

Bible Study: Ephesians

(Part 2—Chapter 4)

by Gary T. Panell

Outline: In the first section we had the I. Wealth of the Believer (Doctrinal) in Chapters 1-3. Now we are in the second section of the outline, II Walk of the Believer (Practical) in Chapters 4-6:9.

Chapter 4:

(1) “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,”

Paul was a living example of how a Christian should live, he was willing to go to prison for Christ or if need be, to die for Him also. We have just studied about our high calling and the spiritual wealth of the believer in the first section. We have also read about how Christ gave His life’s blood for us that we might be saved eternally, now Paul calls on us to walk (live, conduct ourselves) worthy of this wonderful relationship which we have with the God of the Universe!

Paul “beseeches (exhorts, entreats, encourages, begs)” us, or “asks” us to live a godly life, but the choice is ours. God has given His only Son to die in our place that we might be forgiven of all our sins, but not only that, He also has made us joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and seated us in the heavenlies with Him! What more motivation do we need to live and die for Him?! We are to walk (live) worthy of Him because we are sons and daughters of the King. How we behave reflects on His name: “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” (Psalm 23:3b)

(2) “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,”

We are admonished to live like Christ lived. We are to walk humbly with our God in gentleness. “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8) It is said of Moses that he was the humblest man that ever lived, but that was before Christ came! I do not think we can even imagine how humble Christ was and this in stark contrast to the religious leaders of His time. They would go to the street corner, blow the trumpets and announce that they were going to pray. Jesus was just the opposite, even though He is the God of the Universe.

The religious leaders had to have Judas point Him out to them. He looked and lived just like a person of His time; He wore no special clothing that would say He was religious. He had no proud look that would announce that He was better than you; He was just a godly, humble person to anyone who saw Him. This is the way we are to live!

Jesus was longsuffering when the apostles were wanting the earthly glory of sitting on one side or the other of His throne when He came into His kingdom, He just told them it was not His to give, but the Father’s. When they wanted to bring down fire on nonbelievers He told them that they did not know of what spirit they were of.

He walked day in and day out without getting upset with those around Him. That is the way God wants us to walk, humbly, not getting upset with people, but loving them no matter what.

This passage should remind us of 1 Corinthians 13, where it says, “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

(3) “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Now we are not just talking about the unity in our own families or the local church, here; he is speaking of unity in the body of Christ. Of all the sins in the Church today, probably this one is committed the most, or the command that is violated the most. To be honest with you, at the writing of this commentary, I see only a little progress in this area. However, if you have read our article, The Holy Catholic Church, you will see that this attitude will change. The true believers in the true Church will be “one” before Christ returns. There are bright spots like: “Promise Keepers,” Calvary Chapels, Teen Missions International, Billy Graham Association, Community Churches, etc. these are groups that are trying to fellowship with Christians of like faith but in different denominations. Some churches are having community worship fellowships together.

Obviously there are things happening around the world that we are not always immediately aware of in this area of renewal. The work of renewal of the Holy Spirit is taking place in the last days, and will increase as Scripture foretells in the book of Joel. I was very encouraged to read a wonderful little book called, *Light and Life Renewal in Poland*, by Grazyna Sikorska. In this book it details God’s working in revival in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. The story is about Father Franciszek Blachnicki, a courageous, devoted priest; Father Blachnicki founded Light-Life, the Christian renewal movement that has swept throughout Poland. Sikorska relates how tens of thousands of Poles have experienced spiritual renewal over more than three decades now and have formed Light-Life groups in nearly every parish in Poland.

The Roman Catholics there in Poland worked closely with Campus Crusade for Christ. This is American-based interdenominational movement known also as “Agape,” which pursues evangelistic activities in over 80 countries throughout the world. Agape concentrates on preaching the basic Christian truths common to all denominations and aims at helping individuals to establish a personal relationship with Jesus, accepting Him as Christ the Savior and Lord. Those who become believers are then encouraged to join a local church of their choice.

Not only has this renewal movement influenced Poles to have a personal relationship with Christ; it has also had a profound influence in two other areas for life in Poland. One, it has caused a change to take place in the type of government they have in their country. Secondly, it has taught the importance of abstinence in the area of drinking (something I am encouraging also). So there are some good things starting to happen, but there needs to be more, and we can help. Personally, I believe persecution will be one of the key factors that will bring about this “unity” of true believers. Let’s serve the Lord in unity even before persecution forces us to unite as true believers in Christ!

Will the Church always be divided up into various denominations? Probably it will be, however, there is coming a time in the future when these differences in names will not mean as much. A Roman Catholic Priest

spoke on the radio one day to the Christians in the United States; he had just come from ministering in the Sudan. This priest commented, when persecution hit, the true Christians united. Their name differences didn't mean anything anymore, the only thing that mattered, was that they were fellow brothers and sisters in the family of Christ!

Jesus prayed this prayer for "unity" of true believers in John 17, and His prayer will be answered! "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all **may be one**, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also **may be one in Us**, that **the world may believe that You sent Me**. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they **may be one** just as **We are one**; I in them, and you in Me, **that they may be made perfect in one**, and **that the world may know that You have sent Me**, and have loved them as You have loved Me." (John 17:20-23) Now, what part will you have in obeying this command, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?! I believe we have a part to play in bringing this about; it is not just a sovereign act of God. God wants us to love our fellow Christians!

This means that we have to change our attitude toward other Christians that are in other denominations than our own. It means not telling jokes about other Christians. It means praying and thinking of ways that we can fellowship together, whether it be through worship services or through united evangelism, whatever, we need to find ways to unite with other born again believers. We need to see Christians that are in other churches as God sees them, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

As soon as I write this I can hear people saying, "There he goes again encouraging ecumenism." Wait just a minute, as I pointed out in the article mentioned above (The Holy Catholic Church), I do not mean uniting with nonbelievers. What I am saying is that true Christians need to unite, and if you do not agree with the statement made by Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you have an argument with God on this issue, and not with me. God has said it, and I am only commenting on it. I say this in love, but with passion because I believe this is what will trigger a great ingathering of souls into the Kingdom of Christ. Twice, in John 17 Jesus prayed, "...that they also **may be one in Us**, that **the world may believe that You sent Me**." The world will see the unity and love among true believers, and many will believe in Christ also! I believe we will see this revival happen before Christ returns for His bride the Church!

(4) "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*"

Yes, there are many different names for the churches, but the fact remains, the Bible teaches that there is only one Church, the invisible Universal Church. That is what the word "Catholic" means, the dictionary states it this way, "*of broad or general scope; universal; all-inclusive, of or pertaining to the ancient undivided Christian church.*" For some this statement is a welcome thought, but others think of it almost as heresy. The reason there is such a difference on this subject is because for many years the Church has been much divided. The seeds of division were even in the early Church.

Paul says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in, 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" You see even in Paul's time, at the beginning of the Church, people claimed one man's teaching over another's, some even going so far as to say, "We are of Christ." These people were indicating that they were the only ones that had the right

interpretation, and the right teaching of the Bible.

Do you hear people today saying we are of John Wesley, of Martin Luther, of John Calvin, of Pope John Paul II, and so on? It is not wrong to think of other Christians in other churches as brothers and sisters in Christ, even if we do not agree on every doctrinal issue. And I am not saying that the teaching of these teachers is wrong, but what Paul in the Bible is saying is that we do not use the teaching of certain men or women as an excuse to hinder our fellowship with other true believers!

Whether we know it or not, all “born again” Christians are in the Holy Catholic Church. The Church is bigger than any one denomination. It is greater than the Roman Catholic Church; it is bigger than the Orthodox Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, and whatever other church denomination you can think of. I know these statements make some people angry, but this is what the passage is teaching. So often it has been taught that this unity is only in our local church or our denomination. This, however, is not being true to the context of this book, which is the unity of the body of Christ.

The Church is: “EKKLESIA, from *ek*, out of, and *klēsis*, a calling (*kaleō*, to call), was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens gathered to discuss the affairs of State, Acts 19:39. In the Sept. it is used to designate the gathering of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose, or a gathering regarded as representative of the whole nation...It has two applications to companies of Christians, (a) to the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, “I will build My Church,” Matthew 16:18, and which is further described as “the Church which is His Body,” Ephesians 1:22; 5:23, (b) in the singular number (e.g., Matthew 18:17, R.V. marg., “congregation”), to a company consisting of professed believers. E.g., Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:5, and in the plural, with reference to churches in a district.” (VINE’S)

I have used the upper case “C” in my writings usually for the Church universal, and a lower case “c” for the local church or denomination, but you need to know this distinction is not found in Scripture. Also, the word “church” is never used of a building or a denomination in the Bible as we do so often use it today, in error! The Church is the “people of God” that have been called by Him to be Christians.

(5) “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;”

There is one Lord—the Lord Jesus Christ, one faith in His shed blood for us, and one baptism that all believers are baptized into by the Holy Spirit.

First let us see how we get into this invisible Catholic Church. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith, we are baptized by the Spirit of God into the Church. (I have known people that teach this Scripture is saying that when people are baptized, they are baptized into their local church, there could be nothing further from the truth. We are not baptized by the Spirit of God into any local church, nor are we baptized into any particular denomination, as much as people would like to believe and teach this.)

There are Christians who say, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean...” These verses are found in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, but look at what these verses are really talking about in their context. Someone has said, a verse without a context is a pretext. These verses in question are not saying, do not have fellowship with Christians that are different from you, or that are in a different

denomination from you. These verses are saying just the opposite, stay away from idol worshipers, and as verse 14 makes very clear, “don’t be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” These verses are not teaching as some say that we are not to have fellowship with other Christians that do not believe everything just like us. You may know the saying, “If you find the perfect church don’t join it because you will spoil it.” We are imperfect people and on different levels of understanding of God’s Word, so there are bound to be differences.

When we receive Christ by faith we are “all” baptized into the body of Christ, the **CHURCH**. **“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”** (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) When we are born again by the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit takes us at that instant and places us into the Church; we are then all part of the **ONE BODY, THE CHURCH!**

This thought almost frightens people. They cannot comprehend such a thing! They have been taught for so long that they belong to one denomination. Sorry, this is not how God sees us in the Spirit! He sees us untied in **ONE BODY**. I just know some people will not be able to comprehend this, but when we meet around the throne of God together, it will be clear. The point is, in this practical section of Ephesians, on the subject of the Church, Paul wants us to not only know this truth, but to start putting it into practice by our actions, and by our living.

(6) “one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.”

The Christian, at the moment of conversion, is brought into the body of Christ. That means that all saints from the day of Pentecost until God calls the Church, His Bride, home to be with Him are in this one body. Some believers are on this earth and some are in heaven, but they too are in the body, the Church. One reason it is called the invisible Church is because some are in heaven already. The other reason it is called the invisible Church is because we do not meet together at one time here on this earth and also the organization is of the Holy Spirit. In the Spirit we are one in Christ, and God sees His Church on earth and in heaven.

Often, here on this earth, we have a limited spiritual vision, but the Holy Spirit through St. Paul wants us to expand our vision of the Church. Does that mean that we are to unite with just anyone who calls themselves Christians? God forbid that we should try to unite with churches and individuals that deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ, because Scripture says, “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” However, as this verse points out just like we will not unite with someone who is cursing Jesus by saying He is not Lord, also we will fellowship with someone who claims Jesus Christ as Lord. This person is a brother or sister in Christ!

Yes, there will be those in the Last Days, that the Bible speaks about who will fall away from the truth, these we will separate ourselves from! These are those who deny the Lordship of Jesus and His salvation that comes through His shed blood, as taught in His Word the Bible. These so called “Christian leaders” will be into immorality and homosexuality, and greed of all kinds. “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude3,4)

Getting back to this subject of unity in the Church, does that mean that we have to all go to the same denomination? No, there will probably always be different denominations until we are home together with the Lord. It is not always wrong to be different, by the way, look at our physical body, it has a lot of different parts, but they all work together to make the whole body.

This is exactly what the Bible says about the Church here on the earth. “For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.” (1 Corinthians 12:14-20)

I am aware that these verses are speaking of the different gifts in the body of Christ, but I also believe we see different characteristics of churches because they are using different gifts. We need each other, for example, there are those denominations that really get into the study of the background of the Bible, they have given us great Bible scholars like, Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and St. Augustine, etc. Then we have other churches that have great evangelists, and missionaries, and on and on the list could go. The point is we many not think we need each other, but we do!

(7) “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”

That takes us to this section on the gifts, and gifted offices that God has placed in His body, the Church. God is the one who gives out these spiritual gifts (grace) to His Church. Just like salvation there is nothing we do to deserve these gifts, God just gives them to us by His love and grace. He places the gifted offices and gifts in the body where He knows they will be needed most. Of course, how they are used is subject to our own spirit and free will. God never forces believers to do anything, He may, however, make us willing though, like Jonah found out!

God wants us to discover and joyfully use the gifts He has given us. By the way, most of the gifts, particularly all the ones that are mentioned here, are for the Church and not for our own personal use. We find great joy in using the gifts God gives and this is one way we know these are our gifts. (The gifts are covered in other Scriptures like: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12-14, and 1 Peter 4.)

(8) “Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”

After Jesus rose from the dead He returned to heaven and He took with Him those in the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades. Then Christ, on the day of Pentecost, (fifty days after the resurrection) poured out on His Church the Holy Spirit. This is when the gifts started being given to believers in the Church Age. This was a new thing, and not like in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament times only certain believers were given the Holy Spirit to do the ministry God intended. Then the Holy Spirit was with them, but now He is in us. Now all believers are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (I Corinthians 12:11)

You might ask, “Why do we have to desire spiritual *gifts* if God gives them to us?”

We have a role to play, it is just like salvation, it is free, but we still need to ask for it. So too, we need to desire and ask God what gift(s) do you have for me. “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” (I Corinthians 14:1)

(9) “(Now this, ‘He ascended’ –what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?”

By the way, I have written in more detail, than I can cover here on this subject of the lower parts of the earth, and this is in the article on *Hell*. It might be good just to give a brief back ground here, though, on this subject. It seems quit clear from Scripture that before the resurrection of Christ that there was in the heart of the earth, amazing as this seems, two compartments. One of the compartments was for Paradise or Abraham’s bosom as it was called. The other was “hell” before the judgment, sort of like a county (local) jail where people are held until their trial, if I may use this illustration. This is why in the Apostle’s Creed it says in the later versions, Christ descended into “hell,” if people know their Hebrew and Greek, the word that really should be used is “Hades” (the place of the departed dead, in Hebrew—Sheol).

Let’s look at the verses in the book of Luke that have to do with this subject. “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.” (Luke 16:22-26)

(10) “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”

“Paul explains that the quote from Psalm 68:18 (v. 8) applies to the **ascended** Christ. An ascent implies a prior descent. Christ’s descent **into the lower parts of the earth** has been variously interpreted as a descent into hell (associating it with 1 Peter 3:19), a descent into Sheol/Hades (the realm of the dead [see Acts 2:25-35]), or as symbolically referring to His incarnation (whereby Christ descended to Earth from heaven), a descent carrying Him to the depths of humiliation (see Philippians 2:5-11). With reference to the view that He descended into hell, there is no biblical support for the notion that Jesus suffered in hell, only that He descended to Sheol [Paradise side of Sheol/Hades] to release the righteous dead into eternal glory, proclaiming the adequacy of the atonement and validating the testimony of the prophets.” (New Spirit filled Life Bible)

I want to quote the 1 Peter 3:18-19 passage here: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water.”

Some teach that this passage is saying Jesus went to hell and preached to people down there, who were sent

there as a result of not believing when Noah preached. This is not the case at all. First, what would be the point of preaching to someone who does not have a second chance, since Scripture says, "...it is appointed unto men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27) Second, as the Spirit Filled Life Bible commentators pointed out, nowhere in the rest of the Bible can you find support for Jesus going to hell. As He told the thief on the cross they would be together in Paradise not hell.

Then you say, "What is this passage saying then?" It is speaking about Christ's Spirit that preached through Noah to the people who are now in hell, but at one time they lived before the flood. It is His Spirit also that was in the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades during the three days and three nights when Christ's body was in the grave. He was very much alive even as He was from all eternity. Peter is simply pointing out Jesus was alive in the Spirit even as He was all through the Old Testament, and only one example is given here, and that is the example of Christ preaching through Noah before the flood.

To understand fuller what verse 10 of Ephesians is talking about look at these verses in Acts. "... Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" (Acts 2:26-35)

Hebrews reiterates this same idea when it reminds us: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9)

Then also in, Philippians 2:5-11, we see Christ's humiliation and His exaltation. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(11) "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,"

And He Himself gave... "Continuing the analogy with returning human conquerors, who gave gifts to their countrymen, the ascended Christ, by His Spirit, has given spiritual gifts to His subjects individually, to be exercised for the benefit of the one body, corporately. Many of these gifts of the Spirit are listed in Romans

12:4-8, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-12, 27-30.” (The DEFENDER’S Study Bible)

“In 1 Corinthians 12:8-28 the Holy Spirit is seen as anointing the members of the body of Christ with spiritual gifts, or enablements for various services; here certain Spirit-anointed believers: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His body the Church. In 1 Corinthians, the gifts are spiritual anointing for specific service; in Ephesians, the gifts are men who have such gifts.” (You can look at this information in our commentary on 1 Corinthians.)

“The Lord, in bestowing the gifted men, determines providentially (e.g. Acts 11:22-26), or directly through the Holy Spirit (e.g. Acts 13:1-2; 16:6-7), the places of their service. ‘Some’ (churches or places) need one gift, as, e.g. an evangelist; ‘some’ (churches or places) need rather a pastor or teacher. Absolutely nothing in Christ’s service is left to mere human judgment or self-choosing. Even an apostle was not permitted to choose his place of service (Acts 16:7-8).” (New Scofield Reference Edition, Oxford)

Now let us look at these gifts that Christ bestowed on His Church by His Holy Spirit when He ascended on high. First mentioned is Apostles, we do not believe these are just the twelve apostles (other apostles are mentioned in the New Testament besides the twelve) because they would only help at the beginning of the Church. These gifts are meant for the duration of the Church. So the first twelve, Judas being replaced by Matthias as Scripture says in Acts 1:26. “And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

“**APOSTLE**” means in Greek: “APOSTOLOS is, lit., one sent forth apo, from, stellō, to send). “The word is used of the Lord Jesus to describe His relation to God, Hebrews 3:1; see John 17:3. The twelve disciples chosen by the Lord for special training were so called, Luke 6:13; 9:10. Paul, though he had seen the Lord Jesus, 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8, had not ‘compared with’ the Twelve ‘all the time’ of His earthly ministry, and hence was not eligible for a place among them, according to Peter’s description of the necessary qualifications, Acts 1:22. Paul was commissioned directly, by the Lord Himself, after His Ascension, to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

“The word has also a wider reference. In Acts 14:4, 14, it is used of Barnabas as well as of Paul; in Romans 16:7 of Andronicus and Junias. In 2 Corinthians 8:23 (R.V., margin) two unnamed brethren are called ‘apostles of the churches;’ in Philippians 2:25 (R.V., margin) Epaphroditus is referred to as ‘your apostle.’ It is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:6 of Paul, Silas and Timothy, to define their relation to Christ.

“2. APOSTOLĒ, a sending, a mission, signifies an apostleship, Acts 1:25; Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 9:2; Galatians 2:8. (VINE’S) The word we use more often today is “Missionary.” Some would teach that this gift is not operating today, but this would make no sense at all because how could this be a gift to the Church in our time? All the other gifted offices that are mentioned here are for the Church today, so why would the first one not be for us also. If it is not meant for the Church today why didn’t Paul say so? No, it is most certainly needed today; however, apostles of today or missionaries as we call them will never take the place of the first twelve since they have a special role to play in God’s kingdom. We do need missionaries today, they are ones that start new works, or go where no one has gone before with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (VINE’S)

“**PROPHET**” means in the Greek: “PROPHĒTEUŌ, one who speaks forth or openly (see Prophecy, A), a proclaimer of a divine message, denoted among the Greeks an interpreter of the oracles of the gods.

In the Sept. it is the translation of the word *rōeh*, a seer; 1 Samuel 9:9, indicating that the prophet was one who had immediate intercourse with God. It also translates the word *nābhī*, meaning either one in whom the message from God springs forth or one to whom anything is secretly communicated. Hence, in general, the prophet was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested, Numbers 11:17-20, one, to whom and through whom their messages were very largely the proclamation of the Divine purposes of salvation and glory to be accomplished in the future; the prophesying of the N.T. prophets was both a preaching of the Divine counsels of grace already accomplished and the fore-telling of the purposes of God in the future.

“2. PSEUDOPROPHĒTĒS, a false prophet, is used of such (a) in O.T. times, Luke 6:26; 2 Peter 2:1; (b) in the present period since Pentecost, Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; Acts 13:6; 1 John 4:1; (c) with reference to a false prophet destined to arise as the supporter of the “beast” at the close of this age, Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10 (himself described as ‘another beast,’ 13:11).

“Prophetess” in Greek: PROPHĒTIS, the feminine of prophētēs (see above), is used of Anna, Luke 2:36; of the self-assumed title of “the woman Jezebel” in Revelation 2:20.” (VINE’S)

Today we call these people preachers usually, and they are very needed in the Church. Usually they are found preaching the Word of God. If they are filled with the Holy Spirit and prayed up in the Spirit, they will be preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit as Peter did on the day of Pentecost. They will at times, if filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesy things that will happen, but this will always be in agreement with the Word of God, if it is truly from God. **Caution:** What they say is not to be added to Scripture as equal to Scripture. There are many prophets that will be coming in the Tribulation time as well, and these are spoken of in Revelation chapter 7 and chapter 11.

Do we need these today, you better believe we do, and they are mentioned in the book of Joel and Acts as well. Let us look at the Acts passage: “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those day; and they shall prophesy...And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of LORD shall be saved.” (Acts 2:16-21)

It is obvious from what Peter says that this passage is being specifically fulfilled now in the Church Age, but will also have a further fulfillment in the Tribulation time as well. So both men and women can be prophets, just as it was in the Old Testament, but even more so in the Age of Grace. Women are welcome to “preach” (which is mainly what this is, preaching the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit) as long as they are under the authority of the men of the church. (For more on this look at our commentary on I Corinthians 14, Part 4).

“**EVANGELIST**” means in Greek: EUANGELISTĒS, lit., a messenger of good (*eu, well, Angelos, a messenger*), denotes a preacher of the Gospel Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11, which makes clear the distinctiveness of the function in the churches; 2 Timothy 4:5. Cp. *Euangelizō*, to proclaim glad tidings, and *euangelion*, good news, gospel. Missionaries are evangelists, as being essentially preachers of the Gospel.” (VINE’S)

We think of great evangelist like Billy Sunday, D. L. Moody, Billy Graham, Luis Palau, Anne Graham, etc., but I believe this gift is also given for personal evangelism. Notice, though that there is some overlapping of this word with “prophet,” and this would be expected if this person is sharing the Word of God to evangelize.

Moody was a personal evangelist long before he began to preach. He led many young people to the Lord in a Sunday school class, and else where. So let us not think of this gift only for the gifted public speaker. You may find that you are very good at leading people to the Lord, but have never spoken to great audiences. We surely need this gift in the Church today as well. These people find it easy to witness and win many to the Lord, Philip in the Bible was known as a great evangelist. He also had four virgin daughters that were gifted evangelist.

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:4-7) Notice too, that other gifts such as healing were used in the ministry of evangelism. Then this gift was passed on to probably the only children he had, four virgin daughters. “On the next *day* we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.” (Acts 21:8-9)

“**Pastor**” means in Greek: POIMĒN, a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them), used metaphorically of Christian “pastors,” Ephesians 4:11. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; cp. Acts 20:28, which, with verse 17, indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); so also in 1 Peter 5:1,2, ‘tend the flock...exercising the oversight,’ R.V.; this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence. See SHEPHERD. (VINE’S)

“**Teach or Teacher**” means in Greek: DIDASKŌ or DIDASKALOS, absolutely, to give instruction,

These two terms Pastor/Teacher are together here. Those who shepherd the flock have to do this by teaching the Word of God in an expository method.

(12) “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”

Jesus not only sent His disciples to do evangelism, He sent them to teach doctrines of the Word of God, and to establish churches. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The word **perfecting** of the saints is used in the old King James, and we find that this word “implies full development, growth into maturity of godliness. The word ‘perfect,’ as the Bible uses it of men, does not refer to sinless perfection. Old Testament characters described as ‘perfect’ were obviously not sinless. Although a number of Hebrew and Greek words are translated ‘perfect,’ the thought is usually either *completeness in all details* (Heb *taman*, Gk. *Katarizō*), or to reach a goal or achieve a purpose (Gk *Teleioō*)...” (Scofield) “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12)

The reason for these gifts and gifted offices are to build up the Church as a whole, and to help individual local churches, as well as individuals. Missionaries (apostles) go into new areas where there are few or no churches. Paul would do this at the beginning of the Church age. This takes a special type of person since Satan doesn’t like the gospel going to what he feels is his territory. A missionary has to have a wide range of gifts to use at

their disposal. They will need to do evangelism, preach, teach, organize, delegate, often cast out demons, heal, and so on. When a work is established others need to be trained to help out like evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

“That is, it is the business of all the saints—not of a few leaders only—to carry on the work of the ministry. The leaders are for the purpose of perfecting or equipping believers to carry on this work. Most local churches today do not follow this NT idea. It is common practice to let the pastor do the ministering. Sometimes the pastor temporarily may find it easier to do the work himself than to train others to do it. But his job is to train up workers, and in the long run his ministry will be more effective if he does so.” (The WYCLIFFE BIBLE COMMENTARY)

(13) “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”

The goal is for the leadership to teach the Word so well that we will major on the major doctrines of the Word of God, and not be divided over the minor issues. Paul did this everywhere he went, but we can be encouraged to know that there was no perfect church even after such a gifted apostle as Paul was there. That is why I say the “goal” is to help us agree on the basics of the Word, but I believe total unity will not take place until we are in the perfect state in heaven. Notice, our main subject of preaching and teaching will revolve around the knowledge of the Son of God. The goal is “unity of the faith,” but this will only happen as each one of us as individuals in the Church learn of Christ and become more like Him!

(14) “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting;”

The longer I am in the ministry, the more I see how little Christians know of the Word of God. The reason we are tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine is because we are like children that can be easily tricked. There are unsaved men and women out there that are tools of the Devil, and their greatest desire is to trip us up spiritually by their scheming and craftiness. These people are energized by Satan himself. C.S. Lewis’ *Screw Tape Letters* is a humorous book to read on this subject. However, the subject is not really funny, but very serious, and we are in a life and death warfare. Later in chapter six we will go into more detail on this warfare.

(15) “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—“

God wants us to become sincere in our relationships with each other in the Church, and to relate to each other in an honest and open, but loving manner. God wants us to mature in our faith. “...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18a)

There is no substitute for meditating on the Word of God every day, morning and evening if we are to be successful spiritually speaking. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

(16) “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in

love.”

We are back to the illustration of the body given in 1 Corinthians 12: 12. “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” There is only one Church and every true Christian is a part of it. We need to love each other and work together. Right now the Devil is laughing, I believe, at the Church because he already knows what we do not know, and that is we are not knit together. We are pulling apart, it is like when a disease is attacking the body, and the body destroys itself. We need to understand that this is happening and come together as brothers and sisters in Christ and stop tearing each other down.

You see, I do not believe that Paul is just talking about the local church and its working together, but about the whole of the Church. Remember the letter is addressed not just to a local church, but to the Universal Church. We need to support each other even if we are in different denominations. God does not see us as in different churches, but He sees us in the body of Christ! The sooner this takes place, the sooner healing can happen. We must use our gifts to build, rather than to tear down or separate. If a person has one of the above gifts it should be used in all the Church to help edify, it is not just for one congregation. Yes, you may be the pastor/teacher of a local church, but you will also minister to others that are not in your local church.

I believe God has used men like Billy Graham and women Mother Teresa to help Christians work together. These leaders were not as concerned as to what their denomination had to say about them working with other believers outside their denomination, as they were about the ministry God had given them to do. They went out there and worked with other Christians in whatever denomination, and were used mightily of the Lord! The thing is we need many more like them in the Church today. And oh yes, you will be misunderstood and ridiculed at times, but so was Jesus when He worked with His disciples. We need those who will take up the torch and run with it! We need those who will say what needs to be done and now let’s work together to get it done.

(17) “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,”

Gentiles here are being used like an example of the nonbelievers. It is true the unsaved have no real purpose in life other than to please themselves. There may be exceptions, but for the most part there are underlying motives of selfishness in the “good” that they do. Often it is to be seen of men, or for a tax write off and so forth. You see if you do not believe there is a future after this life why should you really care for anyone except yourself. So their minds are on the here and now, the physical. It is really all pointless if you think about it, if you believe when you die you are dead and gone, why get excited about living the right way. The world’s philosophy is really, “Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die.” They say, “If it feels good, do it.” They teach, “You only go around once.” There is no real thought of doing things for the Lord, and for the motive of just loving people like Christ loved them.

I had a friend in the National Guard, and he had given a girl a ride that she needed, then he rewarded himself by going to bed with her. He thought of this as a fair return for his “good deed.” Like Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden, you can be like God. How often do you here this taught today, “You are a god,” they say, “Look out for number one.” There is no thought of doing something as unto the Lord. The world doesn’t think this way.

They feel that what matters is only the here and now. Like Madonna sings, I'm a material girl, and she probably is, but she needs the Lord. We are not to live or think like the unsaved, but we are to have different motives for what we do. We should do things because we love the Lord!

(18) "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;"

Satan has the people in the world thinking they are just fine the way they are. They say everyone else is doing it, why shouldn't we. Interesting, isn't this what they said before the flood? I was thinking about the spiritual blindness the world has in the area of creation for example, they cannot even imagine in their wildest dreams that there could be a God who created everything, to them that is absurd. However, for them to believe that everything came about by chance and everything just happened to come together by accident, after billions and millions of years seems to make perfect sense to them.

How do you think they got so twisted up? Satan has planted in their hearts this darkness. "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God should shine on them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

I started to watch a program on television about the "real story" of the birth of Christ. As I expected, the worldly wise men and women do, they started shooting holes in the place where Jesus was born, then saying that Mary, Jesus' mother, was not a virgin but impregnated by some soldier. I had heard enough to know that they were not believers, even though some of them were from some seminary (cemetery if you ask me).

But this is the type of thing you get from the world, they are not going to believe unless first the Holy Spirit works in their hearts and lives, and then they open up to Christ as Lord and Savior. They are just like the religious leaders in Jesus' time; they too called Jesus illegitimate, and did not believe He was who He said He was. The Bible says, "But without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6) Those in this world are blinded by Satan, and until they come to Christ by faith for salvation they will continue in darkness.

(19) "who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

When you do not believe there is a life after this life, nor a God that you will one day have to answer to, when you believe you evolved from an animal you begin to think and live worse than an animal. I am not saying everyone who is an atheist is like this, because some people are not brave enough to act out what they would really like to do. However, given a chance, and under the right conditions those in the world that do not believe do horrible things.

Think about the Holocaust, think about abortion, think about brothels, orgies, torture, murder, immorality, adultery, homosexuality, abuse of children and women, rape, incest, bestiality, alcoholism, drugs, witchcraft, human sacrifices, extortion, blackmail, pedophilia, and crimes of all kinds. No, we don't like to think about these things, neither should we dwell on them, but we should not put our heads in the sand, but take a look at what the Bible says about this world without Christ. These are not my words, but what God says about the

world's condition, and until we see it for what it is, we will not see a need to change it! We as Christians, so often look at the world through "rose tinted glasses," unless of course you are living where these things are out in the open. I know these things that we have mentioned happen in every country of the world including United States, it is sad to say.

In Romans it says this about where mankind is at spiritually without Christ: "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

"Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." (Romans 1:24-32)

(20) "But you have not so learned Christ,"

As a Christian, now, there has to be a contrast in our lives from that of the world, or else we are not true Christians, or else we are carnal Christians as we saw in the book of 1 Corinthians.

(21) "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:"

"If" there are things in your life like what has been mentioned in verse 19 you need to examine your life to see if you are truly saved. "Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified." (2 Corinthians 13:5) Sometimes people even are raised in the church, but they do not know Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior.

It may be that you need to pray right now to make sure that you are saved. Say, Lord, I am not sure if I am saved or not, but I want to know. Right now I ask you to forgive me of all my sins, I repent of them (turn from them to Christ). I do believe that Jesus, of the Bible, was born of the Virgin Mary, and that He is truly God and man. I believe that He died on the cross and rose again the third day, right now I want to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me, and making me your child. In Jesus name, I pray, Amen. It is as simple as that, because it is by grace through faith that we are saved. It is a gift of God, and we only need to receive it. (If you want to read more on this subject look at our commentary on Romans, or tracts like: What Does it Mean to be Born Again, Heaven, How to Get There.)

(22) "that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,"

When we are truly born again we will be a changed person, no, we are not perfect by a long shot, but we are changed in many ways. “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

There are those who teach that you can't know you are saved until you die, well, that is not what God's Word says. How else would we be able to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, or as this verse says we can know we are a new creation? Also, St. John says we can know, look at these verses: “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:11-13)

(23) “and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,”

When we know that we are saved we can be renewed in our spirit and mind, and then we can walk (live) in the Spirit. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

The renewing of our mind comes about as we meditate on the Word of God everyday after we are saved. Then our minds start to change to be like Christ's mind. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)

I would like to suggest that you get a daily Bible reading chart. We do have one in our literature section, and it is set up so you can “meditate” your way through the Word of God in two years, but there are also others out there that you can get your hands on. If you have a Christian Bible Book Store near by, you could ask them for a chart as well.

(24) “and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

As we meditate on the Word of God and put it into practice our lives, we will change over time. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as *much* as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.” (Psalm 119:9-16) Someone has said, “The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible.”

(25) “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each *one of you* speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.”

Here is one of those places in the Epistles that the Ten Commandments are repeated for us so we will know that they are still for us in the Church Age. (Again for a more in-depth study of the Law and the Ten Commandments look at our study on Romans.) You see when we are “born again” we want to keep God’s law, He has written His law on our hearts in this “Age,” not like the last “Age,” where it was written on stone.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those day, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34) This promise is to be ultimately fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ, but right now Hebrews says it is fulfilled in us in the Church Age, as we receive Christ as Savior. So we will not want to lie, but if we do, we will confess our sin to God and ask His forgiveness as it says: “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 how we are to live (walk) every day in the Lord.

(26) “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,”

There are times we are suppose to be angry, and that is when people are sinning against the Lord or their fellow man. Jesus became angry at the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He became angry at people selling things in the Temple itself rather than praying there. So there are reasons to be angry. Today we should be angry that people would take innocent lives by abortion. We should be angry at injustice even as God is angry over this, however, we are not to sin. You see God can be angry and bring justice about through judgment because He is God, but that is not our job but His. “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

We are not to become angry with people and do anything physical to them, nor are we to use angry words or bad words on people. “Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19-20) With the exception of police officers, and soldiers we have no right as Christians to kill others. The early apostles never fought back, they did try to get away, but they never used violence against those who were persecuting them. We have more in-depth information on this in the Romans study.

Vengeance is not ours to give out; God will do that, in His time and in His way. When He does it, He will not make any mistakes. We have to suffer wrong now, and love people no matter what they do to us. Yes, this is hard, and yes, this is persecution sometimes, but ours is to trust God that He knows what He is doing. We are not to be angry with people, because this only destroys us, therefore we are not to allow the sun go down before we forgive someone. Does God know we feel adrenalin rushes sometimes? Yes, He does, so He allows for some time, after you have thought about it and prayed for that person; forgive them that same day before the sun goes down.

You say, but you don’t know what they did to me: they killed my loved one, they raped me, they spit on me, they humiliated me, they stole from me, and on and on the list could go. Guess what; is what happened to you any worse than what happened to Jesus? What did He say when He was suffering on the cross for our sins, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34) Our duty in Christ is forgive people that sin against us, only God can help us do this. In our Lord’s Prayer doesn’t it say: “...And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...? (Matthew 6:12) Then it goes on to say after that prayer: “For if you forgive

men their trespasses, Your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

(27) “nor give place to the devil.”

Satan would love to get us to harbor hatred in our heart toward people that wrong us, because he knows it will destroy our witness and inner selves. “Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...” (Hebrews 12:14-15)

I am afraid many Christians do not have victory in their lives because they cannot forgive, and forget. They continue to dwell on what has happened to them, and they become angry at not only the other person, but at God. We have to repent of these sins, and go on walking in the Spirit. God’s grace is sufficient for us if we will pray and ask for His grace.

We also need to remember that God is Sovereign, in other words He only allows things to come into our lives that will in some way turn out for our good and His glory. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” (Romans 8:28) “no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)

(28) “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”

There is a brother in the Lord that I know who was a thief before he got saved, in fact, he was even fired from a job for stealing. However, now that he is a Christian, he works with his hands to serve the Lord. He came out to our home and helped us build a shed which was a real blessing. You see the difference is, in the world, the way of life for many people is to steal whatever they can get their hands on, but when that same person gets saved, they want to work for what they get, and also they want to give to others in need. My Dad was a professional gambler before he was saved, but when he got saved he paid back one man, that he had cheated, over two thousand dollars. You can read about this in the article: *What happened to Shorty?*

(29) “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

I know of people that were very good at “cussing (cursing) or swearing” before they were saved. Now that we are saved we want to watch every word we say. Yes, the world sees nothing wrong with “cussing” or using bad words, but that is because they are listening to Satan who loves bad words. When we were casting out a demon out a girl who was demon possessed, she would say terrible things, which is what Satan likes, he wants people to curse God and everything. That is what the word “damn” means; it means to send people to hell, God wants just the opposite for them, and so should we want this!

Nonbelievers may choose to use these bad words, but they are not for Christians. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:35-37)

Neither should we take God’s name in vain. Taking God’s name in vain is saying God’s name when we are not praying or speaking respectfully about Him. Some Jews, even to this day, will not pronounce the name of God or write it because they know it is holy. Also, it is one of the Ten Commandments not to take God’s name in vain. I believe people can violate this command even by saying “God” in a casual way.

When we went to a Christian school in Canada we were told not even to use slang words for God in our language. As a result, I might say, oh brother or something else rather than to use God’s name carelessly. “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.” (Deuteronomy 5:11) I believe many people have God’s curse on their lives because they are using God’s name to curse things and people. I believe this can even happen to Christians, and that is why Paul is saying these things to Christians.

God wants us to use our mouth to praise God, and bless people. “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” (James 3:7-10) “We” cannot tame our tongue, but God can if we ask Him to!

Look at Peter in the Bible, he was a hard old fisherman before He came to know the Lord, but afterward he was a changed man. He too though, had a problem with cursing, when he was sitting at the fire near Jesus, before Christ went to the cross. Remember how he denied the Lord three times. Remember how he began also to curse again, but God changed him after the resurrection. He then used that same *tongue* on the day of Pentecost to preach the Gospel in a powerful way, and saw three thousand brought into the kingdom! God can use my tongue and your tongue in a positive way for His honor and glory, if we will let him!

(30) “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

How could we grieve (make sad, notice not mad, but sad) the Holy Spirit of God? I believe there are many ways. Since I was filled with the Holy Spirit, it is like there is a check in my soul when I start to say or do things that are grieving the Holy Spirit. That does not mean that I always listen to Him, but He is speaking to me, and sometimes I do grieve Him. I am sorry for these times, I repent, and go on with my life, but I try to listen and obey His voice. Often it is a still quiet voice. I think us men have trouble listening to a soft voice, we want the Lord to use a loud voice, or better yet hit us over the head and then we will listen. Wouldn’t it be a lot better for us to listen and obey the soft voice, rather than to grieve the Holy Spirit?!

When we have the Spirit of God living in us as Christians He helps us know what is wrong and right in different given situations. He may say don’t do that, but if we do it, and disobey Him, we have grieved Him (made Him sad). He is a person, and He has feelings and emotions. Those of us that have a wife know what it is like to grieve someone. The Holy Spirit is trying to help us live like Christ would, so if we listen to Him it makes Him happy, but if we sin against Him it makes Him sad, it is as simple as that.

I heard on the news how an UPS driver was delivering his packages in his truck, but he heard a noise like a vibration in the back and he went on driving, not thinking anything of it. A little while later he looked back to see that his truck was on fire, it was a tire that needed fixing, but he did not listen to the warning signs. As a result many Christmas packages were destroyed, so it is when we do not listen carefully to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is one in the Holy Trinity, so when we sin and make the Holy Spirit sad, we also make all three sad, because they are three in one. Remember from the first section of this book, how we talked about being sealed by the Holy Spirit in this Church Age. This means that God has put His mark on us as His, and He is protecting us until we get to heaven (the day of redemption). He is saying here, don't bite the hand that feeds you; the Holy Spirit is trying to help you, listen to Him! "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" (2 Timothy 2:19) If we are truly born again by the power of God we will want to live victorious lives, trying not to sin or grieve the Holy Spirit of God!

(31) "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice."

This section reminds me of Galatians where it talks about the fruit of the Spirit. "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:16-26) If we are Christians we will not "practice" sin, that does not mean that we are perfect by any means, but we hate sin, and we want to live holy lives for the Lord.

In Romans, I gave the illustration of an Indian that had received the Lord. Someone asked him how it was going. He said, "Being a Christian is like having two dogs in you that are fighting, one good, and one bad." They then asked him which one was winning, he replied, "The one I feed the most." So it is in our lives if we feed our spirit on the Word of God we will grow and become victorious. If we feed the flesh on the garbage the world has to offer we then will have the old nature winning. Watchman Nee has some good material on this subject as well, that you might want to read. He has a book called, *Normal Christian Life*, and it goes right along with what we are talking about here.

(32) "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

Probably this is one of the hardest things we have to do as Christians, we think, and that is forgiving one another. There is something humbling about having to go to someone we have wronged and to ask there forgiveness, but this is what the Word says we have to do. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and

there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way, First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24) I have had to do this many times, and I can’t say that it gets easier each time; I will say that I have to do it less often. Maybe one of the reasons for this is because I think about my actions more now that I have had to confess my faults to others.

But if we do have something that is between us and another person it hinders our prayers and our walk with the Lord. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” (Psalm 66:18) “Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

Sometimes it is not our fault, we still need to forgive them too, even as God forgave us, and our sin certainly wasn’t His fault. Jesus again is our example, as always, and that leads us into the first verse of chapter 5.

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