

# Ephesians

## Chapter 1

**1:1. “holy.”** The Greek is *hagios* (#40 ἅγιος). It is an adjective, but used as a noun and best translated “holy ones.” Through the ages the word “saints” has acquired a meaning that is not biblical, and thus it can be confusing, especially to new Christians. Every Christian is a “holy one” because each Christian has God’s gift of holy spirit sealed inside him.

**“faithful.”** The Greek is *pistos* (#4103 πιστός). It means “faithful” or “believing.” The translation “faithful” is difficult because Ephesians is not just to the faithful. Lenski goes with “believing,” which is certainly true.

**1:3. “Blessed.”** The Greek is *eulogētos* (#2128 εὐλογητός), and it means “blessed, or praised.” It is an adjective, and so “blessed” is the better translation here, especially in light of the fact that the word is used three times in the verse.

**“Blessed...has blessed...blessing.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton, or “many inflections,” in which the same root word is being used in different parts of speech. The polyptoton emphasizes the blessing that each party has. “Blessed” (*eulogētos*; #2128 εὐλογητός) is an adjective; “has blessed” (*eulogeō*; #2127 εὐλογέω), is a verb (participle); and blessing (*eulogia*; #2129 εὐλογία) is a noun. This is the only verse in the Bible that has “blessed” three times.

**“in Christ.”** The word “in” is translated from the Greek preposition *en* (#1722 ἐν). Ephesians 1:3 is the use of *en* that Greek grammarians refer to as the “static *en*,” which defines a relationship or sphere of influence. We need to understand the static use of *en* (in) because although we understand how a person can be “in” a room, English does not typically use “in” to describe a relationship, such as “in Christ” or “in the Lord.”

The preposition *en*, like all prepositions, has many different meanings and shades of meaning, depending on the context. In fact, the BDAG Greek-English lexicon says of *en*: “The uses of this preposition are so many and various, and often so easily confused, that a strictly systematic treatment is impossible. It must suffice to list the main categories, which will help establish the usage in individual cases.”

Christians have been blessed “in Christ,” and it is only by virtue of being “in Christ” that we are blessed. We are not good enough to deserve the blessings we have from God apart from Christ. To fully understand what it means for the Christian to be “in” Christ we must first understand the basic meaning of the “static *en*,” and then see how being “in Christ” after the Christian Church began on the Day of Pentecost differs from being “in Christ” before the Day of Pentecost.

In the case of Christians being “in Christ” or “in the Lord,” the “static *en*” can be understood to mean “in connection with,” “in association with,” or “in union with.” The BDAG Greek-English lexicon says:

“Especially in Paul or Johannine usage, to designate a close personal relation in which the referent of the ἐν-term is viewed as the controlling influence: *under the control of, under the influence of, in close association with...* In Paul the relation of the individual to Christ is very often

expressed by such phrases as ἐν Χριστῷ [in Christ], ἐν κυρίῳ [in the Lord], etc.,...*in connection with, in intimate association with, keeping in mind.*”

Bratcher and Nida translated the phrase in verse 3: “For in our union with Christ he has blessed us....” They go on to say, “‘In our union with Christ’: this much-used phrase in the Pauline letters (literally, ‘in Christ’) is generally taken to indicate the believer’s union with Christ. Here it states that condition existing for the blessing which God gives to the believer” (*A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*). Bratcher and Nida are correct that the basis for the blessings of God in the life of a Christian is the fact that the Christian is “in union with” Christ.

Jesus introduced the vocabulary of being “in” another person at the Feast of Dedication, which fell in December (John 10:22). However, at that time he only spoke of him being in the Father and the Father in him (John 10:38). Some months later, during Passover time at the Last Supper, Jesus again spoke of his being in the Father and the Father being in him (John 14:10, 11, and 20), but he also spoke of believers being in him and the Father, and he and the Father being in believers (John 14:20; 15:4-7; 17:21, 23, 26). Before the start of the Christian Church, which included the New Birth and the Body of Christ, the extent of believers being “in” Christ was that they would be unified with Christ by obeying him and walking in love. That certainly was the context of John chapters 14 and 15.

When the Christian Church started on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), it became available to be “in” Christ in a whole new way: by being part of his Body, the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the spiritual entity that consists of every person who is born again (1 Cor. 12:27; cp. Romans 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 10:16; 12:12-20; Eph. 1:23; 3:6; 4:4; Col. 1:18; 3:15). Like our physical body, this spiritual body is comprised of many members, and Jesus Christ is its head (Eph. 5:23). The Body of Christ is unique to the Administration of Grace (cp. Eph. 3:2), and is never mentioned outside the Epistles to the Christian Church.

Because Christians are spiritually united with Jesus and part of the Body of Christ, when Christians are said to be “in Christ,” there is more than just a connection due to us obeying and following Christ; we have an actual spiritual union with Christ. The Christian was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), died with Christ (Rom. 6:8), was buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), and was raised with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Thus, in most cases it is appropriate to think of our relation with Christ as a union with him, although sometimes “in connection with” or “in association with” seems more appropriate. For the purpose of the translation of the New Testament, however, in many cases it seems better to understand that the phrase “in Christ” means “in union with Christ” or “in connection with Christ” than to keep translating it “in union with Christ (but see Rom. 6:3 REV).

Several English versions besides the REV use the word “union” in Romans 6:3 to express the relationship that exists between Christ and the believer who is “in” Christ, and many of them add the word “union” in other places in the New Testament as well (cp. *The New English Bible*; Goodspeed’s translation; Charles Williams’, *The New Testament in the Language of the People*; and Cassirer’s translation, *God’s New Covenant*).

Christians have many blessings because of being “in union with” Christ that are not blessings due to our own works. We have already seen that we were crucified with Christ, died with Christ, were buried with Christ, and were raised with Christ. Some of the other blessings that Ephesians lists as our having by virtue of being “in Christ” are: blessed in Christ (1:3); chosen in him (1:4); being the praise of the glory of God’s grace (1:6); redeemed (1:7); claimed as God’s possession (1:11); sealed with the promised holy spirit (1:13); raised up and seated in the heavenlies (2:6); created (2:10); made near (2:13); created into a new man (2:15); being built into a sanctuary of God (2:21, 22); Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers of the promise (3:6); and, forgiven (4:32). All of these blessings and more are by virtue of us being “in union with” Christ; part of his Body.

Far too often Christians fail to understand the blessings they have “in Christ.” The blessings of God “in Christ” in our lives are an accomplished reality: we do not work to get them; we already have them. Now we give our lives to God in thanksgiving for the blessings He has given us. [For more on “in” and the relationship it refers to, see commentary on John 10:38]. [The Greek preposition *eis* can have the same meaning as *en* and refer to a relationship; for more information on that, see commentary on Romans 6:3]. [For information of the permanence of salvation and that the blessings of God which accompany salvation cannot be lost, see Appendix 1: “The Permanence of Christian Salvation”].

**“spiritual blessing.”** This is the only use of “spiritual blessing” in the Bible, and it is important that we pay attention to it because Christians have been blessed, but often we do not seem to directly experience those blessings in our physical life. Nevertheless, the spiritual blessings are real. For example, we have a guarantee of salvation (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5), which is surely a blessing, but we have to apprehend it by faith to really enjoy it at this time.

**“heavenlies.”** The Greek is *epouranios* (#2032 ἐπουράνιος) a plural adjective. Similar to the fact that the word “heaven” is always plural in Hebrew because it is a plural noun, this could be the plural of majesty for “heaven.” The word *epouranios* occurs 5 times in Ephesians. They are all adjectives and all plural, and we have translated all of them, “heavenlies.”

There are versions that read “blessed us...in the heavenly realms,” and there are versions that read “blessed us...with every blessing in the heavenly realms.” The blessings are with God in heaven, conferred upon us here on earth. It is not that we in the heavenly realms are blessed, because we are on earth. (Although some would argue that Eph. 2:6 says we are in heaven, that is the idiom of the prophetic perfect; see commentary on “seated” in Eph. 2:6.)

**1:4. “us.”** It is very important to understand that the “us” is a plural pronoun. It is common to hear a Christian say that God personally chose him or her for salvation and use this verse to prove that point. But it is important to fully understand the implications of making that statement.

This verse has been central to the Calvinist-Arminian debate for centuries. John Calvin (1509-1564) taught that God chose who would be saved and who would not be—that the individual could not make that choice, God made it for each person. James (Jacob) Arminius (1560-1609) disagreed with Calvin’s teaching and emphasized man’s

free will. The debate between the basic theology of Calvinists and Arminians has continued now for centuries.

Ephesians 1:4 does not just say God “knew” who was going to be saved, but that He “chose us” before the foundation of the world. If this verse is referring to individuals, as many people believe, then it is saying that before the foundation of the world God chose some people to be saved while leaving others unsaved. That is exactly what Calvinists teach: that it is God who chooses who will be saved and who will be damned. It is not a freewill choice that we ourselves can make; rather the choice was made for us before the foundation of the world. Calvinists claim that God chose people for salvation even before the foundation of the world, and then gives them His “irresistible grace” such that they are never able to refuse salvation. This is why churches that follow the Calvinist doctrine, such as Presbyterian churches, do not have altar calls and ask people to come forward if they would like to be saved. In those denominations the doctrine is that the individual cannot make the choice to be saved: it is made for him, so there is no point to having an altar call.

In contrast to the Calvinists, the Arminians and those people who believe in free will assert that people make their own choice to be saved or not. They point out that in verses such as Ephesians 1:4, the pronouns are plural. In other words, it was not individuals who were being chosen to salvation, but “us,” the group, the Body of Christ, the Church. In other words, before the foundation of the world God planned to have a “Christian Church,” “the Body of Christ,” and planned that those people who joined the Church would be saved. God knew that there would be some people would get saved and join the Church—there have always been people who follow after God. But He did not choose who would join and who would reject Him. It is the individual’s choice whether or not to get saved and be a part of the Church.

A rough analogy to the Arminian position would be a college that does not have a basketball team but decides to form one. Long before a single player is chosen for the team, university staff get together and plan things out. They build the arena and court, practice area, and locker rooms. They hire the coach and staff. After all that, they make it available to play ball, and individual athletes begin to choose to play for the school. It can rightly be said that the “team” was chosen before the court was ever built. They were not chosen as individual players, but the team was chosen to play for the school and represent the school. In the same way, God chose the Church and planned for it before the foundation of the world, and now we have chosen to join the Church and play for God’s team.

We agree with the Arminians, and assert that God did plan for a special group on which He would pour His grace, and He planned for that group before the foundation of the world.

**“in him.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**“foundation.”** This refers to the foundation of our earth today, even before Adam and Eve were created. It does not seem to make as good sense to translate it “overthrow,” because the destruction of the Genesis 1:1 creation is not so much in mind as the simple fact that in God’s mind, His Church even predates his creation of mankind.

**“world.”** *kosmos* (#2889 κόσμος).

**“to be holy and without blemish.”** There is a lot packed into this phrase. To say that we “should be holy...” (KJV, ESV), causes people to miss the point that Christians are holy in God’s sight by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ and the gift of holy spirit that God has given to each Christian, which is why we are said to be “saints” (holy) in the opening of the various Church Epistles. The Greek verb “be” is in the infinitive mood, which Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*) notes as the infinitive of purpose, in other words, God’s purpose was that we be holy, and He blessed us in Christ, making us holy. This is part of the meaning here, which is repeated in 5:25-27, where Scripture says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” The Church is holy because of the work of Christ, however, also packed into the idea of “to be holy” is that we should live holy lives. Each Christian is spiritually holy, but God did not make us that way with the idea that we then would ignore our flesh and fulfill the passions it produces on us (Eph. 2:3). God made us spiritually holy, and He made us to work hard to live a holy life as well.

**“without blemish.”** This is a term that relates to the fact that sacrifices had to be without blemish to be accepted by God. We have blemishes, but He chose us and made us both “holy” and “without blemish.” The Greek is *amomos* (#299 ἄμωμος) and appears eight times in the NT. All of them can be related to the perfection an offering to God had to have, and all can be translated “without blemish.”

**“in love.”** There is a big debate about whether this phrase goes with verse 4 or 5. The commentators are pretty well split. We think it goes with verse 4 for two major reasons. **1.** God chose us to stand to be “holy,” “without blemish” and “in love.” Love is part of the way we are to stand before Him. Furthermore, v. 5 already says God acted from His “good pleasure” so placing “in love” in v. 5 seemed like an unnecessary duplication. **2.** “It is Paul’s usual, if not constant, habit to place *en agapē* after the clause it qualifies (Eph. 4:2,15,16; 5:2; Col. 2:2; 1 Thess. 5:13; cp. also, though in association with other terms, 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 1:13).” (W. R. Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, Vol. 3, p. 251).

**1:5. “us.”** The “us” is plural and refers to the Church, the Body of Christ. It does not refer to God choosing individuals, but rather God choosing the Church. See commentary on Ephesians 1:4, “us.”

**“decided in advance.”** The Greek word is *proorizō* (#4309 προορίζω), and in Ephesians 1:5 it is an aorist participle. The basic meaning of the word is to “decide upon beforehand,” or to decide in advance. Bratcher and Nida (*A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*) have, “having decided ahead of time.” *Proorizō* is a good example of a word whose meaning has to be defined from the context and scope of Scripture. In a context like this, *proorizō* could possibly refer to God choosing ahead of time the people He will save and the ones He will condemn, with the individuals having no choice in the matter, and there are many theologians who think that is what the verse is saying. However, in Ephesians 1:5 *proorizō* can also refer to God’s deciding how He will save people; His choosing the path or plan to salvation. In this case, God decided in advance that He would save people by way of faith in Christ. We have to remember that, in the context of Ephesians, the “us” is plural and refers to the Church, not to individuals. God did not choose who would be saved and who would not—that is our choice—God decided there would be a group of people who He would save by faith in Jesus Christ,

and we now decide if we want to join that group. [For more information on Calvinism and Predestination, see Appendix 8: “On Calvinism and Predestination.”]

**“would be adopted.”** The Greek is *huiiothesia* (#5206 υιοθεσία), and it only occurs five times in the New Testament, all in the Church Epistles (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). According to Vine it means, “the place and condition of a son given to one to whom it does not naturally belong.” The Greek Lexicon by Louw and Nida says: “to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one’s own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one’s own child, including complete rights of inheritance.” *Huiiothesia* literally means, “to place as a son.”

“Adoption” clearly indicates that a Christian is a member of God’s family. In the Roman culture, the adopted son or daughter had four major changes: a change of family, a change of name, a change of home, and a change of responsibilities (Charles Welch, *Just and the Justifier*, p. 212, with a fuller explanation on pp. 208-213).

Most importantly, by using the word “adoption,” God emphasizes that salvation is permanent for the Christian, which is why it appears only in the Church Epistles. Some versions translate *huiiothesia* as “sonship,” but we believe that is not as good as “adoption.” While it is true that someone adopted into the family attains sonship (the status of a son), “adoption” is more accurate to the Greek meaning of the word, and it correctly expresses the fact that the adopted child is permanently placed in the family.

Birth seems so much more desirable than adoption that it is fair to ask why God would even use “adoption.” The answer is that the Romans recognized that when a baby was born, “you got what you got,” whether you liked it or not. This would include the sex of the child, birthmarks, etc. Thus, according to Roman law, a naturally born baby could be disowned from the family. However, people *adopting* a child knew exactly what they were getting, and no one adopted a child unless that specific child was wanted as a family member, so according to law an adopted child could not be disowned. He or she was permanently added to the family. Many early believers were Roman citizens, and using the word “adoption” was one of God’s ways to let the Church know that He chose the children brought into His family, and they could not be taken from it. The Roman historian William M. Ramsay writes:

“The Roman-Syrian Law-Book... where a formerly prevalent Greek law had persisted under the Roman Empire—well illustrates this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son, and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth, yet it was so.” (W. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1979; p. 353).

Roman customs and laws differed from those of the Jews, and it is by understanding Jewish laws and customs that we see why “birth” is used in Peter and James, and “adoption” is used in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians: “Among the Jews, adoption had no importance, and hardly any existence. The perpetuity of the family, when a man died childless, was secured in another way, viz., the levirate. Only sons by blood were esteemed in the Hebrew view” (Ramsay, *Historical Commentary... Galatians*; p. 341). The “levirate” that Ramsay refers to was the law stating that if a man died childless, his wife was to marry the man’s brother, and then her oldest son would be counted as the child of the dead man and carry his name (Deut. 25:5-10; Mark 12:18-27).

God made salvation permanent for Christians, which was radically different from before the Church started on the Day of Pentecost. He worked very hard to communicate that change to His Church, which is composed of both former Jews and former Gentiles (when a Jew or Gentile believes, he or she does not lose his nationality, but in God's eyes is now a Christian, a new creation in Christ). Thus, in Scripture that has a distinctively Jewish flavor, such as Peter and James, God speaks of "birth" (*anagennao*, 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; *apokueo*, James 1:18), because birth and genealogy were very important to the Jews. They would immediately understand that a child "born" into God's family was a permanent member of His family. God also uses a word for "birth" (*paliggenesi*) in Titus 3:5 (It is noteworthy that all three of these Greek words for birth are unique to writings to the Christian Church, another indication of the permanence of Christian salvation).

However, in books such as Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians, which were addressed to people with a Gentile background, He also speaks of "adoption." The same truth is communicated by both terms: the Christian becomes a permanent member of the family of God, because he is forever sealed in Christ (Eph. 1:13), and has a guaranteed hope (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14; NIV, ESV). While no verse in the Old Testament even hints that one day God would make salvation permanent, the permanence of salvation for Christians is the hallmark of the Sacred Secret.

This total change to permanent salvation is clearly taught in Galatians 4:1-5. The first three verses of the chapter show that before Jesus came, though the people of God were heirs, they were equal to slaves, being under guardians and enslaved to the basic principles of the world. God's equating Old Testament believers to minor children equal to slaves is very important, because a slave is not guaranteed a place in the family. Galatians goes on to say that when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son (4:4) so that we might receive "adoption" into His family.

Galatians 4:5 then says: "[God sent His Son] in order that he might redeem those who were under *the* law in order that we might receive the adoption." The two "in order that" clauses show that for people to be adopted into God's family, Christ first had to redeem them, and before Christ redeemed them they were under the law. Without Jesus paying the redemption price, no adoption was possible. Thus no Old Testament believer was adopted into God's family because adoption was not available yet. Adoption was available only after Christ died, and God started to bring people into His family by "adopting" and "birth" on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Christ died on the cross. Thus, permanent salvation was not available until Christ died, and was first made available when the Church started on the Day of Pentecost. For more on the permanence of Christian salvation, see Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be Like Christ*, Appendix A: "The Administration of the Sacred Secret." The words "as sons" do not appear in the Greek text. If we are adopted, then we are adopted. The phrase "as sons" was apparently brought into the KJV from the Latin Vulgate.

**"to."** The Greek preposition is *eis* (1519 εις). Prepositions are very flexible and have many meanings. Bullinger gives some of the ways that the Greeks used prepositions in a mathematical sense, but that only applied in some cases and in math. It is wrong to think that the Greeks were not as flexible with their prepositions as we are. The word "unto" is archaic and unnecessary. "To" is perfectly acceptable.

**"good pleasure."** The Greek word is *eudokia* (#2107 εὐδοκία). This word is difficult to translate. It contains the idea of good, of pleasure, and of intent. Thus some

translations go with “kindly intent.” We decided to stick with the ASV and let the word “will” carry the fact of intention.

**“he.”** Here it refers to God, and the REV keeps pronouns that refer to God in lower case except in a few contexts. The primary reason for doing this is that there are places in the text where who the “he” is, is very unclear, and by capitalizing it now we will be forced later to put a specific meaning on it that the biblical text does not place on it.

**1:6. “for.”** The preposition *eis* can denote purpose or result. In this case, result is the primary meaning, although God also purposed it for that end.

**“freely gave us”** The root of this phrase is “grace,” and the Greek has a wonderful word-relation: “his grace, in which he graced us.” At this point we have decided to go with the ASV, which carries the meaning of the word and is very clear.

**“in the Beloved One.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**1:7. “in whom.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**“redemption.”** See commentary on Colossians 1:14.

**“transgressions.”** This is a difficult word to exactly translate. The Greek is *paraptōma* (#3900 παράπτωμα) which is to “misstep,” “to fall by the wayside.” This “misstep” is not necessarily intentional, although it can be. Thus, in life, “trespasses,” are much more common than “sins.” Meanings of *paraptōma* include: “faults,” “deviations from truth,” “lapse,” “error,” “mistake,” “wrongdoing.” We went with “transgressions.” Often we trespass from a lack of wisdom and experience. It is a blessing to know that Jesus not only forgave our intentional sins and faults, he forgave us our trespasses as well.

**“riches.”** The Greek word is singular, but the plural translation is okay because “riches” is a singular reality. We could have gone with “wealth” but that has too strong a connotation of money.

**1:8. “lavished on.”** The phrase that is more literal, “made to abound toward us” is awkward for the modern reader and “abound” is not normally considered a verb. We went with “lavished on,” as do a number of the modern versions.

**“prudence.”** The Greek is *phronesis* (#5428 φρονήσει), and Louw Nida, BDAG both agree. Thoughtful, planning, *prudence*.

**1:9. “having made known.”** “making known” is better translated “having made known,” especially in light of the context, which is past.

**“sacred secret.”** The Greek is *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) and is best translated “secret” rather than mystery. The Greek word *musterion* means a “secret” in the religious sphere. A secret can be known if it is revealed, while a mystery denotes something unknowable (Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, “Mystery;” Bullinger, *Lexicon*, “Mystery;” Thayer, *Lexicon*, “*musterion*”). The *musterion* was revealed. This fact can also be seen within Scripture itself. Ephesians 1:9 says that God “**made known** to us the *musterion* of His will.” God made His “secret” known to us when He revealed it in His Word. By definition making known a mystery would be impossible. Versions of the Bible that translate *musterion* as “secret” include The New English Bible, The International Standard Version, the Complete Jewish Bible by David Stern, The Bible by James Moffatt, J. B. Phillip’s New Testament, The New Testament in the Language of the People by Charles Williams, The Better Version of the New Testament by Chester

Estes, Young's Literal Translation, and The Emphasized Bible by Joseph Rotherham. [For more information on the "Sacred Secret" and the Administration of Grace, see Ephesians 3:9.]

**"in him."** This is not "himself." It refers to Christ, as does the "in him" in verses 4, 7, 10, 11, and 13. Although there are some versions that go with "in himself," the middle voice (of "he purposed") is already reflexive, so saying "in himself" would be redundant and unnecessary.

**1:10. "the administration of the fullness of the times."** The definite article, "the," is implied, and in Greek, the preposition (in this case, *eis*) before the noun can make the noun definite without there being a definite article in the text. The administration of the fullness of times is a future administration, most likely what we sometimes call "the Everlasting Kingdom" (cp. Rev. 21, 21).

**"in the heavens."** This is the literal Greek, which takes the form of the Hebrew text, in which "heaven" is always plural (prob. a plural of majesty to emphasize the largeness of the heavens, cp. note Eph. 1:3).

**1:11. "in whom."** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, "in Christ."

**"we."** The word "we" refers collectively to the Church, the Body of Christ, not to individual Christians. See commentary on Ephesians 1:4, "us."

**"were claimed as God's possession."** This whole phrase is translated from the one Greek verb *kleroō* (#2820 κληρώω). There is disagreement among scholars and translators as to whether this verse is speaking of believers receiving an inheritance from God, or the believers themselves being God's inheritance. The decision about the meaning of the verse and how to translate it is made more difficult because this particular verb only occurs in this one place in the New Testament. To understand the verb *kleroō*, it helps us to understand the noun, *kleros*, which was a "lot" (as in casting or drawing "lots"). In the biblical culture, casting lots was a common way to make decisions. The "lot" could be dice, bones, stones, etc. For example, the soldiers who crucified Jesus did not want to cut up his robe, so they cast lots to see who would get to keep it.

In Greek culture the verb *kleroō* was used in several ways. The basic meaning was simply "to cast lots" or "to determine something by casting lots." However, that basic meaning was expanded so that *kleroō* also came to be used for that which was assigned by lot. A third meaning that is harder to articulate but vital for the understanding of this verse is that *kleroō* was used such that the thing chosen or won was itself the "lot." In that usage, *kleroō* meant, "to make a 'lot,'" in other words, that something would become a possession, heritage, portion, or private possession as if won by lot. In Ephesians 1:11 the believer becomes God's chosen possession, His "lot."

It is important to realize that the word *kleroō* was used for someone or something that was a possession even when a "lot" was not specifically cast. We today do the same thing, and use words that have roots that were once meaningful but now are just part of the word. For example, we can have an "auspicious occasion" even though there was actually no "auspice," no "favorable sign" that preceded the occasion. Similarly, God did not actually "cast lots" for us as if by chance some people were chosen to be His and some were not. The word *kleroō* was used to emphasize the point that we became God's chosen possession.

The commentators and the translations are divided as to how to translate *kleroō* in this verse. Is the verse saying that in Christ we *received* an inheritance (HCSB; ESV; KJV; NASB; NRSV)? Or is it saying that in Christ we *became* an inheritance, i.e., became God's chosen possession (NAB; NET; NIV; Rotherham; Williams)? Part of the problem in deciding the meaning of the verse is that to some extent both interpretations are true. We can even see this in the immediate context, because verse 14 says that the gift of holy spirit sealed in us guarantees us our inheritance, while verse 18 says that the believers are God's inheritance. So not only are both concepts of inheritance—us receiving an inheritance in Christ, and us being an inheritance in Christ—in the Bible, they are both in the first chapter of Ephesians!

Nevertheless, we believe that for the sake of translation into English, the stronger position is that in Christ the believer is claimed as God's inheritance, God's possession. In the Old Testament, Israel was God's possession (Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 9:26, 29; 14:2; 32:9). Deuteronomy 32:9 is very well known: "For the LORD's portion is his people." Also, us being made God's possession fits the flow of the sentence better. It makes more sense to say that we became God's possession so that we will be to the praise of his glory (v. 12), than to say that we received an inheritance so that we will be to the praise of his glory. Also, although in the context of Ephesians 1 the "inheritance" relates to our salvation, there are uses of inheritance in the New Testament that are about rewards, and our rewards are earned and not guaranteed. Lastly, in his commentary on Ephesians, Harold Hoehner also lists some grammatical reasons that support the reading that in Christ we become God's portion.

In conclusion, we would say that the primary meaning in this verse and context is that we become God's possession, but also part of what is being said is that in Christ we receive an inheritance.

**"being marked out beforehand."** God planned for the Church, the Body of Christ, before the foundation of the world. This is not "predestination," even though many versions use that word. [For being "marked out beforehand," see Appendix 8: "On Calvinism and Predestination". For the word "we" referring collectively to the Church, see commentary on Ephesians 1:4, "us."]

**"plan."** We felt that "counsel," as some versions have, was not the clearest translation. It is not that God had a large council meeting and many people were involved. "Plan" is much better.

**1:13. "in whom."** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, "in Christ."

**"when you heard...and when you believed in him, you were sealed."** This verse is a great key in properly understanding salvation, the new birth, and receiving the gift of holy spirit. Every Christian receives (is "baptized in") the holy spirit the moment he has faith in Christ. The individual may not outwardly manifest the holy spirit by things like speaking in tongues or prophecy at that time (in fact, he may never outwardly manifest the spirit), but he has the holy spirit born and sealed inside him.

The King James Version can confuse people about the timing of believing and being sealed with the holy spirit. It reads, "In whom ye also trusted, **after that** ye heard the word of truth...in whom also **after that** ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The two times the phrase "after that" is used in the KJV can confuse the modern reader and make him think that a person is sealed with holy spirit some time

after he believes. This is not the case. R. C. H. Lenski states the truth quite succinctly: “The moment we come to faith the sealing occurs. The thought is not that we must believe a while, and that some time later in the course of our believing the Spirit is bestowed.” The problem is that 400 years ago when the King James was written, the phrase “after that” was sometimes used when “when” would have been more appropriate (cp. Mark 8:25; Acts 1:8; Gal. 3:25; Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:2; Titus 3:4). The confusion caused by the use of the phrase “after that” does not occur in the modern versions, because they do not use that phrase.

“**promised holy spirit.**” The Greek texts read, “the holy spirit of promise.” This is a genitive of relation, and means the holy spirit that was promised. The gift of holy spirit that we have today was promised in the Old Testament in verses such as Isaiah 32:15 and Joel 2:28. The Old Testament prophets and Jesus foretold its coming, saying it would be a new spirit that would be “poured out” (i.e., given in fullness) into all the believers (Ezek. 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27; Joel 2:28, 29; John 14:17; cp. Isa. 32:15; 44:3-5; Ezek. 37:12; 39:29; John 15:26; 16:13).

It is very confusing to some Trinitarians that the holy spirit was promised, because if “the Holy Spirit” is an eternal member of the Trinity, how can he be promised for the future? Realizing that “the holy spirit” is the gift of God and not a member of the Trinity clears up that difficulty.

We also need to understand that although the holy spirit that we have was promised, it was not promised “to” us. It was promised in the Old Testament and Gospels to be given in the future, but a study of the verses in the Old Testament that speak of the coming of the gift of holy spirit refer to the Millennial Kingdom. God, by grace, gave us the gift of holy spirit that He promised to give to people in the Millennial Kingdom.

It is also important to realize that we today do not have the same gift of holy spirit that God gave to Old Testament believers such as Moses or Deborah. Rather, what we have is the firstfruits of the gift of holy spirit that God promised to pour out in the Millennial Kingdom. [For information on the gift of holy spirit we Christians have, see Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: the Power to be Like Christ*, and Appendix A of that book, “The Administration of the Sacred Secret”].

During the Old Testament and Gospel periods, God gave the gift of holy spirit in a very limited way: it was upon only certain selected people, and He gave it conditionally and by measure. However, God promised much better things for Israel’s future. He promised that in the Millennial Kingdom He would “pour out” holy spirit in abundance to everyone who believed. Furthermore, what God promised to Israel, He has given grace to the Christian Church, which explains why holy spirit in Christians is called “the promised Holy Spirit [holy spirit]” (Eph. 1:13), and the “firstfruits of the Spirit [spirit]” (Rom. 8:23). Therefore, the things about holy spirit that were foretold for the Millennial Kingdom apply to Christians also, even though holy spirit was not specifically foretold for Christians. Christians even have holy spirit with manifestations that were not promised in the Old Testament, and these are speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. The Church Epistles make the point that the gift of holy spirit that Christians have today is “the **promised** holy spirit” (Acts 2:33, Eph. 1:13).

Jesus spoke to his disciples about the promised holy spirit in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. In the Old Testament God promised to give holy spirit to Israel, not the Church. No one knew there was going to be a Christian Church, because it was part of the Sacred

Secret that God hid in Himself (see commentary on Ephesians 3:9). God promised that holy spirit would be poured out in the kingdom of Christ, but because He has given it to Christians, Scripture calls what we have the “firstfruits” of the spirit (Rom. 8:23).

God calls what we have “firstfruits” because we have today what He promised for the believers in the Millennial Kingdom. There are some major differences between the gift of holy spirit that God gave in the Old Testament and the gift of holy spirit God promised to give in the Millennial Kingdom, which we today get by grace.

**1) In the Old Testament and Gospels, holy spirit was upon only a few believers, but in the Millennial Kingdom it will be in all believers.** Even though there were millions of Israelites who lived during Old Testament times, only a few were blessed to receive the gift of holy spirit. In contrast to that, in the Millennial Kingdom God will pour out the gift of holy spirit on every believer. Verses such as Joel 2:28, 29 and John 7:38 make that very clear. Today, in the Administration of Grace, every believer gets holy spirit just as will happen in the Millennial Kingdom.

**2) In the Old Testament and Gospels, God gave holy spirit in a limited way, by measure, but in the Millennial Kingdom it will be poured out in abundance.** In contrast to the limited measure of holy spirit God gave in the Old Testament and Gospels, He promised to give holy spirit in abundance in the Millennial Kingdom. We read that Joel said, “. . . I will pour out my Spirit [spirit] on all people” (Joel 2:28; cp. also Isa. 32:15; 44:3). The words “pour out” are significant, and indicate great abundance. There is no place in the OT or Gospels that God’s gift of holy spirit is said to be “poured out,” but that is the promise for the Millennial Kingdom. It needs to be noted, however, that even though God promised He would give people an abundance of holy spirit, He did not specifically promise that they would be filled, even though that is clearly implied. In contrast, it is clear in Scripture written to the Church that every Christian is filled with holy spirit.

**3) In the Old Testament and Gospels, God gave holy spirit conditionally, and the recipient could lose it.** King Saul is an example of a person in the OT who lost the gift of holy spirit because of his disobedience to God (1 Sam. 16:14), and David prayed that God would not take it from him (Ps. 51:11). In the Millennial Kingdom, holy spirit will be given permanently, and by grace we receive it permanently also. It is vital to understand this aspect of the gift of holy spirit. For Christians, it is the presence of holy spirit inside them that makes them a Christian. When an unbeliever today confesses Christ as Lord, he gets the gift of holy spirit at that instant. The presence of holy spirit inside that person makes him a “holy one” (often translated “saint,” cp. Rom. 1:7, etc.), is the “seed” that is in him (1 Pet. 1:23), is why he is said to be “born again” (1 Pet. 1:23), is why he is called a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), and is why he is said to have a “guarantee” of salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). In the Old Testament the gift of holy spirit was said to be “upon” people, but in contrast, God promised that when He gave holy spirit in the Millennial Kingdom, it would be in them (cp. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26, 27; 37:14). Jesus thoroughly knew the Old Testament and its promises, and made sure his followers knew that holy spirit would be “in” people (John 14:17). Throughout the Old Testament and Gospel periods, the gift of holy spirit was upon people conditionally, and God could therefore take it back. In contrast to the way God gave holy spirit in the Old Testament, in the Millennial Kingdom He will give holy spirit permanently to those believers who had been raised from the dead, brought into the kingdom, and settled in the

land (Ezek. 37:12, 14; Isa. 59:21). The permanence of the relationship between the Millennial Kingdom believer and God is the basis for many promises of the OT, such as when God said of resurrected Israel believers that He would “no longer” hide His face from them (Ezek. 39:29). He told them he will give them a “new heart,” taking away their heart of stone and giving them a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26), and all the people will know Him (Jer. 31:33 and 34).

**4) In the Old Testament and Gospels it is never stated that holy spirit would influence a person to live a godly life. However, Scripture promises that in the Millennial Kingdom, holy spirit will influence people toward godliness.** One of the most exciting things about the gift of holy spirit that God promised to give in the Millennial Kingdom was that it would help people live godly lives. There is no evidence in the Old Testament or Gospels that a purpose or characteristic of the gift of holy spirit that they had was that it produced a positive transforming influence, helping them become more godly. Certainly people such as Moses or Elijah, who walked in great spiritual power, were aware of God more acutely and thus would have worked hard to live godly lives, but there is no statement in the Old Testament or Gospels that one of the purposes of the gift of holy spirit that God gave in those times was to help transform people toward godliness. However, the gift of holy spirit in the Millennial Kingdom (and for us today) is that the promised holy spirit is specifically stated to help people live godly lives. Jesus even called it the “helper” on many occasions (cp. John 15:26; sometimes this is translated “comforter,” or “encourager”). In Ezekiel, God promised that when holy spirit is poured out on resurrected people in the Millennial Kingdom, they will be able to talk with Him directly and intimately, and not be hidden from His “face” any more (Ezek. 39:29). Having holy spirit does not remove free will or force a person to obey God, and we all know that Old Testament believers who had holy spirit, and Christians (who all have holy spirit) disobey the commandments and sin. Nevertheless, holy spirit, as it is given in the Administration of Grace to Christians, and will be given to believers in the Millennial Kingdom, does have a very powerful influence on the person.

Ezekiel 36:27 says the holy spirit will “cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.” Isaiah 44:3-5 also testifies to the godly influence of holy spirit. The Church Epistles testify to the godly influence that holy spirit has in the life of a believer, as it fights with the sin nature that lives in us (Gal. 5:17). For more on the **promised** holy spirit, see commentary on John 7:39. [For more information on the uses of “holy spirit”, see Appendix 6: “Usages of ‘Spirit’”.]

**1:14. “deposit guaranteeing.”** This is a deposit that guaranteed delivery. The presence of holy spirit in a person guarantees that he will be saved.

**1:15. “Because of this.”** The Greek is *dia touto* (#1223 δία #3778 τοῦτο), which means “because of this,” “for this reason.”

**1:16. “I do not stop.”** The meaning of the Greek.

**“remembering you.”** We felt like “mention,” as some versions have, has come to mean an afterthought in English, which is not Paul’s point at all. Kittel pointed out that it could be idiomatic. We felt “remembering you” was the heart of the text.

**1:17. “a spirit of wisdom.”** This phrase has caused commentators much trouble. The word “spirit” here does not refer to the use of spirit that relates to human attitudes and emotions, nor does it refer to the gift of holy spirit, which has already been sealed inside the believer (cp. 1:13). This is the use of the word “spirit” that is the metonymy for

something produced by the holy spirit, i.e., a manifestation of the spirit, and it most often refers to the manifestation of prophecy (see commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:12). Harold Hoehner gets the sense correctly when he writes, “Rather, he [Paul] is praying for a specific manifestation of the Spirit so that the believers will have insight and know something of God’s mysteries as a result of the Holy Spirit’s revelation” (*Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*).

By the time that Paul wrote Ephesians, most likely in 62 AD, it was well known in Christian circles that the word “spirit” was used for a manifestation of the spirit, especially a prophecy. The Corinthians were “zealous for spirits” (1 Cor. 14:12); “the spirits [prophecies] of the prophets were subject to the prophets (1 Cor. 14:32); the Thessalonian congregation was not to be troubled by “a spirit,” a prophecy (2 Thess. 2:2); and we Christians are to test “the spirits,” the prophecies, “because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Furthermore, Jesus will destroy the wicked one by the “spirit,” the prophetic words, that come out of his mouth (2 Thess. 2:8). Paul was praying for the people of Ephesus so that God would give them a prophetic word of wisdom to guide them, also so that they would get revelation, and that this was to be in relation to their accurate understanding of God. Thus Paul is praying both that the believers will have wisdom and revelation to guide them, but that wisdom and revelation will be related to their accurate knowledge about God, which makes sense because the more we understand God and His Word, the more God can correctly guide us. Many people who have an inaccurate knowledge of God misunderstand His spoken Word and misread His written Word. Included in the “full knowledge” is wisdom and revelation about God.

“**revelation.**” For what “revelation” is, see commentary on Galatians 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 12:8.

**1:18. “his inheritance in the holy ones.”** The commentators disagree completely. Some say that the vocabulary and context clearly indicate that God’s inheritance is distributed to the saints, while others state that the context of Ephesians clearly says that it is the saints who are God’s inheritance. Actually, both meanings clearly have merit. It is true that the saints shall receive an inheritance from God, but it is just as true that we are His inheritance, for the Lord’s portion is His people (Deut. 32:9). In this section of Ephesians the use of *autos* (#846 αὐτός) is generally placed after whatever Paul wants to be of God, and the flow of that pattern indicates that, although the text can be read to mean that we are His inheritance, the more probable meaning is that his inheritance is given to the believers. Translating literally from the Greek text leaves the possibility of both meanings in the text, and given the ambiguity of the passage, we felt that this was the best policy.

**1:19. “to us, the believing ones.”** This is very literal, but makes the point that the *power* of God is manifested in the lives of those who are currently believing, not just in those who at one time confessed Christ as Lord.

“(according to...all things in all).” This is the figure of speech *Parembolē* (Bullinger, *Figures*), a form of parenthesis. The *Parembolē* starts in verse 19b and goes through verse 23. It explains and gives great depth of meaning to the phrase “surpassing greatness of his power.” How great is God’s power to us? It raised Christ from the dead, seated him at God’s own right hand in heaven, and raised him far above all other powers in the universe. And it is that power that is “to us” who believe.

*Dunamis* (#1411 δύναμις) = power; *energeia* (#1753 ἐνέργεια) = energizing; *kratos* (#2904 κράτος) = might; *ischus* (#2479 ἰσχύς) = strength.

**1:20. “the Christ.”** The presence of the definite article and this specific context makes this reading preferable to just “Christ.”

**“out from among the dead.”** See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “from among the dead.” The word “dead” is a genitive plural adjective, and needs a noun to complete the sense, thus it means “dead people.” The text says that Christ was raised from the dead [people], not, “from the state of his being dead.”

**1:21. “rulership.”** *archē* (#746 ἀρχή) = rulership.

**“name that is named.”** This refers to Jesus being above every other power and authority in the world. In the ancient world it was believed that the names of divinities had power, and there was truth in that because both God and demons respond to those who invoke their name. Modern witches still use the names of Satan and the names of demons in their spells, and Christians use the name of Jesus Christ in their prayers and when, by revelation, they command miracles and healings to come to pass. In Luke 10, the 72 men Jesus sent out to the cities of Israel returned and said, “Lord, even the demons are submit to us in your name.”

In contrast to Christians who use the name of Christ, people involved in witchcraft of all types use the names of demons in their spells and incantations. The Jewish rulers knew the Apostles were doing miracles, but could not bring themselves to believe that the miracles were done by the true God. Acts 4:7 records that they called in the Apostles and asked, ““By what power, or in what name, have you done this [healed the crippled man]?” The Jewish exorcists used the names of Abraham, Solomon, and other Patriarchs, and that was considered orthodox. However, witchcraft was condemned by the Sanhedrin, and this inquisition in Acts 4 was not about the miracle—no one could deny that—but about the “name” or “power” that was used to accomplish it.

Acts 19:13 records that there were Jews who were exorcists who thought they could use the name of Jesus to cast out demons even though they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. “But also some of the Jews, exorcists, who traveled from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, ‘I charge you under oath by Jesus whom Paul preaches.’” The result of this action was disastrous, because the demons had no regard for the name of Jesus being used by unbelievers, and wounded the men trying to cast them out.

The city of Ephesus was well known for magic and witchcraft, and when Paul’s ministry touched many people, “a number of those who practiced the magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver” (Acts 19:19; a drachma was a day’s wage for a laborer, so at today’s wages of perhaps \$8 an hour, or \$64 per day, the amount would be over 3 million dollars). Since Ephesus was so steeped in magic, it is appropriate that it was to the believers in Ephesus that the Word tells us that Jesus is “far above” every name that is named. There is no magic, spell, or witchcraft that is more powerful than Jesus. The believers in Ephesus did not have to fear that someone would try to cast a spell or curse on them using a more powerful name than Jesus, because there is no name more powerful than the name of Jesus.

**“coming one.”** The Greek is *mellō* (#3195 μέλλω), and refer to the age that was close at hand, the Messianic Age. This is more than a simple future. The Greek almost certainly expresses an immanence that is very difficult to translate into the English.

**1:22. “and he put all things in subjection under his feet.”** This verse continues the effect of God’s energizing the Christ, which started in verse 20. This is a good example of the prophetic perfect: that something that will absolutely happen in the future is placed in the past (aorist) tense (see commentary on “seated,” in Ephesians 2:6).

**“for the congregation.”** There is debate as whether “to the church” or “for the church” (NIV, RSV) is more accurate. The word “appoint” is a translation of *didōmi* (1325 δίδωμι). *Didōmi* is used here as equivalent to “appoint.” We have chosen, “for the congregation” as a translation of the dative case. The dative case is generally translated either with the preposition “to” or “for,” e.g. “to the congregation” or “for the congregation.” Since *didōmi* is not used to mean “give” but rather “appoint,” we felt “for the congregation” was a better translation of the dative case because Christ is appointed head over “everything” for the sake of the church, which was very much God’s plan. This verse is not saying that Christ is over the head of everything in (“to”) the church, but that he is head over everything, period, for the sake of the church.

## Chapter 2

**2:1. “he made alive.”** This phrase is pulled up from verse five to add clarity for the reader. Admittedly, while it adds some clarity, it also removes some of the emphasis of the Greek sentence, which is very long and includes all of verses 1-7. A quite literal translation of verse one is, “And you, being dead due to your trespasses and sins,”. It is not until much later in the seven-verse sentence, and even then in different verses, that we are told, “God” [verse 4] “made us alive together with Christ” [verse 5]. It is as if God tells us in 2:1 that we are dead and then lets us sit in that state and think about how horrible it is all the way to 2:5, when He affirms for us that He “made us alive.” Translators debate whether it is better to bring the phrase about “made alive” up from 2:5 into 2:1 for clarity (KJV, NKJV, RSV, REV), or to leave it out and let the reader discover it much later in the sentence (HCSB, ESV, NIV).

**“Dead due to your trespasses and sins.”** Although most English versions read “dead in your trespasses and sins,” there is no word “in” in the Greek text; the construction is simply the adjective *nekros*, “dead” followed by the nouns “trespasses” and “sins,” which are in the dative case. The effect of the dative is to make the point that it is “due to,” or “because of,” your trespasses and sins that “you” are dead. In his commentary on Ephesians, R. C. H. Lenski correctly observes: “the datives are causal: ‘due to your trespasses and sins.’” Heinrich Meyer writes, “The dative connotes the *causa efficiens*, ‘efficient cause’ of the death” (*Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament*).

We can see that the word “dead” is used in a figurative sense, because the verse itself and the next few verses make it clear that the people Paul was writing to were very much alive even before they were saved. But if “dead” is being used in a figurative sense, what is that figurative sense? Actually, it seems clear that “dead” has two figurative meanings, a primary one and a secondary one. The primary meaning is proleptic, in that it

is speaking of the future result of unforgiven sin, which is everlasting death. The secondary meaning is that the person who is not born again and sealed with the gift of holy spirit is “spiritually dead.” (There are commentators who say “spiritual death” is literal. We agree it is real, but shy away from “literal,” because “spiritual death” only makes sense because we understand actual physical “death.” The phrases “spiritually dead,” or “spiritual death,” do not occur in the Bible). We will now take the time to examine both of these meanings.

The primary meaning of “dead” is proleptic, meaning the event (the person’s death) is actually future, but it is spoken of as if it is a present reality. Meyer correctly observes:

The expression νεκροὶ [“dead”] is proleptic: ‘when ye were dead through your sins,’ i.e., when you had through your sins drawn upon you death, had become liable to eternal death, so that in this way the *certo morituri*, ‘those who are surely to die,’ are designated as νεκροὶ [“dead”]. (*Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament*).

Marcus Barth in *The Anchor Bible* spoke of “dead” as having a “prophetic tone.” Understanding the word “dead” as a prophecy is the same as understanding it proleptically, but it is perhaps easier for some people to understand the concept. Also, the idea of the future being spoken of as something that has already occurred is often called, “the prophetic perfect,” although the phrase “prophetic perfect” is properly applied to verbs in the past tense (see commentary on Ephesians 2:6, “seated”).

A major reason the Bible says the people are dead now (“being dead;” *ovtas nekrous*; present tense) is for emphasis. Saying something that will happen in the future has already happened is a biblical way of emphasizing the point, which in this case is emphatically saying that the unsaved will die in the future. Other verses in the Bible are more literal, and say that the death of the unsaved has not happened yet. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,” and 2 Corinthians 4:3 says, “But even if our Good News is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.” The unsaved are in the process of perishing, because day after day they grow closer to everlasting death—a death that is certain unless they get saved.

That the word “dead” is proleptic, a future reality being spoken of as a present reality, fits with the two other concepts in the sentence that are also proleptic. To better understand the proleptic nature of the whole Greek sentence, the English reader needs to know that the sentence is very long, and includes all of verses 1-7. That is not unusual for Paul, who occasionally uses very long sentences. For example, in Ephesians 1, verses 3-14 are all one sentence, although many English versions break it up into smaller sentences so it is easier to read. The proleptic use of “dead” at the beginning of the sentence fits with the proleptic use of “made us alive together with the Christ,” and “seated us with him in the heavenly places,” which occur later in the sentence. The sentence says we are “dead,” but we are not literally “dead” yet, just as the sentence says we are made alive together with Christ, even though we have not died yet nor been raised like Christ in our new, everlasting bodies. Furthermore, we have not yet been seated with Christ in heaven, but we will be in the future when the Rapture occurs. So the whole thrust of the sentence—the death of the unsaved, the resurrection of the saved, and the saved being seated in heaven—is future, but is grammatically placed in the past tense for emphasis.

It was common in Semitic languages, and in the language in the Bible, to express the certainty of a future event by speaking of it as having already occurred, so saying the unsaved are “dead” when they will be dead in the future is not unusual. Thus, the use of “dead” in a proleptic sense is not unusual in the New Testament. Romans 7:10 says, “and I found that the commandment that *was given* for life actually resulted in death.” Is Paul saying that people died when they sinned? Of course not. He is using the term “death” proleptically, that unforgiven and unatoned sin will result in everlasting death. But the result, “death,” is so certain that he speaks of the death as a present reality. Similarly, in Romans 7:24 Paul asks, “Who will rescue me out of this body of death?” Paul refers to his body as being dead even though it is alive, and he notes that being rescued from his dead body is a future event, as evidenced by the future verb “will rescue.”

A secondary meaning of the word “dead” in Ephesians 2:1 is that it refers to being spiritually dead. One of the beauties of the way the Bible expresses truth is that one word or phrase can express several different realities. In Ephesians 2:1, because the Bible uses “being dead,” the certainty of the future death of the unsaved is powerfully expressed, and also the reality of the spiritual death of the unsaved is expressed in the same phrase. The problem with the theological phrase “spiritually dead” is that it is not in the Bible. It describes a spiritual state of being, but the exact nature of that state is understood differently by different people. We assert that it refers to the state of the unsaved person who has not been born again of the holy spirit of God [see Appendix 1: “The Permanence of Christian Salvation”], and thus is separated from God and headed for everlasting death.

In contrast to “being dead” being figurative, the theology that is broadly described as Calvinism (after John Calvin) understands “dead” and “spiritually dead” in a different way than just separated from God and headed for death. According to Calvinist theology, since the Bible says the unsaved person is “dead,” he cannot believe on his own but must be given life by the “Holy Spirit” in order to believe in Christ. That is why Calvinism teaches that it is God who picks who will be saved and who will not. According to Calvinist theology, God empowers the dead people He selects for salvation by giving them His “Holy Spirit” so that they can believe. Once empowered by the “Holy Spirit,” the person can believe and get saved. There are many problems with this interpretation of the verse and of Calvinism in general. One problem is that it denies (or significantly modifies) the meaning of “dead.” The unsaved person is not really dead, as we can see even from the sentence itself, because the “dead” people in the verse lived and acted upon their emotions and feelings (even Calvin himself freely admitted these “dead” people were physically and mentally alive). That forces the Calvinist to say that the unsaved person is alive both physically and mentally, but cannot make the choice to do anything against his “dead” and unholy nature, such as get saved, unless empowered by the “Holy Spirit.” But there is no proof for that assertion. For one thing, it is going far beyond the meaning of the verse: it imports a theology that is not part of the verse itself. More than that, however, it is part of the “nature” of mankind to survive and even to try to improve one’s circumstances. Thus, when presented with the opportunity to survive forever on the basis of faith alone, it is well within the “nature” of mankind to make that choice. Unsaved people do have the survival instinct to believe in Jesus and receive everlasting life. Calvinism denies that, of course, which is why there are thousands of pages of commentary and debate written on the subject between Calvinist and non-Calvinist

theologians (good books that assert people's ability to believe and get saved include: *What Love Is This* by David Hunt and *Against Calvinism* by Roger Olson). To us it is evident that unsaved people can and do believe in Christ and then consequently receive the gift of holy spirit (cp. Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13).

A very good reason to believe that Ephesians 2:1 is primarily to be taken in a proleptic, prophetic sense, is the wording of the verse itself. The verse says that the unsaved people are dead “due to,” or because of, their sins. But dead people do not sin, so these people have to be alive enough to have original sin and to sin themselves. A quite literal translation of the verse is: “And you, being dead due to your transgressions and sins, . . .” Interestingly, Calvinist theology readily admits that the people of Ephesians 2:1 are “dead” due to their sin (or “in” their sin, which is still in part the sin they committed), but in doing that, they admit these “dead” people actually are alive. For Calvinist theology to work, the “dead” people in the verse can sin because they are alive, but cannot believe and be saved because they are dead. This is very fuzzy thinking.

According to Calvinist theology, the unsaved “dead” people have never been alive because they have never been given life through Christ. But if a person has never ever lived, never been alive at any time, he cannot have sin. At that point the Calvinist shifts his definition of death and says that the people are alive enough to sin, so they are in fact deserving of burning in Gehenna, but they are not “spiritually alive,” so they are incapable of having faith in Christ. We reject that reasoning, and assert that the verse is actually quite simple. It points out both that the unsaved person is separated from God, and that his sin will result in his eternal death. Beyond that, we believe other verses in the Bible say these people, who can freely sin, can also freely have faith in Christ and receive everlasting life. It is not necessarily a desire to be Christ-like or holy that lures most people to salvation, but the chance to live better on earth as well as survive forever.

The point of Ephesians 2:1 is not just to tell us about the fate of the unsaved, but to produce profound thankfulness in the believer for what God has done in saving him. The Greek phrase “being dead,” (*ovtas nekrouς*) refers to the believer's state before he got saved. We can see this from the context, because 2:5 uses the same Greek as 2:1 but exchanges “you” (plural) for “we.” We can also see it from the grammar itself, because the participles show peoples' state before God granted them salvation.

**2:2. “you once.”** This is a good translation of *pote* (#4218 ποτέ).

**“according to the ways of this world.”** The Greek is “according to the *aiōn* (#165 αἰών) of the *kosmos* (#2889 κόσμος).” When a person walks in accord with the *aiōn* of this *kosmos*, he walks in a way that conforms to the world in its present fallen and corrupt state. The Greek word *aiōn* gets translated “age,” most of the time, but it is important that we think of “age” the same way the Greeks did. Generally, when we think of “age,” we mean a period of time. Although the word did refer to a period of time, it referred to the thinking and attitudes that existed in that age. Trench writes that *aiōn* refers to “All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to cease and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral, atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again, inevitably to exhale,—all this is included in the *aiōn*. . . .” (Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms*).

Just as the owners of a Mexican or Chinese restaurant work hard to create an “atmosphere” that represents their home country, the Adversary works hard to make sure

that this world has an “ungodly atmosphere,” and that “atmosphere” is the *aiōn* of this world (*kosmos*). The unsaved and the ignorant Christians do not even notice that the “atmosphere” of this world is ungodly, and they follow the culture without thinking much about it.

Because the word *aiōn* includes the idea of time and behavior, we felt that in this verse the behavioral aspect was being emphasized because of the verb “walk,” and went with “ways.”

**“of the authority of the air.”** The Greek reads, “the authority (genitive singular) of the air.” The Devil is the ruler of the “authority” of the “air.” The air can be literal, because the Devil controls and to some extent lives in the air. However, the “air” can legitimately refer to the “atmosphere” of evil that exists in the world, which is part of the understanding of *aiōn*. This may be an excellent example of the Figure of Speech, *amphibologia*, double meaning. Both meanings are true, and can be textually supported by the vocabulary. The “authority” can refer to the authority he has, or that he exercises through demons, and can even include the demons themselves.

**“working.”** The Greek is *energeō* (#1754 ἐνεργέω), a verb that means “works” or “energizes.” We have used both translations in Ephesians.

**“sons”** is literal and cultural.

**“defiance.”** The Greek is *apeitheia* (#543 ἀπειθεία), and refers to willful disobedience.

**2:3. “passions.”** The Greek word is *epithumia* (#1939 ἐπιθυμία), and refers to an over desire. “Passion” is a good translation in this context, whereas the word “lust” connotes a sexual desire that the Greek text simply does not communicate.

**“carrying out.”** “Doing” would be more literal but difficult, and in slang colors the meaning. “Pursuing” is more to the point, which is following the whims of the flesh.

**“Mind”** is more accurately “thoughts” (plural), but it does not make good sense in English to say “the desires of the thoughts” since the thoughts are the desires.

**“Wrath”** is a good translation, see Bullinger. It has the idea of desire for revenge or justice. It is in the mind, not in the action, so “anger” could be a good translation, but given the scope of the NT, “wrath” is better.

**2:5. “when we were”** is the participle, but it makes the reading awkward and so we followed other versions, which translate it “when we were.”

**“due to.”** See commentary on Colossians 2:14.

**“transgressions.”** The Greek is *paraptoma* (see commentary on Eph. 1:7).

**2:6. “seated.”** In the Hebrew and Aramaic idiom in which the Bible was written, when something was absolutely going to happen in the future, it was sometimes spoken of as if it had already occurred in the past. This is apparently due to the fact that it is sometimes hard to express that a future event is certain to happen. Many times when we simply say that something “will” happen it does not happen. One way the Semitic languages avoided that was by idiomatically saying something already had happened even though the event was actually still future. That is the case in Ephesians 2:6 and some other verses in the New Testament—a future event is put in the past tense for emphasis.

In Ephesians 2:6 the verb “seated” is in the aorist tense, as if the seating had already occurred, even though actually we have not yet been seated in heaven. This is a figure of speech, in this case an idiom that comes under the general category that some scholars refer to as the “prophetic perfect,” and in this specific case is a “futuristic aorist”

(also sometimes called a “proleptic aorist”). We have not yet been seated in heaven, but the fact that we are born again guarantees that we will be when the Rapture occurs, so that fact is expressed by the idiom and we are said to be “seated” in heaven.

Hebrew scholars are familiar with this idiom and refer to it as “the prophetic perfect,” “the historic sense of prophecy,” the “perfective of confidence,” etc. It is also referred to by some scholars as the “here now, but not yet” or “already—not yet.” We should not be surprised that different scholars refer to the idiom by different names because idioms in languages do not have specific names—they are just the way people in that culture speak.

E. W. Bullinger recognized that a future event was sometimes referred to in the past tense as if it had already occurred, and instead of referring to it as an idiom of the language, referred to it as a figure of speech called *heterosis* (“The past for the future;” Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*).

The average Christian has no knowledge of the idiom because most of the time when it occurs in the Bible, the translators have not translated it literally, but instead have changed the tense of the verb so the English is easy to read and understand. Thus, the “prophetic perfect” is rarely apparent in English Bibles. In fairness to the translators, because the English language seldom uses anything like the prophetic perfect, most Christians would only be confused if the idiom was translated literally into English. For example, the Greek text of Jude 14 says that the Lord “came” with thousands of his saints (cp. NASB). Scholars of the biblical languages recognize that Jude was simply using the prophetic perfect to indicate the certainty of the Lord’s coming in the future with thousands of saints. But if they translated the verse literally, the average Christian would probably become confused and wonder, “When did the Lord come with thousands of his saints? The first and only time he came he had only a small group of apostles and disciples.”

Although the idiom of the prophetic perfect is originally a Semitic concept, it occurs in the New Testament Greek. Often the idioms of the Hebrew language and culture come over into the New Testament text. E. W. Bullinger explains that the idioms of the Hebrew language and culture are reflected in the Greek text:

The fact must ever be remembered that, while the language of the New Testament is Greek, the agents and instruments employed by the Holy Spirit were Hebrews. God spake “by the mouth of his holy prophets.” Hence, while the “mouth” and the throat and vocal chords and breath were human, the *words* were Divine. No one is able to understand the phenomenon; or explain how it comes to pass: for Inspiration is a fact to be believed and received, and not a matter to be reasoned about. While therefore, the *words* are Greek, the *thoughts* and *idioms* are Hebrew. Some, on this account, have condemned the Greek of the New Testament, because it is not classical; while others, in their anxiety to defend it, have endeavored to find parallel usages in classical Greek authors. Both might have spared their pains by recognizing that the New Testament Greek abounds with *Hebraisms*: i.e., expressions conveying Hebrew usages and thoughts in Greek words” (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, pp. 819–20).

When the Hebrew idiom of the prophetic perfect is brought into Greek, it is expressed in several different ways, because the Greek tenses are structured differently than the Hebrew tenses. Thus, technically in Greek, under the category of the prophetic perfect idiom, there is the prophetic perfect (the perfect tense used to express a future event), and proleptic aorist (the aorist tense used to express a future event).

The prophetic perfect and proleptic aorist are vital idioms for students of the Bible to understand, because of the important meaning it brings to the text. By writing about a future event in the past tense, God is emphasizing that the event will absolutely come to pass. If God simply used the future tense to write about future events, the aspect of absolute certainty that the idiom communicates would be lost. Here in Ephesians 2:6, for example, God could tell us, “we **will** be seated in heaven with Christ.” However, there might then be mitigating factors that would keep us from going to heaven, which is exactly what those people who say that Christians can lose their salvation teach. By saying that Christians are already in heaven is one of the ways God says that our salvation is not in doubt; we Christians will absolutely be with God.

There are many examples of the prophetic perfect in the Bible. For instance, God told Noah to build the ark. After telling him how to build it, the Hebrew text, translated literally, reads that God said, “And you **have come** into the ark” (Genesis 6:18). The ark was not even built at that time. Another is when God said to Abraham, “To your descendants I **have given** this land” (Genesis 15:18; cp. NASB). This promise was made to Abraham before he even had any descendants to give the land to, but God states His promise in the past tense to emphasize the certainty of the event. Later, when Abraham was bargaining with God to save Sodom, God told Abraham that if fifty righteous people could be found in the city, He would spare it. To make His point clear, God used the prophetic perfect and said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous people, I **have spared** the whole place” (Genesis 18:26). Another example occurs when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream and foretold that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. When mentioning the years of famine, Joseph used the prophetic perfect for emphasis and said, “And there **have arisen** seven years of famine” (Genesis 41:30). The prophecy of the coming Messiah given by the prophet Balaam is placed in the prophetic perfect for emphasis. Although it would be more than 1,400 years before the Messiah would come, the Hebrew text has, “A star **has come forth** out of Jacob and a scepter **has arisen** out of Israel” (Num. 24:17). Although Isaiah wrote more than 700 years before the birth of Christ, the Hebrew text reads, “To us a child **has been** born, to us a son **has been** given, and the government **has been** on his shoulders, and he **has been** called Wonderful, Counselor...” (Isa. 9:6).

Wallace explains the proleptic aorist as follows: “An author sometimes uses the aorist for the future to stress the certainty of the event. It involves a ‘rhetorical transfer’ of a future event as though it were past” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 564).

Other examples of the proleptic aorist besides Jude 1:14 that was mentioned above are John 3:31 and Hebrews 2:5.

A different idiom, but one that is very closely related to the prophetic perfect, is the prophetic present. It is very similar to the prophetic perfect, which as we have seen, was used when an event was certain to happen. However, the prophetic present also

usually indicates that the event being referred to was close at hand. For information on the prophetic present, see the note on Luke 3:9.

For a more detailed explanation of the Prophetic Perfect with quotations about it from linguists and grammarians, see John Schoenheit, *The Christian's Hope: the Anchor of the Soul*, Appendix E. Grammarians that mention the idiom include: Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*; Davidson, *Hebrew Grammar*; Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*; Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*.

**“in Christ Jesus.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**2:7. “that.”** The Greek is *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) usually has either indicates a purpose “in order that,” or a result, “so that.” Leaving the word “that” in the text gives the reader the flexibility to decide what God means. See extensive note on

**“by.”** The Greek *en* (#1722 ἐν) means “by” in this context; it is the instrumental sense of *en*.

**“have been saved.”** This is a periphrastic perfect. It uses a form of the verb “to be” and a perfect passive participle to represent the essence of a perfect tense, i.e., the action is in the past with effects continuing into the present.

**“so that.”** The Greek *hina* is expressing a result.

**2:8. “saved.”** This is the idiom of the prophetic perfect (see commentary on Eph. 2:6). The idiom of the prophetic perfect in large part explains why the New Testament sometimes says that “salvation,” “redemption,” “glorification,” and “adoption” are an accomplished reality in some verses, but in other verses says those things are still future. There are verses stating that we Christians have already been saved (Eph. 2:8, “You have been saved through faith”), verses that state we are in the process of being saved now (1 Cor. 1:18, “But to us who are being saved, it [the cross] is the power of God”), and verses stating that our salvation is still future (Rom. 13:11, “Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” and 1 Thess. 5:8, which says that the “helmet” of the Christian is the “hope of salvation”). So, which is it? Are we saved now or is salvation something we have to wait and hope for? The prophetic perfect idiom gives us a window into understanding that question.

No one, Old Testament or New Testament, is saved now in the sense that he is already rescued from death and the consequences of sin in this world. We all still wrestle with sin and death. Although God is working out the process of our salvation now, our complete salvation is still future. We *will* have new bodies, we *will* be rescued from death, and we *will* be freed from sin and sickness. But right now, we Christians have God's gift of holy spirit born inside us, and that is “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession” (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The fact that our future salvation is *guaranteed* means that, in the idiom of biblical language, it can be spoken of as if it were already accomplished. Thus, we Christians refer to ourselves as “saved” even though we struggle with sin, sickness, and death in our day-to-day lives. When we are finally “saved,” we will have new, glorified bodies (Phil. 3:21), and will no longer struggle with sin and death. We will have been finally rescued (saved) from the afflictions of this life by the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are other things that Christians will absolutely have in the future that are spoken of in the Bible in both the past and future tense. The Bible says the believer is

already redeemed (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), but also awaiting redemption (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30). We are said to have been adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15, translated "sonship" in the NIV), and yet we are still awaiting adoption (Rom. 8:23). We are said to be glorified (Rom. 8:30), but our glorification is also said to be future (Rom. 8:17 and Col. 1:27 say we have the "hope of glory"). We are spoken of as already justified (Rom. 5:1), but Galatians 5:5 says, "we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope" ("justified" and "righteous" are from the same root word in Greek—one is a noun, the other a verb). These examples all show the interplay between the reality that our salvation, redemption, and glorification are future, with the reality that because they are guaranteed to us, they can be spoken of, in the idiomatic language of the Bible, as accomplished realities.

Christians who are not careful to rightly divide God's Word can end up like the six blind men arguing about what an elephant was like (cp. the poem, "The Blind Men and the Elephant" by John Saxe). In the poem, each blind man had grabbed a different part of the elephant and was vigorously defending his position. The man who had the leg declared the elephant was like a tree, the one who had the ear said he was like a fan, the one who had the trunk asserted he was like a snake, and so forth. So too, Christians can grab different verses in the New Testament and begin arguing as if the Bible could contradict itself. That is not how to establish truth in the Christian world. The Bible is God-breathed and does not contradict itself. It uses words according to the language, culture, and idioms used in biblical times. Paul did not finish writing the Church Epistles and walk away saying, "Ha! They'll never figure *that* out." Certainly not. He wrote using words and phrases that reveal truth. The truth revealed by the prophetic perfect idiom is that the Christian does not need to worry about his salvation, redemption, or glorification. Although these things are not yet fully realized, the presence of the holy spirit in the Christian and the sure word of prophecy guarantees them when the Lord returns.

A great challenge and opportunity that each Christian has is to live his life in the confidence that the great things such as salvation, redemption, and glorification are an accomplished reality from God's point of view, they just have not been fully given to us yet. It is like a child who is awaiting a birthday that has not yet come, but his new bicycle has already been bought and is in the garage. We do not have to earn or be "good enough" for any of the things that have been bought for us by Jesus Christ. We need to live in the confident reality that they are ours because God will never go back on His guarantee.

**"faith."** The Greek is *pistis* (#4102 πίστις), a noun. In both ancient secular Greek and in the Bible *pistis* means "confidence, trust, assurance." When the people of the first century got the letters of Paul, for example, they did not say, "What is *pistis*?", as if Paul had invented a new word. *Pistis* was in common use in the Greek language, and had been for centuries. It is in the writings of the Greeks, including Aristotle, Plato, Herodotus, etc. The first definition of *pistis* in the *Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon* is "trust in others."

When the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin, *fides* was the natural choice as a translation of *pistis*, because *fides* means "trust, confidence, reliance, belief." As the English language developed, our English word "faith" came from the Latin word *fides*. There should be nothing mysterious about *pistis*, *fides*, or "faith." We know what trust is. *Merriam-Webster* defines it as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something."

It needs to be clearly understood that the ancient and biblical definition of *pistis* differs completely from the modern definition of “faith.” If both *pistis* and *fides* mean “trust,” how did “faith” come to be defined in our modern culture as “firm belief in something for which there is no proof” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition)? The actual historical process is long and tedious, but the concept is simple. The Church asked people to trust doctrines that were neither logical nor clearly backed up by Scripture. For example, the doctrine that the “host” (bread) and wine that are used in Roman Catholic Mass become the body and blood of Christ is not backed up with solid Scriptural exegesis, nor is it logical. Priests know this, and so they ask people to “Take it by faith,” meaning, “Believe this even though there is no proof.” Over time, belief in something for which there is no proof became the accepted definition of “faith.” This is harmful because people then import that made-up definition of “faith” back into the Bible, although that is not what “faith” means when used in the Bible.

There is nothing wrong with “take it by faith (trust)” if there is actually something, such as a promise of God, to trust. When Jesus told the blind man that if he washed in the Pool of Siloam he would be healed, the blind man had faith in, trusted, Jesus and his promise, washed, and was given sight by a miracle. However, if there is nothing to trust in and nothing “trustworthy” to believe, then to ask people to “take it by faith” is wrong, and contributes to the misunderstanding of God and the Bible. Biblical faith is neither magic, unreasonable, nor illogical. It is simply *trust*.

Ephesians 2:9 and 10 make it clear that “faith” is not “works.” We are saved by grace through faith, not by works. This is God’s definition of terms. Thus, by God’s definition, “faith” is not a work.

When a person has faith, i.e., trusts that Jesus is Lord and God did raise him from the dead (Rom. 10:9), then God responds to that trust by giving the person salvation. The faith does not make salvation happen, God does, but He does it when the individual trusts Him. It is because God gives the salvation, rather than the faith “takes” the salvation, that salvation is a “gift.”

When a person has faith in Jesus, he gets “born again” (1 Pet. 1:3, 23), and what is born inside him is the gift of holy spirit. That is why Galatians 3:14 says we get the promise of the spirit by faith. At the moment a person has faith in Jesus Christ, he gets born again and the guarantee of salvation, and also receives the gift of holy spirit. For more on faith, see commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:1.

**“this.”** “This” is the Greek word *touto* (#5124 τούτο), and it is a nominative neuter pronoun. There is quite a bit of discussion as to exactly what it refers to, but the bottom line is that it refers to our salvation. Bratcher and Nida write: “...it seems more likely that the Greek neuter pronoun refers to the whole preceding event, that is, salvation by God’s grace through faith...” (*A Translator’s Handbook to Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*). Andrew Lincoln concurs, and writes: “*Touto* is probably best taken, therefore, as referring to the preceding clause as a whole, and thus to the whole process of salvation it describes, which of course includes faith as its means” (*Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*). In other words, our salvation is not from ourselves, it comes from God. Thus the verse could be expanded to read, “...you have been saved through faith, and this salvation is not of yourselves....” The verse is not saying that the faith does not come from us, because it does. The word “saved” is in the passive voice, for it is the Lord Jesus

who saves us when we have faith. Our part is to have faith, at which point the Lord saves us, we do not save ourselves by our faith.

Some Calvinist commentators say that “this” refers to the word *pistis* (trust, faith) in the first clause, which would make our faith come from God. Although it is true that there are cases where the gender of the pronoun *touto* does not agree with the noun, Robertson, in his *Grammar of the Greek New Testament* writes that in general it does, and there does not seem to be any reason in this context that the general rules of grammar would not be followed. Thus, because *pistis* is a feminine noun, it should not be linked with the neuter pronoun. Lenski writes: “The neuter *totou* does not refer to *pistis* [faith] or *charis* [grace], both of which are feminine, but to the divine act of saving us” (Robertson agrees, cp. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Calvinists assert that a person cannot have faith unless God gives it to him, but we disagree. It is clear that unsaved people can have trust (even Calvinists agree with that statement in general), and trust is what we must have to get saved. It seems incongruous to us that a Calvinist would agree that an unsaved person can trust another person, or trust that they would fall if they jumped off a cliff, but not be able to trust Jesus Christ without God’s giving them that trust. They can trust in Jesus based on the evidence they gather from the world around them, just like they build trust for other things. Our trust does not save us, it is simply what God is looking for from us such that He moves and saves us. Bratcher and Nida write: “Faith therefore may be described technically as “contributing circumstances,” for without faith on man’s part God will not impose his grace and salvation.” We believe Robertson is correct in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* when he writes: “‘Grace’ is God’s part, ‘faith’ ours.

**2:10. “his.”** The “his” is emphasized in the Greek text, but it is difficult to do in English. A more literal translation would be, “His handiwork are we...”

**“created.”** The Greek verb is an aorist passive participle, which means that our creation in Christ was a one time event, not an ongoing action.

**“in Christ Jesus.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**“for us to walk in.”** The phrase starts with the Greek conjunction *hina*, which is most often “that,” “so that,” or “in order that,” but the purpose can be expressed as “for,” especially in this case because of the verb *peripateō* (#4043 περιπατέω), walk. The verb is subjunctive, hence most literal versions say “may walk,” “should walk,” or “could walk.” However, the conjunction *hina* is the reason the verb is subjunctive, which means we must translate it according to the context. In this case, God did not prepare good works so we “might” walk in them, He prepared them for us to walk in. “Walk” is idiomatic for something we do regularly. Since walking was an essential part of biblical life, our “walk” with God was something that was daily. It was part of life. Similarly, good works are supposed to be something that we do daily, as part of life. The Boy Scouts had the right idea when they made their motto: “Do a good turn daily,” that is, make sure you do something good for someone else every day.

**2:12. “excluded.”** Being alienated implies that there once was a relationship, but in fact there never was any such relationship. Hence, “excluded” is a better translation.

**“citizenship.”** The Greek word is *politeia* (#4174 πολιτεία), and the commentators, and versions, are divided on its meaning in this verse. Although it has several meanings, the two most likely in this context are “commonwealth” (i.e., a state) or “citizenship.”

There is truth in both meanings, which is a major reason that the commentators and versions differ. In a very real sense, the Gentiles were excluded from the state of Israel, and also excluded from citizenship in that state. So the Greeks of the first century did not have to make the tough decision that today's English translators have to make; the word *politeia* carried both meanings. We felt "citizenship" fit the context better than "commonwealth" or "state" because the context is not referring to the Gentiles getting to be accepted into the theocratic state of Israel, but rather that they would be together with the citizens of Israel. Now, by the blood of Christ, the "in" Jews and the "out" Gentiles are both one group, not by virtue of the Gentiles being accepted into the state of Israel, or because the Jewish state is disbanded in Christ, but rather that the Jews and Gentiles are now both citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) and are "one" in Christ (Eph. 2:14).

**"Covenants of promise"** = "The promise" is the collective promises of the OT. Thus covenants is plural when promise is singular.

**"without God."** The Greek is "godless," but the English word "godless" means ungodly, not "without God" which is what the author is trying to communicate and does communicate in the Greek language.

**2:13. "in Christ Jesus."** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, "in Christ."

**"far off...near."** The word "near" can be confusing to the modern reader because it was used idiomatically in the Judaism of the time of Christ. In Christ, Gentiles are not just "near" to God, they are "part" of the people of God. They are "one" with the believing Jews (Eph. 2:14), "one new man" in Christ (Eph. 2:15), and "fellow members of the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:6). So why does the Bible say they are "near" when actually they are "included?" Andrew Lincoln (*The Word Biblical Commentary*) points out that in the Old Testament, "near" and "far off" were words that were used to describe and contrast the Jews and the Gentiles, and at the time of Christ they were used of proselytes, Gentile converts to Judaism. Lincoln writes: "Often in the OT, the Gentile nations can be described as 'far off' (*rahoq*...Deut. 28:49; 29:22; 1 Kings 8:41; Isa. 5:26; Jer. 5:15), while Israel is thought of as 'near' (*qarob*) to God (cp. Ps. 148:14). These terms, 'far' and 'near' later occur frequently in discussion about proselytes." Lincoln writes that to bring a non-Israelite "near" to God was to accept him as a proselyte, while to hold him at a distance (keep him far off) was to reject him as a proselyte. In summary, then, to be "near" was to be accepted as part of the community of God, while to be "far off" was to be rejected from the community and considered apart from it.

There were many Jews in Ephesus, and many scattered throughout the Roman world in general, so the Jewish concepts of "far off" and "near" would have been well known to the Gentiles. That is why Paul could use them in Ephesians, and the fact that Ephesians says that the Gentiles are now "near" by the blood of Christ would have had a huge impact on the Gentiles reading Ephesians. They would have immediately known they were accepted into the community of God.

Sadly, there is no way to retain the literal translation "far off" and "near" in English and completely understand the sense of the passage without knowing some background about how the words were used in the first century. If we do not translate the words literally, but translate their sense, the verse could read like this: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly not part of the people of God are included in the people of God, by the blood of the Christ."

**2:14. “peace.”** The Greek is *eirēnē* (#1515 εἰρήνη ; pronounced ā-ray'-nay), meaning “peace, tranquility,” but behind it is the Semitic concept of *shalom*, total wellness of being and therefore mental and physical peace.

In this context, Jesus is specifically said to be our (Christian’s) “peace” because he has put an end to the hostility (and suspicion, hatred, and enmity) between Jews and Gentiles and allowed anyone to become part of God’s people. There was hostility between the two groups before, but now, because of the work of Christ, we are at peace. This peace is not our doing, it is the work of God through Christ, and so he is our peace. Even more globally, Jesus is the peace between those who are, and those who are not, God’s people, partly because he has made it available for everyone to be part of the people of God, and, in a wider sense, partly because we are to love our enemies, at least as far as Christians can make peace work (cp. Rom. 12:18).

**2:14. “the dividing wall, the fence *between us*.”** The Greek text of Ephesians 2:14 and 15 are very difficult to bring into English, as anyone reading multiple English versions can easily see. The primary difficulty is whether or not the word “hostility” (or enmity in some versions), goes with and describes the dividing wall or the Law. The way the Greek is worded, it can go either way, and indeed, there is every reason to think that Paul wrote that way on purpose as an *amphibologia*, a double entendre. The hostility was due to the Law and to things that focused people’s attention, such as the wall that divided Jews and Gentiles in the sanctuary.

If the dividing wall is the hostility, then the translation is like the HCSB or ESV: “the dividing wall of hostility.” This position is supported by Greek heavy-hitters such as the Expositor’s New Testament, A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, and Vincent’s *Word Studies in the New Testament*. If, on the other hand, the hostility is due to the Law with its commandments and regulations, the translation is like that of the ASV, New Jerusalem Bible, and NASB: “abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances. . . .” That position is supported by commentators such as R. C. H. Lenski, Andrew Lincoln (*Word Biblical Commentary*), and E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*).

The fact is, that although the Greek may be a double entendre, we have to make a decision as to how we will translate the English. The hostility between Jew and Gentile was certainly epitomized by the dividing wall in the Temple between the Jew and Gentile, but it was the Law that made the wall necessary, and it was the Law that divided Jews and Gentiles most of the time. It is safe to say that the vast majority of Gentiles who came in contact with Jews all over the Roman world never went to Jerusalem and never saw the actual dividing wall. But the wall was clearly there in the following of the Law. In general, the Jews feelings toward the Gentiles ranged from dislike to absolute abhorrence. Because the Jews were “chosen” and given the Law, they considered Gentiles unrighteous before God. They considered them dogs (Matt. 15:26) and unclean, and would not even eat with them (Acts 10:28; 11:3). The Gentiles reciprocated and hated the Jews for different reasons, including their arrogance, their separatism, and the fact that they would not participate in festivals and sacrifices that brought the favor of the gods upon the Empire.

When he died on the cross, Jesus did away with the Law, and slew the hostility on the cross (Eph. 2:16). Now there is one Body of believers, the Law has been made of no effect, and there is no need for a wall of separation because there is no separation.

**2:15. “in himself.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

As to the punctuation of 14 and 15 and as to the fact that it is the middle wall of partition that is the mutual enemy (“enmity”), see Expositor’s NT, and Robertson’s NT *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, and Word Studies in the NT by Vincent. The phrase “in his flesh” can modify either “broken down the middle wall” v. 14 or with “abolished the Law” in verse 15. The commentators are divided, and with good reason. It was by his flesh that he did both. We felt that since verse 16 pointed out that he slew the enmity, i.e., the middle wall, on the cross, the context favored the placement of “in his flesh” with breaking down the middle wall.

**“law consisting of commands expressed in regulations.”** This is either a genitive of apposition; i.e., “the Law, that is to say, the commandments expressed in regulations,” or a genitive of contents, i.e., “the law consisting of...” The meaning is the same, that the Law is made up of commandments that are expressed as regulations. For “regulations,” the Greek is *dogma* (#1378 δόγμα), see commentary on Acts 16:4.

**“of no effect.”** The Greek word is *katargeō* (#2673 καταργέω ; pronounced cat-ar-geh'-ō), and it means “to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative, to disempower, deprive of force, influence, or power, to loose from someone or something, to end, terminate, abolish.” When it come to the Law, “abolish” is not the best translation because there are many parts of the Law that are still in effect and Christ spoke of not abolishing the Law but fulfilling it. It must be said, however, that when the Bible mentions the Law, sometimes it is only referring to parts of the Law, and it seems clear that in this context there are parts of the Law that are not in effect any more, and parts that are. Simpson and Bruce write: “In one or two cases in the papyri it [*katargeō*] appears to signify ‘to bring to a standstill’ or ‘put out of gear.’ Here it might be rendered ‘to invalidate’ or to nullify, annul, quash.’ The clumsy word ‘depotentiate’ [un-power] would nearly represent the general sense of this peculiarly Pauline verbalism” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*).

Jesus did not “abolish” the Law. In fact, Romans 7:12 says the Law is holy, righteous, and good. Furthermore, many of the commandments in the Law are in the Church Epistles: do not lie, steal, envy, commit sexual immorality, and so forth. So why is the Law, “of no effect?” Because it cannot get anyone saved. It cannot make us holy and righteous before God. Jesus does that when we get born again. All the things the Law cannot do, Jesus does in us when we trust him. The Law is now “of no effect” for our righteousness and salvation,” but it is not abolished.

**2:16. “having slain the enmity by it.”** Ironically, Christ used the cross, which was used to slay him, to slay the enmity. For the “it” or “him” autos, referring to the cross, see Robertson.

**2:19. “foreigners.”** Indicates someone who is in the land but is not a citizen.

**2:20. “cornerstone.”** There is no actual word for “chief” as the KJV has. The Greek text has *akrogōniaios* (#204 ἀκρογωνιαίος), which is the “far corner” or “extreme corner,” thus being the “cornerstone.”

**2:21. “in whom.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

**“being fitted together.”** The Greek word has more to it than just the concept of “joined” together. It has overtones of the pieces being chosen so that they “fit” together, after which, of course, they are joined together. Especially in the context of a Temple, which was constructed of stone, “fitting” the pieces together was of utmost importance. The stones in the foundation wall at the Temple in Jerusalem, although thousands of years old and weighing many tons, are “fitted” so well that a knife blade will not go between them.

**“sanctuary.”** The Greek word is *naos* (#3485 ναός), which means the inner sanctuary, and then, occasionally, by association, the temple building that houses the inner sanctuary. Then, by metonymy, the Greek word *naos* is used of the body (Bullinger, Vine). In contrast, the Greek word *hieron* (#2411 ἱερόν) means the temple building along with its porches, outer courts, and all associated out buildings. Interestingly, the *hieron* is never used figuratively in the Bible, it is always literal. In Jerusalem, Herod’s *hieron* (ἱερόν) was a massive complex inclosing some 37 acres. The 35 page article, “Temple, Jerusalem,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* has drawings and diagrams of Solomon’s Temple (*hieron*) as well as that of Ezekiel and Herod.

The need for the distinction between the *naos* and the *hieron* was necessitated by God’s Old Testament regulations concerning the Tabernacle, and then the Temple. God placed an important distinction between the outer courts, where all the priests could minister, and the inner sanctuary, i.e., the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (KJV, “Holy of Holies”). This distinction became to be supported by vocabulary, and the inner rooms came to be called the *naos* (and, as was stated earlier, eventually by association the Temple building proper that contained it), while the *naos* along with the outer courts came to be referred to as the *hieron*.

We use the word “sanctuary” to translate the word *naos*, and “Temple” or “temple complex” to translate the word *hieron*.

**2:22. “in whom.”** This phrase refers to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. See commentary on Ephesians 1:3, “in Christ.”

### Chapter 3

**3:2. “surely you have.”** In the indicative mood, the Greek word “if,” *ei* (#1487 εἰ, pronounced as a long ā) does not always have the conditional meaning of our English word “if.” In certain circumstances, the Greek word *ei* is used even though the condition is taken as being fulfilled, and should be translated “since;” “surely you have;” or something similar. In those circumstances, translating the Greek *ei* as “if” can confuse the English reader who does not understand that the Greek *ei* is not always equivalent to our English “if.” To avoid confusion and carry the sense of the Greek in this context, we translated the *ei* as “surely you have.” See Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 289, for more information on *ei* being used in a sense that is not conditional.

That *ei* has a sense that is conditional, and one that is not conditional, depending on the context and the mood of the verb it is associated with, is one reason that it does not work to try to translate each Greek word into English in the same way.

A good example of a use of *ei* that is not conditional is in John 7:4. Jesus' brothers knew he was doing miracles, so the verse should read (and does in versions such as the NIV), "since you are doing these things...." In his note on 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Lenski calls this "the condition of reality" (and 1 Thess. 4:14 is another good example of the sense of *ei* that is not conditional). In Ephesians 3:2, there was no doubt about the Ephesians having heard of the Administration of the Sacred Secret. Paul had been there for more than two years teaching (Acts 19:10). Other good examples of this grammatical construction are 1 Corinthians 15:12 and 15:44. If the context of the verse makes it clear that the "if" is meant as a "since," we may leave the translation as "if" in the REV. However, if the context may confuse the reader, as here in Ephesians 3:2, we translate it "surely you have" to help the English readers understand the text. We could have gone with "since" in the verse, as we have in a couple other places, but in this case "since" implied that a reason for something would follow, and that is not the case in this context. The NIV uses the same translation as the REV.

**"Administration of the Grace of God."** This is the administration in which we live, which is also called "the Administration of the Sacred Secret" (Eph. 3:9). It began on the Day of Pentecost, and will end at the Rapture of the Church.

At different times in history, God changed the rules He gave people to live by. Even a cursory study of Scripture shows that God has "administered" people differently at different times. Many theologians call the specific rules of a specific time period an "administration" or "dispensation." The term "dispensation" refers to God "dispensing" His rules and justice to mankind. Similarly, "administration" refers to Him "administering" His rules and justice. There is a systematic theology that recognizes different administrations or dispensations and is referred to as "Dispensationalism," and there is a huge theological battle as to whether or not it is correct.

This is not the place to expound the differences between Dispensationalism and its theological opponents, primarily the doctrine called "Covenant Theology." Instead, it is helpful to realize that even theologians who hold to what is known as "Covenant Theology" recognize that God has changed the rules for mankind from time to time. In its entry under "Covenant Theology," the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter Elwell, says, "...the covenant of grace includes various dispensations of history...." Then, under the entry "Dispensationalism," we read, "Some covenant theologians...use the concept of different dispensations, but as part of the covenant of grace."

It is to the advantage of both camps (and those of neither camp) to realize that God does in fact change the rules for mankind, and examples of that abound in Scripture. We, like those who hold to the theology of "Dispensationalism," (and not all Dispensationalists agree on the definition of Dispensationalism, or how many dispensations there are, or exactly when they start and end) think that the word "dispensation" or "administration" is a good one to define the rules and regulations that God wants obeyed in a particular period of time.

The word "administration" (cp. REV, HCSB, NIV, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible) and "dispensation" (cp. ERV, KJV, YLT), is from the Greek noun *oikonomia*

(#3622 οἰκονομία), which means “the management of a household.” *Oikonomia* is from the verb *oikonomeō* (#3621; “to be the manager of a household”), which is from *oikonomos* (#3623; “the person who manages the household”), which is a compound word built from *oikos*, “house,” and *nemō*, “to distribute, deal out, or apportion.” God “manages His household” in different ways at different times, and He does so by changing the rules He gives to people.

Examples of God changing the rules from administration to administration abound. For example, when it comes to food, in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam and Eve to eat plants only (Gen. 1:29). After the Flood, God changed the rules and allowed man to eat meat also (Gen. 9:3), and He still allows us to eat meat today. Another clear example concerns the Sabbath. Before the Mosaic Law, there was no specific law concerning the Sabbath. When God gave the Law to Moses, He changed the rules and established a set Sabbath, and commanded that anyone who broke the Sabbath should be put to death (Exod. 31:14). Today, in the “Administration of the Grace of God” (Eph. 3:2), God has changed the rules again, and it is not a sin to work on the Sabbath (Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16 and 17). A third example of God changing the rules involves animal sacrifice. Before the Mosaic Law, there was animal sacrifice, but it was not tightly controlled. When God gave the Mosaic Law, He gave lots of new rules about it, and commanded the death penalty for breaking some of them. Today, in the “Administration of the Grace of God” (Eph. 3:2), animal sacrifice has stopped because Jesus Christ was the one-time sacrifice for sin.

When Christians do not recognize or understand the administrations in the Bible, they cannot resolve its apparent contradictions, and become confused as to which commands to obey and which to not obey. It is of the utmost importance that Christians who want to obey God’s instructions understand the administrations in the Bible. If they do not, they may well end up obeying a command that was not written to them. For example, what if a Christian took more than one wife, saying that the Bible said it was okay to do, and quoted Exodus 21:10? Can a Christian marry more than one wife just because a verse in the Bible says it is allowable? No, because we must consider where the Bible says that, and to whom was God addressing that regulation. In the case of marriage, in the Old Testament, God allowed a man to have more than one wife. But now He has changed the rules and has a one-husband-and-one-wife rule (1 Cor. 7:2) and even says that if a person has more than one wife, he cannot be a leader in the Church (1 Tim. 3:2).

Another example would be that if a person has psoriasis (sores and flakes on the skin), does he have to wear torn clothes, not brush his hair, cover his mouth with cloth, live outside of town, and cry “Unclean” when he walks down the street? That is what the Bible says to do (Lev. 13:45 and 46). Thankfully, those commandments were part of the rules God gave to the Jews under the Law, and God has given the Christian Church different rules to live by. Neither do we have to wear tassels on the outside of our garments (Num. 15:38), nor do Christian men have to go to Jerusalem three times a year (Deut. 16:16). Jews under God’s Law were commanded to do these things, but now God has changed the rules, and we live in a different administration, the Administration of Grace. If we want to obey God, we must obey the rules that apply to us. Martin Anstey wrote in his book, *How to Master the Bible*, (p. 32): “In this matter the golden rule is, ‘Distinguish the dispensations and the difficulties will disappear.’”

Dispensationalist scholars do not agree on the number of administrations there are in the Bible, or when they begin and end, but they do agree on some basics. For example, that Paul speaks of an administration in which we now live that is different from the one before it (Col. 1:25, 26; Eph. 3:2), and that Paul also writes of a future administration (Eph. 1:10). Also, there is the time in Eden before the Fall. That makes four, and it seems clear that in the time before our administration, there were at least two, the Law, and the administration before the Law. That makes five that all dispensationalists agree on. (It is much easier to see this in versions such as the KJV, which uses the word “dispensation,” or Rotherham’s *Emphasized Bible*, that uses “administration,” than it is in versions such as the ESV, which do not consistently translate the word *oikonomia*, or translate it by words such as “stewardship”).

To us there are eight administrations in the Bible, and knowing exactly when they begin and end, and the rules distinctly associated with each, is indispensable in explaining many of the apparent contradictions in Scripture. The eight administrations are:

- 1) Original Paradise (Creation to the Fall),
- 2) Conscience (Fall to the Flood),
- 3) Civil Government (Flood to the Mosaic Law),
- 4) The Mosaic Law (the giving of the Law until Pentecost),
- 5) The Administration of the Grace of God (from Pentecost until the Rapture),
- 6) Tribulation (from the Rapture to the end of Armageddon),
- 7) Millennial Kingdom (lasts 1,000 years),
- 8) Final Paradise (will last forever).

The Administration of the Grace of God, in which we live today, began on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost (Acts 2), when the gift of holy spirit was given to everyone who believed. This new administration is called by two different names. It is called the Administration of God’s Grace (Eph. 3:2. We usually call it “the Administration of Grace”), and it is also called “the Administration of the Sacred Secret” (Eph. 3:9, *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*). God had specific reasons for using the names that He did. He calls it the Administration of “Grace” because Christians enjoy the grace of God in a manner and to an extent that was not given to people of previous administrations. God has always given grace to mankind, but He has so abounded in His grace to the Church that He calls the very time we live the “Administration of the Grace of God” (Eph. 3:2). God also calls this administration the “Administration of the Sacred Secret,” because He kept the knowledge of the blessings and grace that we have today a secret, and did not reveal it until the Epistles of Paul were written.

When we understand the administration in which we live, we can see why God called it “the Administration of Grace.” God, for His own purposes and for our benefit, gave Christians grace in a way that He had not done before. That is why He says in 2 Corinthians that the administration of the Law has “no glory” now in comparison to the glory that God has given the Church. What is this glory that God has given the Church, which is based on so much grace that God calls the very administration in which we live “the Administration of the Grace of God”? There are many aspects of the grace that God has given us, but a huge one is salvation by birth, that is permanent (see commentary on 1

Pet. 1:23, “born again”). Another is the fullness of the gift of holy spirit, and all its nine manifestations (see commentary on 1 Cor. 12:7ff, and 1 Cor. 14:5).

It is easy to see what the text means when it says that Paul was given “the Administration of the Grace of God.” The context makes it clear that Paul was given the revelation about this new administration, which he then passed on to the Church. However, many of the modern versions do not recognize the different administrations of God, and their translations reflect their theology. For example, the ESV of Ephesians 3:2 reads, “...you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you.” What would that mean? That God had somehow given Paul the special right to steward God’s grace for the benefit of the Church? That hardly seems correct, and does not seem to fit with the context. Also, if God did give Paul special grace to steward for the benefit of the Church, and then from the rest of the Epistles we learn that this grace involves the New Birth, and new and greater glory, and “Christ in you,” and being seated in the heavenlies, does that not indicate that God has done something new and once again changed the rules He wants His people to live by? That puts us right back where we started: that God had a new “administration,” a new way of doing things, a new set of rules, for the Church, and it all started on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

When it comes to dispensational theology, there are a lot of “straw men” out there, and so-called arguments that are actually misrepresenting dispensationalism. For those people wanting to know more about dispensationalism, the book *Dispensationalism* by Charles Ryrie is excellent. Also excellent is the article in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter Elwell. That article is short and accurate, and says that “Dispensational theology grows out of a consistent use of the hermeneutical principle of normal, plain, or literal interpretation. ...dispensationalists have taught and do teach that salvation is always through God’s grace. The *basis* of salvation in every dispensation is the death of Christ; the *requirement* for salvation in every age is faith; the *object* of faith is the true God; but the *content* of faith changes in the various dispensations” (emphasis his).

**3:3. “sacred secret.”** We translate the Greek word *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *musterion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm. [For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see Ephesians 3:9.]

**“revelation.”** For what “revelation” is, see commentary on Galatians 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 12:8.

**3:4. “you are able to understand...”** The Greek word *noeō* (#3539 νοέω) has as its first definition in Louw and Nida: “to comprehend something on the basis of careful thought and consideration...” It is the action that occurs in the *nous* (#3563 νοῦς), the mind. It is more than a simple perception, but not necessarily a full comprehension. We felt “understand” was an appropriate translation, as the NASB.

The Greek word *sunesis* (#3539 νοέω), often translated “understand” is often the result of understanding. Louw and Nida say: “that which is understood or comprehended.” Zodhiates says: “the word denotes the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them.” We have gone with the English word “insight” (again, as the NASB) because when a person sees the relationship between the facts and concepts in the world around him we say he has “insight.”

**“sacred secret.”** We translate the Greek word *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *musterion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm. [For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see Ephesians 3:9.]

**3:5. “as it has now been revealed.”** The essence of the word “as” in this verse means, “as clearly as,” or “as fully as.” The “as” makes the point that, although there were things in the Old Testament that have turned out to be similar to things in the Sacred Secret, the actuality of what people have in the Sacred Secret was never revealed. So, for example, the Old Testament said the Gentiles would be blessed in the Messiah (cp. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Ps. 72:17; Isa. 11:10; 49:6; 60:3; Amos 9:11, 12), but it never even hinted that the Gentiles would be joined together with Israel as the people of God, and be joint-heirs, joint members of one Body, and joint partakers of the promise (Eph. 3:6). The “as” does not mean, “in the way that,” or “in the manner that,” because the Word of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament was given to people by revelation.

**3:6. “in Christ Jesus, through the Good News.”** These two prepositional phrases appear at the end of the sentence in the Greek text. However, if we translate the phrases into English the way they appear in Greek, the sentence becomes somewhat confusing. That is due to the fact that in English, when a prepositional phrase is added at the end of a list, our natural tendency is to think that the added phrase only refers to the last item in the list. Thus, when we read a version such as the NASB, for example, “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,” most people do not think of “in Christ Jesus” as going with “fellow heirs” and “fellow members.” Instead, they tend to read the phrase “partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus” as a unit, and wonder what “the promise in Christ Jesus” is. The problem could be remedied by putting “in Christ Jesus” with each blessing, and have: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs in Christ Jesus, and fellow members of the body in Christ Jesus, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, all by way of the gospel,” but while that translation is very clear, it is not best to add that much to the text when there is no need for it.

The phrase, “in Christ Jesus,” refers to our being in union with him, or being associated with him (see commentary on Ephesians 1:3). We do not have the blessings of God on our own, but only by virtue of being “in Christ.” Furthermore, the phrase “in Christ” applies to each of the blessings in the verse. It is only because we are in union with Jesus Christ that we are “fellow-heirs,” “fellow-members of the body,” and “fellow-partakers of the promise.”

While the first prepositional phrase, “in Christ” refers to locale (“in Christ”) the second, “through the Good News,” is shows the means by which we gain the blessings. We get them “in Christ,” and we get to be “in Christ” “through the Good News,” i.e., by believing the Good News that we heard.

**3:9. “administration.”** This verse refers to “the Administration of the Sacred Secret,” which is the administration of God’s grace that is the time period of the Christian Church, which started on the Day of Pentecost when the gift of holy spirit was poured out (Acts 2), and will end with the Rapture of the Church. For a more complete understanding of the Administration of the Sacred Secret, and an explanation of administrations in the Bible, see commentary on Ephesians 3:2, and Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *The Gift of*

*Holy Spirit: The Power to be like Christ*, Appendix A “The Administration of the Sacred Secret.”

There are some Greek texts that read “fellowship” of the Sacred Secret instead of “administration” of the Sacred Secret. However, the evidence shows that reading to be a later change to the Greek text. Metzger (Textual Commentary) writes: “The Textus Receptus, in company with a scattering of late minuscules, replaces οἰκονομία [administration] with the interpretative gloss κοινωνία (hence AV “fellowship”). The true reading is supported by p<sup>46</sup>, all known uncials, almost all minuscules, all known versions and patristic quotations.” It can be easily understood that as the understanding of the administrations in scripture declined, that “administration” was replaced in some texts with the more easily understood, “fellowship.”

**“Sacred Secret.”** In this verse, the administration of the Sacred Secret refers to the Administration of Grace, which began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and will end with the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:15-17). [For more information on the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Ephesians 3:2].

God rightly calls the Administration of Grace the Administration of the Sacred Secret, because the fullness of what Christians have today in Christ was indeed a secret, hidden in God and unknown in the Old Testament. Besides calling it what it is, a “sacred secret,” God says over and over that it was hidden and people did not know about it until God revealed it after Pentecost (Rom. 16:25, 26; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; Eph. 3:4, 5, Col. 1:26).

We translate the Greek word *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *musterion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm. *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible* also translates *musterion* as “sacred secret.”

Although many English versions translate *musterion* as “mystery,” we do not think that is a good translation. Actually, “mystery” is not a translation of *musterion*, but a transliteration of it—simply bringing the Greek letters into English and not translating the word at all. In fact, we believe that the English word “mystery” is a mistranslation of *musterion* because a “mystery” is something that is incomprehensible, beyond understanding, unknowable. Things such as the Trinity or transubstantiation are called “mysteries” because they cannot be understood. In contrast, a “secret” is something that is known by someone but unknown by others. The password on a computer is a “secret,” not a “mystery,” because the owner of the computer knows it. Similarly, God has revealed his “sacred secrets” to the Church via the Bible, and Christians are expected to know them. They are not “mysteries.”

Translating *musterion* as “mystery” in English Bibles has caused many problems in the Church. The biggest problem is that many false and illogical doctrines have been foisted upon Christians, who are told not to try to understand them because they are “mysteries.” Another problem is that people who are convinced that the things of God are mysterious quit trying understand them and so remain ignorant of many truths that God wants every Christian to know.

That *musterion* refers to a “secret” that is known by some people but not others, and that it does not mean “mystery,” is well documented by Greek scholars, as the following selection of sources show.

- James Strong writes: “*Musterion*: In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made

known in a manner and at a time appointed by God” (*The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, Thomas Nelson Publisher, Nashville, TN, 2001, p. 1247).

- The *New Bible Dictionary* says: “But whereas “mystery” may mean, and in contemporary usage often does mean, a secret for which no answer can be found, this is not the connotation of the term *mysterion* in classical and biblical Gk. In the NT, *mysterion* signifies a secret which is being, or even has been, revealed, which is also divine in scope, and needs to be made known by God to men through his Spirit” (Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, Intersociety Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1997, p. 795. Marshall uses a “Y” to translate the Greek letter *upsilon*, usually translated by a “u”).
- William Smith writes: “But while the *musterion* thus implies something hidden, and inaccessible to the unaided reason, and usually also of weighty import, it by no means necessarily denotes anything strictly mysterious and incomprehensible. The fact or truth, though requiring to be *revealed*, may, when revealed, be of a very elementary character” (*Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1981, vol. 3, p. 2047).
- *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* says, “Mystery in the NT does not deal with the unknowable, but with what is imparted by revelation” (Merrill Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, vol. 4, p. 330).
- The *Holman Bible Dictionary* says, “The mystery of the New Testament has been described as an ‘open secret’; matters previously kept secret in God’s eternal purposes have now been or are being revealed (Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 2:7-8)” (Trent Butler, editor, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1991, p. 998).
- Robert Thayer writes: “In the New Testament, God’s plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*).

Numerous other sources could be cited, but the point is that the Greek word *musterion* does not mean “mystery” and should not be translated that way. Although God kept His sacred secrets as secrets for years, He has now made many of them known, as the following verses show.

- Matthew 13:11 (KJV): “it is given unto you to know the mysteries [*musterion*] of the kingdom of heaven.”
- 1 Corinthians 2:7, 8, 10 (KJV): But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [*musterion*], *even* the hidden *wisdom*,... Which none of the princes of this world knew... But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit.”
- Romans 16: 25, 26 (NIV84): “the mystery [*musterion*] hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known.”
- Ephesians 1:9 (NIV84): And he made known to us the mystery [*musterion*]
- Colossians 1:26 (NIV84): the mystery [*musterion*] that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

Now that we have seen that *musterion* does not mean “mystery,” and that a *musterion* can be understood once God reveals it, it is important to better understand why we translate *musterion* as “sacred secret.” The Greek language uses *musterion* for secrets in the

“sacred” or religious sphere, but has another word, *kruptos*, for secrets that are in the secular realm. The word *kruptos* appears in many places in the New Testament, including when Jesus said to give alms in secret (Matt. 6:4-KJV); Jesus teaching that every secret thing will be brought to light (Mark 4:22-KJV); Jesus’ going to Jerusalem in secret (John 7:10-KJV); Scripture saying that God will judge men’s secrets (Rom. 2:16); and that prophecy reveals the secrets of the heart (1 Cor. 14:24 and 25). The feminine form of the word *kruptos* is found in Luke 11:33, where some translations have “cellar.” It refers to a “hidden place” or crypt. The adjective is *krupton*, and the verb is *kruptō*, “to hide.”

Not only does the noun *kruptos* appear in the New Testament, the verb *kruptō* appears many times as well, often translated as “hid” or “hidden.” Examples include: a city on a hill cannot be hidden (Matt. 5:14); the wicked servant hid his talent in the ground (Matt. 25:25); a Christian’s new life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3); and, Moses’ parents hid him after he was born (Heb. 11:23).

From the above information we see that *kruptos* is a “secret,” and so also translating *musterion* as “secret,” which some versions do in some places, clouds what the Greek text is saying. Anyone reading the Greek New Testament immediately understands whether God is speaking of a secular secret (*kruptos*) or a sacred secret (*musterion*), and a good English translation will bring out that difference also. Thus, versions such as the REV and Rotherham use “secret” for *kruptos*, and “sacred secret” for *musterion*.

A study of *musterion* shows that it is used to refer to the “Administration of the Sacred Secret,” as it is here in Ephesians 3:9, but God has other “sacred secrets” as well, and in fact, the Devil has secrets in the religious sphere as well (2 Thess. 2:7).

**3:10. “many sided.”** The Greek reads, *polupoikilos* (#4182 πολυποίκιλος). “Pertaining to that which is different in a number of ways—‘many and diverse, manifold, many-sided’” (Louw-Nida). “This is the only occurrence in the NT and it has the idea of ‘most varied,’ or ‘(very) many sided.’ It alludes to the variegated facets of God’s wisdom...” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 461). “God’s wisdom is one, yet it can be termed ‘multifarious’ because it weaves a thousand apparently tangled threads into one glorious pattern. So out of the most diverse elements, where the strongest opposites clashed, where men saw only impossibilities, God, coming with means which looked hopelessly inadequate to men, worked out results which no man would have dreamed, and no angel could have foreseen” (Lanski, p. 483).

## Chapter 4

**4:3. “unity of the spirit.”** This is the genitive of production, meaning *the unity produced by the spirit* (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 105). This is picked up in Kistemaker’s translation: “unity imparted by the Spirit,” although Kistemaker is thinking in terms of “Spirit” being the third Person in the Trinity rather than God and Christ working to produce unity in the Body of Christ via the gift of holy spirit that is born and sealed in each Christian (Eph. 1:13, 14). The genitive of production is very similar to the genitive of origin, except the word in the genitive (in this case “spirit”) is more active in a genitive of production; rather than simply being the source of the unity, the spirit is both the source and producer of that unity. It is of note that we are called only to “maintain”

this unity, not to produce it. The unity we are supposed to maintain is the natural result of holy spirit being inside each believer. It makes us all brothers and fellow-members of the same Body, and works in us to conform us to the image of Christ (Gal. 5:17), and it is the primary vehicle through which God and Christ can give us revelation and move us towards both wanting to do, and doing, God's will (Phil. 2:13).

**4:4. "God sent his Son."** The teaching that God sent Jesus Christ occurs over forty times in the New Testament, and can have different meanings in different contexts. For in-depth commentary on Jesus Christ having been sent by the Father, and its different meanings and nuances in context, see John 6:57.

**4:8.** Quoted from Psalm 68:18.

**4:11. "apostles, prophets, evangelists."** Ephesians 4:11 mentions five specific ministries in the Church that are especially given by the Lord Jesus to prepare and equip Christians for service to God. Scripture does not refer to these ministries collectively by a particular name, so different Christian groups have referred to them in different ways. Some call these five ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) "gift ministries," but that is misleading because every Christian has a "gift ministry," that is, a ministry he or she is specifically enabled to carry out in the Body of Christ. The word "ministry" simply means "service," and every Christian has been specifically enabled and empowered to serve. These five ministries have also been called "ascension gift ministries," but again, after his ascension Jesus gave each Christian a ministry (Eph. 4:8), so in fact every Christian has an "ascension gift ministry."

The Word of God says that the purpose for these five ministries is "for the equipping" of the believers (Eph. 4:12; NASB), and many other versions besides the REV recognize that "equip" or "equipping" is an excellent translation in this verse. It is good practice for Christians to use the vocabulary of the Bible whenever possible to describe spiritual realities, and thus a good way to refer to the five ministries in Ephesians 4:11 is to call them, "equipping ministries."

**"pastors and teachers."** The term "pastor" is the Greek noun *poimēn* (#4166 ποιμήν) and means "shepherd," and it is translated as "shepherd" almost every other time it appears in the Bible. It is unfortunate that in the development of the English language, people who preside over congregations are referred to as "pastors" when the Greek word means "shepherd," because when we correctly refer to Jesus as the "good shepherd" and the "Chief Shepherd," but call the ones he appoints over others as "pastors" instead of "shepherds," we lose the wonderful connection between the two offices.

Anyone who works with sheep knows that it is impossible to look after a large flock without help. A large flock always had a "chief shepherd" and other "shepherds" who helped with the work. Understanding that fact helps us understand the parable of the lost sheep (Matt. 18:12ff; Luke 15:4ff). The chief shepherd did not leave the 99 sheep vulnerable to save one, he left the 99 with his help—and the people of that time would have clearly understood that. The Body of Christ has millions of individual "sheep," and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and he works closely with his "help," the shepherds (the "pastors") he has placed in his Body. That Jesus is called the "Chief Shepherd" should be a great encouragement to anyone who is called to leadership in the Body of Christ, because it is clear that any shepherd can and should look to the Chief Shepherd for help, guidance, support, information, and whatever else is needed to shepherd the flock. [For

more on the relationship between the Chief Shepherd and his flock, see commentary on 1 Peter 5:4].

The term “teachers” is the only ministry mentioned after the first term in the list without the separator particle *de* in front of it; instead there is a *kai* (“and”). This has made the verse very difficult to interpret exactly. Many commentators have concluded that there are only four ministries in the verse, the fourth being that of the pastor/teacher. However, people intimately acquainted with the workings of the Church become keenly aware of the unique callings of the pastor and the teacher, and the differences between them. There are other reasons for the grammatical construction of Ephesians 4:11 besides saying that the pastor and teacher are one combined ministry. Meyer correctly points out that generally, the apostle, prophet, and evangelist, are more ministries to the entire Body of Christ, while the pastor and teacher are more generally tied to one congregation (*Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament*). Besides that, there is a closer association between the pastor and teacher than often exists between the other ministries, and a closer connection between the function of their ministries. To be truly effective, the pastor must always bring people back to God’s perspective and to the Word of God. Pastoral care is not just sympathy, it is helping people find God, so the pastor is always teaching. Similarly, the teacher cannot be divorced from the pastoral needs of the congregation. Every teacher knows what it is like to “hit the mark” in a teaching, when the subject matter was biblical and informative, and the teaching also reached into the hearts of the people who heard it. No teacher teaches simply to impart information. The information must bring the people closer to God, so there is an element of pastoral care in all good teachings. In spite of the pastor’s need to teach, and the teachers need to pastor the people, there is a huge difference between the pastor and teacher, but the “and” rather than the *de* brings attention to their special connection.

**4:12. “for the equipping.”** The Greek phrase is *pros ton katartismon* (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν), which is literally, “for the equipping.” The Greek word *katartismos* (#2677 καταρτισμός) means “a process of adjustment that results in a complete preparedness” (Friberg Lexicon), and can be translated as “equipping, preparing, training, perfecting.” There are some versions that read, “to equip” instead of “for the equipping,” however, in this case, “for the equipping” is better, because it is more literal to the Greek text and because it more clearly implies that the process of equipping is an ongoing one. The work that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers do in the Body of Christ is an ongoing one, both in the individual lives of the believers, and in the entire Body as new believers are saved while others fall asleep in the Lord.

**“for the work of ministry.”** This is not, “for the work of **the** ministry,” as if the believers were being equipped to do formal church work. Rather it is for the work of “ministry,” i.e., the act of ministering to each other in such a way that the Body of Christ is built up. Every believer is involved in “ministry,” serving and ministering to people both spiritually and physically in such a way that the Body of Christ is built up and strengthened. One of the sad facts of Christian history is that the true meaning of this verse has been mostly lost in the Church, especially in previous centuries, but even now in many denominations. This verse makes it plain that every believer is to “minister” to others, and through that ministry build up the Body of Christ. Every Christian is a witness for Christ, an ambassador of Christ, a “holy one,” a fellow-builder with God, a soldier of the Lord, etc. We are all to spur each other on to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).

Sadly, the way this verse has been translated in some versions, and acted out in the Church, is that the clergy does all the work while the average Christian sits in a pew and gives money to support the clergy and church work.

**4:14. “doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it was a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt “doctrine” was better than “teaching.” [For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13].

**“trickery.”** The Greek is *kubeia* (#2940 κυβεία). Literally it means “dice playing,” but because the people who played dice often cheated, just as they do today, the word became used for the deceptions brought about by men, or trickery.

**4:17. “implore.”** This verb, *martureō* (#3140 μαρτυρέω), almost always means “to testify, bear witness,” however, here it has the meaning of “urging or insisting upon something” (BDAG).

**4:21. “and were taught about him, (seeing that truth is about Jesus).”** The Greek reads more literally, “and were taught in him, seeing that the truth is in Jesus.” Both uses of “in” are the Greek *en* (#1722 ἐν), the “static en,” which describes a relationship and is better understood as “in connection with,” or “in union with” (see commentary on Romans 6:3). Thus a very literal, but not easily understood, way to translate the phrase would be: “and were taught in connection with him, (seeing the truth is in connection with him).” However, in these situations, we more easily understand if we are taught “about” Jesus, and realize the truth is “about” him.

**4:24. “true righteousness and holiness.”** This is the figure of speech, *antimereia* (see Bullinger, *Figures*). The Greek uses the phrase “holiness of truth,” using true as a noun instead of an adjective to put the emphasis on “true.” We have been born again and taken on the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4). We literally are “new” and now have to put that new man on, which we do by living by the spirit. Because we have been created in TRUE righteousness and holiness, we now must speak truth (v. 25), and live righteous and holy lives, and the next verses direct us in holy living.

**4:25.** Quoted from Zechariah 8:16.

**4:26. “Be angry....”** This quotation is from the Septuagint of Psalm 4:4. The Hebrew reads, “Tremble, and do not sin.”

**“angry.”** The Greek verb translated angry is *orgizō* (#3710 ὀργίζω). *Orgizō* is more of a long term, burning anger often associated with revenge, while *thumos* (another Greek word often translated “anger”) is the “boiling agitation of the feelings.” *Thumos* is more passionate but temporary compared with *orgē* (cp. Trench, *Synonyms*).

**4:27. “a place or an opportunity.”** The Greek word is *topos* (#5117 τόπος), and it has two important meanings that affect our understanding of this verse. The most basic meaning of *topos* is a place, a space, room, any portion or space marked off or differentiated in some way from surrounding space. It has many nuances, and occurs over ninety times in the New Testament. It was used for the “room” or “space” in the guestroom of the house where Mary gave birth to Jesus (cp. commentary on Luke 2:7). The Jews used it idiomatically of the “space” occupied by their Temple (see commentary on Matthew 24:15 and John 11:48).

The other distinct meaning of *topos* that is important in this verse derives from the first meaning, and is an “opportunity” or “occasion for acting.” We can easily see how

these two meanings are important in this verse. The Devil wants to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), but sometimes he cannot just move in and do that. He is patient, and will be content for a while if we will just give him a “space” in our lives, a place where he can sit and wait for us to make a mistake. Many people allow themselves to be in “dangerous positions,” where they are not in sin, but could fall into sinful behavior very easily. That is giving the Devil a place, a base of operations. Then in the moment of weakness or inattention, they give the Devil the opportunity to act, and he will. This word *topos* warns us not to give the Devil a place or an opportunity.

**“the Slanderer.”** This is “the Devil.” The Greek is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος). The Greek word *diabolos* means “slanderer,” the one who slanders others, and that is a primary characteristic of the Devil. He has no regard for a person’s reputation or the illicit means he uses to discredit and destroy people. Slander is a primary tactic of the Devil. [For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 14: “Names of the Slanderer”].

**4:29. “Let no corrupting talk proceed out of your mouth.”** The verb, “let proceed,” is imperative present, and ties this phrase into the one that begins verse 30, “grieve” which is also imperative present. Verses 29-32 are closely tied together, having a lot to do with communication. We are not to let proceed any corrupting communication come from our mouths, as this would grieve God, the Holy Spirit. Instead, we are to put away those things that are the source (root) of corrupt communication, bitterness, anger, wrath, etc.

**“corrupting.”** The Greek is *sapros* (#4550 σαπρός), and it means to be rotten or putrefied, like rotten fruit. In this context it means “unwholesome to the extent of being harmful, bad, evil, unwholesome,” (BDAG).

**4:30. “grieve.”** How do we grieve God? The context tells us. We allow bitterness, anger, wrath, to live in us (verse 32), and these produce the fruit of communication that corrupts (verse 29).

**“the Holy Spirit of God.”** This refers to God. The Greek reads, “the Spirit the Holy of God.” This is the genitive of apposition, and could be translated “the Holy Spirit, namely, God.” It was “the Spirit of God” that hovered over the waters in Genesis 1:2 for example. But why refer to God as “the Holy Spirit” in this verse? The context is the key. We have been created in true holiness (v. 24), and God wants us to reflect His holy nature. When we do not take advantage of the holy nature which has been created in us and live in an unholy manner, we grieve the “Holy” Spirit, namely God. [For more information on the uses of “holy spirit”, see Appendix 6: “Usages of ‘Spirit’”.]

**4:31. “defaming speech.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. [For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3].

**4:32. “you, the ones in Christ.”** The phrase “in Christ” means “in union with Christ” (see commentary on Ephesians 1:3), and it modifies “you,” not “God.” Lenski correctly states: “The phrase does not modify ‘God.’” God is not “in Christ,” we are. It is by virtue of being in union with Christ that we are forgiven. The wages of sin is death, and we died “in Christ” (Rom. 6:8). If we were going to expand the verse, we could say: “and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also forgave you, because you are in union with Christ.”

## Chapter 5

**5:2. “gave himself up for us.”** Much more strongly supported than “gave himself up for you.” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*). “Love is best gauged by sacrifice” (*The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*; E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, p. 74).

**“sweet-smelling fragrance.”** This phrase is literally a genitive, “fragrance of a sweet smell,” but this may be an instance of an adjectival genitive, see Lenski.

**5:5. “has any inheritance.”** The Greek word translated “inheritance” is *klēronomia* (#2817 κληρονομία), and it is a noun that refers to an inheritance; property that will be received by inheritance; or it can refer to property that is given by one person to another. To understand Ephesians 5:5, we must understand the difference between our “salvation,” which means we will be a part of the everlasting future Kingdom, and “rewards,” which are the rewards we receive (or do not receive) in the future Kingdom of Christ.

As it is used in the NT, the word *klēronomia* (inheritance) can refer to the Christian’s everlasting life (Eph. 1:14), or it can refer to the rewards the Christian will receive in the Kingdom for any work he has done (Col. 3:24). In this verse, the word *klēronomia* has to be referring to the rewards a Christian will receive, and not to everlasting life. Christians are saved by faith in Christ, and can be saved even if they have sin in their lives. Once a person is saved, he will be in the Kingdom of Christ. However, not everyone in the Kingdom will have the same inheritance. There will be different jobs to do and different levels of authority and responsibility.

Ephesians 2:8 makes it very clear that Christian salvation is not by works, but by faith, something that is very clear in the rest of the Church Epistles as well. Romans 10:9 says if a person confesses Christ as Lord and believes in his heart that Jesus has been raised from the dead, that person will be saved. There are many verses like Romans 10:9 that tell us salvation is by faith, such as Romans 3:22, 26, 28, 30; 4:13; 24; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:8, 24, etc. There is nothing in those verses that says salvation is by faith as long as we do not sin. The Good News of salvation is that we are saved by faith in Christ, not that we are saved by faith if we do not participate in sexual sin of any kind, or are “unclean” (immoral; particularly sexually immoral) or are greedy and are thus idolaters.

Ephesians 5:5 is teaching us the same lesson as 1 Corinthians 3:10-17. In those verses, a man who builds a bad work on the foundation of Christ will suffer loss, “but he himself will be saved” (1 Cor. 3:15). The person who builds his life badly will suffer loss, and enter the Kingdom like a person who had gone through a fire—with nothing. He will be saved and be in the Kingdom, but will have nothing there—no rewards; no inheritance. Similarly, in Ephesians 2:8 we were told we were saved by faith, “not by works.” Also, in Ephesians 1:14 we were told that salvation was guaranteed. What kind of guarantee of salvation would it be if it was not really guaranteed? That would make no sense. Our salvation is guaranteed, but our inheritance, our rewards in the Kingdom, are not guaranteed, they are earned. Christians dare never be smug about the fact that our salvation was paid for by Christ and guaranteed after we accepted him as Lord. It would be terrible to be a part of the future Kingdom of Christ and not have any rewards there. We must obey God and watch our lifestyle closely to get rewarded in the Kingdom. [For

more on the permanence of Christian salvation, see Appendix 1: “The Permanence of Christian Salvation”. For more on salvation vs. rewards, and rewards in the Kingdom, see 2 Cor. 5:10, “good and worthless].

**5:16. “making the best use of.”** The Greek is *exagorazō* (#1805 ἐξαγοράζω), and it means, 1) to redeem by payment of a price, to recover from the power of another, to ransom, buy off; 2) metaphorically, of Christ freeing the elect from the dominion of the Mosaic Law at the price of his vicarious death 3) to buy up, to buy up for one’s self, for one’s use 4) to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good. Definition 4 fits here, and the concept is that God asks us to “buy back” the time we have from day to day and use it for His purposes.

**5:18. “drunk.”** The Greek word is *methuskō* (#3182 μεθύσκω), and it refers to being drunk, intoxicated, impaired. This verse specifically refers to being drunk on wine, but that actually shows us that the principle is a general one. One way we know this is that God says, “drunk on wine” when from reading the scope of Scripture it is clear that He also forbids being drunk at all, be it on whiskey, wine, rum, gin, beer, or whatever. It is the effect in the mind that alters people’s thinking that God forbids. When God says not to get drunk, He is not just forbidding what we refer to as being “drunk” on alcohol, but being “mentally affected,” mentally altered.

The word “drunk” refers to the mental state or being drunk, intoxicated, or mentally impaired. For example, both the Greek word *methuskō* and our English word “drunk” refer to being mentally impaired by things other than alcohol, for example both we and the Greeks had spoken of people being “drunk with power.”

There are many times that, for medicinal purposes, people take drugs that alter their mind. The reason that is acceptable with God is that the drug, while altering the mind, allows the person to function and serve God better in other ways. For example, if great pain is keeping a person from serving God, God would rather have the person be able to serve Him even if the person is a little unclear in his thinking.

However, to get drunk or “high” for pleasure is wrong, and it is wrong for a number of reasons. One is that it makes the person less mentally sharp for God. God expects us to be ministers for Him, and we are not generally mentally sharp or in prayer when we are drunk or high. Another reason getting drunk or high is wrong is that it can open up the mind to demons. Apparitions are quite common to people who get “high,” and in fact a study of anthropology shows that in many cultures, the reason people got high was to have a spiritual experience. Many times if you open yourself up to a demon by your use of alcohol or drugs, it does not go away when you become sober. Another reason not to get high is that, at least right now, it promotes an industry that is very harmful to society. Much innocent blood has been shed over control and concealment of drugs that people consume illegally for pleasure. Buying the product is a contribution to the sins of the industry.

**“reckless actions.”** See commentary on “recklessness” in Titus 1:6.

**5:19. “singing and making music in your heart to the Lord.”** Believers are to honor both God and Christ in many ways, and singing to them out of the joy and thanksgiving of our hearts is one of those ways. Jesus told us that we were to honor him just as we honor the Father (John 5:23), and one way to honor Christ is to sing to him, and we should sing many different genres of music, including “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

We can tell that the word “Lord” in this verse refers to Jesus by reading the end of the sentence, which is in the next verse, because it makes a distinction between God, “the Father” and “our Lord Jesus Christ,” clearly referring to the Father as “God” and Jesus as “Lord.” We again see believers singing to Jesus in Revelation 5:9. It is also possible that the “speaking” praises in Revelation 5:12 and 13 is actually singing, as per the NIV, NET, and NRSV, because much early music was more “spoken” than “sang,” but there is no way to confirm that.

There is also evidence from the early Church that Christians honored Jesus with songs and praise. About 112 AD, the Roman Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan regarding Christians, and said, “...it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before the daylight and sing antiphonally a hymn to Christ as [to] a god” (Quoted in D. G. Dunn; *Did the First Christians Worship Christ?* ebook, chapter 2.2 “Hymns.”) Similarly, Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch, (born between 35-50 AD, and died between 98-117 AD) speaks of Christians singing in praise of Jesus Christ (also in in Dunn). Singing to Christ also fits the tenor of Hebrews 1:6, which says that when the Son came into the world, God said, “And let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb. 1:6 NASB). Hebrews 1:4-7 is about angels, but it does not seem logical that God would tell the angels to worship the Son but forbid humans from doing so, in fact, it seems that if God wanted angels to worship the Son then He would want humans to worship him too, and singing to him would certainly be part of that. [For more on our relationship with Jesus and praying to him, see Appendix 15, “Can We Pray To Jesus?”].

**5:20. “in the name of Jesus Christ.”** This phrase means, in essence, “by the authority of Jesus Christ.” It is a cultural phrase that refers to the authority a person has due to his relationship with the one being named, who in this case is Jesus Christ. In Christian culture, “the name of Jesus Christ” gave the user authority, just as using the name of any other ruler or great person would give the one who used it authority. [For more on the name of Jesus Christ, see commentary on Acts 3:6].

**5:21. “Submit yourselves one to another.”** As to the word “submit,” *hupotassō* (#5293 ὑποτάσσω), Robertson says, “The construction here is rather loose, coordinate with the preceding participles of praise and prayer. It is possible to start a new paragraph here and regard *hupotassomenoi* as an independent participle like an imperative.” We agree with Robertson and see “submit” as starting a new subject and being a command of God. Although much has been made of verse 22, that wives should submit to their husbands, simply reading the text shows that we Christians are to submit to one another (in fact, the word “submit” does not even appear in verse 22, even though most English versions include it in the verse).

If we are to submit to one another, then we have to ask, how is that to be done correctly? The answer to that question is to determine the spheres of authority that we each have and submit according to that authority structure. A common mistake it to see submission in a completely vertical paradigm, where one person, the “leader,” has everyone submit to him in everything, and that structure is followed from the top down, until the lowest person in rank, so to speak, the “low man on the totem pole,” has no one submit to him in anything. The proper way to see submission is like a circles of authority in which leadership is “by area” or “by category,” and a person who submits in one area will have authority in another.

A pastor in a church will have authority under his roof in certain areas, but if he visits another church he will be under the authority of that pastor. If he visits the home of members of the church, they will have authority in their own home. Also, if the church has a finance committee, he will be under the authority of that committee when it comes to spending money.

**5:22. “the wives to their own husbands, as to the Lord.”** To properly understand this verse, we must pay attention to the fact that it is the last half of the sentence that started in verse 21. Although most versions translate it as a new sentence, even the modern Greek text is punctuated such that it is the last part of verse 21. That is why the word “submit” is missing from the Greek text in verse 22—because it is in the first part of the sentence, which is in verse 21. Most English versions have to add “submit” in verse 22 because they have made verse 22 into a new sentence. If we read a proper translation, however, we see that the sentence reads, “Submit yourselves one to another in *the* fear of Christ, the wives to their own husbands, as to the Lord...” When we read the verse that way, we can see that wives submitting to their husbands as they would to the Lord is just one example of the mutual submission being referred to in verse 21.

Two points need to be made about the submission of the wife. One is that since the wife submits as she would to the Lord, we can see the subject of the verse is submission to godly and loving requests. The wife submits to the husband as she would submit to the Lord Jesus, not as if she were being told to submit to the Devil and ungodly requests. The submission of the wife is not “absolute submission,” but “proper submission.” The second point that needs to be made is that just because this verse points out that wives are to submit to their husbands does not mean that there are no areas where the husband submits to the wife. Again, we must keep in mind that the sentence started with us submitting one to another. 1 Timothy 5:14 says the women are to “rule the household,” and the single Greek word that is translated into that phrase is *oikodespoteō* (#3616 οικόδεσποτέω), a compound word built from *oikos*, house, and *despotēs*, a ruler or master (in Scripture, home owners, slave owners, and Jesus Christ are referred to as *despotēs*). Thus, in many household affairs, the Lord has given the woman primary responsibility, and the husband should submit to her in those areas. For more on submission, see the commentary note on Colossians 3:18.

**5:27. “without blemish.”** See commentary on Ephesians 1:4.

**5:31.** Quoted from Genesis 2:24, occurs again in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7.

**“be glued to.”** The Greek word is *proskollaō* (#4347 προσκολλάω), and Thayer’s Lexicon says, “properly, *to glue, glue to, glue together, cement, fasten together*; hence universally, *to join or fasten firmly together*; in the N. T. only the passive is found....”

**5:32.** We translate the Greek word *mysterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *mysterion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm. [For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see Ephesians 3:9.]

## Chapter 6

**6:2, 3.** Quoted from Deuteronomy 5:16.

**6:5. “sincerity.”** The Greek is *haplotēs* (#572 ἀπλότης), and BDAG says, “In our lit. esp. of personal integrity expressed in word or action...simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness... Of simple goodness, which gives itself without reserve, ‘without strings attached’, ‘without hidden agendas.’”

**6:6. “to win their approval when their eye is on you.”** The Greek is *ophthalmodouleia* (#3787 ὀφθαλμοδουλ(ε)ία), which is “service that is performed only to make an impression in the owner’s presence” (BDAG). Occasionally it happens that the only way to make a Greek word clear is by translating it as a phrase, and that is the case here. The word “eye-service” does not communicate the meaning of the Greek.

**“soul.”** The Greek word often translated “soul” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή; pronounced psou-kay’), and it has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here “soul” is inclusive of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the person himself, so many versions have “heart” instead of “soul.” We are not to only work hard when people are watching, but are to work from our very soul, all that we are mentally and emotionally. [For a more complete explanation of “soul,” see Appendix 7: “Usages of ‘Soul’”].

**6:10. “be empowered.”** The Greek verb is *endunamoō* (#1743 ἐνδυναμόω), and it is an imperative present 2nd person plural. The voice of the verb can be either passive or middle, but the passive voice fits better here. Donald Hagner correctly notes, “The power does not come from the believer, but from an external source,” which would be God or the Lord Jesus (Hagner, *Ephesians*, p. 820). The believer is commanded to do what it takes to be filled with the power of God.

**“that is.”** The Greek word *kai* can be conjunctive, as “and,” or it can be “and in addition,” as “also,” or it can be explanatory as “even.” In this case, a more literal, but less easily understood way to translate the phrase would be, “be strong in the Lord, even in his mighty strength.” The *kai* here is not conjunctive or “in addition” as if being strong in the Lord and in his strength were two separate things. We are to be strong in the Lord, by being strong in his mighty strength.

**“in the might of his strength.”** This is an attributed genitive: “mighty strength.” It could also be genitive of origin: “might that originates from his strength”; or genitive of production: “might produced by his strength.” To allow for multiple understandings we left the “of” formulation intact in the translation, rather than translate the genitive to its primary meaning. The Greek reads, “in the might [*kratos*] of his strength [*ischus*].” This one verse places an amazing amount of emphasis on the power that we have in Christ, and the power that we need if we are going to stand for God throughout our lives. This verse contains the word “power” (*dunamis*), which refers to inherent power or ability. It also has “might” (*kratos*), the ability to express or exhibit resident strength, (usually spoken of as the resident strength of a nation, for example); and also the exercising of that strength. Thus we speak of “mighty nations” as those that have a lot of strength they can bring to bear on a situation militarily, economically, or politically. It also has “strength” (*ischus*), which is translated well as “strength.” It is the capability or capacity to exert force or power.

**6:11. “the Slanderer.”** This is “the Devil.” The Greek is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος). The Greek word *diabolos* means “slanderer,” the one who slanders others, and that is a primary characteristic of the Devil. He has no regard for a person’s reputation or the illicit means he uses to discredit and destroy people. Slander is a primary tactic of the

Devil. [For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 14: “Names of the Slanderer”].

**6:12. “wrestle.”** The Greek is *palē* (#3823 πάλη), The primary meaning of the Greek word is “to wrestle.” The word “wrestle” is a very good translation, even in this context of a soldier’s armor. While it is true that over time the usage of *palē* broadened to include various struggles, which is why quite a few versions say “struggle” instead of “wrestle,” *pale* always retained its undertone of the wrestling contest. Furthermore, hand-to-hand combat was common enough among professional soldiers that being a good wrestler helped a lot on the battlefield (cp. Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 825).

Another reason that “wrestle” is such a good translation is that it subtly communicates that we are in a serious struggle, but there is nothing we can do in this life to “end the fight.” Athletes do not kill each other, they continue to fight over and over. A champion wrestler will have fellow athletes that he competes against match after match, year after year. That is why anyone who is going to be victorious over and over has to be mentally prepared and physically conditioned for the “long haul.” Anyone who lives godly in Christ will find himself wrestling against spiritual wickedness his whole life.

**6:14. “having belted around your waist with truth”** is the way the text reads literally. This can be an awkward sentence, so a couple versions have, “having fastened the belt of truth around your waist.” The force of the aorist participle, “having fastened,” is important. It could be less literally translated, stand...after you have belted around your waist with truth. Also, “having belted” is in the middle voice, as is “having put on” of the breastplate and the shoes, emphasizing the fact that we have to put these things on. They are not “automatic armor” that comes with the New Birth.

**“breastplate of righteousness.”** The Roman soldier wore a breastplate that covered his vital organs. The Christian is to put on the breastplate of righteousness. To fully understand the breastplate of righteousness, we must remember that “righteousness” has two meanings in the Administration of Grace in which we live (John Schoenheit, *Righteousness—Every Christian’s Gift From God*, Christian Educational Services, 2002). Righteousness is the God-given righteousness, or right standing, that we have before God because Jesus died for our sins, and it is also the right standing we have before God because of right living before God. When Romans 5:17 mentions the free gift of righteousness that Christians have, that is our righteousness due to the work of Christ. When 1 Timothy 6:11 instructs us to follow after righteousness, or 2 Timothy 3:16 says that the Bible provides instruction in righteousness, that is “right living” before God.

The “breastplate of righteousness” in Ephesians 6:14 includes both meanings. First, no matter how hard we try to live obediently before God, we will sin. If we do not understand that our sins are forgiven, and that due to the work of Christ we stand righteous before God, the weight of that sin on our conscience can be unbearable. Many people have been made ineffective in their lives and ministries, and some have abandoned the Christian faith altogether, due to the guilt that they feel from not being able to obey God. They have not put on the breastplate of righteousness, and guilt and shame have penetrated their vital organs. The knowledgeable Christian is aware that his sins are forgiven in Christ, and does not hold on to the guilt produced by his mistakes. Freed from that weight, he can stand effectively for the Lord.

The breastplate of righteousness is also the breastplate of our righteous life. Living righteously before God protects the Christian in many ways. There is physical

protection, such as from the ravages of alcohol, drugs, sexually transmitted disease, and so forth. Also, the mind is protected from the consequences of willful sin, such as shame and guilt. The Bible says that those who practice sin become slaves to sin, and that is true. The savvy Christian puts on the breastplate of righteousness by living righteously from day to day so he can readily stand against the wiles of the Devil.

**6:15. “shod your feet with the preparation of the Good News of peace.”** In this case, the footwear of God is the readiness, or preparation, one has for the evil day that is given by the Good News of peace. The reference to the gospel of peace in this context is not referring to evangelism, that is not the context here. Rather it is referring to the peace that Christians must have in their mind and heart to stand firm day after day under the onslaughts of the Adversary. The Christian who has not prepared himself to be peaceful will have a difficult life, for every day brings new challenges to worry about. In contrast, people who love the Law of God and follow it have great peace, and can stand in the battle of life.

One of the great pieces of irony in the Word of God is that the Christian prepares for spiritual war by putting on his feet the preparation of the Good News of peace. If we are not at peace within ourselves and feel at peace with God, we are not prepared for the spiritual battle.

**6:16. “the shield of faith.”** The “shield of faith” is a genitive of apposition, and means, “the shield, that is to say, our faith.” In other words, the shield is our faith. “Faith,” which is “trust” in God, does not keep the blows of the Adversary from coming, and having a shield does not mean we will not feel the blows. But our trust in God keeps us from being “killed” by the Adversary; we withstand attack after attack with our love for God and commitment to Him intact.

Shields have long been used in individual combat to protect a fighter from the attack of his adversary, and usually we think of a shield only protecting the one who holds it. While that individual protection is certainly a large part of the “shield of faith,” the shield also protected other people as well. It would not be lost on the people of Ephesus, and indeed, on Romans in general, that the shield not only protected the one who held it, but comrades as well.

Long before Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), Greek infantrymen were armed with body armor, a round shield, and a thrusting spear, and attacked an enemy by closing in and jabbing the opponent head-on, rather than throwing a javelin from a distance as was done by many of their opponents. On the left arm of these Greek warriors was a round wooden shield about three feet in diameter, the hoplon, and it was from this vital piece of equipment that the infantryman got his name, “hoplite.” When the Greek hoplites were in the phalanx (the line of interlinked soldiers), the hoplon protected the soldier’s left side, but also provided protection for the otherwise unprotected right side of the man to his left in the phalanx. The round shape, however, had disadvantages, and left open upper and lower parts of the body. By Roman times, the round hoplon shield was replaced by a rectangular shield. In Roman battle tactics, the legionnaires in the front line linked shields, the soldiers on the sides linked shields to protect from flanking attacks, and the soldiers who formed the middle ranks of this fighting rectangle raised their shields overhead to protect from arrows, spears, and sling balls (or sometimes they put their shields on the back of the soldier in front and pushed, adding force to the forward motion of this “battle rectangle,” and more easily breaking through enemy lines).

The shield of faith not only protects us as individuals, but it can be used to protect the family of God as well, and especially when linked with the faith-shields of others believers can be a very effective protection against the attacks of the Adversary.

**“arrows.”** The Greek word is generic, and can refer to any thrown projectile such as an arrow or spear. However, since it was the arrows that were generally set on fire, “flaming arrows” makes more sense from a customs point of view. Today’s dart would not generally be of much danger.

**“Wicked One.”** The Greek is *poneros* (#4190 πονηρός), which the BDAG Greek-English Lexicon describes as, “pertaining to being morally or socially worthless; therefore, ‘wicked, evil, bad, base, worthless, vicious, and degenerate.’” *Poneros* is an adjective, but it is a substantive (an adjective used as a noun; for more on substantives, see the commentary on Matthew 5:37).

The Slanderer is the fount and foundation of wickedness. It was in him that wickedness was first found, when he was lifted up with pride and decided to rebel against God. Ever since that time he has been true to his name, “the Wicked One,” and has been doing and causing wickedness wherever he can, which, since he is “the god of this age,” is a considerable amount of wickedness. [For more names of the Slanderer (the Devil) and their meanings, see Appendix 14: “Names of the Slanderer”].

**6:17. “helmet of salvation.”** The “helmet of salvation” of Ephesians 6:17 is more accurately called the helmet of “the hope of salvation” in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The word “salvation” is used in its general sense in this verse, and is not restricted to only Christian salvation to everlasting life, although that is included. Neither the world nor the Christian are saved at this time. The Bible refers to us as “saved,” and we refer to ourselves that way, due to an idiom in the original languages of the Bible known as the “prophetic perfect” (see commentary on “seated,” in Ephesians 2:6). The essence of the prophetic perfect idiom is that if something is absolutely guaranteed to happen in the future, it is often spoken of as if it had already occurred. Because our salvation is guaranteed, we speak as if we have it now, and the salvation of the world from its present distress is guaranteed also.

The entire creation is in bondage and is groaning in pain (Rom. 8:21, 22), and Christians are groaning in pain also (Rom. 8:23) and everything in creation needs to be “saved,” “rescued” from the power of sin. Nothing any of us can do will change that now, but God will rescue His creation in the future. The Lord Jesus will descend from heaven and conquer the earth, and the earth will once again become a paradise. God promises that in the future we will live on a beautiful earth in new, energetic bodies, and our lives will be free of sickness, hunger, war, and injustice. God has given us that wonderful Hope for the future, and it can sustain us through our lives, especially in hard times. No matter how difficult our lives get on earth, our hope for a wonderful future shines through the darkness and points to better things to come. Because of this the Bible refers to the Hope as “the anchor of our soul” (Heb. 6:19). As the anchor of our soul, it is fitting that our hope of salvation for ourselves and creation is referred to as our helmet. Life can be so difficult and discouraging that it is hard to think straight. Each year vast numbers of people get caught up in the difficulties of life and make unwise decisions. Many people completely lose sight of any value or purpose in their life and commit suicide. The hope of salvation says, “Hang in there, your troubles will not last long, and then things will be better.” The hope of salvation helps protect our minds, and helps keep us calm and

rational in troubled times, allowing us to keep standing for God. When properly understood, the hope of salvation is a very effective helmet, protecting the thoughts of the Christian and helping him to stand for the Lord year after year.

**“the sword of the spirit.”** The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and is the only offensive weapon the believer has as he wrestles with evil. It is important to remember that the sword is the “sword of the Spirit.” The genitive in this verse is probably the figure of speech *Amphibologia*, encompassing two meanings at once. Thus the genitive has both the force of a genitive of possession, i.e., that it is ‘the Spirit’s sword’ not our sword, and also the force of a genitive of origin, “the sword given to us by the Spirit,” to use in our earthly lives.

In the Greek text, the verb telling us to take the helmet and sword is in the imperative mood. That means that God is not just stating that we should take these pieces of armor, or asking us if we would like to, He is commanding us to take them and put them on. If we do not put on the helmet and take up and use the sword, we are in effect telling God that we are quite content to not enter into His service in our fullest capacity. One important reason why God would command us to take the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is that if we do not really understand it, we can unknowingly be used by the Devil against the purposes of God to hurt other people. That has happened many times in history. The Christians that tortured other Christians during the Inquisition, for example, thought they were doing Christ’s work. Although that is an extreme example, the same kind of thing, people working against God when they think they are working for him, happens on a much smaller scale every day. Christians are called to stand for God, and the sword of the spirit is an essential part of our armor if we are going to be successful at doing that throughout our lifetime.

**6:19. “sacred secret.”** We translate the Greek word *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *musterion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm. [For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see Ephesians 3:9.]