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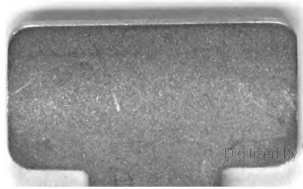
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God's masterpiece

Arno Clemens
Gaebelein



GOD'S MASTERPIECE

AN ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION OF
EPHESIANS I-III

BY
ARNO C. GAEBELEIN
Editor of "Our Hope"

PUBLICATION OFFICE "OUR HOPE"
456 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY

PICKERING & INGLIS
11 Bothwell Circus
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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
ANALYSIS.....	8
THE FIRST CHAPTER.....	16
THE SECOND CHAPTER.....	61
THE MYSTERY OF THE MASTERPIECE.....	87
THE THIRD CHAPTER.....	115

God's Masterpiece

INTRODUCTION.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul. Tychicus and Onesimus were sent by him to Colosse. Epaphras, that great man of prayer, who agonized in prayer for the Colossian believers (Col. iv:12), had communicated to Paul the condition of the church in Colosae, and informed him of the threatening danger from unsound teachers. Tychicus had received from Paul the letter to the Colossians, containing such wonderful revelations concerning the person and work of Christ, and the believer's fulness in Him. All the Colossian errors were met by the Holy Spirit in this Epistle and much more was added. Onesimus, the runaway slave, who in believing the Gospel had become the spiritual son of the Apostle and a brother beloved to his master Philemon, carried that beautiful little epistle of recommendation and courtesy to Philemon. The Epistle to the Ephesians* was also committed to Tychicus. Never before and never after were such

*Some scholars claim that the words "at Ephesus" should be omitted and that the Epistle was not addressed

weighty and blessed documents entrusted to human messengers.

In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul makes the statement, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God" (Col. i:25). To fulfil the Word of God does not mean, as often stated, that Paul fulfilled his ministry and was faithful in it. It means rather that to him was given the revelation which makes full, or completes, the Word of God. The highest and most glorious revelation, which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been pleased to give, He communicated through the Apostle Paul. The two prison Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians embody this completion of the Word of God. The Ephesian Epistle holds the place of pre-eminence. The revelation which is given in this Epistle concerning believing sinners, whom God has redeemed by the blood of His Son, and exalted in Him into the highest possible position, is by far the greatest revela-

to the Ephesians. The evidence for it is found in the fact that the Epistle does not contain any messages of personal greetings and in other internal evidences. We believe that the Epistle was first sent to the church at Ephesus and then passed on to other places, so that it was a kind of a circular letter. The Epistle mentioned in Col. iv:16 was undoubtedly this Epistle.

tion. God is revealing His own loving heart and tells out by His Spirit how He loved us and thought of us before the foundation of the world. He shows forth the riches of His Grace and now makes known the secret He held back in former ages. How rich it all is! Like God Himself, so this revelation, coming from His loving heart, is inexhaustible. We may speak of Ephesians as the rich Epistle of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, rich in mercy, tells us of the exceeding riches of His Grace in kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. But even this definition does not tell out half of all the Glory this wonderful document contains. It is God's highest and God's best. Even God cannot say more than what He has said in this filling full of His Word.

In the Psalms we read: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Ps. xix:1). We lift up our eyes and behold the wonders of God's creation, which He called into existence by His Son and for Him (Col. i:19). Here in this Epistle another heaven is opened. If the heavens of Creation are so wonderful and their depths unfathomable, how much more wonderful are the Heavens into which Christ has entered, where He now is seated, far above all princi-

pality and power and might and into which God's Grace has brought us in Him!

And this brings us to the reason for calling the opening chapters of this Epistle "the Masterpiece of God." The first three chapters of Ephesians contain the great revelation to which we referred above. What God has accomplished in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, how He makes believing sinners one with His Son, sharers of His fulness and His Glory, this is the revelation of these chapters. All was planned before the foundation of the world, while elsewhere in these chapters (ii:7), the eternity to come is mentioned. From eternity to eternity are the boundaries of these three chapters.

The church, the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, the one body in which believing Jews and Gentiles are united, the building growing unto an holy temple, the habitation of God by the Spirit, and the ultimate destiny of that body, are further revelations of these marvellous chapters.

Now the central verse of these chapters is found in ii:10. "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." The word "workmanship" arrests

our attention. It is the Greek "*Poiema*," from which our word "Poem" is derived. It is a beautiful thought in itself to think of those who are saved by Grace, and united to Christ as "the poem of God." But the word "*Poiema*" may also be rendered "Masterpiece."

Only once more is the same word found in the original language of the New Testament Scriptures. In Romans i:20 it is used in connection with the physical creation. God has produced two great masterworks in which He manifests His power. He called the universe into existence out of nothing. What He, as the omnipotent One can do, is seen in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the sustenance of His creation. His eternal power and Godhead are revealed in creation (Rom. i:19-20). But the creation of the universe out of nothing is not the greatest masterpiece of God. God has done something greater. He has produced a work, which reveals Him in a far higher degree. That greater masterpiece is the redemption of sinners. God took only six days to bring order out of the chaos of the disturbed original creation and to call into existence the present earth and heavens, but He spent forty days with Moses in directing him to build the tabernacle, because the work of redemption is

more glorious than the work of creation. In this greater work He manifests "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (i:17-20). God planned this great work before He ever created the universe, and the universe was called into existence in anticipation of this greater manifestation of God's glorious power. How God planned it before the foundation of the world, the work of the Godhead in the accomplishment of it, the details of His masterpiece and the mystery connected with it, we hope to follow in this exposition.

God's creation may be studied with the telescope and with the microscope. With the telescope we study the heavens and see the great constellations and millions of heavenly bodies. We take the microscope and examine the drop of water and behold there the marvels of creation. A telescopic sweep of this Epistle is insufficient. The microscopic examination brings out its wonders.

"The student of the Epistle to the Ephesians must not expect to go over his ground too rapidly; must not be disappointed, if the week's end finds him still on the same paragraph, or

even on the same verse, weighing and judging, —penetrating gradually, by the power of the mind of the Spirit, through one outer surface after another, getting in his hand one and another ramifying thread, till at last he grasps the main cord whence they all diverged, and where they all unite—and stands rejoicing in his prize, deeper rooted in the faith, and with a firmer hold on the truth as it is in Christ. And as the wonderful effect of the spirit of inspiration on the mind of man is nowhere in Scripture more evident than in this Epistle, so, to discern those things of the Spirit, is the spiritual mind here more than anywhere else required.”*

And the more we read and study this Epistle, the more we will be impressed with the greatness and the glory of the revelation it brings to our hearts. It is a theme for eternity. How needful the study of this Epistle is for us in these days! The truths revealed will keep us in the days of apostasy and lift us above the materialistic spirit of the times. Without earnest and continued meditation on the great truths made known in this Epistle, spiritual growth and enjoyment are impossible. May it please the Holy Spirit to lead the writer and the reader into a better and deeper heart knowledge of His wonderful Grace.

*Dean Alford. Prolegomena.

The Analysis of Ephesians

Chapters I-III

The Epistle to the Ephesians is composed of two parts. In chapter iv:1 we read, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." With the fourth chapter the second part of this Epistle begins. The preceding chapters, the first three, then tell us of the calling wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has called those, who believe in His Son, and from the fourth chapter to the end of this letter we find exhortations to walk worthy of that calling. To walk worthy as a Christian it is needful to know the calling wherewith He has called us. In the first great prayer in this Epistle we read, "That ye may know what is the Hope of His calling." Every Christian believer must know the Calling above everything else. The true knowledge of it is to govern our lives on earth.

Chapter I. How God planned for and works in the production of His Masterpiece.

- 1. The Introduction. Verses 1-2.**
- 2. The Great Doxology. Verse 3.**

**3. The Plan and Work of the Godhead.
Verses 4-14.**

A. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. Chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Verse 4.

b. Predestinated us unto the Son-place in Christ. Verse 5.

c. Made us accepted in the Beloved. Verse 6.
"To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace."
Verse 6.

B. The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. Redeemed us through His blood. Verse 7.

b. The Revelation in Him of the mystery of His will. Verses 8-10.

c. In Him we obtained an Inheritance. Verse 11.

"To the Praise of His Glory." Verse 12.

C. The Holy Spirit of God.

a. Quickened by Him in hearing and believing the Gospel. Verse 13.

b. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. Verse 13.

c. The Earnest of our Inheritance. Verse 14.

“Unto the Praise of His Glory.” Verse 14.

4. The parenthetical Prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory. Verses 15–23.

A. Thanksgiving. Verses 15–16.

B. The Prayer for Enlightenment in the Knowledge of Him. Verses 17–18.

a. To know the Hope of His Calling (God the Father). Verse 18.

b. To know the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the Saints (God the Son). Verse 18.

c. To know the exceeding greatness of His power to usward, who believe (God the Holy Spirit). Verse 19.

C. The Manifestation of the Power to usward. Verses 20–23.

a. Christ raised from the dead. Verse 20.

b. Seated at God's right hand far above all. Verses 20–21.

c. All things under His feet. Verse 22.

d. Head of the Church, His body. Verses 22–23.

Chapter II:1-10. The Masterpiece produced.

1. What Man is by Nature. Verses 1–3.

A. Dead in Trespasses and Sin. Verse 1.

B. Enemies of God under the Prince of the Power in the Air. Verse 2.

C. Children of Wrath. Verse 3.

2. What God does rich in Mercy. Verses 4-6.

A. The foundation: His great love wherewith He loved us. John iii:16. Verse 4.

B. Giving Life together with Christ. Verse 5.

C. Hath raised us up with Him. Verse 6.

D. Seated us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Verse 6.

3. The Destiny of the Masterpiece. Verse 7.

The Ages to come.

4. Saved by Grace through Faith. Verses 8-10.

A. The positive statement. Saved by Grace Verse 8.

B. The negative side: Not of Works. Verse 9.

C. The Purpose of the Masterpiece. Verse 10.

a. His Workmanship.

b. Created in Christ unto good works.

Chapter II:11–III:21. The Mystery of the Masterpiece, the Church, the house of God and the Body of Christ.

1. The Conditions of the Gentiles. Verses 11–12.

A. Called the Uncircumcision. Verse 11.

B. What they were. Verse 12.

- a. Without Christ. (Aliens).
- b. Strangers to the covenants.
- c. Without Hope and without God.

2. But Now in Christ Jesus. Verses 13–18.

A. Made nigh by the blood of Christ. Verse 14.

B. What the work of Christ has accomplished. Verses 15–18.

- a. He is our Peace; made both One. Verse 14.
- b. Broken down the middle wall.
- c. Abolished the law of commandments in ordinances. Verse 15.
- d. To make one new Man. Verse 15.
- e. In Himself.

C. The Reconciliation. Verse 16.

- a. Both (Jews and Gentiles) reconciled unto God in one body.

- b. The enmity slain.
- c. By the Cross.

D. The Peace and Reconciliation preached.
Verse 17.

- a. To those afar off (Gentiles).
- b. To them that were nigh (Jews).

E. The gracious Result. Verse 18.

Both have access by one spirit unto the Father.

3. The great Relationship of the Master-piece. Verses 19–22.

A. The relationship changed. Verse 19.

- a. No more strangers and foreigners.
- b. Fellow citizens with the Saints.
- c. Of the Household of God.

B. The church as the Spiritual House. Verse 20.

- a. The foundation of the house laid.
- b. The chief cornerstone.

C. The Holy Temple. Verse 21.

- a. Building framed together.
- b. Growing unto an holy temple.

D. The Church, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

4. The ministry of the Mystery of the Masterpiece. Chapter III:1-13.

A. Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ. Verse 1.

*B. His Ministry concerning the Masterpiece.
Verses 2-5.*

- a. Made known by revelation.
- b. The mystery of Christ.
- c. Hidden in other ages.
- d. Now made known by the Spirit.

C. The Mystery revealed. Verse 6.

- a. Gentiles fellowheirs.
- b. Of the same body.
- c. Partakers of His promise in Christ.

D. Paul made a Minister of it. Verse 7.

- a. According to the gifts of His Grace.
- b. According to the working of His Power.

*E. The Proclamation of the unsearchable Riches.
Verse 8.*

- a. The Apostle's humility.
- b. The unsearchable riches of Christ.

*F. The dispensation of the mystery and its
purpose. Verses 9-10.*

- a. To make all see what it is. Verse 9.
- b. To show the manifold wisdom of God to the heavenly principalities and powers. Verse 10.

c. According to the eternal purpose. Verse 11.

d. Access with confidence. Verse 12.

e. The tribulations of the Minister of the Mystery. Verse 13.

5. The Prayer unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 14–19.

A. The Prayer unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 14–15.

B. The Petitions of the Prayer. Verses 16–19.

a. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner Man. Verse 16.

b. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Verse 17.

c. Rooted and grounded in love.

d. To comprehend with all saints. Verse 18.

e. To know the Love of Christ. Verse 19.

f. To be filled with the fullness of God.

6. The Great End Doxology. Verses 20–21.

This marvellous section of the Word of God begins with a great doxology (i:3) and ends with another great outburst of Praise. All is unto the Praise of the Glory of His Grace.

The First Chapter

How God planned for and works in the production of His Masterpiece.

1. **The Introduction.** "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Verses 1-2.)

The introductory words of this great Epistle are in tune with the great revelation it contains. It is interesting to compare the opening words of the different Epistles. Inspiration is as much manifested in the introductions and greetings, as it is in the great doctrinal unfoldings of these precious documents. In **Romans** Paul speaks of himself in the beginning of the Epistle as separated unto the Gospel of God; in the words of introduction all the leading features of that Gospel are revealed, because **Romans** unfolds the Salvation of God. In the Epistle to the **Corinthians** among whom the leaven of worldliness was working, the fact of their sanctification is put in the foreground: "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints." **Galatians** is characterized in the first verse as the Epistle in which the Holy Spirit gives the

defence of the apostolic authority of Paul and of the Gospel he preached: "an apostle, not from men, nor through man." **Colossians** too has its characteristic introduction, while in the Epistle to the **Philippians** Paul does not speak of himself at all as an apostle, but associated with Timotheus, he speaks as a fellow-servant and fellow-saint.

Without showing these peculiarities in the opening sentences of the other Epistles we point out that "the will of God" is made prominent in the very brief introduction of our Epistle. Paul means "little." It is the name Saul of Tarsus assumed with the conversion of Sergius Paulus in Paphos (Acts xiii:7-9). The name tells of the great humility of the Apostle, which is elsewhere more fully expressed in this Epistle (Chapter iii:8). And his apostleship is by "the will of God." It is to be noticed that the will of God is repeatedly mentioned in the first chapter. All the blessings mentioned flow forth from the will of God. What God hath done for us in Christ Jesus is "according to the good pleasure of His will" (verse 5); "having made known unto us the mystery of His will" (verse 9); "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (verse 11). This will of God reacheth back before the foundation of the world. It made the erstwhile

persecutor of the church of God the Apostle of Jesus Christ, through whom that blessed will of God is now fully revealed.

“To the Saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” We stated before that the words “which are at Ephesus” are not found in the best manuscripts. It is of little or no consequence. The Epistle may have been sent from one assembly to another, and in all probability is the one mentioned in Colossians iv:16. There is no mention made of the church at Ephesus, though the Epistle contains the fullest revelation of the church we have in the Word of God. Individual believers are addressed as Saints and as faithful in Christ Jesus. The words “Saints and the faithful” do not mean, as it has been supposed, two classes of believers in Ephesus. All believers are constituted saints, “separated ones.” But a Saint may not be faithful. Many who are saved by Grace and called Saints are unfaithful in their walk and testimony. The believers addressed are such, who live in faithfulness in Christ Jesus, manifesting in practical holiness their calling as Saints. And to such the Holy Spirit can give the highest and the best; He was unhindered to make known unto them the blessed revelation this Epistle contains. This is still an important

principle. This address to "the Saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" corresponds to the division of the Epistle. In the first three chapters we learn that God has made us His Saints in Christ, and in the last three chapters we are exhorted to walk in faithfulness.

Then follows the salutation so full of blessed meaning. "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." These words are often termed a wish, a prayer or a blessing. They are more than that. Grace and Peace from the Father and His ever blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ are bestowed upon us, and they are put at the beginning of this and other Epistles to assure the people of God, that these unfathomable blessings, Grace and Peace, are on our side. No matter how weak and imperfect those may be who are saved and sheltered in Christ, Grace and Peace will never be withholden from them. The Holy Spirit never mentions Himself in these salutations to the Saints. They are always exclusively from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is in the Saints of God.

2. The great Doxology. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Verse 3.

This great doxology should constantly be as an outburst of praise upon the lips of God's redeemed people. It stands at the beginning of the great revelation of this Epistle, without doubt the greatest doxology in the entire Word of God. And when we reach the end of these three marvellous chapters we find another outburst of praise recorded. "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (iii:20-21). Between these two doxologies are found the unfathomable riches of the Grace of God towards us in Christ.

The third verse, the beginning of the Epistle itself, is the key to the great revelation which follows in this chapter. It is the bud which the Holy Spirit gradually unfolds.

The Godhead in blessing sinners is revealed in this doxology. **First** we find the **God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the author of all blessings. We are to bless Him for the blessing which He has bestowed upon us. We are to give the blessings back to Him in praise.

In the **second** place we learn that the blessings are **in Christ**. In His Son, God has blessed us. He gave Him for us. He came,

died and was raised from the dead. In Him we have believed and in Him, with whom we are one Spirit, God has blessed us.

Then in the **third** place we read of the blessings, what kind of blessings they are, spiritual blessings; they are therefore communicated by the **Holy Spirit**. And how many such blessings has He given? Our authorized version states "with all spiritual blessings." The correct rendering is "with every spiritual blessing." There is then no blessing whatever, which God can give, which He has kept back from those who are in Christ. All God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, can give in spiritual blessings, He has given. It is a most blessed fact! God has now come forth and revealed what He can do for such as we are and how great are the exceeding riches of His Grace. In Old Testament times God had His people Israel. To them He promised earthly blessings. But greater than the blessings of the earth are the blessings He has given to us in Christ. What these blessings are we shall discover in the verses which follow.

The phrase "in heavenly places" should be translated "Heavenlies." It is peculiar to this Epistle. We find the Heavenlies mentioned five times. Chapter i:3, 19; ii:6; iii:10 and vi:12. It has a twofold meaning, the

nature of the blessings which are ours in a risen and ascended Christ, and the locality where our Lord, the Head of the body is. In the Heavens where He is now, the church will be with Him. As we review this doxology we find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit mentioned. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us; these blessings are in the Son and as spiritual blessings they are communicated by the Holy Spirit.

What follows is very interesting. From the fourth verse to the fourteenth we find the blessings stated with which we are blest in Christ. Generally these blessings are enumerated by expositors of this Epistle, and seven of them are pointed out. There seems to be a better key to unlock the verses which speak of these blessings. Three times in these verses we read of the praise of God, His Grace and His Glory.

Chapter i:6, "To the praise of the Glory of His Grace." Verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of His Glory." Verse 14, "Unto the praise of His Glory."

Each of these words of praise mark the end of what is said about the different persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-6 we read of what the Father has done; verses 7-12 reveal what

we have and are in the Son, in Christ; verses 13 and 14 reveal the work of God the Holy Spirit. Thus we have the work of the Godhead in our behalf represented in this chapter.

**3. The Plan of the Work of the Godhead.
Verses 4-14.**

A. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him; in love having predestinated us unto the Sonplace by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Verses 4-6.

These three verses reveal the blessed work of God the Father. Three great facts are mentioned of Him. He hath

- a. Chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the Word.
- b. Predestined us unto the Sonplace in Christ.
- c. Made us accepted in the Beloved.

How wonderful these statements are! Here we are face to face with revelation. To deny this would stamp these words as the lying imaginations of a deceiver, absolutely unreliable and untrustworthy. Only a direct revelation

from God can acquaint us with that which took place before the foundation of the world. In the first verse of the Bible we read of God's original Creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." How many millions of years ago this took place is not revealed, nor can human science ever find it out.* But here revelation takes us before the foundation of the world. Whatever is in God's eternity, that unfathomable existence without a beginning, is beyond man's ability to know and therefore unrevealed. In the words before us the Spirit of God makes known the great truth, that God before even the world existed planned His Masterpiece, how He would make known the exceeding riches of His Grace. With Him in all eternity, resting in His own bosom was His Only Begotten Son, the Son of His Love. In Him, by Him and for Him all things, visible and invisible were called into existence. Before even this creation was effected, God knew the outcome. Surprise is an impossibility with God. He knows the end from the beginning, "Known

*The guesses of Science on the age of the earth are amusing. They range from 20 million years to 400 millions. None of the eminent scientists have ever been able to agree on a fixed number. And if they did, it would still be guesswork.

unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv:18). Before He created the highest creature, him who was the Cherub that covereth (Ezek. xxviii:14), God knew that he would become the Devil. The whole story of man's fall, dragged down by the fallen Lucifer (Isaiah xiv:12) into sin and death, was not hidden from God. He knew all what would come to pass. The whole human race as it was to come into existence was known to Him and every member in that race. Well may we exclaim with David, when the Spirit of God unfolded to him God's omniscience, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it" (Psalm cxxxix:6).

And then God made provision. He made the "ages" in His Son (Hebr. i:2-3). Then He chose us in Him that we should be holy and without blame before Him. This deep and blessed statement refers to the Saints of God, who constitute the Church, the body of Christ and as such the Glory of Christ (Chapter i:23). In Ephesians we find the fullest revelation concerning the church, that mystery, which was not made known in former ages (Chapter iii:5). Here on the threshold of this sublime revelation we are told that the church was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. Before His blessed Son ever came to

this earth for redemption, before He ever died on Calvary's Cross and rose from the dead to return as the glorified Man into God's presence, before the Holy Spirit ever came to form that body, God knew the members of it, all who would constitute the body of His Son, the church. And as such He has chosen them that they should be holy and without blame before Him. How men with a show of learning have wrestled with these statements and by their theories and opinions have made the words "election" and "predestination" obscure and difficult! Depths are connected with the statements before us which we cannot fathom. And God forbid that we should ever try to explain the actions of God's Sovereignty or judge Him by our own thoughts. We bow in adoration and worship in the presence of such a statement "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." Israel as the elect earthly people will give us a little help. In Old Testament times there were many nations, nations of culture, learning and power. Yet God did not take them up, but let them go their own way. But what does He say concerning Israel? "Hear this Word that the Lord hath spoken against you, oh children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

you only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii:1-2). Israel is His elect earthly people; but their election is never spoken of as having been before the foundation of the world. Israel was chosen in time. The Saints of the New Testament times, which constitute the Body of His blessed Son, He hath chosen before there was a world. That body, the church, is an outgathered company, in its number known to God alone, because He has chosen them. And this choice of God declares that in Christ we should be, even as we are (blessed be His Name) "holy and without blame." It means that we become thus partakers of His nature, the nature of God, and therefore a nature capable of communion with God, a nature to which no blame is attached. This God willed and this is the portion of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Grace of God bestows it upon us. And our destiny as we shall see, the destiny of the elect body of Christ, the Church, is not in connection with the earth, but in the Heavenlies, even as we are chosen before there was an earth.

The words "in Love" with which verse 4 ends, we believe, belong to the sentence which follows in the next verse, so that we read, "In love having predestinated us unto the Son-

place through Christ Jesus by Himself according to the good pleasure of His will." It was love which purposed all this, the love which passeth knowledge. The words before us reveal the position, which God has given to those whom He hath chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. The authorized version speaks of "adoption of children." This hardly expresses it correctly. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not adopted into the family of God; they are born into the family. The Greek has only one word "Son-place." We are placed into the position of Sons. Not alone hath God given to us His own nature, but He gives us, because we have that nature in and through His Son, the place as Sons. Think of what God might have done for those, who by wicked works are His enemies. He might have given us the place of unfallen angels, the wonderful ministers of Heaven. What mercy that would have been! Or He might have lifted us to the dignity of an Archangel, full of beauty and power. But even that would not have been the very best He could have done in the riches of His Grace and Love. He has made us Sons, like **the** Son, whom He raised from the dead and seated at His own right hand. Sons of God, like His Son, destined to be joint heirs with Him and

forever with the Lord; this tells out the marvelous story of God's riches in Grace. He gave to His Son, risen from the dead, a better name and a better inheritance than the angels. And this we share in Him according to the eternal will of God.

And all this is "according to the good pleasure of His will." Not according to our works, nor according to the appreciation or apprehension of all this, as some have stated. Our works and actions have absolutely nothing to do with this. All we do is to accept in faith that, into which God has brought us according to His will. It is all of God. How else could it be, if it was all done in His will before even a human being existed.

Before we pass to the third statement, a brief word on "predestination." This word, which means "marked out" is nowhere found in connection with the Gospel, nor does it say anywhere in the Word, what some have said, that God has predestinated human beings to be lost. But while we do not read that He ever predestinated any one to be lost we read "God would have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii:4). God has nothing to say to a lost world about predestination. His Grace, bringing salvation has appeared unto all men. God's offer of salvation is therefore to all.

“Whosoever will” and “Whosoever believeth” are the glorious terms of God’s good news to all alike. But when we believe, we **know** that we are chosen and predestinated. Those who have believed on Christ are predestinated and they possess the Son-place. Then having believed, we know that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

And in all this God shows what His Grace can do. “To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace.” God could not manifest the Glory of His Grace with angels; but with sinners in the bondage of sin and death, on the road to eternal death and punishment, He was enabled to show it all forth. In the gift of His Son He has made it known. This modern Gospel of “salvation by character” is surely a wicked thing, a soul-destroying delusion. It robs God of the Glory of His Grace. Let us magnify Grace! Let us give Him the Praise and the Glory, and as being saved by Grace let us live to the Praise of the Glory of His Grace!

And in the third place we read that we are made accepted in the Beloved. Mark, it does not say “in Christ” but in the Beloved. This is extremely precious. Christ is the Beloved of God and as chosen in Him, partakers of the divine nature, predestinated unto the

Son-place, we are "the Beloved of God called Saints." The Love wherewith God loveth the Son is the Love with which we are loved. We are as dear to God as He is Himself, who was always His delight. "Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee," is often sung by those who do not know anything of what Grace has done. We cannot be nearer to God, nor dearer to Him, than we are in Christ, the Beloved. Accepted in the Beloved, means that we rest in Him on the bosom of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! come and let us praise His Name.

B. The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace, which He hath made to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, for the administration of the fulness of times to head up all things in the Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in Him, in whom also we obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His Glory, who have trusted beforehand in Christ." Verses 7-12.

These verses put before us the Son of God, what He has done for us in His work, and the riches of God's Grace, which abounds in Him

towards all who have believed. We discover three things, which are stated here:

- a. Redeemed us through His blood. Verse 7.
- b. The Revelation in Him of the mystery of His will. Verses 8-10.
- c. The inheritance we have obtained in Him. Verse 11.

And all this is "to the praise of His Glory." Verse 12.

The Beloved One, having been mentioned in Whom we are accepted, we read at once of His work. The Son of God came from the Father's bosom to this earth to redeem us, so that God's eternal will might be carried out. Redemption, the taking out of the condition in which we are by nature, is a necessity, and has been forever accomplished by the blood of the Son of God, which He shed on the cross. Three Greek words are translated by redemption, giving us its blessed meaning. **Agorazo**, which means, to buy in the market. It is used in the following passages: 1 Cor. vi:20; 2 Pet. ii:1; Rev. v:9; xiv:3-4. **Exagorazo**, to buy out of the market, used in Gal. iii:13 and iv:5. **Lootruo**, to liberate on the receipt of a ransom, used as a verb and

noun in Luke xxi:24 and 28; Romans iii:24; viii:23; 1 Cor. i:30; Eph. i:7, 14; iv:30. It is this last word which is employed here. Through His blood the Son of God has taken us out of the condition in which we are. He paid the price and has set us free. The redemption we have in Him is a settled thing. We know it belongs to us. But it means more than the forgiveness of our sins. The riches of His Grace revealed in redemption through His blood includes all our needs as sinners. The blood has redeemed us, set us free, from all things in which we are by nature. All we have, all we are, all we shall have and shall be are the blessed results of redemption by blood. We **are** delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i:10), as well as "out of the present evil age" (Gal. i:4). We **are** delivered from the power of darkness (Col. i:13), yea, "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Tit. ii:14). These things we have, they are ours in Christ while we wait down here for the full "Son-place," the adoption, the redemption of our body (Rom. viii:25). The forgiveness of sins is, so to speak, the foundation, and upon this follow all the other precious gifts which God is enabled to bestow according to

the riches of His Grace, because His blessed Son shed His blood.

How little all this is enjoyed by those who have believed in Christ! How great the ignorance of many of God's people concerning the riches of His Grace, which He hath made to abound towards us! So many lack the fullest assurance to which every believer is entitled, and have but little knowledge of all they have entered upon and they have received, when they trusted in Christ. And it is this knowledge of the riches of His Grace we are told to contemplate, and which will be the means of drawing us close to Himself. As we know this and enjoy it, we walk in separation from this present evil age, out of which we are redeemed. It will not leave us barren nor unfruitful, but produce in our lives fruit to the Praise of the Glory of His Grace.

The words which follow put before us some blessed and deep truths. Redeemed through His blood, having redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of Grace, He hath made known unto us the mystery of His will. God wants His elect, His church, to know the secret things of His will and what He hath purposed in Himself. Therefore He hath made the riches of His Grace abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence. God has been

pleased to make known **in Christ** the mystery of His will. It is the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom. xvi:25), so that we know in Christ and through Christ the fulness of His purpose. That mystery of God is Christ, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii:3). Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood, was raised from the dead. God "set Him at His own right hand in the Heavens"—"He hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Chapter i:21-23). This is the mystery: that Christ risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, is the Head and those who believe on Him constitute the church, His body. This body is destined, according to the eternal purpose of God, to share the Glory of the Head. This purpose is still in the future. The administration (or dispensation) of the fulness of times has not yet come. When it comes all things will be headed up in the Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. We must notice it speaks of "**The Christ**," which means Christ, the Head, and the church, His Body. Marvelous Grace which has reached down to us and makes us one with Him, who, in accor-

dance with His Father's will, shares His own Glory and Inheritance with those who are in Him, the Sons of God! "The administration of the fulness of times" will come when He, who occupies now the Father's throne, comes again and receives His own throne. Then all things will be put in subjection under His feet; He will be supreme and the reconciliation of things on earth and things in heaven (not things or beings under the earth) will take place. Creation itself, disturbed and so fearfully marred by the fall of man, will be put back into its original condition. The administration of the fulness of times is the age to come, when righteousness will reign as Grace reigns now; the kingdom age, when He has taken His inheritance and reigns as King over the earth. In that day of Glory He will bring His many sons unto Glory (Heb. ii:10), and, more than that, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed" (2 Thess. i:10). This is the glorious mystery of His will made known unto us who are, through the riches of His Grace, the heirs of God and fellowheirs with Christ.

Of this inheritance we read in the words which follow: "In Him, in whom also we obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of Him, who worketh

all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His Glory, who have trusted beforehand in Christ." It is all "in Him," in this precious and deep portion of God's holy Word. A brief review will demonstrate this. We are blessed "in Christ" with every spiritual blessing (verse 3). We are chosen "in Him" before the foundation of the world (verse 4). He hath accepted us "in the Beloved." It is "in Him" we have redemption, and "in Him" we have obtained an inheritance. Apart from Christ there is no blessing, no redemption, no Glory. Rejecting Christ and the price He paid for our redemption, His blood, means eternal death, eternal darkness, eternal wrath. It is a solemn fact that apostate Christendom, that Christless Christianity and bloodless Gospel, rejecting God's Son and God's only Gospel, is rushing on towards the judgment of a holy and righteous God.

The inheritance of Christ, which belongs to Him as the glorified Man, we have seen before; He will receive it when "the administration of the fulness of time" comes. In Him we have obtained an inheritance; we are called of God to share the inheritance of His Son in the ages to come. It is equally true that we are as redeemed by His blood, His inheritance.

How wonderful it all is! We shall see Him as He is and then we **shall be like Him**; transformed into His image that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. We shall possess with Him His inheritance, for we are **joint heirs with Christ**. We shall be with Him wherever He is in Glory, for the body must be where the Head is; **forever with the Lord**. This is the inheritance we have obtained in Him. But what it all means. Only eternity will disclose the unsearchable riches of our Glory in Him and His Glory in us. And it is "to the Praise of His Glory." Before we heard of "the Praise of the Glory of His Grace" (verse 6), which speaks of what He has done for us in raising us from the dunghill of our sin, misery and shame. But "the Praise of His Glory" will be fully manifested in the day of His Glory, when He appears with His saints. Of this He spoke in His prayer, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii:23). When He appears and leads forth in triumphant splendor His redeemed ones, all reflecting His Glory, then the world will know and He will get "the Praise of His Glory."

Those mentioned here who "trusted beforehand in Christ," are Jews who have entered by

faith into this blessed relationship and who possess now something infinitely higher and more glorious than the nation will possess when the Lord Jesus comes to restore His earthly people. In fact the "we" in these two verses refers to believing Jews, while the "ye" in the verse which follows means believing Gentiles. Both classes constitute the church, the body of Christ. Into this the second chapter enters more fully.

May it please the Holy Spirit to make these blessed truths concerning our place and our inheritance in Christ more real to us. Our walk depends upon our believing contemplation of all these riches of His Grace. A little time is left us here. May we enter with our hearts more fully in all this and manifest His Grace, the Grace which stooped so low and has lifted so high, in a separated walk and devoted life, till we obtain the inheritance "to the Praise of His Glory."

C. The Holy Spirit of God.

"In whom ye also having heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; and having also believed in Him, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Who is the earnest or our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the Praise of His Glory" (verses 13, 14).

In these words the Holy Spirit reveals His

own work in God's Masterpiece. Here again we notice three things:

a. Hearing and believing ; the Quickening by the Spirit. Verse 13.

b. The Sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Verse 14.

c. The Holy Spirit the Earnest of our Inheritance.

These words are of great importance. The Son of God came to this earth to redeem us and because He has finished the work the Father gave Him to do, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead has come to do His work.

Three words are prominent in the thirteenth verse, the words "heard," "believed" and "sealed." They go together. The Word of Truth, the Gospel of salvation must be heard and believed; the hearing and believing results in the sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession takes place.

The Word of Truth, the Gospel of Salvation is the medium through which the Holy Spirit works. In the second chapter of this Epistle we read of the condition in which all men are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins."

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Life and Power can alone reach this condition of death. He quickens us in our spiritual death, but He does His work through the Word of Truth, the Gospel of Salvation. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x:17). The Word which is to be preached is "the Word of Faith" (Rom. x:7). Through this Word the Spirit of God operates and reaches the heart of man "for the Word of God is living, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and judgeth the thoughts and reasonings of the heart" (Heb. iv:12). It is evident that inasmuch as "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" that the hearing of the Word is the means through the power of the Holy Spirit to produce faith. Hearing and believing the Word of Truth, the Gospel of Salvation, the Holy Spirit then acts and we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. i:23). This explains the words of our Lord to Nicodemus "except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii:5).

But too little of this Word of Truth and the

Gospel is preached in our days. Some of the professional evangelists instead of preaching the Word and the Gospel, tell all kinds of anecdotes, which make people laugh and sometimes blush. A number of these men employ "slang" words and are extremely vulgar in the language they use. These same men seem to be after the money of the people and collect thousands of dollars for a few weeks of so-called "revival services." They attract large crowds and claim marvellous success in the conversion of thousands. But is this really the work of the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit of God use silly anecdotes, often mixed with falsehoods, or can He use vulgar language to quicken sinners dead in trespasses and sins? These questions we must answer in the negative. These "revivals" are often discovered to be counterfeits. The supposed conversions were attempts at reformation produced by soulical emotions, or, what is even worse, a "religious affiliation" without salvation. All these attempts to reach men apart from the clearcut presentation of the Gospel of Salvation are the most dangerous tactics the arch-hater of the Gospel, Satan, uses. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of Truth. We repeat it again, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." What is needed is to preach the Word in fullest assur-

ance and confidence that the Holy Spirit with His power is doing His work in His own way by it. No Gospel preacher need to trouble himself about the results of his preaching. The Spirit of God uses the message, though the results may not be seen at once.

All who have heard and believed are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. The authorized version is misleading. "In whom also after that ye believed" should be rendered by "and having also believed in Him ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Some teach that a person may have believed in Christ and not have received the sealing with the Spirit. The claim is made that between believing in Christ and the sealing with the Spirit years may intervene, and that the sealing with the Spirit must be sought in a definite experience. All these claims have no foundation in Scripture. The sealing with the Spirit is not an inward experience, which must be sought after conversion and which is obtained by self-surrender. Sealing is a figurative expression. The seal is a mark of ownership. As soon as a sinner hears the Gospel, believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to him and makes His abode there. In this way God seals His own who believe in His Son, by giving to them His Spirit. Every believer is therefore

indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and by this, God marks us as belonging to Him, while the Holy Spirit in us is the assurance of our security, for He keeps all in whom He dwells. The seal is therefore the Holy Spirit Himself, and His presence in the believer denotes ownership and security. The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling or some mysterious inward experience. Nowhere are we told to "feel" that we are sealed; we know it because the Word of God tells us so. And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise, because He was promised and has come in fulfilment of the promise of the Father and the Son.

But He is also the Spirit of promise in the believer, for His presence promises better things. He is the earnest of our inheritance, the pledge that in the future we shall come into possession of our full inheritance. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the first installment, so to speak, of the Glory which belongs to us. When we come into full possession of the inheritance He ceases to be the earnest, but He Himself will **never** leave us in all eternity.

The inheritance is here also called "the purchased possession." It has been fully paid for and is therefore completely purchased. But it speaks here not only of "purchase" but also of the "redemption" of our inheritance.

The purchase price was the Blood; the redemption of the purchased possession will be by power. Our inheritance, the purchased possession, is in the Heavenly places. This heavenly sphere is still in the grasp of Satan "the prince of the power in the air." With his demons he tenants the air and the Heavenly places, which are part of Christ's inheritance and, therefore, ours as well. That such is the case we find in the last chapter of this Epistle, where we read of our present warfare which is "against the wicked spirits in the heavenly places" (vi:12). But this purchased possession which belongs to Christ and to us will not always be left in the power of Satan and his angels. The power of God will fully recover it in the future. Revelation xii gives us the most interesting prophetic history of this. Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven and the redeemed of God will take possession of the wonderful inheritance above. The redemption of the purchased possession begins with the rapture of the Saints, when all His Saints are caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air. This is followed by Satan cast out of heaven. The redemption by the power of God will be consummated in the personal and glorious Manifestation of our Lord to establish His Kingdom over the earth.

And now before we turn to the prayer which concludes the first chapter of this great Epistle we must have a review of this great revelation we have found thus far, concerning the work of the Godhead, in the production of the Masterpiece of God in redemption.

1. We found **God the Father** has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. **God the Son** came down from Heaven's Glory and redeemed us by His Blood. **God the Holy Spirit** quickens those who hear and believe. He is here because Christ finished His work on the Cross.

2. **God the Father** has predestinated us unto the Son-place. **God the Son** reveals, to all who are sons with Him, the mystery of His will, concerning the future of the new creation. **God the Holy Spirit** because we are sons possesses us and keeps those whom He possesses. He is the Spirit of Sonship.

3. **God the Father** has accepted us in the Beloved. **God the Son** has given us in Himself an inheritance. **God the Holy Spirit** is the earnest of that inheritance.

Surely this is revelation from God. So blessedly simple, so profound that all the eternal ages will not suffice to sound its depths. No man could have ever discovered or invented such a plan. Let us bow before it in worship

and yield our lives "to the Praise of the Glory of His Grace."

The second half of this chapter contains a prayer. It is the first prayer in the Epistle; the second prayer is found at the close of the third chapter. Let us notice that the greatest revelation of God given in Ephesians has these two prayers connected with it. The revelation is given that we might enter into the knowledge of it and enjoy it in our hearts, even "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Prayer is needed for this. As we read these blessed truths we must make them our own.

A. Thanksgiving, verses 15-16.

"Wherefore I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the Saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

These are the words with which Paul introduces his prayer for the Ephesians. He had heard of their faith and love. Faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the Saints are the leading and blessed essentials of true Christianity. Grace works these in our hearts. Neither faith nor love can be learned or acquired by man's own efforts; both are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the

Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii:3). "The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us" (Rom. v:5). Without this faith in the Lord Jesus, love unto all the Saints is impossible, and where there is true faith in the Lord Jesus, there must be love unto the Saints. If our hearts lay hold by faith of the great truths contained in the first part of this chapter and the Lord Jesus, and our wonderful position in Him and blessing is enjoyed by us, the love unto all the Saints will be manifested. It is the fruit of faith in the Lord Jesus. It is by this love that we know we have passed out of death into life, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii:14). "Whosoever loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John v:1).

And let us notice the little word "all." The Love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts includes all the Saints of God, not alone a little circle of such who see eye to eye with us in all things, not alone the Saints we know and are of an amiable disposition, but it takes in all, no matter what they are, and where they are, all who are born of God. He loveth them all and His Love in our hearts must needs embrace all whom He loveth. How little of this love unto all the Saints is in evidence in

our days! May we always think whenever we come in touch with Saints who appear unlovable, who either oppose us or who do not share all our views, that the Lord Jesus loves them, loves them as much as He loves us. We must bear with them as He bears with us. This is one of the true tests of spirituality, love unto all the Saints. In the peculiar days in which we live, the last days of this age, when Satan tries to divide the flock of God as never before, may we love all His beloved people and reach out after the weak and stumbling ones of the flock. Let us remember that God hath chosen them with us before the foundation of the world, that He has accepted them as He has accepted us in the Beloved. May we never forget that the Lord Jesus died for them as He died for us, and that the same Holy Spirit who abides in us, is also in them. Then we shall make mention of all the Saints in our prayers. It is a blessed occupation, into which the Holy Spirit will lead us to pray for the Saints of God, besides giving thanks for them. Whenever a fellow believer has misunderstood us or the enemy attempts to sow the evil seed of jealousy between ourselves and other Saints, the best way, yea the only way, to overcome the evil is by prayer. When there is prayer for the Saints and the love for them is nourished by

the prayer of intercession, the enemy will find it difficult to bring in his discord. Paul made mention of them in prayer and what he asked for all the Saints we find revealed in the verses which follow. But we must remember the mighty One, who stood behind the penman of these words, the Holy Spirit. It is therefore more than the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesian Christians. It is the prayer of the Holy Spirit for all the Saints. What the Holy Spirit desires for those who belong to Christ, to know and to enjoy, is now made known. The Spirit who prays is the Spirit of power, who can and will make all good to us.

B. The Prayer for Enlightenment in the Knowledge of Him, verses 17-18.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward, who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”

The prayer here is addressed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” The prayer in the third chapter is made to “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This corresponds most beautifully to the blessed

revelation in the first 14 verses of this chapter. "God and Father" are the blessed words, which stand in the foreground of this Epistle. God is Light and God is Love. The first prayer is a prayer for light, that His redeemed people may know, be enlightened; therefore it is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second prayer in the third chapter is for love, and therefore addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we look a little closer at the words "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory," we shall discover their marvellous meaning. God who hath chosen us and predestinated us before the foundation of the world is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." The whole blessed story of the Gospel is revealed in this sentence. Here is the fact that God gave Him, who is His Only Begotten. The Son of God came to this earth and humbled Himself, appearing in the form of a servant; this is expressed in the word "Jesus," His Name in humiliation. The titles "Christ and Lord" tell us of His resurrection. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii:36). The only time the Lord Jesus spoke of God as His God was on the Cross, when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But after His resurrection He speaks again of His God and in a most blessed connection. He said to Mary "Go unto My brethren and say to them I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John xx:17). Thus His God, the God who gave Him, who delivered Him up for us, who raised Him from the dead, is our God. We are brought into the same blessed relationship with Him. This is the only correct and scriptural way how we should address God "Our God and our Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; anything less than that cannot have the approval of the Spirit of God.* And what does the expression "the Father of Glory" signify? From Him, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," He who raised Him from the dead and gave Him Glory, Glory proceeds. First He gave to Him, who was made sin for us, glory. We see Him now crowned with Glory and Honor at the right hand of God. But the Glory He has received will be by-and-by shared by the church, His body. Thus the words "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" takes us in the past; the title "Father of

*Sir Robert Anderson in a recent volume, "The Honor of His Name," has called attention to the unscriptural use of the name of our ever blessed and adorable Lord, a very timely warning.

Glory" looks forward into the future. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished the work for us in His Son and Glory, eternal Glory is now before us.

In verses 17-19 we find three petitions and with these, in which we see the three persons of the Godhead indicated, we shall now be occupied. First we notice, however, that the desire is expressed that God "may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened."

This does not mean that they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. We saw they were, as every true believer is, sealed by that Spirit of promise, which means, the gift of the Spirit. There is no second giving of the Spirit promised. It means that the Spirit might operate as the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. He is in all believers, but in few He can manifest His full power as the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. And the Holy Spirit will impart "the knowledge of Him." If we desire to know Christ more fully, the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation will give us this knowledge. He enlightens the eyes of our hearts.* It is the heart, the new nature

*The authorized version has "the eyes of your understanding," which is an incorrect translation.

in the believer, which alone can take in the great truths revealed in the Masterpiece of God. The human intellect cannot grasp these truths; the Spirit of God must enlighten the eyes of our spiritual nature.

And now the three petitions "that ye may know."

1. The first is "that ye may know what is the Hope of His calling." This is the calling of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory. What then is His calling? For what has He called us? Into what is He bringing those whom His Son redeemed? It is infinitely more than to have our sins forgiven, as some have explained it; or to get to heaven. We do not hope to have our sins put away, but we **know** they are put away. We do not hope to get to heaven, we know that we are there in Christ, through Grace. Romans viii:29 gives us the Hope of God's calling. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." The hope of His calling is to be One with Him, whom God raised from the dead and gave Him Glory. Every sinner saved by Grace will eventually bear the full image of the Firstborn from the dead. "We shall see Him as He is and shall be like Him."

The church, the body of Christ this Masterpiece of God, will be joined to the Head and they shall be One. This is God's calling; this is into what He brings redeemed sinners. The Holy Spirit must enlighten the eyes of our heart, that we can get fresh glimpses of this high and holy calling, and He must keep this calling constantly before our eyes. There is no other way to have and to enjoy the reality of this. If but this knowledge of His calling, our glorious destiny in Christ and with Him, is entered in by God's children, it would mould their lives and keep them in the place of separation. May it please the Holy Spirit to enlighten afresh the eyes of all His people, so that they may know this great calling and walk worthy of it. And how soon this calling of God for which we earnestly hope may become an actual fact! A little while longer and "He that shall come will come." It is then that we shall come into possession of our inheritance.

2. The second petition is that we may know "the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the Saints." Now again we read of "riches." "For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye by His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii:9). The riches into which God, the Father of Glory, has

brought us through Him, who laid His Glory by, is told out in this Epistle. It is the rich Epistle of our riches in Christ. "The Riches of His Grace" (Ep. i:7); "the Riches of the Glory of His Inheritance" (i:18); "Rich in Mercy" (ii:4); "the exceeding Riches of His Grace" (ii:7); "the unsearchable Riches of Christ" (iii:8); "according to the Riches of His Glory" (iii:16); these are the passages in which we read of His Riches towards us and our Riches in Him.

And what is the meaning "the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the Saints?" We have an inheritance, and He has us for His inheritance. He is our inheritance, and we are His inheritance. The Glory of Christ's inheritance are the Saints, for whom He died, the many sons He brings to Glory. The church is the fulness of Him, who filleth all in all. The Saints are the gift of the Father to the Son. He said in His high-priestly prayer, "I am glorified in them." What are the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in us, we cannot fully fathom at this time. In that blessed day, when He receives His inheritance from the Father's hands, we shall inherit with Him, and He will have His inheritance in the glorified Saints. "He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over

thee with singing" (Zeph. iii:17). Though this is spoken of Israel it is equally true of the church. Knowing this, that before us is a future of Glory with Him, though we cannot grasp the fulness of that Glory of His inheritance in the Saints, our hearts even now rejoice and give to Him the praise and adoration, which belongs to Him. Oneness of Glory with Him and the Father is the never ending destiny of the blood-bought Saints.

3. And the third petition is that we may know "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." The context shows what the power is, which is mentioned here and which is on our side. When God called His Masterpiece, the Universe, into existence He manifested His great power. He called all into existence out of nothing. What great power it was by which He created all things! In His great Masterpiece in Redemption, He also made known His power and the exceeding greatness of His power is now to usward, who believe. It is put on our side.

What is this power? The concluding verses of this chapter give the answer. Look to the Cross. There the ever blessed Son of God suffered and died. He bowed His blessed head after he had spoken the precious, never to be forgotten words, "It is finished." He who knew

no sin was made sin for us, and by the shedding of His blood paid our debt. His body was laid in the tomb. On the third day the mighty power of God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, opened the tomb and "He raised Him from the dead." But more than that, the mighty power of God lifted Him up. He passed through the heavens, higher and higher, until He was carried by the mighty power of God into the highest heaven and seated at God's own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. And still more than that. The mighty power of God put all things under His feet and made Him head over all to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him, that filleth all in all. In the highest Glory, with the highest possible Glory upon Him, is the **Man** Christ Jesus. His presence there, taken from the tomb, through the heavens into Glory, tells of the fullest accomplishment of God's Masterpiece.

And now the power which raised Him from the dead, which seated Him at God's own right hand, which put all things under His feet (though we do not yet see all things put under Him) is on our side. It is to usward who believe. We can count as His redeemed ones on this resurrection power. How is it to us-

ward? When we believe and that life is imparted unto us, even eternal life, that power is there. In our lives as His people down here, in the conflict, in temptations, every step of the way, this mighty power is on our side. Oh! for faith to realize this constantly, that we are indeed risen with Christ. The **Holy Spirit** is in us as the Spirit of power to give us the victory. And finally the mighty power of God will be to usward in "that day" when the blessed Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, will give the shout from the air, when the Saints, who fell asleep (as to the body) will rise first, when we who are alive and remain will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment, and caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The same power which raised Him and carried Him through the heavens, will bring His complete church into Glory.

In the presence of the words of verse 23 one feels more like worshipping than trying to expound its meaning. Marvellous words! It tells out the blessed Masterpiece of God. Christ the Head, the church, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, the body. The Head is in Glory; the body not yet joined to the Head. He waits in Glory; the Saints wait on earth. The Body needs the Head, but

the Head also needs the Body. "The Christ" will be complete when the Body is joined to the Head by the mighty power of God. The church as His Body is His fulness; it makes Him complete. And when that is reached, when Head and Body, Christ and the church, are united in Glory, then will the hope of His calling be realized and He will have the Glory of His inheritance in the Saints, and we shall know the exceeding greatness of His power to usward.

Concerning the church, as the Body, the Masterpiece of God, we shall hear more in the chapters which follow.

The Second Chapter

Verses 1-10

The Masterpiece Produced.

After the great revelation of the first chapter and the prayer which followed, the production of the Masterpiece itself is now brought more fully into view. We have before us a revelation concerning our state by nature and how God takes us up and produces out of such material His Masterpiece. The first ten verses of this chapter give us this story. These verses belong to the richest of the whole Word of God.

1. What Man is by Nature. Verses 1-3.

“And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

What Man, Jew or Gentile, is by nature, is first brought forward. The contrast between the Epistle to the Romans and that to the Ephesians is interesting. In Romans the Spirit of God demonstrates at length the guilt and unrighteousness of the whole world. Gentiles

without the law and the Jews with the law are seen equally guilty and lost. All have sinned. Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. The divine verdict is "there is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. iii:9-10). God stops every mouth and shows that the whole world is guilty and lost (iii:19). Upon that dark background God writes the story of His love in His blessed Son, and reveals His righteousness, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe. He reaches down into the terrible pit where man is as sinner and discovers the way out, leading forth in the Epistle to the Romans, till the summit is reached in the eighth chapter.

In Ephesians nothing is said of Man's condition in the opening chapter. God speaks of Himself and His sovereign Grace first of all and leads us far higher than in the Epistle to the Romans. And after He has made known His plans and His work, after He has revealed the riches of His Grace and into what He brings those who believe on His Son, He tells us what material we are. Our desperate condition in which we are by nature is uncovered.

A. Dead in Trespasses and Sins.

The first description shows that man is by

nature in the state of death. This is spiritual death. While in Romans the conduct of Man as a sinner is made prominent, here it is the condition in which man is. Man is dead spiritually, dead towards God, because man is conceived and born in sin. The entire Word of God bears witness to this condition. The spiritual death of man is the foundation fact of the Gospel. If man were not in that condition, he would not be in need of salvation. Our Lord emphasized this condition. He told the religious Pharisee Nicodemus, the moral and learned ruler of the Jews, one of the finest types of the natural man, that he had no life and "must be born again." In His great discourse in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John, our Lord makes the declaration that man is spiritually dead. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed **from death unto life**" (John v:24). This shows clearly that as long as man does not believe on the Son of God, he is in the state of death, and only Grace by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can change that condition. Again He said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when **the dead** shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and

they that hear shall live" (John v:25). The dead in this verse are not the physically dead, for He speaks of those in verses 28-29 of the same chapter. He describes the condition of man spiritually and shows that He alone can change this condition. And His power to raise the physically dead was abundantly demonstrated when He raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had lain four days in the grave. Lazarus dead, in the darkness, and corruption of the grave, may well be used as a picture of man as he is in his natural state. The scholar, the learned, the moral man, the philanthropist, all, no matter what they are or have made of themselves, if unregenerated, are dead towards God; they are in the darkness and corruption of spiritual death. This is a hard saying for the twentieth century. We hear much of the "better self" or "the good spark" which is in everybody. Appeals are made to live better and cleaner lives, but the truth God has revealed concerning man, that he is dead in trespasses and sins, is but little believed.

B. Enemies of God under the Prince of the Power of the Air.

The next verse tells us of the walk in which the natural man is found. It is according to the course of this world, according to the

Prince of the Power of the Air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. It fully reveals the awful place in which man is as dead in trespasses and sins. The walk is according to the nature; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the governing principles of this walk. All are enemies of God by wicked works. And behind all there stands the Prince of the Power of the Air, Satan. He works in the children of disobedience, which here means the Jews. Of this our Lord spake when He said, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John viii:44). And again it is written, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John iii:8). It is a solemn truth, which God has revealed concerning our condition as fallen beings, that we are in the grasp of the Prince of the Power of the Air; that man is under this mighty Being of Darkness. To what a place of degradation man has been brought by sin! This likewise is disbelieved by the great majority of professing Christians. A personal devil is ridiculed and his existence denied. But all these denials cannot change the true condition as made known by the Spirit of God. These denials emanate from this very Being, whose work

is to blind the eyes of man so that he cannot see his real condition before God. As long as the natural man has not received that life, which God offers in His Son, he is dead in trespasses and in sins, and is forced to walk according to the course of this age, held in captivity by sin and Satan, whose slave he is.

C. Children of Wrath.

The "you" of the first verse is addressed to the Ephesians, who were of the Gentiles, and their unsaved condition is thus pictured. When in this verse it is stated "among whom also we had our conversation," the Apostle shows that the Jews were in the same condition. And he adds, "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." The Spirit of God shows that Gentiles and Jews by nature are the children of wrath. The wrath of a holy and righteous God rests upon man in this awful condition. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii:36). No Millennial Dawnist, Restitutionist, or as some call themselves, "Reconciliationist," nor any of the other errorists of the present day, can disprove this simple and solemn statement. They attempt an explanation, but fail

in it. The truth revealed that we are "children of wrath" by nature and remain children of wrath as long as we are outside of Christ, is increasingly denied. What a significant fact, that God has revealed to us our true condition in which we are by nature! And man denies this revelation and refuses to believe what God saith about him. This denial is found in all the cults of Anti-christianity, such as the new Theology, Christian Science, the new religion, Russellism or Millennial Dawnism, Bahaim, Theosophy and a number of others.

But where is there a true child of God, saved by Grace, enjoying the knowledge of the Gospel with its blessed depths and marvellous heights, who denies the truth of the first three verses of the second chapter of Ephesians? We know it is our true photograph. We acknowledge it all to be true. Such material God has to produce out of it His great Masterpiece.

2. What God does, rich in Mercy. Verses 4-6.

After this dark picture of death, ruin and wrath, we read of what God has done and does for all those who are in that condition, who believe on His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall find how, in the riches of His Mercy, He reaches, in His Son, down to these conditions

of death and despair and gives life in place of death, raises up with Christ out of the conditions of enmity and Satan's power, and changes all who believe, from children of wrath, into children of Glory. It is a marvellous, a most blessed revelation given in a few sentences.

A. The foundation. The great love wherewith He loved us.

“But God who is rich in mercy, for the great great love, wherewith He loved us” (Verse 4). This is the precious bridge, which leads out of the dark and dreary, hopeless condition. How beautiful are the first two words of this verse! How sweet they are to faith. **But God:** There are many “But God” in the Bible, and it is well for the reader of the Word of God to notice them. When human power is ended, when man's help fails, when all is dark, when hope is gone, then “But God”! May our faith constantly lay hold upon it, and whenever difficulties arise, trials and troubles surround us and insurmountable obstacles, mountains, confront us, may we cry triumphantly, “But God!”

And so here in our passage. Man is helpless; Man in himself is hopeless. What can one do who is dead? What can a person do who is the slave of a powerful being, whose chains

cannot be snapt by a puny effort? What can one expect who has deserved only wrath? But God! God now comes to the front and makes known that towards such as we are, He is rich in mercy. Rich in Mercy! How often one hears this. Who does not talk of the mercy of God? Hindus, Mohammedans, Unitarians, Bahaists, all talk of God being merciful. But God who is righteous cannot be rich in mercy unless His righteousness is satisfied and His mercy rests completely upon that righteousness. And this is blessedly the case. He has loved us with a great love. For that great love with which He has loved us, He is now towards such as we are, "rich in Mercy" and can take us up and out of our condition. John iii:16 tells us of that great love. He gave His only begotten Son. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. He put the cup of wrath to His blessed lips and He drank the last drop of it, which was our due. The Lord Jesus Christ met all the claims of God's righteousness, and now God is rich in Mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us.

On account of this great Love wherewith God has loved us, which enables Him, who is righteous, to be rich in mercy, God can take up lost sinners and lift them so high. How God does it is now revealed in a few words.

B. Quickened us together with Christ.

“Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ” (by Grace ye are saved). Verse 5.

The verse and that which follows in which we read of the believer's resurrection with Christ and being seated in Christ in the heavenlies, takes us back to the time when our blessed Saviour Lord was quickened and raised from the dead and seated in Glory. It is plain what God did for Him, who died on the Cross, He has done for all, who believe on His Son. Many Christians are ignorant of this great truth, while others have difficulty in grasping it. Yet it is quite simple. Every Christian believes that when the Lord Jesus suffered on the Cross He bore their sins in His own body on the tree. With the Apostle Paul every believer is entitled to say in looking back to the Cross, “He loved Me, He gave Himself for me.” We know all our sins were paid for by His work; all the punishment we deserved fell upon Him, our gracious substitute. In Him we died. All this happened when we were not in existence at all. The sins He bore were not yet committed. God knew all about us and all about our sins and shame, the punishment we deserved, and His ever-blessed Son took all upon Himself. In the same sense

God hath quickened us with Christ, raised us up and seated us in Him, when He did this for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. This is simple, yet so wonderful and deep, that it is incomprehensible. It was all done for us, who believe, when it was done for Him. God in His marvellous counsels in redemption has associated us with Christ. He has made all, who believe on Him, sharers of His life and nature; He brings them into the same relationship as sons, and finally into the same Glory and Inheritance. Let us bear in mind that all this was done for us in Christ. He is the first One who was quickened, raised up and exalted in Glory, and associated with Him are all His members; we share it with Him.

But from this high point of God's counsels we must descend and speak now of our individual quickening and how all this becomes our blessed and real portion by faith in Jesus Christ. Before we do this, we call attention to the word "together." It is generally misapplied. Many read as if it meant we are "quickened together **with Christ.**" If this were the meaning, the word "together" would be superfluous; it would be sufficient to say "quickened with Christ." The word "together" has reference to "Jews and Gentiles"; these two, as seen

elsewhere in this chapter, are made one and both are quickened with Christ.

The word "quicken" is an old English word and means "imparting life." We learned from the first verse of this chapter that man is dead in trespasses and sins. Our condition is that of spiritual death. But God in His great masterpiece of redemption has life for us, which He imparts as His gift. That life is spiritual and eternal; it is the Life of His Son, who died and was raised from the dead. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it dies it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii:24). He went into death and the grave, but came forth out of the grave. It is this life of the Son of God the sinner receives, when He believes on Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v:24, 25). As soon, then, as a sinner believes on the Son of God, casts himself as a lost sinner upon Christ, he receives life, eternal life, as the gift of God.

How little this great, yet simple fundamental Gospel truth is known and enjoyed among the great mass of professing Christians. Some years ago a Y. M. C. A. Secretary showed us a large number of cards, which had been signed during an evangelistic campaign. The cards were in the form of a pledge. "From now on I promise to lead a better religious and Christian life." We asked the Secretary how it is possible for a person to lead a better life, when that person has no life at all. Before there can be a better life, a life lived to please God, there must be the communication of spiritual life, of which man by nature is destitute. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God," because they that are in the flesh are simply natural men, without the new nature. The Gospel does not come to man demanding to do better, to stop lying or stealing, to lead a better life. The Gospel does not say, Do and act right and you shall have life. The Gospel offers life to man dead in trespasses and sins. When that life, the gift of God, is received by faith in Jesus Christ, the doing follows. Only as we receive this life can we live and walk in righteousness.

There is a beautiful parable concerning Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel, which fully illustrates this (Ez. xvi:1-14), "Thy birth and thy

nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite" (Ez. xvi:3). What a parentage! It fully illustrates Psalm li:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And when that child was born, it was cast out. "Thou wast cast out into the open field to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." It pictures our condition by nature. Sin has put us into the "open field" (the world), and put us into the desperate condition in which this little one is seen. And what could this child do, laying in its own blood in the open field? Could it help itself, wash itself, save itself and lead a better life? Absolutely impossible! It needed salvation, and it found salvation, not by its efforts, but from the Lord who passed by. "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live!" In mercy He beheld the miserable, lost little one and the first thing He did was to speak the word of Life and by it communicated life to the one doomed in death. All this shows forth the Gospel concerning life. It is the first thing our Lord does, when He finds us, giving us life. In the same parable we read what else He did for the child. He entered into covenant with the child, "and

thou becamest mine." "I washed thee with water" . . . "I anointed thee with oil." He clothed the child, provided shoes, covered it with silk. "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head." What did the child do? Nothing whatever. From the word "Live" to the beautiful crown, which was placed upon its head, it was all His work. This is what Grace does for all who believe the Gospel.

"By Grace are ye saved." Blessed be God in all eternity for these precious words, which are given here for the first time in this Epistle! Salvation is by Grace, and is all from His side. God has accomplished the mighty work for us. We could have nothing to do with it, for it was all planned before the foundation of the world; it was done when we were not at all in existence. And as we trust in Christ we are saved by Grace. We do not hope to be saved at last. Nor do we work to be saved. The Grace of God has saved us, we have eternal life and can never perish.

C. Raised us up together.

"And hath raised us up together." This

leads us on in the mighty power of God in the production of His Masterpiece. Quickening and Resurrection are not one and the same thing. As already stated, quickening means the giving of life. Resurrection, however, is the placing of that given life into the proper sphere. By the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ we are justified. Nothing can now be laid to the charge of God's elect, nor can there be any more condemnation (Romans viii:31-39). In Him, therefore, whom He raised from the dead, God has given to us a new and blessed position. We are taken from among the dead; we have received His life and now occupy in resurrection the blessed place before God, which He occupies as the First-begotten from the dead. We are Sons of God, the beloved of God, called Saints, and no longer as enemies of God in a guilty distance from Him. We are fully accepted in the Beloved. We are as near in Him to God as He is. That is what it means, "raised us up together."

D. Seated in Christ Jesus.

"And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This leads us still higher. Grace must do all it can do, or it would not be Grace. God is going to get now

the highest Glory for Himself by making known the riches of Mercy towards those who are in Christ. If He had stopped short of the wonderful declaration before us, His Grace would not have been exhausted. It would be unfinished. But He has done it all. Besides giving us life and placing us in the blessed position as sons in resurrection, He has seated us in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places. Quite often the statement is quoted as "made us sit together in heavenly places **with** Christ Jesus." This is incorrect. We are not seated with Christ, but **in** Christ. When He comes again, we shall be with Him and share His glory. Here we have the very summit of Christian position. We are not alone representatively, but also virtually, sitting in Christ in the highest Glory. Not alone have we life in Him, but He is our life. Therefore our life is hid with Christ in God. In Him, who is our life, we are seated in the heavenly places. How far above man's thought and expectation all this is! Who would ever have dared to reach as high as that! And how little we can enter into the fullness of all this. Yet it is given to us to enjoy now in faith by believing what God hath told us, without being able to comprehend its heights and depths. Oh! that indeed the eyes of our hearts may be enlight-

ened, that we may know the hope of His calling.

It is worth the while to review in a brief word the blessed revelations given in the first six verses of this chapter.

We saw first what man is by nature. Dead in trespasses and sins; this stands in the foreground. Enemies of God under the Prince of the Power of the Air; this is the result of such a condition. Children of Wrath, because we are dead, His enemies and linked with Satan.

And now God has come in with His mighty Power in the production of His Masterpiece. He gives life so that the dead condition is ended. Instead of enemies, we are constituted, by the resurrection of His Son, beloved sons of Himself. And in Christ Jesus, He makes of us children of Glory, instead of children of Wrath. Marvellous Masterpiece of God! May we praise Him for it all.

But one must ask in view of such riches of Grace, as revealed in the preceding verses, What is the purpose of all this? The verse which follows gives the answer. We find ourselves face to face with the purpose of Glory in the destiny of His Masterpiece.

3. The Destiny of the Masterpiece.

“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding

riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Verse 7.

In the first place let us notice that the little word "us" now refers to all, the "together" in verses five and six, believing Jews and Gentiles. The Masterpiece of God is not so much the salvation of the individual as it is the church, the body of Christ into which believing Jews and Gentiles are put by the Holy Spirit. Only once was this great truth mentioned at the close of the first chapter, when we read that Christ is the head of the church, "which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." We have refrained from enlarging on this fact that the church, the body of Christ, is God's Masterpiece, because in the second half of this chapter and in the one which follows the truth concerning the church is more fully revealed.

The verse before us revealing the destiny of God's Masterpiece is one of the richest and deepest of the whole Word of God. It is strange that some of the leading and most analytical expositors of Ephesians have failed to grasp its meaning. They apply it in a way which is all out of keeping with the scope of the first part of this chapter. "The ages to come" are explained by them as the present Christian age; of the different periods of our

dispensation, they speak of "ages." Their interpretation is, that God shows **now** in this dispensation, in every period of it, the exceeding riches of His Grace in those who are in Christ. Anyone can see that this view is incorrect, for the Word of God never speaks of a dispensation being composed of ages.

"The ages to come" are future ages, which follow the present age. This verse forms a kind of a mountain-peak in this Epistle. We look into the past eternity without a beginning and hear what God willed before the foundation of the world; we look in the future and hear of "ages to come."

The greater part of evangelical Christendom holds a very hazy and decidedly unscriptural view concerning the "ages" of time and eternity. The different ages of the past, the present age and the ages to come are something foreign to many Christians. The great dispensational truths of the Word of God have been grossly neglected. It has avenged itself in a fearful way. The enemy has taken advantage of this. Evil teachers like the notorious "Pastor Russell," with his "Plan of the Ages," etc., have brought out a little of the dispensational facts, but mixed with it the most deadly, soul destroying errors, which are a curse to the professing church and by which

thousands have become ensnared. The prevailing idea, that the present age in which we live, is the last age, and that when it ends no other age will follow, has no foundation whatever in the Scriptures; it is totally unscriptural. The present age will end. How it ends and that another age will follow is fully revealed in the prophetic Word. The coming age is that of "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Chapter i:10), the Kingdom age, when the Kingdom will be established on this earth and the Lord Jesus Christ will exercise His Kingly rule and authority, showing forth His Kingly Glory. When the Kingdom age ends and this earth is consumed by fire (2 Peter iii:10) there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Then the eternal state—the eternal age—is reached.

Of this we read here and a revelation is given concerning these ages to come. God is going to make known His Glory through and in His great Masterpiece. The word "show" means "to exhibit"—"to display." His purpose concerning the future then is "that in the ages to come He might display the exceeding (surpassing) riches of His Grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." The age in which we live loves to display. Every few years there is an "exposition" somewhere, when all

the great achievements of the age are displayed. Man in his day prides himself with his power. But this boasting age will end in the predicted crash, when all high things will be laid low and this boasting, Christless civilization will be swept by the fires of divine displeasure and judgment. It is then, when the present age closes and man's display comes to a sudden end, that God will begin His display, His exposition.

He opens the Heavens and brings forth Him, who is now unseen, the Man in Glory at His right hand. His Glory will cover the Heavens, when He shines forth in His royal Majesty and comes in great power and glory. What a day it will be when He sends Him back, the First begotten from the dead! And He will not be alone. His Saints follow Him. Each reflects the Glory of Himself. The Son brings His many sons into glory. He is then glorified in His Saints and admired in all them that believed (2 Thess. i:10). What a wonderful display of power and glory that will be! God displays His Masterpiece; the Christ, the Head and the Body. He shows to all the beings of the Universe what He has accomplished, and thus displays the surpassing riches of His Grace. Throughout the Kingdom age this unspeakable display will continue.

The Lord and His Church will be together in the Glory of the new Jerusalem and will reign over all.

But this is not all. In the eternal age, from eternity to eternity, God is continuing in this. He will bring forth something new in Glory, new riches of Himself for those who are one with His well beloved Son. From eternity to eternity He displays the surpassing riches of His Grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. How one is overwhelmed in the presence of such a statement! And how little after all we can understand all those coming riches in Glory. What a destiny! The heart may well cry—nothing but Glory! What is the little suffering, the little while down here, in comparison with such never ending Glory!

A word of caution here is also needed. Of late the teaching is being circulated that in eternal ages God will work towards a restitution of all things. These unscriptural teachers call themselves "reconciliationists." According to them the ages to come will bring God's grace to all the lost and they will be saved. But where does it say this? Certainly not in the Word of God. Their theories are obtained by a process of reasoning. The passage here speaks only of those "in Christ Jesus."

4. Saved by Grace through Faith. Verses 8-10.

A. The Positive Statement. Verse 8.

"For by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

And now once more the Spirit of God emphasizes this great fact "saved by Grace." Salvation and all it includes is the gift of God. But what about faith? Is that also the gift of God? Assuredly. It is not of ourselves to be able to believe and accept God's Word, nor is it an accomplishment which is to our credit; but it is God's gift. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

In a day when the counterfeit Gospel, the Gospel of works and character building, is almost universally preached, a Gospel, which is not of God, but which has the curse of God resting upon it (Gal. I:8), may we cling the closer to the solid rock, which will abide forever "saved by Grace."

B. The Negative Side: Not of Works. Verse 9.

"Not of works lest any man should boast."

The works of man have nothing to do with salvation. Alas! how many try to gain favor

with God by doing. The religious Pharisee who stood in the temple and told God what he had not done and what he was doing as a religious man, has thousands of followers in Christendom to-day. Man has no works. We are by nature positively and negatively bad. We have never done a good thing. If righteousness and with it salvation were by the law, then Christ would be dead in vain. And how strange that some say that they believe salvation is not of works, but by Grace, and then assert, that if they are saved and wish to remain saved, they must work!

C. His Workmanship. Verse 10.

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

This is linked closely with the foregoing statement. We have no works; nothing we do or have done can save us. But God has worked. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus. We are in Him, His new creation. By giving to us the new nature, His life, He has called us “unto good works.” Fruit to the praise of His Glory is the result of Grace. “This is a faithful saying and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be

careful to maintain good works" (Tit. iii:8). Fruit unto God is the blessed result of being in Christ and abiding in Him (Rom. vii:4 and John xv:5). Saved by Grace is witnessed to by a holy walk. The man who says, "Saved by Grace" and walks constantly in unrighteousness and brings no fruit, shows that his profession is spurious.

The Mystery of the Masterpiece—The Church

Chapter II:11–III:21.

With the eleventh verse of the second chapter we reach a new division in this Epistle. The great Mystery of the Masterpiece of God, the church, is next revealed by the Holy Spirit. We saw in the first chapter of this wonderful Epistle how God planned His Masterpiece and the work of the Godhead. Then we learned in the first ten verses of the second chapter how God deals with us individually and fashions lost sinners, who trust in Christ, into His Masterpiece. And now we are led higher, and the fact is made known that all believers are united into one body. This truth was briefly mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter (i:22, 23).

1. The Condition of the Gentiles. Verses 11–12.

A. The Uncircumcision. Verse 11.

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the Uncircumcision

by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands."

The Gentiles are to remember first of all what they were in time past. What Gentiles were morally we have learned from the opening verses of this chapter. The same condition is also that of the Jews, "for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii:22-23). But while there was no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles morally (Rom. iii:9), there was a difference dispensationally. "What advantage, then, hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii:1-2). God had revealed Himself to Israel, the seed of Abraham, while the Gentiles were permitted to go their own way. Even so the Lord reminded Israel of this fact: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii:2). Circumcision in the flesh made by hands was the covenant sign and the characteristic mark of separation from the other nations. Gentiles possessed no such divinely made covenant, and the reproach of "Uncircumcision" rested upon them.

B. What Gentiles were. Verse 12.

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Four things are given to picture the desperate condition of the Gentile world.

- a. Without Christ.
- b. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.
- c. Strangers from the covenants.
- d. Without Hope and without God.

The picture indeed is dark; but it only brings out the marvellous beauty of God's Masterpiece, and His Grace in putting such wanderers, without hope and without God, as members into that blessed body, which is the fulness and glory of Christ, who filleth all in all. Dispensationally, the great Gentile world was "without Christ"; they knew nothing about Christ; no promise had been given to them. But Israel possessed the promises. Prophet after prophet had spoken and announced to Israel the coming One and His work. Everything in their God-given institutions fore-shadowed Christ, and when He came in the fulness of time He declared "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv:22). Though the Syro-Phoenician woman cried after Him and addressed Him as "Son of David," He answered her not a word; as a Gentile she had no claim on Him. Gentiles

had no part in the promised Messiah. Only after His own had rejected Him and delivered Him into the hands of wicked men, was the Gospel sent to the Gentiles. By their fall salvation came to the Gentiles (Rom. xi:11). They were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" and "strangers from the covenants of promise." Because they were as Gentiles so completely excluded from the commonwealth and the covenants of promises, they were without Christ. The Gentiles were "the dogs"; poor, wandering outcasts, far off, as we read later in this chapter. Yet, beautiful it is to see God anticipated the salvation of the Gentiles, and some Gentiles were received into the congregation of Israel. We mention but "Ruth," the Moabitess, upon whom the curse of the law rested in a special manner, and whose name is found in the genealogy of our Lord.

And the result of having no promise of Christ, separated from Israel and God's covenants, as well as the commonwealth of Israel, the kingdom of priests, the result of all was—"without hope and without God in the world." No ray of hope enlightened the dark night of the Gentiles. The Gentiles had indeed possessed light and had known God, but had turned their backs upon God. Therefore being left alone, they

had no hope. Different was Israel's condition. Israel along with the promises and the covenants had hope. The hope of Israel is the Messiah; and though they are wanderers now, yet there is hope, which some day will be gloriously realized in the conversion of the remnant of Israel and the fulfillment of all their promises. But the Gentiles knew no hope. They were "without God in the world." God, of course, knew the Gentiles. His dealings with them was not unrighteous, but according to His own sovereign will. He did not make Himself known to the Gentiles because they had turned away from the light and therefore He gave them up. The first chapter in Romans is an enlargement of the brief description of what Gentiles are morally and dispensationally. They knew God (Rom. i:21) and glorified Him not. They became vain and were darkened. They thought themselves wise and became fools. After they became idolatrous, God gave them up in their bodies (Rom. i:24), in their souls (verses 26-27) and in their spirits (verse 28).

Well may we remember in the dreadful days of apostasy, which are upon us, that Gentiles, who have had the Gospel preached unto them, are turning once more from the light, yea, from God's best. Christendom in denying

Christ is rapidly waning, and must eventually plunge into a greater darkness than the darkness of the Gentile world before the cross. Without Christ, without hope, and without God! Fearful and solemn words these are! When Christ is given up, His Deity and His Blood rejected, when men deliberately turn away from Him, and deny His Person and His Glory, they rush into the outer and eternal darkness "without hope and without God."

2. But Now in Christ Jesus. Verses 13-18.

A. Made nigh by the Blood of Christ. Verse 14.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Blessed are the two little words that stand at the beginning of this sublime verse—But! Now! It is the second "but" in this Epistle. It corresponds to the "but" in verse 4 of this chapter. The Holy Spirit describes, in the beginning of this second chapter, as we have seen, the desperate moral condition of Jews and Gentiles, showing that all are by nature the children of wrath. Then the triumphant declaration comes in—"But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love, wherewith He has

loved us." And here, after it is shown that the Gentiles were dispensationally without Christ, without hope and without God in the world, so very far off, we meet the other "but." God in His mighty power, in His infinite grace, makes the far off Gentiles nigh. "But now." This dispensation of Grace in which He makes known the mystery, which in other ages was not made known, that the Gentiles, once without Christ and without God, should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, is the "**now**" in which the surpassing riches of God's Grace are made known. **Now**, after Israel rejected the King and the Saviour, **now**, when He is upon the Father's throne, **now**, when the Holy Spirit is on earth to do His appointed work, **now**, during the present age, God makes fully known what He had planned before the foundation of the world. He is producing His Masterpiece, taking the material from Israel, and reaching out with His mighty power after the Gentiles, to put them into one body. The poor, miserable, naked beggar upon the dunghill, the Gentile, is taken up to sit among princes and inherit the throne of Glory.

"But now in Christ Jesus." Here again we are obliged to halt. "In Christ Jesus." This is the place of blessing; this is the One in whom

the purposes of eternity are carried out. Not for what they have done, or would do, but "in Christ Jesus." Oh! that blessed Name, above every other name! How prominent this precious Name is in these unsearchable revelations on the threshold of this rich Epistle! Review them once more. Five times His Name is given in the first three verses of Ephesians. Paul is an apostle of **Jesus Christ**, and the Saints are faithful **in Christ Jesus**. Grace and Peace is **from the Lord Jesus Christ**. **In Christ** we possess every spiritual blessing. **In Him** we are chosen. By **Jesus Christ** we have the son-place. In the **Beloved** we are accepted. **In Him** we have redemption. All things are to be gathered **in Christ** in the coming dispensation. **In Him** we have an inheritance. And thus we could continue and cover the same blessed ground once more. It is **Christ**, and Christ only, throughout these marvellous revelations.

In Him, who came from Heaven's glory and went to the cross, where He gave Himself and shed His blood, believing Gentiles are made nigh. Oh! blessed words! Made nigh by the Blood of Christ! What comfort this brings to us poor sinners of the Gentiles, once so far off, such outcasts in such a fearful, immeasurable distance from God! What a

blessing that not our works, our service, our sacrifice, our sufferings or anything else have anything whatever to do with "being made nigh." Nor, blessed be God! have our works anything to do with keeping us nigh. The Blood has made us nigh; the Blood will ever keep each true believer nigh, and unfaithfulness can never put him back into the place where he once was. The Blood of Christ has justified us; by the Blood we have forgiveness of sins: it cleanses us from all sin. By the blood of Christ we enter the Holiest. And who can tell us how nigh the Blood has made believing Gentiles? We are as near to God as Christ is. We are as dear to Him as He is, who was our substitute on the cross. Oh! for faith to enter into this and to enjoy it. And as we enjoy in faith our nearness to God in Christ, our blessed and eternal portion, we shall find that we shall indeed live and walk no longer as the other Gentiles do, but "unto the praise of the glory of His Grace."

*B. What the work of Christ has accomplished.
Verses 14-15.*

"For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of command-

ments in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace."

Made nigh by the Blood of Christ! This is the blessedness of believing Gentiles, who were once afar off, without Christ, without hope and without God in the world. But much more has been accomplished by the blessed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Three things are stated in these two verses.

- a. He is our peace; making both one.
- b. Broken down the middle wall and abolished the law of commandments.
- c. Making in Himself one new man.

It is a most precious truth that Christ Himself is our peace. Not what we have done, or what we do could make peace. It is wrong to speak, as it is so often done, of making our peace with God. God has done it in the blood of the Cross; and He who hath accomplished this for us, is our peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." However, this most comforting fact of peace with God, through and in Christ, is not at all before us in the fourteenth verse. The parties here, which are made one, are not a holy God and an unholy sinner. The Jews and the Gentiles are the two, who are

made One in Christ. Between these two there stood a middle wall of partition, separating them. This middle wall of partition is the law. God Himself had put up this wall, separating His people Israel from the Gentiles. We read in Isaiah about the vineyard, which is Israel, that He had fenced it (Isaiah v:2); and our Lord, speaking of the same vineyard, said: "He hedged it round about" (Matt. xxi:33). The law of commandments in ordinances demanded from the Jews an entire separation from the Gentiles. For a Jew to eat with a Gentile was sin. Even Peter, when he had eaten with the Gentiles in Antioch, separated himself and withdrew; this shows how deeply rooted was this prejudice. The enmity and hatred between the Jews and Gentiles was great and can easily be traced in history. And now in the cross of Christ, God has broken down this middle wall of partition and made an end of this enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances. It has found its end in the cross. The Jews having rejected their Messiah had filled up the measure of their guilt as a nation and had become more guilty on account of it, than the Gentiles. The middle wall ceased existing. The Gentiles far off, in darkness, without Christ, without hope and without God, the Jews having rejected their promised Christ

and nailed Him to a Cross, are the material, which God forms into His great Masterpiece. He comes forth with the mystery He had not made known in former age. Jews and Gentiles, believing, trusting in Christ, made nigh by His blood, are made both one and constitute one new man. This is what God has accomplished, taking believing Jews and believing Gentiles, gathering them into one. This is the Masterwork of God, He does during this age. When the Kingdom age comes the Jews will receive their place of blessing and glory in their land, and the Gentiles will be greatly blessed and enjoy righteousness and peace. Both Jews and Gentiles will be in the Kingdom then, but not as **one body**. In the present age a body is forming "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Col. ii:11). This new man is the church, and Christ is the Head of that new man. Grace flowing from the cross of Christ, where peace was made in the blood, takes up Jews and Gentiles and makes them one. When our Lord prayed in His high priestly prayer "that they may all be one as we are one," He must have thought of this great truth, now fully revealed in this Epistle by the Spirit of God.

C. The Reconciliation. Verse 16.

“And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”

- a. Both reconciled unto God in one body.
- b. The enmity slain by the cross.

The two classes are still in view here and the “one new man” of the preceding verse is now called “one body.” That body is the church. Thus gradually the Holy Spirit leads up to that mystery, which in former ages was not made known unto the sons of men. How sublime are the unfoldings in this greatest of all Epistles! Taken back into the counsels of the Godhead; then down to where He finds us in our sin and shame; then out of death and up into glory. And now the Spirit of God begins to show us the mystery of the one body. In all this wonderful work, the cross and the work of the cross, is kept in fullest view. Apart from the cross and the blood, which was shed by the holy One, there can be no such reconciliation. A careful comparison should be made with Colossians i:20-21, inasmuch as the same word is used for “reconcile,” which is used in this verse. “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometimes alienated and ene-

mies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight." Here we find a double reconciliation. The reconciliation of all things and the reconciliation of believing sinners. These two reconciliations correspond to the two headships of Christ. He is the head of Creation (Col. i:15-17) and He is the head of the body, the Church (Col. i:18). The reconciliation of all things, that is, things in earth and things in heaven, is still future. When He comes again and takes the place over His creation and delivers groaning creation from its groans and from the curse, which rests upon it, then He will reconcile all things. All things in earth and in heaven will be brought into their right, their holy and glorious condition; of this the Old Testament prophetic Word bears abundant witness. The wicked dead, however, are not included in the "all things."*

The reconciliation of all who have believed

*Compare with Phil. ii:9-11. In Philipians, where Christ's exaltation is described and the fact is revealed, that every being **must** acknowledge Him as Lord (not as Saviour), a forced acknowledgment, as far as the lost are concerned, **things under the earth** are mentioned. But not so in Col. i:20. For things under the earth there is no reconciliation.

is an accomplished fact. How the 20th and 21st verses of the first chapter of Colossians correspond with the second chapter of Ephesians needs no further explanation. But in the verse before us in Ephesians, the individual reconciliation is not in view. The two, believing Jews and Gentiles, are reconciled in one body unto God, and Christ is the head of that body. And by the cross the enmity was also slain. This again refers to the law. It is not the law which is slain, but it is that which is so fully developed in the Epistle to the Romans. All who are in the one body are dead to the law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him that was raised from the dead, that we should bring fruit unto God" (Romans vii:4).

*D. The Peace and Reconciliation Preached.
Verse 16.*

"And He came and preached peace to you, who were afar off, and to them that were nigh."

- a. To those afar off (Gentiles).
- b. To them that were nigh (Jews).

The two classes are again mentioned. We, as Gentiles, are afar off and the Jews are they who were nigh, though, morally, as far off as the Gentiles. It has been argued from this

verse that the Lord Jesus Christ never preached in person, after His resurrection, this peace to these two classes. Inasmuch as it says "He came," it is claimed that it means His "spiritual coming" in which this is accomplished. But He promised another comforter, who was to come and who came, the Holy Spirit. He has taken His place and through His Spirit He sends forth this blessed message to Gentiles and to Jews, "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him, that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah lvii:19-21). This is an Old Testament anticipation of what was to come; a hint of what was in the mind of God and which is now fully revealed in this Epistle of the Masterpiece of God. When He comes again as the Prince of Peace, when His church, composed of all who were made nigh, is complete, He will speak peace to the nations, and they will learn war no more.

E. The gracious Result. Verse 18.

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

The Holy Spirit brings the message of peace

and reconciliation to Gentiles and Jews. The believing sinner is put by the Spirit into the one body, and both, Gentiles and Jews, have by one Spirit access unto the Father. The Jew never knew anything whatever about "access unto the **Father**." He had a tabernacle and the way into the Holiest was not yet made known. The Gentile was "without God" altogether. Something far more blessed is now made known. All believers are made nigh and born again, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they belong to the family of God and cry by the one Spirit, given to all, "Abba, Father."

Our Lord spoke of this to the woman at the well of Samaria. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the **Father** seeketh such to worship Him" (John iv:23). Made nigh by blood; worshipping in the Holiest; calling upon God as Father; a continued access into His presence by His own Spirit—these are blessed realities for all, who are in Christ, members of His body. But how little we enter into the full enjoyment of this!

We are led still higher. The last four verses form a climax. What Gentiles were without Christ, what Gentiles are in Christ, we have learned from the preceding verses. The middle

wall, the law of commandments in ordinances, is broken down. The enmity was slain by the cross. Believing Gentiles are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles constitute in Christ one new man and both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. And now we hear more of that new man, the body of Christ, that is the church.

3. The Relationship of the Masterpiece.

A. *The Changed Condition.* Verse 19.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

- a. No more strangers and foreigners.
- b. Fellow-citizens with the Saints.
- c. Of the household of God.

“Now therefore” Gentiles are no longer that which they were without Christ. Then they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the promises; but now, in Christ, they are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God. A most blessed transformation! Fellow-citizens with the Saints does not mean that they have been brought into the commonwealth of Israel. The conception that the church, the body of Christ, is the commonwealth of Israel continued in a spiritual form, is incorrect. Grace has in-

troduced both, believing Jews and believing Gentiles, into a higher sphere and into a far more precious fellowship. Their fellowship is with the Saints, which means fellowship with the whole company of the redeemed. This fellowship will some day find its blessed realization and consummation in the Kingdom to come, which the Saints receive and which cannot be moved (Heb. xii:28). Abraham, the father of the faithful, by faith, "looked for a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi:10). And believing Gentiles, once without God and without hope, are brought into the same fellowship and look for the same heavenly city. "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii:20). But more than that, they are of the "household of God," members of the family of God by the new birth. But the words "household of God" are to be connected with the verse which follows. Believing Gentiles constitute, with believing Jews, the house of God. The masterpiece of God, the church, is therefore now described under the figure of a building.

B. The Church as the Building. Verse 20.

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and

prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."

- a. The foundation.
- b. The chief cornerstone.

In the first chapter of this Epistle the church is called "His body." In the second chapter the church is compared with a building, which groweth unto an holy temple and which is the habitation of God through the Spirit.

In the Old Testament God had a building in which He manifested His presence and His Glory. The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple of Solomon were shadows of the church, which God is now building. The foundation upon which the church as the house is built, we find mentioned first. And it is of importance that we examine this foundation closely. One of the common mistakes concerning the foundation upon which the church is built, is that, which claims that the foundation are the prophets of the Old Testament. According to this view the Old Testament Saints belonged to the church, and the church itself was therefore in existence throughout the previous dispensations. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Moses and all who believed the promises of God are therefore taken to be members of the church. This view is often based upon the words we have under consideration, that the church is

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now if the prophets were mentioned before the apostles, there might be a possibility that the prophets of the Old Testament are meant. But it says "apostles and prophets." They are the New Testament apostles and prophets. Chapter iii:5 gives positive evidence on this whole question. The church is called a mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." To this we may add the words of our Lord at Cesarea Philippi when He said to Peter "upon this rock I will build my church." The church up to that time was not yet in existence, nor was it in process of building, during the days of the earthly ministry of our Lord, but the building of the church was still a matter of the future. When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the church began and subsequently the same Spirit revealed the mystery hidden in former ages.

Another error in connection with the foundation of the church is the conception that the apostles are the foundation. The Romish "church" teaches this, closely followed by ritualistic protestant "churches" which speak of apostolic succession. These claim that they possess the successors of the apostles and,

therefore, their "churches" have a succession of foundations. A queer building that is! And other protestant sects trace their beginnings to some man who "founded" their church. All this is wrong and against what God has accomplished in His Masterpiece. In this way the enemy has marred and corrupted the Truth of God.

But what does it mean "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets?" Are they themselves, in their persons, Paul, Peter, James and others, the foundation upon which the church rests as a building? Not at all. It is true the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I have laid the foundation." But that does not mean that **he** is the foundation. In connection with the same statement, Paul declares, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii:9-11). He speaks of Christians as "God's building," the church. Paul and the other apostles are the foundation in what they taught and still teach in their epistles. The Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Christ, this is the foundation. This the apostles taught. It is their doctrine, given by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. It is not the question of being the foundation, but building upon that foundation, as taught by the apostles and prophets.

When Peter had uttered his inspired confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord announced, as mentioned above, the future building of His church. "And I say also unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi: 18). Satan has invented the abominable lie, that Peter is the rock foundation of the church. But the rock is not Peter, but Christ Himself. The apostle Peter significantly received no messages to the church and his epistles give no revelation concerning the church. Only once does he touch upon the fact that believers are God's building. And when he did, the Spirit of God guided his pen to answer the perversion of the truth as found in ritualistic Christendom. The Holy Spirit anticipated the fatal errors to come. Peter writes of the Lord Jesus as the living stone, and believers he calls "living stones" built up a spiritual house (1 Peter ii:4-5).

So it is Christ, and the doctrine of Christ, which is the foundation. "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." But He likewise is the chief cornerstone. Of this also Peter testifies. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

It is a quotation from Isaiah xxviii:16. But who can tell out the preciousness of this blessed One, upon whom everything rests! Another passage to be considered in connection with Christ as the chief cornerstone is Psalm cxviii:22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." Jewish tradition gives the story that, when Solomon's temple was building, a stone was discovered hewn in a peculiar way. The builders refused that particular stone, only to discover later that it was fitted to be the cornerstone. This may be true. But we know from the Gospels and the book of Acts, that the rejected stone is Christ. "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, the stone, which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Matt. xxi:42). "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts iv:11). It was after Israel rejected Christ, that He became the chief cornerstone, the sure, the precious foundation, upon which the building rests.

C. The Holy Temple. Verse 21.

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

- a. Fitly framed together.
- b. Growing unto an holy temple.

The building of God's Masterpiece is fitly framed together, which means, that God puts it together in His own marvellous way. Believers are living stones. They possess the same life, which is in Christ, the living stone. Needless to say, that only those, who are born again, belong to that building. From the first chapter of this Epistle we learned that all those who belong to this elect body were known and chosen of God before the foundation of the world. The entire building is therefore planned by God and every stone has its proper place. This is a marvellous fact. Solomon's temple gives a little illustration of this. When that temple was building hammer, axe and tools of iron were not heard. "And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building." Every stone was prepared before hand and fitted into the place where it belonged. How beautifully it illustrates the fitting together of the house, His church! He chooses and prepares the material and puts each in its proper place.* What a contrast with man's

*Read in connection with this 1 Cor. xii. The same truth is there revealed in connection with the teaching of the Church as the body of Christ.

methods in trying to increase "church-membership!" The divine revelation is forgotten. Christendom has departed from the faith in these revelations concerning the one church and its architect. But all the confusion, the wrong conceptions and attending evils, cannot frustrate the purposes of the Lord. He is building His church. He takes the material and puts it as living stones in the place where it belongs. This is the work of His Spirit. And in the midst of all the confusion, the clamoring voices, the spurious revivals, the ecclesiastical-political hurry of world-reformation, the work goes on quietly, but steadily. The church is the temple of God. Some day that growing temple will be complete. The last stone will be put in and then the building, which was fitly framed together on earth, will become the **holy** temple of the Lord in glory. All this transcends everything which was revealed by the Old Testament prophets. The eternal destiny of this holy temple no saint can fully understand.

*D. The Habitation of God in the Spirit.
Verse 22.*

"In whom ye also are being built in together an habitation of God in the Spirit."

This is still another climax in this rich Epistle of God's greatest work. The third person of

the Godhead is now mentioned. He dwells in the church, because He indwells every individual believer. This is a present fact. We are the habitation of God. As He dwelt of old in the tabernacle, so He dwells in the church through the Spirit. He does no longer dwell in an earthly house. The conception of a church building being a "holy place" which we must call "the house of the Lord" or "a temple" is absolutely wrong. It is the Jewish idea. God does no longer dwell in an earthly house and yet He has His habitation here. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst; that is a church and the habitation of God through the Spirit. "Even now in the state of imperfection, by the Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers, that God has His habitation in the church; and then when the growth and increase of that church shall be completed, it will be still in and by the Holy Spirit fully penetrating and possessing the whole glorified church, that the Father will dwell in it forever."* Alas! how this wonderful truth is not alone completely lost sight of, but rejected by men, who claim to be Christians. How great is the prostitution of the church! May we remember these great truths and individually

*Dean Alford in Greek New Testament.

walk in them, knowing that we are the habitation, the dwelling of God. Out of that consciousness flows both our blessedness and our responsibility. What influence this blessed revelation of the Masterpiece of God should have upon our life and conduct! Daily we ought to have it vividly before our hearts that we are the habitation of God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom ye have of God, and you are not your own" (1 Cor. vi:19).

The Third Chapter

The Ministry of the Mystery of the Masterpiece

Chapter III: 1-13.

A. Paul the Prisoner of Jesus Christ. Verse 1.

“For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles.”

The great Apostle begins to speak of himself and the mystery which had been made known unto him. In the brief word of greeting, with which this epistle begins, we find his name mentioned as an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. Then followed at once that marvellous unfolding of the Masterpiece of God in all its riches and precious depths. And now he is to tell more fully of the mystery of the Masterpiece; and as it was revealed to Him as the Apostle to the Gentiles, he writes, “I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles.” He became the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for the Gentiles, when on his last visit to Jerusalem, he related his experience, speaking from the stairs, which led into the castle, and addressing the Jews in the temple-court. When he told them that the Lord had said unto him, “Depart, for I will send thee

far hence unto the Gentiles," the Jewish mob would not listen any longer, but cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" (Acts xxii:21-22). In this way he became the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles. From the prison in Rome the most blessed messages were sent forth by the Holy Spirit through Paul.

B. His Ministry concerning the Masterpiece. Verses 2-5.

"If indeed ye have heard of the dispensation of the Grace of God which is given me toward you, how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

- a. Made known by revelation.
- b. The Mystery of Christ.
- c. Hidden in other generations.
- d. Now made known by the Spirit.

He speaks of that which they had known, and learned from his oral teaching, that the Lord had entrusted him with the dispensation* of the grace of God towards the Gentiles. The Gospel of Grace in all its marvellous riches,

*Administration or stewardship.

flowing out to the Gentiles, was given to Paul to proclaim. He spoke of this Gospel which he preached as "my Gospel." In defense of that Gospel, the dispensation of the grace of God, he wrote to the Galatians, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if anyone preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." These are solemn words. They have occasionally been termed a passionate outburst of Paul, when he found his authority belittled by the judaizing teachers, which troubled the Galatians. They are not that at all. The Holy Spirit bears testimony in these words to the fact that he had received a dispensation of the grace of God towards the Gentiles, and that the Gospel, which he so faithfully proclaimed, was given to him by revelation of Jesus Christ. It was therefore a most serious and solemn thing to interfere with that Gospel, or to teach anything which was not in harmony with it. The curse of God must surely rest upon those who pervert or counterfeit that Gospel. How much this is done in the days of apostasy needs no further illustration. The day assuredly comes, when the divine anathema will be

executed upon Christendom, which has set aside the true Gospel and proclaims what is not the Gospel at all.

The Apostle had received this double ministry, the Gospel and the ministry concerning the church (Col. i:23, 25). Both are inseparably connected. Indeed they were revealed in germ at his conversion. He saw on the road to Damascus the Lord in His Glory. The Gospel he received proclaims to the sinner, who believes on the Son of God, a blessed identification with the risen and glorified Lord. Then he heard the Lord speaking to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He persecuted Christians and not Christ, but he learned then, that believers in Christ are one with Him. This is the germ of the truth concerning the church. In Ephesians the stewardship or dispensation concerns mostly the church.

This mystery was made known unto him by revelation. The word mystery needs a brief definition. It is not something mysterious, but it means that which was unknown, hidden from man, till it pleased God to make it known by revelation. When our Lord spoke of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew xiii, He said: "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the

world." The Apostle Paul often speaks of the mysteries made known. See 1 Tim. iii:16; Col. i:26-27; Col. ii:2; Eph. v:32; 2 Thess. ii:7; Rom. xi:26. He reminds the readers of this Epistle that he had mentioned the mystery before in a few words. Without doubt this directs our attention to the first chapter of the Epistle. Then he had stated "the mystery of the Christ." What is it? Not merely the statement contained in the last verse concerning the church, as the body of Christ, but Christ Himself. Christ whom God raised from the dead, whom He set at His own right hand in the heavenly places, under whom God hath put all things and who is the Head of His body. This body is the church, His own fullness.

This mystery of a risen Christ, who has a body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, is the mystery, which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men. It is the mystery which was kept secret since the world began (Rom. xvi:25). From the beginning of this Epistle we learned that the church was in the counsel of God before the foundation of the world, but He let ages go past till He was pleased to make it known. This statement settles the question once for all concerning the existence of the church,

the body of Christ, in and during the Old Testament dispensations. Yet it is one of the most widespread views that the church existed from the beginning of creation and the words of promise contained in the Old Testament prophetic Word are the promises of the church, and its glorious future on the earth, in reigning over the nations. Before this mystery could be made known, the Son of God had to come into the world and go to the cross to make propitiation for sins. Furthermore, He had to ascend upon high and take His exalted position at the right hand of God, and the Holy Spirit had to come down from heaven. On the day of Pentecost the church came into existence. The assembled believers in Jerusalem were not alone filled with the Spirit, but also baptized by the Spirit into one body. But even on that glorious day, when the evidence was so wonderfully given, that the One who had died on the cross is risen, and at God's right hand, the truth concerning the church, the mystery, was not made known. Peter did not preach a word about the church. The Lord chose Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, as steward of this hidden mystery. It was revealed to him. When he states, "it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit," there is no clash

whatever with the previous claim of the Apostle, "He made known unto me the mystery." The apostles and prophets (New Testament prophets and teachers) received also the truth concerning the mystery, but as under him, to whom the Lord gave the revelation first of all. They were acquainted through Paul's revelation with the mystery, and the Holy Spirit led them into the knowledge of it.

C. The Mystery Stated. Verse 6.

"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."

- a. Gentiles—fellow-heirs.
- b. Of the same body.
- c. Partakers of His promise in Christ.

We look at these statements separately. That Gentiles should be fellow-heirs* with Jewish believers in a distinct body is a new revelation. The Old Testament abounds in promises for the Gentile nations. These promises speak of righteousness and peace, which the nations of the earth are to enjoy. But they all stand connected with the age which is yet to come. That age is introduced by the

*Literally: Joint-heirs, joint-members and joint-partakers.

visible manifestation of the Lord. At that time the people Israel will receive the place of headship among the nations. The Gentiles will join themselves to Israel, and Israel has the promise that the nations will seek the light and glory revealed in their midst. "And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee. Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and be filled with delight; and thine heart shall thrill, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the nations shall come unto thee" (Is. lx:3-5). Many similar passages could be quoted, but in not one of them is it even hinted at that Gentiles will be joint-heirs with Israel. In this mystery of the church there is revealed an inheritance, which is far superior to any inheritance promised to Israel and to the nations in the coming Kingdom. Christ, whom God has raised from the dead, and who is in the presence of God, is also made by God the heir of all things. Believers in Him are called "joint-heirs with Christ" because they are sons of God (Rom. viii:17). Both believing Jews and believing Gentiles

are joint-heirs with Christ, and in the future day of His glory, they will rule and reign with Him.

Then "of the same body" joint-members. The believing Jews on the day of Pentecost were formed, as already stated, into one body by the Holy Spirit. They became then one spirit with the Lord, and that marvellous organism, the body of Christ, had its beginning. Gentiles are joint-members of the same body; they are united with all the saints in one body. And therefore believing Gentiles are joint-partakers of His promises in Christ by the Gospel. These promises again do not concern the earth, but they concern the glory to come. Israel's promises will be fulfilled, and they will be under Christ as King, when He comes to reign. But the body of Christ has far greater promises in Christ. The body will be joined to the head, share the glory of the head and be where the head is. The Head, Christ, and the Body, the Church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, joint-heirs, joint-members, joint partakers—this is the mystery.

D. Paul, the Minister of the Masterpiece, Verse 7.

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift

of the grace of God given unto me according to the effectual working of His power."

- a. According to the gift of His Grace.
- b. According to the working of His Power.

The Apostle Paul states once more the fact of his divinely given ministry. It was the gift of the Grace of God unto him; the Grace which called him and made him the steward of God's highest revelation. And this stewardship distinguished him from the other Apostles; for this reason Paul refers to it so often. He knows what was committed unto Him. The Grace which was given to him was linked with the manifestation of "His power"; it was "according to the effectual (literal: energetic) working of His power." This statement must be linked with Chapter i:19. One of the things Paul mentions in the prayer of the first chapter is the knowledge of the exceeding greatness of His power, which is to usward. "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." We remarked on this verse that this mighty power, which raised Christ from the dead and made Him Head over all things, is to usward in a three-fold way. When we are quickened with Christ; when we believe and receive the gift of God, eternal life, as a present possession, that

power is manifested. It is on our side in our walk; in the conflict, in trials we can count on it. In the future this mighty power will be to usward, when the shout of the Lord will be heard from heaven, when the dead in Christ are raised and living believers are caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The great Apostle to whom these blessed truths were so fully revealed experienced in himself the working of this mighty power. He knew the exceeding greatness of His power. It worked in him and through him. It enabled him to serve and to suffer. Nor must we forget the remarkable experience he made, when he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words (2 Cor. xii:1-4). "As the chosen interpreter of God's hidden mysteries, and the special expounder of the church, it was fitting, that he should be so initiated into the realities of heaven, as to become an unfaltering, and, as it were, familiar witness when declaring things unseen." The gift of His Grace and the working of His Power are seen together in Paul as the minister of the Masterpiece.

E. The Proclamation of the Unsearchable Riches. Verse 8.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

- a. The Apostle's humility.
- b. The unsearchable riches of Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, the young Pharisee, of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as he described himself (Phil. iii:5) and exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers (Gal. i:14), was no doubt filled with pride. Grace wrought a marvellous change in him. The name Paul means "little," expressing the beautiful humility, which characterized the life of this chosen instrument. In the Glory-light which shone around him on the way to Damascus, he had seen his own vileness and unworthiness. He had seen the Lord. This vision broke him down completely, so that he speaks of himself ever after in terms of self-abasement. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. xv:9). "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i:12-13). He called himself "the chief of sinners." And here in the Epistle in which he unfolds through the Spirit of God the highest revelation concerning

the Masterpiece of God, he takes the very lowest place. He called himself "the least of the Apostles"; but now he goes deeper than that. "Less than the least of all saints" is what he thinks of himself. He might have made much of his superior knowledge, of the great revelation given to him, and he might have paraded a kind of an official pride as the Apostle to the Gentiles. But the high calling, the mystery made known unto him, the blessed ministry given to him, produced far different results. It humbled him into the dust before God. It could not be otherwise. Grace, such wondrous grace, as revealed through Paul, reaching down to such as we are, lifting so high with such an unspeakable calling and destiny, will ever humble us into the dust to give Him the glory. Grace necessitates this. The more we know of the blessed mystery of God's Masterpiece, the less we shall think of ourselves and delight to take the lowest place. Truth learned or knowledge gained in spiritual things, which does not humble us and make us think less and less of ourselves, is a dangerous thing. Truth, must ever break us down and lead into self-judgment and self-abasement.

And how little of this true humility, manifested by the great Apostle, is seen in our days! Many desire to be teachers. How

often a novice, flattered by others on account of a little gift, becomes lifted up with pride and falls into the crime of the devil (1 Tim. iii:6). Instead of being humble, such are puffed up. They glory in the little knowledge and forget what is written: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv:7). Their pride of heart leads them to claim that they have received "new light." No one before them, even the most blessed teachers of bygone days, knew the truth in such fulness, as they have discovered it. They make the boast that they follow no man, but read exclusively the Bible. More than once have they been found out to be plagiarists, reproducing almost verbatim the works of others. Their attempt to be original leads them into error. Such men ought to be shunned, for they belong to that class against which the Holy Spirit warns. "Also of your own selves, shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx:30). Treat with suspicion such who claim to possess more light and knowledge in divine things than others, and who are puffed up with pride. A spiritual Christian will soon find that the utterances and writings of

such teachers, though beautifully worded, leave the heart empty. The power of God is not there.

Paul speaks of what he had to preach as the gift of grace. This grace enabled him to preach among the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ." This means more than the preaching of salvation to the Gentiles. What riches these are, which God has revealed in Christ! They are riches of grace, riches of inheritance and riches of glory. Christ is the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii:2, 3). And these riches are unsearchable; we cannot fathom their depths.

F. The Purpose of the Mystery. Verses 9–13.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord; in whom we have boldness and access by faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

- a. To make all men see. Verse 9.
- b. To show to principalities and powers the wisdom of God. Verse 10.
- c. According to the eternal purpose. Verse 11.
- d. Access with confidence. Verse 12.
- e. The tribulations of the minister of the mystery. Verse 13.

His ministry in the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ was also to make all men see the fellowship of the mystery. Those who are saved, and therefore belong to Christ, are meant. The natural man without a spiritual nature cannot grasp these things, but the believer, Jew and Gentile, is to see "the fellowship of the mystery." The better rendering is "to enlighten all (with the knowledge) what is the administration of the mystery, hidden throughout the ages in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." The word "administration" (economy) is the same as dispensation; the mystery is the one stated in verse 6, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, etc.," the mystery of the one body, the church. Before we learned that this mystery was not made known in other ages. This is once more emphasized by the statement that the mystery was hidden in God from the beginning of the world.* How necessary therefore is the knowledge of this hidden mystery, but now made known, to the people of God! Alas! this great mystery of God has been obscured and hidden by the enemy of the truth. We see about us the sad results springing from the ignorance of this mystery.

*See also Romans xvi:25; Col. i:26.

May all those who acknowledge still the authority of the Word of God, and desire to please the Lord by obedience, enter deep into this most precious revelation and carry out in a practical way the truth of what the church is. This is the way in which we can enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The tenth verse leads us still deeper. While the mystery is made known to human beings, the principalities and powers in heavenly places learn to know by the church the manifold wisdom of God. The principalities and powers are heavenly beings, the host of angels. Little do we know of these unfallen beings, their habitations in the heavenlies and their ministrations. Some day, when we shall know as we are known, these mysteries will all be known to the heirs of glory. For in the day of His manifestation (and our manifestation with Him) the angels shall worship Him (Heb. i:6, 7) and the redeemed will know these celestial beings. They have, as the creatures of God who know Him and His works, an intense interest in the affairs of this earth, one of the smallest body in the vast universe. In the hour of creation they sang for joy (Job xxxviii:7). Throughout the history of the Old Testament we hear them mentioned and often

they appeared on earth as the servants and messengers of Jehovah. Intelligently they entered into all His ways and works, as He dealt with the earth in mercy and in judgment. They beheld the wisdom of God in many ways. Yet what God had purposed before the foundation of the world, the hidden mystery, was not known by them. Prophets prophesied of things to come and searched to know the meaning, and angels desired to look into these things (1 Pet. i:11-12).

Gabriel was sent to the virgin to announce the incarnation. With what wonder those heavenly beings must have looked on, as He, who is in the bosom of the Father, laid His glory by and took the creature's place! They hovered near the place where He was born and broke out in their heavenly praise. Angels ministered unto Him after His temptation in the wilderness. No doubt they were with Him all along the path, He so patiently went in His humiliation. An angel appeared in Gethsemane to strengthen Him. With what awe they must have stood by when wicked men nailed Him to the cross, when the prince of glory died! The angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the tomb. They were present at His resurrection. They witnessed the farewell scene

on Olivet and gave the message of hope to the disciples. When He ascended up on high these principalities and powers beheld the glorious victor, for it is written that He was "seen of angels" (1 Tim. iii:16). With what joy they must have seen Him enter God's presence far above themselves, made so much better than the angels! What Hallelujahs they must have cried in heavenly ecstasy, when the Man Christ Jesus took His place at the right hand of God!

And now they behold the manifold wisdom of God by the Church. That, which no prophet ever saw, what no human being could have imagined, what no angel ever knew, what was known alone to God, took place. The church, the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, began on earth with the Coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. They see how this body is being built, fitly framed together, and they know the glory which awaits that body. Therefore now is made known unto them by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

And because the angels possess this knowledge, they rejoice over one repenting sinner (Luke xv:7). They know what it means to the sinner, and more so to Christ, when another member is added to His body. Nor must we

lose sight of another statement. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i:14). We do not know how they minister to our need, but we know they do minister.

The principalities and powers in verse 10 do not include the evil spirits as mentioned in Chapter vi:12. Satan, no doubt, is forced likewise to see the power and wisdom of God by the church and his coming defeat and overthrow likewise.

And all this great mystery now made known is "according to the eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." In Him we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him. We can draw nigh to God and enter into His presence. The Greek word "parresia" translated by "boldness," means really "free speech"—that is, the speaking of all. It is the blessed privilege of prayer. How sad, that we made nigh by blood, sharers of the unsearchable riches of Christ, are so slow in making use of such a wonderful privilege!

Then Paul addressed His Gentile brethren personally. He desires that they faint not at his tribulations for them, which is their glory. The blessed instrument chosen to

make known the mystery suffered in prison. Suffering belongs to the body, as the Head also suffered. We suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him (Rom. viii:17). And Paul wrote in the Epistle to the Colossians, "Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the church" (Col. i:24).

Well may we glory in tribulations when we think of the glory which is ours in Christ.

5. The Prayer unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. III:14-21.

The great unfolding of the Masterpiece of God has for its closing paragraph a prayer and a doxology. The first doxology we found in the opening chapter (verse 3), where also the first prayer is recorded. And now after all these riches were made known, the blessed truths, and the mystery of the Masterpiece, a second prayer, follows.

A. The Prayer. Verses 14-15.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named."

The first prayer is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. We learned what is connected with that prayer. The petition is

that "we might know." The second prayer is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Here it is the question of love, that we may enjoy in our hearts the riches of His grace and possess Christ and His love, as a reality in our hearts. It is not enough that our minds grasp the marvellous revelations of the Masterpiece of God, and we receive the knowledge of the blessing wherewith He hath blessed us in Christ. The heart is to enter into all this. We must know in a practical way what it all means. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our Father. He is the Father of every family (not "the whole family") in heaven and earth. And this does not mean that modern day error, the All-Fatherhood of God. The teaching that God is the Father of the entire human race and that every human being is a child of God, independent of faith in Christ, is unscriptural. But what does it mean "of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named?" Angels are here first of all viewed as a family over which God is Father. He is the Father of spirits. Israel will be the family of God in that blessed future day, when they will receive their promised blessing. Then

*The best manuscripts omit "of our Lord Jesus Christ"; but it is of little consequence; the Father is the Father of our Lord.

Israel will be indeed God's son on the earth and they will know Him as Father. The Gentiles, too, when they are blessed with believing Israel in the age to come, when righteousness reigns under the sceptre of the King of righteousness, will also be a family, and God will be known by them as a loving and merciful Father. But, while the position of angels and their relationship to God is exalted and most blessed; and the position of Israel in the Millennium will be one of glory as a redeemed family; and saved Gentile nations will know the Father and be sharers of earthly glories—the relationship and blessing of the Masterpiece of God, the church, is infinitely higher than every other family in heaven and earth.

B. The Petitions of the Prayer. Verses 16–19.

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

a. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner Man. Verse 16.

b. That Christ may dwell in your hearts. Verse 17.

c. To comprehend with all saints. Verse 18.

d. To know the love of Christ. Verse 19.

e. To be filled unto the fullness of God.

The first petition is that "He would grant you, according to the riches of His Glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." In the first chapter we saw our wonderful position in Christ "to the praise of the glory of His grace," and the prayer that we might know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints." And here we have the standard given according to which we can address our petitions and claims to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is according to the riches of His Glory. Thus we find it expressed in another epistle. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His Riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv:19). This is the treasure from which we can draw. Oh that we might remember it each time we bow our knees and address the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! How poor and feeble our words are! Our petitions often sound as if they were addressed to a God, who is limited in His power or unwilling to shower His fullest blessing upon us. The difficulty with us is that we look too much to ourselves, to our failures, to our own struggling experience, and not enough to Him who is our Lord in Glory and the riches of glory, which are for us. How different our prayers would be if, before we approach Him, we would meditate first on Himself and the

riches of glory, which are now on our side! Praise would burst forth from our lips and His Spirit would fill us. Let us reckon with these riches of His glory, the riches of Himself displayed in Christ, in His Cross, in His presence at His own right hand; and may we constantly remember that our Father wants us to lay claim to them. And if we do that we shall indeed be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts. He is the Spirit of power. He is with us and in us to strengthen us. And if the Spirit of God is ungrieved in our hearts, He will constantly direct our attention to Him, who is altogether lovely. He reveals to our hearts "the Riches of His Glory" ever shining from the Word of God, the full display of God in the Person of His Son and all His Riches. It is then, when He does this work in us, that we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.*

And this leads us to the next petition, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by

*A strange delusion it is, when men and women seek by self-surrender, prolonged prayer and fasting, etc., to obtain the manifestation of the power of the Spirit of God. We have often found these misguided souls ignorant of the Glory of God as displayed in the Person and Work of Christ. They know nothing of God's Masterpiece.

faith." Beautiful prayer! And what a wonderful thing it is! Christ is in the highest Glory, far above all principalities and powers. We beheld His Glory and His Future. All things are to be put under Him. And in Him we are. "In Christ" is the sweet music of this Epistle, sweet and precious to God and to those, who enter into these things in the Spirit. But here we are told that Christ Himself is to dwell in us. What a difference there is between an occasional guest in a home and one who really comes to abide. Christ is not to be a visitor in the heart of the believer, but He is to dwell there. Beautifully does this petition correspond with the words of our Lord. Read John xv, His parable of the Vine and the Branches. "Abide in Me and I in you," "We will come unto Him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv:23). "I in them and Thou in Me," thus He prayed before He went to the Cross. And Paul, through whom the Holy Spirit prayed this prayer for the Saints of God, knew the blessed truth, for he confessed "I live, nevertheless not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii:20). And faith is to lay hold of it, while the Holy Spirit makes it a reality for us. And then to walk, to live, to act, to serve with the consciousness Christ dwells in my heart! The

Christ of the Glory, the Christ of God in me and I in Him. As we are occupied with Him and His Glory, He dwells in our hearts by faith. We must be rooted and grounded in love. As we think of Christ, are occupied with Him and His Glory and He dwells in us, we shall indeed be rooted and grounded in that love which passeth knowledge. The roots are to go deeper and deeper into the love of God. While all about us is being parched spiritually, because the apostate masses turn their backs upon the Gospel and the Cross of Christ, the roots of our faith must take the strength and joy out of that never-failing source, the love of God. Then we shall be grounded like the deeply-rooted tree. And what can give stability in these last days but "keeping ourselves in the love of God."

And then we come to the dimensions. We are to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height. But who knows these dimensions? It will take eternity to comprehend it all. Look at the outstretched arms of the blessed One on the Cross! Here we behold breadth—"Come unto Me all" is the message as it comes from the cross. The length of His love is from eternity to eternity. The first chapter told us of the fact that before the foundation of the world He

thought of us. He loved us before we ever existed. His love has no beginning and no end. It is an eternal love with which He loveth us.

And the depth! How deep, oh! how deep did He go down! The manger? The boyhood days in Nazareth? The manhood where He had not where to lay His head? The life that spent and was spent? Ah! the depths are far deeper. Let the hours of darkness give the answer, when He descended into the deep, dark waters of judgment and God's face was hidden from Him. Shall we ever know the depths of His love?

The height takes us into the Heaven of heavens. Look into an opened heaven! See the Glory-light! Behold there on that throne, there sits, not an angel, but a man! "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." And into that Glory He has taken us. His love could never stop short of that. Where He is there the objects of His love shall ever be with Him. "The Glory Thou hast given me I have given them." Oh! the breadth, the length, the depth, the height!

"To know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." We are to know something which passeth knowledge. It is a paradox.

We know that love, and the more we know it the more it passeth our knowledge. Shall we ever know fully the love that passeth knowledge? This ever must be our blessed occupation to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. And what are the consequences? "That ye may be filled unto (not with) all the fullness of God." In the measure in which we know the love of Christ and comprehend the dimensions of this love, in the measure in which we have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith and are rooted and grounded in love, in that measure shall we be filled unto all the fullness of God.

6. The Great End Doxology. Verses 20–21.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

One feels like dropping the pen and leave untouched this wonderful outburst of praise given by the Holy Spirit. How blessed are these final words of the three greatest chapters of the Bible! And they are so fitting for the end of the description of God's Masterpiece. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Often these words have been misapplied. Some one prays for

help in earthly things and pleads this promise. Accordingly the suppliant may expect a great deal more than he asked for. But his prayer for increase in temporal things remains unanswered. We have a perfect right to make all our wants known before Him. He is interested in the smallest things in our life. We can come with all our earthly need to the throne of Grace and we shall never come in vain. The words in this doxology, however, have nothing to do with earthly needs and blessing. We are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing. It is for us to claim all these wonderful blessings which belong to us because we belong to Christ. Let us open our mouth wide! Ask for spiritual blessing, for the knowledge of that love which passeth knowledge; pray to be strengthened by the might of His Spirit in the inner man; pray for being filled unto all the fullness of God, yea, ask much and He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we asked. Exhaust all imagination in thinking on the glory of Christ and your glory in Him. Think of the highest, the best, the most glorious in connection with Christ and our union with Him, as well as our inheritance. And after we have come to the end of all our thinking and expectation, He will do exceeding above all we think. Glory to His Name!

“To Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages. Amen.” It is and ever will be eternal praise, because it is eternal glory. And the church, His Masterpiece, is the vessel of His praise. Therefore He took us up and put us into the one body “that in the ages to come He might display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” Could God have given a higher revelation than this? Could He say more than what He hath said in these wonderful chapters in Ephesians? May the prayer of His Spirit be answered in all who read these truths, so that His gracious purpose may be accomplished in us and through us.





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