred to within this context is not the structure itself, but rather the process of construction; the same word is translated elsewhere as *edify*, or *to build up*.<sup>234</sup> The *all* is more than simply *everything* – it carries the thought of every little piece; there is a careful individuality (an attention to the smallest detail) to this *building*. *Fitly framed together* is from a single Greek word that means *to join closely together*: there are no gaps, no holes, only a perfectly fitting structure.<sup>235</sup> In Christ, every individual is being perfectly joined together according to an established pattern.

All of this is growing, or increasing, toward a *holy place* – a *temple in the Lord*; the Greek word used here for *holy* (*hagios*) is exactly the same word that is used to describe the OT *saints* (*hagios*) to whom those who are now *in Christ* are joined (Ephesians 2:19). *Temple* (*naos*) comes from a Greek root that means *to dwell*, and therefore we can think of this as being *the dwelling place of God*.<sup>236</sup> *Temple*, as it is used here, is in the singular; those who are *in Christ* and the OT saints are being made into *one temple*. Again, we see that there is a unity of saints from all ages in *holiness in Christ*!

Let's look into this a little more thoroughly, just to ensure that we understand it fully. When John saw the glorious New Jerusalem, he wrote: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle [*skene*] of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God*" (Revelation 21:3).<sup>237</sup> *Skene* (*tabernacle*) is generally applied to a temporary dwelling place, very frequently a tent;<sup>238</sup> yet the writer of Hebrews refers to the still-standing temple in Jerusalem as *skene* (Hebrews 9:8), clearly anticipating its removal according to Jesus' words (Matthew 24:2). However, at the same time we recognize that God *dwelt* in the midst of Israel from the construction of the first portable tabernacle in the wilderness until Jesus paid the price for sins upon the cross (except during their time in exile) – His dwelling place remained until His purposes changed it. In the New Heaven and Earth, God's purpose will be to *dwell* among His people, somewhat like those early days when He was in the midst

<sup>234</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



of Israel. Beyond the general, temporary dwelling, we see *skene* (*tabernacle*) used in reference to the temple structure (as already noted, Hebrews 9:8), to the Holy Place (Hebrews 9:2) and to the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:3) – each identified as bearing the presence of Jehovah, although to varying degrees. When Moses had constructed the tabernacle, Jehovah declared that He would commune with him from above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim (Exodus 25:22), and so the presence of Jehovah was said to rest between the two cherubim in the Holy of Holies (within the tabernacle and later within the temple); in the New Jerusalem, it is proclaimed to John that the presence of Jehovah will be *with men* – He will be *dwelling* among them for they are His redeemed ones. A little later, John makes this observation: “And I saw no temple [*naos*] therein [referring to the New Jerusalem]: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple [*naos*] of it” (Revelation 21:22).<sup>239</sup> *Naos*, almost always translated as *temple*, speaks of the dwelling place of a divine being (it is not restricted to the Lord in its use);<sup>240</sup> its application within the Biblical context, is specifically to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies – never including the courts that surrounded the temple structure. With this in mind, it is understandable that there is no temple (*naos*) in the New Jerusalem because God the Father and the Lamb are there – the structures are no longer needed to protect the people from the glory of God! We will have been purged of all sin, and we shall see the face of God and live (Revelation 22:4; cp. Exodus 33:20).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple [*naos*] of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).<sup>241</sup> Within the context of our study, this is significant because it identifies our bodies as being the dwelling place of the Lord – like unto the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle and temple. This serves to underscore the fact that the traditions of the Mosaic Law have been replaced by the New Covenant in Christ, and explains why the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matthew 27:50-51). Through faith in Christ, our bodies become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit – comparable to the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle.

There is one other Greek word that is used as it relates to the temple: *hieron* – a word that includes everything that pertained to the temple.<sup>242</sup> This word was used when Jesus’ disciples called His attention to the amazing temple structure, and which Jesus declared would be destroyed so that not one stone would remain upon another (Matthew 24:1-2). This word does not impact Paul’s instruction here.

Returning to our text, we must remind ourselves of Jesus’ words: “... I will build my church ...” (Matthew 16:18). This one *temple* is being assembled (*fitly framed*

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<sup>239</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>240</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>241</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>242</sup> Vine’s, “temple.”



together) by the Lord – He is the *Chief Corner*, and everyone who comes to Him in faith is added in keeping with His eternal pattern (the foundation of the Message of the OT Prophets and NT Apostles). There is no guess-work on the Lord’s part; when we place our faith in Him, we become a *new creation* made specifically for His *holy temple* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Individually, we are the *temples* of the Lord; all together, we will make **one** *holy temple in the Lord*.

The importance of being **in Christ** must not be missed or minimized; however, Jesus also made it clear that the responsibility to continue abiding 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 15:4 are: “*You must* abide in me”; this is a command (*abide* is in the imperative mood) on which we are to take action (active voice where the subject *you* is to carry out the action of *abiding*). Further, we must not misunderstand this to be a one-time, past action; *abide* is in the aorist tense, which simply identifies this as a reality without regard to time (it must always be). Likewise, Jesus also said that *the one who endures unto the end, this one will be saved* (Matthew 24:13, literal);<sup>243</sup> *endures* (*hupomeno*) also bears the aorist tense, and it means to remain faithful even through trials.<sup>244</sup> John explains what faithfulness includes: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [*are keeping*] his commandments” (1 John 2:3).<sup>245</sup> We’ve just seen that one of His commands is that we are to abide in Him; but we are not alone in our obedience, for He has promised that He will also abide in us (John 15:1) – this in no way minimizes our responsibility of remaining 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 remain 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 Him, then His promise is 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 of the ages!



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

Here is another parenthesis: *in whom* (in Christ) ... *through the Spirit*. Lest there be any doubt as to the Ephesian believers being included in this marvelous building program of God, Paul clarifies that they, too, are being built on this very same

<sup>243</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>244</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>245</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

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 (i.e., those who hold to dispensational teachings), 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). They, too, are being fitly joined together with the saints of all ages to form an eternal dwelling of God, accomplished in Christ, the *Chief Corner*, by the working of the Spirit of God! The Spirit of God has been at work throughout 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 holy fellow-citizens with all of those who are **in Christ** (the *chosen*, Ephesians 1:4), even to becoming adopted members of the family of God. We are those who are being carefully joined together upon the foundation that was laid by the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ being the eternally established Chief Corner, the surety and pattern for this holy dwelling for God. Truly, this could only be ***in Christ*** and ***through the Spirit of God***! The culmination will be in the New Heaven and Earth where God will  *dwell*  forever among His people who have been redeemed from sin through the blood of Christ **and** who have lived faithfully for Him to the end of their days (Revelation 21:3; Matthew 24:13)!



## 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. In Jerusalem, as Paul made his defense before the Roman captain and the Jews who sought to kill him, the Jews were attentive until he declared his God-given mandate to go to the Gentiles: “And he [the Lord] said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And 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 God’s call for Paul to go 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 (his Roman name), which means *small or little*;<sup>246</sup> having received the mandate from the Lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, he set his Hebrew name and heritage aside (Philippians 3:4-8).



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

Paul was 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 (Ephesians 1:1). The word *if* is not used to inject a sense of doubt into the

<sup>246</sup> Strong’s Online.

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, to proclaim the Way to the Gentiles, and to herald the removal of that middle wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles. The bulk of chapter 3 is generally considered to be parenthetical, then in chapter 4:1 he picks up the thought of his being in prison and carries on.

Paul was entrusted, by God, with the administration (*dispensation*) 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 His messenger. 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 is a testimony to the effectual grace of God in a life (particularly in light of his purpose for going to Damascus, Acts 9:1-2).



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



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

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 is open to all people. What was hidden to the Jews (and **by** the Jews, for it was their interpretation of the prophecies that clouded the promise) 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 provided through the completed work of Christ on the cross. It is evident that they kept their traditions (even though the temple sacrifices would have been forsaken) and sought to impose them on the Gentile Christians. What had remained hidden for years, and what was slowly coming to acceptance among some of the Jews of Paul's day, God had made known to Paul, and he became a minister of this revelation to all who would hear. It seems 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 had written to the Ephesians, the first one being a brief note explaining how he came by his insight into the mysteries of God.

Paul's earlier, brief note (*few words*) had been given to them, *to which you who are reading, are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ* (literal).<sup>247</sup> What we are missing in our English is a proper translation of the Greek word *dunamai* (which means able to, or capable of, but shows up in the KJV as *may*); *dunamai* is also in the indicative mood, which means that it is a statement of fact – with the reading will come understanding.<sup>248</sup> The Greek word that is translated as *read* is *anaginosko*, a compound of *ana* (again) and *ginosko* (to know), and it means *to distinguish between, to recognize, or to know accurately*.<sup>249</sup> This word is used of *reading* since that is the means of identifying characters or letters that make up words, sentences, etc., howbeit with accuracy lest the reading should become meaningless. Paul is expressing his certainty that they will understand the authority that he was given 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 *generations*; here it refers to the generations of those who came before, those to whom the reality of the Messiah was foretold.<sup>250</sup> There was always an aura of mystery surrounding the coming of the Messiah, the Deliverer Who would crush the power of Satan (Genesis 3:15); despite Daniel's very specific prophecy (Daniel 9:24), the timing of His coming eluded the Jewish leaders, and what He would come to accomplish remained a mystery to them, and even became a source of stumbling. Jesus' disciples did not comprehend the purposes of God for His coming, even after His death and resurrection; 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 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, 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 unfolding details of that revelation through the generations was a different matter. When the timing was right for God, He sent Jesus (the Word made flesh, John 1:14) to fulfill the

<sup>247</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>248</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>249</sup> Vine's, "read"; Strong's Online.

<sup>250</sup> Strong's Online.



promise for the defeat of Satan that had been given in the Garden, the blessing of all families to Abraham, and the freedom from sin to Moses foreshadowed by the law. 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 of 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 (Ephesians 4:11-13) that these giftings, along with others, were given in order to bring the holy ones (*saints*) to perfection, or completion, until we will all arrive at "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 no longer the faith for which we are called to contend, "the faith which was once 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 the textual reliability of the Bible was no longer accepted, the falling away took place very quickly – now everything that Scripture declared was open for debate. 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 is able to get us to question even one small part of God's Word, then he has opened the door to sin. When New Evangelicals made their voice heard, they 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 “diluting” of the Word of God is through the plethora of translations that are now available to everyone. In the late 1800s, modern textual critics began to call into question the basis for the translation of the King James Version. These critics (now referred to as *higher critics*) refused to acknowledge that the Scriptures contain the very words of God and need to be handled differently from worldly, ancient literature. They no longer accepted the teaching that God has promised to preserve His Word (Psalm 119:89, 152; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25), and they placed a greater emphasis on the worldly credentials of the translator than on his submission to the clear teachings of Scripture. During this time, these critics compiled a new Greek NT based upon their new criteria, a text that won great favor and underlies ALL modern translations. Their team of language “experts” included several Unitarians who openly deny the Triune God and that Jesus is God come in the flesh – evidence that credentials eclipsed a right heart with God. The latest tactic has been to depart from making a literal word-for-word translation of the Greek text, but rather, to translate ideas and thoughts, which means that the final product becomes a translation of what the translator **thinks** that the underlying text means. We refer to our Bible (the KJV) 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 upon 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 that 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 Greek text that has been mishandled by those who deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have a recipe for perpetuating modern Evangelical accommodation and undermining God’s Word.



Such accommodation 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 – their reasoning is that 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 really is. 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 are warned that there will be false prophets among us, and so we must 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."<sup>251</sup>



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, of the mystery of Christ is. Just prior to this, Paul called the Gentile believers *fellowcitizens with the saints*, and *of the household of God* (Ephesians 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 that middle wall of separation, He made one body out of two distinct peoples (Ephesians 2:15-16). Those who were *afar off* and those who were *nigh* are now brought together into one *in Christ*. There is only one! This is the unity of the faith that Paul will discuss in Ephesians 4:5 and 13; this is the one body spoken of in Ephesians 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*.<sup>252</sup> *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 has established so that they can enjoy pasture with a greater number. What they fail, or refuse, to realize, is that God placed those fences there 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

<sup>251</sup> John E. Ashbrook, *New Neutralism II*, p. 82.

<sup>252</sup> *Vine's* "body."

Church kept the Word of God from the people so that they could impose their own interpretation of truth on them. 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.

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, rather than 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 (Luke 12:29-31). 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 the message must be rejected, and we also need to turn away from the messenger (Romans 16:17).

The Gentile believers have been made fellow-partakers of God’s promise *in Christ*; the Greek word for *partaker* means to be sharing with.<sup>253</sup> “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). “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 ... Therefore *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 addressed to the serpent (Genesis 3:15): the promise of a Son Who would crush the power of the devil; this promise was made much more specific with God’s call of

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<sup>253</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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 first promise of redemption. The promise that God made at the time that sin entered into the world was fulfilled in Christ; God’s promise to deal with the root of sin (the devil) becomes the hope of everyone who will ever live. It was God’s promise, and it is His Provision Who fulfilled that promise, thereby bringing salvation as a gift, an unmerited gift from God – 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.*

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 is someone who executes the commands of another.<sup>254</sup> 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 that he is doing, as opposed to *doulos* (bondservant or slave) that focuses on the individual’s relationship with his master.<sup>255</sup> 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? Their service is to be such that the saints are spiritually brought to where they ought to be (Ephesians 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 careful instruction while adhering to the teaching that has been established by God, and 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 that he had worked so diligently to stamp out? It was through the power of God working through His gift of grace. Paul was called, saved, and commissioned, all within a matter of days (Acts 9:4, 6, 15-16).

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

<sup>254</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>255</sup> Vine’s “deacon.”



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* that is applied only to superhuman power – primarily of God, but also the power of the devil.<sup>256</sup> 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, left to ourselves, we will 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 appointed by God as an Apostle 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, that does not erase what we did before we found His forgiveness. However, those things should not drag us down, but rather, encourage us to faithfulness and holiness. The grace of God was given to Paul so that he would 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 role as a persecutor, he also 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, and 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 become one of the leading proponents 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....'"<sup>257</sup> Martin and

<sup>256</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>257</sup> Bobgan, Martin and Deidre, James Dobson's Gospel of Self-Esteem and Psychology, p. 46.



Martin & Deidre  
Bobgan

Deidre Bobgan, who have written on Dobson's errant philosophies, declare: "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 being 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."<sup>258</sup> 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 that is advocated by Dobson, yet this doctrine finds a haven among Evangelicals today. "Christian" colleges teach such psychology as a science (when it is more correctly defined as a humanistic religion, with its emphasis upon "self"), and they will go to great lengths to justify their teaching as being Biblical.<sup>259</sup> 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 eternity. Only Satan could have formulated a philosophy that would entice those who, with the one hand hold the very words of God, and with the other, 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; more specifically to those who were outside of Israel, to those who were *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 8:1, 15:2). It was Philip, one of the seven

<sup>258</sup> Bobgan, Dobson, p. 48.

<sup>259</sup> Bodgan, Psychoheresy, p. 65.

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 still within the area of Israel. It was Paul who took the Gospel to those in *far off* places – to *the uttermost part of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

It’s interesting when 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 of 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 this letter:

1. In Him, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing (1:3)
2. In Him, we are chosen by God from before the world began (1:4)
3. In Him, we are 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* are from one word in the Greek: *photizo* (*fo-tid'-zo*), which means to enlighten, to inform, to illuminate or to make clear and so to understand.<sup>260</sup> This contains no concept of forcing people to accept what you teach (no brainwashing), but rather giving instruction and teaching for the purpose of providing guidance and increased 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, then 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 in the world (the rest of Scripture forbids such an interpretation). Again, we must pay particular attention to the context. Paul has just noted that he is preaching the Good News of Christ's unsearchable riches among the Gentiles (*euaggelizo* is not just preaching, but includes the Good News of the Gospel),<sup>261</sup> and now he says: *and enlighten them all*; the *all* is simply a reference to those who are hearing his teaching.<sup>262</sup>

Here again we have reference to *mystery*; that which has been hidden in God has now been revealed to His own. In Colossians 1:25-27, Paul speaks of this mystery: "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to 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...." This is the mystery of God

<sup>260</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>261</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.deepl.com/translator>.

that was hidden for the most part from the OT prophets and the Jewish leaders that is now being proclaimed openly to everyone: **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; the term translated as *fellowship* rests in the Greek *koinonia*, which carries the thought of community, of communion, and of intimacy.<sup>263</sup> 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, 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 [*koinonia*] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3); there is an intimacy here, a oneness, and a unity that goes well beyond the concept of fellowship as we might understand it today.

This 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 betrayers and 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 of Jesus (Acts 17:32). In Paul’s day, these were the two points that caused many to turn away: the Jews had great difficulty in accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah (after all, their religious leaders had orchestrated His death), and the Gentiles, who were well versed in humanistic philosophy, had to open their minds to accepting the reality of the resurrection from the dead. Modern Evangelicals have no problem agreeing with these two pillars of the faith, but they run amuck by settling for a misrepresentation of the freedom that we have in Christ. They will readily pay lip service to the authority of the Word of God and the necessity of standing for the truth, yet their life-styles, activities, and choices do not affirm this. Chuck Colson referred to himself as being a Fundamentalist, even while he reduced the fundamentals of the faith to five cryptic phrases that opened the floodgates to his misguided concept of the “narrow way.”<sup>264</sup> Rick Warren pushes the need to reach out to those about us, even while he uses the techniques of the world to create a worldly atmosphere and then points to the large numbers 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

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<sup>263</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>264</sup> Colson, Charles, *The Body*, p. 186. He laid 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 used broad brush-strokes in order to keep the Roman Catholics and Evangelicals on the same page. His goal was unity, not the truth of God’s Word.



that we cannot do outside of Christ (Romans 8:8), no matter how successful we might appear to be, or how logical our reasoning might seem.

From the beginning of creation, God's plan to pay the full price for the sins of man was already in place (1 Peter 1:18-20), but how this was to be accomplished remained hidden in Him.<sup>265</sup> Promises were made: Adam and Eve heard the promise and understood that God would deal a death blow to Satan through a descendant of Eve ("bruise his head," Genesis 3:15); Abraham believed the promise of God that, through him, a Blessing would come on all of the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3); Moses wrote the words of God and heard that one day a Prophet would arise Who would be like him but much greater (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 though the Levitical priesthood was still 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 even as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:9). Although 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 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 had those who were faithful to Him 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 support this: 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, also 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,*

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<sup>265</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

*Principalities* is from the Greek word *arche*, which means *beginning*, and, therefore, *the first place*, or *rule*;<sup>266</sup> within this context, it refers to the holy angels.<sup>267</sup> *Powers* is from the Greek word *exousia*, and carries the thought of authority, the right to act, and here again, it refers to the angels.<sup>268</sup> The reason why we can say that these refer to the angels is that these principalities and powers are in the *heavenlies*, the dwelling place of God and His angelic hosts. This does not include Satan and his host of fallen angels, for they have been cast out of the heavenlies (Isaiah 14:12; Revelation 12:9).

Here is a mystery for God working in us: He is using us to teach the angels. *Might be known* means to make known or to reveal;<sup>269</sup> therefore, one of God's purposes (*to the intent*) for having Paul preach the Gospel to all men is so that His angelic hosts will see something new. From this, it is evident that the angels are observing us, and they are watching God work in us, His *ekklesia*, or assembly of believers. What is God showing them? He is demonstrating to them His *manifold wisdom*, the many aspects of His infinite wisdom – it is being revealed in many, many different ways. The wisdom of God that is being evidenced through His saints is something that the angels have not understood before; this is something that they have never seen because it is centered in God's working in His people under the New Covenant – this is a *new* demonstration of God's wisdom that they are witnessing. After being with the Lord for eons, the angels are learning something new about their Creator; perhaps this is a glimpse of what eternity with the Lord will be like for His children – always learning something new.



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

Once again, we have reference made to the *purpose* of God; earlier (Ephesians 1:11) we saw that our adoption as His children was a part of His *purpose*. His desire to use His children to show the holy angels His wisdom in new ways is *according to the purpose of the ages that He made in Christ Jesus our Lord* (literal).<sup>270</sup> This is not a spin-off of His dealing with us; this is something unique that He had planned in Christ Jesus – something that could only take place once the mission of Christ was completed and the New Covenant established. Earlier we also learned that because Christ's mission was completed, He was raised to a place that is far above all

<sup>266</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>267</sup> Vine's "principality."

<sup>268</sup> Vine's "power."

<sup>269</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>270</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

*principality* and *power* (Ephesians 1:20-21); He is the Creator of all things (John 1:3), including the *principalities* and *powers* who are now learning of God's wisdom by observing His actions among us. Through faith in Christ, we are raised up together with Him, and are sitting with Him in heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:5-6). If we remain faithfully *in Him*, then we will one day be saved in order to abide with Him forever (Matthew 24:13), and will join the company of the angels in praising Him (Revelation 5:8-12). All of this is the grace of God expressed in all fullness through the salvation that is available only through Christ – a deliverance from sin that is sufficient for all of mankind (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2), prepared by God from eternity past as a gift that is available to everyone (Revelation 13:8; Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16).

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 fathom; He is eternally sovereign, there are no surprises to Him; His Word will never 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 rather than rock the boat. As the Lord began to open the eyes of my wife and me to a proper understanding of Biblical separation, one of the things that took me some time to get over was that there are many, many men who are far better educated than I am, men who have spent years studying the Word of God, yet they have not come to understand what was becoming evident to us. How could this be? Surely, I must be mistaken. How could anyone study God's Word for so long and never arrive at a correct recognition of something as basic as Biblical separation? It has become apparent that there is a spirit of delusion among Evangelicals, a spirit that has bound them to the fallacies of New Evangelicalism (as proclaimed by Harold Ockenga in 1948), a spirit of Ecumenism that seeks to unite everyone under one banner. With this thoroughly engrained in their thinking, and a generally accepted systematized theology of whatever persuasion, there is very little room left for the Spirit of God to speak to their hearts. Such as these have chosen a superficial understanding of the Word of God in order to avoid conflict with their broad, Ecumenical message; they have the "answer" to every Biblical question (hence we have Hank Hanegraaff as the *Bible Answer Man*), yet they choose to disregard the holiness of God and the unshakeable, eternity of His plan for mankind. God is the same yesterday, today and forever; He has not changed nor will He (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), and just as assuredly, His plans remain unchanged from the day that He spoke light into existence.

There are those today who proclaim the doctrine of "progressive omniscience," or "open theism." They hold that God cannot know the future because 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

Philip Yancey, a very popular author within Evangelicalism, and one of the editors of *Christianity Today*, is a proponent of open theism. What such 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); as the Creator of time, He is the “I AM,” the One Who is ever “now” (Exodus 3:14). In man’s intelligence and sophistication, he may not carve idols out of gold or silver, but he does not hesitate to mold a philosophical god that is no better than he himself is – a god who cannot save, and cannot hear. In Isaiah 59:2 we read: “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; “For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... boasters, proud, blasphemers ... having 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.

Since Philip Yancey is quite popular, and open theism is seemingly an acceptable Evangelical doctrine, let’s consider the major components of this theology:

- 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.”<sup>271</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Gary Gilley, “Open Theism,” <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/23-doctrine/550-open-theism-part-1>

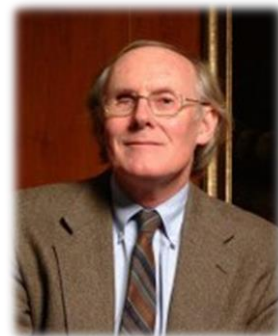
Bruce Ware, in his book *God's Lesser Glory*, has exposed the foundation and appeal of this aberrant theology:

“Along with open theism’s view of God’s limitations comes a corresponding exaltation of human beings. God is lowered while man is elevated. Herein lies both the appeal (sadly) and the danger of open theism. The culture in which we live, including much of the Christian subculture, has drunk deeply at the well of self-esteem [something that we have already noted]. 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, in a relationship in which we are encouraged to have an elevated view of what we think and feel, struggling along together with God while we are both subject to many of the same limitations – and all of this feels so right.

In fact, it is so very, very wrong.”<sup>272</sup>

In 2000, the Baptist General Conference declared that open theism falls “within the accepted bounds of the Evangelical spectrum.”<sup>273</sup> 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 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”<sup>274</sup>) for their views on open theism. However, not surprisingly, after the case was carefully reviewed, the



Clark Pinnock

<sup>272</sup> Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory*, p. 148.

<sup>273</sup> [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TasteAndSee/ByDate/2000/1156\\_We\\_Took\\_a\\_Good\\_Stand\\_and\\_Made\\_a\\_Bad\\_Mistake/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TasteAndSee/ByDate/2000/1156_We_Took_a_Good_Stand_and_Made_a_Bad_Mistake/)

<sup>274</sup> <http://www.etsjets.org/>



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.

In stark contrast to open theism, is the growing enthusiasm among Evangelicals for Calvinism; this is the polar extreme where God is accused of predetermining every minute detail of everyone’s life, including their eternal presence in either Heaven or the Lake of Fire. It is this kind of accommodation of 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 else’s doctrinal persuasion – rather than permitting the Spirit of God to guide us into His truth (John 16:13). I am slowly learning to be unimpressed by educational credentials.

Again, we are reminded that all is *in Christ Jesus our Lord* – *Lord* means one who has full authority over another as an owner.<sup>275</sup> When we call Jesus our Lord, we are saying that we belong to Him (after all, He did buy us out of sin!), and that He has the authority to decide what is best for us. Therefore, when things happen to us (something that we did not 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 all that 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 boldness* to come before God; however, this bears no hint of either brashness or carelessness. It is true, we have the freedom to come to God without hesitation, but it is only *by the faith of him* or *through His faith*.<sup>276</sup> One thing that has been obvious in our study of Ephesians so far: nothing comes to us from God except by being *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 complete.

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<sup>275</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>276</sup> Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

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

Romans 3:21-22 – “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by [through] **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe [*are believing*]: for there is no difference ...”<sup>277</sup>

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 [*are believing*].”<sup>278</sup>

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: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant [*doulos*, slave], and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).<sup>279</sup> Jesus, eternally with the Father and the Spirit, and the 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 in order to purchase the eternal deliverance from sin for 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 His finished work, which is the express demonstration of the faith that Christ had in

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<sup>277</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

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 us. Jesus said that if we would have faith as a grain of mustard seed, then we would be able to accomplish great things (Matthew 17:20) – the faith of a mustard seed is 100% in its Creator! Jesus did not say that we should have faith the size of a mustard seed; rather, we are to have faith **as** the seed. Like the seed, our faith must be completely in our Creator and Redeemer – since He has paid for our sins, we have a much greater reason to have faith in the Lord than the mustard seed. As we place our faith in Christ, and as we are believing 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 faith has been placed. As we are believing 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 *in Christ*; it is only in Him that we are brought together with the saints of all the ages to show forth His glory, to be His inheritance. What a great loss for those who are 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 have full access to the salvation that Christ secured by the cross, and now offers to all men (Ephesians 3:6), 2) Paul was made a minister of this Gospel despite his unworthiness (v.7-8), 3) the angels are learning about God’s wisdom as He works with His saints (v. 10), and 4) our confident access to the Father rests in 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 become discouraged or lose heart.<sup>280</sup> Clearly, Paul was facing tough times for these people; *tribulations* is from the Greek word *thlipsis*, and

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<sup>280</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

literally means *pressing together* or *pressure*, and metaphorically speaks of oppression, distress or affliction.<sup>281</sup> Because of these things, Paul is asking them not to become discouraged because of what he is going through for them – this is coming from Paul, the prisoner! The one who is experiencing the *pressing together* is requesting that they not become disheartened at his trials.

Paul goes on to say that the affliction that he is facing *is their glory*. How can this be? The Greek word for *glory* (*doxa*) is also translated as *honor* and *praise*, in addition to meaning the splendor and majesty of God.<sup>282</sup> Remember that Paul had been imprisoned because the Jews of Jerusalem sought to silence his message of the risen Lord Jesus (which he took to the Gentiles) and that the Law of Moses was ended in the risen Lord (Acts 21:27-28; 22:21-22). The *tribulations* that Paul faced were a direct result of the Message of life that he preached everywhere and to everyone, including the Gentiles. It seems that it was Paul's desire that they should view his tribulations as an honor; he was willing to suffer persecution to bring this message of hope to the Gentiles, and that included the Ephesians! Paul declared: "... we glory [or boast] in tribulations [*thlipsis*] also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience ..." (Romans 5:3); we also read that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [*dioko* (hostile pursuit)]" (2 Timothy 3:12).<sup>283</sup> 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 committed ourselves to follow the Lord more fully, and as we have sought without reservation to live in obedience to Him, 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 (as we see in what follows). 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 bend before Him only to experience His righteous judgment, rather than His grand salvation.

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<sup>281</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

*For this cause* draws what follows to Paul's desire that the Ephesians would accept his persecution and trials as a sign of honor for them. Clearly, Paul has accepted his tribulation in this life as what the Lord will use for his growth. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you [drive you out] *from their company*, and shall reproach [insult] *you*, and cast out your name as evil, **for the Son of man's sake**. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke 6:22-23).<sup>284</sup>



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

The family to which we, as the faithful *in Christ*, belong has been named after Christ; hence we are referred to as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). The word *family* speaks of lineage or a common origin,<sup>285</sup> and our lineage, as the Body of Christ, is through Christ, the Deliverer Who was promised from the beginning. Everyone who is being saved has been purchased by Christ: those before His coming to earth, and those after His resurrection. This family, of which Christ is Head, abides in heaven and upon earth; saints from all of the ages are a part of this family, 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 that 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 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, and we must remain 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;*

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<sup>284</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>285</sup> Strong's Online.



We return here to the main, beginning thought, namely that the Ephesians will see Paul's tribulations as being to their glory, and that he 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 (Ephesians 1:1).

Paul has a specific request of God for this group of saints – something that he longs for God to give (*grant*) to them. What follows is the reason that Paul willingly bears tribulation for the glory of the Ephesians; he submits to God the Father, even in his tribulation, and it is in his submission that he petitions the Lord on behalf of the Ephesians. The next portion of his letter expresses his desire of the Lord Jesus for these saints; it is as his appeal to the Lord finds expression in the Ephesians that Paul's tribulations will become their glory. Paul's request to God is that they would look 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 – *the ability to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man* (literal).<sup>286</sup> His request is for God to give them the power that would see them strengthened through the Spirit of God in the *within* man.<sup>287</sup> Jesus said, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These 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. 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 will live as we are commanded. However, this does not 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 that were first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden; through the smooth words of the devil, the forbidden fruit became *good for food, pleasant to the eyes*, and able to make one *wise* (Genesis 3:6).

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<sup>286</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>287</sup> Strong's Online.

The deception 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 have been convinced that the way to life is not nearly as narrow as Jesus stated, yet 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,*

This is the second request presented by Paul. 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 – *the Christ to reside in your hearts through the faith* (literal).<sup>288</sup> *Dwell* (*katoikeo*) carries with it the thought of settling into a place and remaining there.<sup>289</sup> Paul's desire is that Christ would inhabit the essence of their (and our) spiritual being, that He would fill and rule us.<sup>290</sup> Contained here is the spirit of Jesus' instruction to "abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4) so that we are able to 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 of Christ. "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 makes it feel less restrictive; 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 and draw

<sup>288</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>289</sup> Vine's, "dwell."

<sup>290</sup> Strong's Online.

undesired attention. Consider this example: a charted course that is set one degree off, after a mile will be off by a mere 92 feet; however, after 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 Evangelicals said that they would not practice Biblical 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 impact of this error will become more evident when the Antichrist is revealed, and its full effect will be understood at God's great white throne judgment. In the meantime, the siren song of unity and accommodation has already lured many Evangelicals right onto the rocks of apostasy for their final destruction.

*That ye, being rooted and grounded in love* – this introduces Paul's third request, which carries on into the next verse. *In love, ye have been rooted and established* (literal);<sup>291</sup> this provides the foundation for what follows. Again, consider that the requests are linked together and build in a cumulative manner. First, that we will be strengthened in our inner man by the Spirit of God; second, that we will experience the abiding presence of Christ within us. The result of this is that we have become *rooted and grounded* in the love of Christ, and this forms the basis for the third request.

*Rooted (rhizoo)* means to strengthen with roots, and here it is used figuratively to mean: to firmly establish or to strengthen.<sup>292</sup> It exudes a feeling of permanency; something that is rooted is not easily moved. James understood this when he wrote: "If 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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A 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* in Christ will not waver, or vacillate, in his commitment to Him.

*Grounded (themelioo)* means to lay the foundation, to make stable or cause to be firm and unwavering.<sup>293</sup> Here Paul uses two different Greek words with somewhat similar meanings to underscore the extent of our being established *in love*, not based on our own efforts but on 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), and as we are *in Him*, we are in His love!

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<sup>291</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>292</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

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 justice. In the name of *love*, they have set a proper understanding of Scripture aside lest they should cause anyone 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 found expression through His grace to meet the requirements of His justice, that sin is dealt with, so that even in His holiness, He is able to have fellowship with the sinner who is *in Christ*. We hear much of "God accepts you the way that you are"; and this has become an excuse to overlook sin and our need for repentance before God. Yes, it is true that there is nothing that we can do to gain merit before God; we cannot cleanse ourselves in order to be acceptable before a holy God. However, God does not accept us the way that 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, but by me" (John 14:6) – 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 (Ephesians 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, then that is all that is necessary to secure our eternal destiny. We have lost sight of God's requirement of 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; Luke 14:26-27).

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 that 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, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in

sin, that grace may abound? God 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 [full] knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26). These are sobering words that Evangelicals today refuse to hear.



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



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

This is the core of the third request, which is based upon Christ dwelling within us and our being firmly grounded in the love of God. The indwelling Christ and abiding in His love are necessary *in order that ye are able to lay hold of with the mind what the width and length and depth and height, to come to know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge* (literal).<sup>294</sup> The thought of verse 18 flows right into the next without a break, and so we understand that the four dimensions are related to our comprehension of the love of God. The saints who have gone on before and now abide in the presence of God, understand more fully the scope of the love of God, yet we who are still in this life, are to always be growing in our understanding (2 Peter 3:18). Nevertheless, it is by being firmly established in the love of Christ that we will be able to come to such a surpassing knowledge one day. Jesus said, *If my commandments you do keep, you will remain in my love, even as I the commandments of My Father have kept and I am remaining in His love* (John 15:10, literal).<sup>295</sup> Remaining firmly in the love of Christ requires that we live in obedience to His commands; we must not be so deluded as to believe that we can remain in His love even as we live in disobedience to Him! John the Baptist understood this very well: “He that believeth [*is believing*] on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that

<sup>294</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.



believeth not [*apeitheo*; *is disobeying*] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth [*is abiding*] on him” (John 3:36).<sup>296</sup> *Apeitheo* (from *a*, a negative, and *peitho*, to persuade) is much more than simply *believeth not* – it is a rejection of God’s will, which can only be described as *disobedience*.<sup>297</sup> Jesus said, *if you are loving Me, My commandments you must keep* (John 14:15, literal).<sup>298</sup> To what commandments would Jesus be referring? There are many of His commands scattered throughout the Scriptures, but they all find their foundation in the Law of God, the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments! The abiding presence of the Spirit of God within the heart of the child of God was a mystery that was hidden for many generations, but the commandments of God have always been known (though not always written). When the Lord reiterated the promise to Isaac that He had made to Abraham, He said that He could do so because “Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, **my commandments, my statutes, and my laws**” (Genesis 26:5) – Abraham knew what God required of him because he knew God’s *commandments, statutes, and laws*. Every generation has known what God expects of them, yet it seems that today’s “Christian” is suddenly at a loss, and so everyone does what is right in their own eyes – like Israel of old (Judges 17:6).

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* or width, and it includes the idea of a great extent.<sup>299</sup> *Mekos* is *length* and completes the two-dimensional expression (length and width).<sup>300</sup> *Bathos* literally identifies that which is below the surface (whether earth or sea); figuratively, it is used to express an extreme greatness, and in relation to God, inexhaustibility.<sup>301</sup> *Hupsos* speaks of the summit or top – the pinnacle.<sup>302</sup> Here are four dimensions applied to the love of God that begin to stretch our minds as we contemplate the greatness of His love. Paul’s third request for the Ephesians, and for the faithful in Christ Jesus, is that we will come to understand, at least to some extent, the unlimited love of God. While in this life, we will never be able to plumb its depths or scale its heights, but perhaps we will come to comprehend, in a limited way, the love of God as it has been expressed in bringing us, who were once far off, into a building that is made up of all of the saints from all ages (Ephesians 2:19). God’s love is so great that even though He knew the price that it would take to pay the penalty for the sin of fallen mankind, He made no change in His plan.

We now come to the fourth request, or desire, of Paul expressed for the Ephesian believers and for all of “the faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1), which means

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<sup>296</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>297</sup> Vine’s, “disobedience.”

<sup>298</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>299</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>302</sup> Vine’s, “height.”

that it is for us as well. Once again, this rests upon that which has come before: 1) we are being strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God, 2) Christ is dwelling in our hearts by faith, and 3) we are growing in our 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 describing a completed achievement.<sup>303</sup> 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). Growing in our understanding of the Lord 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 knowledge* (literal);<sup>304</sup> 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).<sup>305</sup> *Filled* is in the subjunctive mood, but because it is contained within a purpose clause, it expresses the fulfillment of Paul's desire;<sup>306</sup> 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: "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 is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). 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 Paul's desires for 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 bears a façade of being righteous even while it is really 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" (Ephesians 4:5), the same Lord Who desires to live in us and be our Hope of glory – not our hope for earthly prosperity. It is the same Lord

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<sup>303</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>304</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

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 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,*

Paul now 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* (*dunamai*) and *power* (*dunamis*) 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.<sup>307</sup> 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: *huper ekperissou* (*exceeding abundantly above*), which denotes superabundantly, or what we cannot express.<sup>308</sup> This forms a strongly emphasized articulation of God's ability to act that is beyond anything that we could *ask* (or request) or *think* (or conceive).<sup>309</sup> It is this superabundant ability of God that *is working* (present tense) in us who are obedient to Him! God help us to always submit to His wonder-working power!



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

*Unto him* refers to God, Who is filling us and working in us through His abiding Spirit. *Glory to Him in the ekklesia in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of the ages* (literal).<sup>310</sup> *Age* (*aion*) is used in Greek to describe a period of indefinite duration, and so *the age* becomes *forever*, and *the age of the ages*, *forever and ever*.<sup>311</sup> Glory will come to God through His called-out ones (*ekklesia*) who are *in Christ*; however, the last phrase applies this truth to **all generations** *forever and ever*! *Generations* (*genea*) can only have an earthly application (it is derived from *genos*, which speaks of birth, and from *ginomai* – to become) because there will be no

<sup>307</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>308</sup> Vine's, "exceedingly"; Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible.

<sup>309</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>310</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>311</sup> Vine's, "age."

ongoing *generations* in heaven (Matthew 22:30).<sup>312</sup> Therefore, *all generations* must include everyone from Adam to the generation that will close the millennial reign of Christ. *In Christ*, all of the redeemed from *all generations* will bring glory to the Father; it is God's purpose to *gather together in one all things in Christ* (Ephesians 1:10), and Christ will forever be the Head over the *ekklesia*, which is His Body (Ephesians 1:22-23)!

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<sup>312</sup> Strong's Online; Vine's, "age."



## 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 then, the prisoner of the Lord, am calling you to walk worthily of the calling with which you have been called* (literal).<sup>313</sup> We are to live according to the calling of God on our lives; what is that calling? “As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That 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 in *righteousness* and *holiness* according to the power of the Spirit of God Who now abides within us (Ephesians 4:24). “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). What is very evident is that if we are *in Christ*, then the Spirit of God is also present in us. Therefore, in order to live in the holiness and righteousness of the Lord, we must be *in Christ* and the Spirit of God must be present! These things are inseparable – you cannot have one without the other.

Could it be at this point that the first New Evangelicals missed the mark that has resulted in the present-day dramatic Evangelical failure? A **holy** God has called us with a **holy** calling; therefore, it is only fitting that we endeavor to understand what it means to live in holiness. The OT Scriptures are provided for our example (1 Corinthians 10: 11; Hebrews 4:2) 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); the Law of Moses expressed this

<sup>313</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



eloquently through the instituted priesthood and sacrificial system. Israel suffered much because they neglected, or ignored, God's instructions to not mingle with the heathen of the Promised Land, and to not learn their ways (Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Despite this example, one of the declared goals of the New Evangelicals was to dialogue with the Liberals and the heathen, so as to become as intellectually limber as they were; but God has declared that we are to separate from them, lest we be rejected by Him (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). God has not changed; His instruction to the Israelites is exactly the same as that which has been given to us! By setting this clear instruction from Scripture aside (and this is only one of many), Evangelicals have placed themselves under God's judgment: *The one who is believing in the Son is having life everlasting, but the one who is disobeying the Son will not see life but the wrath of God is abiding on him* (John 3:36, literal).<sup>314</sup> Through this one principle of their creed, they established the precedent of ignoring the Word of God, and ascribed greater value to their own understanding than to the instructions of a holy God. As they stepped out onto this slippery slope of compromise (by rationalizing their rebellion), it was only a short time before the whole of Scripture was brought into question, and the inerrancy of God's Word was denied – in practice, if not in words. Even though there were some within the New Evangelical movement who recognized the doctrinal deterioration, particularly as it related to the inspiration of the Bible, it seems that they failed to identify the reason for this or were unwilling to practice separation from error as God has prescribed.<sup>315</sup> "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 all of these years, the product of this shift away from the clear instruction of Scripture has sealed the spiritual death of 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 giving life 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;*

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<sup>314</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>315</sup> Harold Lindsell, who was actively involved in establishing the New Evangelical Fuller Seminary, wrote two books calling attention to the danger of losing the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy [*The Battle for the Bible* (1976) and *The Bible in the Balance* (1979)], yet he seemed unable to heed his own warning. Although there were a few who left the New Evangelical movement in those early days, Lindsell was not among them – the lure of acceptance by the Liberals seemed to be too great. Even though Harold Ockenga wrote the foreword to *The Battle for the Bible*, it is very clear that he gave no credence to Lindsell's concerns and certainly did not believe his warnings.

What follows now is a brief overview of what is to 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” (Ephesians 2:21) – a growing Building whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ.

*Lowliness* means to have a humble opinion of one’s self, to live unselfishly.<sup>316</sup> 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 holding to the Word of God or the word of man, for they certainly cannot both be right. Sadly, Evangelicals have again accepted the teachings of men over the clear instruction of God; yet they are without excuse, for, even though they have full access to the Scriptures, they love to hear words that soothe their consciences and soften the edge of their guilt before a holy God. “For the time will come when they [speaking of those within the “Christian” community] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap



C.S. Lewis

to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [*muthos*, myths, stories, i.e., lies!]” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Among Evangelicals today, there is a great acceptance of mythological tales: *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, and *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien are two that have gained particular prominence. C.S. Lewis is hailed by many Evangelicals, not only as a great writer of fantasy literature (*muthos*), 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 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 to be 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 in order to make it appear to be more acceptable. They will forage through the garbage looking for one small nugget of good, not realizing that the longer that they dig, the more they begin to look and smell like the garbage in which they have been digging. We have been called to separate from error, yet Evangelicals will go to great lengths to rationalize away the clear instruction in the Word of God.

<sup>316</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Consider a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Last Battle* (in the *Narnia* series): "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** ... 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" (emphasis added).<sup>317</sup>



It is clear from the emphasized portions of the above quote that C.S. Lewis is promoting vile heresy within this children's fantasy literature. He declares that it is possible to serve Satan all of your life, and end up being accepted by God! Jesus said, *The one who holds out faithfully unto the end, this is the one who will be saved* (Matthew 24:13, literal).<sup>318</sup> Lewis is promoting a works salvation where, if you do good deeds, even in the name of Satan, then God will apply them to your credit. However, that is **NOT** what Jesus said! To many who have done seemingly wonderful things in His name, Jesus will 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 within Lewis' thinking, this would for sure be their 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 made this statement: "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."<sup>319</sup> 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. He was **not** a bastion of Biblical theology, but a theological heretic who continues to hold great admiration and popularity among Evangelicals today.

<sup>317</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, p. 156.

<sup>318</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>319</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 53.

In the same book, Lewis went 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).<sup>320</sup> This is heresy, and we have already seen that men like Billy Graham have promoted this very same doctrine; it is really no 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.”<sup>321</sup> 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.”<sup>322</sup> 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. In essence, it is more acceptable to reject the Word of God than to hold Lewis up to the light of God’s Word. Rather than these things reflecting badly on C.S. Lewis who was unquestionably not a Christian, and therefore, was writing from the perspective of a religious 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 and his written theological ramblings as Biblical truth.

Now let us take 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 (since he was a Catholic).

Once again, we have to hear from 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.’”<sup>323</sup> The article goes on: “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.”<sup>324</sup> Dobson published the declaration that Tolkien is *a Christian*, thereby

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<sup>320</sup> Lewis, *Mere*, p. 176.

<sup>321</sup> Erhardt, Gretchen, “Lessons from a Lion,” “Family,” *Focus on the Family*, May 1999.

<sup>322</sup> McCusker, Paul, “The Chronicles of Narnia: Great Stories and Great Theology,” “Family,” *Focus on the Family*, December 2000.

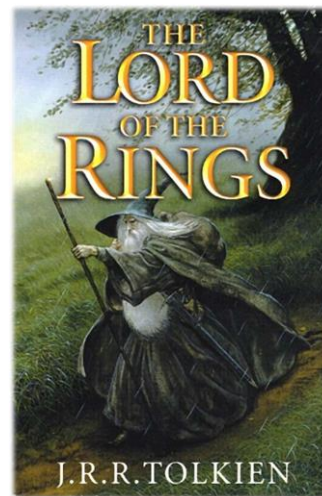
<sup>323</sup> Ware, Jim, “Stories Within Stories,” “Family,” *Focus on the Family*, December 2001.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*



setting the stage for anyone who reads his literature to take the bait and swallow the lie. Yet, how could we expect anything less since 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 James Dobson's Christianity 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."<sup>325</sup> By contrast, Genesis 8:21 gives us God's more negative description of the imaginations of mankind: "...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ...."



Then there is the 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 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.<sup>326</sup>

It is so evident that modern Evangelicals are ripe for anything but the pure Word of God; there is an epidemic of itching ears among Evangelicals today, and they will stop at nothing to have their itch scratched (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This is an example of

<sup>325</sup> Kjos, Berit, "Tolkien's Lord of the Rings," <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/rings.htm>

<sup>326</sup> Beam, Lindy, "Exploring Harry Potter's World," "Family," Focus on the Family, May 2000.



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*, and is not to be misconstrued as being weakness.<sup>327</sup> “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 so reluctant to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt that God provided Aaron, his brother, as a spokesman, it seems that it was not long before Moses found his voice. Here was a man who accepted leadership reluctantly, yet whom God used to demonstrate His power before two nations. *Meek* (from the Hebrew ‘*anav*), in this case, refers to humility as the intended product of affliction.<sup>328</sup> Jesus describes Himself as being meek: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek [*praos*, gentle] and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29).<sup>329</sup> *Meekness* is also one of the evidences of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:23); we, who are believing in the Lord Jesus, are to clothe ourselves in meekness (Colossians 3:12) and 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 (Isaiah 55:9), 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 thoughts of patience and endurance together, along with a quietness of heart and mind in the midst of difficult circumstances.<sup>330</sup> This requires a big-picture view of life, a mind-set that sees our short span of time in light of the vastness of eternity. It is a certainty that we will be maligned, misunderstood, and persecuted in this life (Scripture has indicated that this will be normal if we 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 think that they know what they want, and they want it now; we must stand in contrast to this by remaining faithful to the Lord despite what comes our way.

*Forbearing* carries an element of *longsuffering*, but within a different application. It means to exercise a self-restraint in favor of allowing others to flourish, to show tolerance toward those who do things differently – to bear with them.<sup>331</sup> What this does **not** mean is being tolerant of error; rather, it is a personal control against making your view of things as the only acceptable one. In essence, this can mean

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<sup>327</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>328</sup> TWOT #1652.

<sup>329</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>330</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>331</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

holding one another up or bearing with one another – perhaps many times it will be 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 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 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.

Further to this, we are also cautioned to consider our weaker brother and to conduct ourselves in a manner that will not cause him offense; this is more of an enduring, or bearing with, someone. “But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak ... But 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. It is not that we are to cater to their weakness in not obeying what God requires of us (in other words, we do not tolerate disobedience), but rather, we hold under restraint the freedom that we may have as we live before those who have not yet gained such maturity. The crux of the matter is that we are to be continually looking 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 though we are to live in consideration of those who are weaker in the faith, our forbearance must never be used as an excuse for the weaker brother to remain weak. We are all to be subject to instruction and exhortation that focuses on the truths of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13), and there is to be a continual growth and a deepening understanding of God’s Word (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, gentleness, and patience, always considering what is best for the other person. With this in mind, we now receive a challenge to action that is to flow from this self-less attitude. *Endeavoring* carries the idea of exercising diligence, or making every effort to accomplish some task.<sup>332</sup> We are to expend energy in order to achieve what follows; this would indicate that it may not always be easy, but we are to make the effort. What is it that we are to do? We are *to keep the unity of the Spirit*. *To keep* (used in the present tense) means *to be attending to carefully* or

<sup>332</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

guarding,<sup>333</sup> hence the idea is that we are to be diligently protecting this unity and fending those off who would seek to undermine or rob us of the unity of the Spirit. Notice that this is a unity that already exists; it is not ours to create but, rather, to defend; this unity is to be kept in the *bond of peace*. The word *bond* speaks of *that which binds together*,<sup>334</sup> and comes from the same Greek word that is used for the ligaments that hold all of the 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. However, we must also understand that this *bond of peace* does not refer to a *peace* at the human level, but that which comes from the Prince of Peace Who abides within those who are His. In other words, the *bond of peace* must **never** be misconstrued as being Ecumenical unity!

The *unity of the Spirit* that is spoken of here 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:



Chuck Colson

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.<sup>335</sup>] ...

"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.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>333</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Tournier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Tournier)

<sup>336</sup> 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.

Notice the progression in his thinking on this subject: 1) a lack of unity is a poor testimony to the world and will display animosity (*rancor*); 2) disagreement is evidence of unsure convictions (this is presented as a fact, when in reality it is simply his 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 that 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 a wrong conclusion out of it. 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 able to bring into being. This is the error that is so prevalent among Evangelicals today; there is a push for unity because, like Colson, they see it as the *essence of the church*.

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.”<sup>337</sup> Therefore, unlike the WCC, Colson will admit that there are differences, but chooses to focus on *the great orthodox truths all Christians share*, thus, in fact, creating his own lowest common denominator. The net result is the same as the WCC: any differences that arise, are simply ignored – is ignoring differences any 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,

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<sup>337</sup> Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

they declare that the Holy Spirit “can never lead believers into disunity.”<sup>338</sup> 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 that 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.



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.

<sup>338</sup> Colson, *Body*, p. 114.



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<sup>339</sup>



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 individually].”<sup>340</sup> So what is this Body?

The dispensational theology of many Evangelicals considers Israel to be set aside by God (because they rejected their Messiah, Jesus),<sup>341</sup> with God then establishing the “Church” as the Body of Christ – a Body of believers comprised of those who are being saved during this present “Age of Grace,” (or the “Church Age,” which they define as being from Pentecost through to the return of Christ<sup>342</sup>). This theology gives rise to a couple of hypothetical questions: 1) if Israel had not rejected Jesus as their Messiah, would they have gone directly into the millennial kingdom (the “Church” being merely a parenthetical insertion into God’s dealings with Israel), and 2) would Jesus’ death have been unnecessary if the Jews had accepted Him as

<sup>339</sup> <https://puritanreformed.blogspot.com/2007/08/poem-preacher-on-fence.html>.

<sup>340</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>341</sup> [https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/a\\_refutation\\_of\\_replacement\\_theology.php](https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/a_refutation_of_replacement_theology.php).

<sup>342</sup> <https://www.compellingtruth.org/church-age.html>.

their Messiah? Since such hypothetical thinking is rejected even by those who hold to a dispensational view of the Scriptures, then we must accept that Christ's sacrifice **was** God's plan, and that it was foreordained by God before the world began (Ephesians 1:4-5; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 13:8). Christ's sacrifice for sin was foreshadowed in the priesthood and sacrificial system that were established by God within Israel at the time of Moses; ultimate victory was promised by God in the hearing of Adam and Eve, and it was anticipated immediately after the fall (Genesis 3:15 and 4:1).

Therefore, since the *ekklesia* is not a parenthetical institution by God, an afterthought in His dealings with Israel (and the evidence would indicate that it is not such), what is this Body? Hebrews 10:8-10 helps us to bridge the gap in our thinking: "... [Quoting from Psalm 40:6] Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* [atonement] 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.] Then 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) so that the will of God is established (the second).] By 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 be set apart, and is from the same Greek root word used for the word *holy* and *saint*.<sup>343</sup>]

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 10:9 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 of 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 of the ages are not one body, the Body of Christ – Who is the promised Deliverer from sin for all of mankind. The writer clarifies that the faithful of the OT will not be complete without those who are now being saved (Hebrews 11:40). Christ made one sacrifice, which was for all of humanity; He is the only Mediator between man and God – there is no other: "... no man cometh

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<sup>343</sup> Strong's Online.

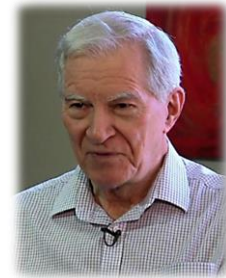
unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6b). Then, why would we try to separate into two groups those whom God has purchased out of sin? We have already seen that Christ has removed the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14), yet dispensational Evangelicals seem intent on rebuilding that wall.

In harmony with the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3), it is affirmed that there is only one Spirit; so there is a singularity in the 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 that insists upon an acceptance of all persuasions no matter how bizarre. We’ve grown up in what has been termed a pluralistic society, which means that we’ve 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 being equally true with our own. In other words, everything has become subjective; although we are permitted to hold our own truths (as it was under pluralism), for us 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, and that’s okay; however, I must accept your truth as being just as valid as my own. The bottom line is this: there is no longer room for absolute truth, and we must be accepting of everyone’s version of it. Nevertheless, there is one exception to this rule: tolerance will not be extended to the person who says that he has absolute truth (Biblical truth) and those who disagree are wrong. Most faiths in the world have no problem with this exception, for they are generally inclusive (and inclusivity excludes exclusivity) – the problems arise with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which are 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 that is 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 with the religious practices of the nations that they were to have displaced, so today’s Evangelicals have managed to reduce God’s light to the point where they feel justified to set the Scriptures aside as they reach out to those who hold opinions contrary to God’s Word. The slide into 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 at the time, sought to bring a group of Pentecostal Indians in 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 standing against this mixing of the holy with the profane, 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,”<sup>344</sup> this was the response that I received:

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.



Don Richardson

We whites have an incredible amount of historical sin to atone for. Harsh judgmental attitudes will only add to that hill of unwisdom.<sup>345</sup>

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 being flexible in our understanding of Scripture, lest we should cause offense. However, Jesus caused offense to the extent that He was unable to work miracles among those who knew Him during His early years (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 it.

Our *calling*, and by implication this is God’s calling to salvation, is based upon 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 that is not readily accepted today, not even within the Evangelical community. Billy Graham 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.”

It is no longer fashionable to use the Word of God in order to determine if someone is a Christian; if he says that he is, then that is not questioned. Today we

<sup>344</sup> Aiden Schlichting Enns, “Where the Spirit Lives,” *Faith Today*, July/August 2000.

<sup>345</sup> Personal communication from Don Richardson, October 15, 2000.

have a lethal combination of an obsession with unity and an overarching “judge not” attitude (which really means, “discern not”). Within this atmosphere, it is 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 only one time (*once*) entrusted (*delivered*) to the saints (Jude 3), the faith for which we are to *earnestly contend* (struggle or fight for), the faith described in the eternally preserved and indestructible Word of God.<sup>346</sup> 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, was 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 everything aside 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 hold in common with the Catholic faith. There is no denying that Catholics have 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 that is not the Gospel – therefore, it is an empty faith, and a deception of the devil. Second Corinthians 11:13-14 speaks of “... false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And 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* (*baptisma*, immersion or submersion) – an external act of immersion that publicly identifies us with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.<sup>347</sup>

<sup>346</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>347</sup> Strong’s Online.



“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). “Christian baptism originally consisted in full immersion.”<sup>348</sup> Yet even the Evangelical Free Church leaves the door open on the mode of baptism (sprinkle, pour or immerse), 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*; both consider it to be the required entrance into their denomination. Despite their well-honed arguments for their persuasions, they do **not** represent the baptism of which Paul wrote to the Romans. Clearly, they use the word *baptism* for activities that are not even supported by its actual meaning.



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

As we look at this verse, we must not disconnect 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 provides no support for the heresy of Universalism, but rather, it describes God’s relationship with **His children**. He is our God and Father; even though He is the Creator of all things, He fills the role of heavenly 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 (Ephesians 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 the exclusive message of the Gospel as given in 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.”<sup>349</sup> However, that does nothing to deter Evangelicals from building bridges to Mormons; through the years, there have been many who have sought to extend an olive branch to the Mormons, including D.L. Moody preaching in the Mormon Tabernacle in 1899.<sup>350</sup> In November of 2004, the late Ravi Zacharias, at the time a leader among Evangelicals, and Richard Mouw of Fuller Seminary accepted an invitation by the Mormons to follow Moody’s example. In similar fashion to the Roman Catholics, the Mormons will not change their doctrines or beliefs, but Evangelicals will focus on what they determine to be

<sup>348</sup> [www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=b&p=2](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=b&p=2)

<sup>349</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *Spiritual Roots of Human Relations*, p. 74.

<sup>350</sup> <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/featured-article-the-mormon-evangelical-dialogue/>.

the “essentials” of faith in order to give themselves license to “dialogue” 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, one that will draw everyone together under one banner in preparation for the work of the Antichrist. It would seem evident that we are living in the day when the “falling away” from the faith, as declared in the Scriptures, has already taken place – there are very few (just a remnant) who still desire the narrow truth of God (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Matthew 7:14). We must make every effort to remain steadfast against the complacency and error of Ecumenism.



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

*Grace* is a quality that adds joy, pleasure, and delight; with God, it speaks of His favor.<sup>351</sup> It was God’s desire to show favor to sinful mankind in order to provide a way for them to enjoy fellowship with Him again. This meant that man needed to be purchased out of his sinfulness in order to live in the holiness for which he was created – God’s *favor* (through Christ) made a way to satisfy His justice and meet the standard of His holiness! We (the faithful in the Lord) are each *given grace* as we live in a manner that is befitting the *vocation* (verse one), or calling, that we have received. As children of God, we have been called to walk in holiness, and here we are assured that we have all been given the measure of grace so that we, through the abiding Spirit of God, can live in keeping with the holiness and righteousness of God (Ephesians 4:24).

What is the *measure of the gift of Christ*? Malachi 3:10 reads: “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, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” If we would but render to God what He desires of us (obedience to His commands), 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 blessing (*every spiritual blessing*, Ephesians 1:3)! Notice that it is the *windows of heaven* that will be opened, and not the vaults of earth – we cannot construe this *blessing* to be the health, wealth and prosperity that is being peddled as the Gospel by many charlatans today. We are called to a spiritual life of holiness; the fleshly mind (attitude) is absolutely not pleasing to God (Romans 8:4, 8) and is actually hostility toward Him (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* is *dorea*, and is used within the NT only of the

<sup>351</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

spiritual and supernatural gifts that are given by God to those who are His.<sup>352</sup> Consider what Jesus told His disciples about the coming *gift* of the Spirit of God:

- 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).

Through the presence and working of the Holy Spirit, God has bestowed His *grace* upon those who are believing and obeying. It is through the Holy Spirit's free working and influence within us that we are able to live in a manner that is worthy of a holy God – in His holiness and righteousness. God has made a way for us to walk worthy of the calling by which He has called us (Ephesians 2:10).

This Gift has been given to “us,” the saints of Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 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 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) until they were raised from the dead at Christ's resurrection. As Jesus died upon the cross, “... behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks

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<sup>352</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:51-53). We must consider this carefully: the *graves were opened* at the time of Jesus’ death, but the *bodies* of the saints did not come out of the graves until **after** Jesus’ resurrection. Up to this time, the souls of the saints were in Paradise (the bosom of Abraham), but as Jesus rose from the grave, there was a resurrection of the saints of the OT (body and soul were reunited)! The text quoted tells us that *many* bodies arose. *Many* is from the Greek word *polus*, which under ordinary usage is an exclusive word (like our English *many*; *many* but not *all*); however, context must be brought to bear so that we understand it correctly.

Let’s consider an example: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon **all men**, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12); it is clear: Adam sinned and death came to *all men* (everyone). A little further we read this: “For if through the offence of one **many** [*polus*] be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto **many** [*polus*]” (Romans 5:15b). In this case, we must understand *polus* to mean *all*; it is clear that through the *offence* of Adam *all men* face death (*many be dead*), and also that the gift of God’s grace through Jesus is extended to *all*. Even though *polus* is **generally** an exclusive word, there are also times when it is inclusive (meaning *all*).

Returning to the resurrection of the saints, the obvious question would be: if some were raised, then why not all? If *many* is used in the exclusive sense, then how would God determine whom to raise and whom to leave in Paradise, and why would some be raised and others left? Let’s place this within a context that will help us to understand it more fully. *And now Christ, raised from the dead, did become the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep* (1 Corinthians 15:20, literal).<sup>353</sup> A brief review of *firstfruit* is important so that we will understand what Paul is explaining. The Lord’s instruction to Israel was this: “When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf [‘omer] of the firstfruits [singular] of your harvest unto the priest” (Leviticus 23:10).<sup>354</sup> The *firstfruit* was the first of the harvest that was to be brought to the priests who would *wave* it before the Lord in order to obtain His favor. When Christ was raised from the dead (to never again be subject to death), He was the *first* to be raised to life among all of those who had died. Paul goes on to elaborate on Christ being the *firstfruit*: *the firstfruit, Christ, after that those of Christ in His presence* (1 Corinthians 15:23b, literal).<sup>355</sup> Revelation 14 tells us of the 144,000 (not to be taken as a definitive number, but as a great multitude) who are with Christ, and they are identified as being the *firstfruit* [singular] *unto God and to the Lamb* (Revelation

<sup>353</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>354</sup> Strong’s Online; BDB.

<sup>355</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

14:4b). Christ is called the *Firstfruit*, but this great multitude is the *firstfruit* to Christ. This great company of saints are those who were raised after Christ's resurrection – they are the OT saints in their glorified bodies in the presence of Christ! The *many bodies of the saints* is an **inclusive** expression of the raising of all of the OT saints as the *firstfruit* unto Christ. Therefore, when Christ ascended to the Father, He *led captivity captive* – He led the OT saints, who were now in their glorified bodies, into the presence of the Father in heaven. Those who had been held captive in Paradise awaiting the time when the Promised One would come, Christ (our High Priest after the order of Melchisedec) now presented to the Father as His wave offering. This was the first of the harvest, with the full harvest coming when Jesus returns to gather His faithful ones from the earth (commonly called the rapture).

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus brought the Old Covenant of promise to an end, and instituted the New Covenant of fulfillment that is founded upon the blood that He shed for the sins of the world (Luke 22:20). “For the priesthood being changed [from the Levitical order to Melchisedec (Christ)], there is made of necessity a change also of the law [from the Old Covenant to the New]” (Hebrews 7:12). In other words, since Jesus is now our High Priest (a change in the priesthood), it is necessary that the New Covenant replace the Old (the teaching of Paul in Ephesians 2). The message of the New Covenant is the Gospel that is for all men without the filter of Jewish traditions, established by God to point forward to Christ, Who made the **final** payment for sin: a new life *in Christ* with His Spirit abiding within. Our text states that when He ascended, Christ not only led the OT saints to glory, but He also *gave gifts unto men*. The greatest gift that Christ gave was the possibility for everyone to come to God the Father through Him (the New Covenant); the invitation is to *whosoever* but He is the **only** Way – it is a broad calling to a Narrow pathway to life (Matthew 7:14; John 14:6). When we accept His invitation by faith, the Spirit of God comes to abide within us, sent by the Lord to guide us into all truth (John 16:7, 13), and to work in us to the benefit of the whole Body of Christ (what Paul will deal with shortly).



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



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

This is 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 – the *Word* became flesh (John 1:14). However, it was not simply a matter that Christ came from heaven to earth, but He,



as eternal God, 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 some who hold that it is speaking of Jesus' incarnation. The Psalmist wrote: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My 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). Indeed, the context would support viewing the Hebrew for the *lowest parts of the earth* as a figurative reference to the womb,<sup>356</sup> but does this carry forward into the Greek? Jesus said, "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); using Jonah for comparison, He places Himself in the inner parts (*heart*) of the earth for three days and nights.<sup>357</sup> When Jonah came to his senses within the fish, he cried out to the Lord "out of the belly of hell [*sheol*]" (Jonah 2:2); *sheol* is mostly translated as *grave* or *hell*, and for Jonah, the belly of the fish is better understood as a figurative reference to his *grave* since he never died.<sup>358</sup> The comparison that Jesus makes relates to the *three days and three nights*, and not to the location of where this time was spent. To the repentant thief on the cross, Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise [*paradeisos*]" (Luke 23:43); as Jesus' body was in the grave for three days and nights, He was in *paradise*. As Jesus related the story of Lazarus and the rich man, He says that righteous Lazarus went to *Abraham's bosom* when he died, whereas the self-righteous rich man went to *Hades* (Luke 16:23). It was while in the torments of Hades that the rich man raised his eyes and saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham (Paradise). *Hades* is a place of torment for the unrighteous dead, and, although it was well separated from *Paradise* (*Abraham's bosom*, a place of rest for the children of God), those in Hades could see into Paradise (Luke 16:23, 26). We have already learned that Paradise was emptied when Jesus rose from the dead, whereas Hades will continue until it relinquishes all of its dead for judgement before God (Revelation 20:13).

If we consider the context of our verse, it follows the affirmation that Jesus *led captivity captive* when He ascended to the Father; therefore, it is fitting to view the *descended first* as a reference to His time in Paradise, the place of the righteous dead – where He went to lead them forth in resurrection. We are all familiar with the rapture, when Jesus will come in the clouds with His angels to raise His faithful ones to be with Him in their glorified bodies; in this case, Jesus went to Paradise to raise everyone there in new bodies and lead them to His Father in heaven.

Christ ascended so *that he might fill all things* or *in order to accomplish all things*,<sup>359</sup> He ascended to the very presence of the Father so that He could complete

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<sup>356</sup> BDB; Strong's Dictionary.

<sup>357</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>358</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>359</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

the payment for the sins of all of humanity (Hebrews 9:11-12). Even as the high priest would enter annually into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God in order to make atonement for sins, so Jesus entered once into the heavenly Holy of Holies in order to complete the atonement for the sins of all of mankind. Christ, *through His own blood, did enter once for all into the Holies; eternal redemption He did obtain* (Hebrews 9:12b, literal). As our High Priest, Jesus, entered into the presence of the heavenly Father, He completed the redemption plan for sinful men and brought before the Father a *wave offering* of the OT saints! By descending from the heavenly glories, Christ took on the body through which He made the final payment for sin (death), and, as He became the Firstfruit from the dead (by the resurrection of that body), He defeated death and Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15). It was through this victory over death that He immediately raised the OT saints to new life (Matthew 27:52-53); those, since Adam, who had enjoyed Paradise, ascended to heaven with Christ where they abide in the presence of God in glorified bodies – bodies like unto that of the risen Lord! The full payment for their release had been made; although they had been held in a favorable place (in contrast to Hades), they were held *captive* until Christ rose from the dead, thereby sealing their release unto the Father.

It is because of Jesus' full payment for the sins of humanity and His victory over death and Satan, that He ascended *far above all heavens* into the very presence of the Father! God's eternal plan for the salvation of sinful men was complete, and the firstfruit of that salvation was now in the presence of their promised Savior and God. This is another glimpse into the majesty of Who Christ is and what He has accomplished; Paul has provided a solid portrayal of Christ before he launches into an explanation of the functioning of the Body of Christ – those who have placed their faith in Him and the victory that He has won.



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

Here is a delineation of some of the results from Christ giving *gifts unto men*: the New Covenant makes His salvation available to all men equally (the Jews and their traditions are no longer intermediaries), and the Holy Spirit was imparted to those who are *in Christ*, which leads to individuals being specifically enabled. The emphasis is not upon those who have received such gifting, rather, it is upon Christ having provided the *ekklesia* with those who are so gifted for a purpose. *And, indeed, He gave the apostles, as well as the prophets, and the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers* (literal).<sup>360</sup> To the Corinthians, Paul also dealt with this subject and

<sup>360</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

indicated that there was an order to their bestowal: *Also God did place these within the ekklesia: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that powers, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of languages* (1 Corinthians 12:28, literal).<sup>361</sup> A simple comparison of the two lists indicates that these are not intended to be exhaustive, but a presentation of **some** of the enabling that comes through the Holy Spirit. In our passage, God *gave* these as gifts, while in the Corinthian passage, God *placed* them – in both cases, their source is 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, while the latter is more instructive.<sup>362</sup> God *placing* these gifts within the Body is more fitting for a corrective letter – it removes any thought of the gifting being done haphazardly, whereas *giving* is more instructive and shows God's benevolence to His own.

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

*There are varieties of gifts and the same Spirit, and there are varieties of ministries and the same Lord; there are varieties of activities, now God is the same Who is working all things in every way, and to each one is given the evidence of the Spirit for the common good. For to the one through the Spirit is given the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; then to another faith in the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing in the same Spirit, and to another works of power, and to another prophecy, and to another the discerning of spirits, and to someone else kinds of languages and to another the interpretation of languages; but the one and the same Spirit is working all these, Who is distributing individually to each one even as He is determining* (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, literal).<sup>363</sup> Without question, it is God Who determines the gifting that is needed, both individually and overall within the Body of Christ (*the common good*); it must be our resolve to faithfully live in a manner that is in keeping with how God has called and gifted us (Ephesians 4:1). It is also conceivable that our gifting may change depending upon the requirements of the situation in which we find ourselves; it is God Who has the bigger picture in view – we must remain faithful to Him so that we do not miss His leading.

It has also become clear that the gifting is not general, but, according to God's determination, is given for a specific purpose – namely, the *common good* of the

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> <http://bible.org/seriespage/pauline-epistles>

<sup>363</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

*ekklesia*. The giftings that are noted in our text are all geared toward growing the Body of Christ both spiritually and numerically, and we recognize that not every local expression of the *ekklesia* will necessarily have all of them, but we can be assured that what is needed will be there. What is important to note is that the gifting is imparted by God to individuals for the accomplishment of His purposes. Let's consider each of those identified here.

**Apostle** – the Greek word (*apostolos*) means, one who is sent on a mission.<sup>364</sup> 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 these are the only twelve; Judas lost his position and, subsequently, Jesus called Paul 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 also be included as *apostles*, but once again, they were commissioned by others, not directly by the Lord. The names of the twelve Apostles will be 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 has not deterred many from attempting to take on the mantle of Apostle; Paul addressed the problem of *false apostles* in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:5-15), and the elder of the assembly in Ephesus is commended by the Lord Jesus for ferreting out those who claimed to be apostles (Revelation 2:2). Indeed, the Catholics contend that the Pope is a successor to the Apostle Peter (with great apostolic authority), the Mormons refer to their council of twelve leaders as *apostles*, and the New Apostolic Reformation consider their *apostles* to hold the highest authority within their local assemblies. Clearly, even before the canon of Scripture was closed, there were those who sought to assume this role, and then were properly discerned to be frauds. The role of Apostle carried great weight among the early believers since the Lord Jesus had specifically called each one, and there were those who sought that influence and prestige. 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 the Lord; within this context, this is a closed gifting.

**Prophet** – "one who speaks forth ... a proclaimer of a divine message."<sup>365</sup> Couched within this is the concept of proclaiming the truths of God, someone who unveils the Word of God but not necessarily new revelations. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 13:8 that a time will come when prophecies will cease – an indication

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<sup>364</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>365</sup> Vine's "prophet."

that when the canon of Scripture was completed, special revelations would also be ended. 2 Peter 2:1 declares: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you ...”; it is interesting that the Lord did not parallel the historic *false prophets* with present *false prophets* but, instead, identified that we would experience *false teachers*. Evidently, a transition was taking place: from *false prophets* to *false teachers*; from those who would portray themselves as divinely inspired when they were not, to men who endeavor to twist the meaning of God’s Word. 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 new revelation from God; if they make the claim, then they are not speaking forth truth from God. Those who claim to have a *revelation from God* have brought much error into the Flock. Many of the cults that lay claim to the name *Christian*, have come about through this means.

**Evangelist** – this is a “bringer of good tidings.”<sup>366</sup> By definition, this would be someone who could be called an itinerant preacher of the Gospel, bearing the Good News everywhere that he went. As such, he would probably not hold the same responsibilities within his home assembly as the *pastor* and *teacher* (next in our consideration).

**Pastor** – in Greek this word is *poimen*, literally a “shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them).”<sup>367</sup> 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.<sup>368</sup> It doesn’t take much contemplation to realize that most who call themselves “pastors” today fall far 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 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 into line because he is the *shepherd*, not because he has invested his life into theirs and has earned their trust. Today’s shepherd abuses Hebrews 13:17 that tells us: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves”; he uses the *obey* 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 a submission that is based upon testing their message against God’s Word

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<sup>366</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>367</sup> Vine’s “pastor.”

<sup>368</sup> Strong’s Online.



and finding it true (something that may take time). Vine's says, "the obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion."<sup>369</sup> This is no *stick* to keep the sheep in order; this speaks to the testing of the shepherd affirming that he is true to the Scriptures – the onus is on the "pastor" to be true to the Lord, not on others to bow in submission. "Pastor" is not an office that includes authority to which we are to submit; this is the gift of shepherding that comes from God, with no inherent authority.

Today the *pastor* is defined as "a Christian minister or priest in charge of a congregation,"<sup>370</sup> which sounds more like the president of a company than a shepherd who must be found to be faithful to the Lord in all things. However, when you consider that most "pastors" don't stay with a congregation for more than a few years, it is easy to understand why 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 yet they expect the people to obey them implicitly, even though they may make no effort to demonstrate their Biblical integrity. Elders are elected by the "membership" for a period of time, often without consideration being given to the Biblical qualifications for the role. 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 above the Word of God.

**Teacher** – There is no mystery here, *didaskalos* is a teacher. However, we are warned to be diligent and to be on the alert for false teachers (2 Peter 2:1) who are clearly not there to strengthen the Body of Christ. These are Satan's counterfeits, who will proclaim things that we might like to hear (2 Timothy 4:3) and may even have a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:2-5), but we are to be spiritually discerning and turn away from them. They may even be highly educated yet "never able to come to the knowledge [a full knowledge available only through Christ] of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).<sup>371</sup> 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, yet are entangled in a web of their own philosophies and are unable to understand the simple truths of Scripture. Consider 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 truth in their message, but it is for the error that they have added that we must turn away from them.

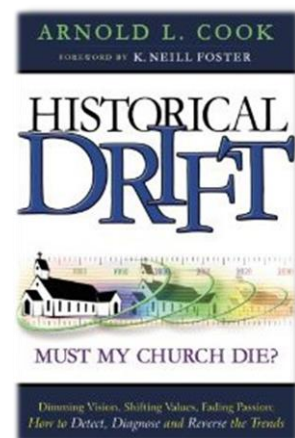
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<sup>369</sup> Vine's "obey."

<sup>370</sup> Encarta Dictionary, "pastor."

<sup>371</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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.”<sup>372</sup> That is a good statement and one with which we could heartily agree. He also observes that “standing for doctrinal truth will place us in situations where we will be perceived as breaking Christian unity,”<sup>373</sup> 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.”<sup>374</sup> In other words, we must hold our commitment to the Word of God on equal balance with what we understand to be our relevance in the world; in essence, he promotes giving an objective reality (the Word of God) equal weight with a subjective determination as to what is relevant today. In addition to this, 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.<sup>375</sup> This strange mixture of truth and error 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 also present many things 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).<sup>376</sup>



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

We are now given three reasons for God providing such gifting to the Body of Christ (or three results that will be realized from them). The first, *perfecting* carries with it the thought of equipping or bringing to a place of complete preparedness.<sup>377</sup> Later on in chapter six, Paul speaks of putting on the whole armor of God – these

<sup>372</sup> Cook, Arnold, *Historical Drift*, p. 138.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid, p. 198.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid, p. 180-181.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>376</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>377</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

giftings (as apostles, prophets, etc.) were given by God to us (the faithful in Christ) so that we may become 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 completed 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 to 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 conflict – there are challenges to face and an enemy for whom to be on the alert. Our walk with Christ through this life is to be characterized by growth, a deliberate, 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 might beckon us. Unlike Arnold Cook, who advocates balancing the Word of God and social relevancy, we must be prepared to stand upon 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" one. 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 are "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.<sup>378</sup> The Greek word translated as *ministry* bears the root from which we get our word *deacon*, but there is no definite article in the Greek to make this *the ministry* – it is *the work of ministry*.<sup>379</sup> This is not an ecclesiastical function (as *the ministry* might suggest), but merely a day-by-day attending to the ordinary 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 one 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). Therefore, *ministry* 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. Jesus taught that there is no positional authority within His *ekklesia*, simply differing functions and roles: "But 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. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister [*diakonos*, deacon]: And whosoever

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<sup>378</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>379</sup> Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant [*doulos*, slave] of all. For 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).<sup>380</sup> The Lord Jesus lived His life as an example to us – a life of ministry, of serving sinful mankind even though He was their Creator! What humility, what service! Each of us has been given an area of work that we must not evaluate as to whether it is 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 gifting has 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 is also a progression. First, there is a foundation of individual equipping, followed by work that makes use of that equipping, and finally, a general growth of the Body of Christ. God is not content to have us profess faith and then nothing (which seems to be the attitude of many Evangelicals); rather, He desires that we grow and mature in our understanding of His Word, and He has said so. “For when for the time [that has past] 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 [solid food]. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in [unacquainted with] the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat [solid food] belongeth to them that are of full age [mature], even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).<sup>381</sup> God is not satisfied with simply a barren belief; milk is fine for its intended use, but it must result in growth and development so that more solid foods can be handled. The word *unskillful* carries the thought of a lack of experience, or of being ignorant, something that is to be expected of a baby; however, someone who remains as a baby, and does not grow, has a serious problem. Nevertheless, among Evangelicals, there is a great tolerance for such (spiritually speaking). In fact, it seems that there has been a general backward trend within the average Evangelical, an increasing sense of being unsure of anything spiritual, and this is largely 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). Evangelicals have lost their spiritual teeth, and are trying to receive spiritual nourishment from what is meant for an infant. There has been a massive capitulation to the professional theologians/preachers, and a failure to recall that the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14) and cannot be understood merely by training the intellect (2 Timothy 3:7) – this is one of the many errors into which Evangelicals have fallen.

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<sup>380</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>381</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Hebrews 5:14 speaks of “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” *Use* expresses a continual practice and exercise resulting in the formation of habits; *senses* refers to the faculty of perception and understanding and, within this context, it is spiritual; *exercised* does not refer to the process but to having become trained and self-disciplined – the product of the *practice and exercise*.<sup>382</sup> Those who have gone from milk to solid food are continually exercising their minds so that they will be spiritually perceptive and alert to what is taking place around them. They will be constantly growing in their relationship with the Lord and yielding to the abiding Spirit so that their discernment is sharp. Average Evangelicals today cannot stomach solid food; they are content to sit idly by and accept the homilies of the so-called experts as being truth; they have cast God’s protective armor aside in favor of an open acceptance of everyone – including those against whom we are to be on guard. Anyone who exercises Biblical discernment is often considered to be a troublemaker, and a narrow-minded pessimist who always sees the glass as being half-empty. Jesus said, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

The reason for this alertness and discernment is so that we may be able to distinguish between *good and evil*. In Greek, the words for *good* and *evil* are *kalos* (good) and *kakos* (evil).<sup>383</sup> The words are very similar – with only a one letter difference; someone who was not discerning and alert might easily confuse them. This is exactly the problem among Evangelicals today – there is a blurring of the difference between good and evil; they have grown weary of being vigilant and have expanded their definition of what is good and acceptable. I am reminded of the word of the Lord to Ezekiel: “Son 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: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then 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. He 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. But 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. So 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 arranged to make the role of the watchman obsolete by removing the list of enemies for whom we are to be on the alert. The Lord set Ezekiel

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<sup>382</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>383</sup> Strong’s Online.



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 that is filled with many warnings and calls for discernment, yet, like Israel of old, Evangelical ears and eyes have been closed to the truth. Jesus said, “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And 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]: For 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).<sup>384</sup> The Lord told Ezekiel 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 are closed to its meaning. Their hearts have become insensitive (*waxed gross*) and they have closed their eyes and ears to God’s truth; to such, the Lord will send a delusion so that they will believe lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart [*become apostate*] from the faith, giving heed to seducing [*deceiving*] spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy [the *hypocrisy* will be that to them the *lies* will be the truth!]; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2).<sup>385</sup> Interestingly, *shall depart (become apostate)* is in the indicative mood: this is a statement of fact from the Lord that some will turn away from *the faith*! One of the *lies* that the Evangelicals have been deceived into believing is that you cannot lose your salvation; this is a *lie* that is made to appear to be a Biblical truth – many seek to support it with Scriptures that they do not understand, or have molded to fit their theology.

When we think of the Body of Christ being edified, we must bring to mind our calling by God to a life of holiness. God has not changed. If the path that we walk now is different from when we first committed ourselves to the Lord, then one of two things is evident: we were wrong before and we have grown in our walk on the Lord’s way, or we are wrong now and have departed from His way. Paul clarified our responsibility: *You must be examining yourselves, if you are in the faith; you must be testing yourselves* (2 Corinthians 13:5a, literal).<sup>386</sup> Placing the first part of this into our typical English if-then format, we have: *if you are in the faith, then you must be examining yourselves*. In other words, **everyone** who is *in Christ (in the faith)* is to be continually carrying out an examination of how he is thinking and

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<sup>384</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>385</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>386</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

living – we are to be ever on the alert! Paul then tells us how this is to be carried out: by *testing yourselves*. *Testing* (*dokimazo*) means to determine the purity, or authenticity, of what is being examined; its literal application describes the tests that are made on metals (like silver and gold) to ascertain their quality (*assay*).<sup>387</sup> Within our context, it also carries with it the anticipation of approval; if we are *in the faith*, then we are living in obedience to the Lord, and the Spirit of God is abiding within us – a strong basis to be found true. The standard for our *testing* can only be the Word of God, which means that we must have a good and growing understanding of **the Scriptures** – **not** theology! Most preachers proclaim the Scriptures in keeping with the theology that they have learned, rather than teaching the Word of God that they have studied. For this reason, they can spend a lifetime in the Bible and never come to understand what God desires and requires of them; theology will cloud God's truth, but God's truth will dispel the need for theology.



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:*

Once again, we must keep in mind the context 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 making. 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 **should** all come into the unity of the faith*.<sup>388</sup> If we recall from verse 3, we are to make every effort (*endeavoring*) 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. Such contending is a product of the edification of the Body of Christ – a natural flow from what has just come before. The fruit of the perfecting, working and edifying (v. 12) is being unfolded here: so that we might all come to that which is outlined in this verse. Since this is outlining our focus for living the Christian life, we would do well to endeavor to understand these truths.

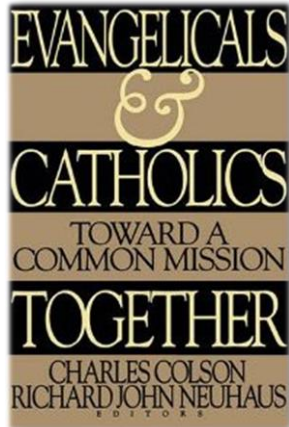
Through the gifting that God has given to the Body of Christ, comes a growth and maturity that will see us all united in one faith (Ephesians 4:5). However, the *all* (in our verse) does not mean all of mankind – we must not lose sight of the context of this passage. There is no unification of all religions here, no coming together of all faiths into one great and grand unity; this is applicable **only** to the Body of Christ; **only** to those who are *in 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 Him that we

<sup>387</sup> Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

<sup>388</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

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).

Among Evangelicals, there is a broad movement that seeks to place the emphasis on the *unity* rather than on the *faith*; it is **the faith** that includes the unity to which Paul refers. By placing the emphasis on *unity*, 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 that 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 between a sheep and a fake-sheep is to be sensitive to the Spirit of God, and observe their words and ways, so 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 was placed upon 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).<sup>389</sup> Although he criticizes the Ecumenical bodies for ignoring the doctrinal differences, he acknowledges them and then spends all of his time fixated on the commonalities – however, the result is exactly the same: ignoring the differences (as Colson did) is the same as pretending that they don’t exist – there is no apparent difference, it is just semantics.

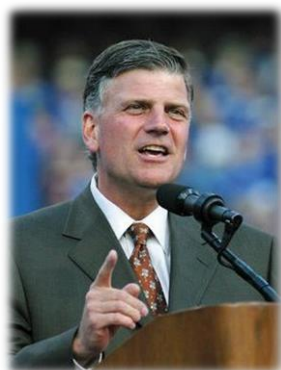
In an April 5 appearance on the Hannity & Colmes Show on the Fox News television network, Franklin Graham was asked this question by Sean Hannity (who is Roman Catholic): “Let me ask you this, what are some of the disagreements ... between, say, Catholicism and Evangelical Christians? Or is it just more that you agree on than disagree on?” Graham replied, “Well, there are a lot of doctrinal issues that we disagree on. But the things that we do agree on are the cross, that Jesus Christ was the son of the living God who went to the cross, took our



Sean Hannity

<sup>389</sup> Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

sins, died on that cross, was buried on the third day, according to the scriptures, rose again. And this is the essence. **This is what we agree on and we can work together on and can build on**” (emphasis added).<sup>390</sup>



Franklin Graham

We find the same emphasis on unity coming from the Catholic Church as it endeavors to become the controlling church of the 21<sup>st</sup> 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” (errors in the original).<sup>391</sup> There is a general movement today to return to the Roman Catholic Church and a desire to undo the work of the Reformation. However, if you consider the Reformation carefully, it really was not a cleansing from the errors of the Catholic Church. For the most part, the Reformation movement retained much of Catholic tradition and doctrine; although they were forced to separate from the Church to a certain extent (since Luther was excommunicated<sup>392</sup>), they did not remove themselves from all of its errors. For example, “The Council of Trent [a Roman Catholic Council] solemnly defined that there are seven sacraments of the New Law ... Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.”<sup>393</sup> Although most Reformation churches do not hold to all of these, the Free Reformed Church, for instance, still holds to two **sacraments**: namely, baptism and the Lord’s Supper (what the Catholics call *Holy Eucharist*). Most notably, they refer to them as being *sacraments*, not *ordinances* like the Baptist and Evangelical movements. The difference is that a sacrament is a means of God bestowing grace 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.”<sup>394</sup> 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 Reformation with a resurgence of true Biblical faith, yet there were believers who held to the true faith of God all through

<sup>390</sup> <https://rainhadocanto10-evangelicalchristian.blogspot.com/2011/07/franklin-grahams-unscriptural-ecumenism.html>.

<sup>391</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/lwf-and-vatican-urged-churches-worldwide-to-celebrate-the-fifth-anniversary.html>.

<sup>392</sup> <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/martin-luther-excommunicated>

<sup>393</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm#IV>

<sup>394</sup> <https://frcna.org/about-us/what-we-believe#11>.



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 seeks to soften our guard against his wiles, and have us fail to “keep the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3).

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.<sup>395</sup> Through the proper expression of the gifts that God has given, will come an accurate and increasing understanding of Who Jesus is – another area of failure among many Evangelicals today. Although they retain much of the traditional teaching that they have inherited from generations past, it has become merely 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 Evangelicals who look like the world are, according to the Spirit of God through James, spiritually dead! All of 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: ... *they are always learning and never having the ability to come unto the full knowledge of the truth* (2 Timothy 3:7, literal).<sup>396</sup>

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 – “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That 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]. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away [*apostasia*, apostasy] first, and that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition.”<sup>397</sup> 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 that full knowledge of Jesus, even if we could not tell the difference. Yet to fall away from, or forsake, a belief, means that you must have held that 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 2:20-21 speaks to this: “For if after they have escaped [been freed from] the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [a full

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<sup>395</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>396</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>397</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.



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. For it had been better for them not to have known [that *full knowledge*] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it [*full knowledge*], to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”<sup>398</sup> 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 should be lured away and become part of the great movement into apostasy.

Here is a third part of this goal – we are to become *a perfect man*. *Perfect* is defined as “wanting nothing necessary to completeness.”<sup>399</sup> 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 gifting given to those within the Body of Christ is to be our completeness in Christ someday. But once again, the admonitions of Scripture are there for a reason – we must not simply sit idly 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 the targets of Satan, and not idle spectators, who need to wear the protection of the Lord, (1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:11). “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But 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 are bound for heaven. “... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If 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 like to think that life should suddenly be free of problems. Even though we might 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 exercised [to exercise self-control] thereby.”<sup>400</sup> If we permit the Lord to work in us through our trials, then there will be growth in our walk with Him so that we will increasingly live in keeping with God’s holy calling on our lives.

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<sup>398</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>399</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>400</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Jesus declared: “he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38); 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 Jesus called us to bear; many would find that offensive and unduly negative (to our self-esteem, if nothing else). We hear more that God “loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.”<sup>401</sup> This feeds our desire to live a life of ease – pain-free and trouble-free; it is more in keeping 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, in reality, they should be warned that they are about to come under attack and there are no prisoners – it is a fight to the finish.

For many Evangelicals, entrance into the Christian life has been reduced to praying a prayer and you are on your way to heaven. Yet Jesus, the One Who is the only way to heaven by means of His sacrifice on the cross, said to count the cost before you commit to becoming His disciple (Luke 14:26-33). There is a cost; our commitment to Jesus is to be greater than any earthy relationship that we might have, and we can expect to suffer persecution as we seek to follow in His steps. Since Jesus said, “Count the cost,” why do we not hear about this today? The cross that Jesus calls us to bear has been removed from the Gospel message, and so the message has become something other than the Gospel from God. Inasmuch as most who call themselves Christians today are either ignorant of Jesus’ call to take up the cross, or they simply have no desire to shoulder it, they are not worthy of Christ (according to Jesus’ own words, Matthew 10:38). The Scripture makes it clear that if we live Biblically, then there is 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 is declared by its promoters 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, and 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 that comes because of our faulty living, but something that falls 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 most of the persecution that Jesus faced 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

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<sup>401</sup> “Four Spiritual Laws,” Law #1, <http://www.greatcom.org/laws/>

(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 being righteous, who brought persecution upon Jesus’ head. These self-righteous ones kept the Law with great flourish and gave careful attention to each minute detail, yet they received Jesus’ condemnation because they had lost sight of the spirit of the Law that 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, yet 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, and thereby they made access to God a burden that was too large for anyone to bear. Listen carefully to Jesus’ words to the Pharisees: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe 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 that included justice, mercy and faith; they omitted the part of the message that dealt with the heart and, through faith, 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 bring an eternal surety. This 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 faith. Jesus’ judgment is clear: “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. Many 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? And 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 nod, and then we are free to go 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 ignore 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), and this is to be demonstrated through how we live our lives: in obedience to the Lord's commands!

Consider Paul's charge to Timothy: "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 1 Timothy 4:14); 2) do not join together, or fellowship, with those who are in error (thereby becoming party to their error); 3) carefully guard, or *keep*, your purity. The Greek word for *keep* is the same as that used in Ephesians 4:3, where we are told to guard carefully the unity of the Spirit.<sup>402</sup> 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: through the power of the Spirit of God, we are to live a life of purity (obedience!), and as we do so, we will discover that we are also carefully guarding the unity of the Spirit of God. **The unity of the Spirit is a present reality**; a pure life will give evidence to 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, only leads to sin; they sought for unity with those who had no part in *the faith* – the faith that we are called to defend, not compromise (Jude 3). The Lord's command is that we separate from these who promote error, not join with them. By not giving careful attention to the doctrines that they teach, many of today's Evangelical leaders have lost the saving element of the Gospel, and hold empty words that appeal to the desires of the masses – words that contain death, not life. These men proclaim their messages loudly and widely, but, like Samson of old, they are not aware that the Lord is not with 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*. Gifting has 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 become like Christ.<sup>403</sup> 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 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 refuse 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

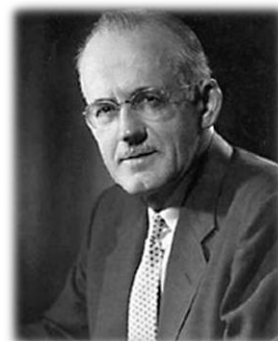
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<sup>402</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>403</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



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.”<sup>404</sup> By removing the offense of the cross from their message, Evangelicals have inadvertently removed the saving element of the Gospel, and they are left 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 [*Gehenna*, the Lake of Fire] than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).<sup>405</sup> How can this be? 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 in the hearts of their converts. Who 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 the *unity* of the faith, a *full knowledge* of Jesus, and a spiritually mature individual enjoying the *fullness of Christ*. All of the gifting and edification is for our growth in Christ, so that we are able to 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.<sup>406</sup> It is as we mature in Christ that we will *be no more children*. As we walk in obedience to God’s commands, we will grow out of our spiritual childhood into maturity. 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

<sup>404</sup> <http://www.acts17-11.com/cross.html>

<sup>405</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>406</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).



so that we might learn that God is holy and serious about our need to walk in purity and holiness in this life; this is not a “someday” reality, but rather, a journey of struggle and growth toward the fullness of Christ.

We are no longer to be *children*; this means that we are not to remain unskilled, immature and untaught. The reason for God gifting individuals (as apostles, prophets, etc.) is for the growth and maturity of those who are *in Christ*. “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: “For 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. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But 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). The average Evangelical today clings to the words of their teachers, whether from the pulpit or through books, but will 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 because they took the words of the Apostle Paul and went back to the Scriptures to ensure that what he was saying was in accordance with the Standard that does not change (Acts 17:11). A pathetic pall of lethargy has fallen over Evangelicals today, and they have set themselves up for terrible deception. “... 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. And 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 who may say some good things, but we must not be lulled into complacency and accept anything 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.”<sup>407</sup> 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 attention or endorsement – we must diligently examine their teachings in light of God’s Word in order to ensure that their foundation is Biblical.

Paul goes on to outline several characteristics of what it means to be immature; the first is being *tossed to and fro*. This is one word in the Greek, and literally means

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<sup>407</sup> Strong’s Online.

to be *tossed by the waves*.<sup>408</sup> 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; the latest book to hit the market, or the latest captivating preacher on the airwaves becomes the new wave to ride. We live in a generation that demands instant gratification, and fads come and go very quickly; this is in 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 must not 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 sustained damage by the waves that they faced. There is also a damaging element to being someone who 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 – *carried about with every wind of doctrine*. The word *wind* does not mean a gentle summer breeze, but rather “a very strong tempestuous wind.”<sup>409</sup> The Greek word translated as *carried about* conveys a real sense of instability; literally, it means to be carried this way and that, and metaphorically, speaks of those who are convinced of one thing and then, in the next moment, of something else entirely.<sup>410</sup> Today, the winds of teaching are blowing strongly from every direction and, unless we have the truths of Scripture settled in our minds, we will be *carried about* 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. It is not that we have a closed mind to new ideas, but we must exercise discernment and weigh against Scripture all that we hear and read; we will not always be right, but we must not forsake our convictions without first being convinced in our understanding that we have strayed from Scripture. 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 (it was now desirable to re-examine the fundamental doctrines of Scripture that had stood the test 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 accepted as being truly inerrant, leading to God’s Word no longer being

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<sup>408</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

considered the unfailing 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 their teachings against the eternally established standard of the Bible, we could well become casualties of the latest doctrinal gale. The average Evangelical today knows more about the teachings of the latest popular speaker or writer than he does about the teachings that have come to us from God Himself; he has fashioned his convictions after his favored preacher (at least for today). Evangelicals have stepped away from 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 these righteous (i.e., these *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, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who 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 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 repent and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; 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.”<sup>411</sup> It goes on: “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.”<sup>412</sup> 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).<sup>413</sup> Their

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<sup>411</sup> Canons of Dort, First Head of Doctrine, [http://www.frcna.org/Creeds/Canons/1st\\_head.ASP](http://www.frcna.org/Creeds/Canons/1st_head.ASP)

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, Article 11.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, Article 12.

assurance that they are numbered among *the elect* whom God has chosen from eternity past is based upon a subjective observance of their own righteousness! Yet God's Word tells us that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), and that the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) – how can we be assured of our eternal standing before 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."<sup>414</sup> 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*; in other words, 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** (emphasis added),"<sup>415</sup> they do not stop there. They go on to declare that "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)."<sup>416</sup> Therefore, even though they admit that Christ's death was sufficient for the redemption of all of humanity, they conclude that it was only intended for the elect – 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 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, from eternity past, He has chosen only the elect for salvation. 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 has 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

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<sup>414</sup> Canons of Dort, Article 6.

<sup>415</sup> Canons of Dort, Second Head of Doctrine, Article 3.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, Article 8.

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 Romans 16:17 that commands us to withdraw from those who teach things that are not quite true to Scripture (*contrary to*, alongside of) – it seems clear that Reformed theology is *alongside of* Scripture, and it is equally evident that they promote a different gospel. A note of caution: when we test such teachings against the Scriptures, we must be sure to take into account the whole of the Word of God, and not limit our testing to the texts that the promoters of such teachings use – they carefully select their texts in order to make it appear that Scripture supports their doctrines.

*By the sleight of men* – the Greek word for *sleight* means playing dice or gambling, and metaphorically came to mean trickery or deceit.<sup>417</sup> 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 the whim of the moment. This is actually a contradiction, for we cannot firmly hold a belief (a conviction) that is based upon a whim. We have 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 are to be based 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 like the flagpole that 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 deceive, who do not teach the truth. 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 (panourgia)* is always used in a negative sense in the NT, and speaks of unscrupulous conduct by someone who is capable of anything, and trickery – the ability to conceal fallacy under a cloak of apparent truth.<sup>418</sup> The concealing cloak will most frequently involve false reasoning that appears to be very convincing – ostensibly sound arguments (giving a flavor of truth) cleverly covering a wrong premise. This is the tactic that is used by most of the popular Evangelicals today. It is often difficult to determine whether this is being done mindfully or not; however, this was the strategy used by the devil when he came to Eve, and he is more than willing to use Evangelical preachers to follow his lead. Rick Warren has been one of the latest shooting stars disseminating a teaching that is taking the world by storm

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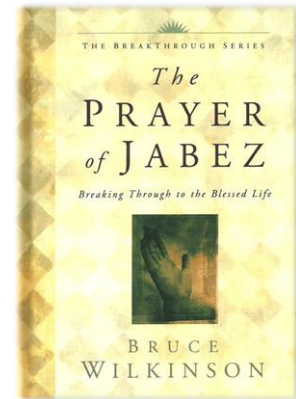
<sup>417</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>418</sup> Vine's, “craftiness”; <https://archive.org/details/theologicaldicti0000unse/page/770/mode/2up?view=theater>; Strong's Dictionary.



– 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 as truth; 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 “Christian” worlds. Then 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 of integrity* for Christ.<sup>419</sup> What a contradiction! With such a broad exposure, you would think that some would see through the cloak of deception; nevertheless, when the presented philosophy is so attractive (who could question the need for *men of integrity*), most will accept their word rather than Biblically evaluate the teaching that is being presented. The subtlety of this is that neither Rick Warren, Bruce Wilkinson, nor the leaders of Promise Keepers would for one second say that they are deceiving people; they sincerely believe that everything being said is true – to



further complicate the deception, not everything that is said is wrong! This is *cunning craftiness*! This is evidence of Satan’s involvement, and it only serves to make the sham doubly dangerous – it might well appear to be good, even Biblical, yet whatever truth that is present is interwoven with error that may not be immediately evident. We must be so careful in this day of *cunning craftiness*, to weigh what we hear against the Word of God. Through their believable words and eloquence, these false teachers will completely deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (Romans 16:18).<sup>420</sup> They seek those who will become followers of their philosophies, and, despite God’s warnings, Evangelicals still become enthusiastic supporters of the newest, solve-all-your-problems philosophy.

Our trouble is that today we are not being challenged to think Biblically – and we can only do that if we are students 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 according to Scripture what they hear or read.

To complicate this even further, we have become extremely shortsighted; we make our decisions based on what is in front of us, and we live in the midst of a

<sup>419</sup> <https://promisekeepers.org/promise-keepers/about-us/>.

<sup>420</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

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, then it must be right – the end justifies the means; therefore, the Rick Warrens of this world build upon 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 of Jesus Christ (which is to destroy it), and 2) we conform our understanding of success to that of the world around us. Notwithstanding, we are warned: “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.

Through carefully crafted homilies and an eloquent delivery, the charlatans lead others into their way – a way of error, deception, and devoid of life. 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.”<sup>421</sup> This statement is not untrue, but if you consider this to be the only aspect of God’s dealings with us that sees the light of day, then 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 do not obey Him, 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 then 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 come for one purpose: to deceive us and lead us astray. Those who propagate these winds may not realize their error, but they have a desire to gather a following, and those who follow them are being led astray. How appropriate is 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

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<sup>421</sup> Personal correspondence, December 2005.

doctrine, and then by taking all that we hear and read back to God's Word to determine its veracity. Unfortunately, it seems that most Evangelicals have things backwards. They listen carefully to the teachers of the day and allow them to interpret Scripture for them; rather than holding the teacher's words against the Word of God, they come to understand (really to misunderstand) God's Truth in light of what the teacher says. Therefore, the final authority is, in fact, 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 carefully check out 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 is to be our practice. Paul described 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 tells us that we are to wear *truth* as part of the protection that we will have against the enemy.

The contrast is this: *but we, speaking the truth in all things, we may grow in love in Him Who is the Head – the Christ* (literal).<sup>422</sup> *Speaking the truth* is much more than simply not lying; it means to be faithful to the truth, which goes beyond our speech. Rather than being deceived and carried from pillar to post by various teachings that come our way, we are to remain faithful to Christ (*I am the ... truth*) in all things, and thereby, grow in His love that *passeth knowledge* (Ephesians 3:19). We are not to compromise the truth of God, nor water it down so that it is easier to take, and through this faithfulness to His truth, we will grow in Him. We must not lose sight of the *faith* that forms the basis for this required *faithfulness*. James wrote that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17); faith needs to be expressed, otherwise there is no evidence that it exists. Therefore, *faithfulness*, likewise, has to have an expression in order to be seen, and that comes through obedience. Being faithful to the truth can only come through obedience to the commands of the Lord, Who is the Truth; if we're not sure what that entails, we can

<sup>422</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

begin with His Ten commandments since they form the foundation for everything that He requires (Matthew 22:35-40).

As we have indicated, this *truth* is not subject to our determination or modification; Jesus unequivocally declared that God's unchangeable Word is truth. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to weigh everything that we hear and read against that **unalterable truth**. The world around us has decided that truth is whatever someone thinks that it is; when truth is subjective, we cannot ever say that someone is wrong – they are only expressing their view of what is true. Within this murky quagmire, truth becomes as fluid as water, and will take whatever shape that its container determines; nevertheless, 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, without regard for the winds of doctrine that are blowing around us; we are to be the firmly planted flagpole that is uninfluenced by the winds, rather than the flag that shifts according to the direction of the wind. By compromising their position on the Word of God (the Truth), Evangelicals have undermined the very foundation of their faith. What we see today is the wreckage that came when they stepped away from the Rock and committed themselves to the waves.

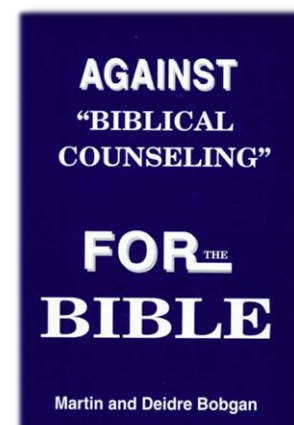
*May grow up in him* expresses the purpose for our committed faithfulness to the truth. Again, we see that we are not to remain as those who can only drink milk, but are to grow and mature in Christ. Christians are to be characterized by spiritual growth. If there is no growth, then is there really life? 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, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *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 that 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 Evangelicals no longer accept this.

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 determine what it is that their target market wants to see 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. In essence, 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 have failed to realize that they no longer have God’s Message for lost mankind; they have become blind watchmen who are not able to discern the guise of the enemy of our souls – they have seen an angel of light, and do not detect the presence of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14). We are told explicitly that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19), yet Evangelicals are clamoring after this wisdom: whether it is the church growth movement that is enamored with the fleshly marketing techniques of the world, or the likes of James Dobson who subjects the Word of God to the humanistic philosophies of psychology. Speaking generally, Evangelicals have permitted their popular leaders to lead them into different “truths,” and have rejected the Spirit of the living God Who is able to open their eyes to **the Truth**. They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage, and then went away rejoicing at the bargain that they had struck!

Of these two (church marketing and psychology), it seems that the latter has made the greatest inroads into the hearts of Evangelicals, and even into those who call themselves Fundamentalists. Those who work within psychology are very reluctant to judge anything according to the Scriptures; the more acceptable approach is one of greater tolerance for the problems, more blame for something (or someone) else, and working through the difficulties following the pattern of the world’s 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.”<sup>423</sup> By all appearances, only a very few 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 (both considered by many to be Fundamentalist schools) offer programs in counseling that include courses in psychology. This is one area that has been propelled into prominence among Evangelicals by the general deferral to the “experts.” It seems that those who have been 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



<sup>423</sup> Bobgan, Martin & Deidre, *Against “Biblical Counselling” – for the Bible* (pdf format), p. 100-101.



been mixed with superficial references to Scripture, are given higher regard in the matter of discerning what is right than those who have only studied the Word of God (this is rare since virtually all seminaries teach theology rather than the Bible). 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 (including psychology), godless philosophy now provides the framework by which the Bible is to be understood – the result is one of confusion and error.

We are told that we are to grow in 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 the “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 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. The Spirit of God is sent by Jesus to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), so why would we look for direction from the ramblings of those who sought to eradicate God from their thinking?

Returning to our verse, we see that Christ is referred to as the *head*. In Ephesians 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 tells us: “He is the head of the body, the church,” the *ekklesia*, His called-out ones. We are to grow in Him, in keeping with the charge to remain in Him: “If ye keep [*obey*] my commandments, [then] ye shall abide [*remain*] in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15:10).<sup>424</sup>

All of this upward growth in Christ comes through remaining faithful to the truth in all things; 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 even consider supplementing 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.*

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<sup>424</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

*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 all who are believing, Christ, as the Shepherd, leads those who are following Him (John 10:27), and, not only provides them with what they need individually, but also what is best for the Body (the flock) as a whole.

This Body is *fitly joined together*. The same Greek word is used here as in Ephesians 2:21, where it speaks of the building growing into a holy temple in the Lord, and carries the thought of being joined closely together.<sup>425</sup> The Master-builder is at work and as the Chief Corner (Ephesians 2:20), He is constructing a *Building/Body/Flock* that will be perfect and holy. Hence, if we are not growing *in Him* (which is something that is required of all who believe), 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; being *fitly joined together* flows from Jesus Christ, not Sigmund Freud, James Dobson, Chuck Colson or anyone else with a teaching that does not pass the Biblical test!

The Greek word for *compacted* carries the thought of being united, which hearkens back to the *unity of the Spirit* (Ephesians 4:3),<sup>426</sup> 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.<sup>427</sup> The thrust here has nothing to do with flexibility, and everything to do with being one with Christ: *you remain in Me, I in you* (John 15:4a, literal).<sup>428</sup> Again, we must not lose the context for this, namely, that this interconnectedness is with Christ, and has **no** Ecumenical context. In this Body, we are inextricably joined to Christ (without Him, we are lost): the Vine and branches of John 15:4 – without Him we cannot do anything!

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 center of the body and seeks to keep all operations in balance, calling for compensating functions when something goes wrong.<sup>429</sup> 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 is the parallel that Scripture wants us to understand when it refers to Christ as being the Head of the Body – those whom He has purchased out of sin. As we make every effort, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, to walk worthy of His calling, we strengthen our connection with our

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<sup>425</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> Vine's "joint."

<sup>428</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>429</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brain>

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 being *in 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 that will not survive the test of fire, and only lead to compromise and the Lord's displeasure.

When we understand that the unity that we have as the Body of Christ comes only through our union with Christ, and that it is strengthened and sustained by being joined to Him through our continual abiding in Him, then we will realize the futility of our efforts that may be expended in order to achieve unity. When Colson says, "we must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church,"<sup>430</sup> 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 was 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 expended in an attempt to bring about an external unity, and have nothing whatsoever to do with the unity of which Paul wrote. 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

Returning to our verse, the Greek word that is translated *effectual working* (*energia*) is used in the NT only in regard to superhuman power.<sup>431</sup> 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 that comes through our vital connection to Christ as the Head of the Body. The Body is united, or joined together, not through our efforts, but through the working of Christ in us by means of our being joined to

<sup>430</sup> Colson, *Body*, p. 102.

<sup>431</sup> Strong's Online.

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 in order to underscore the message: *apart from Me you have absolutely no ability to do nothing at all* (literal);<sup>432</sup> a double negative doesn’t work well in English, but, in Greek, it is quite commonly used to underscore the impossibility of something. However, in order to provide a balanced understanding of this strong declaration, it is necessary to consider Jesus’ words from Matthew 7:21-23: “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. Many 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? And 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), the Lord did not recognize their works. Jesus said that, without Him, we are able to do absolutely nothing; therefore, we can understand that all of 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 vanity for they hold no eternal value.

We have looked at Matthew 7:22-23 where Jesus warned that He would not accept everyone just because they have done marvelous things in His name. Consider the context of this warning – it follows on the heels of: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye 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, because 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 (their fruits), will be 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 be walking in obedience to the commands

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<sup>432</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



of God. John wrote: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He 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 they are not keeping 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 that 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 Roman Catholic Church, and many of the Reformation churches, consider the sacraments to be essential to salvation, 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). Paul is writing about those in the end times who will be deceived by the working of the Antichrist (Satan’s man) that will be done with “all power and signs and lying wonders,” and their deception will come because of their disregard of the truth. Jesus declared that the words of God are truth (John 17:17); therefore, unless we are prepared to live in accordance with the Scriptures, we will be declared to be liars (1 John 2:4), and furthermore, will 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 a 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 should be overcome by the message of positivism and succumb to the deception of Satan. “Blessed 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. But 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 stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Catholics and was 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 the narrow pathway to life. 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 them. 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 that we will face 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 were to "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This requires more than a cursory evaluation; it calls for a 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 if 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 figuratively, as it is used here, refers to the result of measuring, an understood extent or limit.<sup>433</sup> The Greek words translated as *every part*, also include the word for *one*, adding an element of singular precision – every part is included, not one is left out.<sup>434</sup> As we bring these together, what we have 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 individual part of the Body. Two things bear consideration here: 1) it is Christ Who is working, as we have already seen, and 2) we are all different. Christ is working

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<sup>433</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>434</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

according to the 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 – that will only lead to disaster.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul illustrated this very clearly when speaking of the gifting by the Spirit that we have all been given. “For 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. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But 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 among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). Indeed, since God has placed us within the Body according to our limitations and as it pleased Him for the benefit of the whole Body, 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 working through us will 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, what everything has been working toward: the growth of the Body of Christ that leads to its edification within that amazing love of Christ. As we all learn to maintain our relationship with Christ, the Head (John 15:4), we will grow and mature in Him, and that results in the whole Body being uplifted in His holiness and righteousness. Not comparing ourselves with anyone else, which is *not wise* (2 Corinthians 10:12), but being encouraged and committed individually in our walk with the Lord.

All of this is a result of God having given apostles, prophets, etc. to the Body of Christ (v. 11). Through the ministry of those who exercise the gifting that God has

bestowed upon them, we will all grow in spiritual maturity and 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 shepherds and teachers, and they are speaking enticing words of comfort for the itching ears of listeners who only desire to be consoled and assured that they are okay. Spiritual blindness has settled over the average Evangelical; 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 to these 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 must be avoided at all costs, even at the expense of forsaking God's declared truth (this might not be acknowledged, but it is what happens). Yet we are called to stand against a foe, 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, and yet they sold out to the evil one just so that they could relax, let their guard down, and enjoy life. Unfortunately, the terms of peace were so enticing that their example spread like wildfire, and even many Fundamental preachers 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 message that called for separation from error and adherence to the Gospel, even standing against the compromises made by Billy Graham. Then one day, he became weary of being “hate-filled”;<sup>435</sup> he laid his message of truth down, picked up the 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. Contrary to popular opinion, this

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<sup>435</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/jack-van-impe-died-end-times-televangelist.html>.

verse does not say that those in Christ **cannot** be seduced. The Greek word translated as *possible* means to be strong, mighty or able.<sup>436</sup> 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* in their persuasion, then it is very possible that they may be able to lead some, 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.

Within churches today, there is a tradition that elevates the role of a so-called *pastor* or leader beyond what the Word of God declares. Those of this mindset look to Scriptures like Hebrews 13:17 as their basis for deferring to the *pastor* because of the role that he fills within their assembly. A superficial reading of this verse might seem to support their position: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ....” *Obey* is a command, but it is **not** a command to submit to someone who is in authority, as it is in 1 Peter 2:13. The Greek word translated as *obey* (*peitho*) means to be persuaded, and is most often translated as *persuade* or *trust*.<sup>437</sup> 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, being persuaded that he is trustworthy, we then submit ourselves. Given the subtlety of the seduction of the enemy of our souls, we must always remain alert; there is to be a continual testing lest we be drawn away from the truths of Scripture (*peitho* is in the present tense – it must always be happening). There is never a time when we can spiritually put our feet up and relax; we must always be vigilant (1 Peter 5:8). It is only as we are alert and remain *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 and disobedience to the Lord – they become a source of stumbling to those who see them (Romans 16:17). 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,*

<sup>436</sup> Vine's "possible."

<sup>437</sup> Strong's Online.

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.

Although this portion does not take the form of a command, the structure demands that we give it careful attention. Paul inserted the phrase *testify in the Lord*, which tells us that these are more than simply his words. The Greek word translated as *testify* (*marturomai*) comes from *martus* or witness (from which we get *martyr*) and is an emphatic word that stresses Paul's calling on the Lord as a witness to the truth of this matter,<sup>438</sup> thereby placing greater significance on his words that follow.

We are no longer to walk as the rest of the people walk (*walk* is used figuratively in reference to how we are living, how we use the opportunities that come our way); *other Gentiles* (*loipoy ethnos*) does not catch Paul's thought accurately – literally it is *the remaining people*.<sup>439</sup> This is a simple statement of fact that there is to be a marked difference between how we, as children of God, conduct our lives and the heathen who are not *in Christ*. 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.”<sup>440</sup> 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 for ways to meld it into a society that did not recognize the authority of Scripture. Today we have Evangelicals presenting a different gospel that bears little resemblance to the Gospel message of the Bible – one that is readily accepted by society because it places few demands on them. In contravention of Paul's declaration that we are not to live like the rest of the world, 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 occasionally 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, “None!” 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 Evangelicals (following the New

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<sup>438</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible, Foreword*.



Evangelical mandate) seek to bring the light into communion with the darkness – the result has been a great darkness (Matthew 6:23)!

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 (*mataiotes*) that means devoid of truth, emptiness, without purpose, or nonsense.<sup>441</sup> 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 intellect, reasoning, and thinking – those aspects that bring insight and understanding; what intuitively stands in contrast to *vanity*.<sup>442</sup> The foundation upon which the world makes its determinations 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 that has settled into the minds of Evangelicals today causes a greater blindness than is often demonstrated by the ungodly who do not have Spirit-guided Biblical understanding – or, could it be that these Evangelicals are also without the Spirit of God because they cling to their own false gospel?

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul was critical of them for taking their internal disputes to the ungodly judges for resolution (chapter 6:1). It is not that these judges were unable to make wise determinations, but the fact that they are without the Spirit of God means that they cannot make decisions in accordance with God's perspective. 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 Evangelicals is an effort 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 were saying: "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, 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 that has been created by the wisdom of man; they say, "We see!" yet they walk in the ways that lead to death and destruction (John 9:41). We are not to follow in their darkened footsteps; we are to identify these hewers of broken cisterns, and avoid them (Romans 16:17)! 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 has become the Evangelicalism of

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<sup>441</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>442</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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 also includes 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 are not obeying the Lord's commands. Will they hear, "Depart from Me" from the Lord? That is not for our determination, but we are responsible for ensuring that we do not follow them in their heresies – we must test them according to the Scriptures (1 John 4:1). It is our personal duty to hold tenaciously to the teaching of the Word of God, and avoid those who propagate a message that does not fit with it (Romans 16:17).

Those who are outside of Christ (*other Gentiles*) have their *understanding darkened*. The Greek word for *understanding* means that which is known through thinking, pondering and reflecting,<sup>443</sup> and so it is not a reactive response but one that comes through carefully exercising the mind. For quite some time now, the world has encouraged meditation that has come through their adoption of eastern religious traditions, but does not include meditating upon the truths of God's Word – although, in their inclusiveness, they might suggest some Bible thoughts in an effort to make their practices more acceptable. Their ponderings are *darkened*, that is, filled with darkness, and include no light.<sup>444</sup> Their deepest contemplations and their most profound thoughts are *vanity* – devoid of the truth, and nonsense before God. Consider this 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, and through deep reflection and much study, came up with the principles that undergird modern psychology. Based upon this passage alone, we can understand that their reflective thinking is darkness, and we must have no part in it. Yet many who profess to know God today follow their philosophies, and seek to blend this darkness with the light of the Word of God – again, "what communion hath light with darkness" (2 Corinthians 6:14c)?

Now we are given an explanation for the darkness that covers their understanding – *being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them*. They

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<sup>443</sup> Vine's "mind."

<sup>444</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

have become estranged from, or are outside of, the life of God through their lack of knowledge; the word *alienated* means to be excluded from someone's fellowship and intimacy – to be separated.<sup>445</sup> 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 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 forms; the fact that evidence within the natural records that 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, apart from 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 for Christians to 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 was important to the founders of New Evangelicalism – one of their founding purposes was “the reexamination of theological problems such as ... God's method of creation.”<sup>446</sup> Unfortunately, their reexamination of God's account of creation, as given to us in Genesis, was made from the perspective of the evolutionist, and has resulted in such things as progressive creationism, the gap theory, etc. All of these had one purpose: to integrate an acceptable theology (some truth) with evolutionary thinking (error). As with any mixture of truth and error, the result is never truth, but rather a more dangerous form 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 living in a manner that is 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 mix the light of God's Word with the darkness of man's philosophies – despite being warned specifically against this very thing. In fact, Paul tells us that unless we practice this principle of separation from what is darkness, 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 are now sitting in the seat of the scornful (Psalm 1:1). They are beyond walking with the wayward, and way past standing together with them; they are now comfortable

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<sup>445</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>446</sup> Harold J. Ockenga, *Foreword to The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell.

enough with error so as to rest in its midst. Be wary; be vigilant against the error that enshrouds Evangelicalism today.

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* refers to not knowing, and includes a willful lack of knowledge, particularly regarding the things of God.<sup>447</sup> 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. Evangelicals exhibit a rapidly decreasing understanding of Biblical truths, and an increasing ability to rationalize away the commands of Scripture so that they feel justified in embracing 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 becoming alienated from God through their increasing ignorance of His Word. 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 might 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* (*porosis*) means to cover over with a callus; for the eyes, this would cause blindness, and for the heart, an insensitivity or stubbornness.<sup>448</sup> This darkened condition of the rest of the world, and their alienation from the life of God comes down to their hearts having been hardened, reducing their sensitivity to, or desire for, spiritual light. In essence, 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 to be 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 minds, this self-diagnosed righteousness is spreading rapidly even among those who should know better. Yet if we look at an illustration from the life of Jesus, what is taking place among Evangelicals today will not surprise us: “And he [Jesus] entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And 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. 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. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they

<sup>447</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

might destroy him” (Mark 3:1-6). The Jewish religious elite persecuted Jesus the most, so it should not come as a surprise to us that it will be the religious, professing Christians who will give us the most grief as we 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 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 discredit 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 will often use terminology that sounds Biblical, but they have subtly shifted the definitions of many terms in order to give themselves 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* (*apalgeo*) means to become callous, apathetic or without shame.<sup>449</sup> This is a product of the hardness of their hearts that was just mentioned; the callus that has formed has not only blocked their sensitivity to spiritual truth but has also numbed their consciences. To Timothy, Paul identified these as having their “conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2) – their consciences no longer work. 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 when they associate with, or clearly accept error (they are *callous*); secondly, there are those who will bite their tongue and tolerate the error (they are *apathetic*). In neither case do they feel any shame for their accommodation of lies (a clear name for *error*) – it has become the accepted norm for them and they feel justified in their hypocrisy (accepting error for truth). Even though the *apathetic* are simply passive in the face of blatant error, they are as if their hearts are hardened, and in fact, their hearts have become calloused against the accommodation and acceptance of error. When the Lord calls us to separate ourselves from those who do not adhere to His teachings, being apathetic is not an acceptable response (Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:17).

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 committed themselves to this lifestyle; *given* is in the active voice – this is something that they have done. The action (in the case of the callous

<sup>449</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.



ones) or the inaction (of the apathetic) is the same – a willingness to act in this corrupt manner is the same as being unwilling to separate from it; they are both guilty!

*Lasciviousness*, within our modern definition, has to do with sexual excesses. However, the Greek word so translated (*aselgeia*) is much broader than that; it “denotes excess, licentiousness [aggressive pursuit of desires without regard for morality], absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness [without inhibitions].”<sup>450</sup> 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 cannot place such a limitation on this word, for there are many other ways that *excess* can reveal itself. Worldliness is becoming increasingly prominent within Evangelical circles, and there is a corresponding lowering of the guard against selfish excesses. In their desire to fit in, 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, but particularly for the teacher of this prosperity gospel. 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 3:6; 1 John 2:16).

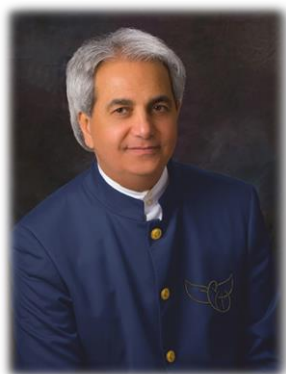
The lascivious excess within the Evangelical heart today is evident in their demonstrated right to do whatever they please – they declare a freedom in Christ that they use to justify their worldliness. Truly, in His discussion with the Jews, Jesus declared, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, 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; Romans 6:6-7). 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 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; Isaiah 29:13). 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

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<sup>450</sup> Vine’s “lasciviousness.”

good things, they seem to be able to keep their consciences quiet, until such a time when their consciences no longer work (become *seared*). 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.

Earlier we looked at part of Paul's warning to Timothy about those who would fall away: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from [*aphistemi*, to withdraw from, to become apostate; middle voice, this is something that these people do to themselves] the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ..." (1 Timothy 4:1-2).<sup>451</sup> The phrase *seared with a hot iron* is one word in Greek (*kauteriazō*, from which we get our word *cauterize*) and it means to brand with a red-hot iron; in the place where the iron is applied, there is no longer any feeling – the nerves have been deadened.<sup>452</sup> As we noted in this case, it is the *conscience* that has been *branded*, and has become unfeeling and numbed toward spiritual truth – it has ceased to work. Paul reminds us that these things will not only characterize the godless who have never understood the faith, but this is also the end for those who will withdraw themselves from the faith (become apostate): their conscience will bear the identifying brand of sin and will be spiritually dead! How can this be? Psalm 1:1 tells us that it all begins by walking with those who do not adhere to the full counsel of the Word of God. The Pharisees should be our example: they had the Scriptures and were the religious elite 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, for the most part, are on the same road as the Pharisees: they seek to honor the Lord with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.



Benny Hinn

*Uncleanness*, as used here, carries the thought of impurity and worthlessness, and stands in sharp contrast to the holiness to which God has called us.<sup>453</sup> Once again, this cannot be limited to a sexual context, for it in the same way describes an extravagant and wasteful lifestyle with self as the focus. Too frequently, this is lived out by the heads of "ministries" who enjoy lavish lifestyles with several multi-million dollar homes, vacation homes, and numerous luxury cars and planes. Benny Hinn is such an example: 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 hotel rooms."<sup>454</sup>

<sup>451</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>454</sup> <https://www.coursehero.com/file/116902000/Benny-Hinn-criticdoc/>.

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 – an example where his fruits clearly reveal that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

However, we must not limit this excessiveness to material things. There are those who love 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 placed on his rapport with the US Presidents, as well as with the heads of many nations around the world. Bill Clinton did much to advance the gay-rights movement in the US, yet Billy recalled 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.”<sup>455</sup> 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. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither ... idolaters ... nor 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.

<sup>455</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 656.

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, by exercising the lasciviousness of our sinful hearts. Yet the statement is here, and for good reason. As we look around at the Evangelical community, and 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 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: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31-33). Those outside of Christ 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 that 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 *in Him*.<sup>456</sup> The thrust is that if you have heard His voice and received His instruction, then you will not walk as those who are outside of Christ – you will not emulate the world and its values. This is a foundational truth for the Christian life, yet it is being scorned by Evangelicals 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 [*will*] be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve [*are no longer enslaved by*] sin” (Romans 6:6); the subjunctive mood (for *destroyed*), as part of a purpose statement, explains the reality of what it means to be crucified with Christ.<sup>457</sup> Second Corinthians 5:17 clarifies: “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

<sup>456</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>457</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).



he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). One of the purposes for the coming of the Spirit of God upon us is for Him to teach us the 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 gifting that God has given to His saints is 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.

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.”<sup>458</sup> 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.”<sup>459</sup> 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



Norman Vincent Peale

<sup>458</sup> <https://libquotes.com/norman-vincent-peale/quote/lbr4c0e>.

<sup>459</sup> [https://www.inplainsite.org/html/norman\\_vincent\\_peale.html](https://www.inplainsite.org/html/norman_vincent_peale.html).



think that they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven."<sup>460</sup> What a departure from the exclusive truth of God's Word!

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."<sup>461</sup> Billy Graham's years of hobnobbing with the Catholics produced a harvest: he learned their language and followed 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 great concern. Evangelicals are growing increasingly apathetic to the error that is flooding Christianity. Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, and even Norman Vincent Peale continue to be held in high regard among professing Christians today. This is a serious violation of the Word of God that calls us to separate from error (2 Corinthians 6:14-17), and to mark those who waver on 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 seemingly 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 being honorable Christians (Psalm 1:1). It all begins by exhibiting apathy toward, or a disregard for, 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 and the **only** Way to life eternal.



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* (*apotithemi*) includes the thought of separation (*apo*); it is not merely to set something down, but rather to break away from it – to get rid of it.<sup>462</sup> We are to separate ourselves (it is in the middle voice, which tells us that we do it for, or to, ourselves) from the way of life

<sup>460</sup> <https://www.cuttingedge.org/news/n1141.cfm>.

<sup>461</sup> <http://www.catholicdatabase.com/?page=catechism> , paragraph #847.

<sup>462</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

that we had prior to coming to know the truth of Jesus – that life when we were outside of Christ and living after the traditions of the *other Gentiles*. No matter how good we may have been (in our eyes or in the eyes of others), there will need to be a setting aside, a separation from the ways of the *old man*. The *old man* is none other than the sinful nature that we have inherited from Adam. When Adam sinned, he knew that things were not as they had been just a moment before, for he attempted to hide himself from the presence of God. By contrast, it seems that today the sense of sinfulness has been lost, and there is an arrogance and pride toward God; the *old man* does not hold the same stench of death that it once did, or, perhaps, we have lost our sense of smell. Jesus has become something that Evangelicals seek to attach to their 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) and 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 participle that further describes the *old man who is being corrupted because of deceptive cravings* (literal).<sup>463</sup> From this we understand that the *old man* is not only corrupt because of the inherited sin from Adam, but there is a continual corruption because of the ever-present lusts for sin. *Exhorting yourselves each day ... in order that not anyone of you becomes unyielding by the deception of sin* (Hebrews 3:13, literal).<sup>464</sup> Sin will seldom present itself as being *sin*; most frequently, it will appear to be something good or beneficial for one’s self, and, therein is its deception! “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him* ... reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:6a, 11). It is as we are *in Christ* that we will be able to account our *old man* as being dead – crucified with Christ!

The *old man* can be the source of many marvelous things. We must be careful not to think that he is incapable of doing good things – sinful man still bears the image of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9); moreover, Jesus said that even those who are *evil* know how to give good gifts to their children (Matthew 7:11). However, **none** of these good things will ever lead to salvation; there are not many ways to God – only One, and that is Christ (John 14:6). To put it any other way is to distort the Gospel, and secure your own destruction. “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add 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 those who profess to be Christians freely redefining the Gospel message according to their own understanding, and then basing their eternal destiny

<sup>463</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

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.”<sup>465</sup> 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 – the compromising work of Chuck Colson has been effective. On the other hand, even though the Reformed churches came out of the Catholic Church, they held tightly to many of its trappings and traditions – the presence of 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 has been a leader among Evangelicals, and, although no longer living, he still exercises influence. 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.”<sup>466</sup> Thereby, Billy Graham revealed his willingness to deny the truths of Scripture! 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.<sup>467</sup> Where can you find in Scripture that baptizing an infant makes it a Christian? You can’t!! Billy was guilty of adding to the words of God and, to that extent, we have the pronouncement of Proverbs 30:6 that he will be found to be a liar (see also, Revelation 21:8).

The Greek word for *lusts* (*epithumia*) means a strong desire of any kind, and it depends on its modifier to determine if it is good or bad. Paul uses this word in a positive sense in Philippians 1:23 when he says that he has “a desire [*epithumia*] to depart...” In our verse, the modifier is the word *deceitful*; earlier we noted the literal translation as *deceptive cravings*.<sup>468</sup> 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. He molded *disobedience* in order to make it appear to be something beneficial and desirable. Today, being gracious, open-minded and desiring unity are all held as positive dressings to cover

<sup>465</sup> <http://www.catholicdatabase.com/?page=catechism> paragraph 1113.

<sup>466</sup> <http://bbcinternational.org/believers/english/articles/topical%20research/ecumenical/billy%20graham.htm>.

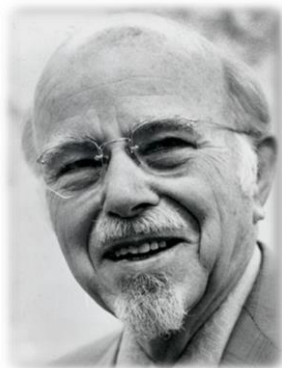
<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

compromise and disobedience; the Scriptures will be used carelessly in order to feign “support” for such 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, he also quoted Scripture (Luke 4:9-11).

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 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 disguised as something that is good for us, something that is desirable, and something that will make us wise (Genesis 3:6). It will come as something that we may easily rationalize and justify, and it might even appear to be supported by Scripture (taken out of context, of course) to make it easier to accept. 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 results of their actions appear to be good, then what they have done to get there must be okay. When you add to this today’s self-centeredness, the end results need only to be good for you, personally!

The church growth movement (CGM) is a classic example illustrating the significant influence of pragmatism, and where we can see the results of another (a different) gospel that has been created to appeal to the masses. CGM, although most



Donald McGavran

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.”<sup>469</sup> 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 unequivocally stated: “My particular job as senior pastor is, hopefully, to deliver messages that will bring great crowds to church on Sunday morning.”<sup>470</sup> The measure of the success of his message is whether or not the building is full? How shallow; a building full and a message

<sup>469</sup> David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), p. 69-70.

<sup>470</sup> Robert H. Schuller, *Your Church has Real Possibilities* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, 1974), p. 60.



that is empty – how pathetic!! 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!”<sup>471</sup> 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, in his opinion, 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 and pragmatic reasoning to the point that men, like Warren, can carry out their own agendas and not only feel justified, but confident that they are doing an amazing work for the Lord – like unto Matthew 7:22-23, perhaps? 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 carry it out in the name of Christ; yet these efforts are *iniquity* and *unfruitful* in God’s eyes (Matthew 7:23). 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, then 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 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; the means) than our achievements (the end). 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 to 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;*

<sup>471</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 65.



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 become 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; indeed, 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 among Evangelicals 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,”<sup>472</sup> and is used to speak of Jesus’ transfiguration. Our English word *transform* is also used to describe false apostles making themselves to appear as true ones (2 Corinthians 11:13), and Satan and his demons making themselves to appear as 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.”<sup>473</sup> The word that we are considering (*metamorphoo*) speaks of a complete change, whereas the other word (*metaschematizo*) 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 deceived 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; *renewed*, in our text, is in the passive voice, which describes an action that is done for us by the Lord. “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” (Titus 3:5). This is the work of the Spirit of God, and is to result in a complete change (*metamorphoo*) 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

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<sup>472</sup> Vine’s “transfigure.”

<sup>473</sup> Strong’s Online; Vine’s “fashion.”

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). In order to make today's preaching something other than foolishness to the world, the cross has to be removed; once the cross is gone, then the offence to the world is no longer there, 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, then the persecution from the Jews would stop; however, he also realized that if he did so, then that would be an affront to the work of Christ upon the cross in fulfillment of OT prophecy. His commitment to the message of the Gospel that he had been given by the Lord needs to inspire us to remain true to God's Word, regardless of the consequences.



24. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Along with a *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 of Romans 12:2 that begins within, and 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 to see a change when our feet have been removed from walking the broad way that leads to destruction, and have been placed upon the narrow way that leads to life? The change that takes place will always be dramatic (from death to life), even if the external changes may vary depending upon the kind of life being 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 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 in the Lord*, then we are to live 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 excuse, has not experienced the renewing of the mind that the Spirit of God will do. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [*is not doing*: a present tense statement of fact] sin; for his [God’s] seed remaineth [*is abiding*] in him: and he cannot [*is not able to*] sin, because he is born [*has been born*: perfect tense, a past completed action with ongoing results] of God” (1 John 3:9).<sup>474</sup> 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, we will no longer live a life of perpetual, or continual, sinfulness. If we are born of God, then the Spirit of God is dwelling within us, and our 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.”<sup>475</sup>

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 turn over in an effort to make ourselves into 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* (*ktizo*), in the NT always refers to an act of God.<sup>476</sup> 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, and 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”<sup>477</sup>) and *wis* (meaning “wise, way, manner”<sup>478</sup>). Matthew Henry saw *righteousness* as being active toward others, as encompassing our actions, our manner of living – and hence the last six commandments of the Decalogue.<sup>479</sup> Likewise, he saw 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

<sup>474</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>475</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on 1 John 3:9, Volume 6, p. 1077.

<sup>476</sup> Vine’s “create.”

<sup>477</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=15>, “right.”

<sup>478</sup> Ibid, “righteous.”

<sup>479</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Ephesians 4:24, Volume 6, p. 707.

whole or intact, that cannot be transgressed or violated,”<sup>480</sup> from which would come the idea of purity. Matthew Henry’s application of this phrase is fitting. This *new man* is created in us by God according to His desire so that we will demonstrate His *righteousness* and characterize His *holiness* (Romans 8:3-4). 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 the commands of God) and give less heed to the teachings of men. If we would just weigh, by the Word of God, what we hear from the lips of men, 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 [*ataktos* – idle, lazy, irresponsible]” (2 Thessalonians 3:6), then that is what we are to do.<sup>481</sup> 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 careless – 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, I can have no part with any of the participating Evangelical churches. The Scriptures are that clear! These Evangelicals have set the clear directive of God aside in favor of unity – we are charged to test all things in order to determine if they are of God (1 John 4:1); their refusal to do so is either laziness or irresponsibility (being *disorderly*), and is nothing less than disobedience to the Lord! 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 that it is somewhat

<sup>480</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=15>, “holy.”

<sup>481</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

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 even make a lie appear to be true. 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 will characterize our speech and actions 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; based upon what follows (*we are members one of another*), this is entirely appropriate, but is it exclusively so? 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 (*plesion*), and it comes from the thought of being near or close-by, so there is no basis for restricting the application of this command to a spiritual brother or sister.<sup>482</sup> Therefore, 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), *dilogos*, which is literally saying the same thing twice, and hence, saying one thing but meaning something entirely different – in other words, speaking hypocritically or deceitfully.<sup>483</sup> If one’s words are not clear, i.e., if they carry a double meaning, then lying (or deception) has entered in – this is not to be a part of those who are elders or deacons. The reason that Paul explicitly lays out the qualifications for elders and deacons within the Body of Christ is given: “...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church [*ekklesia*] of the living God, **the pillar and ground of the truth**”

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<sup>482</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>483</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.



(1 Timothy 3:15).<sup>484</sup> Truth is to be the identity of those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Those who are a part of the Body of Christ are to be a pillar (a column that supports a building) and ground (the foundation) of the truth.<sup>485</sup> We, as those who have been purchased out of sin by the Lord, are to be characterized by objective truth – He **is** the Truth (John 14:6), and His Word is the Truth (John 17:17)!

This would not, nor could it ever be, truth as it is defined by the world today; truth has become something that is subjective, and they leave no room for the objective Truth of God. 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 because truth (in their thinking) can vary from person to person. This is nothing other than the fruit of pragmatism and the work of the devil, the father of lies: if it works, then it must be right; if it is right for you, then it must be your truth. What the world fails to recognize, and refuses to acknowledge, is that there is an objective Truth to which we are all subject, and that is God and His Word. However, this attitude of openness is no longer confined to 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 within the minds of the average Evangelical today, so that we can be sober and vigilant, and not become caught in the very same traps:

**1. New Evangelicalism** – This represented a significant 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 Gospel. Their deliberate disregard for Biblical separation was so that they could demonstrate their love for all of mankind and thereby, 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 of these things for the purpose 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 some 80 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

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<sup>484</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>485</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

day. This has taken place within Christian Bible colleges that were founded a century or more ago and remained Biblical for many years, and it has also taken place within the mind of the average Christian. The 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 are there fewer Bible courses offered, but the Bible teaching that remains has now become mixed with the poison of humanistic and New Evangelical 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 at the feet of the intellectuals, 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 in following the Word of God. The truths of the Scriptures are spiritually discerned through the aid of the Spirit of God, and they will not be comprehended through the scholarly tactics of the worldly-minded. Nevertheless, the average Evangelical today has submitted to the idol of *scholarship*, and he no longer seeks the help of the Spirit of God in order to understand what He desires of him. The Scriptures have become a closed Book – we are rapidly returning to the spiritual blindness of the Dark Ages. During 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, unable to fathom spiritual truth.

**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 against the Scriptures what we are being told. We cannot lay the responsibility for our ignorance of the Word of God entirely at the feet of those who are sold-out to the error of New Evangelicalism; in fact, 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 about the Bible 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, then 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: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor 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 that the amazing truth of this passage 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.**”<sup>486</sup>

- 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.”<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

- 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 “endure,” “hold fast,” “take heed,” etc. if our salvation was eternally secure? 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 (Romans 8:38-39), it is equally clear that we can fall away from God through the devices of our own deceitful hearts (Hebrews 3:12). 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 did not fit with the scholarship of the Liberals and the world. By placing 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 tolerate 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 willing to embrace opposing teachings and, seemingly, not 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 Evangelicals set their course in opposition to

separation, the example of Israel was chosen – not to learn from them and heed God’s instruction, but to follow them into error.

When Moses reviewed the commandments of God with the people of Israel before they crossed over the Jordan, he declared: “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And 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: “And 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. ...and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which [God] had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And 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). 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 noted 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. In our day, we might be tempted to think that we do not have the problem of Israel, 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."<sup>488</sup> Most of today's Evangelicals have bowed before the idol of unity. Allow me to reiterate Chuck Colson's infamous statement: "We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church";<sup>489</sup> this has been echoed throughout the Evangelical community. As we consider 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 abandoned the defensive weapons from the Lord that had characterized most of 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 on the outside for so long. It is lonely being a soldier, and they wanted to wave the white flag of peace – after all, the Liberals used the same kinds of 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 with them. Rest assured, Satan made sure that there was a lowest common denominator, and with their standards lowered, their lives suddenly became so much easier: the battle was over!

What happened to Biblical separation? Did God change 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; Hebrews 13:8). "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 Whom we face today – He has not changed, and 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 do not like; it has everything to do with God's desire for us to live in purity and holiness before Him. Since God is still calling us to be a separate people, 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

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<sup>488</sup> *Encarta Dictionary*, "god."

<sup>489</sup> Colson, *Body*, p. 102.

Evangelicalism (by now it includes all of Evangelicalism – it is no longer *New*), 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 – 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 might appear to be righteous and even speak the language of a Christian, but they hold to teachings that are not Biblically accurate. 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; it is claimed that they have sufficient common ground to accept them, and therewith, the snare of unity is 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 6:14-17 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 wearing the guise of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

In His desire for us to live in holiness before Him, God does not stop there. There is also a clear call for us to separate from those of the family of faith who walk irresponsibly (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 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 those much closer to home demonstrate disobedience? 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 a part of living in a *disorderly* manner – using God’s Word as our Standard for conduct is deemed to be too difficult (laziness) and so they opt for an easier and more pragmatic approach; all of these examples represent compromise – that first seemingly innocent and easily justifiable step into 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, in fact “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet, we must recognize that God is calling us to separation, and the practice of it! May the Lord grant us the 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!

All of what we have just considered is because we are *members one of another*. “And 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). In other words, our actions impact all of those who are a part of the Body of Christ. Therefore, if we fail to be truthful in all things, we are then not only disobedient to Christ, Who is the Truth, but we have also become a means of causing a fellow-member of His Body to stumble. “No man is an island, entire of itself ...”<sup>490</sup> – what we do has an impact on those around us, either positively or negatively. As we have already learned, it is as we speak the *truth in love* that the Body is edified and strengthened – the bond of every member with Christ, their Head, being made stronger (Ephesians 4:15-16). As we live in truth for the edification of the Body, those close to us (our *neighbors*) will also be beneficiaries.



26. *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

We continue with those things specifically linked to putting on the *new man* (from v. 24). All three phrases here are in the imperative mood – they are commands! The first two phrases make it very evident that anger, in and of itself, is not sin. Jesus

<sup>490</sup> <https://allpoetry.com/No-man-is-an-island>.

said, “whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of [answerable to] the judgment” (Matthew 5:22a).<sup>491</sup> Angry (*orgizo*) always appears in the passive voice in the NT, which means that this is not an initiated emotion, but is a response to something – to become angry because of ....<sup>492</sup> Jesus cited an example where being angry was subject to judgment, but the word is also applied where it is justified. The king was angry (*orgizo*) with his servant, for whom he had forgiven a massive debt, who did not extend the same forgiveness to his fellow-servant in a small matter (Matthew 18:34); a king was angry (*orgizo*) with the guests whom he had invited to his son’s marriage when they showed disdain for his invitation and mistreated/killed his servants who had been sent to tell them that all was in readiness (Matthew 22:7). It is evident that becoming angry in response to wrong is okay, but becoming angry without such a cause is not. However, even in response to a justifiable cause, it seems that there is a possibility of it leading to sin if we are not alert. Romans 12:19 declares: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto [*leave place for*] wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”<sup>493</sup> If we become angry and seek retribution, then we have fallen into sin; God has clearly declared that vengeance belongs solely to Him. If we seek revenge, then we have lifted ourselves up to be as God in the matter. If we have been unjustly dealt with, then our response must be: “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself” (Psalm 94:1).

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 cause of the anger to the Lord, then we can be assured that His justice will be done – whether in this life or at the day of final judgment. There may be lingering sorrow for the sin that caused such hurt, and, perhaps, even for the hurt caused by such sin, but the anger will have dissipated. As we learn to humble ourselves before God, then we will readily relinquish our anxieties into His abundant care (1 Peter 5:6-7).



## 27. Neither give place to the devil.

Couched among the shadows of harbored anger, the devil is seeking to establish a claw-hold within us. By dealing with anger the Lord’s way, the devil will have one less opportunity to gain access to our lives. Realizing that anger is not necessarily a sin, but that our reaction can certainly lead to sin, we must be alert as to how we handle it.

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<sup>491</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>492</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>493</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Perhaps one of the things that we need to keep in mind as we contemplate being angry, yet without sin, is the cross that we are called to bear as the saved of Christ. The Spirit of God gives us this insight through Peter: “Beloved, 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: But 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. If 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. But 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 [this is a command]. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed [a command]; but let him glorify God on this behalf [a command]. For 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? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore 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).<sup>494</sup> This provides us with some insight into the bigger picture. God, in His omniscience, has prepared trials and testings for us, knowing that a life of ease does not cultivate spiritual growth or a dependency upon His care. Peter understood what it was to suffer. Earlier he wrote: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure [or bear patiently] grief [or sorrow, pain, affliction], suffering wrongfully [undeservedly, without fault]. For 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).<sup>495</sup>

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 that 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 will 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

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<sup>494</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.



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, is to be stirred by the sinful stubbornness of those about us, not directed at the sinner, but at the work of the devil, who so successfully blinds the minds and eyes of pagan and “Christian” alike. If we become angry because of 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, then we still are not to become angry, but are to bear this reproach with patience, for it is then that 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 result of putting on the new man (v. 24): we are no longer to be thieves. We are to labor, to expend our energies and become physically exhausted so that we will have something to give to those who are in need.<sup>496</sup> However, there is also a qualification to what we are to work at – it is to be that which is *good*. This challenges the principles of pragmatism that says that if the end result is good, then the means (how we get there) doesn’t really 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 give God greater pleasure: obedience to His commands, or providing for the poor? 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 justify their disobedience by meeting the humanitarian needs of third world people.

We see this with organizations like World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse. World Vision still declares that they are a *partnership of Christians*, yet they work closely with the United Nations, have a UN official on



<sup>496</sup> Strong’s Online.

their Board of Directors (along with others from Liberal and apostate denominations), and spend all of their resources meeting the physical needs of people.<sup>497</sup> Samaritan's Purse is even more subtle, for this is headed by Franklin Graham, son of the late Billy Graham, and they have a much more Evangelical Statement of Faith. However, they also declare: "For over 50 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."<sup>498</sup> Herein lies the subtlety of such organizations: they make broad statements that sound very spiritual (*follow Christ's command*), yet these spiritual words are simply a means to garner favor in the eyes of potential supporters. Once again, we can see 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 was secondary to Jesus' desire that he would follow Him; this young man was obsessed with things – in essence, 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 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, unfortunately, we can be assured of the Ecumenical flavor of any evangelism that they would carry out – the apple (Franklin) has not fallen far from the tree (Billy).

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 of God's commands 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 others. God still delights in obedience more than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). However, we

<sup>497</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/about-us/our-vision-and-values>.

<sup>498</sup> <https://www.samaritanaspurse.org/our-ministry/about-us/>.

must be wary of the commandments of men that may sound like they have come from God. This is not new, for Jesus dealt with this in the Pharisees of His day: “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But 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*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making 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 is able to 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.*

The first phrase is in the imperative mood – it is a command that we are to obey: *Not a single unprofitable word is to be proceeding from out of your mouth.*<sup>499</sup> The word *corrupt* means rotten or putrefied, worthless for use – that which will not edify.<sup>500</sup> Our first thought, as we consider this term applied to speech, is to bring to mind 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, we must also 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.<sup>501</sup> 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 is not a benefit to the hearer. We must be diligent to keep our hearts in tune with correct Biblical teaching, for if our doctrine is no longer in keeping with the Scriptures, then we have fallen prey 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

<sup>499</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>500</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

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 some of 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. 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 harbor 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 presenting itself as being truth, and as that which is honorable and desirable; Satan will do his best to point out the good in compromise, even as he did to Eve by making the forbidden fruit to appear as something good for food, beautiful to look upon, and a means to 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 under 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 reveal more to us. 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 is 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.”

The purpose for such edifying speech is this: it will give grace to those who are hearing. “A soft answer turneth away wrath ...” (Proverbs 15:1a); “An angry man stirreth up strife ...” (Proverbs 29:22a). Words that bestow *grace* upon those who hear them are born out of a heart that is in tune with the Lord Jesus; out of a strong relationship with the Lord will flow words of encouragement and exhortation. Today, Evangelicals love words that comfort their hearts, soothe their minds, and make them feel good about themselves. *For a time will be when accurate teaching they will not tolerate, but according to their own desires, they will surround themselves with teachers, who are scratching them with respect to hearing and, indeed, from the hearing of the truth they will turn away, and to myths they will be*

turned (2 Timothy 4:3-4, literal).<sup>502</sup> Just before these prophetic words, Paul counselled Timothy: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul understood that the clear teaching of God’s Word would not always be accepted, and that there would be some who would turn away from His Word to the deception of Satan. Jesus’ own words find their application here: *Beware, lest anyone should lead you astray* (Mark 13:5, literal).<sup>503</sup>



30. *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

We are not to be grieving (*lupeo*, to cause pain or sorrow) the Spirit of God (it is a command), along with a reminder that the Spirit of God is *holy*.<sup>504</sup> Just before the account of Noah, we read this: “And 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. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved [*atsab*, emotional sorrow] him at his heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).<sup>505</sup> The wickedness of mankind caused the Lord great sorrow, and the admonition of our verse is that we are not to do this to the Spirit of God, Who is abiding within. We are not to permit wickedness to have any part in our lives; we are called to purity and holiness, and that is to characterize our living. We must be careful to walk in obedience to the commands of God. When the unbelieving Pharisees tested Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, we are told that He was “grieved [*sullupeo*, deeply grieved] for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5).<sup>506</sup>

It seems evident that what grieves the heart of God is wickedness (not to walk in His ways: to be disobedient) – namely, 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 left purity in favor of unity; they seek the favor of the Liberals, the apostate, and the godless above the favor of God – that is, they hold lightly to obedience and holiness. God’s call for separation from error has been rationalized away, and the self-justifying excuses for disobedience draw them into apostasy. One of the pillars of New Evangelicalism propounded in the late 1940s was the repudiation of separation; at the very outset, these men abandoned 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

<sup>502</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>505</sup> Strong’s Online; BDB.

<sup>506</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.



and expect obedience to a few others 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.”<sup>507</sup> 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 how many others we obey. We must cultivate a love for God’s Word lest we fall for the lies of Satan and are deceived. Paul warned the Thessalonians about those who will be duped by the devil: “They received [accepted] 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).<sup>508</sup> 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, everything that we hear and read lest we be taken in by the charlatans who appear to be righteous, but inwardly are ravaging 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 the seal’s owner. It was also 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: “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the **immutability of his counsel**, confirmed it by an oath: That 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: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither 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 Whom we have laid hold (Christ),

<sup>507</sup> [http://www.gracegems.org/4/if\\_i\\_profess\\_with\\_the\\_loudest\\_vo.htm](http://www.gracegems.org/4/if_i_profess_with_the_loudest_vo.htm)

<sup>508</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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, and 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 the assurance that we have in Christ without any doubts. We are to lay hold of this hope, or to hold fast to it. 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.”<sup>509</sup> 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 His Word. Everything that we hear and read we are to take back to the Word of God, where we are to weigh it according to this 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*;<sup>510</sup> 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 (John 10:28)! Adam, perfectly created in the image of God and without sin, chose to sin; so, still bearing the image of God as well as the inherited nature of sin (from Adam) that struggles against the Spirit of God within us as believers, we 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 according to 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 will 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 there is 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. We know 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

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<sup>509</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>510</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

result in being disqualified (Hebrews 3:6). There are numerous passages that warn us of the possibility of being cut off from God (Hebrews 3:6, 12-14; John 15:1-2; Matthew 10:22), and (returning to our passage) we have a warning here to not cause the Spirit of God to sorrow. 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 fail to obey it – we are in sin. Yet such sin is easily attended to, for God has also 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 the payment of a ransom.<sup>511</sup> 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 “... the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits [*firstfruit*, singular] of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22-23).<sup>512</sup> 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 that day when our salvation will be complete, but that must not be misconstrued as being 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 having departed from Israel because of their rebellious nature (1 Samuel 4:21). Through Isaiah, the Lord called Israel *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* because they grieved Him, and He was no longer with them – it did not disrupt their religious ceremonies, and life continued on as before, but without the Lord’s cleansing (Isaiah 1:10-15); they seemed to be unaware of the difference. What a serious admonition for us today when there is much religious activity, yet that is not to be misunderstood as a sign of the Lord’s presence; all of the busyness of Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, and Joel Osteen does not assure 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). At

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<sup>511</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>512</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

the turn of the century, the US Center for World Mission proclaimed 115,000 new followers of Jesus every day;<sup>513</sup> yet a careful consideration of Scripture 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 onto 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 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 purpose 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 is evident that these will grieve the Spirit of God – they are not in keeping with having the Seal of God in our lives. God has given us a small listing of what must not take up residence in our lives, and to this, we must take heed.

*Bitterness* (*pikria*) describes plants that produce inedible or poisonous fruit, and metaphorically, it identifies a bitter hatred, an attitude of hostility and a general animosity toward others.<sup>514</sup> *Wrath* (*thumos*) is the sudden expression of anger, in contrast to *orge*, which is a calm state of displeasure that is often the basis for the flash of anger.<sup>515</sup> *Anger* (*orge*), as just noted, is a long abiding indignation, and most clearly illustrated by God's enduring anger against sin that will end at His great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).<sup>516</sup> *Clamour* (*krauge*) comes from a Greek word that imitates the cry of a raven, and means a loud outcry, shouting, or

<sup>513</sup> "Catch the Vision," 2000, uscwm.org; this data has been removed from their site.

<sup>514</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.



wailing.<sup>517</sup> *Evil speaking* (*blasphemia*) is most often translated as *blasphemy*, and is speech that is slanderous, insulting, or damaging against another, but most particularly against God.<sup>518</sup>

Within Evangelical circles today, most would say that *evil speaking* is not an issue; in keeping with their “judge not” philosophy, they will never speak against anyone. Yet there seems to be little hesitancy to teach things that are acceptable to the Christian status quo yet contrary to God’s Word – is this not a form of *blasphemy* against God because it brings His Truth into question? Was the devil’s question, *Yea hath God said?* (Genesis 3:1), his means of lowering Jehovah in the eyes of His creation, and thus, *slander* against the name of the Lord? This question has pervaded the New Evangelical examination of what they deemed to be *problem* areas within Christianity, and, consequently, much of today’s Evangelical teaching has been tainted by the devil’s questioning of God’s authority. There are many Evangelical doctrines that stand in opposition to what God has clearly stated in His Word – this is *evil speaking* and *blasphemy* against the Lord! It is very much an issue today!!!

Let’s consider an example: today’s preachers will rarely move into the field of exhortation, unless the pragmatic end of their exhortation results in a greater security of their position. I’m sure that we’ve all heard the preacher’s gentle reminders to attend church services regularly; after all, if no one came, they would be unemployed. Frequently, they like to use Hebrews 10 as their “prod” or “stick,” depending on the personality of the preacher: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not 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” (Hebrews 10:24-25). The gathering together (*assembling*) is to be a time for stimulating (*provoke*) one another to love and obedience (*good works*) through exhortation! What many preachers use to guilt people into coming to services is not about the coming together, but about using that time as an opportunity to grow in Christ. They focus on meeting together, but fail to see that it is for the purpose of exhortation, which places a greater responsibility upon them! Preachers have a fear of offending anyone, yet Paul said that he would not compromise the Gospel message lest the offence of the cross should be removed (Galatians 5:11). We are not to offend by being a stumbling block to others (1 Corinthians 10:32; 2 Corinthians 6:3; Philippians 1:10), yet we are to live in obedience to the teachings of Scripture (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:2-4). The balance is this: “But speak thou the things which become [are fitting for] sound doctrine ... In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of

<sup>517</sup> Strong’s Online; Vine’s “clamour.”

<sup>518</sup> Strong’s Online.



you” (Titus 2:1, 7-8).<sup>519</sup> Speaking the whole truth and living it so that there is no hypocrisy – in such a life there is no cause for stumbling. 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 which even the Liberal finds 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) and man alike. 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 he preaches a “‘Christianity lite’ — no sin, no suffering, no sacrifice, replacing fire and brimstone with a motivational message.”<sup>520</sup> 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.”<sup>521</sup> 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 fitting 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.<sup>522</sup> 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, and they 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 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.

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<sup>519</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>520</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=2716887&page=2>

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

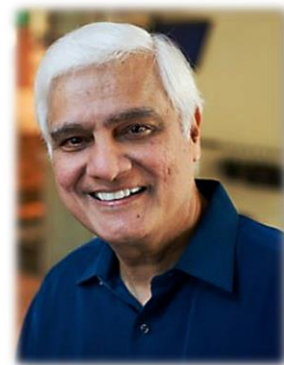
<sup>522</sup> Strong’s Online.

When Ravi Zacharias preached in the Mormon Tabernacle on November 14, 2004, the reaction was of short-lived surprise, even among many Evangelicals.<sup>523</sup> 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. ...



Ravi Zacharias

But Zacharias, who spoke elsewhere in Utah last week, wasn't the only Evangelical on the platform. 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*. 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.'"<sup>524</sup>

As is clearly evident, there is a desire to bring the Mormons and Evangelicals together by focusing on those things that are held in common – thereby reducing the commandments of Scripture down to a few concepts that are acceptable even 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 again in 1899 (the same

<sup>523</sup> <https://www.thechurchnews.com/2004/11/20/23237407/ravi-zacharias-speaks-in-tabernacle>; he appeared there again in January 2014: <https://www.cjfm.org/blog/2014/01/21/ravi-zacharias-speaks-at-the-mormon-tabernacle-in-utah/>.

<sup>524</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/146/11.0.html>


year that he died), although this is something that is not widely reported.<sup>525</sup> Can the Lord bless such activities when the clear command of the Lord is to separate from the works of darkness and not to cling to what is unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17)?

It is not that we 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 Mormons, within the minds



D.L. Moody

of many Evangelicals, that can only lead to confusion and further apostasy. Instead of sounding the alarm at their false teaching, they have sought to embrace the wolves and speak of what they have in common. This is nothing short of blasphemy – the *evil speaking* that we are to have put away with the *old man*.

 32. *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

The word *be* is interesting: it is an imperative (a command), in the middle voice (we act **and** are also the beneficiaries of that action), and present tense (it must be a continuous action).<sup>526</sup> *Kind* is from a Greek word (*chrestos*) that means to be obliging, benevolent, and to go out of your way for someone else.<sup>527</sup> This is fascinating: the middle voice tells us that as we extend kindness to others, we also receive of that same kindness! There is an exchange of kindness when seeking the good of another; Paul taught this same principle to the Philippians (Philippians 2:3-4). This is **not** the positive-only mindset of modern Evangelical thinking, because it includes the Biblical mandate of exhortation. As we noted earlier, our coming together is to be for the purpose of exhortation (Hebrews 10:25), but, from this verse, we understand that exhortation must be done in kindness. Exhortation is an essential element within the Body – it is one of three things on which Paul commands Timothy to give special attention (1 Timothy 4:13). Many use Hebrews 10:25 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, as we are



Mormon Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

<sup>525</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/novemberweb-only/11-15-11.0.html>.

<sup>526</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>527</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

gathering. This *exhortation* is for us to give close attention to one another as to how we are able to stimulate, or (more literally) to sharpen, one another toward love and good works.<sup>528</sup> 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. Interestingly, the focus has become the one thing within this passage that can be done in the flesh, and yet we so often hear it stated with great “spiritual” fervor.

The second command, in our passage, is to be *tenderhearted*, which means, literally, to have strong bowels.<sup>529</sup> The Jews regarded the bowels (the internal organs including, but not limited to, the heart) as the seat of the more tender affections, so we understand this to mean that 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, in order that we may be drawn onward and upward together as we live out our faith in the Lord.

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 (paralleled in Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37-38): And forgive us our debts [that which we owe], as we forgive our debtors. ... For if ye forgive men their trespasses [*paraptoma*, a sin of action, a mis-step, a lapse in truth or uprightness], your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.<sup>530</sup>

In the model prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples, we see a correlation between the forgiveness that is afforded 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 to us according to 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.<sup>531</sup> This is an aspect of God’s forgiveness about which we do not hear much today. The clear statement of the Lord is that if we forgive men their failures, or sins, against us, then our Father in heaven will also forgive us; if not, then not. The act of

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<sup>528</sup> Vine’s “provoke.”

<sup>529</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>530</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>531</sup> Strong’s Online.



forgiveness that is ours (*if ye forgive men ...*) is in the subjunctive mood, which simply means that it is a possibility but not a certainty – there is a choice to be made. The model prayer exhorts God the Father to forgive us on the same basis as we forgive others (*forgive* is in the imperative mood – it is a command). This is a sobering reality that most who recite the Lord’s Prayer rarely stop to consider.

Let us look further at what Jesus taught on this subject:

Matthew 18:21-35: Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>532</sup> But 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. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But 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. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then 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: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 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 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

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<sup>532</sup> This is estimated to be 204 metric tons of silver (<https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-a-talent-700699>); today’s value of this is about \$160,000,000US (based on a value of about \$785US/kg of silver). A denarius was the laborer’s daily wage at the time and contained 3.24 grams of silver (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denarius>); the servant’s re-payment time for this debt would have been over 170,000 years (working every day) – this was a tremendous debt!



trespasses.” This is a hard saying, yet these are the words of the Lord, and we dare not glibly gloss over them, so let’s take a moment to look a little deeper.

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, and it primarily signifies something as being a myriad or numberless, rather than *deka chilas* (as used in Luke 14:31) which is literally *ten thousand*.<sup>533</sup> However, if we use the specific figure of ten thousand talents, the servant’s debt to the king was equivalent to about 63,000,000 workdays (at a denarius per day) or some 200,000 years, working 6 days a week – clearly more than anyone could ever hope to repay.<sup>534</sup> This was an exorbitant debt, and its repayment is beyond consideration – the ultimate example of an investment gone wrong. In verse 27, this outstanding amount is referred to as *a loan* (*daneion*),<sup>535</sup> which would indicate that the servant did not squander the king’s money as an employee (as in Luke 16:1-13), but that the king had loaned it to the servant to be repaid. However, when the loan came 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 his due, even while petitioning him for more time to repay the massive debt. It is evident that the servant was sincere in his request for additional time to repay a debt that he could never hope to repay. The king then responded to him with compassion and forgave the loan; these are stated as facts (in the indicative mood) giving no indication that this was anything other than what it is declared to be – a complete eradication of what had been 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? He, his wife and children 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, and he began to strangle (*pnigo*) him (Matthew 18:28).<sup>536</sup> Interestingly, the same word is used to describe what took place when the seed from the sower fell among the thorns; it says that “the care of

<sup>533</sup> Vine’s “thousand.”

<sup>534</sup> Assuming the debt to be equivalent to 204 metric tons of silver (<https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-a-talent-700699>), and a denarius (a day’s wage) contains 3.24 grams of silver (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denarius>), that yields a working debt of 63,000,000 days. Working six days/week would increase the total days to 73,000,000 (making provision for the Sabbath day of rest), or just over 200,000 years.

<sup>535</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

the world, and the deceitfulness of riches” choke (*sumpnigo*, the prefix *sum* places the *seed* together with the *thorns*) 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 a small amount money, he permitted his new lease on life from the king to be choked (rendered ineffective) in light of what he was owed.

The action of this servant was duly noted and brought to the king’s attention; this is where the parable becomes rather knotty in the light of common Evangelical theology. The king called this servant in and reminded him that his debt had been cleared; then the king canceled the forgiveness that had been extended to the servant, reinstated his debt, and sent him to the tormentors to have him repay what he owed. The Greek word for *tormentors* (*basanistes*) bears the same root as the Greek word used to describe what the devil will receive (*basanizo*) in his eternal habitation (Revelation 20:10).<sup>537</sup> Inasmuch as the debt of the servant was beyond counting, it is evident that the time that the servant will spend with his tormentors will also be without measure.

Jesus then provides 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 (*hebdomekontakis*) and bears the idea of “the absence of any limit.”<sup>538</sup> 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’s perseverance of the saints, but our first concern must be to the Word of God and what it says, not the speculating 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

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<sup>537</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>538</sup> Vine’s “seventy times.”

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 10:11), so let us consider how God, Who does not change, dealt with Israel (Malachi 3:6). A passage from Deuteronomy illustrates this for us: the Lord God said: “Therefore 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; And that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. ... And it shall come to pass, if ye shall 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, 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. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And *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. ... Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And 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 11:8-9, 13-17, 26-28).

The message of the Lord is clear: obey my commandments or you will *perish quickly* from the land that was promised to you – more specifically, the overarching command is to not *go after other gods* (verse 28). 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 remain faithful to the Lord; we are to apply ourselves to obedience 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 – **if** we hold the foundation of our faith firm unto the end, **then** we **are** partakers of Christ. The condition is not the sin that so easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1), for which cleansing has been provided (1 John 1:9; 2:1), but rather, to a heart that has become corrupted by unbelief, and has turned away from God (Hebrews 3:12) and from obedience to His commands (John 14:15). The writer of Hebrews tells us of the end of someone who has succumbed to a heart of unbelief and turned away from God. “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened [passive voice – this is the Spirit of God entering the heart at the time of birth from above], and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of

God, and the powers of the world to come [these affirm that this individual is indeed born-again], If they shall fall away [*having fallen away* (literal)], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 9:28a), and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).<sup>539</sup> 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 borne out. Numbers 15 declares: “And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And 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. Ye 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. But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [with a high hand, i.e., willfully, proudly and arrogantly<sup>540</sup>], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [or blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off [receive the death penalty] from among his people. Because 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 (Numbers 15:27-31).<sup>541</sup> Notice that God’s provision for atoning for the sin of ignorance 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 committed in ignorance or error, and that done willfully in pride and arrogance. Compare God’s dealings with the scribes and Pharisees to His dealing with Ananias and Sapphira: even though 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 death.

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the [full] knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses [the application of Numbers 15:31]: Of 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 [*made holy*], an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto [made a mockery of] the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:26-29).<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>540</sup> BDB; TWOT #2133

<sup>541</sup> BDB.

<sup>542</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

The Bible is the infallible Word of God and His complete revelation to man. All of these passages come together to draw the exact same picture: there is complete forgiveness with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Unless our lives reflect obedience to the Lord, we stand in jeopardy of paying, for all of eternity, for our sins that He is willing to forgive. From the very beginning, this forgiveness was made available to all men: the promise of a Savior was given to Eve before Cain was born (Genesis 3:15), and forgiveness was extended to Israel as well as 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 that we must not permit our hearts to be drawn away from the Lord into deception. The warnings are many: “Take heed to yourselves, that your 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); “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 (1 Peter 5:8). We must give careful attention to Jesus’ words to His disciples: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And 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, and 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 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 and our neighbors – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this *worthy* living describes our lives regardless of who is watching. 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 on our own to achieve it; He has provided His Spirit by Whom we are to 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;*

This is another command, and it is based on what has just come before (*therefore*). The Greek word for *followers* is *mimetes* (*mim-ay-tace*'), and simply means to imitate.<sup>543</sup> 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). “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7), and therefore, as imitators of God, we are to live in holiness, clothed in the *new man* (Ephesians 4:24). There is no higher calling.

However, what we see far too often within Evangelical circles is the attitude that Jesus is our buddy; there is no longer an appropriate 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 – something like Jesus in a backpack, rather than Jesus as our Lord! What heresy! What delusion! This thinking finds its source in the idea that everyone is essentially good – all that we have to do is attach Jesus and everything will be okay. That is attempted syncretism! I say *attempted* because TRUTH (Jesus and the Word of God) is exclusive and objective, and therefore, it **cannot** be *syncretized* with anything! What did God command Israel before they went into the land of Canaan? “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; ... 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). From this it is very clear that Jehovah makes **absolutely no** provision for syncretism! Yet today we find that those who should know better are ignoring God’s clear commands and the example of Israel –

<sup>543</sup> Strong’s Online.

men like Don Richardson, who dealt with the pagan tribes of Indonesia. When commenting on the indigenous tribes of North America mixing their ancient spiritism with Christianity, he gloried in the “new emerging Native ... Christian leaders,” confident of seeing the “Holy Spirit bearing His witness thru them.”<sup>544</sup> Explaining their ancient traditions of drumming, dancing, smudging, etc. in Christian terms does not suddenly make their pagan traditions honoring to the Lord. This is another example of where Evangelicals have lost, or are rapidly losing, their fear of the Lord; they mix the principles of life with the practices of death, and glory in their grand accomplishment. Don capped his acclaim of such compromise with this: “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”).<sup>545</sup> “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ... who changed the truth of God into a lie ...” (Romans 1:22, 25); how do you change God’s truth into a lie? – by endeavoring to meld it with anything else. We are told that, in the last days, men will be “ever learning, and never able to come to the [full] knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). As much as we might like this to 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 an effort to make the beliefs of pagans 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 Evangelicals today is that foundation for wisdom – the fear of the Lord. They have raised the idol of their own intelligence (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 translated as *beloved* when God spoke of His “beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). It is unique to the Bible, and not one that was in common use in the language of the day.<sup>546</sup> It 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.<sup>547</sup> This is also 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 “... sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and ... run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking 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

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<sup>544</sup> Don Richardson, personal correspondence, October 15, 2000.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Vine’s “love.”

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

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 while 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 are to be characterized by *love* (again, the root of this word is *agape*). “By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). 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 living 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 Man, He is the pattern for our lives. He did not stray from this walk of love even when he spoke to the Pharisees and pronounced eight “woes” against them (Matthew 23). His love was not diminished as 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 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 – their religion had become their focus; they had reduced God's calling to a set of their own rules and practices (idolatry). Professing themselves to be wise, they had become fools before God (Romans 1:22). This is not a flattering picture of the Jewish religious leaders, but modern Evangelicals differ little; even among those who might claim to be Fundamentalists, they have systematized their understanding of Scripture and it has become cold and methodical – God's Word must bend to their theology, rather than the other way around. “We are Baptists,” or “we are Presbyterians” becomes a mantra that is used to declare our understanding of the Word of God; in Jesus' day, it 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 and 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 those deeds were to flow (Matthew 23:23); they had a veneer of righteousness, but had lost the heart that would have made them righteous before God. They were proud to be the descendants of Abraham, yet failed to understand the faith of Abraham that made him righteous before God. Today, we might take pride in our Baptist heritage, or in our understanding of Reformed theology – but have we lost sight of the faith of Abraham? Our righteous standing before God does not come through either a Baptist heritage or a Reformed theology, but through the Lord Jesus Christ!

How did Christ love us?

Christ demonstrated His love for us by bearing our sins on the cross, thereby fulfilling 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 it was sweet before God because it looked forward to the sacrifice that God would one day make for the payment of man’s sin, and it showed that the one who made the sacrifice was walking in obedience to what He had commanded. Yet this did not begin with God’s instruction to Israel, for in Genesis 8:20-21 God used the same phrase in speaking of Noah’s sacrifice after he left 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 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 – part of God’s eternal plan of redemption (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, outlining 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* or *quieting*, so the sacrifice was a quieting or soothing of God’s anger against the sinner. The sacrifices were an expression of the faith of the repentant sinner, and led to a restoration of communion with God; sins had been

dealt with according to God's prescribed order. Even though the sacrifices of the OT had to be carried out on a continual basis, through them there was an expression of faith in God, of man's need to receive atonement for his sins, and of his commitment to walk in obedience to Him. Even within the sacrificial system of Israel, it was a personal matter; when someone committed a sin, forgiveness came by means of a sacrifice that was brought to the priests – the shedding of blood was required. Then once each year, the high priest would enter into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for his own sins and the sins of the people. When Christ fulfilled the foreshadowing of the sacrificial system, the continual cleansing sacrifices and the atoning work of the high priest were ended; He was the final Sacrifice made once for all time (Hebrews 10:10), yet His sacrifice must also be applied personally for it to be effective. Christ died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), but that does not mean that everyone in the world is destined for heaven. The Calvinists contend that Christ did not die for the whole world, but only for the elect, which they define as those whom God has chosen to be saved. 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 means of forgiveness for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world* (1 John 2:1-2, literal in italics).<sup>548</sup> Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for the sins of all of humanity, and it is available to everyone; even as the sacrificial system was equally available to Israel and the stranger (Leviticus 24:22), so Christ's fulfillment leaves no one out. 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 to Nicodemus in John 3 make it clear that there needs to be a believing heart in order for salvation to begin ("whosoever believeth"); the faith of Abel, Noah, and Abraham must be active in the individual for the work of Christ on the cross to be made effective. Jesus said, *But the one who endures* [remains faithful to the Lord] *unto the end, this is the one who will be saved* (Matthew 24:13, literal).<sup>549</sup> Notice two things from Jesus' words: 1) the need for remaining obedient to the Lord to the very *end*, and 2) salvation is not a current possession but a future reality if we remain faithful to Him. The first (obedience) is our choice that can only be realized through the leading of the Spirit of God Who is abiding within us – the *new man* living out the Lord's righteousness and holiness. The second affirms that Jesus did not teach eternal security of salvation; salvation comes at the end of a life that has been lived in faithfulness to Him – whether that is eight minutes or eighty years, it matters not (Matthew 20:1-14). A life of willing obedience is a *sweet fragrance* to the Lord!

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<sup>548</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.





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 are some things that are not to describe how we live. Let's consider them carefully.

*Fornication (porneia)* – from which we obviously get our word *pornography* and all related words – means any illicit or unnatural sexual intercourse: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, etc.<sup>550</sup> Metaphorically, this word is



Barack Obama

used to describe apostasy from the Lord through idolatry – spiritual unfaithfulness.<sup>551</sup> It is very interesting to note that Strong's includes sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman in its definition 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 anyone – the Lord being excepted, of course! Hence, this term includes the modern day shacking up and all homosexuality, no matter how it is dressed, both of which are becoming increasingly acceptable to those within “Christian” circles. Even those within the upper echelon of Evangelicals 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. At the time, Obama was a US senator who stood in contradiction to most of the Scriptural values that Christians should be tenaciously holding onto in this day. He still promotes the right to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy (including the controversial and cruel partial-birth abortion), is opposed to those who seek to provide aid to surviving babies of abortions, is strongly promoting 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.<sup>552</sup> Why would Warren have anything to do with a man who openly supported fornication and murder? How could Warren permit such a godless man to address his congregation? Could it be for Obama's future political influence as he clearly had high political aspirations? Their feigned mutual concern for the AIDS epidemic in Africa was the public reason given, but the obvious compromise that Warren made is inexcusable before God. Warren is governed by expediency; pragmatism has become his guide, if not his god and his bible. However, he

<sup>550</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> 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](http://www.townhall.com/columnists/KevinMcCullough/2006/11/19/why_is_obamas_evil_in_rick_warrens_pulpit)

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 to “... come out from among them, and be ye separate ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

*Uncleanness* speaks of impurity, whether 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 stain God’s holiness in our lives. This has been emphasized with the word “all,” signifying that every type of uncleanness is included.

*Covetousness (pleonexia)* is defined as a greedy desire to have more,<sup>553</sup> and the Greek word always carries the negative sense of its use. Paul told the Corinthians to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31), but the Greek word used here (*zeloo*) means to show zeal for, and is translated by the compound *covet earnestly*. The word that is in our text refers to an insatiable craving for more – there is no satisfying this desire.

Three things are named here: any kind of unlawful or unnatural sexual intercourse, all impurity, and greed. None of these is to be even *named* among us, who are 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 among Evangelicals. He was forced to face his uncleanness when a homosexual prostitute named him as a client.<sup>554</sup> Satan takes great delight in the sins of Christians, especially those who are high profile. However, even as Ted Haggard went through the embarrassment of facing his immorality (twice), men like Rick Warren continue to flaunt their disdain for the commands of Scripture, and remain popular among those who should see his error. It is evident that Evangelicals have less tolerance for the more visible sexual failures than for major compromises with error and a wholesale disregard for Scripture; yet the latter is far more dangerous because it continues to wear the garment of spirituality and evades the attention of the average Evangelical. There is a growing level of comfort with sin – especially when we can see the “good” that results. Evangelicals are rapidly becoming first-class pragmatists who are following



Ted Haggard

<sup>553</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>554</sup> <https://religionnews.com/2022/07/26/disgraced-pastor-ted-haggard-faces-new-allegations/>; despite going through a “spiritual restoration” process, he faced similar allegations in 2020. From founding a mega-church, he is now meeting in his home – he still has people who want to sit under his teaching?!

the world in calling good evil, and evil good (Isaiah 5:20), and like the world, they will become the recipients of Jehovah's woe!

Paul addressed his letter to the *holy ones* at Ephesus and the *faithful* in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:1), and he now reminds them (and us) that there is conduct that is not acceptable for saints or those who remain faithful to the Lord. We have been reminded of things that are to have no part in our lives; 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 identify a few more practices that are also not to be a part of the lives of saints, although these are more easily justified.

The Greek word used for *filthiness* (*aischrotes*) literally means ugliness, and so indecency or obscenity; its root, *aischros*, speaks of shame and baseness.<sup>555</sup> Now here is something that our modern generations are losing all sense 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. What is pure is more likely to be the butt of jokes than upheld as an ideal, and 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 (nor do they care to learn about it); they use the world's music as a means to promote an insipid and false form of Christianity.<sup>556</sup> The ever popular Bill Gaither and Mark Lowry posed with the "Christian" lesbian artist Marsha Stevens (although in his backpedaling, Bill called it a snapshot that someone took of them); yet it seems evident from the picture that Stevens was being endorsed, not corrected. However, the "Christian" music industry does not have the edge on compromise – it is everywhere that you look with Biblically



Bill Gaither and Mark Lowry  
with Marsha Stevens (second from left)  
and her then "partner."

<sup>555</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Vine's "filthiness."

<sup>556</sup> David Cloud, "The Anti-Fundamentalism Rebellion of CCM," <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/antifundamentalismrebellion.htm>

discerning eyes. There is a growing softening of the general Evangelical attitude toward homosexuality – we’ve already noted Rick Warren’s 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 in fighting 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 inviting them to speak at his 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 Evangelical 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, making *foolish talking* a step-up from *filthiness*. However, the *nor* between *talking* and *jesting* is simply a connecting conjunction, which places these two terms on an equal basis. *Foolish talking* is translated from one Greek word (*morologia*), which is idle talk, useless or silly speech; the root (*moros*) means foolish or stupid.<sup>557</sup> This is more than simply being silly in conversation; there is an evident lack of knowledge or the ability to discern what is appropriate. *Jesting* (*eutrapelia*), on the other hand, can identify a lightness, wit, or facetiousness, but in a more negative light, it carries a vulgar connotation.<sup>558</sup> The Greek word literally means to turn well, or easily, and it came to refer to smooth and witty words that harbor a piercing barb (sin).<sup>559</sup> 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 (*foolish talking* and *jesting*) 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; these are not to have any part in the saint’s life.<sup>560</sup> 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; they 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 in their error, receiving the accolades of the world (which they love) and the condemnation of God (that they ignore).

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<sup>557</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>558</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s “jesting.”

<sup>559</sup> Vincent’s Word Studies, Vol. 3, p. 398.

<sup>560</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



In the place 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 (Ephesians 2:1), and brought into a new life *in Christ*.



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 (*for this ye know*), and, perhaps, of which the faithful in Christ Jesus need also to be made 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 people, and, what's more, this is considered to be a 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 contrary to 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* ( *pornos* ) is applied primarily to men who indulge in unlawful sex, frequent prostitutes, or are male prostitutes, but it came to apply to any sexually immoral person.<sup>561</sup> It is someone who engages in illicit sexual practices as a lifestyle.

The *unclean* person is someone who is ceremonially unclean (within the Jewish traditions), or whose thoughts and life are morally impure.

*Covetous* is applied so someone who is eager to have more than his share, or someone who is greedy for gain, particularly for material possessions.<sup>562</sup> This is someone whose mind is occupied with the things of this world and how to get ahead, and with an insatiable desire to accumulate great wealth. Perhaps a generous seasoning of jealousy also fits within this description – the motivation to stay ahead

<sup>561</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.



of the Joneses. Such a person is equated with being an idolater (*who is an idolater*), a worshipper of a false god (in this case, riches) in direct disobedience to 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, “Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly [with difficulty] enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is [comparatively] 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).<sup>563</sup> From our passage, it is evident that someone like this rich young ruler is an idolater, whose wealth became his 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 that is 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? We’ve already mentioned Ted Haggard, but he is only one 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 gained control over that life. 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 this 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 within the Evangelical community. We must take heed lest we be led astray by the great deceiver, the father of lies, and the spirit that now works among us to destroy and uproot all things Biblical. We must be vigilant lest we become ensnared by the seemingly “good things” that the devil offers (through disobedience to the Lord) in an effort to draw us away from the best that God has to offer (through obedience). The choice is often not between what is best and worst, but simply between what is best and what appears to be good; if the devil can lure us into accepting his good over God’s best, then it won’t be long before we are choosing fair over good, and the devil’s claw-hold on our lives has become firmly established.

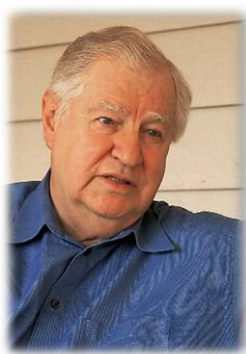


6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

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<sup>563</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Here is another command – *Let no one be deceiving you with empty words!*<sup>564</sup> Within the context of our passage, the challenge that we are given is that we must 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 accuracy. 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 by what sounds pleasant but is devoid of the truth and filled with lies (2 Timothy 4:4). Modern preachers may speak with an eloquence that falls gently upon our ears, and their message may even contain some truth, but we must guard against being deceived by their soft words and fair speeches (Romans 16:18), for it is through this that 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 façade of spirituality that hides the barb of mysticism and heresy; yet we see many Evangelical leaders obviously embracing these teachings without any qualms – they accept the façade without applying the Word of God. The seeds of New Evangelicalism are producing a harvest: there has been a move from dialoguing with the enemy, to standing with them, and now, 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 people in 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 without a moment’s hesitation. The prince of this world has no problem wearing the cloak of Evangelicalism, and as he enters, there comes a reduced concern for the truth, a greater acceptance of those who practice error, and a general discomfort with anything that might be construed as the application of God’s Word. The average Evangelical today has followed Israel in their example of disobedience and compromise; God’s judgment will surely follow!



Henry Blackaby

The phrase, *these things*, refers to the sins that have just been delineated. God’s wrath (*orge*) is aroused by such things, and is directed at those who practice them. Who practices these things? 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

<sup>564</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

God has called us (Ephesians 4:1), as obedient children, not as disobedient. 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 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.”<sup>565</sup> 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, bringing various denominations together in unity. This group embraces leaders such as Ted Rendall, who is Ecumenical, and features 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.”<sup>566</sup> Blackaby is telling us 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 edition of his book *Experiencing God*, he wrote: “With God working through His servant, he or she can do anything God can do. Wow! Unlimited potential.”<sup>567</sup> 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.”<sup>568</sup> It would appear that the first phrasing for this thought brought criticism, or unattainable desires and hence, failures.
3. “... when God prepares to do something in our world, He reveals to His people what He is about to do.”<sup>569</sup> Not true! We are told that 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.”<sup>570</sup> He speaks much of making “adjustments” for God – but nothing of repentance, confession of sin, or of obedience to God in all things.

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<sup>565</sup> <http://www.revivalfellowship.com/objectives.html>

<sup>566</sup> Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby & Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Revised & Updated), p. 99.

<sup>567</sup> <https://truthwithsnares.org/2012/02/22/a-mysticism-primer-henry-blackaby-and-experiencing-god/>.

<sup>568</sup> Blackaby, p. 43.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

How can the Canadian Revival Fellowship expect to cultivate a deeper passion for spiritual things when they harbor and promote teachings that are contrary to the Word of God? They cannot!

When we refuse to practice Biblical separation from the world, from 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 that we can be “a testimony” to those in error – what kind of a 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 [that which appears to be Biblical], 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. Jesus said that if we love Him, then we must be living in obedience to Him (John 14:15). Will we walk accordingly, and commit the results of obedience to Him? “...strait *is* the 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). Do we find ourselves on a path that is lonely? Perhaps that is simply because there are only a few who will find that Narrow Road (Jesus) that leads to life. May God give us a heart of 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 partakers together with spiritual Israel in the promises of God that are made evident 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 join 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 frequently 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. This is nothing less than 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



Shirley MacLaine

when man 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.”<sup>571</sup> We may scoff at Shirley MacLaine standing on the beach facing the Pacific Ocean and crying out, “I am god,”<sup>572</sup> 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 monument in time to the high-mindedness of man and the sovereignty of God. We live in just such a day of arrogance among Evangelicals; unity is being acclaimed despite the warnings by God and His Word to separate from error; 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:*

The first phrase 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

<sup>571</sup> <https://truthwithsnares.org/2012/02/22/a-mysticism-primer-henry-blackaby-and-experiencing-god/>.

<sup>572</sup> [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/bog\\_bogi\\_e.htm](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/bog_bogi_e.htm)

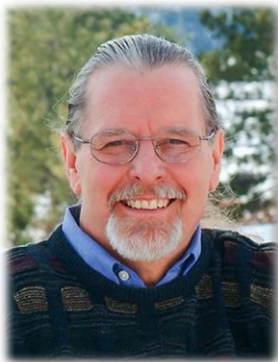


openly declared that we are to abide in Him (John 15:4); He is our source of life and light.

By contrast, the Eastern religions see the light as a part of who we are; they believe the lie that Satan first gave to Eve – *ye shall be as gods* (Genesis 3:5). 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).<sup>573</sup>



Richard Foster

Within their convoluted impression of reality, they advocate to first follow 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 and understanding] 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).<sup>574</sup> 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 is like the seed that fell by the wayside, and the birds came and snatched it away; the Word of God comes to the heart of such 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.

<sup>573</sup> <http://www.swamij.com/swami-rama-guru.htm>

<sup>574</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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. Appropriately, we are asked: “What communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Today the answer to this rhetorical question needs to be stated openly in order 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; 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. Even prominent Evangelical, Max Lucado, writes of the *divine spark* that everyone has, and then quotes mystical heretics and Emergent Church promoters in an effort to support his heresy.<sup>575</sup> 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 who practice its techniques – and they will be professing Christians, Catholic mystics, Buddhists, and anyone in the world



Dallas Willard



Jim Hammacher

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, for this error is being presented within Christian circles with great success. Despite how we might like make them appear, yoga techniques (often a part of this new spirituality) 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 Hammacher<sup>576</sup>) 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.”<sup>577</sup> At the same time, a professor of Hinduism at the University of Virginia says that “he has seen many Christians whose faith has been strengthened by their yoga practice.”<sup>578</sup> 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.”<sup>579</sup> So we have those, who should know better, openly practicing syncretism (seeking to merge darkness and light, and trying to call

<sup>575</sup> <https://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/max-lucado-hops-into-the-contemplative-camp/>.

<sup>576</sup> 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.

<sup>577</sup> Alexandra Alter, “Yoga Stretches Traditional Christian Boundaries,” <http://www.veda.harekrsna.cz/connections/Christianity.php>

<sup>578</sup> <http://www.letusreason.org/current81.htm>.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

it *light*), and those who are pagan are encouraging 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 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 those who promote spiritual formation's accommodation.



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.”<sup>580</sup> 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). In other words, 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 that 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: “Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So 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, then so be it, if it is reaping, then 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

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<sup>580</sup> Strong's Online.

acumen, for to do so would require violating meekness – an evidence of the Spirit of God.

Jesus taught His disciples about the Vine, the branches and fruit. He said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every 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” (John 15:1-2). 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 to be worthless, and 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 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 went 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, then 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: in order that *ye are going and ye are bearing fruit and your fruit is remaining* (literal).<sup>581</sup> 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*).<sup>582</sup> 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. Paul exhorted the Philippians: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11). 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

<sup>581</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>582</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).



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) – the fruit-test is used to reveal the false prophet, but, by the same token, it will also reveal 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”;<sup>583</sup> 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.”<sup>584</sup> 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 directed to walk as children of light that will produce the fruit of righteousness from the Spirit of God. *Truth* refers to that which never changes; Jesus (as being the Truth) 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 [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness ....”<sup>585</sup> Paul is beginning his discourse on God being revealed to all of mankind through the evidences that are everywhere to be seen, yet it seems that there is growing evidence of many within organized churches who are suppressing God's truth under unrighteousness. How many professing Christians hold in their hands the very Word of God (truth), yet they fail to heed it because they do not 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).<sup>586</sup> However, I would contend that they differ most on application (rationalization has even rendered a right interpretation based upon 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 in order to see it lived out in reality, but continue to bury the truth under their self-justified unrighteousness. It is clear that the truth will not accomplish anything in the lives of those who refuse to live by it.

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<sup>583</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>586</sup> Taken from a taped message by Henry Schorr.



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: “... the righteousness of God ... is manifested ... *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe [*who are believing*] ...” (Romans 3:21-22).<sup>587</sup> It is clear that we have no righteousness in ourselves, but it is equally apparent that God’s righteousness is available to us through faith in Christ. As we have already seen, both the Lord Jesus and God’s Word are called Truth (John 14:6, 17:17). *Goodness, righteousness and truth* all find their source in God; anything that might appear to be good, right and true (but is not of God) will fail. That is why we are told to be fruit watchers (i.e., fruit-of-the-Spirit watchers), for thereby comes our first means of identifying the wolves who seek to portray themselves as sheep (Matthew 7:15-20). As we rest in the guidance of the abiding Spirit of God, He will give us the discernment needed to discover the other wolves – as long as we are actively weighing them against the Standard of the Word of God (1 John 4:1).



#### 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 (*dokimazo*) that means to test or examine carefully in order to determine if something is genuine, with the anticipation of approval.<sup>588</sup> This tells us that even if we expect 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 – simply abandon it. Paul uses this same word (in its imperative form) to describe the self-testing that we must do to ensure that we are living in accordance with what God requires (2 Corinthians 13:5). In our day of compromise and feel-good preaching, we need to exercise genuine discernment in accordance with God’s Word (our Standard for conducting the examination). 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 listen to what is said and look at the Scriptures that they might quote; our examination needs to include all of God’s Word, and we need to pay careful attention to their associations and the things that they approve. Our associations are 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 frequently expose the heart than the carefully selected words that are spoken.

<sup>587</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>588</sup> Strong’s Online; Vine’s “prove.”

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 carefully examine 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. 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. The root of the Greek word so translated is *koinonia*, which speaks of communion, partnership, and association, and this Greek word (*sugkoinoneo*) includes a prefix that means *with* – so it is such a close *fellowship with* the works of darkness.<sup>589</sup> This goes well beyond what our present-day understanding of *fellowship* would indicate. In our passage, such fellowship is given a negative emphasis – we are **not** to have communion, partnership or any association 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 morally barren and without true value.<sup>590</sup> We have just looked at “the fruit of the Spirit” that is in “all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9); now we are faced with unfruitfulness. Being a spiritual exhortation, the unfruitfulness spoken of here bears a spiritual application, not a physical one. Therefore, these *unfruitful works* are activities that do not bring forth the *goodness, righteousness and truth* of God, even though they may well 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. Consider Joel Osteen,



Joel Osteen

<sup>589</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

who preaches a feel-good message of encouragement to have a more positive attitude and things will be better for you, because 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. Think about 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 accurate], 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 into vain ramblings of a philosophy of their own design – God is not pleased, yet we too often demonstrate acceptance when we should be testing 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 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 Him – 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, Franklin 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 23:27). 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 extended to accommodate Christ's death and resurrection). These have all chosen to ignore the life of holiness and purity in exchange 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, because 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."<sup>591</sup> Fuller Seminary seems bent on plowing new ground in the area of 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 be aware. Unfortunately, they have opted for a religious system that places all of the authority in the hands of the educated, and there is great hesitation to question the actions of those 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 (and that includes Islam and the Gospel); 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."<sup>592</sup> Now this is something that today's Evangelical finds very difficult, if not abhorrent. We have seen Fuller Seminary's stance when it comes to the Muslim faith; they will not condemn anyone

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<sup>591</sup> [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1058/is\\_26\\_120/ai\\_112131080](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_26_120/ai_112131080)

<sup>592</sup> Vine's "reprove."

– they will always look for that common ground. However, it is one thing to avoid someone, particularly when they are high profile people like 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 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, that will include 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*, and 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* (*aischron*) literally means ugly or deformed, and speaks of that which stands opposed to purity.<sup>593</sup> We are to expose (*reprove*) these works of darkness to the light of the Word of God; what we must not do is delve into the lives of those who are doing these dark works – for therein is that which is shameful. Jesus openly declared that we would come to know them *by their fruits* (Matthew 7:20) – the fruits being the evidence of their heart’s condition. Since Joel Osteen promotes a message that is contrary to the Word of God, then we are to accept that as evidence that his heart is not right with God; our task is to openly reprove his message of health, wealth and feel-good psychobabble, but not to dig into the hidden philosophies of his mind that produce this false gospel. Our responsibility is to expose the evident fruits for what they really are – heresy. We must not try to understand the hidden ramblings of his heart – our focus must be on God’s Word and where he violates what God has said.

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 that is

<sup>593</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s “shame.”



contrary to the Word of God, does not 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, then the Spirit of God has not revealed that message. Consequently, when we see the leaders of our local Evangelical Free Church and the Prairie Tabernacle joining with the Catholics and Charismatics to celebrate *Easter*, then we can rest assured that we have just seen the unfruitfulness 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 have close communion because of their disobedience to the clear instruction of God's Word – they are living irresponsibly (*disorderly*) before God. 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 and activities 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 shameful things in their lives that produce such disobedience. It is enough that we uncover their teachings and activities.



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 are 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, to lay bare, and to reveal.<sup>594</sup> 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, but alas, such targets of reproof are becoming increasingly few in number. However, to address the error of men like Rick Warren, Billy



Barack Obama at  
Warren's Saddleback Church

<sup>594</sup> Vine's "manifest."

Graham, Joel Osteen, et al, is considered to be nigh unto sacrilege.

What is the error of Rick Warren?

His entire focus is on worldly 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). Furthermore, 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). Even 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 supports abortion in all nine months of pregnancy, and the radical homosexual activists’ agenda.

What was the error of Billy Graham?

He, too, neglected God’s call to separation. From his earliest crusades, he worked with the Roman Catholics and Liberals who are **not** Christian – only religious pagans. 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.”<sup>595</sup> Romans 16:17-18 says that we are to withdraw from those who are alongside of the doctrine of Scripture – Graham violated the Scriptures all through his ministry. Even though he is no longer living, Evangelicals are still in awe of him and hold him in high esteem.

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.

Using the light of Scripture to identify those who transgress the Lord’s commands, is not popular; 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, it is as we reprove the works of darkness that 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 lead to a couple of things: 1) the exposure by the light of God will bring sharper criticism of us, the reprovers, and 2) the Lord may use our reproof to prick the heart of a hearer and possibly restore him to a proper understanding of Scripture. Obviously, we cannot choose the response; we must

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<sup>595</sup> David Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*, p. 84.

faithfully reprove with the light of Scripture so that the Spirit of God is able to use the reproof to restore hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The latter part of the verse uses some of the same words as the first part, but *light*, in this case, is used in a figurative sense as describing the function of the *light*.<sup>596</sup> In the Greek, *all things* and *whatsoever* are from the same root (*pas*), but the first is plural and the second singular.<sup>597</sup> *And all things are being reprov'd; by the light it is being made known, for everything that is being revealed is open* (literal).<sup>598</sup>

Many modern Evangelicals will contend that they are *light*; in their minds, they are explaining the Scriptures so that others will better understand what is being said. However, are they presenting God's explanation as it is revealed in His Word, or are they simply elaborating on their accepted theologies? Herein is our responsibility – we must take what we hear and read back to the *light* of the Word of God and let His Word expose the truth or error. It is in this simple (yet time consuming) 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 – the only criteria being that they are on the list of accepted teachers. Having set God's Word aside, there is a broad acceptance of men's doctrine, for the Scriptures are deemed to be far too difficult to understand without much learning. However, the Spirit of God is promised to all who actively believe, and is with us to guide in the ways of truth. Three 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). Yet there are those who will say that the Spirit of God may lead one person to this understanding and someone else to that. Consider this from J. Vernon McGee, who is looked upon as being a conservative Evangelical: he recommends that we check “anything that I have to say by the Word of God and to make sure that the Spirit of God is leading you in that direction [to agree with him] – [He] may give you a different interpretation than He gives to me.”<sup>599</sup> This is absolute heresy because the Spirit of God is **not** divided concerning the Truth – He will **never** lead anyone to anything but the Truth! Paul wrote: “...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. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ... Now 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 [*will know*; yes, *know* is in the subjunctive mood but, as part of a purpose clause, it identifies the

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<sup>596</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>597</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>598</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

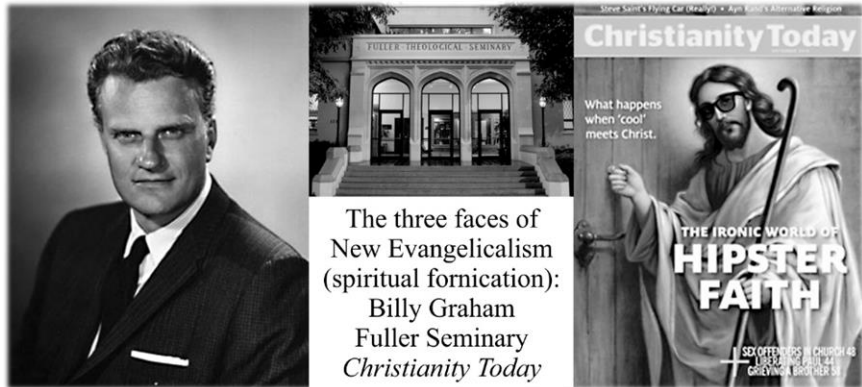
<sup>599</sup> <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/thru-the-bible-questions-and-answers/player/questions-answers-3145-1013685.html?type=branded#now-playing>.

reason that we have received the Spirit of God].<sup>600</sup> Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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 2:9-14). Clearly, the guidance of the Spirit of God is precise and certainly not double-minded, as McGee suggests (James 1:8). 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, this emphasis spread around the world. Evangelical concern became focused on scholarship (with the re-examination of Biblical doctrines), on social projects (with a de-

emphasis of the message of Scripture), and on dialoguing with men of other belief systems. Their emphasis on scholarship has led to many of the doctrines of Scripture being either completely re-worked or set aside altogether. Out of this grew 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, and a whole new generation of religious pagans. The focus on social projects has resulted in much talk about redeeming our culture, with these lightly-Christianized pagans endeavoring to influence all areas of society. Consequently, there has come a renewal of the movement to establish the kingdom of God on earth through the efforts of man (this is often referred to as reconstructionism or kingdom-now theology); establishing His kingdom on earth is something that the Lord Jesus will do when He returns. Their push for dialogue with the intellectuals of the world has become a catalyst to seek to join with all faiths in order to save the world. Out of 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 seen Briercrest



The three faces of  
New Evangelicalism  
(spiritual fornication):  
Billy Graham  
Fuller Seminary  
*Christianity Today*

<sup>600</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).



Biblical Seminary negotiating an educational agreement with the University of Saskatoon,<sup>601</sup> and Prairie Bible Institute doing the same with Bow Valley College, Olds College, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and Lethbridge Community College.<sup>602</sup> In clear contravention of the Word of God, these “Christian” schools have collaborated 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 that massive revivals are taking place all around the world, but because their message is no longer the Gospel of Christ, the revivals are not Biblically based and are a smokescreen. The US Center for World Mission, founded by Ralph Winter, a faculty member of Fuller Seminary at the time, 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 (in 2015, USCWM merged with Frontier Mission Fellowship to be known as Frontier Ventures), 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 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) [all errors are a part of the original].”<sup>603</sup> Notice that Winter has redefined what it means to become a Christian – it is now yielding to that *new Kingdom*, the one that men are endeavoring to establish on this earth for God, and by joining the “kingdom,” Jesus becomes your Lord and Savior. Does this mean that Paul and Silas had it wrong? When the Philippian jailor cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” they responded, “Believe 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 be convinced 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), then 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

<sup>601</sup> [http://announcements.usask.ca/news/archive/2007/04/university\\_of\\_s\\_27.html](http://announcements.usask.ca/news/archive/2007/04/university_of_s_27.html); while I was a student at Briercrest, this was proclaimed as a proud moment in the School’s history.

<sup>602</sup> <http://www.prairie.edu/pcaat/pcaat.htm>

<sup>603</sup> <https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment57>.



God's Word, and have managed to spread that word far and wide among people who are largely ignorant of the Bible.

Is the Frontier Ventures a source of light? Clearly, not! Do they consider themselves to be light? Of course they do! The USCWM stated that it “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).”<sup>604</sup> There is no mention of salvation, only obedience and worship of God – two things that they deemed necessary for their kingdom to be successful. “If we think that church planting is about saving individuals, we’re thinking too small ... Church plants are God’s kingdom infiltrating the world.”<sup>605</sup> There has been a subtle shift from God dealing with individual souls, to the establishment of monuments to the success of spreading the *kingdom* of God. After all, if these people are attending the 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 must not 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 steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:17). As *children of light* we are challenged to be alert, lest we succumb to the wiles of the devil and *fall away from our place in Christ*!



14. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

The first phrase, *wherefore he saith*, indicates 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: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, 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. And 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 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.<sup>606</sup>

<sup>604</sup> <http://www.uscwm.org/>, under “Frequently Asked Questions”; with the merger, this quote is gone.

<sup>605</sup> <https://ministryadvice.com/church-planters/>.

<sup>606</sup> Strong's Online.

*Awake* is in the imperative mood, it is a command, and it means to rouse or to pay attention.<sup>607</sup> The command is given to the one who is not alert. 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 an indifference, a laziness or a general lack of attentiveness toward spiritual things.<sup>608</sup> The Spirit of God is commanding the believer who is indifferent to the things of God, or who is permitting sin to creep into his life, to rouse himself and shake the grogginess of sleep off. In Romans 13:11-12 we are told: "... now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. The 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 because the day of 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 off the works of darkness" (the *old man*) and to "put on the armor of light" (the *new man*), the very thing that Paul is telling the Ephesians about – the light that reveals and lays bare whatever it shines on (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, it will undoubtedly lead to the second. It is interesting to realize that believers can be asleep and unaware of the reality of what is taking place around them. When we are sound asleep (physically), we are largely oblivious to what is happening around us, and this is a good thing because it permits the body to rest and rejuvenate. However, in the spiritual realm, sleep takes place while our eyes and ears are wide open – a numbness enters into our hearts and we fail to comprehend what is taking place around us. The Spirit's command here is to awaken from this spiritual slumber!

Jesus told us that the access to life is *strait* (*stenos*, narrow), that it opens onto a pathway that has always been *narrow* (*thlibo*, restricted or compressed), and that *few* (*oligos*) will ever find it (Matthew 7:13-14).<sup>609</sup> Paul told the Thessalonians that before the Lord returned there would first be an apostasy and the revealing of the Antichrist, the *son of perdition* (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 have all contributed),

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<sup>607</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>608</sup> *Vine's* "sleep," Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>609</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

and there are many who are advocating that a massive revival is taking place around the world. These are not two separate things, but are actually two parts of the same Evangelical thinking. What does this do? It does two things: 1) most significantly, it sets aside the clear instruction of Scripture that Jesus is the only way to life (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5); 2) the borders for salvation that are established by the Lord (Galatians 3:26, James 2:23) are moved so that Evangelicals feel justified in ascribing salvation to many more people than God does. It is upon this sand that Billy Graham felt free 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.”<sup>610</sup> There is a tremendous indifference to the truth of the Word of God and to the things of the Spirit. 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 [*Gehenna*, a reference to the eternal Lake of Fire] than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).<sup>611</sup> 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 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 – can eternal salvation come from this? NO!!

The fables that are being promoted today as Christian teaching can only result in spiritual sleep, complete apathy, and death. This spiritual sleep, from which many will never awaken, can only lead to a deeper deception for the professing Christian, and apostasy or spiritual death for a true believer who is caught in its snare. When we looked at the definition of *sleep*, we saw that it spoke metaphorically of an indifference to spiritual things; the Spirit of God tells us that “... to be carnally minded *is death*” (Romans 8:6). *Carnal* (*sarx*) is literally the flesh of a body (whether human or animal), and is used within a broader context to refer to human nature – that *old man* that functions without the guidance of the Spirit of God. On this basis, we can understand that someone whose way of thinking is *carnal*, limited to the *old man* of sin, cannot be *in Christ*, and is, therefore, subject to *death* – “For the wages of sin *is death*” (Romans 6:23a). There is *death* in this sleep that we have been looking at – a present spiritual death, which then yields to a resurrection for eternal judgment – the second death (Revelation 20:12-15). Paul encouraged 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). By using *us*, Paul includes himself among those who must *watch*; we must all be alert lest we should

<sup>610</sup> <https://www.cuttingedge.org/news/n1141.cfm>.

<sup>611</sup> Strong’s Online.

be deceived and drawn into error. Romans 16:17-18 says: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [*desire*]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”<sup>612</sup> The *simple*, as it is used here, does not refer to the simple-minded, but rather to those who are blindly, or willfully, trusting of what others say, who fear nothing from other people. I am reminded of someone who, after changing churches again, said that she was so happy to be able to relax and absorb the messages without having to be on guard. **That** is the identification of the *simple* as used here – someone whose heart is no longer on guard against those deceiving “good words and fair speeches.” Spiritual sleep comes not from exhaustion, but from carelessness or deliberate neglect. We are called to be awake, to be alert, to watch, and to **avoid** what does not pass the test of Scripture!

The second aspect of *sleep* is the entrance of sin and sloth into our lives. James tells us: “... every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then 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: “Do not err ...,” and then goes on to elaborate that “every good gift ... cometh down from the Father of lights ...,” Who does not change (James 1:16-17; Malachi 3:6). There is spiritual strength to be gained by studying the Word of God – God does not change, and His Word does not change! People change their minds about many things, and philosophies change to fit the day, but if God said something in His Word, then 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 – and so it was justified. 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 full knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...” (Hebrews 10:26); “...the wages of sin *is* death ...” (Romans 6:23); “... 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 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 (anistemi)* comes from a Greek word that means to stand up.<sup>613</sup> *Arise* carries the imperative mood – we are commanded to stand up! *From (ek)* also translates as

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<sup>612</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>613</sup> Vine’s “*arise*.”



out of, or away from.”<sup>614</sup> Therefore, the command is for us to *stand up out of, or stand up away from – 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 that follows on the heels of being commanded to awaken from sleep, then it seems appropriate to say that we are to stand up out of, or away from, *the dead*; if we do not deal with our spiritual sleep, then we will soon 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 awaken. We have already noted that spiritual indifference, and sin that creeps in, will lead to spiritual sleep and ultimately, if left unchecked, to death – apostasy! The Scriptures are clear that if we, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, willfully sin (it is the pattern of our lives), then there is **no more sacrifice** for our sins (Hebrews 10:26-29); apostasy, falling away from faith in the Lord, is final – there is no recovery!

We come now to the last phrase of our verse – *Christ shall give thee light*. This 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 – literally, *Christ will cause thee to understand*.<sup>615</sup> We learned in verses 11 and 13 that the unfruitful works of darkness are to be exposed, and it is light that will cause them to be known. The *light*, or the ability to comprehend, is identified as coming from Christ. It is as we grow in Christ that our understanding will be sharpened so that we are able to discern *good, and so evil* (Hebrews 5:14, literal) – it is as our comprehension of Christ and His Word increases (learning to discern *good*) that we will be able to recognize with greater surety the works of darkness (*evil*). There are two reasons for this enlightenment: 1) if there are things in our lives that need to be corrected, our growing understanding of Christ will reveal them so that we can then settle the matter with the Lord, and 2) it is the light of Christ that will provide us with the needed clarity (discernment) to expose the evil that comes across our pathway. “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 enlighten us so that we will know where we stand, **and** it will illumine the path ahead so that we are able to walk in truth and not be drawn away from the Narrow Way 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 because of a general neglect, the development of theologies that have sprung up because of this neglect, or the multitude of translations that take God’s Word away from them. Because of these things, the enlightenment that comes from Christ

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<sup>614</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>615</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



alone has been abandoned for the darkness of man – philosophies and deceptions that are devoid of truth, built according to the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8). Without the Word of God, we have no access to the Light to ensure that we are standing on the Rock of our salvation (2 Samuel 22:47), and there is no light to illumine the path upon which we are walking. 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 is anyone involved in promoting the Ecumenical-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* (*blepo*) appears elsewhere as *take heed*, *beware*, or *discern* – it is in the imperative mood: this is a command.<sup>616</sup> *Then* draws what has come before as the reason for the command; the groundwork for this command has been laid by what Paul has just 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.”<sup>617</sup> The Greek word (*akribos*) from which it is translated, means carefully, diligently, or accurately.<sup>618</sup> As you can see, there is some difference; the Greek meaning demands an attention to details that our English word does not include – *circumspectly* provides the big picture but fails to include the precision on which the Greek focuses. So what do we have here? Because we have just been given the promise that Christ will give us understanding, 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.”<sup>619</sup> 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 areas where Christians can agree to be in fellowship and to cooperate together.”<sup>620</sup> Lest we be left in the dark about whom they are speaking, they have

<sup>616</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>617</sup> American Dictionary of the English Language (1828), “circumspect.”

<sup>618</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>619</sup> <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/006/pd-deception.htm>

<sup>620</sup> <http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=400>

identified what they mean by *other world Christian bodies*: “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.”<sup>621</sup> Each one of these either is an active participant with the World Council of Churches, has members who are in the WCC, is Roman Catholic, or is 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 right to be speaking at a BWA congress, and 2) by making this statement to a congress of Ecumenical zealots, he is affirming that he will not separate from those who are Ecumenical. 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 his errors. In addition, thousands of congregations 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, for some, and deeper into religious paganism for others. The Lord told us in His Word that this would take place, for 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 do not see Warren as being 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, then we must be alert to men like Warren who propagate a soft message of lies and deceit, interwoven with a thin thread of Biblical truth. We are to walk with precision in the commands of the Word of God. We have 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 (*akribos, circumspectly*). Rick Warren and all who follow his lead are walking as fools; they are not regarding the Word of God, nor are they 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

<sup>621</sup> <http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=400>.

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 with the ability to apply knowledge to life (for us, to live in obedience to the Lord).<sup>622</sup> 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 Ecumenical 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 we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [or burdensome]” (1 John 5:3).<sup>623</sup> Separation from the world, from error and from those who profess faith in Christ but who are living in error, are all commands of God. Despite the best efforts of Evangelicals today to dismiss them, these commands are still in the Word of God and we are still warned to follow them with great accuracy and diligence – as those who are *wise*.



#### 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Simply put, this tells us to take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way, because the times in which we live *are evil*.<sup>624</sup> The purpose of this alertness is to shine the light of Christ on the works of darkness – a natural outcome of walking *circumspectly*. The Word of God is the light that shows us where we stand, and illuminates the path upon which we walk (Psalm 119:105); however, if we do not walk carefully 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 – a *darkness* that he calls *light*; yet he bears no light to show the way that leads to life. “The light [*luchnos*, lamp] of the body is the eye [the eye admits light, and enables understanding]: if therefore thine eye be single [healthy, clear], thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil [*poneros*, unhealthy, in poor condition], thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light [*phos*, not the source] that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness” (Matthew 6:22-23).<sup>625</sup> What a picture of modern Evangelicalism! Today Evangelical leaders have become very learned (in the eyes of men); they excel in philosophical thinking and developing great and marvelous theologies, yet they have failed to cultivate the fear of the Lord that is “the beginning [foundational condition] of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).<sup>626</sup> They have stripped the Word of God of its inerrancy, and subjected it to the same

<sup>622</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>623</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>626</sup> TWOT #2097.

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 claim to hold to the Truth, they still quote from 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).<sup>627</sup> 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 church cooperation. The scale of involvement makes no difference – both are a violation of the Word of God! When an organization that says that they are Christian, cultivates associations with those who are not, 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 them in any way; we are to reprove their deeds and separate from them. The teaching of Scripture is clear; all that 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 discernment – but we must be spiritually awake in order to be used by Him to expose the darkness to His light.



Billy Graham with Pope John Paul II



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 being *unwise*). There, *wise* meant those who are skilled to apply

<sup>627</sup> Strong’s Online.



knowledge to life.<sup>628</sup> However, here the Greek word translated as *unwise* (*aphron*) means without reason, senseless, foolish, or silly.<sup>629</sup> Based upon what has come before, we are commanded to not be foolish but to understand the will of the Lord. Today, His will 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 are unable to determine the Lord’s will; 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, but that it comes through a renewed mind, and being conformed to this world stands in opposition 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 is not to 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 in this matter. Perhaps our struggle is less with knowing what the Lord wants, and more with our unwillingness to obey what He has commanded. God’s desire is for us to be a holy people unto Him, and this will only come to pass through our obedience to the commands of Scripture, which is 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, then 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 [*is doing*, present tense] the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).<sup>630</sup> Evangelicals today have focused their attention on many things, but what they have set aside is God’s call to separation and holiness – yet, above all else, we are to be holy before Him (Hebrews 12:14). 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;*

<sup>628</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>629</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>630</sup> Strong’s Online.



The first part of this verse states simply: *and not being made drunk by wine in which is debauchery*.<sup>631</sup> Elsewhere, the Greek word for *excess* (*asotia*) is translated as “riot,” and brings to mind the life of the prodigal son before he came to his senses (Luke 15:13; a different form of the same Greek word is used), or the life lived “according to the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2).<sup>632</sup> The Greek word used to describe drunkenness specifically marks the process of becoming drunk (it is in the present tense), rather than pointing solely to the final state;<sup>633</sup> 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 (he has become *unwise*); 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, the Charismatic movement calls being “drunk” in the Spirit a “sign gift” of His filling. Rodney Howard-Browne, from Tampa, Florida, calls himself a “‘Holy Ghost bartender’ who dispenses the ‘new wine’ of charismatic fervor.”<sup>634</sup> It seems absurd that Charismatics would use drunkenness to characterize what they believe to be the filling of the Holy Spirit. What is even more inconceivable, is that they will use Ephesians 5:18 to justify their actions – claiming that this verse indicates that there is a correlation between appearing to be drunk 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 called the apostles drunk; 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.<sup>635</sup> *Filled* is also in the present tense and passive voice – it is to be a continual filling, and we cannot do the filling, but God will do it – after all, it is His

<sup>631</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>632</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>633</sup> Vine's "drunk."

<sup>634</sup> [https://jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Doctrines/Charismatic%20Movement/unholy\\_laughter.htm](https://jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Doctrines/Charismatic%20Movement/unholy_laughter.htm).

<sup>635</sup> Strong's Online.

Spirit. The command is that we must be willing for the Lord to carry out this *filling* in us – if we are not willing, He will not fill us against our wills. In Galatians 5:16-21, Paul lists many works of the flesh and then follows it with the fruit of the Spirit (vs. 22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. This fruit stands 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 *in Christ*, then we are to have crucified the flesh, and if we “walk in the Spirit, ... [then 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). It is through this abiding relationship that the fruit will come, not the fruit of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *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 14:15-17). Notice that 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: as we have seen before, 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 – He has promised the Spirit Who is committed to abiding with us forever, **if** we will live in obedience to His Word. The filling by the Spirit of God is sure, but we must walk in submission to His commands – which Jesus says that we will do if we love Him.

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 minds, 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 that “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 eleven couples, two women and one man, and all of them, including the wives,

carry the title of “pastor.”<sup>636</sup> Setting aside the misuse of the term “pastor” these days, and 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 very short on obedience 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 from the previous verse that ended with the admonition to be filled with the Spirit; therefore, it is reasonable to consider that what follows here is illustrating what will flow out of a Spirit-filled life. *Psalms* comes from a Greek word (*psalmos*) 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.<sup>637</sup> The Greek word *humnos*, translated as *hymns*, speaks of a song of praise addressed to God.<sup>638</sup> Lastly, we have *spiritual songs*: the Greek word for *songs* is a generic term, hence the qualification of them being *spiritual* songs. Therefore, Paul mentions 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.<sup>639</sup> *Psalms*, *hymns* and *spiritual songs* 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 a life that is lived in conformity with the Spirit of God (obedience to Him); 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 must 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. Keith Green, a well-known name in Christian music circles from yesteryear, said, “I believe music, in itself, is a neutral force.”<sup>640</sup> In *Worship Leader*, Barry Liesch wrote: “I contend ... that music without words is morally neutral ...

<sup>636</sup> <https://www.revival.com/river/pastoralteam>.

<sup>637</sup> Vine’s “psalm.”

<sup>638</sup> Vine’s “hymn.”

<sup>639</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>640</sup> “The Heresy of Claiming that Music is Neutral,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/heresyofclaiming.htm>

Music style is neutral, ethically and morally.”<sup>641</sup> However, those who are deeply involved in writing and performing the world’s music openly admit that they know that their music is of the flesh and that it is used to promote a sinful lifestyle. A rock musician openly confessed: “Rock is the total celebration of the physical,” and another said that “rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body’s rhythms.”<sup>642</sup> 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 that their music is rebellious and anti-church. The world sees their music for what it is, yet professing Christians will ignore this reality and vainly cling to their empty philosophy in an effort to justify their fleshly habits. We cannot profess separation from the world while embracing its music; many “Christian” musicians



Keith Green



Michael W. Smith

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.”<sup>643</sup> “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?” (James 3:11), the understood answer is, “No!” If professing Christian musicians feed on the dregs of worldly music, can the Lord then be honored by their music, which is patterned after the world? No! In the selection of

types of music, from our verse, there is no place for the songs of the world, which is fitting since our songs are tied to being filled with the Spirit of God.

The Greek word translated as *singing* (*ado*), describes a song of praise, which in the Scriptures is always directed toward God.<sup>644</sup> *Making melody* (*psallo*) strictly means to pluck, or to strike the strings of an instrument with the fingers, then it came to mean to sing to a stringed instrument, and finally, in the NT to sing praises.<sup>645</sup> The correlation of this to the word *psalms* is evident, and the understood application of the term again draws our attention to praise of the Lord. The focus of this phrase is that these songs of praise find their place in our hearts; we might hum or sing them to ourselves, or have them in our



Alan Parsons

<sup>641</sup> <https://worshipleader.com/leadership/is-music-morally-neutral/>.

<sup>642</sup> “The Heresy of Claiming that Music is Neutral,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/heresyofclaiming.htm>.

<sup>643</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/81730171/Replacing-Hymns-With-Contemporary-Praise-Music>

<sup>644</sup> Vine’s “sing.”

<sup>645</sup> Vine’s “melody”; Friberg Lexicon.



heads throughout 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 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 provision for the godless music of the world that is filled with debauchery and excess. Today's "Christian" musicians do not exercise discernment in that with which they fill their minds. Popular artists like Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith admit to enjoying the rock music of the world, and being influenced by it;<sup>646</sup> 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 spiritually-anemic music has flowed 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.<sup>647</sup> They have become so mentally and spiritually lethargic that no one ever takes the time to look at who is singing, what he believes, and to examine the lyrics of the songs in order to discover how shallow and unbiblical 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 have no desire for the hymns and spiritual songs of years gone by. They have no regard for the Scriptures, and fill their hearts and minds with ditties and rock music of all flavors to their own spiritual undoing. Such music has no place in the heart and mind of the obedient saint of God.



*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 been forced into the back seat. Yet the life that has been impacted

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<sup>646</sup> 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](http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evils%20in%20America/CCM/amy_grant-exposed.htm))

<sup>647</sup> "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>)



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 (Hebrews 12:5-6). This is a gratitude that is founded upon faith in God – faith that God will orchestrate the trials that we are 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*.

*For all things* sounds like we are to be thankful *for all things* that come our way. If we remove this phrase and consider what is left, then we will begin to understand what is being said: *giving thanks always ... unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Huper (for)* literally means above or over;<sup>648</sup> therefore, we understand that our gratitude to the Lord stands above the difficulty of *all things* that we face. It is not that we are to be thankful **for** the trials and troubles, but our gratitude in their midst is to the Lord Who is over all and in control of what is permitted to come into our lives. Will we always understand why we are facing such trials? No! But we can be assured that God is using them for our greater good – if we will be so exercised (Hebrews 5:14).

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 lead to a restoration of health. This has taken its toll on us; are we to be thankful in this? This is one of the “all things” in which we can be thankful that it is under God’s control. 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); we may be with the Lord before we begin to see the glory-side of our trials. 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 in this? It can mean nothing else. How can we be grateful in the midst of 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

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<sup>648</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9); it is our place to accept this as being permitted by 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 our Lord Jesus Christ*. As we focus on the Lord Jesus, it will 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. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [or trials]; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience [*hupomone* – endurance]” (James 1:2-3).<sup>649</sup> “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But 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 must remain committed to Him in the midst of the trial (2 Timothy 3:12) – as we do so, we will be given the strength to endure. Jesus assured us that “In the world ye shall have tribulation [*thlipsis*, oppression, affliction, distress]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b).<sup>650</sup> He also 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.<sup>651</sup> Herein is accountability within 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 that hold to a clergy/laity form of functioning. Within the independent Baptist economy, the “pastor” is the undisputed authority in 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

<sup>649</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

broadest understanding is that you are to submit to the *pastor* and walk in obedience to him (and they will abuse Hebrews 13:7 and 17 to support their position<sup>652</sup>). However, this is contrary to our verse that requires a submission among all of the saints to one another. Rather than living humbly *among* the saints (1 Peter 5:1-3), independent Baptist *pastors* assume sufficient authority to simply disregard those with whom they do not agree until they leave the congregation (or, as we have seen, he will have them excommunicated). 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 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 because of a growing weariness with striving, or 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 for 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 a part of 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 ...”;<sup>653</sup> however, this is 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 reads: “But ye [*who are believing* (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, and 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 now so that he can 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 Him. 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 clergy often fills that very same role for the laity. Evangelicals may not go to confession, but neither do they spend time

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<sup>652</sup> The word *rule*, in these verses, means *to lead*; the word *obey* does not signify 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 *obey* comes after obedience to God’s call to test all spirits (1 John 4:1).

<sup>653</sup> Constitution and Guidelines of the Emmanuel Baptist Church (1998 edition), p. 10.

in the Word of God, studying it for themselves 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 that 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 him to proclaim to the children of Israel: “... 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: And 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 (the Lord Jesus Christ) by faith, and it is the faith-works of obedience that ensures that we remain *in Him*. 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, then 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 seem to 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,”<sup>654</sup> 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 necessary duties relating to such oversight.”<sup>655</sup> Once again, it seems that practice has departed from doctrine – the “pastor,” as they so love to be called, is still held in excessively high regard and given almost unlimited authority.

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<sup>654</sup> Extract from “Baptist Distinctives” of Bethel Baptist Church, [http://www.bethelbaptist.ca/baptist\\_distinct.htm](http://www.bethelbaptist.ca/baptist_distinct.htm) .

<sup>655</sup> Extract from the “Constitution” of Foundation Baptist Church, <http://www.foundationbaptistchurch.com/constitution.html> .



In the message of Jesus to the failing elder of the assembly at Ephesus, He noted: “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, “But 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. So 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.”<sup>656</sup> 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,<sup>657</sup> 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.<sup>658</sup> 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.”<sup>659</sup> When these are brought together (as they are in this name) it means, the defeat of the people,<sup>660</sup> and it speaks of those who lorded it over, or had gained the victory over, the common people. Jesus said unto His disciples: “... Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [*diakonos* – servant]; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doulos* – slave]: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many [*pollon* – all<sup>661</sup>]” (Matthew 20:25-28).<sup>662</sup> 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

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<sup>656</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> These were put forward by Iranæus in his “Against Heresies,” Chapter 26.

<sup>659</sup> Strong’s Online; <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/nicoltn.html>

<sup>660</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>661</sup> This Greek word can be used in an exclusive sense (many) or inclusive (all), with context being the deciding factor. In this case, passages such as 1 John 2:2 supports this as being *all* (inclusive). Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, “polloi.”

<sup>662</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



the clergy for direction and spiritual understanding. We live in a day when the sin of the Nicolaitanes is rampant throughout Baptist and Evangelical traditions – 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!

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 that He will resist or oppose (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).<sup>663</sup> If someone has proven to be careless in their handling of the Word of God in the past, we must take extra care in examining their words against the Scriptures. 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 while still weighing them carefully against God's Word. This is what precedes the obedience referred to in Hebrews 13:17, something that must never be overlooked. We must continually test all things and everyone, against the principles of Scripture (1 John 4:1).



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 particular context – again, to prevent what could deteriorate into anarchy, or at least confusion. We have already noted that the first context is to be 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 (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. Within the context of the mutual submission just discussed (from v. 21), a man cannot tell another man's wife how she is to conduct herself (he might tell her, but her obligation for submission is to her own husband, not to another man). Ultimately, as in any case of submission, it cannot be beyond what is required of her by the Lord; the guiding rule, even with her own husband, is that her submission

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<sup>663</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

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). In fact, it is further reinforcement 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 and marriage. Although God's mandate contains nothing that indicates that women are inferior to men (both are made in the image of God – Genesis 1:27), within many cultures that has happened; God's desire is that there be equality, but with differing roles. Yet the feminist movement has sought to turn the tables, and, in many cases, has endeavored to make women to be superior to men, 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.



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 her husband, the thought is restated in terms that are even more offensive to today's feminist: "the husband is the head of the wife." Once again, this has **nothing** to do with equality or value, and everything to do with the roles that God intends 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."<sup>664</sup> 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



Pope John Paul II

there is a thing today called "Christian 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?



<sup>664</sup> Merriam-Webster Online, "feminism."

Pope John Paul II said that the “disorder caused by sin has now been overcome in Christ,”<sup>665</sup> thereby casting God’s prescribed roles within marriage into the *disorder caused by sin*, and thereby placing 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.”<sup>666</sup> However, “CBE members are extraordinary advocates for Christ’s liberation from human limitations imposed by gender, ethnicity or class,”<sup>667</sup> and therein we see the tentacles of the devil’s philosophy. The roles that God, as our Creator, has placed upon 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 also advocate that the Bible, when it is “properly interpreted,” will yield the fruit of Christian feminism.<sup>668</sup>

Earlier (in Ephesians 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 Head of the assembly, so the husband is to be the 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 cannot, or refuse to 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* (*soter*) identifies the means of deliverance as a savior, deliverer, or rescuer.<sup>669</sup> We are reminded of Christ’s relationship to the assembly of all of the saints: namely, He is the Savior of 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, His *ekklesia*, and, within this context, it is particularly interesting.

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<sup>665</sup> As quoted in “True Christian Feminism,” Richard John Neuhaus, *National Review*, (April 2, 2005), <http://www.nationalreview.com/flashback/flashback200504021648.asp>

<sup>666</sup> [http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/who\\_we\\_are.shtml#statement](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/who_we_are.shtml#statement)

<sup>667</sup> [http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/membership/ind\\_family.shtml](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/membership/ind_family.shtml)

<sup>668</sup> 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.

<sup>669</sup> *Vine’s* “Savior”; Friberg Lexicon.

In the previous verse (22), wives are 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 additional 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: "And 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; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In 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 now had to labor in order to provide food for his helpmeet; it was going to cost him dearly to make provision for his wife – she, who was now to desire, or stretch out after her husband,<sup>670</sup> 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 immediately became the target of Satan's attack. 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 become so blended that 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 did not realize that failure was inevitable because we neglected the roles that God has 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; 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.*

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 it is presented in several modern translations:

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<sup>670</sup> Strong's Online.

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 is to 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, each 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, though of 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 many translations that are hitting the market today – if a passage bothers you, wait a moment, for there will soon be 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 fit with any philosophy. 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; the NASB, for example, uses a literal method of translation, but because it is based upon a corrupted text, the final product is also corrupt. Virtually all other modern translations use the dynamic equivalency method of translation, which simply means that they translate thoughts rather than words (thereby imposing a substantially greater degree of 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.<sup>671</sup> 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

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<sup>671</sup> Strong’s Online.



that of Christ to His assembly. By way of 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. *But even as the ekklesia is in submission to Christ, thus also the wives to their own husbands in everything* (literal).<sup>672</sup> 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 her husband would *rule over* her (Genesis 3:16). Satan has worked in women to make that seem as oppressive as possible, for if he is able to get the wife to ignore this admonition and the husband complies, he has destroyed the home that God desires. As we have seen, all of 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 is not a correction of the errors of the past but a general tossing aside of the roles that God has 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 mantle of male domination off. In essence, the error of the men is now replaced by the error of the women – yet, neither is correct! Men neglected the value and equality of women before God, and women have now failed to recognize their role as ordained by God – a role that was designed by the Creator for their own good. When we refuse the role restrictions that God has ordained, we do so to our own peril. Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly common for women to occupy roles of leadership within churches today – roles that, according to God's Word, are set apart for men only (keeping 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 true to God's Word.

How is the assembly subject to Christ? Perhaps if we understood this, then 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 find 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 took stones to stone Him, it is clear that they understood the full implications of what He had said. He not only clarified that He preceded Abraham, but He also 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 did come, I AM.*<sup>673</sup> Jesus clearly

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<sup>672</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>673</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

identified Himself as being eternal God, and the Jews were prepared to stone Him for doing so.

In Jesus' prayer in John 17, He declared: "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 is eternally God, and was in the presence of God the Father in eternity past. 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 eternal *Logos*, bringing all things into existence. The Creator of all things left the glory of heaven to take on the form of man ("the Word was made flesh" John 1:14) so that He could fulfill the promise in Genesis 3:15 and the Law of Moses, and bring the hope of eternal redemption to mankind (Hebrews 9:12). The Creator of the universe subjected Himself to death on a cross so that He could purchase humanity 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 (the *ekklesia*)? These are none other than the faithful ones, the saints from all ages, those who, while on earth, were/are actively believing in the Savior (promised and come) to cover their 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 our hope fast, 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 then reminded, "...we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ..." (Hebrews 3:14). The saint is required to persevere in faithfulness in order to remain a part of the assembly (*ekklesia*) – 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 have persevered, and **are** persevering in their walk of faith. Today there is a modern application of the "Yea, hath God said?" that was 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 simply swallowed the lie of Satan that heaven is secured by being able to point back to a day when they prayed a little prayer. Unless we hold fast to the faith of Christ, we are fallen away. Today's churches are filled with four kinds of people: 1) those who are living an active faith in Christ and are grieved by the disobedience around them, 2) those who once held a living faith but no longer hold it, and are either apostate or entering 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 Lord commands: "come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17). The second group is falling prey to the deception, and their challenge is to "strengthen the things which remain" and "repent" (Revelation 3:2-3); 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 considered, if we expand the question, then 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 because He is the Object of our faith, and our desire is to walk in accordance with His words of life to us. He is our provider of all things that we need, our Head; we are completely dependent upon Him to meet all of our needs (Philippians 4:19). As we have learned so far in Ephesians, we, as saints of God, are *in Christ*. We have been called to holiness of life (1 Peter 1:15-16), and we are charged to "walk worthy of the vocation" to which 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 are 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 completely dependent upon Him, for it is only as 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). It is after this manner that 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 to 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 along with man – not as one who is inferior, but someone who is 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 came 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 similar phrasing: “And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If 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 “longing, craving,” and expresses a very strong feeling; *rule* means “to have dominion, to reign.”<sup>674</sup> God personifies 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 sin to be covered (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, but rather, sin had dominion over him. It is interesting to consider the “Christian” feminist movement whose goal is to raise the lot of women within Christianity generally (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 local 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 (let alone submitting to their husbands). These feminists seek 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 the lead, and man submitted to her; sin entered the world through a **reversal of the roles** that God had established. In giving His judgment for sin, God reiterates,

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<sup>674</sup> Strong’s Online.



clarifies, and pronounces the woman's role for all to hear: her husband is 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 by toil and sweat, he would have to labor in order to sustain life for himself and 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. The general perception of God's desire for the husband and wife has become very blurred through the ages; there have been times when men regarded women as mere chattel – slaves to do their bidding, and other times, like today, when men are often regarded by women as being 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: *the husbands are to be loving their wives* (literal)!<sup>675</sup> 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 *of Himself He did give for the sake of her* (literal).<sup>676</sup> Again, we see the role of provider placed upon the husband, but that is minor when compared to the sacrifice that Christ made for the assembly – a pattern for the husbands to follow in their relationship with their wives.

How did Christ love (*agape*) the *ekklesia*? Our verse tells us that He gave of Himself for her sake; 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 days<sup>677</sup>) – **He laid His life down**. In this illustration, Christ (as the Husband) **gave His life** for the *ekklesia* (His wife).

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 into His creation as Jesus, born of woman by God, in order to make a perfect and final payment for the sins of lost mankind (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20). When Adam and Eve sinned, God immediately covered their sin with coats made of animal skin;

<sup>675</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>676</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; *ekklesia* is a feminine noun in Greek, and so *her* is the proper pronoun, rather than *it*.

<sup>677</sup> Wikipedia, "crucifixion."



through shed blood, He made provision for them to be reconciled to Himself – a foreshadowing of the ultimate payment for reconciliation that was made 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 (Adam) 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 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 had 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), and 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 promise for the covering of sin was open and available to anyone 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 anyone who chooses to accept it.

The reason that the focus of this verse is on the assembly of faithful ones (the *ekklesia*, the elect), 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 Him* (Ephesians 1:3); likewise, the relationship of the husband to his wife is exemplified in Christ's relationship with the assembly, and **not** with the world. Therefore, within this illustration of the marriage relationship, it can be said that Christ gave His life for the *ekklesia* – that in no way diminishes from the fact that He gave His life in payment for the sins of the *whole world* (1 John 2:2).

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, and both are the responsibility of the husband. To cleave means to “cling closely, steadfastly, or faithfully to ... someone.”<sup>678</sup> The husband is to provide security for the wife in their relationship; the wife is to have no reason for doubting her husband's

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<sup>678</sup> Encarta Dictionary, “cleave.”

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 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 subtle shift in thinking is the work of the devil; what better way to destroy the family than to confuse 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.

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 faithful ones: 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.”<sup>679</sup> In beginning this letter to the Ephesians, Paul referred to them as being “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 the quoted 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 that also requires us to be separated from the world, from heresy and error, and from fellow believers who refuse to separate

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<sup>679</sup> Strong's Online.

from the world and/or error. Unless **both** separation **from** and **to** take place, there has been no separation at all! The call to separation is just as clear as the call to holiness, for they are really one: 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, the founders of New Evangelicalism deliberately set Biblical separation aside at their inception, and that exclusion (which is disobedience to the Lord – i.e., sin) 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 – cleansing from sin is not the end, but the beginning. His reason for saving us is not only for salvation from sins, but so that we will be made *holy* (*sanctified*) by Him. The word *sanctify* (*hagiazō*), although it is in the subjunctive mood (which normally indicates a possibility), in this case, it provides the **reason** that Christ gave *Himself* for the *ekklesia*; as part of a purpose clause, it no longer presents only a possibility, but an actuality (like the indicative mood, a statement of fact).<sup>680</sup> 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);<sup>681</sup> if someone has a love for the world (that which is not *of Christ*) then 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. We must understand that to refuse His sanctifying work in us 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 **can** choose to live in disobedience to God's commands! The proof of this is rampant among Evangelicals who claim to be destined for heaven even as they cling to the world's ways: its music, entertainment, philosophies, and its learning – they refuse to separate themselves from any of it. However, by doing so, they find themselves outside of the Father's love and are as one with the world; that is not sanctification, but desecration. Many seek to build bridges to those who

<sup>680</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>681</sup> Strong's Online.

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 participate in Ecumenical activities; 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 holiness of life is available to them, 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, and to that extent, there is a small overlap with being *holy*.<sup>682</sup> The order of the words in our KJV makes *sanctify* and *cleanse* appear to be of equal weight, but the Greek does not: *in order that He did make her holy, He did cleanse (her) by the washing of water through a word* (literal).<sup>683</sup> The last phrase is a little more difficult. *Word* (*rhema*) does not refer to the written Word of God as a whole, but to *a word*, or *a saying* – it is singular.<sup>684</sup> Our English *word* is most frequently derived from the Greek *logos*, which is also a name given to the Lord Jesus. There is a difference between *logos* and *rhema* – let us take a moment to consider these words more fully.<sup>685</sup> *Logos* is described as the expression of thought; the Scripture is God's Message (His *Logos*, His *thoughts*) for humanity – He is its Author, and it comes with His authority and power.<sup>686</sup> The Scriptures, in their entirety, are God's revelation of Jesus Christ (His promise, His heritage as the Son of Man, His coming as the Son of God, and the Gospel – the fulfillment of all), and Jesus is called *the Logos* (John 1:1) and *the Logos of the God* (Revelation 19:13).<sup>687</sup> On the other hand, *rhema* is that which has been spoken, whether uttered or written.<sup>688</sup> In essence, God's *Message* (*Logos*) to the world is made up of what He has *spoken* (*rhema*, both uttered and written). To help us further, consider this example from the life of Peter: "While Peter yet spake these words [*rhema* (plural form)], the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard [with understanding, not just with the ears] the word [*logos* (singular)]" (Acts 10:44).<sup>689</sup> Remember that Peter was very uncomfortable in his situation: he was speaking to Gentiles in the house of a Gentile, and he would not have been there except for the Lord specifically telling him to go. He was giving to his audience the *rhema* (the words) of God, but it was God Who used those *words* to bring understanding of His *Logos* (His Message) to Cornelius and those who were with him in the house. It seems that Peter could not quite bring himself to present God's Message to the

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<sup>682</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>683</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>684</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>685</sup> Some try to make *logos* and *rhema* to be synonyms (<https://www.truthchallenge.one/blog/2012/01/16/the-rhema-barb-and-its-poison-the-rhema-vs-logos-controversy/>); from my research, they are not.

<sup>686</sup> Vine's "word."

<sup>687</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>688</sup> Vine's "word."

<sup>689</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



Gentiles (he still viewed them through his biased, Jewish eyes), so he gave them a brief overview; God took his *words* (*rhema*) and gave the Gentiles understanding of His *Logos*.

There are some today, particularly among those of charismatic and word-of-faith persuasions, who have skewed *rhema* to fit their agendas. One writes: “Our God isn’t silent ... He continues to speak today, and **He wants to speak directly to us**. It’s by the *rhema* word that **we can know God subjectively**, in our personal experience” (emphasis added).<sup>690</sup> This particular writer goes on to qualify this by saying that “God’s living, instant speaking [*rhema*] **always corresponds with and never contradicts His written Word** [*logos*]” (emphasis added).<sup>691</sup> Knowing man’s propensity to rationalize virtually anything, despite his caveat, he is stepping onto a very slippery slope. Consider Kenneth Copeland’s view that takes this further onto that *slope*: “The Greek word *rhema* is a **quickened, specific word from the Holy Spirit directly to you**” (emphasis added).<sup>692</sup> He then goes on to provide a sample prayer that can be used to receive your own *rhema* word from God, **if you pray in faith**. When such charismatic preachers declare, “God spoke to me,” this is what they mean: they *received* a word from the Lord (a *rhema* word), and because it is a *rhema* word from the Lord, there is no need to look for support for it within the pages of Scripture. This becomes a means to an end; this (their *rhema* word) becomes the “support” for their heresies. This is an aberrant view of the word *rhema*, and one that finds no confirmation from God’s Word (His Message) to us.

*Washing* is actually a noun, and comes from the Greek word for *a laver* or *a bath*.<sup>693</sup> 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 reads: “the word [*rhema*] of the Lord endureth forever;” that is the same Greek word as in our passage. Peter goes on to state: “And this is the word [*rhema*] which by the gospel is preached [or, which is the good news declared] unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).<sup>694</sup> 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,

<sup>690</sup> <https://blog.biblesforamerica.org/two-important-greek-words-in-the-bible-emlogosem-and-emrhemaem/>.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

<sup>692</sup> [https://www.kcm.org/real-help/faith/pray/prayer-receive-rhema-word-god?language\\_content\\_entity=en-US](https://www.kcm.org/real-help/faith/pray/prayer-receive-rhema-word-god?language_content_entity=en-US).

<sup>693</sup> Vine’s “washing.”

<sup>694</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



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.*

Here is the purpose for Christ's sanctifying and cleansing work within His faithful ones, and He will accomplish what He desires to do! His goal is to present it to Himself a *glorious* assembly (*ekklesia*). The word *present* means to "place beside,"<sup>695</sup> providing us with a glimpse of where the *ekklesia* is in relation to the Lord – we are beside Him. *Glorious* speaks of a splendor that is attributable to the majesty of God, and therefore, it refers to its Provider when it speaks of the gathered saints. If we permit the Lord to work in us, and to accomplish His sanctifying and cleansing work, then we will be clothed with the purity of the Lord (Revelation 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 – that "new man" of Ephesians 4:24.

These faithful ones will be without *spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. The *ekklesia* of Christ will have no stain or wrinkle, nothing that could detract from the perfect purity that is *in Christ*; God's intent is that this assembly is 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 (*without blemish* was to characterize all animal sacrifices, e.g. Exodus 12:5). It had to be *without blemish* because it was to be identified with the sins of the people so that their sins could be covered by the sacrificial blood – a foreshadowing of Jesus, Who, as the sinless, perfect Lamb of God, bore 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 will be pure and holy, fit for eternity with Him. The purpose of the shed blood, both within the sacrificial system and in its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, is to bring remission of sin by faith so that the subjects of salvation can be made acceptable before God (Hebrews 9:22) – there is to be a cleansing from sin and a purification of life as the *new man* is donned. God has not changed – He still requires cleansing and purification that can only come through faith in the sacrifice for sins that was made by Jesus Christ.

Today there is a carelessness, a recklessness, and 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,

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<sup>695</sup> Vine's "present."

“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, which is an understanding of God’s character, and its reflection in our lives.<sup>696</sup> 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 into our lives, but Who would never deny us anything that we 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 that *understanding* comes through a knowledge of the Lord.<sup>697</sup> As we bring these two parallel verses together, we see that the common foundation of the fear of the Lord, followed by obedience to Him, will yield a knowledge of God. Israel’s failure was that they had the rituals down pat, but personal obedience to the commandments of God based upon faith in Him, never entered into their thinking (Judges 2:7-19; Isaiah 1:10-15). Israel followed Jehovah as long as they had a godly leader, but, as individuals, they did not make Jehovah their Lord; consequently, when the leader was gone, they fell apart, because they (generally speaking) had no relationship with the Lord. We must 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 (Deuteronomy 6:5). Today we love the routine of “church,” but what most people fail to recognize is God’s **personal** call to purity and sanctification through the working of His Spirit. We are individually accountable to God; the branches that abide in the Vine are individuals (John 15:6), and the crux of meeting God’s approval rests upon individual obedience to His commands (Matthew 7:14 [the narrow way that is for the few] and 21 [only the obedient one will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven]).

It is worth 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 Evangelicals determined to repudiate separation, they set their faces against God and His desire for their sanctification; by declaring their refusal to separate from error, they immediately ended God’s sanctifying work in their lives (or, more likely, closed the door on this work ever being done within them). The present-day state of Evangelicals (their worldliness, their compromises, and their accommodation of those who propagate error) is the legacy of those who laid that first plank of this movement. Biblical separation is the essence of purity before God; without it, there is no purity, no holiness, and no obedience to His Word. There can be no sanctification without separation.

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<sup>696</sup> TWOT, #239

<sup>697</sup> BDB.

Christ's purpose for the assembly of the faithful is that He will make them holy, that they will 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 in order to pay the price for sin once and for all time (Hebrews 10:10), and, for everyone who will heed His call, He is eternally committed to bring 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. 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 then have the resources necessary to fulfill his responsibilities to his wife. If the husband fulfills his responsibility adequately, the wife will have little problem submitting to his leadership role within the marriage. Feminism, generally speaking, is the result of sin and both men and women refusing to fulfill their roles as God ordained; when it rears its ugly head among Evangelicals, 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 *in Christ*. God's call to separation flows out of His holiness; our obedience to His calling 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*,<sup>698</sup> and it ties what follows to what has just come before. Our modern use of the word *ought* seems to have largely reduced it 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 (*opheilo*) and translated as *ought* means “to owe.”<sup>699</sup> The Old English primary meaning of *ought* is “to be held or bound in duty or moral obligation” – *expediency* is ranked third;<sup>700</sup> surprisingly, even a modern dictionary shows its primary meaning as “a duty or obligation to do something (*advisability* is second).”<sup>701</sup> What is evident is that there is clearly more than a casual responsibility indicated by *ought* within our text – we, as husbands, are indebted 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

<sup>698</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>699</sup> Vine's "ought."

<sup>700</sup> American Dictionary of the English Language (1828 ed.), "ought."

<sup>701</sup> Encarta Dictionary, "ought."

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 Christ and His love 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 Christ's love for His *ekklesia*, then this love flows from the very heart of God, and includes 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, it also opens us to the love of God! Jacob served Laban an additional seven years for Rachel, yet they seemed to him to be but "a few days" (Genesis 29:20). Jacob served Laban out of obligation or debt, but because of his love for Rachel, fulfilling that 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" (Ephesians 5:25).

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. A Christian marriage is the expression of the relationship that Christ has with His saints (or it is supposed to be), which is 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 refusing to recognize the roles that God has ordained within marriage, an unwillingness to cultivate a living, personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and failing to comprehend the spiritual significance of the marriage bond as being patterned after Christ's relationship with the assembly of saints. Along 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



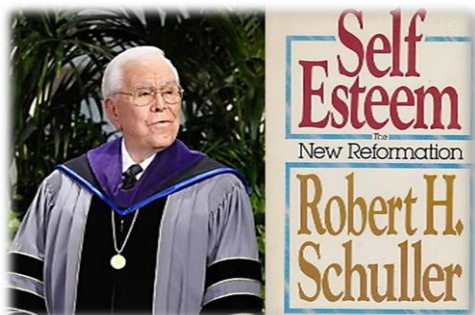
Jack van Impe



in a day of apostasy, and that of Robert Schuller shows us that professing Christians are often totally ignorant of the Bible that they claim to uphold.

**Jack van Impe:** He once warned against Billy Graham, but then went on to acclaim him as the one who taught us how to love; similarly, he turned to embrace the Roman Catholic Church and called 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,<sup>702</sup> 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, 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).<sup>703</sup> Jack made a 180° turn to embrace that from which he had once separated himself. Did the Bible change? No, but Jack did, and he now applauded Catholicism with the same vigor that he once used to warn against it. Did he forget Paul’s warnings in Galatians 1:6-7?

**Robert Schuller:** This man vigorously promoted church growth thinking and exercised tremendous influence on the works of Bill Hybels and Rick Warren.



Robert H. Schuller

“What do I mean by sin? Answer: Any human condition or act that 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).<sup>704</sup> He 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

<sup>702</sup> This is the error of so many and is patterned after the failure of Israel: that we do not stand for the Lord as individuals, only as a community. This is something that is **not** taught in the Scriptures! God has always dealt with individuals (Exodus 32:33).

<sup>703</sup> <http://www.biblicist.org/bible/vanimpe.shtml>

<sup>704</sup> Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, p. 14.



to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.”<sup>705</sup> Could there be anything further from Biblical truth? Although now departed from this life, Schuller continues to remain popular among Evangelicals even though he held to doctrine that was a total departure from 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 very different 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.<sup>706</sup> 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.

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 (Hebrews 13:8). The husband is to provide the food, clothing and shelter 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 often reversed with no consideration given to God’s design. The

<sup>705</sup> <http://letusreason.org/Curren13.htm>.

<sup>706</sup> Strong’s Online.

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 an intimate, individual connection. Our verse includes "of his flesh, and of his bones," 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). 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 declared that the husband/wife bond was to be unique. Our passage says that they will be "joined" – the word, in Greek (*proskollao*), is in an intensive form meaning to "glue or cement together,"<sup>707</sup> and it is in the passive voice: *man* does not do the *gluing*, that is done by the Lord! Being cemented together by the Lord expresses a permanency that is not given much consideration today; divorce, even among Christians, has become an accepted part of life, and the rationalism for it knows no bounds. However, Jesus made it very clear that this is not the way that it is supposed to 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 bold statement: "What therefore God hath joined together [*suzeugnumi* (literally, yoked together) two who are intimately connected], let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).<sup>708</sup> Truly, marriage is not to be entered into lightly, for it is God Who unites the man and woman, and no man is to separate those who are so united (this is a command!). The Pharisees

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<sup>707</sup> Vine's "join."

<sup>708</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

misrepresented Moses by saying that he **commanded** that 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** had been 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 makes one. In Romans 11:17, Paul explains the grafting that God does to bring us into the righteousness and holiness of the Root, so that we are then branches that are abiding in the Vine, Jesus Christ (John 15:4). The reality is that as we remain in the Vine, we are in unity, or oneness, with Christ and God, the Father, through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us (John 17:21). Therefore, Christ and His *ekklesia* are *joined* (*proskollao*) and intimately yoked together (*suzeugnumi*) so that there will be **no separation**; to remain a part of the *ekklesia* of Christ, we must live in obedience to Him. We (individually), in this life, are not glued to Christ with an everlasting bond; Jesus said that it was the one who remains faithful to Him unto the *end* who *will be saved* (Matthew 24:13; yes, *saved* is in the future tense). The Lord has done everything to protect us from any external attack (John 10:28), but we must guard against a heart of *unbelief* that will turn us away from Him (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 (a hard heart) we can depart from the living God. From the beginning, there was no provision for divorce, because that is not God's intent for mankind; likewise, it is God's desire that we hold fast our confidence unto the end so that we will not depart from Him (Hebrews 3:6). However, because man was created with a will to choose (a part of being in the image of God), divorce was permitted; in the same way that Adam chose to sin, so those who are *in Christ* are able to make the choice to exercise *unbelief* and nullify everything that God has done to protect the Vine-branch relationship.

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. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus 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 that phrase, we have this: if someone divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery. If we now reinsert the noted phrase, it **appears** to say that if the wife commits fornication (any sexual sin), then this is the circumstance when it is permitted to divorce and remarry without bearing the guilt

of adultery – and there are many who choose to stop there. However, we must look at the full scope of what Scripture has to say on this matter.

First of all, 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); this is 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 were considered to be married, and the betrothal could only be broken by divorce. There is nothing here to say that after 10 years of marriage, he’s now 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 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 against being hasty in drawing up a divorce, lest, afterwards, 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 that as the basis for divorce years later; nor is he to use any failure during their marriage to justify divorce.

Another approach to this “exception” clause in Matthew 19:9 is found in 1 Corinthians 6:16. If the wife was guilty of fornication before marriage, then, based upon this text, she was already *one* with the other man. Therefore, the husband, who takes a wife who has already been made one with another man, is already guilty of adultery before God; in which case, he would not have to remarry in order to bear this guilt.

The last statement (of 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.<sup>709</sup> In this case, 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.

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<sup>709</sup> Strong’s Online.

Mark's Gospel carries a further comment by Jesus on this subject: "And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What 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: "For 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. So 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 has set in, Jesus explained the matter further to His disciples: "... Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). The principle is the same for 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.

If we hold in our minds for a moment that the marriage relationship is 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 that divorce can touch a marriage (despite God's design), so we must realize the possibility of turning our backs on Christ and being spiritually joined to another (i.e., committing spiritual adultery). A falling away is possible; we are fully protected from outside attack (John 10:28), but we must guard against an "evil heart of unbelief" that will be expressed through disobedience to the Lord's commands (Hebrews 3:12; John 14:15). We read in Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible [this means that it is **not possible**, not that it is merely difficult] for those who were once enlightened [infused with saving knowledge], and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away [literal: *having fallen away*], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."<sup>710</sup> This is in keeping with the principle of divorce that 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 becoming "high-minded" lest they be cut off as well – the branch that is no longer a part of the Vine is cast forth and burned (John 15:6).

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<sup>710</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.





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, the unbreakable bond that He has determined for it, and its life-long endurance.

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 that “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); again, there are only two whom God makes into one. Spiritually, we see much polyandry taking place among Evangelicals; 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 failure to obey God’s instructions, Evangelicals have created a message that no longer supports the metaphor described in our passage. God is not fooled by their arrogance, nor is He impressed with their intelligence; in fact, He plainly warns us about being deceived by those who create seemingly 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 faith and repentance, claim His sacrifice as payment for our debt of sin, then we are part of that glorious, holy assembly of saints – His *ekklesia*, His Body! 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 necessary that we separate ourselves from anything that would stain, and thereby 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, because “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about [present tense – a continuous action], seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8)<sup>711</sup> – and you may be sure that

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<sup>711</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

the moment that you relax, he will be there to destroy. Evangelicals today are so comfortable with their Ecumenical philosophy of Christianity that the devil doesn't need to bother with them anymore; they are so deceived and so under the spell of their illustrious leaders that they no longer examine anything against the standard of God's Word. They have exchanged purity for unity; God's truth has been replaced by a truth-coated lie – the message of the wolf wearing the façade of a sheep and using the words of the Shepherd to confuse, deceive and destroy! Jesus warned us: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24) – our judgment of others must be based upon God's Word (1 John 4:1).

Our text reminds us 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 His 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 to 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 the world is pressing 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 His assembly of saints from all ages. We understand the destruction that divorce is to the mystery of marriage and its holy pattern, and that, in God's view, 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).

Let me explain 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 that 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, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even 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 tells us 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), and 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 they have a clergy-laity separation of importance and entitlement; it is everywhere, and accepted without question. There is a failure to understand 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 spiritual oversight of the local assembly of saints (Titus 1:5-7); the latter (*shepherd*) 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 error. The one who is gifted as a *pastor* or *shepherd* (and he may or may not be an elder) should be permitted to exercise 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 of those who are struggling in order to draw them ever upward in their walk with God. The preacher (a herald or declarer of God’s Word) is someone who is gifted as a teacher or an evangelist. Yet these have somehow become wrapped together (elder, shepherd, preacher), given a special job description, and then elevated to a position that is above the average person who is to sit in submission to this individual.

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 *elites* to provide teaching that is easily “understood,” the average churchgoer has succumbed to an ever decreasing understanding of Scripture to the point that 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 and physically able.

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 elders of the seven assemblies of Revelation, this is exactly what is found in virtually every church today. The church growth movement thrives on this very thing – without a strong hierarchical form 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 looked at the leadership of men like Robert Schuller and Rick Warren and immediately recognized 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.<sup>712</sup>

We must not forget Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-23. It is evident from Scripture that God has always dealt with a remnant, never 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. It is common practice for Evangelicals (and most professing Christians) to embrace tradition more than the Word of God; unfortunately, our traditions are laced with the influence of the apostate Roman Catholic Church. We would do well to be greater students of the Scriptures than of church history, for then we will learn more about 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 will have spiritual life and grow in our walk with the Lord.

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<sup>712</sup> For an expanded study on the *ekklesia* (the church), see <http://www.thenarrowtruth.com/the-ekklesia-of-christ.html>



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.<sup>713</sup> 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* (literal).<sup>714</sup> The center of this *purpose clause* is *respecting* (*reverence*); even though *reverence* is in the subjunctive mood, being part of a purpose clause 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.<sup>715</sup> 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 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 come 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.

<sup>713</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>714</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>715</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/verbs1.htm#AORIST](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm#AORIST).





## Chapter 6 – Relationships and God’s Protection for Us



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

This is a command (*obey* is in the imperative mood) that is addressed specifically to *children*. The questions that must be given some consideration are these: who are children, and when does one cease to be a child? We live in a day of extremes in this regard. We have those who advocate that children are subject to their parents until they leave home (particularly girls); on the other hand, we have parents who, in fact, live in submission 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 a child to be the decision-maker is foolishness, something that the parents are responsible to remove from the heart of a 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 to be personally responsible to fulfill the law – they function as adults.<sup>716</sup> A Jewish boy, after the age of thirteen, actually qualifies as one of ten men required to establish a synagogue.<sup>717</sup> 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 in order to permit them to function as an adult.

The obedience advocated here is not unqualified; i.e., it is not a blind submission. The qualification is that the obedience must be *in the Lord*; in other words, 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 that 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 (*obey them that have the rule over you*) as a command that the people within the

<sup>716</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coming\\_of\\_age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coming_of_age)

<sup>717</sup> Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), p. 51.

“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 blind obedience, but rather a submission to **elders** (not “pastors”) who have been tested to ensure that they are right according to Scripture.

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 and thereby support what they are endeavoring to teach them. Permitting children to determine their own lives only establishes their self-centeredness, and makes it very difficult for them 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 that 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 parents 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, 1 Peter 2:17 places the fear of God ahead of our requirement to honor the king. Once again, we are not to blindly do whatever a governing authority tells us, but we are to weigh the demands made against the words of Scripture to ensure that our compliance will not result in disobedience to God, Who placed the authority there. This is something that the Apostles learned early on (Acts 4:19, 5:29). The difficulty today is that those who profess Christianity do not know God’s Word, which only serves to deepen pragmatism in 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 to be spiritually discerning. As it is, they place all of their trust in a clergy who have become tainted by various and sundry modern philosophies and liberal thinking. Jesus’ words to the scribes and Pharisees of His day are so appropriate here: “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 [Gehenna, the Lake of Fire] than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).<sup>718</sup> 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 presenting that lie as truth to the

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<sup>718</sup> Strong’s Online.

unsuspecting laity. Yet even in this, the deceived laity cannot lay the full responsibility onto the shoulders of the deceived clergy, for they bear the responsibility to test all things according to God’s Word (1 John 4:1). Paul’s words to Timothy are so fitting for today: “... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come [indeed, it is now here!] when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And 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.<sup>719</sup> This is the only command within the Ten Commandments that carries with it a positive promise. Subsequent to these foundational commands, Israel received many others from God that included 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 (in this case, *be*) become like a statement of fact (indicative mood rather than the normal possibility);<sup>720</sup> the Hebrew, from which this is quoted (Exodus 20:12), also carries the same thought: God’s intent is for us to *honor* our parents, and He will then provide long life.<sup>721</sup> The understood implication of this is that God desires us to 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: “... in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be ... disobedient to parents, unthankful ... without natural affection ... highminded ... [yet] having a form of godliness ...” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Indeed, Jesus spoke of a time when those who remain true to His name will suffer greatly at the hands of their own families (Matthew 10:21-22). There is a generation now gaining their independence who

<sup>719</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>720</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>721</sup> BDB.

have ruled their parents from their earliest days; of a truth, these 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 (*parorgizo*) which means to arouse to wrath, or exasperate: *and fathers, do not be provoking to anger [parorgizo] your children* (literal).<sup>722</sup> The word is in an intensive form, which is more than making your children upset or even angry with you. Some might even try to use this as a reason 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. *Nurture* (*paideia*) is most often translated as *chasten*, and includes everything for the training and education of a child.<sup>723</sup> 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, 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 are 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 that these homes are in is 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 then 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 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 perceived by the child to be senseless discipline;

<sup>722</sup> Vine’s “anger”; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>723</sup> Strong’s Online.

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 best understood as *slave*, and particularly one who is born a slave.<sup>724</sup> The word *master* (*kurios*), the other side of the relationship, derives from the Greek word that is most often translated as Lord, or lord, and identifies one who holds legitimate authority over another.<sup>725</sup> Although this does not provide a basis for condoning slavery, it certainly includes the slave-master relationship, which was so common at the time that this epistle was written; however, the concept is also broad enough to include today’s employee-employer relationship. *Doulos* (*slave*) particularly includes the idea of ownership, but it also extends to those who are forced to work for another. 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). There is one difference between the worldly slave-master and the faithful believer-Christ relationships: in the world, the slave becomes the property of his lord against his will, but 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 a 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,” with no thought that the relationship is so much more; unless it includes our submission to Him as our Lord (becoming His obedient slaves), we are not *in Him*. That is why we are told to count the cost; we must be willing to pay the price of following Him – denying ourselves, and living in willing obedience to His commands (Matthew 16:24; John 14:15).

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 faithful 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 that will turn us away from God

<sup>724</sup> <https://glosbe.com/grc/en/δούλος>; Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

<sup>725</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



(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 pathway to life (Matthew 7:21). However, it is important that we 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 who are over them. The same Greek word is used in Ephesians 6:1 (*hupakouo*), and it means to hearken to, or to submit to, the one who is the parent (or master).<sup>726</sup> It is noteworthy that the phrase “according to the flesh” is included here; in essence, the message is to get this relationship right in the physical world where it is easily understood. The slave-master relationship does not exist within the local assembly of the *ekklesia*; on the contrary, we are to submit to one another (Ephesians 4:21). Jesus’ instruction to His disciples was that there was to be no hierarchical authority (master-slave) among them (Matthew 20:25-28), and the Lord strongly condemned the Nicolaitane doctrine (clergy-laity) in two of the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2:6, 15). The clergy-laity relationship may not be exactly like that of the master-slave, but there is definitely an authority attributed to those holding that *clergy-position* of “pastor,”<sup>727</sup> 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: “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called *being* a servant [*doulos*]? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant [*doulos*], is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ’s servant [*doulos*]. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants [*doulos*] of men” (1 Corinthians 7:20-23; cp. Proverbs 22:7).<sup>728</sup> If you are a slave and have opportunity to be freed, then take it; if not, don’t worry about it, for you are free in the Lord. If you come to the Lord being freeborn, then 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 slave 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.”<sup>729</sup> The service is to be done with respect (*fear*), as to someone who can bring retribution if you do not do what is

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<sup>726</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>727</sup> 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.

<sup>728</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

required (*trembling*) – for a slave, failure could mean physical punishment; for an employee, it could mean being fired. *In singleness of your heart* literally means that responsibilities will be carried out with integrity and sincerity of heart, endeavoring to do one’s best.<sup>730</sup> 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, but rather diligently fulfilling the assigned responsibilities.

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; too often it is voiced that the worst employees to have are professing Christians. What a blight on the name of Christ, what a shame on that person, yet this is not as uncommon as it should be. Even within “Christian” organizations, a “they owe me” attitude can develop that results in much time being spent in visiting, coffee times, and the like. Employees, who show little commitment to the work that they have been hired to do, are often 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).



6. *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

*Eyeservice* (*ophthalmoudoulia*) refers to the work that is being done when the boss is watching, so as to make a good impression, but it also hints at the work that is not being done when he is not watching.<sup>731</sup> It exemplifies a heart of deceit and hypocrisy, as those who seek to please and gain the favor of men with as little effort as possible. There is a 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 carries the understanding that the focus is to gain favor with men, and not God.<sup>732</sup> This is someone who perfects the art of *eyeservice*, the ability to leave a good impression, and who has the skill to look good while still 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 submission and obedience. We should not hesitate to be called the servants of Christ, for we have willingly become His slaves (*doulos*) after counting the cost of being His 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 person, for he is “doing the will of God from the heart.”

<sup>730</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>731</sup> Vine’s “eye-service.”

<sup>732</sup> Vine’s “Men-pleasers.”

What is the will of God? It is nothing less than obedience to His Word. Perhaps this is why Evangelicals are in such a mess today; they do not read the Word of God with hearts that desire to obey the Lord. As they neglect the Word in favor of the instruction of the “professional” theologians, Evangelicals align themselves with the theologies of men to the neglect of God's clear instruction. As Evangelical theologians have delved ever deeper into compromise with the Liberals, their theologies have become increasingly dark and apostate. Yet, to the delight of Satan, too few recognize the apostasy that is there; since they will not accept the truth, they are being deluded into believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11; 2 Timothy 4:4).



7. *With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:*

This is a parallel to Colossians 3:23, as we have already noted. The word *service* is from a verb form of *doulos*, and is the performance of duties by a slave – i.e., obedience.<sup>733</sup> It is interesting to notice that, although the matter at hand has to do with the physical work of a slave or employee, Paul emphasizes that such service is to be carried out as if it was for the Lord; our work ethic must reflect our relationship with the Lord. It is not enough to be busy doing things, they must be the right things and done in the right way – such as would please our Master, Jesus Christ. We see much activity within modern Christianity, but activity alone is not necessarily pleasing to the Lord, even when it is done in His Name. Jesus stated very clearly: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [*is doing* (present tense)] the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).<sup>734</sup>



Benny Hinn's Malibu Mansion

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 not known by 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, says that God has spoken to him, and claims to have a healing ministry, yet he has been found to be a fraud

<sup>733</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>734</sup> Strong's Online.

who lives a lavish lifestyle on the gifts of those who give in order to receive a blessing. If Hinn was a man of God, then he would live in obedience to the Word of God. Instead, he arrogantly presents himself as a dispenser of the Holy Spirit, yet he only dispenses false hopes, empty promises, and spiritual confusion. His “healings” have been proven to be lies, his teachings are most often in contravention of Scripture; yet, within the Charismatic arm of the Evangelical community, he has a significant following. Hinn’s work of service is to himself: he lives lavishly. He publicly and piously claims that none of the money given to his ministry goes to himself personally – perhaps, but he is the primary beneficiary of everything that this money buys.

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 called the “Prosperity Gospel’s Coverboy,” and some of his sermon titles expose his thinking: “Enlarge Your Vision,” “Holding onto Your Dreams,” “How Valuable you are in God’s Eyes,” and “The Greatest Hindrance to Healing.”<sup>735</sup> Joel says, “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

<sup>735</sup> <http://www.cultlink.com/ar/osteen.htm>



by speaking it out” (errors in original; emphasis added).<sup>736</sup> In the Bible, we find the concept of growing in favor in just 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 is in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as a child (“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. Just before the *favor* with the Lord and men was declared, 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 promoters of the prosperity gospel shift the focus away from God and onto man; within their thinking, **we** hold the key to making our lives what we would really like them to be – and they do not have obedience to the commands of the Lord in mind.

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,



Bill Gothard

I assumed that crying out 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).<sup>737</sup> Gothard is ascribing power to our spoken words that is not Biblical, and he 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. Jesus recognized that it was for this purpose that He came to earth, yet His humanity shuddered at the thought of the pain and degradation that He was about to endure. Gothard has made a hypothetical differentiation between prayers that are verbalized and prayers from 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).<sup>738</sup> Jesus said, “...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. But 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

<sup>736</sup> <http://www.cultlink.com/ar/osteen.htm>.

<sup>737</sup> Bill Gothard, *Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty*, p. 19.

<sup>738</sup> 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 the phrase “cried out” is used twice as many times in Scripture to refer to those who were crying out against the Lord rather than crying out to the Lord. Clearly, a shaky basis.



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).<sup>739</sup> “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 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



**Joyce Meyer**

host.”<sup>740</sup> 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 upon 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” (errors in the original).<sup>741</sup> 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.

Robert Tilton has openly declared: “Being poor is a sin, when God promises prosperity.”<sup>742</sup> 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.”<sup>743</sup> Actually this passage (Mark 10:29-30) comes on the heels of Jesus’ teaching on the

<sup>739</sup> [http://www.rickross.com/reference/tv\\_preachers/tv\\_preachers4.html](http://www.rickross.com/reference/tv_preachers/tv_preachers4.html)

<sup>740</sup> <http://www.christnotes.org/joyce-meyer.asp>

<sup>741</sup> <http://www.pfo.org/wan-star.htm>

<sup>742</sup> John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, p. 285.

<sup>743</sup> <http://zedekiahlist.com/cgi-bin/quotes.pl?id=30393647>.

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 in 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 that includes an admonition to work faithfully for those over us, in the same way that we work for Christ. We are to do the will of God from the heart, and 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, attuned to His Word, and whose focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of the faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Word of Faith people have done violence to the Word of God through promoting heresy and focusing on the prosperity and health of our present lives. Paul’s charge was to “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). Paul calls us to direct our attention heavenward, to the Lord; the Word of Faith heretics have their focus on what is earthly, and create all kinds of systems to ensure that they are the beneficiary of all that 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; it is as if God is there to serve them and provide for their every wish. They have made merchandise of God; they have bottled, formulated, and tabulated a god of their own imaginings to dupe the gullible 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 for the Lord are not in vain; we may not reap physical rewards in this life (as some claim), but we can be assured that the Lord will reward us for all that we do for Him (Matthew 7:21). We can become *weary* in living in obedience to God’s Word (*weary* is in the subjunctive mood, making it a real possibility), and may even 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 are assured that the Lord is aware of the sacrifice that we make in order to serve Him faithfully, and such labor will not go without His reward – this promise is extended to everyone who serves 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 explain that the service of the *servant* is to be as if to the Lord, 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 [all]” (Matthew 20:28).<sup>744</sup> His specific instruction to His disciples was: “Ye know that the princes [*rulers*] of the Gentiles exercise dominion over [*rule over*] them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [*diakonos*, a servant]; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doulos*, a slave] ...” (Matthew 20:25-27).<sup>745</sup> Jesus provided us with instruction **and** His example!

When Jesus sent His messages to the elders of the seven specified assemblies in Asia through the Apostle John, there were two who drew special instruction in this regard. The elder at Ephesus received the Lord’s commendation for his hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes (which Christ also hates), and the elder at Pergamos was criticized for his tolerance of teachings 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 tolerated in addition to the error of the doctrine of Balaam, and so it is not the same thing. The two primary Greek words making up the word *Nicolaitanes* are *nikos* (which means victory, or to utterly vanquish<sup>746</sup>) and *laos* (which means people): so the word means “victors over the people.”<sup>747</sup> Jesus exposed the authority that the scribes and Pharisees held over the common 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

<sup>744</sup> The Greek word *pollon* (as used here) can be either exclusive (*many*) or inclusive (*all*), with context being the determining factor. In this case, passages such as 1 John 2:2 make it clear that this is an inclusive use, and must be understood as *all*. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, in One Volume, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “*polloi*.”

<sup>745</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>746</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>747</sup> See Ephesians 5:21 for a more in-depth explanation.

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 congregation is large enough). The responsibilities have been defined, and it is generally understood that those who fill the leadership roles 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 all of the followers of the religion who are NOT clergy.<sup>748</sup> There is a division here, a distinct separation between the clergy and the laity. This is clearly evident within most Evangelical churches today where the spiritual interpretation is left up to the experts: the pastors and theologians; consequently, the common people are becoming increasingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and 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 of the Bible to those who are deemed to be more capable or worthy. The average Evangelical is ripe for being deceived by charlatans who bear the title “pastor.” The independent Baptist churches 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.”<sup>749</sup> 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 of these self-proclaimed Bible-believing, fundamental men, with all of their learning and doctorates, still cannot understand that 1) they are abusing Hebrews 13 for their own purposes, and 2) there is no Biblical **position** within the assembly called “pastor.” The clergy-laity concept, including the title “pastor,” came into being from the earliest roots of the Roman Catholic Church; as much as these very same men lament the heretical error of the Catholic Church, they have grasped onto this particular error and cling to it with all of their might. As early as AD 190, we are told that Victor, the bishop of Rome, endeavored to force his views onto those who disagreed with him, upon threat of having them excommunicated from the fellowship.<sup>750</sup> 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 very practice in the book of Revelation! Yet, what do we find today? For the most part, all churches have succumbed to the temptation of following the Nicolaitane pattern firmly established by Rome.

<sup>748</sup> Encarta Dictionary, “clergy,” and “laity.”

<sup>749</sup> Larry Brown, *Blowing the Whistle on the Wolves*, p. 9.

<sup>750</sup> 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 that some maintain their control, and this is often part of a “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 that is still used by 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 Greek phrase *to loipon* (shown as *finally*) means *from now on* or *henceforth*,<sup>751</sup> which means that what follows, being addressed broadly to *my brethren*, signals a change in subject. Paul has just dealt with the marriage relationship, and has specifically spoken to children, fathers, servants and masters; now he will deal with something that everyone can take to heart: how to be *strong in the Lord*.

*Strong* is in the imperative mood (it is a command), but it is also in the passive voice, which means that we cannot do the strengthening – it must come from God.<sup>752</sup> Typically, when we think of a command, it is a call to action, and **we** must do something; however, the passive voice tells us that the action is **not** for us to do. Therefore, how are we to understand this? Although *becoming strong* or *becoming enabled* is an action that comes from the Lord (passive), it is also evident that we must be willing for the Lord to carry this out in us (imperative). Again, we find evidence that no one will enter the glories of heaven against their will; we are created in the image of God, which means that we can reason and make choices based upon our assessment of a matter. Jesus openly declared: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [*is doing* (present tense)] the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21);<sup>753</sup> *heaven* is **only** open to those who are living in obedience to the Father! Paul explained it this way to the Romans: *Consequently, there is now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who are living, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit* (Romans 8:1, literal).<sup>754</sup> No one under God’s condemnation will enter heaven; it is those who are *in Christ* **and** who are living in submission to the Spirit of God who are **no longer**

<sup>751</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>752</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.



subject to God’s condemnation. Our willing compliance (it is a command in our verse) with the Spirit opens the door for the Lord to strengthen us in Himself (the passive voice).

This is the secret to our ability to face life; it is the Lord Who will see us through, not our abilities. “But they that wait upon [*who are waiting for*] the LORD shall renew *their* strength [it is conferred by God] ...” (Isaiah 40:31a).<sup>755</sup> God’s words to Paul were: “...my strength is made perfect [*is being made complete*] in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a);<sup>756</sup> the Lord uses our weakness as an opportunity to show forth His strength through us. One of Paul’s prayers for the Ephesian believers was that they would be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). This is part of the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God in us that will mold us into the image of our Savior, and it fits well with the admonition to *endure hardness* or to bear afflictions (2 Timothy 2:3).<sup>757</sup> “Watch ye, stand fast [*be steadfast, persevere*] in the faith, quit you like men [*be brave*], be strong [*be strengthened* (also passive)]” (1 Corinthians 16:13).<sup>758</sup> 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 really 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 defensive warfare (as we will see); we are in a battle that knows no “time-outs”: *and even all who are desiring to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12, literal).<sup>759</sup>

After Joshua was given the leadership of the children of Israel, 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,” that the purpose is to “observe to do according to all the law.” The admonition in our verse is to be strengthened 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, among Evangelicals today, we hear much encouragement (in the form of empty 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 and Joel Osteen provide motivating speeches of positive platitudes, but they are based on the psychological reasoning of man, not the Word of God. *Now I am imploring you, brethren, be watching for those who are causing divisions and offenses without regard for the teaching that you did learn, and turn away from them; for such as these, our Lord Jesus Christ are not serving, but their own desire and through deceptively favorable words and flattery, they are*

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<sup>755</sup> BDB.

<sup>756</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

*completely deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting* (Romans 16:17-18, literal).<sup>760</sup>

Note: *the teaching that you did learn* is the Word of God; Paul is warning that there will be those who will endeavor to draw you away from God’s Word into their way of thinking (*divisions*); they will present persuasive instruction that is **not** completely in agreement with the Scriptures – it’s not that their teachings are in direct contradiction to the Bible, but they are more intent on defending their philosophy than presenting God’s truth. As with all teaching, we are to take it to the Standard (God’s Word) and evaluate it carefully; it is during this essential process that it will be discovered that the truth has been carelessly handled. Paul has warned us concerning men like Warren and Osteen (and there are many others). It is not a popular thing to stand in opposition to such men; yet we are not called to seek popularity, but to “hold fast the form of sound words” that we have in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13) – if we are holding fast to God’s truth, then we will not be separated from it by smooth words. Paul recognized that not everyone who spoke of Christ was His, and he also warned us about such people. “For 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: Whose 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 earthly focused, and they seek to do only those things that will permit their work to flourish (pragmatism) – which, in turn, serves to increase their willingness to accommodate error. This is becoming increasingly evident in the works of Warren and Osteen, but there is probably no greater example of this than in the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) denomination that is focused on serving a form of Christianity that accommodates the particular lifestyles of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Those involved with the Toronto MCC were “key players in the legal action that ultimately brought same-sex marriage to Canada.”<sup>761</sup> 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. *Put on* comes from the same Greek word as used in Ephesians 4:24 regarding the *new man*, except that, in this case, it is in the imperative mood – it is a command! Herein is the means for being made strong in the Lord; this is the key to enduring. *Whole armor* comes from a Greek word (*panoplia*) that gave rise to our modern word *panoply*, and means “a

<sup>760</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>761</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan\\_Community\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Community_Church)

full suit of armor,” or, more generally, a covering that protects.<sup>762</sup> 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. This is armor that has been prepared by God that will enable us to stand against the *wiles of the devil*; although this armor will not fail, we are warned to guard our hearts against falling away from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12).

This armor, if it is worn as it was intended, will enable us to stand against the trickery and craftiness of the devil. Today, it seems that most wars are being fought against an enemy who no longer follows 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 the normal activities of life, going about their business, yet when the opportunity is there, they detonate the bomb that they are carrying, often with devastating 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, lest their mission should be discovered and ended. Likewise, Satan does not come to us as the devil, but as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14); if he appeared to be as evil as 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 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 could hear the good news of salvation. What harm could there be in revisiting some of those controversial doctrines? If it was possible to add to the fold by making some minor, virtually irrelevant, adjustments, wasn’t that a good thing? Yet the result was a massive and rapid slide into apostasy for those who once knew the truth – truly, a great *falling away* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). 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 being 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 desire for a truce with the enemy has cost millions their spiritual lives.

The command here is to *put on the whole armor of God*. It is not enough to put on some of it; unless all of 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 all of the armor. God, Who knows our foe better than we, has prepared effective protection for us. However, for the most part, we often fail to recognize that we are in a spiritual battle; we hear such an emphasis placed upon unity among professing Christians that anyone who advocates Biblical separation is looked upon as being unnecessarily narrow and divisive. Prairie Bible Institute (now Prairie College) is an

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<sup>762</sup> Strong’s Online; Encarta Dictionary, “panoply.”

example of these New Evangelical shifts: their motto used to be “Disciplined Soldiers for Christ,” then it became “To Know Christ and Make Him Known,” and, more recently, for a time, it was “Building a Passionate Body of Christ.” However, the last was only for a short time, they have now gone back to the previous motto in a feigned attempt to appear to be more Biblical – having removed *Bible* from their name, they had to do something. It is clear that, in their minds, the battle is over, and they are busy building relationships – they may have changed their motto to sound more Biblical, but they have done nothing to undo the significant compromises that they have made through the years. Their actions declare their capitulation to the New Evangelical philosophy! 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 professing Christians today are AWOL – they have checked out of the battle, cast their armor aside, and are engaged in a friendly 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 openly declared that if he came back in 100 years and found his descendants to be Muslims, that it wouldn’t bother him.<sup>763</sup> This is the man after whom Rick Warren and Bill Hybels have patterned their ministries; it has been evidenced that



Bill Hybels



much of what Rick Warren writes comes almost directly from the musings of Schuller.<sup>764</sup> 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 would welcome Barack Obama, who promotes so much that is unbiblical. In Saddleback’s 2007 AIDS Summit conference, Warren gave the podium to Hillary Clinton, who received a standing ovation from those present; five other presidential candidates spoke via video.<sup>765</sup> Clearly, both Hybels and Warren are AWOL (or, more likely, they have never been truly born again), and yet their following among Evangelicals is huge and growing. *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 ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). A *prophet* is literally someone who *fore tells*

<sup>763</sup> [http://inplainsite.org/html/robert\\_schuller.html](http://inplainsite.org/html/robert_schuller.html).

<sup>764</sup> Warren Smith, *Deceived on Purpose* p. 52.

<sup>765</sup> [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=58959](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=58959)



events (the *pro* prefix is of time) and/or one who *tells forth* God’s message publicly (*pro* prefix is of place, before or in front of).<sup>766</sup> With the book of Revelation, there is good reason to believe that the *foretelling* is ended, and that the *forth-telling* of God’s message is the role of the prophet today. A *false prophet*, therefore, is someone who *forth-tells* a message that might appear to be the truth, but in reality, he does not speak for God and proclaims the lies of the devil – a wolf disguised as a sheep!

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 agree with the new nature that God has given us (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have not followed the light within, as the New Age movement advocates, but through repentance from our sin, God makes us new and we *put on the new man* that He has 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 alert to the condition of the soil 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 falls by the wayside – where the Word is heard, but the devil snatches it away before they can believe and be saved (v.12) – the Word is taken away before it can take root in their hearts. Some Seed falls among the rocks, and the Word is received with joy; they are believing for a while, but when a trial or temptation comes along, they fall away or depart from the faith (v.13). Notice that the Word brought forth life; this was not a false profession but a genuine indication of new life, yet because the soil of the heart was shallow (rocky), there was no endurance. Jesus declared that it is the one who faithfully endures unto the end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); there is an endurance to which we are called that we must not miss lest we fail in the time of trial (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:3). Some Seed falls 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 that Jesus used for *choke* (v.7) is the same as He 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 this new life dies through strangulation by 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 the new life out, if they are given the opportunity; the soil of the heart is not too shallow in this case, but it is filled with weeds. The final soil is good 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*

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<sup>766</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



*patience* (*hupomone* – endurance or perseverance!).<sup>767</sup> This *soil* does not produce fruit without effort; if we love the Lord, then we **must** be living in obedience to His commands (John 14:15). James tells us: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience [*hupomone*]” (James 1:2-3).<sup>768</sup> Trials, temptations, and testings are not popular themes among Evangelicals 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 that 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 affirmed this to Timothy: *and even all who are desiring to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12, literal).<sup>769</sup>

However, the theme among Evangelicals today is unity and brotherhood – we are 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 to dupe the unsuspecting into believing a lie (Romans 16:18), 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 those who are apostate.

There is an interesting word picture given to us here. We are to put on the full armor of God so that we are able to *stand* against the subtleties of the devil. This is not what comes to mind when we think of soldiers dressed in their gear; they typically do not *stand* to fend off the attack of the enemy, but, rather, are active in launching an offensive against the adversary. The word *stand* (*histemi*) carries with it the concept of steadfastness.<sup>770</sup> We see that endurance plays a part in our armed posture – we are to be immovable; the Lord has called us to persevere, but He has also provided us with the protection to do so. Paul listed many things that cannot separate us from the Lord: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor 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). This is often quoted as being proof that our salvation is eternally secure. However, this is actually proof of our ability to *stand* and to persevere if we are committed to wearing the whole armor of God. All of these things that Paul cites are **outside** of us, and the Apostle

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<sup>767</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

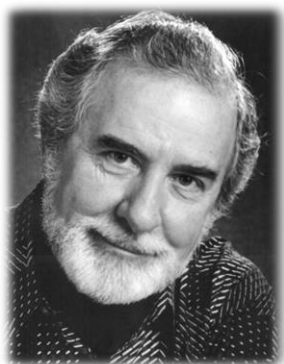
<sup>768</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>769</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>770</sup> Vine’s “stand.”

Paul names all of these things that are **not able** to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is **nothing** that can come against us that is able to cause us to fall; God has provided us with all of the protection that we will ever need against anything that might come at us, the provision for enduring has been secured in Christ (John 10:27-28). However, that is not the end of the story; we have been 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).<sup>771</sup> This warning is given to *brethren*, which 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 provide protection from a coward’s heart.

Charles Templeton is an example of one who professed faith in Christ, and then 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



Charles Templeton

Theological Seminary, he said that he was now an agnostic, and in 1995 he published a book, *A Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*.<sup>772</sup> The protection of the armor of God was more than adequate for all external enemies, but Templeton succumbed to an evil heart of unbelief and 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 wearing 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 – the translators chose to switch them. 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 adequate answer.

<sup>771</sup> Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>772</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Templeton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Templeton)

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 (being first) or rule (dominion, sovereignty).<sup>773</sup> Keeping in mind that these are not the authorities in the physical realm (**not blood and flesh**), they are understood to be spirit beings (angels). Revelation 12:9 tells us of the devil and his angels who were cast out of the presence of God, and Peter says that they are now bound with “chains of darkness” (2 Peter 2:4). Their bonds are not of restraint from movement, but rather are of blackness; they spurned the light and glory of God and are now bound with the absence of light. Yet we are warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 that, to us, their blackness may appear as righteousness, as these ministers, or servants, of Satan are able to transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. How important it is to practice the Lord’s call to separation and wise judgment, lest we should be deceived by those who appear to be righteous, but do the bidding of the devil. It is against these angels, who are bound by blackness, that we wrestle; we are dependent upon the Spirit of God to discern their *blackness* under a veneer of feigned righteousness. If we could completely understand this hidden darkness and the wolf that comes to us as a sheep, we would embrace the narrowness of God’s calling and the Biblical separation that leads to our sanctification. There would be no hesitancy in exercising Biblical discernment to condemn that which is not in accordance with Scripture. In the call of God to holiness (2 Timothy 1:9), we recognize that not all who profess to be Christians are actually born-again; His calling is very specific, and we are to walk worthy of that calling (Ephesians 4:1). Within Biblical separation, we find sanctuary from the alluring philosophies of wolves; by exercising discernment through the Spirit, we will be able to identify those who proclaim Truth mixed with error, and avoid them (1 John 4:1; Romans 16:17).

The Greek word translated as *powers* (*exousia*, authority) speaks of the freedom to choose, and the right and ability to act.<sup>774</sup> In the truest sense, this is applicable only to God, but within our context, it is applied to the spiritual forces that are in opposition to God and who are bound by blackness. This ascribes to them the ability to use any scheme, and any deception, to accomplish their wicked goals. Our enemy, much of the time, will not be identifiable, for they wear the cloak of religion and education in an effort to intimidate and deceive.

However, there is more. We are also facing 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

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<sup>773</sup> Friberg Lexicon

<sup>774</sup> Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

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 clear-minded and alert, “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 was 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), and 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 is called the accuser of the brethren: “And 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. And 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 better 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 consideration of the foe whom we are facing. We are finite creatures who, too often, live as though the visible world is all that 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 full armor of God that protects us against the attacks of this enemy; we have no protection within ourselves. How contrary this is to modern philosophy that teaches everyone to look within for light to guide. Jesus spoke of this light: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [healthy, clear], thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil [unhealthy, cloudy], 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 that His time was come, He “stedfastly set his face” to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51); there was a determination to accomplish what He had come to earth to do. He had 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 (Hebrews 12:2),



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 of the blackened 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 for Satan (Matthew 12:30). There is no middle ground where we can go as it suits us, and there is 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 Ecumenical unity. Charles Colson summarized this Ecumenical error the 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.”<sup>775</sup> 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 making room for their error. Truly, it is a matter of *Biblical obedience* (Colson had those words right), but it is obedience to the Word of God that calls us to separate from those who have deviated from His Truth even if they still call themselves Christians (Romans 16:17).



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; *take* is in the imperative mood, i.e., it is a command!<sup>776</sup> After explaining to us that the foe whom we face is not physical, but spiritual (of the most devious sort), we are again admonished to take the protection that God has prepared. This is a reiteration of verse 11 – and carries the same emphasis to take the *whole* armor of God and then to *stand*.

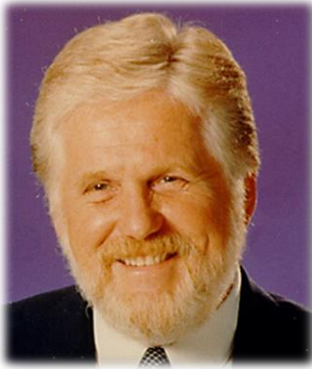
I am reminded of Jude 9 – “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” A mighty angel from the presence of God did not accuse Satan, but deferred to the Lord – this is a demonstration of *standing*, rather than taking the offensive. Yet we find some Evangelicals today embracing what they call *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 challenging the

<sup>775</sup> Charles Colson, *Being the Body*, p. 75.

<sup>776</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.



devil’s influence. Both speak of spiritual warfare and advocate a confrontational approach with Satan.



John Wimber

Wimber founded what has been called the “hyper-charismatic” Vineyard movement.<sup>777</sup> He and his group were influential in the “laughing revival,” as well as the very popular, more mainline, Promise Keepers movement; despite his *hyper-charismatic* connections, Wimber participated in teaching church-growth classes at Fuller Seminary.<sup>778</sup> He sat on the board of the Renovaré, a group founded by Richard Foster, who is heavily involved in new age and Eastern mysticism under the guise of spiritual formation thinking.<sup>779</sup> To add to this,

Wimber never lost touch with the Roman Catholics, thereby truly demonstrating his “hyper-Ecumenical” stance. Out of this conglomeration of hyper-charismatic experience, church-growth philosophy, Eastern mysticism and Ecumenism, comes a man who openly confronts Satan? Because of his clear violation of Scripture (on so many fronts), it seems that he and his movement would be a means to bring people under Satan’s control, rather than freeing them from it. Satan may not be omniscient, but he does 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 he 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 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 even experience feigned success that Satan will use 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 and 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 (so he says). This includes such things as renouncing any involvement in occultic or false religious practices



Neil Anderson

<sup>777</sup> <https://faithinconsistent.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/john-wimber-is-satan/>.

<sup>778</sup> <https://vineyardusa.org/about/john-wimber/>.

<sup>779</sup> <http://www.mediaspotlight.org/pdfs/RENOVARE.pdf>

(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.<sup>780</sup> In coming to his conclusions, Anderson has openly sought to integrate psychology and theology,<sup>781</sup> by which he identifies demonic influence as the primary cause of sin. He has no regard for the fallen nature that we inherit from Adam, which is still a part of every Christian; in Anderson’s view, Christians no longer have a sin nature. He takes exception to Christians being called sinners 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 for 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 personally witnessed that those who become involved in this type of practice are perpetually bound. They are trapped in the cycle of repeating his method of release over and over – a process of constantly praying prescribed prayers in an effort to bring freedom. Every time you sin, you must repeat the prescribed procedure for banishing the devil from your life, which seems to be more of a bondage maker than a bondage breaker. His seven-step process, prescribed to remove the demonic influence as evidenced by sin, serves to replace 1 John 1:9 (at least in his mind). The ability of the Spirit of God to work is bound by a ritual, and freedom can never be realized because it is based upon a false premise. Rather than seeking deliverance from the power of sin through sanctification by the Spirit of God, Anderson strives to break the power of demons through ritualistic prayers and psychotherapeutic thinking. However, he does have influence among Evangelicals, and whole ministries have been formed around his way of thinking. The very fact that he seeks to draw psychotherapy and Christianity together should immediately alert us to his error. Anytime you try to meld the philosophies of unregenerate men (psychotherapy) 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) – drawing truth and error together only leaves you with error, because truth has been destroyed in the process! Thinking that such a mixture will work, is based on an elevation of man’s thinking and a downgrading of God’s Word – the foundation is man-oriented, hence man’s philosophy (the error) 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* (*sulagogeo*) literally means to carry off as captive, and hence to lead away from the truth or to victimize.<sup>782</sup> Satan

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<sup>780</sup> <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?id=888&rc=1&list=multi>

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

has become much more civilized and sophisticated in his approach to gaining the upper hand in the heart of man; we must beware (1 Peter 5:8)!

We are to take the full armor of God, *in order that we will be able to stand* (against the enemy) *in the evil day, and overcoming all, to stand* (literal).<sup>783</sup> The command of our verse is to *take to ourselves* the whole armor of God.<sup>784</sup> We are reminded that this is not a protection that we are able to generate within ourselves or for ourselves; this is a defense that has been prepared by God for us. However, this protective gear is not designed for an offensive attack against the spiritual enemies that we face; all of the pieces of armor 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 being sinless, and the sin that they do commit is the fault of the devil; therefore, if they could just banish the devil from their lives, then they could live their lives perfectly (in their minds, the sin nature that we all have, disappeared when we were saved – contrary to Romans 7).<sup>785</sup> 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’s armor provides no protection. We are to resist [*anthistemi* or stand against (a different form of the same Greek word that is translated as *withstand* in our verse)] the devil (James 4:7),<sup>786</sup> and we are to flee from sin (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11) – 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 attack God has provided full protection. If Michael the archangel would not bring an accusation against Satan, why would we presume to attack Satan 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 that, together, form the full armor that 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 that repetition is used for emphasis – by now it should be very clear, we are to **stand**! Wimber and Anderson, God’s command is **STAND**, not attack!

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<sup>783</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>784</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>785</sup> Yes, like most Evangelicals, they look upon salvation as a past action rather than a life-long journey of sanctification that will lead to a future salvation if we remain faithful to the Lord (Matthew 24:13).

<sup>786</sup> Strong’s Online.

The first piece of armor 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 are to do; we are to wrap ourselves tightly in God’s truth. *Gird (perizonnumi)* refers to tightening a belt at the waist in order to shorten a robe as preparation for activity – in this case, it literally means to *tighten the belt around the waist*.<sup>787</sup> God has made this available to us, but we must expend the effort to put this piece of the armor into place. 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 being the Truth – the only way to the Father. He also stated: “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17), which fits entirely with Jesus’ identity as the *Logos of God* (Revelation 19:13); God has preserved His Word for us in the Scriptures – we, in turn, must be students of His 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 most of them do not even understand the Truth, let alone put it on. To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote of the deception of unrighteousness that is in those who are perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10); this is the same deception to which Eve surrendered in the Garden; she became convinced that taking the fruit was going to be beneficial (Genesis 3:6). In like manner, there are many today who hold to a form of godliness that is a deception, and so they remain in their sins. Even though they are within the professing Christian community, on that final day they will hear, “depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Why are they perishing? *For they the love of the truth did not accept in order to be saved themselves* (2 Thessalonians 2:10, literal).<sup>788</sup> 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 exclusive; mutual accommodation is all that is acceptable. Even within the community of Christianity, this pragmatic thinking has taken root; this is very evident within the Ecumenical movement – they are prepared to reduce their “truth”

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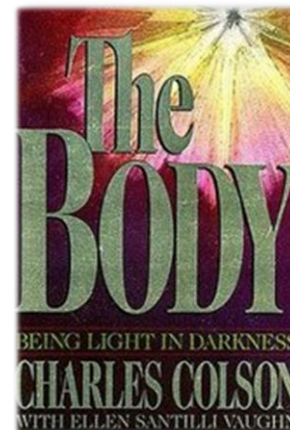
<sup>787</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>788</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.



to a few broad statements in order to justify embracing those who believe error, yet still want to be identified as Christians.

Within the modern unity movement, various approaches are taken to justify their actions. Chuck Colson 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.”<sup>789</sup> To put it another way, he is saying that there are differences and it is foolish not to acknowledge them, but there are also some orthodox truths held in common, and that must be our focus. Billy Graham 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.”<sup>790</sup> 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 Focus on the Family, whose VP has declared that those who work with them “cast their theological distinctives aside in order to achieve a common objective.”<sup>791</sup> 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 (Colson, Graham, and Focus on the Family) are held in high regard among Evangelicals. This is an indication of the failure of Evangelicals to embrace the truth of the Scriptures in purity (2 Thessalonians 2:10).



As we have already noted, the concept of girding the loins is used metaphorically to speak of being in readiness, of being prepared for what will come.<sup>792</sup> We are told that we are to have 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 become our protection; it is not enough to be familiar with theological thinking, we must know what God has said. 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 that **we are to do**, it will not be done for us. The Greek word for “having on” is in the middle voice, which affirms clothing one’s self.<sup>793</sup> This piece of armor covers from the neck to the navel, and protects both the front and back (in similar fashion

<sup>789</sup> Charles Colson, *The Body*. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), p. 104.

<sup>790</sup> David W. Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999), p. 84.

<sup>791</sup> <https://www.incpu.org/UNChangeAgents-AlMohler-MarkDever.html>.

<sup>792</sup> Vine’s “loins.”

<sup>793</sup> Strong’s Online.



to the truth). Therefore, we have righteousness fitly joined to truth in order 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 protection for our hearts from all things external. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor 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 are wearing the breastplate of God’s righteousness – if we have put on the *new man*, whom 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 Him.



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* (*hupodeo*) means to bind underneath, and most often referred to sandals being bound onto the feet.<sup>794</sup> Here we have the good news of salvation as the protection 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 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 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 He goes on to declare the divisions that will come into families because of Him (the word *variance* in v. 35 means to split in two or to sever<sup>795</sup>); 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

<sup>794</sup> Vine’s “shod.”

<sup>795</sup> Strong’s Online.

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 don the *new man* created in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). 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. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly 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* (*thureos*) 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.<sup>796</sup> The root of this Greek word (*thura*) is translated as *door*, and perhaps provides a picture of the usefulness of the shield. Perhaps you have seen riot police with the large shields; they can place the shield on the ground and it forms a complete protection from a frontal attack.

The Lord’s shield for us is *faith*. Keep in mind that this is the armor of God, therefore, this is the faith that God instills within us, and it is 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 is available to everyone; *and now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, being approved by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, even upon all those who are believing, for there is no difference, for all do sin and are falling short of the glory of God* (literal).<sup>797</sup> This is

<sup>796</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>797</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

not a faith that man can muster up within himself, else Christ 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 this faith (1 Corinthians 16:13). We are to unwaveringly fix our eyes upon Jesus, Who is the *founder and finisher of the faith* (Hebrews 12:2a, literal in italics).<sup>798</sup>

The shield of faith will enable us, or make us powerful, to block the arrows of the enemy. The Greek word translated as *shall be able to* (*dunamai*) is the same word from which we get *dynamite*; this shield will provide a defense against the enemy. It is through the use of this shield of faith that we will be able to block all of the flaming arrows of the *evil one* (Satan) – God has made it so. Notice what the enemy will be throwing our way: not only arrows (or *darts*), which alone could cause significant pain and suffering, but these darts are also 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, that was a wasted arrow, but if it carried fire as well, then that could ignite a blaze that would inflict further harm. 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* (*katapino*) literally means to drink down, and metaphorically, to completely overcome or destroy, and 2) there is that little word *may* of which we need to be aware (*devour* is in the subjunctive mood – it is a possibility but not a certainty).<sup>799</sup> 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 that 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* and *vigilant*, and part of that vigilance will be to ensure that the protection that 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* (*dechomai*) is one that is most often translated as *receive*; in this case, it is a command to take hold of the *helmet* that God has prepared as a part of His full armor.<sup>800</sup> It is evident that: 1) this is not just another piece of the armor that God has prepared for us, and 2) for it to serve its purpose, it must be

<sup>798</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>799</sup> Vine’s “devour”; Strong’s Online.

<sup>800</sup> Strong’s Online.

accepted and put into place (along with all of the other pieces). *Helmet* is from a compound Greek word (*perikephalaia*) that literally means around the head,<sup>801</sup> 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 that 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, “who 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. For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility or rebellion] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”<sup>802</sup> 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* (*machaira*), in this case, is a dagger or short sword that is used for close combat.<sup>803</sup> Revelation 19:15 speaks of a sword proceeding out of the mouth of Jesus, and, by contrast, this is a long sword (*rhomphaia*).<sup>804</sup> The long sword is more useful in offensive battle, while the short one is for close fighting – more of a defensive weapon. Notice that this *short sword* is that which belongs to the Spirit of God, and more specifically, it is the word (*rhema*) of God. Once again, we are faced with the necessity of knowing God’s Word to us; we will not be able to defend using the sayings of God if we are not familiar with His Word, the Bible. Herein lies the greatest failure of Evangelicals today – they have relinquished their understanding of the Scriptures to the “professionals.” When they do read the Word of God, it is without the conviction that what they are reading is life and protection for their souls; too often, they are also reading a Bible that has been corrupted by the hand of man. Through the thorough compromise and accommodation among Evangelicals, 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 realize it.

This completes the armor of the Lord; it is important to notice that all of the pieces are defensive in nature. This fits with the admonition that preceded the delineation of the armor of God – we are to stand! God’s provision is designed to

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<sup>801</sup> Vine’s “helmet.”

<sup>802</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>803</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>804</sup> Strong’s Online.

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 the shield of the faith of Christ, we STAND with the hope of His salvation guarding our minds, and we STAND with 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. It is our responsibility to 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;*

The action that we are to take is now 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 gives a different emphasis than we get in English on this first phrase: *with every prayer and petition, you are praying in the Spirit at every opportunity*.<sup>805</sup> This *prayer and petition* is linked to our taking the helmet of salvation (our hope of glory) and the sword of the Spirit (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: 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 discern in our minds what to pray, we can be assured that both the Spirit of God and the Lord Jesus 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* (*parakletos*) is what Jesus used for the Spirit of God Whom He would send after He had ascended to the Father (shown as *Comforter* in John 15:26), and it refers to someone who pleads or intercedes for another.<sup>806</sup> What comfort is ours through this realization; we are not

<sup>805</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; <https://translateking.com/translate/greek-to-english-translation>.

<sup>806</sup> Strong’s Online.



abandoned – two members of the Godhead have come to our aid and are interceding for us. We need to focus our eyes on the future reality: the hope of glory in Christ (Colossians 1:27).

The words *prayer* and *supplication* are very similar in the Greek; the former is a word used only for a petition addressed to God, and the latter carries the additional thought of a plea, or entreaty.<sup>807</sup>

The word *watching* is from the Greek *agrupneo*, literally meaning to be sleepless, and used metaphorically as being watchful.<sup>808</sup> This speaks of a continual vigilance by praying in the Spirit, and is emphasized through the use of *all perseverance*. *Perseverance* (*proskartereo*) is an intensive form of *karteros* meaning to be strong; it identifies the need for a continual commitment to something, and a determination to keep it.<sup>809</sup> This is like God’s instruction to Joshua to *be strong* (Joshua 1:6-9). We are to be strong in our prayers for all of 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,*

Here Paul requests prayer for himself that he will be given a word (*logos*, not *rhema*) 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 so that he will be given a word from God, and that he will proclaim it boldly. Jesus said that when we are brought before rulers because of the Gospel, we are not to be concerned about what we will say (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 will proclaim the full Gospel with boldness and clarity.

We have here the phrase *make known the mystery*, which tells us that what has been unknown in the past is now being revealed. *Make known* (*gnorizo*) means to come to know, and *mystery* (*musterion*) speaks of something that cannot be known without the Lord’s intervention;<sup>810</sup> therefore, the *mystery* that is being revealed is what God has known from all ages, but He is now unveiling it for those who are *in Christ*. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul refers to this *mystery* as being: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). In the purposes of God, this truth was hidden from humanity since the beginning of the world (Ephesians 3:9); through His prophets, the Lord provided small glimpses of what was coming, but with the

<sup>807</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>808</sup> Vine’s “watch.”

<sup>809</sup> Vine’s “attend.”

<sup>810</sup> Vine’s “know,” “mystery.”

fulfilling work of Christ, the New Covenant has been fully revealed! The culmination of God’s salvation that was offered for all of mankind since Adam, is made known in the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God (Jesus) for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). If we are prepared to walk the narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14), which is Jesus Christ (John 14:6), then we have the protection that God makes available to us (His armor). 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 can be distracted from the Way that leads to life. The basis for this is found in God’s instructions to Israel in Deuteronomy 13:6-11, where He gave explicit warnings against being enticed to worship other gods, as well as clear instruction on the course of action that was to be taken to deal with it – this is not a small 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. “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (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 from one country who is sent as its representative to another country, and this is someone who is knowledgeable of his home country. The Greek word (*presbeuo/ambassador*) is actually a verb, which means that Paul is fulfilling the responsibilities of an ambassador – he is serving as God’s man to open the *mystery* of the New Covenant to all. The first meaning of *presbeuo* involves the concepts of being the eldest, the first, or of highest rank;<sup>811</sup> hence, the Greek word for elders within the assembly is *presbuteros* (Titus 1:5) – they are to be those who are older and more established in the faith.<sup>812</sup> So we understand more fully Paul’s instructions to Timothy regarding the qualifications for a bishop or elder (the two are used synonymously in Titus 1:5 and 7) requires that this individual not be a novice (*neophutos*, a neophyte, one recently converted and immature), but one who is stable and seasoned in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6).<sup>813</sup>

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

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<sup>811</sup> Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

<sup>812</sup> Vine’s “ambassador.”

<sup>813</sup> Vine’s “novice.”

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 (Acts 5:29). 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 that provides 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 for the exclusive message 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:*



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.*