

Title: **EPHESIANS**
 “To the Praise of His Glory”
Text: Ephesians 1:3-14
Date: Tuesday Evening—April 13, 2004
Tape # Y-13b
Readings: *Lindsay Campbell and David Burge*
Introduction:

(Eph 1:3-14) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (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: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (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; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (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: (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: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also

trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

I do not need to inform you that Paul’s letter to the Church at Ephesus is one of my favorite portions of Scripture. I would not exalt one portion of Scripture above another. Yet there are some portions more specifically suited to constant meditation and study than others. For example, I know very few people who have memorized or spent much time studying the first chapter of Numbers, which records the numbering of the children of Israel in their genealogies. Though those genealogies are very important, they are not exactly designed for daily meditation.

The first chapter of Ephesians is different. Here we are brought immediately into the counsel chambers of the triune God, caused to think about electing love, blood atonement, effectual grace, and preserving mercy, and made to worship before the august throne of our triune, covenant-keeping God, our Father in heaven, our beloved Savior, and our Divine Comforter.

I have preached so often from this blessed Epistle that I have not been able to keep track of all the sermons I have preached from it. Tonight, we will take a brief overview of these six chapters. We will skip along the surface of these deep, deep waters, like one of those

birds you see, swooping down here and there for an invigorating dip in the cool water, a refreshing drink, or a tasty morsel of meat. We will just wade along the shore, picking up the most obvious nuggets of gold.

Before we wade into these waters, while you pull your shoes and socks off and roll your britches up, let me tell you why Paul's letter to the Ephesians is such a delightfully precious portion of Holy Scripture to me and why it is such a constant source of meditation.

SPEAKS OF CHRIST

I love this book because of the Person of whom it speaks. When I open the book of Ephesians, no matter where I am reading, no matter where I sit down, no matter where I walk in this treasure house, I feel as if I am immediately in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. I read it again yesterday, marking the places where the words "*in Christ,*" "*in him,*" "*by Christ,*" "*through Christ,*" "*for Christ,*" or other words with the same meaning are used. I am sure I missed some, but I counted fifty-five. **Fifty-five times** the Holy Spirit reminds us that everything we have from God, everything we are by grace, and everything we hope to enjoy in glory is in Christ! In Christ God has given us all that he can give and all that we can enjoy. He has given us himself!

THE EPHESIANS

I love to muse upon the things written in these pages because of the people to whom this book was written - The Ephesians. Ephesus was a large, wealthy, metropolitan city of Asia Minor. It was called, “*The Light of Asia*”. It was a city filled with brilliant, wealthy people. It was the envy of the world in its day. Tradesmen, scholars, philosophers, and orators flocked to Ephesus. They thought it had everything a man could want. But Ephesus was a godless society. Actually, that is not true. They had gods galore. But they were altogether without the knowledge of God. Like the society in which we live, idolatrous, man-centered religion walked hand in hand with superstition, immorality, lasciviousness, and utter decadence. The great temple of Diana at Ephesus, just like many religious people in our day, openly promoted every moral perversity imaginable. Yet, from among these hell-bent pagans, the Lord God was pleased to raise up a people, objects of his everlasting love, to whom he revealed his gospel, in whom he revealed his Son, and by whom he made known his grace.

CONTRAST

What a contrast there is in the very first verse of the epistle between the person who wrote it and the people to whom it was written. It is a contrast that singularly displays the great sovereignty of our God in the exercise of his grace. — “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints* (those who are sanctified)

which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful (those who have been and are made faithful) in Christ Jesus.”

Not many of the wise, the mighty, and the noble are called, but a few are. Most of God’s servants, most of the prophets of the Old Testament, most of the apostles in the New Testament, and most gospel preachers today were nobodies and nothings when God called them, shepherds and fishermen. But Paul was one of the most brilliant and most highly educated men of his day. Like Isaiah in the king’s court, this man was a man whose words were respected and heard. Yet, before God saved him, he Saul of Tarsus would not have allowed himself to even come into contact with these pagan Gentiles at Ephesus, for whom he later risked his life, that he might preach the gospel to them!

- Truly, **God is no respecter of persons**. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy!
- **God’s servants are just messengers**. It matters not whether the messenger has an eloquent, trained and polished, baritone voice, which uses perfect grammar, or has a coarse, gravelly voice and obviously does not know the difference between an adverb and an adjective. God’s messengers are not sent to impress, but to instruct, to deliver a message.
- **Paul considered himself nothing but God’s messenger, and counted it his highest honor to be such**. — *“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” (3:8).*

HEAVENLY PLACES

I love the book of Ephesians because it brings me into “heavenly places”. The words “*heavenly places*” are found nowhere else in the Bible, except in the book of Ephesians. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use this term five times (1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). Some prefer to translate the word used in these places “heavenlies” instead of “*heavenly places*”. Whichever way it is translated, this term, “*heavenly places*,” refers to heavenly things, heavenly words, heavenly doctrines, heavenly promises, heavenly possessions, and heavenly experiences belonging to God’s elect in Christ.

“*Heavenly places*” refer to **the place of eternal, covenant blessings in Christ** — “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).

“*Heavenly places*” speak of **the place of our great High Priest’s royal, kingly intercession, advocacy, and sovereign dominion**. — “*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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*” (Eph. 1:19-21).

“Heavenly places” **identify our spiritual union and communion with Christ as well.** — *“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:6). There he is, yonder, at the Father’s right hand, seated, accepted, blessed. But here is something more. **Yonder, “in heavenly places,” I am, seated, accepted, blessed, at the Father’s right hand.**

Frequently, I do not feel so close to my God. Indeed, I often feel far off from God. But my faith does not rest in my feelings. My comfort and assurance are not derived from the cracked cistern of my feelings. My faith is in and my comfort, hope, and assurance are founded upon the Word of God. And God says in his Word, right here in Ephesians 2:6, that I am with Christ *“in heavenly places”*. And I prefer what God says to what my lying hearts says!

“Near, so very near to God, nearer I cannot be,
For in the Person of His Son, I am as near as He!”

“Heavenly places” are **those places in which we are taught of God by divine revelation** — *“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”* (Eph. 3:10).

This passage of Scripture refers to the gathered assemblies of God’s saints around the world as

“*heavenly places*” of spiritual instruction. Here, as we sing, and pray, and worship, and receive instruction in the knowledge of Christ by the gospel of the grace of God, the angels of God are also instructed in the wonders of blood atonement, pardoning love, and saving grace!

“*Heavenly places*” are the place of spiritual privilege and stern perplexity, blessed assurance and bothersome anxiety, sweet communion and stubborn conflict — “*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 heavenly places*” (Eph. 6:12 *marginal translation*).

The world is the enemy of our Father. The devil is in arms against our Master. The flesh is at war with the Spirit. And our carnal hearts are enmity against God. Therefore, we need not be surprised to find our daily experience an experience of unceasing, constant warfare.

GRACE

And I love this blessed book of Ephesians because it talks so much about grace, God’s free, sovereign, saving grace in Christ.

All right, you’ve got your shoes and socks off and your britches rolled up. Now, let’s go wading for just a little while. Wherever you see a diamond or a nugget of gold,

if you care to pick it up and put it in your pocket, you are free to do so. If you see an inviting deep pool, just dive in. Everything here in this treasure filled ocean is yours, if you are Christ's.

Proposition: All grace is ours in Christ by divine purpose and joyful experience to use for our own comfort and peace and for one another's good and for the glory of our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EXPLANATION OF GRACE — Chapter 1

In the first chapter of Ephesians Paul explains what God has done for us by his wonderful, free, saving grace in Christ. He begins this epistle by telling us what the triune God has done for us by his grace, according to his own sovereign will and eternal purpose, for the praise of his glory. The grace of God flows to us from the three persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Grace comes to sinners according to the Father's purpose, the Son's purchase, and the Spirit's power.

ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

The apostle assures us that all God's elect have been blessed of God with all spiritual blessings in Christ from eternity (1:3), and that all the blessings of grace come to chosen sinners according to God's eternal purpose of grace in election (1:4). At the very outset of his letter, he declares that there is no possibility of grace, salvation,

and spiritual blessedness apart from God's eternal election and sovereign, loving predestination.

Having asserted that all the blessings of God's grace are the eternal, unalterable possession of every sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul proceeds to name ten of those great, spiritual blessings in verses 3-14.

1. **Election is the first blessing named** (1:3-4) The Lord God chose a vast multitude of sinners unto salvation in Christ before the world began. He chose us to make us "*holy and without blame before him.*" And he will accomplish his purpose (5:27; Jude 24-25).
2. **The second great blessing of grace is divine predestination** (1:4-5). In eternal love for us our heavenly Father predestined all his elect to what Paul calls in the book of Romans "*the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*"
3. **The third blessing of grace Paul names is adoption** (1:5). Imagine that — The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ adopted us into his family in and by Christ before he called the world into existence (1 John 3:1). Why? Just because he would! He did it "*according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace*" (1:5-6).
4. Next, the apostle tells us that our great God "**hath made us accepted in the Beloved**" (1:6), not acceptable, accepted! By an act of free and sovereign grace he accepted all the objects of his eternal love in

Christ before the world began. And those he accepted in eternity can never be made unaccepted in time.

5. **Redemption is named as the fifth bounty of God's grace** possessed by all who are in Christ (1:6). Redemption is deliverance from all sin, all condemnation, and all the consequences of our sin and fall in Adam, deliverance into "*the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*" This redemption is that which was accomplished and obtained for us by the precious sin-atonement blood of Christ (Heb. 9:12).
6. **Then Paul tells us that the forgiveness of sins is ours in Christ** (1:7). Where there is redemption accomplished there is also pardon. In fact, Paul explains what he means by redemption by saying, redemption means forgiveness. — "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" — Grace does not proclaim a redemption that offers pardon, but a redemption that demands pardon. Justice satisfied means pardon granted. This acceptance with God, this redemption by the blood of Christ, this blessed forgiveness is ours "*according to the riches of God's grace.*"
7. In verses 9 and 10 **Paul tells us that God has given to every believer the knowledge of "the mystery of his will."** The secret things belong to God; but he has revealed his purpose of grace to his children. He has made "*his good pleasure*" known to us in his Word and by his Spirit. It is the purpose and good pleasure of God to save all his elect; and that is exactly what he is doing in his daily works of providence and

grace. When time is fulfilled, he will “*gather together in one all things in Christ.*”

8. In Christ, who took possession of heavenly glory for us as our Forerunner (Heb. 6:20), **we have obtained an eternal inheritance in heaven**, “*being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*” (1:11-12). Yes, the inheritance of heavenly glory is the present and eternal possession of every sinner who trusts the Son of God (John 17:5, 22). We are “*heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.*”
9. In verse 13 the apostle tells us that **every believer has been sealed by God the Holy Spirit**. We believe by the almighty operations of God the Holy Spirit, and believing we are sealed.

Grace is not a proposition, but a performance. Grace is not something God offers, but something God does. We do not believe as the result of God’s offer, but as the result of God’s operation. And this operation of grace, by which we believe, has an intimate, indivisible relationship to the word of truth, the gospel of salvation accomplished in Christ.

The gospel is called “*the word of truth*” because it reveals Christ who is the Truth. It is called “*the gospel of your salvation*” because it reveals salvation accomplished by Christ. It is called “*the word of life*” because it is the means by which God the Holy Spirit conveys life to dead sinners (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do, it is because

God the Holy Spirit has revealed Christ to you and in you by the gospel (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

(2 Tim. 1:9-10) “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, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Where the Holy Spirit has performed his work of grace in regeneration he also performs his work of grace in preservation. He seals all the blessings of covenant grace to us and seals us in the covenant. — *“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, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory”* (1:13-14).

A seal implies four things. (1.) **Privacy** — That which is sealed is private, secret. And we rejoice to know that the secret things belong to the Lord. (2.) **Property** — That which is sealed is the property of the one whose seal is upon it. (3.) **Preciousness** — Any item that is sealed is of great value. (4.) **Preservation** — When a thing is sealed it is preserved from harm or spoilage.

10. The tenth blessing of God’s boundless grace possessed by every sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is “*the earnest of the Spirit*” (1:14). The Holy Spirit dwelling in us as the Spirit of adoption, by whom we believe, is the pledge and guarantee of our eternal inheritance in heaven.

A PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

These great riches of God’s boundless grace in Christ are the present possession of all believers; but none of us knows how rich we are in Christ. Therefore Paul prayed that the Lord God would grant us some understanding of our vast spiritual wealth as the sons of God (1:15-23).

His prayer is that “*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, And WHAT is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places*” (1:18-20).

THREE “WHATS”

Here are three things hidden from all natural men that I trust God will graciously give you eyes to see and know by personal experience.

1. What is the hope of his calling? — It is Christ's obedience unto death as our Substitute.
2. What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? — They are the complete satisfaction of the Father's purpose, Christ's finished work of redemption, and the Holy Spirit's mighty operations of grace.
3. What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe? — It is the sovereign, irresistible power of God's omnipotent grace by which we are called from death to life in Christ. It is the very power by which God raised his Son from the dead (v. 20).

Grace is power, sovereign, omnipotent, effectual, irresistible power. According to the words of the Holy Spirit, it takes the very same power to cause a dead sinner to live and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as it took to raise the dead body of our crucified Redeemer from the grave.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

In verses 20-23 declares the greatness, glory, supremacy, and dominion of our exalted Savior as the Head of his church. Then, at the end of chapter one, he makes a statement that is as comforting as it is astounding. He tells us that the church of God's elect, the body of Christ, is "*the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (v. 23).

Paul is speaking of Christ in his mediatorial capacity. As he is the fulness of all things, so his church is his fulness as the God-man Mediator. What does that mean? It means that he cannot be complete as a Mediator and Savior, if even one chosen member of his body is lost. It means that the salvation of every chosen, adopted, predestined, redeemed, called, and sealed sinner is a matter of absolute certainty! The fulness of Christ as our Mediator could never be accomplished without the salvation of his people. *“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”*

In the first chapter, Paul tells us what God has done for us by his grace.

THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE — Chapter 2

In chapter two the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle to give us a detailed description of every believer's experience of grace.

The grace of God as we experience it in this world involves two things. I stress the fact that I am talking now about our experience of grace in this world. In the experience of it grace involves regeneration and reconciliation. It involves the new birth and the consequent reconciliation of our hearts to God in Christ. We must be born again because we were all born in spiritual death by nature. And we must be reconciled to God because we all hate God by nature. Ephesians 2

deals with these two aspects of grace: Regeneration and Reconciliation.

REGENERATION

Regeneration is the sovereign work and operation of grace performed in the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners by God the Holy Spirit, sinners who are by nature both dead and depraved (Eph. 2:1-10).

The new birth is not accomplished by man's will but by God's power, not by man's choice but by God's purpose. It is not something God offers but something he does. The new birth is a resurrection from the dead. It is that first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20:6, of which we are told, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: 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.*" Look at Ephesians 2:1-10.

Here is **the condition of all men by nature**. — "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 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: 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 other*".

(2:1-3). Man, by nature is spiritually depraved, and spiritually dead.

Here is **the mighty work of God in the new birth**, in raising us from our spiritual death of God to life in Christ. — *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)”* (2:4-5).

- The reason for all this is the love of God (v. 4).
- The new birth is the effect of God’s work in us (v. 5).
- The result of it is union, communion, and fellowship with Christ in the power of his resurrection. — *“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (v. 6). As we were raised together with Christ representatively, we have been raised together with him spiritually in the new birth (John 5:24-26).

Why has the Lord been so gracious to such sinners as we are? Paul answers that question in Ephesians 2:7. — *“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”* Then, in verses 8-10, he summarizes all that he has said in the first seven verse of chapter two.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath

before ordained that we should walk in them.”

RECONCILIATION

The result of regeneration is reconciliation (2:11-22). Remember, I am talking now about the believer's experience of grace. We were legally reconciled to God at Calvary by the death of his Son (Rom. 5:10-11). But our hearts were still enmity against God until he conquered us by his grace and graciously forced us to bow to him in reconciliation. Let me show you three things in these next few verses.

Here is a fact we must never forget. (vv. 11-12) —
*“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; **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.”*

(Isa 51:1-2) “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged. (2) Look unto Abraham your

father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.”

“*But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*” (2:13). — There is that blessed phrase again — “*IN CHRIST*”. **To be in Christ is to be...**

- Chosen In Him.
- Redeemed In Him.
- Justified In Him.
- Called in Him.
- Sanctified In Him.
- United To Him.
- Accepted In Him.

In verses 14-21, Paul tells us that the grace of God experienced in the soul not only unites and reconciles us to God in Christ, it also unites and reconciles us to one another in Christ. All rocks in a building, built upon one foundation and connected to one cornerstone are united to and connected to one another. So, too, all who are built on Christ are fitted together.

Illustration: *The Hewn Stones of The Temple*

This is Paul's doctrine: That which God requires of us God alone can do for us!

- Atonement For Sin (2 Cor. 5:21).
- Perfect Righteousness (Matt. 5:20).

- Spiritual Life, A Spiritual Nature — The New Birth (John 3:7).
- Faith in Christ (Heb. 11:6).

These are the things the Lord God almighty has done for us and in us by his grace in Christ.

THE ENJOYMENT OF GRACE — Chapter 3

In chapter 3 Paul describes what I will call **the enjoyment of grace**. There comes a time, sometime after you are converted, as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you begin to really enjoy the grace of God. Much like a husband and wife really begin to truly enjoy one another, comfortably and confidently enjoy one another only after they have been married for a while, believers, while never getting over the wonder of grace, do not really enjoy grace until they have lived in it and experienced it a while.

A MYSTERY REVEALED

The gospel of the grace of God is a wondrous mystery revealed. It is the revelation of how God justified sinners, and reconciles them to himself and to one another, in one body with Christ as our Head. Though it cost him his very life, as it will every faithful gospel preacher, Paul considered it his greatest honor, highest privilege, and most delightful joy to made a preacher of this gospel (3:7-8).

“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. 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.”

A PASTOR’S HEART

As a faithful gospel preacher, as a pastor with a pastor’s heart, Paul wanted those people to whom he preached to know, in the fullest way possible, by experience, all the blessedness of God’s abundant, free grace in Christ (vv. 9-21).

I know exactly what Paul’s words express in this chapter. As he expresses the desires of his heart for these Ephesian saints, my own heart echoes the same desire for you. It is the burning passion of my soul, as I endeavor to study and preach the gospel to you, to make you see...

- **The manifold wisdom of God in the scheme of grace.** — *“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: 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”* (vv. 9-10).

- **The eternal purpose of his grace.** — “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”(v. 11).
- **The free, accessibility of his grace.** — “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him”(v. 12).

A PASTOR’S PRAYER

In verses 14-19 Paul tells the Ephesians his hearts prayer to God for them; but there is more here than Paul’s prayer for the saints at Ephesus. This was his prayer for all God’s elect, even you and me. As a true under shepherd of Christ, Paul labored for the good of those under his immediate influence and for the good of God’s church as a whole. Read his prayer, and ask the Lord to answer it for you.

(Eph 3:14-19) “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (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; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (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.”

In all his labors and in all his desire, his confidence was in Christ and his aim was the glory of Christ (vv. 20-21).

(Eph 3:20-21) “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, (21) Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

THE EDUCATION OF GRACE — Chapter 4

The fourth chapter of Ephesians shows us **the education of grace**. Again, I can do no more than skim the surface here; but this is a rich, rich chapter. I hope the things I mention will inspire in you a desire to study it in greater detail. Let me just point out three things for you.

UNITY — First Paul urges us to labor at maintaining the blessed unity of God’s church and kingdom, the unity of all true believers in Christ by the Spirit of God (4:1-6). All that we know and experience of God’s grace teaches us that God’s people are one and that we ought to cherish and promote that oneness. The way to do that is to walk before God and with one another in humility, with longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another relentlessly.

(Eph 4:1-6) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation

wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.”

GIFTS — Then he tells us that in the church and kingdom of God there is no room for and no basis for envy and jealousy. Each of us are given specific gifts to use for the glory of Christ, the interests of the gospel, and the benefit of God’s elect (4:7)

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high, he received gifts for men and gives those gifts to men as he will. One of the gifts with which he has endowed his church is the gift of the ministry (4:8-16). Look at verses 11-14.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 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: 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.”

NO LICENTIOUSNESS — Grace does not cause or promote licentiousness, but true godliness (vv. 17-24). The gospel of the grace of God and the grace of God experienced in the soul teaches believing men and women to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world for the glory of Christ. We are totally free from the law; but believers are not lawless. Saved sinners seek to glorify God in all things. If your religion promotes, permits, or allows room for lasciviousness, greed, and deceitful lusts, your religion is not the religion of grace. Grace teaches people to bridle their passions and their tongues (vv. 25-29). And grace causes saved sinners to fear the thought of grieving the Holy Spirit (v. 30).

In a word, grace makes people gracious. “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*” (vv. 4:31-32).

THE EXERCISE OF GRACE — Chapter 5-6:9

Ephesians chapter five describes **the exercise of grace** by people who have experienced it and have been taught

by it. We who have been the recipients of grace ought to always take care to magnify the grace of God in our deeds as well as with our words.

As we have been loved of God, we ought to walk in love with one another. — *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 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”* (5:1-2).

As people who are called to be saints, we should always seek to live in a manner becoming saints (vv. 3-13).

(Eph 5:3) “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”

(Eph 5:8) “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

(Eph 5:10) “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

We must endeavor, for Christ’s sake, to shake ourselves from our natural tendency toward lukewarmness, indifference, and indolence in spiritual things, and buy up every opportunity to worship and serve our Master. — *“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk*

circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (v 14-17).

If we would live for Christ in this world, we must ever seek to be filled with the Spirit (5:18-6:9). Being filled with the Spirit is not some charismatic fit or Pentecostal spasm. To be filled with the Spirit is exactly what verses 18-33 tell us it is. **To be filled with the Spirit is to...**

- Offer thanks and praise to God in all things, for all things, in your heart.
- Submit to one another in the will of God.
- Imitate Christ in all things: As Husbands, As Fathers, As Masters, As Servants.

THE EXHORTATION OF GRACE — Chapter 6 verses 10-24

The latter half of chapter six concludes this blessed book with **the exhortation of grace** (Eph. 6:10-24). Paul urges us to be strong in the Lord and to stand firm in the gospel and in the cause of Christ. — “*Having done all stand!*” He tells us to put on, as our continual, daily clothing, “*the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” In verses 14-21 Paul tells us what the believer’s complete, sevenfold armor is.

1. The Girdle of Truth — Firm, Settled Conviction regarding the Revelation of God in his Word

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness — Not Our Own Pretense of Righteousness, but The Righteousness that is Ours in Christ — We put it on by continually looking away from ourselves to Christ, and reminding ourselves continually of what we are in him and what he has done for us by his grace.
3. Gospel Shoes — Ever standing firm in the grace and peace revealed and given to us by the gospel
4. The Shield of Faith — Ever Relying upon the Promises of God — *“My Grace is sufficient for thee — Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out! — I am with thee! — I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!”*
5. The Sword of the Spirit — Using the Word of God to Protect Ourselves from the assaults of Satan
6. Praying Always — For Ourselves, but More Importantly for One Another

(Eph 6:18-20) “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (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, (20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Finally, if we would serve our God and Savior and the interests of his kingdom, let us make it our hearts ambition that all God’s people in this world have and enjoy his peace and love with faith, and his boundless grace continually. Let us make it our life’s ambition to

promote these things, for the glory of God our Savior (vv. 23-24).

(Eph 6:23-24) “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.”