The Epistle of Paul to the EPHESIANS

Salutation

1 [1]Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus,[1] that is, the faithful in Christ Jesus:[2] [2]Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.[3]

Some concentrated theology

A paean of doctrinal praise[4]

[3]Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,[5] who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms[6] in Christ;[7] [4]just as He[F][8] chose us in Him[S] before the foundation of the world,[9] that we should be holy and blameless before Him[F], in love,[10] [5]having predestined us into an adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, into Him[S], according to the good pleasure of His[F] will, [6]to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved; [7]in whom we have the redemption through His[S] blood,[11] the forgiveness of our

---

[1] I take it that Paul is claiming to be Christ's apostle to them, so he is writing with specific apostolic authority. Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (demonstrably so), omit 'at Ephesus' [such is the basis for the nasty footnotes in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.].

[2] Paul defines what he means by "saints".

[3] The alternation between "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus" appears to be stylistic, without doctrinal implication.

[4] Verses 3 to 14 make up a single sentence in the Greek Text, which makes the translating a bit difficult. With a view to helping the reader, I will list the topics that are included, more or less: 1) God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing; 2) He chose us to be holy and blameless; 3) He predestined us according to His sovereign purpose; 4) everything is for the praise of His glory; 5) all grace and benefits come to us through Jesus Christ; 6) redemption and forgiveness of sins come through His shed blood; 7) He made known to us the 'secret' of His will = subordinate all to Christ; 8) the true Word = the Gospel of salvation; 9) we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance.

[5] The full name of Jehovah the Son is now 'The Lord Jesus Christ'. Where 'Lord' occurs without the definite article or a possessive pronoun I often render 'Sovereign'.

[6] "In the heavenly realms" appears to be a synonym for Heaven; the blessings are there, ready to be distributed.

[7] The blessings are only for those who are in Christ. Unbelievers may receive some spinoff benefits.

[8] Here the pronoun refers to the Father, not 'Christ'. Below, whenever the referent changes I will indicate this by [F] or [S], which will be good until the next change.

[9] This one is difficult for our poor little finite minds to handle. If I was chosen before Creation, then I am part of a PLAN that antedates that Creation, just like the slain Lamb (1 Peter 1:19-20). So He knows who I am and calls me by name (John 10:3). When faced with a 'God-thing' that exceeds our understanding, we can either accept or reject—I choose to accept [there are consequences]. And let's not forget to give thanks.

[10] The syntax is ambiguous: does "in love" go with the preceding clause, or the following one? If the preceding, then it would be our love for Him; if the following, His love for us. When the Text is ambiguous I like to allow for both possibilities, which is why I place a comma before and after. Since both are true, why not teach both?

[11] Without the shed blood of God's Lamb there is no redemption.

trespasses, according to the riches of His[F] grace, **8**that He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligent design,[1] **9**having made known to us the 'secret' of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him[S], **10**with a view to administering the fullness of the times,[2] so as to bring all things together under one head in Christ—those on the heavens[3] and those on the earth—in Him[S], **11**in whom we were also assigned an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him[F] who works all things according to the decision of His will, **12**so that we should be to the praise of His glory,[4] we who first trusted in the Christ; **13**about whom, to be sure, we had heard the true Word[5]—the Gospel of your salvation; by whom, since you also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14**who is the down payment on our inheritance until the release of the possession,[6] to the praise of His glory.[7]

Some doctrinal praying

15Because of this, having heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **16**I really do not stop giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: **17**that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,[8] may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation[9] in the real knowledge[10] of Himself, **18**the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know[11] 1)what is the hope

---

[1] I take it that many people, as they contemplate the mess the world is in, doubt that the Creator [if He exists] knew what He was doing. One day we will agree that the design is marvelous.

[2] The reference is not so much to chronological time as to occasions or epochs. Believe it or not, human history is being "administered".

[3] "On the heavens"—that is what the Text says. I take the reference to be to beings and things that are not an integral part of Heaven, temporary appendages—of course any beings and things on the earth are not an integral part of Heaven either. They all will jointly be subordinated to the Christ.

[4] This is the main point of the whole exercise—the praise of His glory! (See Isaiah 43:7.)

[5] A majority of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have "we", rather than the familiar 'you'. Being unexpected, many scribes may have made the change (of one letter) almost without thinking. The Gospel of Christ is 'the true Word'.

[6] We receive "the release of the possession" in Glory. From the beginning of the epistle both the Father and the Son have been referred to repeatedly—here the Holy Spirit is introduced.

[7] Verses 3-14 form a single sentence in the Greek Text, which is why I translate the same way.

[8] To be the 'Father' of glory is to be the Source of all true glory.

[9] Revelation provides us with true information, and wisdom shows us what to do with it.

[10] I finally settled on 'real knowledge' as the best way to render *επιγνωσις*, the heightened form of *γνωσις*, 'knowledge'. Real knowledge is more than mere intellectual knowledge, or even true theoretical knowledge—it involves experience. The Text goes on to say, "the eyes of your heart having been enlightened". Real knowledge changes your 'heart', who you are.

[11] Paul wants us to know three things, that I have indicated with a number before 'what'.

of His[F] calling,[1] and 2)what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,[2] **19**and 3)what the exceeding greatness of His power into[3] us who are believing, according to the demonstration of the extent of His might **20**which He exercised in the Christ when He raised Him[S] from among the dead and seated Him at His[F] right, in the heavenly realms, **21**far above every ruler and authority and power and dominion[4]—even every name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the next. **22**In short, He[F] placed everything under His[S] feet, and appointed Him to be Head over everything in the Church,[5] **23**which is His body, the complement[6] of Him who fills everything in every way.

Our position in Christ

2 **1**He[F] raised you up as well, when you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2**in which you once walked, according to the Aeon of this world, the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of the disobedience;[7] **3**among whom all of us also used to conduct ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and of the senses,[8] and were by nature children of wrath,[9] just like the rest. **4**But God—being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5**even when we were dead in our transgressions—made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been

---

1 His calling gives us true hope.

2 We normally concentrate on 'our' inheritance, what <u>we</u> are going to get. More important is God's inheritance, what **He** is going to get.

3 "Into us"—that is what the Text says. Note that 'believing' is in the present tense. Please see the note at 3:20 below.

4 It is generally understood that the reference is to the angelic hierarchy. The two thirds that remained faithful to God were never a problem, so presumably the special point is that Christ defeated Satan, with his one third, and is now (as the God/man, the second Adam) seated 'far above' that enemy. Please see the note at 2:6 below.

5 Would it not be wonderful if the Church recognized that Headship in practice! Where *ekklesia* refers to the whole body of Christ, as here, I render 'Church'; where it refers to a local assembly I render 'congregation'.

6 Just as a wife complements her husband (when things are like they are supposed to be), God's purpose is that the Bride complement the Groom (even if we don't understand why Someone who "fills everything in every way" needs complementing).

7 Strictly speaking the Text has "according to the Aeon of this world, according to the ruler of the domain of the air"—the phrases are parallel, so 'Aeon' and 'ruler' have the same referent, a specific person or being. This spirit is presently at work (present tense) in 'the sons of the disobedience'. 'Sons' of something are characterized by that something, and the something in this case is 'the' disobedience (the Text has the definite article)—a continuation of the original rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe. Anyone in rebellion against the Creator is under satanic influence, direct or indirect (in most cases a demon acts as Satan's agent, when something more than the influence of the surrounding culture is required). Anyone in rebellion against the Creator will also have strongholds of Satan in his mind.

8 This is the way people who do not belong to Christ may be expected to act. Far from being surprised, we should count on it, and our strategies (for living and evangelizing) should count on it.

9 To be in rebellion against the Creator is to be under His wrath.

saved) **6**and raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,[1] **7**in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8**For by grace you have been saved, through the Faith[2]—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9**not by works, so that no one may boast. **10**You see, we are His 'poem',[3] created in Christ Jesus for good works,[4] which God prepared in advance in order that we should walk in them.[5]

Once far, now near in Christ

11So then, remember that once you physical Gentiles—called 'uncircumcision' by the so-called 'circumcision' (that made in flesh with hands)—**12**that at that time you were apart from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise,[6] having no hope and without God in the world. **13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have come to be near through the blood of the Christ.

Two into one

14For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and broken down the barrier of separation—the law with its commandments and ordinances—**15**having abolished the enmity through His 'flesh',[7] so as to mold the two [Jew and Gentile] into one new man in Himself (thus making peace), **16**and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross (by which He killed the enmity).[8] **17**He came and proclaimed

---

[1] This is tremendous! Here we have our authority. Christ is now seated at the Father's right, "far above" (1:21) the enemy and his hosts. This verse affirms that we are there too! So in Christ we also are far above the enemy and his hosts. We should be consciously operating on that basis, but since few churches teach this, most Christians live in spiritual defeat.

[2] The Text has 'the' faith; the reference is to a specific faith, presumably the body of truth that revolves around the person and work of Jesus.

[3] The English word 'poem' comes from the Greek word here, *poiema*, and is one of its meanings. Just as each poem is an individual creation of the poet, so we are individual creations, not produced by a production line in a factory.

[4] We are not saved by good works, but for good works. We do good works because we are saved, and if you don't…

[5] "Prepared in advance"—I imagine that this refers to God's moral code, the rules of conduct that everyone should follow (if everyone did we would not need jails, rescue missions, etc.).

[6] "The promise"—that is what the Text says. The various covenants recorded in the Old Testament differ considerably from each other, but one might say that there is one promise common to all: God promises to bless obedience, those who obey Him. To obey God, one needs to have some contact with Him. Without such contact one has no hope.

[7] "His 'flesh'" presumably refers to Jesus' physical body that went to the cross. Without the incarnation none of what Paul is discussing would have been possible.

[8] In this paragraph Paul is dealing with the enmity between Jew and Gentile; within the Jewish 'religion' Gentiles were definitely second class citizens—to be saved a Gentile had to become a spiritual Jew. Within the Church of Jesus Christ that distinction is done away with; all are on the same footing, regardless of ethnic origin.

peace to us,[1] being both far and near, **18**because through Him we both have access to the Father, by one Spirit.[2]

19So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, **20**built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,[3] Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; **21**in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; **22**in whom you also are being built together to become a habitation of God in spirit.[4]

The 'secret' revealed to Paul

3 **1**For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—**2**surely you have heard of the administration of the grace of God that was given to me for you, **3**how that by revelation He made known to me the 'secret'[5] (as I have written briefly already, **4**with reference to which, when you read,[6] you can understand my insight into Christ's secret), **5**which in different generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by Spirit[7] to His holy apostles and prophets:[8] **6**that the Gentiles are joint-heirs, of the same body, and fellow partakers of His promise in the Christ[9] through the Gospel,

---

[1] The Greek manuscripts are badly divided between "us" and 'you', so I follow the best line of transmission. Verses 17 and 18 form a single sentence, wherein Paul now handles Jew and Gentile as a unit, "we both".

[2] Up to this point in the letter the Father and the Son have been repeatedly presented as distinct persons; now the Holy Spirit is added, although introduced in 1:13 above. All three persons are in this 18th verse.

[3] The truth that Paul is expounding is that in Christ Gentiles join Jews as "fellow citizens" and "members of God's household", part of "the whole building". In what sense can that "building" be built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets"? Presumably "prophets" is short for the writings that make up the Old Testament Scriptures, or Canon. The Faith is based on revealed Truth, not individual people. Analogously, presumably "apostles" is short for the writings that make up the New Testament Scriptures, or Canon. Again, the Faith is based on revealed Truth, not individual people. Our "growing into a holy temple" (verse 21) depends upon the Holy Spirit and His Sword (not individuals whom God used).

[4] There is no article with 'spirit'; one 'habitation' made up of many individuals refers to the spiritual realm, not the physical. (Recall that in John 4:23-24 Jesus explained that the Father wants worship 'in spirit'.)

[5] I consider that 'secret' is a better rendering than 'mystery'. The truth about the Church is not all that mysterious; it just had not been explained before.

[6] Whatever writing Paul is referring to, evidently the Ephesians had not seen it yet, but he figures they have heard about it. Paul probably wrote a variety of things that were not preserved in the New Testament canon.

[7] There being no article with 'spirit', it could be either 'by Spirit' (used as a proper name) or 'in spirit' (referring to the manner). Both are true and legitimate, but I have chosen the first option in the translation.

[8] An apostle, upon receiving a revelation, would also function as a prophet, but people like Mark and Luke were prophets without being apostles.

[9] Instead of "the Christ", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Christ Jesus' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

7of which I became a servant according to the gift of God's grace, the gift given to me according to the outworking of His power.

8To me, the very least of all saints,[1] was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9and to enlighten all[2] as to the program[3] of the secret that from the beginning of the ages has been hidden by the God who created all things through Jesus Christ;[4] 10to the intent that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms,[5] 11according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished by Christ Jesus our Lord,[6] 12in whom we have the boldness and the access with confidence through faith in Him. 13Therefore I ask that you not lose heart at my afflictions on your behalf, which is your glory.

Prayer

14For this reason[7] I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,[8] 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its name,[9] 16that He[F] may grant you, according to the riches of His glory: 1)to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man; 172)Christ to dwell in your hearts through the Faith, having been rooted and established in love 18so that you may be fully able to grasp (with all saints) what is the breadth and length and depth and height; 19and 3)to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge—so that you may be fulfilled into all the fullness of God.[10]

---

1 Paul does not always describe himself at this level of humility!

2 His explanation of the secret is for everyone, Gentile and Jew alike.

3 Instead of "program", perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have 'fellowship' (as in AV and NKJV).

4 This text joins Hebrews 1:10, John 1: 3, 10 and Colossians 1:16 in affirming that Jehovah the Son was the primary agent in the creation of our world and race. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "through Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 Don't you know that the cherubim and seraphim and other high ranking angels really wondered what the Sovereign was up to when He created the human being.

6 "The eternal purpose"—this included the Lamb with His blood shed (1 Peter 1:19-20)! Note that "accomplished" is in the past tense.

7 Verse 14 is parallel to verse 1; verses 2-13 form an aside.

8 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "of our Lord Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

9 The pronoun is ambiguous; the antecedent could be either the Father or the Son. But when did God give each family its name? As judgment upon the 'tower of Babel', God created many languages and cultures. A name defines, and each different people is defined by its language and culture.

10 If it were not for verse 20 below (see note), I would be inclined to think that Paul's prayer was overly ambitious! Does he really expect us to arrive at "all the fullness of God"?! Well, we have the Trinity going for us—the Father is granting, the Spirit is strengthening our inner man and the Son is dwelling in our hearts—an unbeatable combination (if it were not for our lack of commitment). That said, however, I must confess that I do not understand verse 18—what is Paul describing? Whatever it is, all

20Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is working in us,[1] 21to Him be the glory in the Church in Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.[2]

Putting the theology into practice

Unity

4 1So then, as the prisoner in the Lord I urge you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, 2with all humility and courtesy, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3taking pains to keep the unity of the Spirit[3] in the bond of the peace.[4] 4There is one body and one Spirit (just as you also were called in one hope of your calling), 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6one God and Father of all,[5] who is over all and through all and in us[6] all.

Building up the body

7Now to each one of us the grace according to the measure of Christ's gift was given. 8That is why He says, "When He ascended into the heights He captured the concentration camp, and distributed gifts to men."[7] 9(What does 'He ascended' imply if not that He also first

---

saints are supposed to be able to grasp it, which seems rather improbable. Verse 19 offers another paradox: if the love of Christ surpasses knowledge, how can we know it? Spiritual growth is clearly a process. 2 Peter 1:3 affirms that "His divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness." So whether we get there or not is up to us—those who overcome will get there in Glory, if not before.

1 Ephesians 1:19 spoke of "the exceeding greatness of His power **into** us who are believing"—note that the verb is in the present tense; having believed yesterday won't hack it, we must believe today. This tremendous power that God pours into us, as we believe, exceeds our powers of imagination. Well now, my personal horizon is limited and defined by my ability to imagine. Anything that I can't imagine lies outside my horizon, and so obviously I won't ask for it. I sadly confess that I have not yet arrived at a spiritual level where I can unleash this power—I have yet to make the truth in this verse work for me. But I understand that the truth affirmed here is literal, and I only hope that others will get there before I do (so I can learn from them), if I keep on delaying. The whole point of the exercise (verse 21) is for God to get glory [not for me to have a good time, although if I ever get there I will certainly have a great good time!], and to the extent that we do <u>not</u> put His power in us to work we are depriving Him of glory that He could and should have.

2 The glory that God gets from the Church will go on forever.

3 "The unity of the Spirit" presumably refers only to things that come from the Holy Spirit; it cannot include anything with which He does not agree. Note that we are not to 'create' the unity, we are to "keep" it.

4 In verses 1-3 Paul is talking about how we relate to other believers.

5 Here is the Trinity again—the Spirit in verse 4, the Son in verse 5 and the Father in verse 6.

6 Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "us" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), while another 4% read 'you' (as in AV and NKJV).

7 "He captured the concentration camp" does not sound very much like "He led captivity captive", now does it. The point is that 'captivity' refers to people held in captivity, and they are freed. When an invading army takes a concentration camp, the prisoners are set free (usually). We have here a quote from Psalm 68:18, where the second half says, "You have <u>received</u> gifts from men", just the opposite of "distributed". What to do? The

descended into the interior regions of the earth?[1] **10**He who descended is the very one who also ascended far above all the heavens,[2] that He might fill all things.) **11**Yes, He Himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,[3]

Targum (a Hebrew commentary) interprets as, "You have given gifts to the children of men". Upon reflection this would appear to be obvious. When you put tithes and offerings in the offering plate at church, you are giving to God, but does that money literally go to Heaven? No, it is redistributed down here—some goes to the preacher's salary, some to a missionary, some to pay the light bill, etc. God does indeed receive gifts from men, but He does not stash them in Heaven somewhere; they are redistributed down here. When done properly He gets the credit: "He distributed gifts to men."

[1] This is one of several texts that lead me to understand that Sheol/Hades is beneath the crust of the earth somewhere. For one of the things He did down there, see 1 Peter 3:19.

[2] "All the heavens"—sounds like quite a few, more than three; and He is above all of them.

[3] I take it that this list follows the chronological sequence of the several ministries. An apostle introduces the Gospel into an area or context; a prophet gets the people's attention and an evangelist urges them to believe; but once people are regenerated then pastors and teachers come to the fore—they are the ones who equip the saints. However, in practice, especially in a pioneer missionary situation, there are seldom that many people around. The missionary preaches the Gospel and it is up to him to teach the first converts; he is alone. A pioneer missionary, the first one to introduce the Gospel to an ethnic group or area, has an apostolic function (whether or not he himself is an apostle). But he must also function as an evangelist and as a teacher (whether or not he has those gifts).

However, most of us live and work where there are established, functioning congregations. So what would be the function of an apostle within an established, functioning congregation? If he lives and worships in that community, probably none at all, in that specific capacity—he might function as a teacher or a prophet. In a country, or area, where there is no more pioneer missionary work to be done, the exercise of the apostolic function would be itinerant, acting as God's special emissary, an official intervener, for disciplinary and correctional purposes.

I will take up evangelist next; what would his function be within an established congregation? Well, can you evangelize someone who is already regenerated? Evidently the function of an evangelist is directed to unbelievers, who should not be members of the congregation (although some often are). Of course an evangelist might also function as a pastor or teacher. A truly gifted evangelist will function beyond the limits of a local congregation.

As for the prophetic function, I will address the question of supernatural revelation of information not available through existing channels. (1 Corinthians 14:3 speaks of 'edification', 'exhortation' and 'comfort' as coming from a prophet, but I will not take up such activity here.) We understand that the Canon of Scripture is closed; God is no longer giving written revelation that is of general or universal application. But that does not mean that God no longer speaks into specific situations. Divine guidance is a type of prophecy; He is giving information not otherwise available. I myself have been contemplated with a prophecy delivered by someone who had no idea who I was, and not in the context of a local congregation. The function of a true prophet cannot be limited to one congregation. Indeed, God may use a prophet at city, state or country level. Our world desperately needs prophetic voices.

A teacher will normally reside in a specific community, but his ministry may range beyond it. A pastor's function is local, just as he is chosen and ordained locally. It is simply a fact of life that someone with a shepherd's heart is not necessarily a good

12for the equipping of the saints into the work of the ministry, so as to build up the body of Christ, 13until we all attain into the unity of the faith and of the real knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, into the resulting full stature of Christ;[1] 14so that we no longer be 'infants', tossed about as by waves and carried off by every doctrinal fad, through the underhanded dealings of the people who collect the fee for the error;[2] 15rather, speaking the truth in love, let us in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, the Christ; 16from whom the whole body, being fitted and knit together by what every joint supplies, as each individual part does its work, promotes its own growth,[3] its own edification, in love.

Put away the old, put on the new

17So then, I affirm and insist on this in the Lord: you must no longer carry on as the rest of the Gentiles do,[4] in the futility of their mind, 18having been darkened in their understanding, being alienated [as a continuing condition] from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts,[5] 19who, having become

---

teacher, and an honest to goodness teacher often lacks a shepherd's heart. The functions are supposed to be complementary, and the object is to get all true believers involved in the work of the ministry. Life in Christ is not a spectator sport!

1 Verse 13 emphasizes the truth in verse 12—<u>every</u> believer is supposed to grow into full stature. Just because we do not reach a goal does not invalidate that goal.

2 Before Paul wrote Ephesians, *κυβεια* always meant dice-throwing (but commentators usually don't like that, and so take evasive action). Why do people do that? Usually for material advantage. If the dice-throwing is 'crafty' then it is crooked—the dice are loaded. But this has to do with doctrinal fads ('winds'). Why do people start and push fads? To get or to keep attention, which usually involves material advantage. But who throws dice by himself? To cheat you have to have a victim. But why is the other guy playing? He hopes to make a fast buck, too. So why do people buy into doctrinal fads? Often for material advantage—the purveyor makes promises (e.g. the 'prosperity gospel'); sometimes for 'spiritual' or social prestige (which can translate into material advantage). You have to make the victim think that there is something in it for him. One of the basic meanings for *μεθοδεια* is 'a method of collecting taxes' or 'debts'. If you want to shear the sheep, you need a method. But who would be vulnerable to any such 'method'? Only a spiritual 'infant', who still thinks he can make a fast spiritual buck, who thinks there can be shortcuts. A "perfect <u>man</u>" (*ανηρ*, not *ανθρωπος*) is like Jesus—when Satan comes with his shortcuts, he is not taken in.

Let us try to pull it together. The fad (*ανεμος*) is an error (*πλανη*), which carries a fee—the error is not free. The purveyor needs a method for collecting the fee (*μεθοδεια*) for the error he is selling. But it cannot be obvious, he needs to finesse it (*κυβεια εν πανουργια)* (he wants happy, unsuspecting sheep). Someone who is mature (verse 13) knows there are no shortcuts, so is not taken in by any cheap promise. Telling the truth in love (verse 15) contrasts with selling an error for gain (verse 14).

3 Any local congregation can promote its own growth by encouraging each member to exercise his gift(s); by making room for all the gifts and promoting their use.

4 It sounds like some of them were not being altogether successful in breaking with their former way of life. Breaking free from the culture that surrounds you, so as to embrace biblical values, is not easy.

5 This works like a downward spiral: the ignorance feeds the hardening, that in turn increases the ignorance. The consequence is that they can never get out by themselves.

dead to hope, have abandoned themselves to depravity, greedily indulging in every kind of vileness.[1] **20**Now that is not how you 'learned Christ'—**21**if indeed you have heard Him and been taught by Him (as the truth is in Jesus): **22**that you put away, concerning your former way of life, the old man[2] (that keeps on being corrupted by the deceitful desires), **23**and that you be renewed[3] in the spirit of your mind, **24**and put on the new man, created in the likeness of God,[4] in true righteousness and holiness.

Practical instruction

25Therefore, having put away falsehood, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,'[5] for we are members of one another. **26**'Be angry but do not sin';[6] do not let the sun set on your angry mood, **27**nor give an opportunity to the devil.[7] **28**The one who steals must steal no longer, but rather let him work, doing something good with his hands, that he may have something to share with someone in need. **29**Let no evil word proceed from your mouth, but only what is good for edification, as needed,[8] that it may impart grace to those who hear. **30**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,[9] with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31**Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander be removed from

---

Someone must take Christ's power to them to help them out, before they become 'dead to hope'. "Having been darkened" is passive voice; they are darkened by Satan, directly or indirectly.

1 What kind of person or being might be "dead to hope"? If someone is dead to hope, is he beyond hope, unrecoverable? And how should society defend itself against those who have "abandoned themselves to depravity"? The consequences of depravity al-ways spill over into the surrounding society, and according to Psalm 5:5-6 the LORD hates such people, and so presumably will not 'draw' them (John 6:44). 1 John 5:16-17 teaches that certain sinners are beyond the reach of prayer, they have passed the point of no return. If someone cannot be saved, then he needs to be neutralized (because of the harm he causes to others) —we need to ask God to teach us how to do this.

2 The "old man" cannot be cured; it must be rejected in favor of the new.

3 The verb here evidently means 'renew' and not 'make new', the implication being that a depraved mind represents a departure from a former condition. When a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit he receives a new nature, but the old one is not obliterated or expunged. We must constantly choose to use the new one.

4 Wait a minute! Was not the first Adam created in the likeness of God? So when he fell did he lose that likeness? Probably not entirely, but Satan has been working at increasing the damage ever since—he works to remake men in his own image; in those who have "abandoned themselves to depravity" (verse 19) he has been successful. For someone to receive the "new man" requires a new act of creation.

5 This is an exact quotation from Zechariah 8:16, though not presented as such.

6 This is an exact quotation from Psalm 4:4, though not presented as such.

7 Evil and injustice should make us angry, and legitimate anger should give rise to appropriate action. But if we do nothing except to sit and brood, we do not help the situation and we do give Satan opportunity.

8 "As needed"—part of imparting grace is knowing when to keep quiet!

9 I imagine that any sort of disobedience on our part grieves Him.

you, with all malice.[1] 32Rather, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Walk in love

5 1Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children, 2and walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma. 3But, you should not even talk about fornication or any form of moral corruption or insatiableness[2] (as is fitting for saints); 4nor any obscenity, nor foolish talk or coarse joking (that do not belong), but rather thanksgiving. 5Because you can know this for sure: no fornicator, nor anyone who is morally corrupt or insatiable (actually an idolater),[3] has any inheritance in the Kingdom of the Christ and God.[4] 6Let no one deceive you with empty words,[5] for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of the disobedience.[6] 7Therefore do not be participants with them—8even though you were once darkness, you are now light in Sovereign.

Walk in light

Walk as children of light 9(for the fruit of the Spirit[7] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10approving what is pleasing to the Lord. 11Do not associate with the unfruitful works of the darkness, but rather expose/reprove them.[8] 12(It is shameful even to speak of those things being done by them in secret.) 13Now all things, upon being exposed, are revealed by the light, for whatever reveals is light. 14Therefore He says: "Wake up, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and the Christ will shine on you."[9]

Walk in wisdom

15See then that you walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise, 16redeeming the time,[10] because the days are evil. 17That is why you

---

[1] The focus in verses 31 and 32 is on how we treat other people. God has been good to us; we should be good to others.

[2] Of course doing such things is out of the question, but why can't we talk about them? If you talk about it you will think about it, which will provide an opening for temptation.

[3] To have an insatiable desire for something (say, money) is to be dominated by that something; it has become a god, an idolatry.

[4] According to the grammatical construction here, "Christ and God" refer to the same person.

[5] Many 'churches' these days are making allowances for sexual immorality of various sorts (getting their values from Freud, not the Bible), but they will find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. Watch out for empty words!

[6] See the note at 2:2 above.

[7] Instead of "Spirit", some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'light' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] I could not decide between 'expose' and 'reprove', since the verb here includes both ideas. So let us do both.

[9] This is not a direct quote of any Old Testament passage. Not all God-given prophesies, though written down and read by subsequent generations, were included in the Canon.

[10] How does one redeem the time? I suppose by taking advantage of the opportunities; also by not wasting it.

must not be foolish,[1] but understand what the Lord's will is. 18And do not get drunk on wine, which is harmful and wasteful;[2] rather be filled with the Spirit,[3] 19speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord; 20always giving thanks to God the Father concerning all things,[4] in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, 21submitting to one another in the fear of God.[5]

Relationships within the home

About wives

22Wives, subordinate yourselves[6] to your own husbands, as to the Lord, 23because a man is head of his wife as also Christ is Head of the Church—He also is Preserver of the body. 24Yes, just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also the wives should be to their own husbands in everything.[7]

About husbands

25Husbands, love your own wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up on her behalf, 26in order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water: in a word, 27that He might present her—the splendid Church—to Himself, not having a blemish or a wrinkle or any such thing, but that she be holy and blameless. 28Just so the husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated his own flesh; rather he nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church—30for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.[8] 31"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."[9] 32This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

---

1 The ultimate foolishness is to not understand the Lord's will.

2 Literally, 'in which is dissipation', so where did I get 'harmful and wasteful'? Well, to dissipate is to waste, and a dictionary I have defines it as "to indulge in pleasure to the point of harming oneself". Drunkenness always harms and wastes.

3 Observe that this is a command, so it depends on us. The Holy Spirit is waiting to fill us, if we will only yield to Him. For light to fill the room all you have to do is flip the switch.

4 We are to declare God's goodness, faithfulness and wisdom, even when we do not like what is happening.

5 Instead of "God", perhaps 30% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Christ' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

6 Observe that this is something she should do of her own volition, not because she is beaten into submission.

7 This "everything" obviously does not include things that God forbids.

8 Less than 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "of His flesh and of His bones" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an easy case of 'similar ending'). Flesh and bones are definitely physical, not spiritual; so what is Paul saying? Perhaps he is emphasizing that "His body" is just as real as a physical body.

9 This is not just poetic language, it is a chemical reality. See Genesis 2:24.

33In any case, each of you individually: let each one love his own wife as himself,[1] while the wife must respect her husband.

About children

6 1Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—3"that it may go well with you and you may live long on the earth."[2] 4And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,[3] but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of Sovereign.

About slaves and masters

5Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;[4] 6not only when being watched, to please men, but as slaves of the Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7serving with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men, 8knowing that whatever good each one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is slave or free.[5]

9And masters, be the same way towards them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Spiritual warfare

10Finally, my brothers,[6] be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to stand firm against the stratagems of the devil. 12Because, our wrestling match[7] is not against flesh and blood,[8] but against the principalities, against the

---

1 Observe that 'wife' is singular. Although in the Old Testament men were not condemned for having more than one wife, in the context of the Church monogamy is the norm. The instruction in verse 33 is basic: if a wife does not feel loved and/or a husband does not feel respected, negative things start to happen.

2 See Exodus 20:12.

3 Unreasonable demands, harsh treatment, lack of clear guidelines—there are various ways to frustrate children and cause them to lose heart, and even give up. In today's world they will probably cop out by going to drugs, or the Internet (both of which leave them wide open to demonic influence).

4 Observe that slavery is not condemned. The owners are not commanded to free their slaves, just to treat them right. The slaves are not told to run away, but to be even better slaves.

5 It pays to do good!

6 Only some 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "my brothers" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), but since the whole letter is written to Christians, there really is no doubt. Besides, how could an unbeliever put on the full armor of God? Note that Paul writes "our" wrestling match—apostles are also under attack, not to mention pastors, etc.

7 The word here is a noun, not a verb, and means precisely 'wrestling match'. A wrestling match is based on violent physical contact, and the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is advising us that we are in such a match, and the opponents are malignant spirits of all ranks. The 'doctrine' to be found in some circles that Christians cannot be attacked by demons is totally and dangerously false.

8 Even though people may indeed act as our enemies, we need to keep in mind that they are only being used by the real enemy.

authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age,[1] against the malignant spirits in the heavenly realms. **13**That is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, to stand firm, with everything in place.

14So stand firm, having belted your waist with truth,[2] having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15**and having shod your feet with the readiness of the Gospel of the peace; **16**above all, having taken up the shield of the faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows[3] of the malignant one; **17**also, grasp the helmet of the salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word spoken;[4] **18**praying at all times in the Spirit, using every prayer and petition, yes being watchful to this end with all perseverance and petition for all the saints **19**—on my behalf too,[5] that when I open my mouth utterance may be given to me with boldness, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, **20**for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly,[6] as I ought to do.

Closing greetings

21Now that you also may know my affairs, how I am doing, Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything; **22**whom I have sent to you for this very purpose: that you may know our circumstances and that he may comfort your hearts.

23Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.

24The grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.[7] Amen.

---

[1] 'Principalities', 'authorities' and 'world-rulers' evidently refer to very high-ranking officers in Satan's army; they are not pip-squeak demons. Each country has a boss-demon, each state or province has a boss-demon, each city has a boss-demon and so on. God has given us adequate weapons, both for defense and for offence, but we need to learn how to use them. Further, we need to actually use them!

[2] Any lack of truth or righteousness in our lives will leave us vulnerable to attack.

[3] If it is faith that quenches these arrows, then they probably come in the form of doubts and fears, as well as physical attacks.

[4] *hrema* (rather than *logos*)—the implication appears to be that we must speak the Word. Well, how else can you use the 'Sword'?

[5] We all need prayer, even apostles.

[6] If you are in prison because you spoke out, to keep on doing so does require boldness and courage.

[7] Evidently "the grace" is not for everybody.