

Adult

Sabbath School Lessons

"One Lord, One Faith"



JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 1986

THE NEW Easy English Edition of the Adult Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly



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**Editorial Offices: 6840 Eastern Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012**

**Lesson Authors: Mario Veloso
Warren H. Johns**

**Editor: Leo R. Van Dolson
Assistant Editor: Charlotte E. Ishkanian
Marketing: Bob Kyte
Sales Office: Shirley Sayers
Art and Design: Pacific Press**

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REACHING



“Don’t just reach for the top of the coconut trees,” Pastor Paterno Diaz, president of the South Philippines Union Mission tells his people. “Reach for the stars. Even if you don’t get there, you’ll be higher than the trees.”

Diaz follows that motto in his leadership of the church in the less-developed area of his country. During the last nine years the membership of the South Philippine Union Mission has grown from 50,000 to more than 134,000; from the smallest of the three Philippine unions to the seventh largest union in the world.

Much of the population consists of unreached tribal peoples, Diaz states

FOR THE STARS

...y worship spirits and have never
...d the gospel. Diaz has big plans to
...h these people for Christ in 1986.
...ready nearly 50 percent of his
...on's yearly baptisms are among tribal
...oles. "They live at a subsistence
...l," Diaz says. "They seldom handle
...and cannot afford to build
...rches." Chapels, built with previous
...teenth Sabbath Offerings, have
...vided a focal point, that attracted
...y tribal people to Jesus.
...ut many tribes have no Christian
...ness. Their villages will not hear the
...el unless laymen and workers join
...ds to build outpost evangelism
...ers. "These are simple meeting
...es," Diaz explains. "They are made

of native material." One of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects is to provide the tin roofs and nails so that hundreds of chapels may be built in unreached tribal villages.

And reaching for the stars, as usual, the South Philippine Union Mission aims to enter hundreds of unreached villages in the next five years. You will add momentum to the thrust of frontier mission this quarter, by supporting the World Budget Offering and planning for a special love gift on March 29.

Other projects to share from this offering are:

1. Outpost evangelism centers, division-wide.
2. Men's dormitory, Philippine Union College.
3. New dormitory, Central Philippine Adventist College.
4. Office building, East Indonesia Union.

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RECHENGEH

MEET THE AUTHORS OF THIS QUARTER'S LESSONS



Warren H. Johns was born of missionary parents in Beirut, Lebanon, at the close of World War II. After completing his theological studies at Andrews University, he pastored several churches in the historic Battle Creek area. He taught for five years at Columbia Union College and Newbold College, then was appointed associate editor of *Ministry* magazine. Currently he is studying for his doctorate at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University. His wife, Loretta, teaches business administration at Andrews University, and his daughter, Lorie, attends elementary school. Family interests include mountain climbing, camping, bird watching, fossil collecting, and canoeing. Elder Johns enjoys telling nature stories to junior campers and jogging. He has entered several races, including marathons.



Mario Veloso was born in Chile. At 15 years of age he accepted the Adventist message and attended Adventist colleges in South America and the United States, receiving his doctorate of divinity from Catholic University of Salvador in Argentina. Dr. Veloso has held pastorates and administrative positions in Argentina and has taught at Andrews University and River Plate College in Argentina. He has served in administrative positions in the Austral Union and currently serves as youth and temperance director for the South American Division. He and his wife, Lucy, have two adult children, Liliana and Eloy, both resident physicians in Mexico. He enjoys jogging and writing, having written more than 20 books in Spanish and Portuguese and published more than 100 articles.

Supplemental Book: *Ephesians: Prison Papers From a Captive Ambassador*, by Dr. Mario Veloso, is published by Pacific Press Publishing Association and is available at your Adventist Book Center.

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul while under house arrest about A.D. 62. Written to foster unity among the Ephesian believers, the epistle contains much valuable counsel for the Christian church today. Dr. Veloso brings out this counsel in his inimitable style and presents it in a format that carries the reader along. While especially designed as a help in studying the Sabbath School lessons for this quarter, the book may be read with profit at any time.

Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians

“One Lord, One Faith”

Paul's letter to the Ephesians has warmed the hearts of poets and reformers, laymen and theologians alike, over the centuries. The magnetic qualities of its message indicate that its author, Paul, knew Jesus in a deeply personal way, even though there is no evidence that he had ever come into face-to-face contact with Him during His earthly ministry. Paul's Damascus-road experience seems to have been his first direct encounter with the Person about whom he writes so eloquently.

Paul had many concerns on his mind as he wrote this letter. One of Paul's major concerns is the mystery of the eternal plan of God that has been fulfilled through His Son Jesus Christ. One facet of the mystery is how the Gentiles can be united with the body of Christ on the same basis that the prophets and apostles were. Because the means by which this is accomplished is the grace of Christ, grace becomes another dominant theme of the epistle. Grace in action brings about unity in the body of Christ, the church; thus unity is another major theme of this epistle. This quarter the theme of unity will serve as the main window through which we will view the letter to the Ephesian church. Because Satan does everything possible to bring disunity into the church today, the emphasis on unity in Ephesians deserves our special attention. If we are divided here on earth, how can we be united happily in heaven?

EPHESIANS OUTLINED

Unity in Calling Chapters 1-3	Unity in Conduct Chapters 4-6
Opening greeting or salutation (1:1, 2). Spiritual blessings IN Christ (1:3-14) Thanksgiving and a prayer (1:15-23) Results of the new life—unity and access IN Christ (2:1 - 3:21)	The practical side—unity IN Christ within the church (4:1 - 5:21) In the home (5:22 - 6:4) In society (6:5-9) Concluding admonition—fighting the Christian warfare (6:10-20) Closing words and farewell— (6:21-24)

"One Hope of Your Calling"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 1:1, 2; 6:21-24.



MEMORY TEXT: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Paul wrote this epistle while under house arrest in Rome. It portrays the strong spiritual ties that he felt for the believers in a church that he had much to do with establishing.

Features of the Book of Ephesians	
The writer	Paul, a prisoner and an apostle
The recipients	The Ephesian church was mostly from a Gentile background, but there were some Jewish Christians in the church
The date and the occasion for writing	Written between A.D. 61 and 63 during Paul's house arrest in Rome and about the same time as Colossians
Paul's greeting and farewell	Marks of authenticity and evidences of Paul's great compassion for people

INTRODUCTION: What a treat awaits us this quarter in our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians! Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge considered Ephesians to be "one of the divinest compositions of man," and Martin Luther called it "the true kernel and marrow" of the New Testament. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul helps us understand what it means for Christ to live in the believer. His letter contains intensely practical instruction for Christians who face the kind of problems we do in relationships in the family, home, society, nation, and even in the church.

When an army goes into battle, it basically faces two types of enemy forces: external and internal. Not only are the forces that the Christian has to face internal as well as external, but they are supernatural as well as natural.

What threatens the onward progress of the church today is not so much an external enemy, such as unbelief, liberalism, or worldliness (although we see these making inroads into the church). The greater threat to the

church is internal disunity. One of the oldest strategies in winning a war is "divide and conquer." If united, the church will stand; if divided, it will fall.

The epistle to the Ephesians likens the church to a physical body. A body must be healthy in order to live. In assessing the church we attend we need to ask whether it is afflicted with spiritual "hardening of the arteries" so that the soothing, life-giving graces of Christ have great difficulty flowing from one part of the body to the other. Is it subject to spiritual "fainting spells" that may be due to lack of emphasis on prayer life—the "breath of the soul"? Many congregations today no longer conduct prayer meeting, the only real opportunity for spontaneous group prayer for the church.

Or perhaps your church could be diagnosed as suffering from the crippling effects of spiritual "arthritis," limiting its effective outreach and soulwinning in the surrounding community. Your church even may have a case of the dreaded spiritual "cancer" that little-by-little saps the body's energy and weakens and finally destroys entire organs. This cancer is the cancer of disunity. It works imperceptibly at first, but in the end its effects are fatal.

The book of Ephesians offers us the divinely-prescribed remedy for the spiritual maladies that affect the health and vitality of the body of Christ. The question is whether we want healing enough to be willing to take our case to our doctor—the Divine Physician.

In order to understand fully the prescription our Physician has given us, we need to learn something about the background of the book and its author and the purpose behind what was written in this epistle.



I. THE WRITER (Eph. 1:1; 3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

In comparison with Paul's other epistles, how limited is the biographical information about the author that is given in this epistle?

Paul devotes only a total of four verses to a description of himself, his calling, and his present predicament. Three of the four verses refer to his imprisonment. This stands in contrast to the more lengthy autobiographical notes found in many of his other letters. (See, for example, 2 Cor. 11:6-33; Gal. 1:10-24; 2 Thess. 3:7-10.)

An Apostle. In his salutation in Ephesians 1:1, Paul designates himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ," putting himself on equality with the twelve disciples. Was he being a bit presumptuous? Not at all. His apostleship was not his own idea, but it was the Lord's doing and the Lord's will. Paul was ordained for discipleship by Christ Himself on the road to Damascus. He was blinded that he might see the light, and he was called personally by Christ just as Jesus personally called the Twelve to discipleship (Gal. 1:15, 16). Beyond dispute Paul's apostleship was not from man, but from God; not his own idea, but the Lord's (Gal. 1:1).

SEARCH AND LEARN: What indications suggest that Paul needed to validate the genuineness of his letters?

1. Gal. 1:6-8 _____
2. Col. 4:18 _____
3. 2 Thess. 3:17 _____

Just as men today forge documents to gain some unworthy end, so someone must have attempted to counterfeit an epistle, passing it off as if it were from Paul's own hand. Such a forgery may have been written in order to gain support for some false teaching. In 1983, sixty-two volumes of Adolph Hitler's diaries were purportedly discovered in a barn in East Germany and sold as genuine. The fraud soon was discovered, but not before some people had been deceived. Not only was the handwriting not Hitler's, but the paper did not come from the time in which he lived.

Paul used his signature to validate the genuineness of his letters. But even more importantly, the Holy Spirit is the validation that the message is true (1 John 5:6). In Ephesians 1:13 it is the Holy Spirit that is compared to a seal, an instrument of authentication, as we will study.

THINK IT THROUGH: In our witnessing to others, what means should we use to demonstrate that we are indeed Christians and that our message is true?



II. THE RECIPIENTS.

What clues are there as to whom Paul is writing and as to what his reasons were for writing this letter? Eph. 1:1; 2:11.

Just as Paul gives almost no biographical information about himself in this letter, so he offers few clues as to the characteristics of the people he is addressing. However, the following points about the Ephesian believers are evident:

1. They were a group composed largely of Gentiles who had come out of paganism (Eph. 2:2, 11; 4:17).
2. Their lives were characterized by a strong faith in Christ and a love for their fellow-believers (Eph. 1:15).
3. The congregation was composed of husbands, wives, children, slaves, and slave-holders (Eph. 5:22, 25; 6:1, 5, 9).
4. They were in danger of slipping back into pagan practices. Notice that some of the practical counsel given by Paul deals with avoiding customs such as foolish talking and jesting (Eph. 5:4), immorality (verse 5), and drunkenness (verse 18).

What is the significance of the fact that Paul mentions only one person by name in the epistle? Eph. 6:21.

It is strange that Paul includes only one personal name in this letter,

Tychicus, whereas most of his other letters are filled with personal allusions and remembrances. Colossians, which was no doubt written about the same time as Ephesians, lists eleven individuals, including Tychicus, in its final chapter. In writing his concluding chapter to the Romans, Paul mentions 35 personal names. These include some who were sending their greetings to the Romans.

The lack of personal references in Ephesians could suggest that Paul may have not known many of the Ephesian members by name at the time he wrote. However, this would be strange in view of the fact that he had labored nearly three years and three months in Ephesus. (See Acts 19:1, 8, 10.) A better explanation is that the letter was intended for the believers in the towns and villages surrounding Ephesus as well. If the letter were addressed to other believers besides those at Ephesus, then we would not expect Paul to name persons in just the one church. Doing so would cause the others to feel left out. Thus the opening words of Paul in this epistle can be better understood to read: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are in the Ephesian region." The letter to the Colossians was written not only for the church at Colossae but also for the churches at nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13-16). In the same way, Ephesians could have been written for the churches in the neighborhood of Ephesus.



III. THE DATE AND THE OCCASION FOR WRITING.

What kind of difficult circumstances was Paul undergoing at the time he wrote the letter, and how harsh were they? Eph. 4:1; 6:20; Acts 28:30.

Ephesians was written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment that began in the spring of A.D. 61 and lasted for two years. Because Paul was under house arrest at the time, he was not under the physical agony that he had to endure during his second Roman imprisonment. At the time of his later imprisonment he likely was thrown into the Mammertine Prison—a dark, damp dungeon that still exists today. While under house arrest he was able to have visitors and eagerly "received all that came in unto him" (Acts 28:30). Some of these visitors to Rome were able to take messages back and forth for Paul, including his letters.

What attitude did Paul take in regard to his imprisonment? Eph. 6:20. (Compare with 2 Tim. 1:8; 4:16; Phil. 1:12-14.)

Whether it was simply a house arrest, as when he wrote Ephesians and Philippians; or a dungeon existence, as when he wrote 2 Timothy, we have no clue from Paul as to the severity of his plight. He always seems to have rejoiced, even when he had good reason to do otherwise.

What kind of individual did Paul choose to carry his letter to the Ephesians? Eph. 6:21, 22. (See also Col. 4:7.)

Paul always chose a trusted individual to deliver his precious letters. Tychicus delivered both epistles—Ephesians and Colossians—most likely on the same trip.

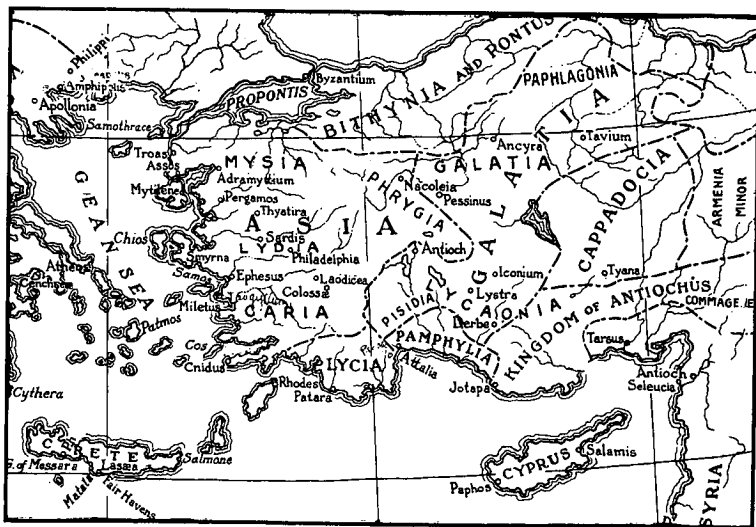
What was Tychicus's mission?

1. He was to make known the full disclosure of Paul's condition in Roman imprisonment to the believers in both churches (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).
2. He also was sent to bring encouragement to the believers in both congregations (Eph. 6:22; Col. 4:8).

One evidence that Ephesians and Colossians were written and delivered at the same time is that, of all the letters Paul wrote, these two are more alike in wording and in subject matter than any other two. One scholar has calculated that 70 percent of the material found in Colossians has close parallels to what is in Ephesians, while 50 percent of Ephesians is reflected in Colossians.



MAP STUDY: Examine the accompanying map that shows the cities of Asia Minor in Bible times. Notice the geographic relationship of Ephesus and Colossae. Also note how close Laodicea is to Colossae. Paul wrote an epistle to Laodicea (that apparently has not been preserved) at the same time he sent one to Colossae (Col. 4:16).



IV. PAUL'S GREETING AND FAREWELL (Eph. 1:2; 6:23, 24).

What can we learn from Paul's characteristic style in the salutations to his epistles? Eph. 1:2.

Two of the most beautiful and touching words are *grace* and *peace*. They must have been a favorite expression of Paul's because he used them in the salutation of virtually all his epistles. (With the greetings to Timothy and Titus he added the word *mercy* so that in these personal epistles he wrote, "grace, mercy, and peace.") In the time of Paul most Greeks used a slightly different word instead of *grace* to begin their letters—the word meaning "prosperity" or "health." However, Paul used the term that means "good will" or "favor"—*grace*. The word *peace* includes the idea of wholeness and health. When Christ first greeted His disciples in the upper room after the resurrection, He used the very word *peace* that Paul used in addressing the believers.

"The life, death, and resurrection of Christ had brought new meaning to both these old familiar terms. 'Grace' was now understood as the redeeming love of God in Christ (see 2 Tim. 1:9). 'Peace' was now peace with God through redemption (Rom. 5:1). With this Christian significance, 'grace' and 'peace' became Paul's customary greeting in all his epistles."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 473.

THU **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:** Have you ever thought about the fact that when God touches ordinary things they become extraordinary?

- Jacob's stone used for a pillow became a monument.
- Moses' rod was not just another shepherd's crook.
- The cross is not just another wooden instrument used to execute criminals.

Even common things become freighted with new meaning under the transforming power of the gospel.

How do the four key things that Paul used at the close of his epistle express the warm sentiment of his heart? Eph. 6:23, 24.

In his farewell Paul uses four meaningful terms: peace, love, faith, and grace. The first word, *peace*, would have special appeal to the Jewish members of the congregation because it is equivalent to the Old Testament word *shalom*. It is another way of saying, "May it be well with you!" It also stresses unity because it has the root meaning of wholeness. The expression "love with faith" likewise emphasizes unity, as reflected in what Paul wrote to the Galatian members: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). The use of the word *grace* has special meaning for the Christian because it epitomizes everything that Christ did on the cross for us.

Usually Paul wrote the farewell in each of his letters with his own hand, after having dictated the rest of the letter to a personal secretary. This fact

is brought out in 2 Thessalonians 3:17: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." It would be wonderful to be able to see the final farewell as written in Paul's own handwriting. In Ephesians the greeting at the opening of the epistle and the salutation at the end are characteristic of Paul's style in his other letters. This fact adds authenticity to the idea that Paul is the author of Ephesians. Besides, the content of the epistle itself is so much like Paul's thought as expressed elsewhere that it would seem unreasonable for us to deny that Paul wrote Ephesians as some modern scholars do.

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FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Acts 28:16-31 to discover in greater detail the setting in Rome of the epistle to the Ephesians.

"Many months passed by after Paul's arrival in Rome, before the Jews of Jerusalem appeared in person to present their accusations against the prisoner. . . . His enemies could hope for success only in seeking by intrigue to influence the emperor in their favor. Delay would further their object, as it would afford them time to perfect and execute their plans, and so they waited for a while before preferring their charges in person against the apostle.

"In the providence of God this delay resulted in the furtherance of the gospel. . . .

"During this time the churches that he [Paul] had established in many lands were not forgotten. Realizing the danger that threatened the converts to the new faith, the apostle sought so far as possible to meet their needs by letters of warning and practical instruction."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 453.

If available, study the article on "Grace" in the *S.D.A. Bible Dictionary* (p. 439 in the Revised Edition).

SUMMARY: Just as it is helpful to know about a person's background and childhood in order better to appreciate that individual and to understand the person's behavior, it is essential to study the background of the epistle to the Ephesians in order to be able to interpret it correctly. The following significant facts emerge:

1. The epistle was written by Paul, whose basis for authority is his call to apostleship.
2. It was written from Rome during his first imprisonment, which was characterized as a "house arrest."
3. It was delivered by Tychicus as a companion letter to the Colossian epistle.

APPLICATION: Many of the world's greatest literary pieces have been produced during times of great hardship and imprisonment. For example, there is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* written from Bedford Jail in England. It may be that God knows it is best to write upon our lives the message of love through the steel-tipped pen of suffering.

- Do I sense God's love and concern when I face difficulty or suffering? If not, why not?
- What can I do to foster such an understanding and to help others who may have a similar problem?

The Blessings of the Believer

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 1:3-14.



MEMORY TEXT: "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" (Eph. 1:10).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has a plan that is all-inclusive. He longs to unite every created being into one body. We can be thankful that His plan is so comprehensive that it includes each one of us individually.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 1:3-14	
Prelude of Praise (verse 3)	Incentives to Gratitude (verses 4-14)
Praise directed to God, the source of every benefit	We can be grateful to God because: He has chosen us (verses 4-6) He has rescued us (verse 7) He has provided us an inheritance (verses 8-14)

INTRODUCTION: The epistle begins on a high note—a note of praise. The first phrase of the body of the letter after the salutation is "Blessed be the God." We might think that it would be most difficult to praise God while languishing in a prison, even if it were in a case of house arrest. But Paul could do so. Looking at it from the opposite viewpoint, we can discover that the more bleak and oppressive the circumstances are, the more the committed Christian lifts his or her gaze above the surroundings to contemplate heavenly realities.

That is exactly what Paul did. His first message is about the God "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). In the New Testament the expression of praise *blessed* is applied particularly to God, as He alone is worthy "to receive glory and honour and power" (Rev. 4:11). Blessing is ascribed to the One sitting upon the throne and to the Lamb at His side (Rev. 5:13). It is the Blessed One who bestows the blessings and benefits outlined in the verses that follow. The fact that Paul focuses on "spiritual blessings" indicates how much more important these are to the Christian than are material blessings.

One of the symptoms of a diseased church is backbiting, but the great-

est remedy for this soul-sickness is a spirit of thankfulness. Appreciation and gratitude make up a healing balm for those who have been treated unjustly and criticized unfairly. Thankfulness contributes not only to the spiritual health of the church but also to the actual physical health of the individual. (See Prov. 16:24.)

SUN

I. PRELUDE OF PRAISE (Eph. 1:3).

To whom should gratitude be directed, and for what reason? Verse 3.

Paul begins the body of his letter with an expression of thanksgiving, followed by a prayer. The first half of the first chapter reads like a hymn of praise. In fact, it contains a three-fold refrain unto the praise of His glory (1:6, 12, 14). Whatever we give praise and thanks for, the glory should go to God. If we were to attempt to take the glory to ourselves the beauty of our praise would turn to ashes.

Some question, "How am I to express gratitude to God when I don't feel the spirit of praise within me?" The answer is that praise is much more than mere feeling. It has to be directed to a reality that lies outside of ourselves—a reality that extends even to heaven itself. For that reason Paul indicates that our blessings are "in heavenly places." God does not ask us to *feel* the spirit of gratitude, but He simply requests that we *express* thankfulness. The surprising thing is that, once it has been expressed, we often begin to feel more in tune with God and more like praising Him.

THINK IT THROUGH: What can I find for which to thank God? How can I know that it is God's hand that provides the blessing when I receive one?

Paul answers: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for giving us through Christ every possible spiritual benefit as citizens of Heaven!" (Eph. 1:3, Phillips). Elsewhere James puts the same truth into different words: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). This means that when anything happens to us that produces good in our lives, even if it is an unpleasant or painful experience, it is a blessing from God; and we can thank Him for it.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the verses listed below, looking for at least three specific reasons why we ought to be grateful to God:

1. verse 4 _____
2. verse 7 _____
3. verse 10 _____
4. others _____

Consider the all-encompassing nature of God's plan for us. It started before we were born, even before there was a human race. God already knew our names. The most visible demonstration of His plan for us took place on the cross when Christ died for us. There He died for us individually. That this is so is evident in the fact that He would have given His life if any one of us had been the only one in need of salvation. His plan will climax when all things separated by sin have been reunited. God's plan moves us from paradise lost to paradise restored. The spanning rainbow of God's love bridges the gap between the two paradises.

MON

II. THANKFUL FOR BEING CHOSEN—ELECTION (Eph. 1:4-6).

How can we be sure that in verses 4 and 5 Paul was not teaching that God determined ahead of time who is to be saved and who is to be lost?

Paul does not advocate predetermination in the sense that some understand it—that God predetermines who is to be saved. Otherwise we would not be able to exercise free will or, for that matter, any choice at all. In verse 5, the word *predestinated* has been translated from a Greek word that means "marked out beforehand." It simply expresses the fact that God's plan for the human race has been in existence from eternity. Because of His omniscience God knew before the foundation of the world who will choose to inherit the kingdom.

It is significant that Paul speaks here of predestination in family terms, employing the word *adoption*. An earthly parent may pick out an occupation and perhaps even a mate for a son or daughter; but the child, upon reaching the point of decision, sometimes rejects the parent's wishes. In the same way, a member of the human family may choose to go counter to the wishes and master plan of the Creator.

The true concept of predestination is that everything God plans is for the good of the world and for those who live in it. God is in control of ultimate outcomes at all times. But He has given us the power of choice and will not force anyone to be saved. Even when people rebel against God and follow their own willful ways, God still has a plan and purpose that controls the ultimate destiny of the world.

What are some of the blessings or benefits brought about by God's pre-determined plan? Verses 4, 5, 10.

In Scripture, predestination is connected to God's foreknowledge. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate" (Rom. 8:29). God's choosing, which is sometimes called election, simply is based upon His all-seeing, all-knowing foreknowledge (John 13:18) and depends on our belief and acceptance (John 6:64, 65). "As God foresaw, and thus foreknew, each generation of men that would come upon the stage of this world's action, He coupled immediately with His foreknowledge the decision to predestinate them all to be saved."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 574.

Election, like the plan of redemption, was made before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), but “was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God” (1 Peter 1:20, 21). “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). In this text the two agencies in the salvation of humanity are revealed,—the divine influence, and the strong, living faith of those who follow Christ. “It is through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, that we become laborers together with God.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 15, 1908, p. 7. Neither Paul nor any other Bible writer suggests that God determines who is saved or lost, regardless of their own choice in the matter.

What is the real purpose in election? Read Eph. 1:4 again.

God’s purpose in our election is that we should be holy and blameless. Not only should we crave the privilege, but we should rejoice in it. John adds that it takes place in order that the believer “should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16) in fulfilling the mission assigned (John 4:36; 12:24).



What else does Paul say that God has in mind in predestinating us? Eph. 1:5, 6.

Paul expands on a theme that he emphasized in his letter to the Roman believers: predestination has as its goal sonship. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). The adopted child takes on the characteristics, concerns, and values of his new parents, and has the blessed responsibility of upholding the standards held by the new parents. The same holds true for the adopted child of God. There is an even closer tie between God and His adopted children than there is between earthly parents and their adopted children. There is an even more far-reaching influence; eternity is at stake. God’s plan for our salvation has been pre-determined or predestinated, but it can be accepted or rejected by the individual.

THINK IT THROUGH: Do I appreciate what God has done for me in adopting me into the family of heaven? Am I showing my appreciation by joyfully doing all that I can to bring honor to my new family name?

III. THANKFUL FOR BEING RESCUED—REDEMPTION (Eph. 1:7).

What does the word *redemption* imply in regard to the plight in which all of us find ourselves? Verse 7.

One of the more common words to appear in the news accounts over the last ten years is the word *hostage*. While kidnapping and hostage-holding have been practiced for ages, the practice has taken on new dimensions in the jet age. A planeload of terrified passengers can be held hostage by a terrorist who holds a brown paper bag and threatens to blow

up the plane unless the terrorist is taken immediately to whatever destination he or she has in mind. Also, for the first time, entire embassies have been held hostage.

But the hostage situation which afflicts the entire human race is much more serious in that the whole world is being held captive by Satan. It is strange how people go about their daily lives totally unaware that they are being held hostage. They can be likened to passengers on a train who are oblivious to the fact that the train's conductor is being held at gunpoint.

When Paul speaks of *redemption* in this passage, he uses a word that means "release by payment of a ransom or price." The word *forgiveness* is translated from one that means literally "sending away."



IV. THANKFUL TO GOD FOR HIS INHERITANCE—RESTORATION (Eph. 1:8-14).

1. Preparation for the inheritance (verses 8-10).

Why is unity so important to God's ultimate plan for the human race? Verse 10.

If we say that we have been healed, it implies that previously we had been sick or had an infirmity. When Paul says that God wishes to gather into one all Christians, it implies that Christians now are scattered.

"The mystery of God's will was His plan to restore this unity when the occasion was ready, a restoration to be accomplished through Christ. That mystery will find its culmination at the end of the great controversy, when all things in heaven and on earth will be united in Christ, and the character of the Godhead will have been vindicated."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1000.

Only if we have unity on earth can we be prepared for the inheritance in heaven where all things, both animate and inanimate, are in absolute harmony with one another and with their Creator.

What is Paul talking about when he connects unity with the mystery of God's plan and purpose in Ephesians 1:8-10?

When Paul uses the term *mystery* he uses it in a way that is different from that dictated by popular usage today. For him a mystery is a special and extremely valuable piece of information that is known by a select few. It is not eternally hidden but has been revealed selectively to those ready to pay attention to it. The gospel is called a mystery (Rom. 16:25), not because it cannot be understood by people, but because those who do not accept will never understand and be benefited by it.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following texts and indicate below how Paul uses the term *mystery* in a consistent manner:

1. Rom. 16:25 _____

2. 1 Cor. 2:7-10 _____

3. Col. 1:26, 27 _____

In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul states that unity is an outgrowth of God's mystery. We have just discovered that the gospel is the mystery to which he refers; therefore, unity must come as the outgrowth of the gospel.

When you stop to think of it, it is incredible how God can take people who have been at odds with one another and blend them into one. He can take two warring factions or seemingly incompatible races and bring about a harmonious relationship. He can make brothers out of enemies. He does so by filling those who respond to Him with His kind of love.

ILLUMINATION: "By the union of church members with Christ and with one another the transforming power of the gospel is to be diffused throughout the world."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 240.



2. Reception of the inheritance (Eph. 1:11-14).

What underlies unity? What is the "reward" for unity, and when and how do we receive it? Eph. 1:10, 11; 1 John 5:11-13.

The good news is that we already possess the inheritance! (See 1 John 5:11; John 5:24; 6:47, 54; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.) Notwithstanding, sometimes we act as though the inheritance were a million miles from here and a thousand years from now. In Christ it is ours here and now.

How can we be sure that we, as individuals, have received the magnificent inheritance made possible through Christ? Eph. 1:12-14.

There are several reasons why the inheritance is certain:

1. It is part of God's eternal plan, and His plan has never failed.
2. It involves trust in Christ, and Christ never lets down anyone who believes in Him.
3. It is sealed (secured) by the Holy Spirit.

Two vivid symbols are used in these verses in connection with the Holy Spirit—the seal and the down payment. In ancient times the wax seal on the outside of a document which had been stamped with signet of the sender guaranteed that the contents were trustworthy. In the same way, the seal of the Holy Spirit not only guarantees that God's written promises are completely trustworthy, but also that the Spirit is an earnest or down payment: "The promised Holy Spirit, . . . is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (Eph. 1:13, 14, NIV). As studied previously, we are hostages and Christ's blood is our ransom payment. The Holy Spirit is the "earnest," the first installment or deposit, on our inheritance.

ILLUSTRATION: David composed Psalm 121 in the wilderness of Paran after he had fled there upon learning of the death of Samuel. Even the hills that fed the dry valleys with water and protected them from the storms were not enough to afford him the protection he needed now that his last influential friend was gone. "He knew that Samuel's death had broken another bond of restraint from the actions of Saul, and he felt less secure than when the prophet lived. While the attention of Saul was engaged in mourning for the death of Samuel, David took the opportunity to seek a place of greater security; so he fled to the wilderness of Paran. It was here that he composed the one hundred and twentieth and twenty-first psalms. In these desolate wilds, realizing that the prophet was dead, and the king was his enemy, he sang:

'My help cometh from the Lord,
Which made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:

He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Behold, He that keepeth Israel

Shall neither slumber nor sleep. . . .

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:

He shall preserve thy soul.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in

From this time forth, and even forevermore.'

Psalm 121:2-8."

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 664.

We, too, can have the certainty that God cares for us and will provide the help we need in the way He sees best and that He is preparing us for a place in the eternal kingdom soon to come.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Psalms 103 to 107. Choose one of these psalms to meditate on and pray about. Discover that the spirit of thankfulness is not based upon feeling alone, but upon the objective reality of what God has accomplished.

"We need to praise God more 'for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.' Psalm 107:8. Our devotional exercises should not consist wholly in asking and receiving. Let us not be always thinking of our wants and never of the benefits we receive."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 102, 103.

SUMMARY: One of the best medicines for a church that is ailing with the harsh spirit of criticism, bickering, and fault-finding is the spirit of gratitude—first of all, gratitude to the One who is the "giver of every good and perfect gift." Secondly, sincere appreciation for the work of others.

APPLICATION: When was the last time you went out of your way to say "Thank you" for a kindness someone had shown you?

- List two things you should thank God for right now:

1. _____

2. _____

The Praying Apostle

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 1:15-23.

SAB
P.M.

MEMORY TEXT: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling" (Eph. 1:17, 18).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: If Paul had a prayer list, it would be most interesting to see what concerns he would put on that list. Actually, we have the privilege of discovering some of his prayer concerns as we study the second half of Ephesians 1.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 1:15-23		
The Incentive to Prayer (1:15, 16)	Topics on Paul's Prayer List (1:17-19)	Other Concerns (1:20-23)
Hearing about the Ephesians' faith and love	Need for wisdom and enlightenment (verses 17, 18) Expected results: hope, heavenly riches, power (verses 18, 19)	Exaltation of Christ (verses 20, 21) Headship of Christ (verses 22, 23)

INTRODUCTION: Some Christians lead a crisis prayer life; that is, they pray whenever there is a crisis, but largely neglect prayer at other times. God accepts the sincere prayer for help no matter when it may come and no matter how dangerous the circumstances may be. But He is pleased to see a child of His pray when there is no crisis.

Paul did not write this letter in order to ward off a crisis faced by the Ephesians, nor to solve difficult problems within the church—such as those he had to confront in the Corinthian church. Therefore, his prayer at this point in the epistle took the form of a prayer of gratitude for the good news received from Ephesus.

THINK IT THROUGH: Were Paul's prayers any more effective as an apostle than are the prayers of the ordinary church member? Are the prayers of two praying Christians more effective than the prayers of one on behalf of another?

SUN

I. THE INCENTIVE FOR PAUL'S PRAYERS (Eph. 1:15, 16).

What can we learn from that which motivated Paul to pray continually for the Ephesian believers? Verse 16.

It is interesting that verses 15 through 23 of chapter 1 form a single sentence, according to the King James Version. Paul is known for his long and sometimes involved sentences. It might help to read this section in a modern translation that breaks it into short sentences. At any rate, verses 15 through 23 should be treated as a unit. In it Paul tells his readers what he has been praying about.

SEARCH AND LEARN: As you scan through this section, list what you discover to be the major burdens of Paul's prayer:

Verse 17 _____

Verse 18 _____

Verse 19 _____

II. ELEMENTS OF PAUL'S PRAYER (Eph. 1:17-19).**1. Prayer for Wisdom and Enlightenment (verses 17, 18).**

When there are so many things for which to pray, why did Paul choose first to pray that the believers in Ephesus be granted wisdom?

Wisdom cannot be viewed in isolation from the revelation of the mystery of God. Reflect again on verses 7 through 9: "In him we have redemption through his blood, . . . in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ" (NIV). The revelation of the mystery of God's will comes through God's initiative, not ours. Wisdom does not come through our efforts either. It is a gift of God. It is not dependent on I.Q., nor is it the result of the accumulation of knowledge. The wisdom Paul refers to comes from a relationship with Christ. It has to do with character and conduct that is based on spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9).

THINK IT THROUGH: How does this kind of wisdom contribute to the unity of God's people?

Revelation is the process by which God communicates His will in a specific way to His people. Quite often it is by a dream or a vision. Prophets and apostles have revelations, but the ordinary believer is not given a revelation in its strictest sense. What most believers are given is "the spirit . . . of revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:17).



How does Paul indicate that the kind of revelation he received involved a special experience? Eph. 3:3; Gal. 1:11, 12.

The ordinary believer does not receive revelations directly from God, but he does have enlightenment. Enlightenment is the process whereby a person appreciates the true value of that which has been revealed. It is somewhat like a person finding a rare coin in the change received during a business transaction. Hundreds, even thousands of people, may have allowed the coin to pass through their hands without perceiving its value. That also is true concerning the revealed truths of God's Word. But there are those who perceive and treasure God's revelations.

"All who believe with the heart the word of God will hunger and thirst for a knowledge of His will. God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed."—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 49.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can a clear understanding of God's purpose for our lives as individual believers strengthen the unity of God's people?

2. The Prayer for the Expected Results: Hope, Heavenly Riches, and Power (Eph. 1:18, 19).

The unconverted human being probably would reverse the order; wishing for power first, riches second, and hope third. But, even at that, the person involved would misunderstand this concept because the riches it talks about are not associated with the glitter of gold or the value of material things. The "riches" Paul speaks about involve the inheritance awaiting each Christian. They are "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18, RSV). Nothing on earth can compare with the inheritance awaiting us. If there were anything earthly having more glory than what our future riches hold, then it might be understandable why we would set our affections on that earthly object.

What does Paul mean when he refers to "the hope of his calling"? Verse 18.

"Some commentators believe that in this . . . passage Paul refers, not to the thing hoped for, but to the principle of hope in the life that is inspired by the divine calling. To have that hope is to have something precious beyond measure. Paul's readers still did not comprehend the full meaning of their calling, and he was anxious that they should see that the Christian's hope is based on the facts of redemption. . . . They had forgiveness of sins, they were children of God, but still their eyes were holden. He wanted them to have the hope that would suggest to them more than they had dreamed of. Hope is a mixture of faith and assurance, but it looks to the future for its completion. The believer may know that if he is called by God through the Spirit, his whole life will become suffused with the blessed hope."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1003.

TUE

SEARCH AND LEARN: Besides the future glory God has promised, what glorious gifts can His children on earth receive right now? Discover some answers in the texts that follow and list them in the space provided:

John 14:12 _____

John 14:16, 17 _____

John 14:27 _____

2 Peter 1:2-4 _____

ILLUMINATION: “Christ’s redeemed ones are His jewels, His precious and peculiar treasure. ‘They shall be as the stones of a crown’—‘the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.’ Zech. 9:16; Eph. 1:18. In them ‘He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.’ Isa. 53:11.

“And will not His workers rejoice when they, too, behold the fruit of their labors? The apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian converts, says: ‘What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy.’ 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 309, 310.

What is one of the greatest demonstrations of God’s power? Eph. 1:19, 20.

In the last part of Paul’s personal prayer for the Ephesians, he prays that they might know experientially the power of God, and not just His power, but “the exceeding greatness of his power.” Paul is famous for his use of “double superlatives”—in other words, he uses the doubling of descriptive words to make that which he is talking about unequalled in splendor, worth, or magnitude. Here he could have said “power” and that would have been meaningful, or he could have said “greatness of his power,” and that would have left a deeper impression, but he says, “the exceeding greatness of his power” to describe the incomparable.

SEARCH AND LEARN: How do the texts that follow illustrate Paul’s use of “double superlatives”?

1. Eph. 2:7 _____

2. Eph. 3:8 _____

3. Eph. 3:20 _____

Besides the resurrection, what other striking demonstration of God’s power does Paul cite? Eph. 3:16-19.

The two great evidences of God's power are the resurrection of Christ from a tomb surrounded by wicked soldiers and evil angels, and the indwelling of Christ in the life of the believer. The first evidence is not one that we can see, except through the eyes of the Gospel writers, but the second is one that we not only can see but also can experience. Is it not thrilling to see a dramatic conversion of a person steeped in sin, as well as to sense Christ making definite changes in our lives?

WED

III. ADDITIONAL CONCERNS IN PAUL'S PRAYER (Eph. 1:20-23).

1. The Exaltation of Christ (verses 20, 21).

Why is it important to know and to believe that Christ has been exalted above every other power on earth and in heaven? Verses 20, 21.

Here are some suggestions:

- The resurrection without exaltation would be incomplete. Christ's throne and kingdom needed to be established again not only on earth in the heart of Satan's domain, but in heaven where the great rebellion first began.

- If Christ were not above every created being, good or evil, then he could not claim to be our Saviour.

Christ is said to be placed at the right hand of God "in heavenly places," thus suggesting enthronement.

"Here we have an allusion to Psalm cx. [110] 1, a verse often referred to in the New Testament. The exalting of the king of Israel as God's anointed lent itself to a supreme application to the Christ. It was so applied before His coming, but most especially after His death and resurrection and ascension."—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 63.

A careful study of Scripture locates God's throne in the heavenly sanctuary. (See Eze. 1:26-28; Rev. 4:1-5; 11:19.) The ark of the covenant in the earthly sanctuary is symbolic of God's throne in the heavenly. Ellen White adds: "In the temple in heaven, the dwelling place of God, His throne is established in righteousness and judgment."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 415.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following texts and indicate what the enthronement of Christ means to the believer:

1. Mark 16:19, 20 _____

2. Heb. 1:3 _____

3. Rev. 3:21 _____



2. The Headship of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23).

How does the headship of Christ over the church, His body, become a perfect illustration of unity?

“All of God’s people upon the earth are one body, from the beginning to the end of time. They have one Head that directs and governs the body. The same injunctions that rested upon ancient Israel, rest upon God’s people now, to be separate from the world. The great Head of the church has not changed.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 283, 284.

If there is one Head, then there must be one body. The Head and body are so intricately interconnected that one cannot exist without the other. Later in this letter to the Ephesians Paul affirms, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). This may be one of the most forceful and clear-cut illustrations of unity found in the Bible. Occasionally scientists have been able to interfere with the normal development of the salamander, a lizard-like creature, and cause it to develop two or more heads. How long would a two-headed or four-headed salamander be able to survive in the wild? Not very long. If it were pursued, the heads might cause the legs to try to run in different directions at the same time. Every part of the church, Christ’s own body, must be under His absolute control at all times if it is to avoid the dangers besetting it on all sides.

Christ’s headship over the body means much to His church:

1. He is Head over all creation (Eph. 1:22).
2. He is its means of salvation and protection (Eph. 5:23).
3. He alone is the body’s nourisher—the key to its health and growth (Col. 2:19).
4. He is the agent of reconciliation (Col. 1:18-20).

This last point is extremely important. Because the body or the church is composed of so many diverse elements, it is inevitable that frictions among members and factions will emerge. Thank God that Christ as Head can reconcile the various parts of the body to Himself!

Why is Christ granted to be Head over “all things” (Eph. 1:22), and why is the *body* said to be “the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23)?

“The apostle does not simply speak of Him as given to be Head of the Church—Lord of all, and of the Church in particular—but that He is ‘supreme head’ (NEB) or more literally Head over all things ‘to’ or ‘for’ the Church. . . . The Church has authority and power to overcome all opposition because her Leader and Head is Lord of all. Jesus Himself had authority because He was under the Father’s authority; He was doing His will and therefore had all the authority of God (see Mt. viii.9f., xi.27; Jn. xvii.2). . . .

“This designation of the function of the Church is amplified yet further; it is not only His body, it is intended to be *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*. We may paraphrase this by saying that it is God’s purpose that the Church should be the full expression of Jesus Christ, who Himself fills

everything there is.”—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, pp. 65, 66.

As members of Christ's body we are granted the privilege of experiencing all the fullness of Christ. Twice more in Ephesians Paul amplifies this point, first by praying that the believers “might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19), and second by urging them to grow up “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Colossians 2:10, RV, continues the thought by stating that “in him ye are made full,” or as Phillips translates it, “Moreover, your own completeness is only realized in him.”

THOUGHT QUESTION: Do I feel sometimes that something is missing in my life, and that as a person I have not experienced fulfillment? According to Paul's inspired messages, what one provision alone makes it possible for me to achieve fulfillment?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: This week we have examined two of our great needs: the need for wisdom and the need for power. For insights as to how we can obtain more of each, read the “Reward of Searching” section in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 113, 114, and the “Power of the Truth” chapter in *Testimonies*, volume 5, pages 157-162.

“Many fix their eyes upon the terrible wickedness existing around them, the apostasy and weakness on every side, and they talk of these things until their hearts are filled with sadness and doubt. They keep uppermost before the mind the masterly working of the archdeceiver and dwell upon the discouraging features of their experience, while they seem to lose sight of the heavenly Father's power and His matchless love. All this is as Satan would have it. It is a mistake to think of the enemy of righteousness as clothed with so great power, when we dwell so little upon the love of God and His might. We must talk of the mightiness of Christ. We are utterly powerless to rescue ourselves from the grasp of Satan; but God has appointed a way of escape. The Son of the Highest has strength to fight the battle for us, and ‘through Him that loved us’ we may come off ‘more than conquerors.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 741.

SUMMARY: Our needs never exceed God's ability to meet them. Just as it is said that the average human being uses less than one percent of his total brain capacity, so it can be said that we in the Christian sphere use far less of the divine resources than what God has made available. We receive little because we ask for little and expect little.

APPLICATION: Take a moment to list your deepest concerns and burdens at the present time. Be specific. Which *one* concern outweighs all other concerns? Then ask yourself which aspects of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 are designed to answer your deepest concerns and to meet your greatest needs.

From Death to Life

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 2:1-10.

SAB
PM

MEMORY TEXT: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. 2:4, 5).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We need to pause from time to time to consider what we were before becoming Christians, in order to appreciate more fully what we are now, and what Christ is doing for us and will continue to do for us.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 2:1-10

The Old Life (verses 1-3)	The New Life (verses 4-10)
Characterized by death	Characterized by life
Controlled by the prince of the power of the air	Controlled by Jesus Christ
Attracted to fleshly lusts	Attracted to heavenly things
Who we truly were: disobedient children	Who we truly are: God's workmanship
What produced death? Sins—outward acts and inward desires	What produces life? Grace that works by faith in Christ

INTRODUCTION: In last week's lesson we examined Paul's personal prayer for the Ephesian believers. In this week's lesson we will discover the thrill that comes from living the new life in Christ. Only those who have witnessed the death of a loved one or a close friend can understand fully the starkness and tragic reality of death. When the arrow of death strikes someone close to us, it comes with a vividness that is not present when it strikes a person living down the street or across the town.

People nowadays even have experienced so-called "death" and lived to tell about it. Perhaps an automobile accident resulted in bones crushed beyond repair, or perhaps a person drowned. The doctors were not able to detect a pulse and pronounced the person dead, but by the application of modern medical techniques the accident victim lived. What rejoicing

there was when the person who seemed dead was recognized to be alive! Experiences such as this help us imagine the thrill that would come from seeing a dead person being made alive.

In the spiritual realm also, a thrill sweeps over us when life follows death and healing replaces sickness. Paul calls this transition from spiritual death to life a resurrection. Resurrection has both a present and a future reality. For the present, it means being made alive in Christ and participating in the joy of His resurrection. In the future resurrection, our "lowly bodies" will be "like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21, NIV).

Paul considered this transition from death to life, from infirmity to wholeness, as an act of creation that is no less miraculous than the original Creation. This act takes place "by grace through faith"—grace on God's part, received by faith on our part.

Our study of this section of Ephesians will be guided by the following outline:

I. The Old Life (Eph. 2:1-3).

- 1. Dead in trespasses and sins.**
- 2. Children of disobedience.**

II. The New Life (Eph. 2:4-10).

- 1. Made alive by God.**
- 2. Raised up by God.**
- 3. Saved by grace through faith.**
- 4. Created in Christ unto good works.**



I. THE OLD LIFE (Eph. 2:1-3).

Two things characterize the old life: (1) being dead in sin, and (2) being children of disobedience. The one condition is no better than the other, because both result in a separation from God that leads to eternal death.

1. Dead in Trespasses and Sins (verse 1).

What condition of the Ephesians before they were saved is typical of all who are without Christ?

The spiritual plight in which the Ephesians once found themselves was nearly identical to the condition of Israel as described by Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa. 1:5, 6). The one difference was that the Ephesians had come out of their hopeless condition, whereas Israel had slipped back into and remained in it. Human beings in their natural state are slaves to death. Our natural state results in moral as well as physical death. Paul compares moral death to the works of darkness: orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, debauchery, dissension, and jealousy. (See Rom. 13:12-14, NIV.) A human being is dead morally when that person clings to sin and a sinful way of life. Sin separates the sinner from Christ, the Life Giver.

THINK IT THROUGH: Are there degrees of spiritual death? How would it be possible to be half alive and half dead spiritually?

The Bible does not recognize “degrees of death.” It does not speak of one person being more dead spiritually than another, although it does speak of degrees of guilt and degrees of evil. A person who is dead is dead. There is no hope of life from self or through self effort.

What does the expression “trespasses and sins” found in verse 1 mean?

“Man’s trouble is not merely that he is out of harmony with his environment and with his fellows. He is ‘alienated from the life of God’ (iv. 18), that is, with respect to his true spiritual nature he is *dead in trespasses and sins*. There is probably no essential difference between the two nouns; the root meaning of the first is ‘missing the mark’ and of the second ‘slipping’ or ‘falling from the way,’ and thus both express man’s failure to live as he could and ought.”—Frances Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, p. 68.

2. Children of Disobedience (Eph. 2:2, 3).

What are some of the characteristics of “children of disobedience”? Verses 2, 3.

The one main characteristic of “children of disobedience” is that they are entirely self-willed and self-centered. Because of this they consciously resist the will of God.

It is frightening when a willful child continually and deliberately chooses to disregard the will of his or her parents. But how awful it is when children of God flout the authority of their heavenly Parent! (See Prov. 13:1; 17:25.) The way that we relate to Christ, God’s Son, reveals the way that we will relate to the Father. (See John 3:35, 36; 14:21.)

The disobedient child walks “according to the course of this world,” the course that is easiest to follow. The disobedient child also walks “according to the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

What does the reference to walking in verse 2 suggest about our former life of sin?

The term *walking* suggests the image of the sinner taking step after step into evil. Psalm 1 outlines what some see as a progressive decline into evil in three steps: (1) walking in the counsel of the ungodly, (2) standing in the way of sinners, and (3) sitting in the seat of the scornful. Perhaps the natural bent is to walk in the direction of evil and, as we progress, to become more established in it. Because the non-Christian walk leads the sinner downhill, the way seems deceptively easy.

What mental picture do you form when you read the words “lusts of the flesh” and “desires of the flesh”?

The word for “lusts” here is an unusual word in that the original Greek word can be used in a positive sense as well as a negative. Basically meaning “desires,” it is used most often to describe “deceitful lusts,” “worldly lusts,” or “fleshly lusts.” (See Eph. 4:22; Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 2:11.) However, on one occasion Christ used this identical word in a positive sense when He said, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). Paul once wrote that he endeavored to see the Thessalonians face to face “with great desire,” using the same word. A comparison of these usages suggests that “deceitful lusts” are a perversion of God-given motives. Because of sin, selflessness is perverted into self-centeredness, ambition is prostituted into avarice and greed, and love becomes lust. Such is the power of evil that it takes whatever God planted originally within humanity as good and turns it into evil. On the other hand, the power of the gospel is such that it takes what is evil—the perverted desires and inclinations, for example—and transforms them into good.



II. THE NEW LIFE (Eph. 2:4-10).

1. Made Alive by God (verses 4-6).

What two miracles has God performed for us because of His rich mercy and great love?

This remarkable passage begins with the two simple words, “But God.” These words assure us that no predicament of ours is too great for God to solve.

According to Ephesians 2:4-6, what is basic to the development of Christian unity?

In reading these verses it would be easy to overlook the theme of unity, just as a person walking along a beach might overlook a rare shell unless specifically searching for it. But the theme of unity is brought out in the fact that, at all stages in the Christian life, we must be united completely with Christ. There must be a divine-human togetherness.

COMPLETE: Read Ephesians 2:5, 6; then fill in the missing words in the blanks below:

- We are made _____ together with Christ.
- We are _____ up together with Him.

- We sit in _____ together with Him.

2. Raised up by God (Eph. 2:6, 7).

What characteristics mark those who dwell in “heavenly places”?

“Those who appreciate this great sacrifice receive from the Saviour that most precious of all gifts—a clean heart. They gain an experience that is more valuable than gold or silver or precious stones. They sit together in heavenly places in Christ, enjoying in communion with Him the joy and peace that He alone can give. They love Him with heart and mind and soul and strength, realizing that they are His blood-bought heritage. Their spiritual eyesight is not dimmed by worldly policy or worldly aims. They are one with Christ as He is one with the Father.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 7.

There can be just one solution for disunity and disharmony: sitting together with Christ in heavenly places. What would it be like if church members would spend just one thoughtful hour each day sitting with Christ?

What is God’s overall purpose in raising us up? Eph. 2:7.

In the resurrection of Christ, God exemplified the exceeding greatness of His power at work. (See Eph. 1:19, 20.) In *our* spiritual resurrection, God demonstrates the kindness that is part of the immeasurable riches of His grace. He will continue to do so throughout eternity.



3. Saved by Grace Through Faith (Eph. 2:8, 9).

How are we saved? Is it through grace alone, or through faith alone, or through grace and faith combined?

Often we hear it said that salvation is “by faith alone,” and that is correct in a sense. But a deeper truth is involved. Actually *our* faith does not save us, but God’s grace does. If there were any saving power inherent in *our* faith, then faith would become another work, as Martin Luther so aptly pointed out. We do not even have enough strength to exercise faith by ourselves. That is why faith has to be a gift of God. But we can cry out, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24), as did the father of the demon-possessed boy.

ILLUMINATION: “There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour. Faith cannot remove our guilt. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071.

Spiritually we are as if we have been brought to a hospital, having been critically injured in an accident. There is no hope that we should see the

light of another day unless prompt action is taken. We have great confidence in the doctor and all his associates; we have faith that the medicine likewise will provide healing. But it is the divinely-directed operation of nature that in the end brings healing. Doctors admit that they have no power to cure disease, nor does the medicine they prescribe cure, although it may assist the healing process. Doctors are instruments in God's hand, and it is God's power that brings healing. Antibiotics can kill disease germs, but that does not make the patient well. God has to heal the inflamed area and repair the damage. Because the same Greek word used in the New Testament for "saving" sometimes is used for "healing," it would be consistent to read the verse this way: "By grace are ye saved [healed] through faith; and that not of yourselves."

Salvation, then, is a free gift from God received by means of faith. This faith does not originate in us, but it can reside in us and work for us. Paul says that it is "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12). (See also Gal. 5:22.)

ILLUMINATION: "Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles."—*Education*, p. 253.

Why does God not want us to have any occasion for boasting? 1 Cor. 1:27-29 (Read this passage also in a modern translation, if available.)



4. Created in Christ Unto Good Works (Eph. 2:10).

How do good works fit into the picture? Does saving faith eliminate the need for good works? Verse 10.

Because God has raised us up from the spiritual death that is the result of sin, as new creatures and God's children, we are His handiwork.

How can the children of disobedience and the children of wrath be transformed into children of God? 2 Cor. 5:17.

The good works that God expects can be produced only when the will and affections have been committed totally to God's direction. Sometimes it is asserted that when a person becomes a Christian, good works come *naturally*. Of course, there is some truth there, but the statement could be misleading. Good works are the product of a struggle. The Christian life is a battle and a march. The enemy of souls does not give in one inch without a fight. Even for a Christian there is enough of the old

nature left so that any attempts at doing good will be met with fierce resistance, a resistance from both without and within. Good works are the outgrowth of a crucifixion. Scripture never speaks of them as coming easily or naturally. True, it describes them in terms of fruit (Luke 3:8; John 15:4, 5; Gal. 5:22); but we must not forget that fruit also is not produced without a struggle—a struggle against the attacks of insects, or birds, or fruit-eating bats, and the ravages of wind, lightning, or hail. Sometimes it is a struggle for a fruit tree to obtain enough water for the fruit to mature.

The Christian would despair of bearing fruit were it not for the miracle-working power of God exercised in the creation of a new life. This new creation is made “in Christ.” Paul describes God’s creative power as seen in nature (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rom. 1:25), and this power is no different from that which is used in creating a human being into a new person.

ILLUMINATION: “It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character upon His church.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Rom. 4:16; 6:5-18; 7:15-23; 8:5-8; Gal. 5:16-21; *Steps to Christ*, “The Test of Discipleship,” pages 57-65.

“Grace is too commonly regarded as a pleasing sentiment, a welcome feeling of cosy favour entertained toward us by our God. The interpretation is ineffective, and inevitably cripples the life in which it prevails. Grace is more than a smile of good nature. It is not the shimmering of an illumined lake; it is the sun-lit majesty of an advancing sea. It is a transcendent and ineffable force, the outgoing energies of the redeeming personality of God washing against the polluted shores of human need.”—J. H. Jowett, quoted by W. E. Orchard and N. P. Williams, *The Study Bible: Ephesians to Philemon* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), p. 18.

SUMMARY: Life can be characterized as a continuous series of contrasts: night and day, planting and harvest, summer and winter, laughter and sorrow, success and failure. But the greatest contrast of all is between the old life of sin and the new life in Christ that we receive through God’s creative power.

APPLICATION: Take a moment to list your deepest concerns and burdens. Which one concern outweighs all others? How does it affect your spiritual development? How much of the “old” way of life is left over in your life and occasionally manifests itself? How much progress have you made in the “new” life? Does life perhaps seem even more of a struggle then when you first set foot on the Christian pathway? Are you willing to let Jesus bring you full victory? Do you believe that He who brought you new life will enable you to become like Him?

One Building, One Cornerstone

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 2:11-22.



MEMORY TEXT: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit" (Eph. 2:21, 22).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the first two chapters of Ephesians Paul uses two different types of imagery to describe the church: the human body and a building. Both types of metaphors have much in common and emphasize the same point—the church must be unified if it is to function successfully.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 2:11-22

Condition Before Reconciliation (Verses 11, 12)	Steps to Oneness or Reconciliation (Verses 13-18)	The Results of Reconciliation (Verses 19-22)
Called "Uncircumcised" Without Christ Without hope and without God	Made near by the blood of Christ Middle wall between Jew and Gentile broken down Ceremonial laws abolished and enmity slain Peace proclaimed Brought to the Father by the Spirit	Household of God established Foundation is firm— apostles, prophets, and Christ Himself A building that grows into a temple where God dwells

INTRODUCTION: Today some of the deepest divisions among human beings are caused by differences in race, cultures, and religion. These struggles do not take place just between the "haves" and the "have-nots," or between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. When wars, rebellions, or riots arise, they often can be traced to long-lasting animosities based on cultural or racial tensions. Add to the racial differences the deep-seated hatred due to religious differences, and the conflict is compounded greatly. Pick up almost any major daily newspaper or weekly news magazine and you will find vivid, up-to-date illustrations of this tension between societies divided by such differences.

The animosities we read about today reflect the animosities that existed between Jews and Gentiles some 1900 years ago. The hatred between the two groups was racial and cultural as well as religious in nature. The deeper the hatred and the greater the conflict, the more of a miracle it would take to reconcile the two groups. Violence was manifested not only in physical acts of sabotage and torture, but also in slander, innuendo, false reports, and verbal attacks. The miracle that reconciliation would take would have to clear away the bitterness of the mind and erase the hatred that was etched almost indelibly upon people's memories.

Last week we studied about the amazing miracle of God's power that rescued the Gentiles from their former way of life. This week we will view this power in action as it melts the hearts of the Jews and levels the barrier between Jew and Gentile.



I. CONDITION BEFORE RECONCILIATION (Eph. 2:11, 12).

What is said about the condition of the Ephesian believers before the gospel reached them and they became believers? Verses 11, 12.

Paul asks the Gentiles to remember that in their "time past" life, they belonged to the uncircumcision, being without Christ. Circumcision was an external sign of God's covenant with His people, a covenant that was said to be written on the heart (Jer. 31:33). When God gave this important ceremony to Abraham and his descendents, He said to Abraham, "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13).

THINK IT THROUGH: Does God take a risk in giving us symbols and outward signs? If so, why does He give them?

The risk God took in giving circumcision to Israel was that the outward sign would become more significant to them than would the inward experience it was intended to represent. Religiosity would become a substitute for true religion, and the people involved would spend their time and efforts pursuing the love of praise rather than the praise of love. The same thing also can happen with baptism—the Christian ceremony that takes the place of and holds the significance that circumcision did with Abraham's descendants. The Gentiles were "called Uncircumcision" (Eph. 2:11). They did not belong to the community of the covenant.

ILLUMINATION: "Paul in Rom. 2:28 had had to insist that true circumcision was not something external and physical, but 'inwardly' and 'of the heart'. The outward mark had come to be not so much a sign that God ruled the man's heart, but all too often a substitute for it. So in Phil. 3:3 Paul wrote to those who had become Christians, whether Jew or Gentile: 'We are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put [have] no confidence in the flesh' (i.e., in the merely physical mark of circumcision)."—C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), p. 102.

We need to balance these comments with the thought that belonging to God's community demands some external evidence as well as the deep experience of having Christ with us. Although the spiritual relationship to Christ is vital, the formal part of belonging to the church also is important because it helps keep us well grounded spiritually.



II. STEPS TO ONENESS OR RECONCILIATION (Eph. 2:13-18).

How are we brought near to God and to His community? Verse 13.

Life is full of contrasts—sickness contrasted with health, joys with sorrow, triumph with tragedy, success with failure, memory of the past with hope for the future. In the same way, in the spiritual life the sinful life of the past can be contrasted with the new life in Christ.

Past. The "past" life of the believer was characterized by disobedience (Eph. 2:2), "wrath" (verse 3), being without Christ, without hope, without God, and being alienated from God's people (verses 11, 12).

Present. The present or "new" life is one of a deep, present spiritual reality that produces unity. Those "who sometimes were far off" are now "made nigh." This is possible only because they are "now in Christ Jesus" (verse 13).

Being "now in union with Christ Jesus" (verse 13, NEB), the true believer leaves behind his former state of being "apart from Christ" (verse 12, TEV). Separation is no longer a factor in his attitudes, thoughts, or experience. The life he lives is the "in" life—in Christ, in God, in the Spirit, in peace, in love, in hope, in the church, and in its mission, and in unity.

"*Made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" Christ's sacrificial death "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). It cleanses us from the sins of separation and alienation that started the human race on the downward path away from the Creator.

THINK IT THROUGH: In what way has the blood of Christ brought us into closer union with God than if we had never sinned? (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.)

How alone can the barriers that sin has erected between God and us and between us and our fellow human beings be broken down? Eph. 2:14.

"There was a barrier both literally and spiritually. In Jerusalem, between the temple proper and the Court of the Gentile, there was a stone wall on which there was an inscription in Greek and Latin 'which forbade any foreigner to go in, under pain of death'. It is strangely significant that Paul was finally arrested and condemned by the Jews in Jerusalem on the basis of a false accusation that he took an Ephesian, Trophimus, beyond this barrier (Acts xxi.29f.). But Christ had now *broken down* the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, of which that dividing wall in the temple was a symbol."—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*

(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 81, 82.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Today society has erected certain barriers that alienate people. Legislation has a hard time removing these barriers. Is it part of a Christian's task to remove barriers? How did Christ go about removing the chains that society had forged around certain people? John 4 would be a good place to begin searching for answers to these questions.



What did Christ do to remove or abolish the "middle wall" separating Jews and Gentiles? Eph. 2:15, 16.

First, Christ had to abrogate completely that which the Jews had allowed to divide and alienate the two groups—the ceremonial system. He did so by dying on the cross. His death removed the need for the system of types and ceremonies that had pointed forward to the Redeemer.

Second, when Christ ascended to His Father, He took with Him human flesh and human form. His ministry in the sanctuary in heaven on our behalf did away with the need for an earthly priesthood, as the torn veil of the Jerusalem temple so dramatically illustrated. Since that time the believer—whether Jew or Gentile—has unlimited access to the Father through the ministry of Jesus. (See Heb. 6:19, 20; 7:25.)

By what agent are we brought into the presence of the Father and thus into closeness with fellow believers? Eph. 2:17, 18.

The peace that Paul proclaimed is that which results from unity. Paul had discussed previously the means for producing the unified church: Christ and what He did for us on the cross.

COMPLETE the following in order to review how Paul emphasized oneness in the verses we have studied so far this week:

- a. "For he is our peace, who hath made both _____" (verse 14).
- b. "To make in himself of twain _____ new man" (verse 15).
- c. "That he might reconcile both unto God in _____ body by the cross" (verse 16).
- d. "Through him we both have access by _____ Spirit unto the Father" (verse 18).

THINK IT THROUGH: Why is there so much emphasis on unity in this section of Ephesians? What does it mean to us today?



III. THE RESULTS OF RECONCILIATION (Eph. 2:19-22).

What significance do you find in the contrast between being a citizen of God's household and being a foreigner? Verse 19.

The church is the city in which the saints, members of the spiritual commonwealth, have their citizenship and those who were strangers and foreigners are now accepted as fellow-citizens.

THINK IT THROUGH: What are some of the duties and privileges of being members of God's community of faith?

While Christ's sacrifice and death took place as much for the non-member as for the member, there rests upon each member a greater responsibility and greater privileges. Each member is to be an example to the believer as well as to the non-believer in all things. The member who falls into flagrant sin becomes much more of a stumbling block to others than does a non-member who falls into that same sin.

Sometimes members accept all the rights and privileges of being citizens of the household of God but fail to realize that there are duties and responsibilities connected with those rights. They love to exert their independence of thinking, freedom of teaching, and liberty of opinion while ignoring the duties demanded of the citizens of God's kingdom. Our duties include obedience to Christ and all His commands, responsibility of conduct, submission to God-given authority, and active participation in the mission of the church.

If the church is compared to a building, how is it to be kept from being swept away in time of storm? Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:7.

It is fascinating to study Paul's use of metaphors and spiritual symbolism. First, we find him comparing the church to the human body (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30). One of the main lessons we learn from this metaphor is the close relationship and unity that is to exist between the body and its Head as well as between the members of the body and their fellow members. Members have different functions but are to work together in unity.

Second, we find Paul drawing upon the symbol of a building, most likely a temple. The building stones must have cohesion, or the temple will topple over during the first earthquake or windstorm. Again unity is a key element.

Each stone in this hallowed structure gains its true worth from its relationship with the cornerstone that represents Christ. "A stone that does not shine is worthless. That which constitutes the value of our churches is not dead, lusterless stones, but living stones, stones that catch the bright beams from the Chief Cornerstone, even the Sun of Righteousness—the bright glory in which are combined the beams of mercy and truth that

have met together, of righteousness and peace that have kissed each other.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1116.

What is the main purpose of the church? Why do we need to be part of a “structure”? Eph. 2:21.

It is interesting that the same expression “fitly framed together” in the original language appears elsewhere in Ephesians: “From whom the whole body *fitly joined together* . . . , maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). (Emphasis supplied.) This expression, which means “to join closely together,” is used first in connection with the symbolism of the building, then in connection with the symbolism of the body. At first it may appear that Paul is mixing symbols that do not match—the building being cold and lifeless and the body being living and pulsating. But Paul viewed the building in a different light because he was adding a spiritual dimension. He thought of the building as alive and dynamic; in fact, it *grows*, as he states in verse 21. One of God’s purposes for the church is for it to be alive and growing so that God can dwell in and be seen in it.



How can Paul’s use of “temple” imagery in verse 21 be harmonized with 1 Peter 2:4, 5.

Peter calls the individual members “lively stones,” or “living stones,” whereas Paul states that the building “grows.” It would seem that in order to have a growing temple, living stones would be required. The stones are unusual in that they merge into and intertwine with one another, just as the personality of a husband blends with the personality of his wife whom he loves and cherishes dearly. There can be no unity without this growing together, this blending of interests, goals, feelings, and affections.

What additional spiritual lessons can we draw from Paul’s comparison of the church to a building?

Here are some possibilities:

1. To be of any use, building stones must be brought from the quarry, which requires an expenditure of toil, energy, and perseverance.
2. The true value or worth of a building stone should not be judged on the basis of its roughened exterior.
3. Each stone has its appointed place in the building. It may require much cutting and polishing before fitting it into that place.
4. The stronger stones are used for the pillars and support structures; the weaker ones are used to complete the building. Each performs a vital service.

What more is required of the Christian other than being part of a church structure or taking part in church activities? Eph. 2:22.

There is a world of difference between being "built" and being "built together." (Notice how Paul returns again to his favorite theme of togetherness.) We can sit from Sabbath to Sabbath with the same people in church pews, and yet there may be no togetherness. We may be in close proximity in body but not in spirit. Unity does not mean being *with* people; it means being interested *in* people—in their cares and concerns, their triumphs and tragedies, their joys and sorrows. Some of the loneliest people may attend round after round of parties or social events seeking togetherness, but they have no one that truly cares for them. A member can sit in church week after week and still be lonely inside. The unity that should characterize the caring church comes from "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). If we truly are followers of Christ, we too will care deeply when others are hurting deeply.

THINK IT THROUGH: If it is not enough to sit on the same pew with others, then how do we show that we indeed care? How does an ordinary church become a caring church?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Romans 9:31-33; 1 Peter 2:1-10; and Psalm 144:12.

"The mighty cleaver of truth has taken you out of the quarry of the world. You were rough stones with jagged edges, bruising and marring whoever you came in contact with; there is a work to be done to smooth off the rough edges. If you appreciated the value of the work that is to be done in the workshop of God, you would welcome the blows of the ax and the hammer. Your self-esteem will be hurt, your high opinion of yourself will be cut away by the ax and the hammer, and the roughness of your character will be smoothed off; and when self and carnal propensities are worked away, then the stone will assume proper proportions for the heavenly building, and then the polishing, refining, subduing, burnishing processes will begin, and you will be molded after the model of Christ's character. His own image is to be reflected in the polished character of His human agent, and the stone is to be fitted for the heavenly building."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 319.

When does most of the polishing take place—while the stone is yet in the quarry or after it has been fitted into its place within the structure?

SUMMARY: The church is compared to both a body and a temple. The body derives its unity and harmony of action from one source, and that is the head; the temple derives its united strength also from its connection with one source, and that is the cornerstone. Spiritually speaking, Christ is both the Head and the Cornerstone.

APPLICATION: Ask yourself, How closely connected am I to the One who is the source of all strength and unity? What do people think of Christ when they learn that I am His representative?

Paul's Commission

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 3:1-13.

SAB
PM

MEMORY TEXT: "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" (Eph. 3:8).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because Paul was given special insights into the mystery of God, he was anxious to be able to share those insights with others, particularly with the Gentiles.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 3:1-13	
Paul's Special Commission (verses 1-7)	The Scope of His Commission (verses 8-13)
Grace given to him (verses 1, 2) Unveiling of mystery given to him that Gentiles should be heirs (verses 3-6) Gift of grace accompanied by power (verse 7)	To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches (verse 8) To preach to all people the mystery hidden from the beginning (verse 9) To present a living demonstration of God's eternal purpose to heavenly beings (verses 10-13)

INTRODUCTION: In this week's lesson Paul picks up the themes that he dealt with in chapter 1 and expands them. He reestablishes his credentials for a divine calling. It is vital that we sense a "calling" for our lifework, for it is the sense of calling or the sense of mission that makes our work a delight rather than drudgery. When difficulties arise and roadblocks stand in the way, it is the knowledge of our calling that moves us forward against seemingly insurmountable opposition.

Paul's calling came in the form of a revelation. Through that revelation he received the dispensation, or stewardship, of God's grace to take the gospel to the Gentiles. He received the stewardship of "the mystery" (verse 3)—something unknown in the past in the way that it "is now revealed" to God's apostles and prophets "by the Spirit" (verse 5).

The content of this revelation stood in total opposition to many of Paul's previous convictions and to many of the traditions of the Jews. The Israelites thought that God would have nothing to do with the Gentile world. But this was not so. The Gentiles are fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of God's promises, provided that they are "in Christ" and this "by the gospel" (verse 6).

I. PAUL'S SPECIAL COMMISSION (Eph. 3:1-7).

As he wrote this epistle, Paul was undergoing imprisonment in Rome. On whose behalf was he suffering imprisonment? Eph. 3:1; Acts 21:27-29.

Although Paul was a prisoner of the Roman authorities, waiting to be brought before Nero's judgment, he considered that passing reality to be an illustration of his permanent spiritual reality. Paul considered himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ, under the arrest of His calling, to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He had come to be a prisoner while doing this work and for the cause of the upbuilding of the Lord's church.

It was because of his great burden for the Gentiles and his active labor among them that he was arrested within the sacred precincts of the temple. He had been accused of bringing Ephesian Gentile Christians into the Court of the Jews, rather than leaving them in the Court of the Gentiles. Probably it was Jews from the province of Asia who accused Paul of this violation. They also must have come from Ephesus because they recognized "Trophimus an Ephesian," whom they charged that Paul brought into the temple.

What special ministry was given to Paul? Eph. 3:2.

The "dispensation" or, better, the "administration" of God's grace is the "dispensation of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:17), which makes those who receive it "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). In Ephesians 1:10 we found that the word *dispensation* was used in the sense of "stewardship."

ILLUMINATION: "The word here (*oikonomia*) is one that was used either for the administration of a household (*oikos*), or for the responsibility of the one who administered it. It is used several times in the New Testament in this latter sense of stewardship. For the Church is the household of God, Jesus Christ is Chief Steward, and under Him His ministers are called to serve as stewards (see 1 Cor. iv.1f., ix.17; Tit.i.7; 1 Pet. iv.10)."—Frances Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 52.

A steward must maintain the same relationship to the Chief Steward as an undershepherd must maintain to the Chief Shepherd. (See 1 Peter 5:1-4.)

In what way was Paul's ministry different from Peter's? Gal. 2:7.

Paul could have quarreled with Peter about who was to have the special position of "apostle to the Jews" just as Peter could have contended with Paul for the "apostleship to the Gentiles." But each was content with his own role. Actually, Paul could have considered himself better qualified for Peter's position, having been a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5).

His education as a strict Pharisee under the famed teacher Gamaliel could have provided him with the necessary academic credentials for relating much better to his fellow countrymen than Peter could. But each accepted his divinely-assigned task.

THINK IT THROUGH: When someone else receives a church office, such as head elder, deacon, Sabbath School leader, or school board member—positions for which I think I am better qualified—what should my attitude be?

MON

How did Paul receive the knowledge of the mystery of Christ? Was it any different from the way that we receive a knowledge of spiritual things today? Eph. 3:3, 4.

Paul already had said that he received his ministry from God (verse 2). Now he defines the grounds on which he bases his knowledge of the gospel and his mission—God revealed these to him. (See Gal. 1:11, 12; 2:2; Acts 9:4-18; 22:7-16; 26:17-19).

What does Paul mean by the term *mystery* in Ephesians 3:4-6? Is it any different from what he had mentioned in Ephesians 1:9, 10 or from what is recorded in Colossians 1:26, 27?

Both in the first few verses here in Ephesians 3 and in Colossians 1:25-27, Paul speaks about the special dispensation or stewardship that has been granted to him. What has been put under his care is not a bank account, or a tent-making business, or a rich person's collection of sculptures and art work. Instead it is the "mystery" which had been hidden "from the beginning of the world" (Eph. 3:9) or "from ages and from generations" in the past (Col. 1:26). Some have asserted that Paul defines the mystery differently in Ephesians from the way that he defines it elsewhere.

In Ephesians 6:19 Paul speaks of the "mystery of the gospel" in a general sense, and in Ephesians 3:6 he speaks of the mystery as it relates to the Gentiles in a specific sense. There is no inconsistency here.

According to Paul, what two factors determined his ministry? Eph. 3:7.

If it is to be most effective, grace must be accompanied by power. In any type of true Christian ministry, God's grace and power can be seen in action. In that way all the glory and the credit for results will be attributed to the true Source.

Paul speaks from his own experience of the grace that set him apart on the Damascus road and the power that made such remarkable changes in his life. "He was unworthy to be a preacher of God's word, because he had been a persecutor; but the grace of God had made him all that he was, a new man in Christ (1 Cor. xv. 10). It also made him Christ's servant in the

proclamation of His gospel, and in the particular work that he had of ministering it to the Gentiles. But mercy was not enough. He was also a minister by the effectual working of his power. The task to which he was called needed no mere human strength and patience and power of endurance. It needed the power of God, and, as in i.19, Paul shows that power is given, and not just as an abstract thing, or as a force applied from afar, but as energizing strength (*energeia*) operative in his life by the Spirit's indwelling."—Frances Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, pp. 95, 96.



II. THE SCOPE OF PAUL'S COMMISSION (Eph. 3:8-13).

Why did Paul call himself "less than the least of all saints"? Verses 8, 9.

Paul may have been the one convert to Christianity who was responsible for the deaths of more Christians than any other convert. For this reason, he may have felt that his guilt before God was greater than that of the converts who came out of the dissipating practices of paganism, such as the very ones to whom he is addressing this epistle—the Ephesians. This is not "mock humility" on the part of Paul because false humility never wins converts to Christ. Mock humility is foreign to the spirit of Christ, who genuinely humbled Himself, even to a lowly death on Calvary's cross. Paul is not boasting of his humility, but is sharing his amazement with fellow church members that God would call *him* to such a weighty and important task.

Paul had to be blinded with God's grace in order that he could help others see the depths of God's mystery. If he were to permit the thought to reside in his mind that he was *better* than the other converts to Christianity, God's grace could not be poured out fully into his life. They would not be able to see the depths of God's mystery.

Why does Paul emphasize God's creatorship when discussing the depths of the mystery? Eph. 3:9.

The Greeks taught that matter is eternal. The eighteenth-century French deists likewise believed matter to be eternal. One problem with such a concept is that God could not have been the Creator of all things if matter was eternal. Scripture stoutly rejects the pagan Greek idea of the eternity of matter when it affirms that "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). The mystery of God is linked in Ephesians with that which is from eternity—not to inanimate matter but to God the living Creator. (See Eph. 3:9, RSV.)

The idea that the universe has been in existence for millions or even billions of years is not foreign to Seventh-day Adventist belief as long as we avoid the pagan concept of the eternity of matter and as long as we attribute the existence of everything to God's creative power. Along with that we need to recognize that our inhabited world was brought into being only a comparatively few thousand years ago. The point here is that

God's mystery is older than the oldest *created* thing; and the marvel is that we, along with the Ephesian believers, have the privilege of seeing this ancient mystery being unfolded before our eyes.



SEARCH AND LEARN: To understand better Paul's teachings about Creation, study the following texts and note to whom each is addressed.

- a. Acts 14:15 _____
- b. Rom. 1:19, 20 _____
- c. 1 Cor. 8:6 _____

What role does the church have in sharing the mystery of God? Eph. 3:10.

Paul was extremely grateful for "the privilege of proclaiming to the Gentiles the good news of the unfathomable riches of Christ, and of bringing to light how this hidden purpose was to be put into effect" (Eph. 3:8, 9, NEB). Is the task of the church any different from Paul's task?

ILLUMINATION: "God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 163.

ILLUSTRATION: Even collective effort is not enough without being connected to the source of power. How much light is provided by a carload of unlit matches or by a warehouse filled with candles that have not yet been used? Each must be individually struck or lit in order to become effective. How much light does a case of unattached light bulbs give off? Before the church can provide light to a dark world the individual members must be connected to its only available Source of power.



What other dimension of the mystery of God did Paul mention? Eph. 3:11.

Paul stresses the greatness of the mystery in four different ways:

1. He ties the mystery with the "unsearchable" or "unfathomable riches of Christ" (verse 8).
2. He links it with the greatness of Creation in ages past (verse 9).
3. He associates it with "the wisdom of God in all its varied forms" (verse 10, NEB).

4. He emphasizes it as part of God's eternal plan (verse 11).

The scope of the proclamation and demonstration of God's purpose includes *all* created beings:

1. Gentiles (verse 8, compare Rom. 1:16).
2. All of mankind (Eph. 3:9).
3. All heavenly beings (verse 10).

Thus God's plan touches upon all dimensions, covering all of time and space. The cross bridges the gap from earth to heaven, and its extended arms overshadow all of humankind. You may feel yourself outside of the shadow of the cross and beyond reach of the sunshine of God's love, but your very existence owes itself to the sustaining power of God. He upholds the galaxies in their immensity and is aware when a tiny sparrow falls to earth. Every breath you take can be traced back to the great wisdom and power of God displayed at Creation, and every pulse of blood that surges through your veins has been made possible by the One who poured out His blood for you at Calvary, because He loves you. To Christ you owe everything. The bread you eat is "the purchase of His broken body." The water you drink "is bought by His spilled blood." (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.)

What qualities does knowing Christ and His eternal plan help develop within us, and why are they important? Eph. 3:12, 13.

Boldness is needed so that we can share the mystery with others. While having boldness, we need not faint, spiritually speaking. It is amazing that Paul was not concerned to any great extent about himself during his imprisonment. But he was concerned that the Ephesian believers not grow faint-hearted as they heard reports of his trials and of his subsequent afflictions. What kept Paul in good faith and courage through all of his troubles was the knowledge that it was part of God's eternal plan. In other words, his afflictions were for the sake of the Ephesians and other believers and for their glory and encouragement.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 160-165.

A person committed to the Lord and His truth can endure any amount of insult and abuse hurled at him as long as he knows that it fits in with a larger plan. Unknown to him, Paul's trials were for our "glory" and encouragement as well. Do we have trials that sometimes are for the glory of others, even those individuals we have never met?

SUMMARY: In true humility Paul stands amazed that God should bestow upon him such a weighty responsibility—helping others to see and understand the mystery of God's grace. We too can have a part in the unveiling of this mystery and in sharing it with others.

APPLICATION: Do I sense God's calling in my life? Am I committed without reservation to the accomplishment of His purpose? What kind of testimony to His goodness do I give in my home, in my community, and to the *universe*?

Unity, an Outgrowth of Love

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 3:14-21.



MEMORY TEXT: "Unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20, 21).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the same way that the greatness of the universe and the complexity of a single atom is beyond our comprehension, the fullness of Christ's love cannot be fathomed. Even after studying it for an eternity we will not have plumbed its depths. Christ can do so much more for us than we can ever comprehend, including bringing unity out of disunity.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 3:14-21

Prayer for Strength (verses 14-16)	Prayer for Growth (verses 17-19)	Praise to God for His Greatness (verses 20, 21)
Strengthened in the inner person	Rooted and grounded in love	Enraptured by the magnificence of His love and the abundance of His power

INTRODUCTION: At this mid-point in the study of our quarter's lesson, it would be well for us to look once again at the theme we have chosen for the quarter—unity. Few verses in this inspiring and inspired letter actually mention the words *one* or *unity*, but most verses bear on the topic in some way. In this week's lesson we focus on a two-fold prayer of Paul's. In the first part of his prayer he prays that the believers might be strengthened inwardly by the Spirit.

Prayers often are the best indicators of what a person's deepest feelings or heaviest burdens might be. So it is with Paul. Why is he so passionately concerned that the Ephesian members should have strength? Had they not received Christ into their lives, and thus should they not already have experienced the strength that His indwelling presence brings? Of all the congregations to which Paul wrote, and for which written records exist, the Ephesians probably received less reproof than any others. But even in a vibrant Christian experience, there still is danger that disunity can set in like a disease.

There is a cause-effect relationship between unity and strength—the greater the spiritual strength of individuals, the greater the collective strength of the congregation. An apt illustration of this principle is a rope. A rope made of eight or ten strands is much stronger than one made of only two or three strands. However, if some of the strands of an eight-strand rope become worn and frayed, then the strength of the entire rope is weakened.

In the second part of his prayer Paul asks the Lord to send the Ephesians love, an ever-deepening and ever-widening love. True Christian love leads to unity. The two best remedies that can be applied to a dis-united and diseased congregation are Christian love and spiritual strength. The best way to cooperate with God in the development of love and spiritual strength is participation in soul-winning activity.



I. THE PRAYER FOR STRENGTH (Eph. 3:14-16).

What kind of example does Paul give us in his prayer life? Verses 14, 15.

Paul once again is seen to be a praying apostle. As we listen in on his prayers, we discover that he was not concerned so much for his own needs as for the needs of those whom he had led to Christ. His prayer was truly an intercessory prayer. He prayed as parents would pray for the needs of a precious child. This type of intercessory prayer contains three vital elements:

1. It must have something important as its focus.
2. It must show a deep sense of reverence toward God.
3. It must be the product of obedience to Christ.

What was the underlying cause for Paul's fervent prayers?

The first three words of verse 14 give a crucial clue: "For this cause." These words refer back to what Paul had written. (See verse 1.) Upon examining the previous verses and chapters we can discover several possible motivations for his prayers.

One is that Paul felt himself a part of the all-embracing unity that included the Ephesian believers. Along with them he was a part of the body of Christ (Eph. 2:16).

Another motivation was that he was called to a divine mission, ordained to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, and certified as one of the apostles (Eph. 3:1-8). To fail to intercede on behalf of the Ephesian believers would be to annul his divine ordination.

A third motivation was the grandeur of the vision he received as he saw and understood the fellowship of the mystery of salvation that had been hid from eternal ages past (Eph. 3:9-11). The fact that he had been granted this special privilege created within him a desire to share it. "For this cause" Paul bent his travel-worn knees and bowed his deeply tanned face to pray for those dear to his heart.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the following texts indicate about bowing in prayer?

1 Kings 19:18. An indication of what? _____

Luke 22:41, 42. To signify what attitude? _____

Rom. 14:10-12. A part of what event? _____

Phil. 2:9-11. An acknowledgment that _____

All of these texts mention bowing the knee in an attitude of prayer or acknowledgment. Does this mean that the only proper form of prayer is praying on our knees? Actually, the Bible describes prayers taking place both in a kneeling and a standing position, and such prayers being accepted by God. Kneeling took place in such cases as Solomon's dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:54), Daniel's daily prayers (Dan. 6:10), and Stephen's final prayer (Acts 7:50, 60). Christ mentioned prayer being offered while standing (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13). Nehemiah must have been standing when he offered a silent petition before a heathen monarch (Neh. 2:4).

Nevertheless, Ellen White counsels: "When you assemble to worship God, be sure and bow your knees before Him. . . ."

Our spiritual strength and our influence are not increased by conformity to a worldly attitude during prayer. . . . Let man come on bended knee, as a subject of grace, a suppliant at the footstool of mercy."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 1130, 1131.



Why does Paul interject the idea at this point (Eph. 3:15) that "the whole family in heaven and earth" is named after the Father?

The model prayer is the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), and the very first words of that prayer are "Our Father." Here Paul is appealing to the Fatherhood of God as the basis for the assurance that His prayers are in earnest and will be heard in heaven. The words translated "whole family" indicate the wide circle of created beings around the universe who are included under the Fatherhood of God.

What is the burden of Paul's petition in Ephesians 3:16?

Paul prays that the believer might have inward strength, but it is diffi-

cult for someone who is weak in the faith to comprehend how he might be able to replace that weakness with strength. The guarantee that this will take place is the riches of God's glory. God's glory is synonymous with His character. When Moses asked to see God's glory in all its fullness (Ex. 33:18), the beautiful facets of God's character were revealed to him (Ex. 34:6, 7). Today God's glory is to be revealed on earth through His people who reproduce His character. According to Romans 9:23, 24, God has made known the "riches of his glory" through his "vessels," and the marvel of this is that we who are believers are these "vessels." People today depend on us for the revelation of God's glory. The only way they can see it is if we become like Christ in words, thoughts, and actions.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can I receive inward strength from the Father?

"The might that strengthens is the power of God. . . . The same power that converts men must continue in them if there is to be Christian growth. Here is where many Christians fail. They do not recognize that spiritual endurance requires as much of the grace of God as did the initial conversion."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1017.



II. THE PRAYER FOR GROWTH (Eph. 3:17-19).

What one quality more than any other prepares the way for the indwelling of Christ? Verse 17.

The faith which Paul is talking about here is not mere intellectual assent. Paul points out the futility of an intellectual belief that is divorced from faith in 1 Timothy 1:4. In Ephesians 3:17 faith is closely linked with the indwelling of Christ. The word used in the original language for "dwell" means "to dwell permanently." If he chose, Paul could have used another Greek word that would have conveyed the connotation of a "temporary sojourning." Paul's prayer and concern was that Christ's indwelling in the lives of the Ephesians would be an experience that would last into eternity.

How can we keep this indwelling experience alive? How can this experience be made permanent, and not just a passing fancy? Eph. 3:17, last part.

The secret of Christian living is to be "rooted and grounded in love" (verse 17). The New English Bible speaks of "deep roots and firm foundations." Some have suggested that Paul is mixing his metaphors here, the word *rooted* being taken from plant life, and the word *grounded* taken from the construction trade. But he must have combined the two symbols consciously and for a purpose. In Ephesians 2:21 he also combined the organic and inorganic realms: "In whom [Christ] the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (RSV). So Paul skillfully compares the church to both a building and a body. Love is epit-

omized by the finest example of endurance that we find in the natural world—a large-spreading tree that is braced against the severest gales. It also is beautifully illustrated in that which gives a building permanence—the foundation stone—because it is anchored fast in bedrock. The combined imagery of trees and building stones is applied especially to youth in the Old Testament. (See Ps. 144:12.)

What effect does the development of a deep, abiding love have upon doctrinal unity within the church? Col. 2:2.

Only twice is the expression “knit together” used in the New Testament, and both times Paul uses it in Colossians. In Colossians 2:19 it incorporates the idea of an organic relationship between the head and the rest of the body. Colossians 2:2 states that “being knit together in love” leads “unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.”

As our love for Christ deepens, our desire for a greater knowledge of His will and teachings will increase. A deepening love for the Head ought to produce a corresponding love for the body and the proper incentive for entering into greater doctrinal unity. “When we yearn for a deeper, broader realization of the Saviour’s love, we shall cry to God for more wisdom.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 177.

THINK IT THROUGH: Why is doctrinal unity so important to the health of the body?



What are the dimensions of divine love? How is it to be measured? Eph. 3:18, 19.

Paul mentions here “breadth, and length, and depth, and height” as the dimensions of God’s love. Some scholars have wondered whether perhaps Paul has been a bit confused here, listing four dimensions when in reality there are but three. Others have suggested that the fourth dimension is love itself. But the simplest explanation is that the apostle is speaking from the standpoint of a single human observer: that person may go forward and backward (length), far to the left or to the right (breadth), to the deepest sea (depth), or the highest mountain (height), and still not escape from the sphere of God’s love. God’s love is not boxed in by dimensions. This is an echoing of the sentiments expressed in Romans 8:38, 39 where Paul exclaims that absolutely nothing—neither “height nor depth”—could “separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It is comforting to know that when we stray to the right or to the left, God’s love in all its breadth always is there to woo us back to the straight and narrow path, the only path of safety. Whether we are making progress forward in the Christian life, or we begin to slip backward, we are never outside of the canopy of His infinite love, for the arms of the cross reach from heaven to the darkest corner of the earth. On rare occasions we may ascend to the very heights of success in our Christian struggles, and there

taste fully of His victorious, all-conquering love; but so often we slip into the depths of discouragement. But even there we can experience the depths of His forgiving love that knows no limits.

No matter how rebellious we have been as His children, it is reassuring to know that we cannot escape from the sphere of God's love.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Besides His love, what are some other aspects about God that are impossible to measure, humanly speaking? Ps. 57:10; 139:1-6; Isa. 40:28, 29; Rom. 11:33.

Because we are finite, and because He is infinite, it is exceedingly difficult to even begin to appreciate and understand God's great love. We are like little children, letting the tiny sand grains of God's love slip through our fingers, while the great ocean of His measureless love lies just before us, waiting to be explored. Such is true of His other qualities:

- His great wisdom and unsearchable understanding.
- His matchless mercies and never-failing forgiveness.
- His untiring strength and creative power.
- His knowledge of our needs and willingness to help us.

We have no idea of the greatness of these qualities. If we did we would exhibit a much stronger faith, a faith that would indeed move mountains of difficulties.



III. PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS GREATNESS (Eph. 3:20, 21).

Paul introduces a doxology here in the middle of his epistle when normally it would be used at the end as a grand finale. When he wrote to the Romans he concluded his letter with a doxology that began and ended with the same style of expression used here: "Now to him that is . . . be glory through Jesus Christ for ever" (Rom. 16:25-27). Jude used a similar style to conclude his brief letter (Jude 24, 25). Actually the close of chapter 3 in Ephesians marks the end of the first half of the book, the doctrinal portion. The second half, chapters 4-6, deals with the practical side of Christianity—the Christian's relationship to fellow Christians.

How can we begin to understand God's awesome power when it is stated as being beyond what we are able to "ask or think"? Eph. 3:20.

Here we find Paul using a literary device that can be called a "double superlative" (compare Eph. 1:19). He could have easily said, "above all that we ask or think" and he would have been absolutely correct. But he has gone a step farther in saying that God can do for us "*exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think" (Emphasis supplied).

To comprehend the greatness of God's power we must first comprehend the greatness of the universe that surrounds us. The world's most brilliant scientists find it challenging to understand the greatness of the universe and the vastness of space that separates galaxies and star systems. They have chosen the fastest traveling unit known in the universe

to measure these vast distances—the speed of light. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. In other words, the light which bounces off the moon at night reaches the earth in less than one and one half seconds, and the sun's hot rays travel to earth in only 8 minutes and 20 seconds—about the time it takes the average jogger to run one mile. Our nearest neighboring star, Alpha Centauri, is four and one half light-years away, or the same as 140,000 round trips between the earth and the sun. Our solar system is a tiny part of a swirling cluster of stars called the Milky Way Galaxy. The center of our galaxy alone contains about 100 billion stars such as our own sun, yet there are some 100 billion galaxies or more in the known universe.

God exercises His enormous power continually in upholding galaxies, stars, and planets in their various courses. His love must exceed the bounds of the vast universe because there is no created object outside the circle of His love and care. Imagine what it meant for God to focus all of His love upon one tiny speck in a darkened corner of our own galaxy and to concentrate all of Heaven's best in the sacrifice upon Calvary!

What agencies will join in bringing glory to God throughout eternity?
Eph. 3:21.

When Paul puts down the words, "throughout all ages, world without end," he again is using a "double superlative." If God's love is infinite and His power is limitless, then our glorification of Him must never cease.

 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 469, 470.

"So ends the apostle's prayer and the first part of the epistle. Amazing glory and majesty embodied in the promises of God to His erring yet hopeful ones has been the theme, beyond human language to express. It leaves the heart uplifted, the spirit chastened, and gives a living hope for the coming of the kingdom of God in its fullness."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1019.

SUMMARY: In bringing this portion of his letter to a grand climax, Paul states everything in the superlative: God's love cannot be put into human dimensions; His power is not only above but exceedingly above anything we can imagine, and we have the privilege of being filled with "all the fulness of God." Finally, time also is superlative—stretching into eternity.

APPLICATION: The greatness of God's love is often focused upon the smallest of objects. Take for example the butterfly's wing. Notice the mosaic of color that is lavished upon what we would consider as being very insignificant. Sometimes we feel insignificant and unimportant in the eyes of others and before our Maker. Think of some of the ways you have been able to see God's love in action in your life in the past few days and weeks. How does this give evidence that you are important in His sight?

Unity, the Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 4:1-16.

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MEMORY TEXT: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When Christ ascended to heaven, He showered gifts upon His church. A partial list of the spiritual gifts includes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These gifts were given not only for developing, instructing, and bringing God's people to maturity but also for bringing about unity. It is remarkable how a diversity of gifts can bring about unity of the faith. But that happens because there is but one Lord who has given the gifts and one Spirit who sets them into operation.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 4:1-16

Unified in One Body (verses 1-6)	The Granting of Gifts (verses 7-11)	The Purpose of Gifts (verses 12-16)
A unified body produced by one Lord, one faith, one baptism	Gift of grace to all—special gifts to a few	Not only for ministry and edification but also to bring unity, nurture, and growth

INTRODUCTION: Paul begins the second half of his letter with an appeal: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). "This verse begins what may be called the practical section of the epistle, although the apostle Paul did not think of doctrine and practice as separate branches of the faith. Theory and application are interwoven in the texture of his presentation of the great theme of the unity of believers. But in this section special exhortations are given concerning Christian duties and privileges, in view of the grace that has been received and of the responsibilities that fellow believers have to one another. The stress is here placed on the effects rather than on the causes of spiritual living."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1020.

"Altogether we find truth and life, here in Ephesians, as generally in Scripture, so closely, so vitally interwoven that it is impossible to treat either of the two as really isolated. Doctrine runs of itself into practice, in the mind of the Apostles, and practice always feels its footing in doctrine."—H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies* (Fort Washington, Penna.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), pp. 169, 170.



I. UNIFIED IN ONE BODY (Eph. 4:1-6).

To what has every Christian been called? Eph. 4:1.

The vocation referred to here is not an occupation, but a life of service for the Lord. More accurately, Paul is saying, "I beg you to live lives worthy of your high calling" (Phillips). Everyone is called to become a member of Christ's body, but only a select few within that body have the privilege of being prophets, teachers, or evangelists. But the calling to membership in that body is just as important and vital as, for instance, is the calling to be a prophet.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following references to see more specifically what is involved in our calling:

Col. 3:14-16 _____

1 Tim. 6:11, 12 _____

In what way are Christians to walk worthy of their calling in Christ? Eph. 4:2, 3.

1. "*With all lowliness and meekness.*" The Greek word translated "lowliness" conveys the idea of "humility of mind." This is a most important characteristic in Christian service and mission. In speaking to the elders of Ephesus in Miletus Paul said, "I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:18, 19). Meekness is a quality essential to the unity of the church.

2. "*With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*" In these qualities we find a progression from patience to forbearance to love.

3. "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" It was under the Spirit that the apostles were no longer "independent units or discordant, conflicting elements," but rather they became of "one accord."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 45.



What parallel is drawn between being possessed by the Holy Spirit and oneness in the church? Eph. 4:4.

As with the human person, Scripture always presents spirit and body in terms of united entity, so with the spiritual body, the church, the Bible

describes the Spirit of God as united with the body. It follows, then, that whenever there are divisions, schisms, gossiping, backbiting and strife within the church there is a corresponding lessening of the power and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit. He does not condone divisiveness.

ILLUMINATION: "The apostle exhorts his brethren to manifest in their lives the power of the truth which he had presented to them. By meekness and gentleness, forbearance and love, they were to exemplify the character of Christ and the blessings of his salvation. There is but one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith. As members of the body of Christ all believers are animated by the same spirit and the same hope. Divisions in the church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world and give occasion to the enemies of truth to justify their course. Paul's instructions were not written alone for the church of his day. God designed that they should be sent down to us. What are we doing to preserve unity in the bonds of peace?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 239.

What is the spiritual relationship between having one Lord, one faith, and one body? Eph. 4:5, 6.

In the same way that hope was related to the "one body" and the "one Spirit," faith and baptism connect the believers to the Lord and the Father. In this way the Christian believer is closely tied to the church, to Christ, and to God the Father. Faith accepts Christ as a personal Saviour. There only is one means of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). The "one baptism" is the door through which believers express their faith and enter into the church. "Baptism by water aptly symbolizes death and resurrection. Also, it signifies cleansing and separation, and is a public announcement of union with the body of Christ."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1022.



II. THE GRANTING OF GIFTS (Eph. 4:7-11).

What is God's provision for keeping unity in His church, and on what basis is this provision received? Verse 7.

"In what measure will God impart to us that we may impart to others? 'According to the measure of the gift of Christ.' Eph. 4:7. Angels are watching with intense interest to see how man is dealing with his fellow men. When they see one manifest Christlike sympathy for the erring, they press to his side and bring to his remembrance words to speak that will be as the bread of life to the soul. So 'God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' Phil. 4:19."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 148, 149.

What did Christ give to His church when He ascended to heaven in a triumphal procession after His resurrection, and why did He make this bestowal? Eph. 4:8.

Note that it does not say that He gave gifts "to all men." God gives basically two types of gifts. One is universal, given to all of the human race. The other is special, given only to the church or His chosen people. Salvation is a gift offered at first to all of mankind, but in the end granted only to those who obey (Heb. 5:9). The ascension gifts at first were granted to a handful of men and women gathered in an upper room awaiting the special dispensation, but subsequently were granted to the church at large.

"Not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' Eph. 4:8. 'Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' (Eph. 4:7) the Spirit 'dividing to every man severally as He will' (1 Cor. 12:11). The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

The major reason for the granting of these spiritual gifts was to bring about unity among a group that up until then had been sharply divided. Paul has been stressing the oneness that God expects in His church, and he has pointed out that there are some things in the church that are one and cannot be divided: the church "is one body," vitalized by "one Spirit," and called in "one hope." All the members of the church are united to the "one Lord" and to "one God and Father" by "one faith." They come into the church by "one baptism." It is remarkable that in this oneness we find "diversities of gifts" and "differences of administrations" (1 Cor. 12:4, 5).



THINK IT THROUGH: How is it possible for a body to have a multiplicity of gifts and yet have a complete unity in spirit, belief, and action? Study 1 Corinthians 12. (Note particularly verses 6-11.)

How were the gifts granted to the church at Christ's ascension to benefit the church, and how does the list in Ephesians 4:11 compare with that in 1 Corinthians 12:28?

Paul states that Christ gave gifted people to the church. In the list in Ephesians Paul mentions several categories of gifted individuals, whereas in First Corinthians he mentions gifts as well as persons.

"Paul is not so much saying that certain gifts were given to men in order that they might become apostles, as that they who had received the gift were themselves being given to the church. The church was receiving to its ministry men who were properly equipped for their functions."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1023.

In this way each gift is a double gift. He first endows the man or the woman. Then He gives these endowed people to the church. In the body of Christ are members charged with various functions and gifts that are to be used in unity with the body and for the perfection of the church.

How do the gifts of “pastors and teachers” mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 relate to each other?

The offices of “pastors and teachers” are interrelated closely because of their being linked together by a single article in the Greek. “The structure of this phrase, in the Greek, suggests that Paul intends to speak of two phases of one office. Any effective ministry is a teaching ministry. The pastoral function of the ministry is presented in John 21:16; Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Peter 5:2, 3; etc., and the teaching aspect in Acts 13:1; Rom. 12:7; 1 Tim. 3:2, and many other passages. The Master Himself was the great pastor-teacher, shepherding the flock and teaching them.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1023.



III. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS (Eph. 4:12-16).

List below God’s threefold purpose in giving endowed men and women to the church. Verse 12.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The “work of the ministry” includes the many and varied types of ministry and serving within the church. *Edification* has the basic meaning of “building up.” This presupposes the concept of the church as a building or a temple. Through fault-finding Satan attempts to tear down what God has established, but one reason that God has given spiritual gifts is that the church might be built up as a monument to God’s grace.

The term *perfecting* has the connotation of completion or completing that which has been started. Unlike erring humans, God always brings to completion that which He has started. (See Phil. 1:6.) This process of perfecting refers to the process of growth, progress, and maturation in our Christian experience.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read Ephesians 4:13-15 and see how many references to and illustrations of growth you can find.

What additional details does Paul present concerning the function and work of God’s gifted men and women in Ephesians 4:13, 14?

Paul first explains the ministry of the gifted men in a positive way. Then, in parallel, he explains their ministry through the negative elements that ministry is designed to overcome. These gifts are to be operative until the members have come to “the unity of the faith” and to “the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

In mentioning the negatives Paul shows what the results will be if there is unity of doctrine—the body of Christians will *not* be “children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” It is the nature of children to quarrel and fight when inequalities arise among them. People have differences of temperaments and personalities that sometimes lead to misunderstanding and even hostility. In the church God gives different talents and spiritual gifts to the members, but these are intended to unify the church rather than to lead to jealousies and quarrels.

THINK IT THROUGH: Can there be differences of opinion and still be unity of doctrine within the church?

What is the ultimate purpose for all spiritual gifts? Eph. 4:15, 16.

If spiritual gifts do not serve to aid the church to grow, develop, and mature into the stature and likeness of Christ, they have failed their purpose. When every part of the body is surrendered to the absolute control of the Head, who is Christ, unity *will* prevail. There is no shortcut to unity. “If the professed followers of Christ would accept God’s standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.

Much of Christianity today is characterized by a growing trend of independence. Some base this movement on the concept that Christians should be answerable to no human being, but to God alone. The Protestant idea of “the priesthood of all believers,” the teaching that we are not answerable to any human being for our salvation, is being carried to an extreme. One part of the body is led to assert its independence from the rest of the body, thus leading to spiritual “gangrene” and finally to death.

“God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinion of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 29, 30.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Testimonies*, volume 4, pages 16-20. Then think of some of the ways that your local congregation can improve in the matter of unity.

“Every branch of the work of God is to have recognition. 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.' Eph. 4:11, 12. This scripture shows that there are to be different workers, different instrumentalities. Each has a different work. No one is required to lay hold of another's work, and, though untrained, try to do it. God has given to each according to his ability. One man may think that his position gives him authority to dictate to other workers, but this is not so. Ignorant of their work, he would enlarge where he should retrench, and retrench where he should enlarge, because he can see only the part of the vineyard where he is working."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 170, 171.

ILLUSTRATION: It Takes All of Us. "The conference is not one member, but many. If the literature evangelist shall say, 'Because I am not the preacher, I am not of the conference' is he therefore not of the conference? And if the doctor shall say, 'Because I am not the educational worker, I am not of the conference,' is he therefore not of the conference? If the whole conference were an educational worker, where were the evangelists? If the whole conference were the publishing department, where were the medical workers? But how hath God set medical and educational institutional workers, field workers, department secretaries, pastors, evangelists, and office helpers, every one of them, in the conference as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the conference? But now are they many members, yet but one conference; and the teacher cannot say to the colporteur, 'I have no need of thee,' nor again the evangelist to the medical worker, 'I have no need of thee.' But God hath tempered the body together, that there be no schism in the conference; but that all members should have the same care for one another.—Adapted from 1 Corinthians 12:14-21, 24, 25.

"They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the preacher encouraged the colporteur, and he that worked in the surgery him that taught in the classroom, saying, 'World conditions are ripe for His coming. Let us join our hearts and hands for the finishing of the work.'—Adapted from Isaiah 41:6, 7."—R. H. Pierson, *501 Illustrations and Stories* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1965), p. 90.

SUMMARY: The church today exhibits an amazing amount of diversity as it spans the barriers of culture, language, and race. To bring about harmony is a miracle of divine grace, the grace given freely to all. The unity that arises out of such striking diversity is no accident, but it results from the members of the body placing themselves under the absolute control of Christ, the Head. "If the world sees a perfect harmony existing in the church of God, it will be a powerful evidence to them in favor of the Christian religion."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 19.

APPLICATION: What are some ways I can work together with my fellow members that will contribute to unity in my church? Do I sometimes dictate what I think ought to be the work and responsibilities of others, thus forcing others into my mold of thought and action; not allowing them to be themselves?

The New and the Old Contrasted

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 4:17-32.



MEMORY TEXT: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God wants us to recognize that the Christian way of life stands in direct contrast to the former or unchristian way of life. Such a recognition helps us focus on the advantages of being a Christian. Following Christ's way involves continual choices.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 4:17-32	
Characteristics of the Old Way of Life (Eph. 4:17-22)	Characteristics of the New Way of Life (Eph. 4:23-32)
Vanity Alienation Blindness Insensitivity	Truthful speaking replaces lying Righteous indignation replaces anger Honest labor replaces stealing Edifying speech replaces corrupt language Kindness replaces bitterness and quarreling

INTRODUCTION: Paul began chapter 4 with a call to Christians to walk worthy of their high calling. He counseled them to grow spiritually in the fellowship of the body of Christ, and showed that God had given the church spiritual gifts and gifted people to help accomplish this. Then, in very practical terms, he explains how they are introduced into a new way of life. In the last part of chapter 4 and in the first half of chapter 5 Paul uses an excellent teaching method—instruction by contrasts. It might help you understand better what he is doing if you will take a few minutes to read Ephesians 4:17 through 5:21. While doing so jot down all of the contrasts that you can find between the new and the old ways of life. The old life in all its sordidness is set beside the new life in all its beauty and loveliness. When we contrast the distastefulness of a life of sin with the joy and satisfaction that can be found in a life of submission, we are more apt to make the right choice—to choose the good.



1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OLD WAY OF LIFE (Eph. 4:17-22).

What characteristic of the old way of life distorts our values? Verse 17.

ILLUMINATION: "Vanity is not only a state of emptiness but it is the condition of a misdirected life. Values become distorted; those things which should hold eternal value are treated as scum or refuse, and those things which are valueless in the light of eternity are treated on earth as if they were all-important. The New International Version translates it as 'the futility of their thinking.' The two life patterns—the old and the new—actually begin with the mind. Just as the old way is characterized by a futility of the mind, so the new life springs from a renewed mind (verse 23).

"The idea is not of conceit but of frivolous and empty aims. Without Christ the Gentile wanders on aimlessly, hopelessly, and recklessly. In Romans 1:21-32 Paul draws a picture of utter depravity when man gives himself up to 'vain' . . . imaginations. This degeneration has taken place in the governing part of the man's nature, the mind, so that the rational faculties have yielded to misdirected or undirected imaginings. This vanity was not merely worthless, it was degrading."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1025.

What additional characteristics of the old way of life does Paul caution against? Eph. 4:18, 19.

Now Paul explains the condition and the actions of those who live in the vanity of their mind. This condition is described by such expressions as *darkened* and *alienated* in verse 18. Satan is the one who darkened their understanding. This is in direct opposition to the work of God who enlightens the understanding of the believers (Eph. 1:18). Through such enlightenment God gives hope, inheritance, and power. The darkened mind makes people become fools, worshipers of the creature, and "burned in their lust" (Rom. 1:22, 25, 27). This leads the mind to a state of being "reprobate" or depraved (Rom. 1:28).

Alienated means that those who act according to the vanity of their mind are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12). This is not simply a passive condition; it could be quite active, because being "alienated" they are also "enemies" in their mind (Col. 1:21). Those who are enemies of God and of His church always undermine the authority of the church and its leaders and thus undermine God's authority.

Two other characteristics of those following the empty way of life are interrelated—*blindness* and *insensitivity*. Literally, the word *blindness* means "hardness of heart." Pharaoh is a prime example of this nearly hopeless condition. While the King James Version translates the first part of Ephesians 4:19 as "being past feeling," the New International Version gives it a more up-to-date and poignant translation: "having lost all sensitivity." You would think that such a condition would be beyond the grasp of the saving power of the gospel, but it is not.

MON

THINK IT THROUGH: Do you know anyone who seems to be totally insensitive to spiritual things? Can you think of examples of Christians who were once in that same condition before the compelling love of Christ penetrated their hardened shell?

What assurance do we have that it is possible for human beings who are trapped in the conditions Paul has so graphically described to escape to the new life in Christ? Eph. 4:20, 21.

The emphasis in these verses is on the power of the truth to transform the mind. Paul is not talking about mere intellectual knowledge. In chapter 1, verse 13 he states that the believers "heard the word of truth," the gospel of their salvation. To *hear* in this context has the meaning of accepting, following, or obeying. We cannot "learn Christ" without accepting Him as a person and without obeying His commandments. "When Jesus Himself said 'learn of me' (Matt. 11:29), He was presenting Himself as an example; here He is offered, not as the great teacher, but as the very object of knowledge and faith."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1026. True learning of Christ means accepting Him fully without reservation.

How difficult is it to rid ourselves of the old way of life and to begin practicing the new way? Eph. 4:22.

Unfortunately, some may feel that a change from the old to the new is not much different than changing one's soiled clothes for a brand-new, nicely pressed set of clothes. But the difficulty in making the change is in proportion to the deep-seatedness of the corruption that has invaded our natures.

"The old man" and "the former conversation [conduct]" are phrases that refer to the same thing—a former manner of life, the things described in verses 17-19. The very mind and nature of the "old man" characteristically involve anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and lies (Col. 3:8, 9)—things that come all too naturally and cannot be abandoned without a struggle.

TUE

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW WAY OF LIFE (Eph. 4:23-32).

What is the secret for the transformation from this old way of life to the new? How must it begin? Verses 23, 24.

The change that Paul urges each believer to experience is not a superficial one. The change God wants involves the governing principles of the mind and includes desires, goals, and the power of the will. While it must begin with the mind, the controlling center of our actions, it also must involve a power from without—the creative power of God. Elsewhere Paul admonishes us to "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowl-

edge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10)—another reference to Creation. The theory of evolution proposes that all of nature has an innate power that continually and gradually improves organisms, raising them to higher levels; in other words, the power for change is internal rather than external. The doctrine of Creation teaches that an omnipotent Being applies power from without, that is externally, to produce living organisms that had no existence prior to their creation. The dust that was shaped into human form in the Garden of Eden was lifeless until the great Lifegiver breathed life into its nostrils. When we are without Christ, our lives are empty and lifeless until the Saviour Himself breathes in new life through His Word.

How can we avoid conforming to the world's maxims, philosophies, customs, and pleasures? Rom. 12:2.

ILLUMINATION: "An enlightened judgment compels us to acknowledge that heavenly things are superior to the things of earth, and yet the depraved heart of man leads him to give precedence to the things of the world. The opinions of great men, the theories of science, falsely so-called, are blended with the truths of Holy Writ.

"But the heart that is surrendered to God, loves the truth of God's word; for through the truth the soul is regenerated. The carnal mind finds no pleasure in contemplating the word of God, but he who is renewed in the spirit of his mind, sees new charms in the living oracles; for divine beauty and celestial light seem to shine in every passage."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 182.

What is to be our motivation for living the kind of practical Christian life that Paul outlines in the second half of his letter? Eph. 4:25.

The recognition that we are "members of one another" and that Christ is head of the body of which we are a part should motivate us to live a Christlike life. We will treat every member of the body as we would treat the Head.

The unity of the body can be destroyed by not speaking the truth (Eph. 4:25), by anger, by giving place to the devil (verses 26, 27), by stealing or not giving to the needy ones (verse 28), by corrupt communication or not ministering grace to the hearers (verse 29), by grieving the Holy Spirit or not being sealed for the day of redemption (verse 30), and by evil speaking or not forgiving one another (verses 31, 32).

1. Truthful Speaking.

Why should the Christian speak truthfully, and in what manner should the truth always be spoken? 2 Cor. 4:1, 2; Eph. 4:25. (Compare with Eph. 4:15.)



A Christian who lies not only hurts the person to whom he has told the falsehood, but, by destroying confidence, injures the entire body of Christ. As members of the divine body, we must build it up (verse 16). We should never tear it down by lying or by any other sin. "How can those who are followers of the One who is the truth do anything else but hold to the utmost integrity in all things?"—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1027. We must go out of the way to be people of integrity.

2. Righteous Indignation.

Under what conditions is it proper for a Christian to exhibit anger? What type of anger should we avoid? Eph. 4:26, 27.

The most likely meaning is that Paul is referring to righteous indignation when he says, "In your anger do not sin" (NIV, quoted from Ps. 4:4). "Righteous indignation has a most important function in stimulating men in the battle against evil. Jesus was not angered by any personal affront, but by hypocritical challenges to God and injustices done to others (see Mark 3:5)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1027.

THINK IT THROUGH: Does a Seventh-day Adventist have a right to be angry as he sees false teachings or worldly practices begin seeping into the church?

3. Honest Labor.

What kind of work ethic is advocated by Paul, and how does it compare with the counsel he gave to the Thessalonian church? Eph. 4:28. (Compare with 2 Thess. 3:10-12.)

"There were those in the communities to which he addressed himself, as Paul makes specific in 1 Corinthians vi.10f., who had been in the habit of making a living by pilfering (the present participle in the Greek implies this rather than a thief in any other sense). There must be no more of such practices, but honest toil instead."—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, p. 134.

Christianity should never encourage a lazy church member to take advantage of those who are more industrious, thus absorbing funds needlessly which ought to be used in God's work. On the other hand, Christians must always be ready to extend material help willingly to those who stand in genuine need.



4. Edifying Speech.

What kind of communication should Christians practice in order to foster unity within the body of Christ? Eph. 4:29.

Paul exhorts, "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths" (RSV). "The word *evil* here literally means 'rotten', as of fish or fruit no longer fit to eat. Jesus uses the same word for a rotten tree which cannot produce good fruit (Mt. 7:17). As applied to talk it is perhaps represented by the word 'foul'. This, however, in English may put the emphasis on indecency to the exclusion of other 'rotteness'. It means anything which lowers the moral tone of the community. This may include such things as ascribing bad motives to other people's apparently good actions, or putting a sinister interpretation on quite innocent conduct. This is the more probable because in Col. 3:8 'evil talk' is linked with 'slander'. *Evil talk* may, therefore, include within its scope words of a complaining, sneering, cynical, sarcastic type, all of which spread demoralisation in a community."—C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians* (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1976), pp. 170, 171.

On the other hand, words that are spoken from pure, sincere motives and out of genuine compassion soothe like a healing balm the many hurts suffered by the members of the body of Christ. A simple word of appreciation spoken to someone who is struggling to do what is right can go a long way to spur that person to put forth greater efforts for Christ. Kind words bring health to the body and healing to the soul.

What makes it important not to "grieve" the Holy Spirit? Eph. 4:30.

Ephesians 1:13, 14 indicates that the Holy Spirit is the down payment or certification that God will make good on His promises: "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (NIV). There is no more potent force for providing and guaranteeing unity than the gift of the Spirit.

5. Kindness.

What is to take the place of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking once we have been converted? Eph. 4:31, 32.

If the power of kindness were not greater than the power of hatred, we would have to say that the power of evil is greater than the power of good. Although at times it may not appear to be so, good is much more powerful than evil. Paul lists five steps that lead an unconverted person from bad to worse, until that person's hatred erupts like a mighty volcano.

1. A seed of bitterness or resentment is sown in a corner of the heart.
2. Wrath seethes like a boiling caldron.
3. Anger becomes the outward expression of that wrath.
4. Clamor—a violent torrent of words—follows.
5. Evil speaking vents the person's rage. The person even may go as far as to curse the Creator Himself.

God alone can help us root out the seeds of bitterness and resentment before they produce a harvest such as this. "Let the tenderness and

mercy that Jesus has revealed in His own precious life be an example to us of the manner in which we should treat our fellow beings. . . . Many have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life, whom one word of kindly cheer and courage would have strengthened to overcome. . . . We cannot tell how far reaching may be our tender words of kindness, our Christ-like efforts to lighten some burden. The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love.”—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 235.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Steps to Christ*, “The Test of Discipleship,” pages 57-65.

For a further clarification of what our duty is as Christians in providing assistance to those living in poverty-stricken conditions, read *Testimonies*, volume 4, pages 508-511 and volume 6, page 255.

“We are counseled to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth; but a corrupt communication is not simply something that is vile and vulgar. It is any communication that will eclipse from the mind the view of Christ, that will blot from the soul true sympathy and love. It is a communication in which the love of Christ is not expressed, but rather sentiments of an un-Christlike character.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117.

The contemporary evangelical British preacher, John R. W. Stott, has this to say: “If we are truly a new creation of God, we shall undoubtedly develop new standards of conversation. Instead of hurting people with our words, we shall want to use them to help, encourage, cheer, comfort and stimulate them.”—John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society, The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 188.

SUMMARY: The Christian life is not simply a remodeling of the old life, nor is it merely putting on clean outer garments to cover up a soiled and stained life. It involves a radical change in which truthful speaking replaces lying; honest labor replaces pilfering; encouraging words replace corrupt speech; and kindness uproots bitterness.

APPLICATION: If Paul were writing a letter to me personally, a letter both of encouragement and rebuke, which of the matters that he raises in the letter to the Ephesians would he have to bring to my attention? How would I personally respond to such a letter from the imprisoned apostle if he were to mention some specifics in my life needing the transforming influence of the Spirit?

Light and Darkness Contrasted

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 5:1-21.

SAB
PM

MEMORY TEXT: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Life can be compared to two paths—the way of light and the way of darkness. It is our choice as to which path we follow. No one has been given the power of making the choice for us—not even God Himself. But none of us can carry out the choice for the right path by ourselves once it has been made. That power is God-given. Another word for it is grace.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 5:1-21	
Following the Path of Light (verses 1-14)	Results of Walking in the Light (verses 15-21)
No one who practices the works of darkness will inherit the kingdom The children of light demonstrate the beauty of God's way Nothing can be kept secret from the One who is light	Wisdom, wise use of time Spirit of thankfulness Spirit of submission

INTRODUCTION: The Bible is a book of contrasts. From the book of Genesis, where we find the joy of Creation and the sorrow of the Fall, to the book of Revelation, where we find a description of the sea of glass and the lake of fire, we discover a continuous succession of contrasts. If the Bible had been written from a human point of view without divine assistance, it most likely would have presented just one side of any question.

Last week we looked carefully at the contrast between the old and the new. This week we will study the differences between the children of light and the children of darkness. The child of light—

- is a follower of God,
- acts according to God's blueprint for moral conduct,
- is not led astray by doctrinal deceivers,
- does not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness,

- uses time wisely,
- understands the will of the Lord,
- abstains from vice, and
- experiences good personal relations with others.

These demands upon the child of light would seem overwhelming were it not for the saving and empowering grace of Christ.



I. FOLLOWING THE PATH OF LIGHT (Eph. 5:1-14).

As children of light, how should we walk? Verses 1, 2.

Our daily walk should tell the world that we are beloved of God, not children who are forsaken and forlorn. Notice that the closeness of our walk with Him can be measured by the degree of our response to His love and by how much we can perceive His hand of love leading in our daily lives. We should walk in love, "as Christ also hath loved us."

ILLUSTRATION: In modern technological societies photocopying machines are becoming more and more perfected so that the photocopy closely resembles the original. The ultimate goal is that our lives will not only resemble the character of God Himself but that there will be such a close resemblance between the "copy" and the great "Original" that others too will want to be followers of Him.

In our study of Ephesians 3:14-21 we learned that one of the quickest ways to create unity within the church is to develop a relationship based on love. Other Bible passages teach the same truth: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11). True love always gives. Love does not give merely things or services. Christ gave Himself to us. We also should give ourselves to God and to our neighbors.

How is Christ's love made most attractive? What aspect of the sanctuary service symbolizes this love? Eph. 5:2.

The Greek word that is translated "sweet savour" or "sweet smelling savour" is derived by combining the words "good" and "smell." This same word used in the Greek Old Testament is applied to the aroma of the incense used in the tabernacle services. (See Ex. 29:18; Lev. 1:9, 2:2.)

SEARCH AND LEARN: What can we learn from Paul's use of this expression as we compare the passages that follow?

1. 2 Cor. 2:15 _____
2. Phil. 4:18 _____

Some may be tempted to complain that their day-to-day experience in-

cludes bitterness, pain, and hardship of various sorts. They may wonder, Where is the sweet smell of incense? But remember that in Christ's last 24 hours before His death He experienced pain, torture, disappointment, and verbal abuse such as we never may be called upon to endure. Yet as He hung upon the cross His sacrifice became a sweet smelling savor to the Father.

"If we are following Christ, His merits, imputed to us, come up before the Father as sweet odor. And the graces of our Saviour's character, implanted in our hearts, will shed around us a precious fragrance. The spirit of love, meekness, and forbearance pervading our life will have power to soften and subdue hard hearts and win to Christ bitter opposers of the faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 174.

THINK IT THROUGH: After quoting Ephesians 5:1, 2, Ellen White asks this pertinent question: "Have we accepted the privileges so dearly purchased? Are we followers of God as dear children, or are we servants of the prince of darkness?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 173.



Why should certain undesirable activities never be associated with, nor be suspected of being associated with, the life of one of God's children? Eph. 5:3, 4.

Verse 3 lists three forbidden activities: fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. The Greek word for fornication, *porneia*, is "a general term applying to illicit sexual relationship," and it "covers all illicit relationships both before and after marriage."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 337, 454.

In this permissive age even some Christians have argued that sex before marriage is permissible. They claim that the word *fornication* is equivalent to the word *adultery* and thus applies only to the breaking of the marriage vow through an illicit affair. But that is not the way that Scripture presents it. In 1 Corinthians 6:15-18 we discover that harlotry (or prostitution) is one form of fornication. The warnings against harlotry apply to the married as well as to the unmarried. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 we notice that the admonition to avoid fornication is not limited to the married. Those contemplating marriage should have a high enough standard of conduct that even the intimation of immoral behavior should not be circulating among those who know the couple. That is what Paul means when he says, "Let it not be once named among you" (Eph. 5:3). Nor should any other type of immoral behavior ("all uncleanness") or covetousness be found in the life of a Christian.

In verse 4 Paul focuses on the use of the tongue, considered by James to be a "little member" that causes great trouble (James 3:5). For Paul the way to control the evil that can be produced by the tongue is to make it a source of good. He urges that the "giving of thanks" replace "filthiness," "foolish talking," and "jesting." Notice how he presents this by using contrasts: "Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Eph. 5:4, RSV).

"Levity means clever witticisms with nasty insinuations which raise a

laugh at the expense of someone's good name. It would include cheap jokes about sexual matters, but also cruel sallies against other people's frailties, errors, or simple goodness. This kind of conversation which cheapens human relationships is not appropriate to those whose lives are supposed to be Christ-controlled."—C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), pp. 178, 179.

THINK IT THROUGH: Why does it seem easier for most people to discuss subjects that are low, degrading, and insinuating than to talk about spiritual things?



What are several reasons for walking as "children of the light" (verse 8)? Eph. 5:5-14.

Perhaps you can find five or six reasons for walking as "children of light," but our study will focus on three of them.

Reason No. 1. *Those who practice the works of darkness cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (See Eph. 5:5.)*

This is made crystal clear in a modern translation: "Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5, 6, RSV). Probably the one description of the works of darkness listed here that comes to haunt us more than the others is covetousness.

In what way does Paul connect covetousness with idolatry? Col. 3:5.

Idolatry means placing a greater value upon a person, object, activity, or even philosophy than upon God. Thus it is a work of darkness because it allows something else or someone else to eclipse one's view of the Sun of Righteousness, the Source of all light.

"Covetousness is an evil of gradual development."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 496. It leads to fracturing of strong social ties with family, friends, or church. It eats away on the inside like a cancer. "Covetousness is greed for more, and this is also a mark of all the sensual sins. . . . Greed is a deadly sin that often passes unnoticed in the most respectable circles; indeed, it is frequently hidden in such terms as 'competition' and 'success.'"—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1032.

THINK IT THROUGH: Should I not make it my daily prayer that I be so enamored with the light and with the One who is the Light that the cancer of covetousness will not eat away my soul?

Reason No. 2. *As children of the light we have been called out of darkness to demonstrate the beauty of the path of light. (See Eph. 5:7-10)*

A person who has wasted half of his or her life as an alcoholic or drug

addict knows the terrific grip that addiction has. But once the chains of addiction have been shattered by the power of Christ, people who have been addicted begin to discover true happiness and peace of mind, often for the first time. Then they do not want to go back to their old life. Those who once lived in darkness, practiced the works of darkness, and have been called into God's marvelous light should not continue to practice the works of darkness. It is totally incongruous to do so. Because we have experienced the amazing transformation from darkness to light—a miniature of what happened on the first day of Creation when light was called out of darkness—we have the thrilling privilege of walking as representative children of light.

How does God's activity on the first day of Creation—the transforming of darkness into light—have a spiritual application? 2 Cor. 4:6.



Reason No. 3. *The secret things of darkness are going to be tested by the light and brought out into the open. (See Eph. 5:11-13.)*

We fool ourselves if we think that as Christians we can hide certain secretive aspects of our lives from the all-seeing eye of Deity. Humanity is developing newer and better techniques for observing the inner processes of the human body. For nearly a hundred years X rays have been used. In recent years scanners have been developed for exploring the intricate processes of the body, entering even into the labyrinth of the brain itself. But the One who has counted every hair of our heads knows every hidden thought. (See Heb. 4:13.)

In what way is it possible for Christians to participate vicariously in the works of darkness by discussing the sordid details of evil acts? Eph. 5:12.

“Christian delicacy and refinement will not permit the discussion of certain things, let alone the practice of them. Usually it is sufficient to name evils without describing them and their processes in detail. A certain frankness is to be commended, but little can be said in favor of the startling bluntness with which sin is often discussed in our sophisticated age. Paul named and denounced shameful vices (vs. 3-5), but he did not paint them in lurid colors so as to appeal to the low and sensual appetites of readers.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1033.

How does Paul summarize his discussion on the importance of walking in the light? Eph. 5:14.

Paul quotes from an unknown source, this exact quote not being found anywhere in the Old or New Testaments. However, it has its roots in the Old Testament. (See Isa. 9:2; 26:19; 52:1; 60:1.) Whatever its source, this quotation describes beautifully the contrast between the darkness of

death and the power of light. When Christ was raised from the dead, the bright light of an angelic being broke through the darkness of the tomb, blinding the eyes of the soldiers. That light symbolized life. Christ's resurrection guarantees that we will rise to new power through light.

In the springtime it takes the power of sunlight to melt the crusted covering of snow overlying barren soil. Once the snow has been melted, the sunlight then must warm the ground, causing dormant life to arouse into action. Flowers bloom and grass turns green. How much more powerful is the light provided by the Sun of Righteousness that brings new life and verdure into the barrenness of a human heart.

List some other ways that sunlight (or even starlight) has observable effects on the world around us and then compare those to the spiritual realm. (For example, many species of birds migrate at night according to the patterns of the stars.)



II. RESULTS OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT (Eph. 5:15-21).

In the last part of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 we have examined carefully the contrasts between the Christian life and the life apart from Christ. The Christian can be characterized as one who replaces lying with truthful speaking; stealing with honest labor; corrupt language with talk that builds up; and quarreling with kindness. Now we are about to add more characteristics to that list. The Christian replaces folly with wisdom, drunkenness with thankfulness, and pride with submission.

What is included in being a truly "wise" person? Verses 15-17.

In their private conduct wise Christians control their attitudes. They are sensitive and alert to every situation, with no intention of using craft or deceit. They use their time in a proper way to make the most of every opportunity, spending it in noble pursuits, doing "good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10), and being active in building up the unity of the church—eager to fulfill its mission. Finally, wise Christians are those who understand. They carefully consider the circumstances, seek to discern the will of the Lord, and want to act in harmony with His will.

How are the various activities of a Christian listed by Paul as an antidote or a preventive to keep from falling into excesses? Eph. 5:18-21.

Paul contrasts two different "filling" experiences: being filled with wine with being filled with the Spirit. He probably considered drunkenness "not only as a gratification of appetite, but also as a social evil that glorifies wastefulness, emotional excitement at the expense of good sense, and reckless pursuit of pleasure. Anything that takes man's reason

from him means deterioration of soul and unfitness for the kingdom of God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1034.

ILLUMINATION: “The Spirit of God is freely bestowed to enable every man to lay hold upon the means of salvation. Thus Christ, ‘the true Light,’ ‘lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ John 1:9. Men fail of salvation through their own willful refusal of the gift of life.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 262.

What is one way that the peace of God in the heart can be expressed in order to encourage others? Col. 3:15, 16.

Instead of using the tongue to gratify selfish pleasure and selfish pursuits, we are to use the tongue for building up, strengthening, and encouraging fellow members of God’s family. Doing so will lead to greater unity. One of the most powerful forces on earth is the power of music.

ILLUMINATION: “Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart. Often by the words of sacred song, the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed.”—*Evangelism*, p. 500.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 496, 497, and think of the different ways covetousness can crop up in our lives. Also read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 473, 477, and note some of the dangers facing the church.

The symbolism of light has many applications to the Christian life. In the natural world most plants respond to light by growing toward it. Notice how potted plants lined up on a window sill lean in the direction of the sunlight. When the pots are rotated 180 degrees, the plants respond by bending back again in the direction of the source of light—a fitting illustration of how the Christian is to respond to the rays that come from the Sun of Righteousness.

SUMMARY: The following inspired gem nicely summarizes this week’s lesson: “Jesus is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. His children are the children of light. They are renewed in His image, and called out of darkness into His marvelous light. He is the light of the world, and so also are they that follow Him. They shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The more closely the people of God strive to imitate Christ, the more perseveringly will they be pursued by the enemy; but their nearness to Christ strengthens them to resist the efforts of our wily foe to draw them from Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 405, 406.

APPLICATION: Christ once said, “There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him” (Mark 7:15, RSV). How can I apply this to what I have studied this week?

A United Home Helps Make a United Church

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 5:22-33.



MEMORY TEXT: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The home might be thought of as a laboratory where the experiment of love is being worked out. Friends, relatives, people in the neighborhood, business associates, and church members are watching to see the outcome of the experiment. The true nature of love is being put to the test to see if it really is a love that comes only as a gift that cannot be bought or sold; a love that can heal all wounds; a love that unites rather than divides; a love that sees the good in others rather than the evil; a love that requires self-sacrifice and shuns self-defense; a love that comes from Christ and leads to Christ; and a love that is divine.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 5:22-33

Obligations of Wives (verses 22-24, 33)	Obligations of Husbands (verses 25-33)
Submission, as unto Christ Respect	Love, as Christ has loved Cherishing, as one cherishes himself United in one flesh, as Christ and the church are one

INTRODUCTION: To a large degree the unity of the church depends upon the unity of the home. Because the church is a composite or mosaic of the homes it represents, the level of spirituality within the church reflects the level of spirituality within the individual homes. What takes place within the confines of the home, perhaps unnoticed by anyone outside of that home, actually has observable effects upon the church, its programs, and the effectiveness of its mission. Anything that will upbuild and strengthen the home will likewise strengthen the church. To look at this from another perspective, the home actually is the church in miniature. "In the home it is possible to have a little church which will honor and glorify the Redeemer."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 323.

When Paul wished to emphasize the unity, love, and respect that should

exist between husband and wife, he chose the finest illustration available—the relationship that exists between Christ and His church. The home should exemplify everything that the church must possess—good organization, Christlike leadership, tender love, unity of action and thought, true companionship, and outreach to others. The home, like the church, is a training ground for service. “Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . There is no missionary field more important than this. By precept and example parents are to teach their children to labor for the unconverted.”—*Christian Service*, p. 106.

Not all who study this lesson will share a husband-wife relationship. But because all are, or are interested in becoming, members of a church family, the principles being studied can be applied equally as well to our relationships as members of the family of God.



I. OBLIGATIONS OF WIVES (Eph. 5:22-24, 33).

Why does Paul counsel wives to “submit” as their first duty to their husbands? Is he suggesting thereby that husbands and wives are not equal? Verses 22, 24.

In this week’s lesson we will be examining the obligations on the part of both husbands and wives—their *duties*, not their *rights*. The first duty for wives that Paul lists is that of submission to their husbands. Does submission imply inferiority? Certainly not. Paul recognizes that in Christ there is no inequality based upon differences in race, sex, or social standing. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

SEARCH AND LEARN: In order to understand fully Paul’s counsels in Ephesians 5 we need to consider other New Testament statements on the role and position of women. In your own words summarize the main point on this topic that is being made in the following passages:

1 Cor. 11:3 _____

1 Tim. 2:11-15 _____

Titus 2:4, 5 _____

1 Peter 3:1, 5-7 _____

In interpreting Scripture it sometimes is difficult to separate that which has local and temporary application from that which has permanent and universal application. For example, in the first passage given above, Paul continues his counsels to women by warning them against praying with their heads uncovered (1 Cor. 11:5). This counsel had an obvious local application. Another example of counsel with a local application is the second passage in which Paul counsels against women being allowed to be teachers, but they are counseled to “learn in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11, 12)—

reminiscent of the counsel given in 1 Corinthians 14:34. This is in harmony with the principle that Christianity should honor the deeply-ingrained social mores and customs when those customs do not violate the principles of Christianity. Particularly is this true when ignoring those customs would impede the progress of the gospel. Paul does not mean to imply that women are to be viewed as inferior to men.

What kind of stipulation or qualification does Paul add to his counsel that women should submit to their husbands? Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18.

Notice how the two passages parallel one another. Ephesians 5:22 should not be interpreted as saying that wives must surrender to their husbands in the same way that they surrender themselves to God. Husbands should not act as if they are God in the demands that they may make upon their spouses. Sarah in calling her husband "lord" was using the accepted title of respect and was not considering her husband as if he were God to her. (See 1 Peter 3:6.) What Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18 is that a wife's submission is to be shaped or determined by what is proper and becoming for a person who is "in the Lord," that is, in Christ.



When Paul counsels the wife to "revere" her husband, does this not imply that the husband is to stand in the place of God in his relationship to his wife? Eph. 5:33.

In this text, "to reverence" means "to respect." Respect does not come automatically; it must be earned. It is the result of a relationship, and a relationship takes time to cultivate. One of the fruits of genuine love, then, is respect. A wife is not dependent upon her husband for salvation, nor is the husband to be dependent upon the wife for his salvation. In the great day of judgment each is answerable to God alone.

ILLUSTRATION: An unbelieving husband who was married to a devout Christian wife tried to justify his not accepting Christianity in the following way: "When it comes time for me to enter the Holy City," he said, "I am going to make sure that I have my wife standing next to me as we wait in line outside the gate into the city. That way, my wife can speak for both of us when we are being questioned by the guardian angel at the gate." Although his great respect for his wife's Christian principles is to be commended, this husband's theology was misguided. Unless he learned to look to Christ rather than to his wife for salvation he would not be given an opportunity to be present when she entered the Holy City.

What is the basis for instructing the wife to submit to her husband? Eph. 5:23, 24.

Paul's counsel here is consistent with what he says in 1 Corinthians

11:3: "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." A man is qualified to be head of his household only if he has submitted himself first to Christ as his head, just as Christ earned the right of headship over the church after He submitted Himself in humility to His Father (Phil. 2:8-11). We must point out that headship does not mean dictatorship. Some husbands do not allow the wives to make decisions for themselves, thus taking away their power of choice. The danger is that if the husband makes the major decisions in areas such as finances, choice of a house or job, and activities outside of the home, then he may overstep his bounds and expect to make spiritual or church-related decisions for the wife. True love not only honors but also jealously guards the other person's God-given prerogative, and that is the power of choice.

In a business partnership, in a club or service organization, in a large corporation, in a political party, or in any social structure someone must take the lead; someone must serve as head. So it is with the home. Scripture assigns the husband as the head of the household, and his headship means that he is the priest of the family.

"All members of the family center in the father. He is the law-maker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice. The wife and children should be encouraged to unite in this offering and also to engage in the song of praise."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 212.

How do Paul's counsels to husbands and wives apply if the one spouse is a believer and the other is not? Should the Christian wife have to submit herself to a husband who is not a Christian? 1 Peter 3:1, 2.

The Christian wife who is married to a non-Christian still is obligated, because of her devotion to Christ, to show Christlike respect, kindness, and even obedience to her spouse, as long as his demands are not a violation of any biblical principle. That is why her submission is to be "in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). That means that if a spouse gives a directive that is contrary to what is in God's law or in the Bible, then the obligation to submit or to obey is no longer binding. Even if the wife's obedience must be withheld in such cases, her obligation to love and to cherish is binding. The same principle holds true for Christian husbands whose wives are unbelievers.



II. OBLIGATIONS OF HUSBANDS (Eph. 5:25-33).

What is the divine dimension of the Christian husband's love for his wife? Verses 25-27.

The husband should love his wife with the same quality of love that Christ has bestowed on His church. "The supreme test of love is whether

it is prepared to forgo happiness in order that the other might have it. In this respect the husband is to imitate Christ, giving up personal pleasures and comforts to obtain his wife's happiness, standing by her side in the hour of sickness. Christ gave Himself for the church because she was in desperate need; He did it to save her. Likewise the husband will give himself for the salvation of his wife, ministering to her spiritual needs, and she to his, in a spirit of mutual love."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1036, 1037.

ILLUMINATION: "Home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another.

"The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides. If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 15.

What is the human dimension of the Christian husband's love for his wife? Eph. 5:28-30.

The most startling aspect of this counsel is that Paul says that a husband's love for his wife should match the love that he shows for himself. Many Christians feel that it is wrong for people to love themselves. Conceit often is described as "self-love," but in reality conceit occurs when a person loves himself *more* than he ought and thinks *more* highly of himself than he ought. Christian psychologists tell us that we ought to have a sense of self-worth based on our understanding of how much God values us.

"The husband is the head, the wife is his body. The head is to love its body. So the Head, Christ, loves his Body, the church. Indeed, husband and wife are *one* flesh, no less. The fact that the relation of Christ to the church lies on a far higher plane alters nothing in the earthly relation of the husband to his wife; only when we compare the superior relation to the inferior, the latter is lifted and ennobled."—R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 638.

WED **SEARCH AND LEARN:** What are some ways that we can follow Paul's admonition to nourish and cherish our own flesh? What aspects of our lives should be cultivated? Look for the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects in the following texts:

1 Cor. 9:24-27 _____

2 Peter 3:18 _____

Luke 2:52 _____

One of the earmarks of people who cherish their own flesh is that they take care of their health. If we let our health steadily deteriorate, then it would seem that our sense of self-worth is beginning to wane. It also can be a sign that our love for Christ is growing cold.

Christians who take care of their own health will want to see to it that the health of their life mate also will be properly cared for. Likewise, Christian husbands or wives who are careful about seeing to it that they grow mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually will want to see a corresponding growth take place in the life of their spouse. The Christian home offers the ideal setting for this type of growth and enrichment to take place.

When a marriage is consummated under the blessing of God, what must be done in order to ensure that the marriage will be a success? Eph. 5:31.

There may be two problems preventing success in marriage: First, a spouse may have failed to break his or her ties with parents at home; and second, the couple fails to become united as "one flesh." They may live together, eat together, and sleep together, but their lives go separate ways. They live under one roof, but live two lives.



ILLUMINATION: "Now at last comes the quotation from Genesis ii.24 that has been influencing all the apostle's thought. This statement from the creation story is the most profound and fundamental statement in the whole of Scripture concerning God's plan for marriage. It has been the ultimate bulwark of the Church against the arguments for allowing polygamy to remain in the societies where she has met it; it is the ultimate argument against promiscuity; it is the ultimate reason against the Church's countenancing the dissolution of marriage by divorce. When our Lord was questioned concerning the legal permission given to divorce, he gave the answer that must still be given. In an imperfect society, in need of such laws, and for the 'hardness of men's hearts', divorce may be allowed, but it is a declension from the divine purpose, and it can never be seen in any other light. The Lord gave no new teaching on the matter, but directed His appeal back to this verse (Mt. xix.3-9 and Mk. x.2-12). Prior to marriage a man or a woman has his or her closest bond with parents, and to them owes the greatest obligation. The new bond and obligation that marriage involves transcends the old. Filial duty does not cease, but the most intimate relationship now, and the highest loyalty, is that between husband and wife, and parents only imperil that relationship by trying in any way to come between."—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Tyndale Press, 1968), p. 161.

How does the relationship that exists between husband and wife illustrate the relationship Christ wishes to have with His church? Or how does the relationship that Christ already has demonstrated in His kind regard for His people illustrate the love and tender regard that should be in the home? Eph. 5:32, 33; Jer. 31:3, 4; Hosea 2:19, 20; 2 Cor. 11:2.

We already have seen in Ephesians 4:4, 5, that there is “one body, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” This means that Christ has only one bride, the church, for there is just “one faith” and “one body.” There is only one husband in the spiritual marriage, and that is Christ. In a sense, baptism becomes the wedding ceremony between Christ and the new church member. Christ as the husband becomes “jealous” when His people start following after “other lovers.” You can imagine how it must break His heart to see them becoming infatuated with the world.

It is beautiful to watch two beings who have many distinctive differences as well as similar interests become more united as their love deepens. This kind of unity results in those who are so much unlike coming together in a mutual relationship, without losing their personal identity. Such a union helps us understand the union of Christ with His church. Both are one. Let no one separate them—man and wife, the church and Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH: How is it possible for the church made up of so many diverse elements to achieve unity?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Adventist Home*, pages 211-215 for a picture of what the father’s role is to be, and pages 231-239 for a description of the mother’s role.

Ephesians 5 outlines Christ’s relationship to His church as well as the husband-wife relationship. How does Christ regard the church as His earthly bride? “The church of Christ is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

“The church is the bride, the Lamb’s wife. Every true believer is a part of the body of Christ. Christ regards unfaithfulness shown to Him by His people as the unfaithfulness of a wife to her husband.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 985, 986.

“Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

SUMMARY: If love is a plant of divine origin and all true love comes from God, then the unity which is an outgrowth of love can come from God alone. Apart from Christ there can be no genuine unity in this world.

APPLICATION: There is no broken home which is beyond the power of Christ’s transforming grace to mend and to heal if both partners are willing to yield to Him. Likewise, if our relationship with Christ has been severed or severely strained, it is never beyond the hope of restoration. Christ is willing for this to happen. All it takes, then, is our willingness. There is hope for what appears to be hopeless. Ask yourself the following:

- Has my relationship with Christ been strained?
- If so, is it affecting my home relationship?
- Am I willing to let Christ mend and heal if such action is needed?

Everyday Christianity

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 6:1-9.



MEMORY TEXT: "Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23, 24).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: This week we will examine guidelines for having harmonious relationships both in the home and at the place of employment. Non-Christians can give practical suggestions as to how to get along with people, but they cannot offer the power to carry out their suggestions. Christianity offers the best motivation as well as God's enabling power for building effective relationships with others.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 6:1-9	
Those Being Admonished	Nature of the Admonition
Children	To obey and honor their parents
Fathers	Not to treat their children too severely, but to use proper discipline
Employees (slaves)	To work conscientiously for their employers, as to the Lord
Employers (masters)	To treat their employees fairly, not taking advantage of them

INTRODUCTION: The greatest test of the truth of Christianity is to be found in the kinds of relationships that Christians develop with those about them. Perhaps the greatest testimony that the Christ who ascended yet lives and reigns is that He has set up His throne within Christian hearts and homes. As the inspired writer has stated it, "A well-ordered Christian household is a powerful argument in favor of the reality of the Christian religion—an argument that the infidel cannot gainsay."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 144.

Even though the book of Ephesians devotes only three verses out of 155 to the duties of children and only one verse to the duties of the fathers to their children, the needs of the home—particularly Christian homes—are so great today that this subject merits our spending a considerable portion of time in studying it this week.

We also are given a glimpse into employer-employee relationships. At first glance it may not seem that the two topics are connected, but they are. Our success on the job is to a large degree determined by the influence that our homes have had and still have on us. A person who has a difficult time in working harmoniously with his associates in his place of employment often has a poor relationship with his own parents, spouse, or children. One of the main problems facing our society is the breakdown of authority. That breakdown begins in the home.

The New Testament may not seem to say much in any one place on the importance of the home, but what it does say is invaluable. Take a few minutes to look at some other New Testament passages on the home; then list the central thought of each to serve as a basis for comparison with the counsel that we find in Ephesians:

Luke 2:51, 52 _____

1 Tim. 3:4, 5 _____

1 Tim. 5:8 _____

Titus 2:4, 5 _____



I. ADVICE TO CHILDREN (Eph. 6:1-3).

What is to be at the very root or foundation of the relationship children should have with their parents? Why are they to obey? Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20.

One of the principles of Bible study is that scripture illuminates scripture, and one text becomes the key to unlock or deepen the meaning of another text. Notice the reason Paul gives for obedience in his Ephesian epistle is that obedience is right, and in Colossians it is because obedience is pleasing to God. How pleased and even proud earthly parents are when their son or daughter obeys after being given a difficult task or assignment—one that it would have been most natural *not* to carry out! How pleased our heavenly Parent is when His children respond to their duties and responsibilities in loving obedience!

The fact that the word used for *obey* is stronger than the one translated "submit" in Ephesians 5:22 indicates a different relationship. In Scripture, those who are disobedient to parents are placed in the same category as "haters of God" (Rom. 1:30), and "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). On the other hand, obedience is portrayed as reasonable and just. "The best way to educate children to respect their father and mother is to give them the opportunity of seeing the father offering kindly attentions to the mother and the mother rendering respect and reverence to the father. It is by beholding love in their parents that children are led to obey the fifth commandment and to heed the injunction, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.'"—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 198, 199.

What is the true meaning of the fifth commandment? What kind of motivation should children have for showing obedience to their parents? Eph. 6:2, 3.

Paul explains that there is a cause and a purpose for honoring one's parents. The cause is found in God's commandment in Exodus 20:12.

"The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

Paul expresses the purpose for this commandment as follows: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:3). This promise of well-being and long life not only applies to this world but also to the new earth.

ILLUMINATION: "Children who dishonor and disobey their parents, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new. The purified new earth will be no place for the rebellious, the disobedient, the ungrateful son or daughter."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 497, 498.

Some parents may ask themselves, Should I reward my children for doing that which is right, or should they automatically do what is right without any thought of a reward? One of the greatest challenges in Christian parenthood is proper motivation. What kind of incentives should be used? Should material things such as toys, gadgets, or money be used in order to motivate a child to establish right habits of behavior? The greatest reward for right doing is a clear conscience, but a child's conscience is only partly developed. Love, praise, and encouragement are types of positive reinforcement that Christian parents can use as incentives to obedience. Is it wrong to use other types of rewards as well?

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study what the Bible has to say about the matter of rewards. Here are some references:

Prov. 3:1, 2

Deut. 7:12-15

Matt. 6:4, 6; 16:27

Rom. 6:23

Because God as heavenly Father gives rewards to His earthly children, it is fitting that Christian parents give rewards to their children.

THINK IT THROUGH: What are the most effective types of incentives that can be used in working with people?



II. ADVICE TO FATHERS (Eph. 6:4).

How does the counsel that Paul gives to the fathers in the Ephesian church differ with what was given to those in the Colossian congregation? Compare Eph. 6:4 with Col. 3:21.

In times past it was a common practice for philosophers and writers to give advice to fathers on how to be good fathers. This advice usually appeared in the form of sayings. At first glance some of these sayings appear to be similar to what Paul has to say, such as the following two from the church historian Neander:

“A father who is always threatening does not receive much reverence.”

“One should correct a child not by hurting him but by persuading him.”—Quoted by E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 292.

However, Christianity offers a much deeper dimension to child rearing—the spiritual aspect. In Colossians Paul tells us that fathers should not be so harsh that they discourage their children, discouragement being an absence of incentive for doing what is right. In Ephesians Paul stresses the positive side of motivation. When children are properly instructed and trained in the way of the Lord, then parents will not have to resort to threats, demands, and harshness to force the child to obey. “Another prolific cause of resentment among children is the capricious, inconsistent demands of some parents. Even if outward obedience is gained by violent means, it is at the expense of honor and respect.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1041.

Phillips translates Ephesians 6:4 as, “Father, don’t over-correct your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment.” The New English Bible renders it as, “You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment.” If this counsel was needed nearly two thousand years ago in households relatively unencumbered with all the pressures that are inherent in a high-technology society, certainly it is needed even more today. The term *fathers* is generic, and thus applies to mothers as well. How sad it is when such pressures as those of a job, getting out of debt, paying school bills, meeting health costs, and doing all that most societies expect of us today keep parents so tense that they occasionally let loose their frustrations on their children by being needlessly severe.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can I make my life less complicated and more serene so that I do not lash out at those who are closest and dearest to me?



III. ADVICE TO EMPLOYEES (SLAVES) (Eph. 6:5-8).

In what way is a Christian employee to serve his employer, whether the employer is a Christian or not? Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22.

In his Ephesian letter Paul fills four verses with instruction to servants (literally “slaves”) and only one verse with instruction to masters. The fact that he has more to say to slaves than to masters may indicate that a large proportion of the early converts to the Christian faith were slaves. Even though Paul was discussing master-slave obligations, his counsel is just as relevant today to employer-employee relationships.

“He [Paul] is searchingly practical. He demands that service be given

in singleness of . . . heart. Honesty of purpose and wholehearted effort must characterize the Christian employee. The same word . . . is applied to both 'secular' work and to the 'spiritual' service of Christians; the New Testament uses it most frequently of liberality in Christian giving (Rom. xii.8; 2 Cor. viii.2, ix.11, 13). The Bible allows no distinction between sacred and secular. *Eye-service* is excluded, and here and in Colossians iii.22 a word seems to have been invented by the apostle to express his thought. Service 'under the compulsion of inspection' (Moule, CB) should not so much as be considered by the Christian."—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Tyndale Press, 1968), p. 168.

In the ultimate sense, what attitude should employees take toward their employment? Eph. 6:6.

"The work of God is sacred and calls for men of lofty integrity. Men are wanted whose sense of justice, even in the smallest matters, will not allow them to make an entry of their time that is not minute and correct—men who will realize that they are handling means that belongs to God, and who would not unjustly appropriate one cent to their own use; men who will be just as faithful and exact, careful and diligent, in their labor, in the absence of their employer as in his presence, proving by their faithfulness that they are not merely men-pleasers, eye-servants, but are conscientious, faithful, true workmen, doing right, not for human praise, but because they love and choose right from a high sense of their obligation to God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 25.



What is the highest motive for service? Eph. 6:7, 8; Col. 3:23.

It is easy for those who work for the church and who receive their salary out of tithe funds to know that they are working for the Lord, but it is more difficult for those who are working for a secular employer, for a large corporation, or for a governmental agency to realize that they too are working for the Lord. If we are to do everything "as to the Lord," then it means that whatever our job, work, or profession, we are being employed by the Lord in *His* service. This fact is alluded to in Ephesians 6:5 where servants are counseled to obey their "masters according to the flesh," thus implying that they have a higher obligation to a heavenly Master. This point also was brought out by Christ when He made the oft-quoted statement, "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24).

A Christian is radically different from the secular person. Everything the Christian does is done with eternity in mind and the cross in view. Reread the first few verses of Ephesians 6 and notice how much of what we do is to be in reference "to the Lord." Review the earlier chapters of Ephesians and you will be reminded that our singing is to be done "to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19) and wives are to bring themselves into harmony with their husband's wishes "as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).

What additional motivation does the Lord offer us in order that we might be sure to do everything as to the Lord? Col. 3:24, 25.

Notice that these words are addressed to slaves, many of whom were working for pagan employers. In spite of this, they are considered by Paul to be serving the Lord in their lowly responsibilities. This illustrates the magnificent way that Christianity, beyond any other religion or philosophy, is able to give dignity to that which the world would consider demeaning. This concept glorifies common labor. The real reward for service does not come from employers, but comes from the Lord who is the true Employer.



IV. ADVICE TO EMPLOYERS (MASTERS) (Eph.6:9).

What is the one trap that employers are prone to fall into and the one that Paul counsels them to avoid? Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1.

It is contrary to Christian principles for employers to take advantage of employees. Employers know that it would be most difficult for their employees to find new jobs if they become dissatisfied with their present ones. The employee has the added pressure of knowing that his or her family is dependent upon the income received. The golden rule might be paraphrased as follows: "Employers, do unto your employees as you would wish them to do unto you if they were in your position."

SEARCH AND LEARN: Notice how many of the parables taught by Christ illustrate the basic principles of employer-employee relationships. What is the main lesson on this topic being taught in the examples given below?

The unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23-35) _____

Laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) _____

The two sons (Matt. 21:28-32) _____

The pounds or talents (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27) _____

THINK IT THROUGH: How can we expect there to be unity within a local congregation if some of its members who hold church offices may be taking advantage of fellow church members in their business relationships? How

can there be unity if employees work diligently only when their employers are observing them? How can there be peace and harmony within the church when there are quarrels at home—when a parent vents his or her wrath upon a child, or when children are allowed to grow up with no respect for authority?

Unity with others can come about only when we are in tune with God and our stubborn wills have become united with His selfless will.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter, “The Home a Missionary Training Center” in *Christian Service*, pages 206-210, and the chapter, “Business Principles and Methods” in *Education*, pages 135-145.

“Fathers and mothers who make God first in their households, who teach their children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, glorify God before angels and before men by presenting to the world a well-ordered, well-disciplined family, a family that love and obey God instead of rebelling against Him. Christ is not a stranger in their homes; His name is a household name, revered and glorified. Angels delight in a home where God reigns supreme, and the children are taught to reverence religion, the Bible, and their Creator. Such families can claim the promise: ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ As from such a home the father goes forth to his daily duties, it is with a spirit softened and subdued by converse with God. He is a Christian, not only in his profession, but in trade, in all his business relations. He does his work with fidelity, knowing that the eye of God is upon him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 424.

“Parents, God desires you to make your family a sample of the family in heaven. Guard your children. Be kind and tender with them. Father, mother, and children are to be joined together with the golden links of love. One well-ordered, well-disciplined family is a greater power in demonstrating the efficiency of Christianity than all the sermons in the world. When fathers and mothers realize how their children copy them, they will watch carefully every word and gesture.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

SUMMARY: The unity of the church is being tested in the everyday lives of its members. We spend most of our time either in our homes or at our jobs, and the closest relationships possible for us to develop usually are cultivated in the home or at work. The strength of the church can be no stronger than are these vital, day-to-day relationships.

APPLICATION: Our study of this lesson should infuse us with new vitality in the performance of our daily tasks. How often we feel that what we are doing is unimportant, particularly if it is done for a secular employer. But remembering that what we are doing is “for the Lord” adds a new dimension to that which seems mere drudgery. Ask yourself, What should I pray for during the coming week as a result of my study of this lesson?

Strong in the Lord

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 6:10-24.

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MEMORY TEXT: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Christian life is a daily battle with self and with wrong. It is a battle that we cannot win in our own strength. We may gain strength from others, but most of all we gain strength and victory over self and sin from the One who already has conquered the enemy.

OVERVIEW: Eph. 6:10-24		
Weapons of Warfare (verses 10-17)	Importance of Prayer (verses 18-20)	Paul's Final Salutation (verses 21-24)
Spiritual weapons for a spiritual battle Loins girded with truth Breastplate of righteousness Feet shod with the gospel Shield of faith Helmet of salvation Sword of the Spirit	Prayer for all the believers Prayer for Paul in prison	Sending Tychicus Wishing them grace, love, and peace

INTRODUCTION: If you never have been in such a situation, try picturing what it must be like to be a soldier out on the battlefield. Imagine the conflicting turmoil of thoughts and the nagging doubts that would press into your mind. Will you ever see your loved ones at home again? If so, will you return home crippled or scarred for life, but clutching life itself as your only trophy? What must it be like to know that the enemy is closing in fast on all sides? You can almost sense the soldier's feeling of helplessness and vulnerability. What keeps him from surrendering when his mind is beginning to play tricks on him for lack of sleep and his body is faint from hunger? His clothes are wet, his body is shivering, his nerves are shattered, his strength is depleted, yet the valiant soldier continues to fight on because he has a country and a cause that he is defending. Victory must be won at any cost, even at the sacrifice of his life.

Paul concludes his epistle with a clarion call to warfare and to the launching of an all-out attack on the forces of evil that are arrayed around

us. At the very moment Paul was writing this letter a Roman centurion stood guard over him, reminding him that life indeed is a battle. (See Acts 28:16.) He could still vividly recall Julius, the Roman soldier who had charge of him on the voyage to Rome. This made him aware of the garb and the life of a soldier. He could sense the unswerving loyalty of a soldier for his commander. He could see that a soldier was duty-bound to endure any amount of sacrifice, discomfort, or pain in order to fulfill his commission. Death was not too high a price to pay for victory. No wonder that Paul, under divine inspiration, seized upon the imagery of a soldier to provide one of the finest illustrations of what the Christian life is about.



I. THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE (Eph. 6:10-17).

What is the source of the Christian's strength and the secret in obtaining victory in the battle? Verse 10.

When we first read Paul's challenge to "Be strong in the Lord," we might infer that the source of our power comes from within rather than from without. Actually the original Greek is better translated as, "be strengthened" or "be made powerful in the Lord," thus pointing more directly to the Lord as the source of our strength.

ILLUMINATION: "Of our own selves we can do nothing; but through Christ we can do all things. God intends that we shall be a help and blessing to one another, and that we shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. . . . God lives and reigns; and He will give us all the help we need. It is our privilege at all times to draw strength and encouragement from His blessed promise, 'My grace is sufficient for you.'"—*Evangelism*, p. 98.

Being made strong in the Lord includes being strengthened "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1), and being strengthened "in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). Grace and faith are blended together in the power of Christ.

This was true in the life of the apostle Paul. Paul said that this strength that came to him from the Lord gave him power to preach successfully to the Gentiles (2 Tim. 4:17). Paul could declare, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

We should also be strengthened "in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). This is the same might that raised Christ from the dead and set Him at the right hand of God. It is a power that is far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion (Eph. 1:19-21). It is a might that will not fail to reach the long-sought victory in the end.

Why is it vitally important that we put on the whole armor of God? Eph. 6:11, 13.

We must be prepared in order to win the battle. This spiritual battle will

become more and more difficult as we approach the end of time. The wicked powers will do everything possible to destroy God's people and divide the church, even to performing signs and mighty wonders. "That time will soon come, and we shall have to keep hold of the strong arm of Jehovah; for all these great signs and mighty wonders of the devil are designed to deceive God's people and overthrow them. Our minds must be stayed upon God, and we must not fear the fear of the wicked, that is, fear what they fear and reverence what they reverence, but be bold and valiant for the truth. Could our eyes be opened we should see forms of evil angels around us, trying to invent some new way to annoy and destroy us. And we should also see angels of God guarding us from their power; for God's watchful eye is ever over Israel for good, and He will protect and save His people if they put their trust in Him. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

"Said the angel, 'Remember, thou art on the enchanted ground.' I saw that we must watch and have on the whole armor and take the shield of faith, and then we shall be able to stand, and the fiery darts of the wicked cannot harm us."—*Early Writings*, p. 60.

What is the real nature of the struggle in which we are engaged, and why is it so crucial that God's people be united? Eph. 6:12.

If we realized fully the true nature of the battle that we are fighting, we would put forth much more than the feeble efforts we are so accustomed to exerting. The battle is unique in that the enemy forces for the most part are unseen, thus enabling them to work within the church as easily as outside of it. Human nature is such that we will rally against an enemy that is visible much more quickly and with much greater ardor than we do against one that we cannot see. In this conflict the motto of the enemy is, "Divide and conquer!" One of the most effective weapons in his arsenal is disunity.

ILLUMINATION: "In this prayer of Christ's (John 17:17-23), God has expressed his desire for the unity of his believing people. But there is an unwearied conflict kept up on this earth. Satan works to make the prayer of Christ of none effect. He makes a continual effort to create bitterness and discord; for he knows that where there is unity, there is strength,—a oneness which all the powers of hell can not break. All who bring weakness and sorrow and discouragement upon God's people, by their own perverse ways and tempers, aid the enemy of God, and are working directly against the prayer of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 27, 1897.



1. Girded with Truth. (Eph. 6:14, first part).

"The girding would be done by a belt. NEB in fact translates: 'Buckle on the belt of truth.' The phrase 'gird the loins' is meaningless today for westerners with the kind of clothes they wear, but very appropriate for the first-century easterner with his flowing robes. His outer garment

would be a long loose-fitting cloak reaching to his ankles. If he tried to run or fight in it, it would wrap itself round his legs and trip him up. If he needed to act quickly and with agility, this loose garment had to be lifted clear above the knees and fastened securely round the waist. So to gird the loins was the necessary preliminary to any vigorous action. For instance, the Israelites, at the time of the first Passover, as they waited for the signal to make their escape from Egypt, were at the ready 'with loins girded' (Exod. 12:11). Elijah, as a herald of the fulfilment of God's promise of rain, prepared to outrun on foot the horse-drawn chariot of Ahab, by 'girding up his loins' (1 Kg. 18:46). Understandably the phrase came to be used metaphorically of mental and spiritual readiness for exceptional tasks. 1 Pet. 1:13 summons Christians to 'gird up the loins of your minds'. So here in Ephesians the Christian is called to 'gird up his loins' spiritually. This means getting rid of anything which might be a hindrance in the struggle against evil, eliminating any easy-going casualness which might make him less than ready for the fray."—C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), pp. 224, 225.

THINK IT THROUGH: What effect does the telling of half-truths or misleading insinuations have upon the life of the Christian?

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14, second part).

The breastplate covered the heart of the soldier. "So important is the breastplate of righteousness in the defense of the Christian soldier in the warfare against the hosts of evil that in 2 Corinthians 6:7 the entire armor is called 'the armour of righteousness.' Since Christ is our defense and hope of victory, we are told that if we abide 'in Christ Jesus' He 'is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' (1 Corinthians 1:30). . . .

"Experiencing the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith to take care of the past, and His imparted righteousness to produce character development into His likeness, are what is involved in the putting on of 'the breastplate of righteousness,' and being clothed with the beautiful robe of the righteousness of Christ."—Taylor G. Bunch, *The Armor of Righteousness* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1957), pp. 45, 52, 53.



3. The Sandals of the Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15).

Why is footwear so important?

"Battles, historians tell us, have sometimes been lost by inadequate footwear. Swords and helmet lose their effectiveness if the soldier is footsore or crippled by ill-fitting boots. A soldier for whom every step is a drudge or a misery is not likely to win battles. The equivalent of strong, light, well-fitting boots for the Christian soldier is that he is equipped with the *gospel of peace*. Few things make a man feel more agile and mobile

than the confidence that he is the bearer of joyous good news (gospel).”—C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, pp. 225, 226.

ILLUMINATION: “The Lord is soon coming. Talk it, pray it, believe it. Make it a part of the life. You will have to meet a doubting, objecting spirit, but this will give way before firm, consistent trust in God. When perplexities or hindrances present themselves, lift the soul to God in songs of thanksgiving. Gird on the Christian armor, and be sure that your feet are ‘shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’”—*My Life Today*, p. 312.

An important element of waging warfare successfully is communication between the front lines and headquarters; messages must be carried faithfully. What does Paul say about the “gospel of peace” in Romans 10:15?

4. The Shield of Faith (Eph. 6:16).

A soldier who is trapped on the battlefield by enemies on all sides and who is running low on ammunition and food has one thing alone left to depend on, and that is faith—the faith that gives the victory. The shield itself is perhaps more important than some of the other pieces of armor, in that if rightly used it provides covering for every part of the body. In ancient times the shield was not the small round shiny bronze “target” that sometimes is pictured, but rather a large oblong, lightweight one measuring four feet high and two-and-a-half feet wide. When the soldier was forced to run, he had to be able to take his shield with him. The “fiery darts” were burning arrows that produced double devastation: first, penetrating a weak spot in the armor, they could kill, and second, they set clothing or gear on fire, causing soldiers to panic.

ILLUMINATION: “Faith in God’s Word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan’s power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ.”—*My Life Today*, p. 313.



5. The Helmet of Salvation (Eph. 6:17, first part).

What makes the helmet so important in the Christian’s armor?

“*Salvation* is a provision for man that can as definitely be received as any other part of the Christian armour—the soul’s deliverance is not a matter of uncertainty to the end. In Isaiah lix.17 the divine Warrior wears the helmet of salvation as the Worker and Bringer of salvation. For the Christian, salvation is part of the defensive armour that is essential for his safety in the fray. It may be taken as God’s gift of salvation from the penalty of sin, but even more as His saving help to protect from the power of sin, and the parallel in 1 Thessalonians v. 8 suggests that here also we may take it to include ‘the hope’ of final deliverance from the very presence of sin.”—Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Tyndale Press, 1979), p. 176.

6. The Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17, second part).

The sword is the only element of the weaponry that Paul mentions that is used for offense as well as defense. It can be used to cause the opposing forces of evil to flee. While the other items listed are primarily for protection, the sword can be used for aggressive attack. (See Heb. 4:12.)

ILLUMINATION: "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, pierces the heart of the sinner and cuts it in pieces."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 441.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER (Eph. 6:18-20).

How does prayer serve Christians in the battles and struggles of life?

A common fallacy is that people who are spiritually strong need not pray as much or as earnestly as those who are weak. But Paul, the valiant missionary who had won victory after victory for Christ, felt his need for prayer and specifically asked that the Ephesian church remember him in their prayers so that he could speak boldly for his Saviour when appearing before the throne of the mightiest monarch on earth. Christ, the divine-human Son of God, felt His need of prayer and continued dependency upon His Father. "If the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 94.



When life is going smoothly for us, it is easy to become lax in our prayer life, or even to neglect prayer entirely. But Paul says that we are to be "praying always." What was in the parable that Christ told that vividly illustrates the point "that men ought always to pray"? Luke 18:1-7.

Perseverance in prayer does not mean approaching God in sheer persistence to make Him change His mind, like a begging child does to get something from an unwilling parent. Perseverance in prayer indicates a state of mind on the part of the suppliant that gives God an opportunity to do things He could not do safely for the individual otherwise.

One of the most powerful influences to bring about unity in the church is prayer. If you are praying for an individual by name, then you will not be harboring bitterness or holding a grudge against that person.

III. PAUL'S FINAL SALUTATION (Eph. 6:21-24).

What were the uppermost concerns on the apostle's mind as he bid farewell to the church members at Ephesus? Verses 21-24.

With stalwart Paul we find no note of self-pity, no personal worries that might lead to preoccupation with self. Instead, he is sending the trusted messenger Tychicus in order to "comfort" the members at Ephesus.

Tychicus is one of the unsung heroes of the cross in the first century. He is listed as one of the seven men who accompanied Paul at the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4) and who undoubtedly followed Paul all the way to Jerusalem prior to his arrest there. He continually plays the role of bearer of good news, for he is the one that Paul entrusted with the delivery of three epistles—Ephesians (2 Tim. 4:12), Colossians (Col. 4:7), and Titus (Titus 3:12). What if Tychicus had fallen by the wayside and failed to deliver these precious messages? The world would have been the poorer if Tychicus had “lost” the epistle to the Ephesians.

THINK IT THROUGH: Paul says, “Ye are our epistle . . . , known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). Are you faithfully delivering the message God has entrusted you in the same way that faithful Tychicus did?

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FURTHER STUDY AND APPLICATION: Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 76 to learn how to have your “loins girt about with truth.”

If available, secure a copy of the Ellen White devotional book, *My Life Today*, and read the selections on the Christian’s armor on pages 309-315. If not available, you can meditate on the following thoughts taken from that section:

“To every one God has made an offer that will help to brace every nerve and spiritual muscle for the time of test that is to come to us all. I am charged with the message, Clothe yourself with the whole armor of Christ’s righteousness. . . . And, having done all you can do on your part, you have the assurance of victory. To every soul is granted the gracious opportunity of standing on the Rock of Ages.”—*My Life Today*, p. 311.

“When souls are converted their salvation is not yet accomplished. They then have the race to run; the arduous struggle is before them to do, what? ‘To fight the good *fight of faith*,’ to press forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus. There is no release in this warfare; the battle is lifelong, and must be carried forward with determined energy proportionate to the value of the object you are in pursuit of, which is eternal life.”—*My Life Today*, p. 313.

SUMMARY: The strong are tempted to rely upon self—to go out to battle in their own armor. The weak recognize their need of help from above because their plight is desperate and their future well-nigh hopeless. The strong often start their busy day’s activities neglecting personal prayer and Bible study, like a soldier running in great haste to the front lines while forgetting to take his sword with him. The weak who recognize their need flee to the Lord in prayer. Never forget that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Eccl. 9:11). Paul states this marvelous truth in another way, “When I am weak, then am I strong” (1 Cor. 12:10).

APPLICATION: Take a few moments to review one by one the various pieces of armor, and then ask yourself these questions: Which of the pieces of armor am I in need of the most? What am I doing with those I have in hand? What orders from my Commander am I neglecting?

JESUS OUR

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

JESUS OUR MEDIATOR

SEE the difference!

me." —Ellen G. White, *White Comments*, Sermon 7, p. 941.

In John 3:14 we find Jesus telling Nicodemus that He must be "lifted up" on the cross. To lift up is to place in the great center of attraction, where all beings are drawn together. Thus God and humanity all that separates, is overcome as the mightiest of all. The cross now serves as the mediator.

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Lessons for Second Quarter, 1986

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1986 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "In Full Assurance."

First Lesson:

HOW TO HANDLE DOUBT

MEMORY TEXT: Hab. 2:4.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Habakkuk 1:1 through 2:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Doubts and questions may arise from both God's seeming inactivity and His activity. Nevertheless, His followers find assurance in a faith that grows as a result of the questionings of faith.

OUTLINE:

- I. Why does God allow evil to go unchecked? (Hab. 1:1-4).
- II. The Babylonians will bring judgment on Judah (Hab. 1:5-11).
- III. How can God use the wicked Babylonians for such a purpose? (Hab. 1:12-2:1).
- IV. Trust in Me! (Hab. 2:2-4).

Second Lesson:

GOD IN CONTROL

MEMORY TEXT: Hab. 2:20.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hab. 2:5-20.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Inherent in sin are the seeds of its own destruction. Despite the apparent success of human pride, injustice, and exploitation of others, the sinner cannot find happiness and peace. Only faith in the God who still is in charge brings peace and assurance.

OUTLINE:

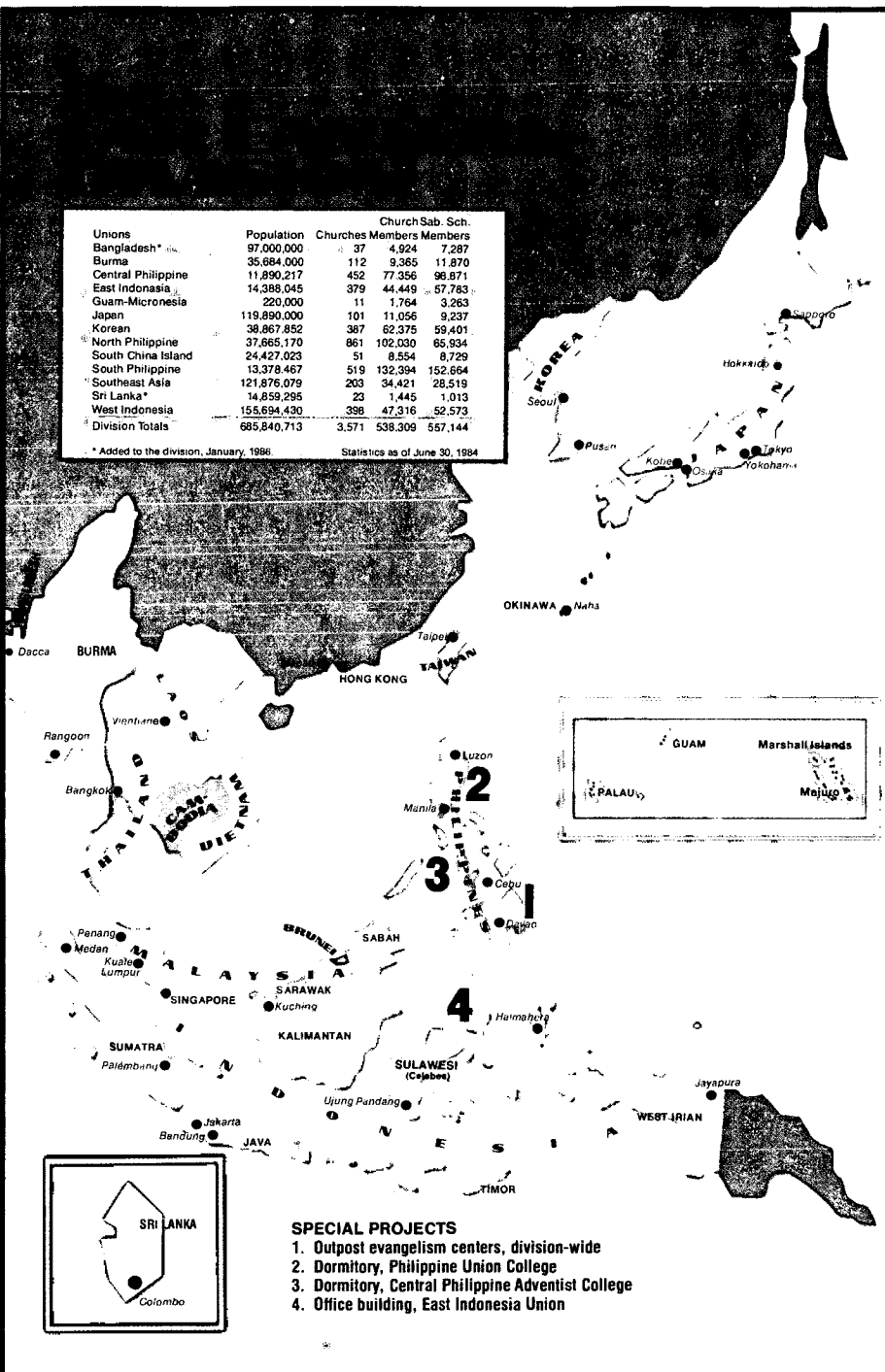
- I. God's Woes (Judgments) on Babylon (Hab. 2:5-19).
- II. Faith's Assurance: God Is in Charge (Hab. 2:20).

Lessons in Braille:

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 ²/₃ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation. Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Unions	Population	Church Sab. Sch.	
		Members	Members
Bangladesh*	97,000,000	37	4,924
Burma	35,684,000	112	9,365
Central Philippine	11,890,217	452	77,356
East Indonesia	14,388,045	379	44,449
Guam-Micronesia	220,000	11	1,764
Japan	119,890,000	101	11,056
Korean	38,867,852	387	62,375
North Philippine	37,665,170	861	102,030
South China Island	24,427,023	51	8,554
South Philippine	13,378,467	519	132,394
Southeast Asia	121,876,079	203	34,421
Sri Lanka*	14,859,295	23	1,445
West Indonesia	155,694,430	398	47,316
Division Totals	685,840,713	3,571	538,309

* Added to the division, January, 1966 Statistics as of June 30, 1964



- SPECIAL PROJECTS**
1. Outpost evangelism centers, division-wide
 2. Dormitory, Philippine Union College
 3. Dormitory, Central Philippine Adventist College
 4. Office building, East Indonesia Union