

## **66 Kindles of Matthew Henry Commentary**

Buy all the 66 Kindles for \$2.99 on a secure website

**THE BIG BOOK OF CHRISTIAN QUOTES Kindle Edition**

**Let's Celebrate Advent Every Day!: Through Practicing God's Presence! Kindle Edition**

Practicing The Presence Of God — The Best Rule of Holy Life Kindle Edition

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/BrokenByHim>

Let's Celebrate Advent Every Day!: Through Practicing God's Presence! Kindle Edition

**More books you might be interested in checking out**

**The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry**

MEMORIES OF PATMOS: A Study Of The Apocalypse & Exposition Of The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

**A Lamp Unto My Feet:366 Bible Verses & Prayers - Tools for the Believer's Daily Renewal [Kindle Edition] \$1.49**  
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00AUN6DC6>

**Practicing The Presence Of God \$0.99**

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00DJYQSDC/>

**The Sinful Desires Of The Flesh! \$1.49**

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Sinful-Desires-Flesh-ebook/dp/B00EEPZAN4/>

**Copyright © 2014** Public Domain Work

Kindle edited by: M. J. Andre  
Fearless Eagle Publishing, Toronto, Ontario

**Table of Contents**

**No table of contents entries found.**

Preface

**An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians**

Some think that this epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several churches, and that the copy directed to the Ephesians happened to be taken into the canon, and so it came to bear that particular inscription. And they have been induced the rather to think this because it is the only one of all Paul's epistles that has nothing in it peculiarly adapted to the state or case of that particular church; but it has much of common concernment to all Christians, and especially to all who, having been Gentiles in times past, were converted to Christianity. But then it may be observed, on the other hand, that the epistle is expressly inscribed (1:1) *to the saints which are at Ephesus*; and in the close of it he tells them that he had sent Tychicus unto them, whom, in 2 Tim. 4:12, he says he had sent to Ephesus. It is an epistle that bears date out of a prison: and some have observed that what this apostle wrote when he was a prisoner had the greatest relish and savour in it of the things of God. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound, whence we may observe that the afflictive exercises of God's people, and particularly of his ministers, often tend to the advantage of others as well as to their own. The apostle's design is to settle and establish the Ephesians in the truth, and further to acquaint them with the mystery of the gospel, in order to it. In the former part he represents the great privilege of the Ephesians, who, having been in time past idolatrous heathens, were now converted to Christianity and received into covenant with God, which he illustrates from a view of their deplorable state before their conversion, ch. 1-3. In the latter part (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters) he instructs them in the principal duties of religion, both personal and relative, and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful discharge of them. Zanchy observes that we have here an epitome of the whole Christian doctrine, and of almost all the chief heads of divinity.

## Chapter 1

In this chapter we have, I. The introduction to the whole epistle, which is much the same as in others (v. 1, 2). II. The apostle's thanksgivings and praises to God for his inestimable blessings bestowed on the believing Ephesians (v. 3–14). III. His earnest prayers to God in their behalf (v. 15–23). This great apostle was wont to abound in prayers and in thanksgivings to almighty God, which he generally so disposes and orders that at the same time they carry with them and convey the great and important doctrines of the Christian religion, and the most weighty instructions to all those who seriously peruse them.

### Verses 1-2

Here is, 1. The title St. Paul takes to himself, as belonging to him—*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*, etc. He reckoned it a great honour to be employed by Christ, as one of his messengers to the sons of men. The apostles were prime officers in the Christian church, being extraordinary ministers appointed for a time only. They were furnished by their great Lord with extraordinary gifts and the immediate assistance of the Spirit, that they might be fitted for publishing and spreading the gospel and for governing the church in its infant state. Such a one Paul was, and that not *by the will* of man conferring that office upon him, nor by his own intrusion into it; but *by the will of God*, very expressly and plainly intimated to him, he being immediately called (as the other apostles were) by Christ himself to the work. Every faithful minister of Christ (though his call and office are not of so extraordinary a nature) may, with our apostle, reflect on it as an honour and comfort to himself that he is what he is *by the will of God*. 2. The persons to whom this epistle is sent: *To the saints who are at Ephesus*, that is, to the Christians who were members of the church at Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia. He calls them saints, for such they were in profession, such they were bound to be in truth and reality, and many of them were such. All Christians must be saints; and, if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. He calls them *the faithful in Christ Jesus*, believers in him, and firm and constant in their adherence to him and to his truths and ways. Those are not saints who are not faithful, believing in Christ, firmly adhering to him, and true to the profession they make of relation to their Lord. Note, It is the honour not only of ministers, but of private Christians too, to have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—*In Christ Jesus*, from whom they derive all their grace and spiritual strength, and in whom their persons, and all that they perform, are made accepted. 3. The apostolical benediction: *Grace be to you*, etc. This is the token in every epistle; and it expresses the apostle's good-will to his friends, and a real desire of their welfare. By *grace* we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it; by *peace* all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits and product of the former. No peace without grace. No peace, nor grace, but *from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. These peculiar blessings proceed from God, not as a Creator, but as a Father by special relation: and they come from our Lord Jesus Christ, who, having purchased them for his people, has a right to bestow them upon them. Indeed the saints, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, had already received grace and peace; but the increase of these is very desirable, and the best saints stand in need of fresh supplies of the graces of the Spirit, and cannot but desire to improve and grow: and therefore they should pray, each one for himself and all for one another, that such blessings may still abound unto them.

After this short introduction he comes to the matter and body of the epistle; and, though it may seem somewhat peculiar in a letter, yet the Spirit of God saw fit that his discourse of divine things in this chapter should be cast into prayers and praises, which, as they are solemn addresses to God, so they convey weighty instructions to others. Prayer may preach; and praise may do so too.

### Verses 3-14

He begins with thanksgivings and praise, and enlarges with a great deal of fluency and copiousness of affection upon the exceedingly great and precious benefits which we enjoy by Jesus Christ. For the great privileges of our religion are very aptly recounted and enlarged upon in our praises to God.

I. In general he blesses God for *spiritual blessings*, v. 3, where he styles him *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; for, as Mediator, the Father was his God; as God, and the second person in the blessed Trinity, God was his Father. It bespeaks the mystical union between Christ and believers, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their God and Father, and that in and through him. All blessings come from God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No good can be expected from a righteous and holy God to sinful creatures, but by his mediation. *He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings*. Note, Spiritual blessings are the best blessings with which God blesses us, and for which we are to bless him. He blesses us by bestowing such things upon us as make us really blessed. We cannot thus bless God again; but must do it by praising, and magnifying, and speaking well of him on that account. Those whom God blesses with some he blesses with all spiritual blessings; to whom he gives Christ, he freely gives all these things. It is not so with temporal blessings; some are favoured with health, and not with riches; some with riches, and not with health, etc. But, where God blesses with spiritual blessings, he blesses with all. They are *spiritual blessings in heavenly places*; that is, say some, in the church, distinguished from the world, and called out of it. Or it may be read, *in heavenly things*, such as come from heaven, and are designed to prepare men for it, and to secure their reception into it. We should hence learn to mind spiritual and heavenly things as the principal things, spiritual and heavenly blessings as the best blessings, with which we cannot be miserable and without which we cannot but be so. *Set not your affections on things on the earth, but on those things which are above*. These we are blessed with in Christ; for, as all our services ascend to God through Christ, so all our blessings are conveyed to us in the same way, he being the Mediator between God and us.

II. The particular spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ, and for which we ought to bless God, are (many of them) here enumerated and enlarged upon. 1. Election and predestination, which are the secret springs whence the others flow, v. 4, 5, 11. *Election*, or choice, respects that lump or mass of mankind out of which some are chosen, from which they are separated and distinguished. Predestination has respect to the blessings they are designed for; particularly *the adoption of children*, it being the purpose of God that in due time we should become his adopted children, and so have a right to all the privileges and to the inheritance of children. We have here the date of this act of love: it was *before the foundation of the world*; not only before God's people had a being, but before the world had a beginning; for they were chosen in the counsel of God from all eternity. It magnifies these blessings to a high degree that they are the products of eternal counsel. The alms

which you give to beggars at your doors proceed from a sudden resolve; but the provision which a parent makes for his children is the result of many thoughts, and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity. And, as this magnifies divine love, so it secures the blessings to God's elect; for *the purpose of God according to election shall stand*. He acts in pursuance of his eternal purpose in bestowing spiritual blessings upon his people. *He hath blessed us—according as he hath chosen us in him*, in Christ the great head of the election, who is emphatically called *God's elect, his chosen*; and in the chosen Redeemer an eye of favour was cast upon them. Observe here one great end and design of this choice: *chosen—that we should be holy*; not because he foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so. All who are chosen to happiness as the end are chosen to holiness as the means. Their sanctification, as well as their salvation, is the result of the counsels of divine love.—*And without blame before him*—that their holiness might not be merely external and in outward appearance, so as to prevent blame from men, but internal and real, and what God himself, who *looketh at the heart*, will account such, such holiness as proceeds from love to God and to our fellow-creatures, this charity being the principle of all true holiness. The original word signifies such an innocence as no man can carp at; and therefore some understand it of that perfect holiness which the saints shall attain in the life to come, which will be eminently before God, they being in his immediate presence for ever. Here is also the rule and the fontal cause of God's election: it is *according to the good pleasure of his will* (v. 5), not for the sake of any thing in them foreseen, but because it was his sovereign will, and a thing highly pleasing to him. It is *according to the purpose*, the fixed and unalterable will, *of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will* (v. 11), who powerfully accomplishes whatever concerns his elect, as he has wisely and freely fore-ordained and decreed, the last and great end and design of all which is his own glory: *To the praise of the glory of his grace* (v. 6), *that we should be to the praise of his glory* (v. 12), that is, that we should live and behave ourselves in such a manner that his rich grace might be magnified, and appear glorious, and worthy of the highest praise. *All is of God, and from him, and through him*, and therefore all must be to him, and centre in his praise. Note, The glory of God is his own end, and it should be ours in all that we do. This passage has been understood by some in a very different sense, and with a special reference to the conversion of these Ephesians to Christianity. Those who have a mind to see what is said to this purpose may consult Mr. Locke, and other well-known writers, on the place. 2. The next spiritual blessing the apostle takes notice of is acceptance with God through Jesus Christ: *Wherein, or by which grace, he hath made us accepted in the beloved*, v. 6. Jesus Christ is the beloved of his Father (Mt. 3:17), as well as of angels and saints. It is our great privilege to be accepted of God, which implies his love to us and his taking us under his care and into his family. We cannot be thus accepted of God, but in and through Jesus Christ. He loves his people for the sake of the beloved. 3. Remission of sins, and redemption through the blood of Jesus, v. 7. No remission without redemption. It was by reason of sin that we were captivated, and we cannot be released from our captivity but by the remission of our sins. This redemption we have in Christ, and this remission through his blood. The guilt and the stain of sin could be no otherwise removed than by the blood of Jesus. All our spiritual blessings flow down to us in that stream. This great benefit, which comes freely to us, was dearly bought and paid for by our blessed Lord; and yet it is according to the riches of God's grace. Christ's satisfaction and God's rich grace are very consistent in the great affair of man's redemption. God was satisfied

by Christ as our substitute and surety; but it was rich grace that would accept of a surety, when he might have executed the severity of the law upon the transgressor, and it was rich grace to provide such a surety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up, when nothing of that nature could have entered into our thoughts, nor have been any otherwise found out for us. In this instance he has not only manifested riches of grace, but *has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence* (v. 8), wisdom in contriving the dispensation, and prudence in executing the counsel of his will, as he has done. How illustrious have the divine wisdom and prudence rendered themselves, in so happily adjusting the matter between justice and mercy in this grand affair, in securing the honour of God and his law, at the same time that the recovery of sinners and their salvation are ascertained and made sure! 4. Another privilege which the apostle here blesses God for is divine revelation—that God hath *made known to us the mystery of his will* (v. 9), that is, so much of his good-will to men, which had been concealed for a long time, and is still concealed from so great a part of the world: this we owe to Christ, who, having lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, came to declare his will to the children of men. *According to his good pleasure*, his secret counsels concerning man's redemption, *which he had purposed*, or resolved upon, merely in and from himself, and not for any thing in them. In this revelation, and in his *making known unto us the mystery of his will*, the wisdom and the prudence of God do abundantly shine forth. It is described (v. 13) *as the word of truth, and the gospel of our salvation*. Every word of it is true. It contains and instructs us in the most weighty and important truths, and it is confirmed and sealed by the very oath of God, whence we should learn to *betake ourselves to it in all our searches after divine truth*. It is the gospel of our salvation: it publishes the glad tidings of salvation, and contains the offer of it: it points out the way that leads to it; and the blessed Spirit renders the reading and the ministration of it effectual to the salvation of souls. O, how ought we to prize this glorious gospel and to bless God for it! This is the light shining in a dark place, for which we have reason to be thankful, and to which we should take heed. 5. Union in and with Christ is a great privilege, a spiritual blessing, and the foundation of many others. *He gathers together in one all things in Christ*, v. 10. All the lines of divine revelation meet in Christ; all religion centres in him. Jews and Gentiles were united to each other by being both united to Christ. *Things in heaven and things on earth* are gathered together in him; peace made, correspondence settled, between heaven and earth, through him. The innumerable company of angels become one with the church through Christ: this God *purposed in himself*, and it was his design in that dispensation which was to be accomplished by his sending Christ in the fulness of time, at the exact time that God had prefixed and settled. 6. The eternal inheritance is the great blessing with which we are blessed in Christ: *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance*, v. 11. Heaven is the inheritance, the happiness of which is a sufficient portion for a soul: it is conveyed in the way of an inheritance, being the gift of a Father to his children. *If children, then heirs*. All the blessings that we have in hand are but small if compared with the inheritance. What is laid out upon an heir in his minority is nothing to what is reserved for him when he comes to age. Christians are said to have obtained this inheritance, as they have a present right to it, and even actual possession of it, in Christ their head and representative. 7. The seal and earnest of the Spirit are of the number of these blessings. We are said to be *sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*, v. 13. The blessed Spirit is holy himself, and he makes us holy. He is called *the Spirit of promise*, as he is the promised Spirit. By him believers are sealed; that is, separated and set apart for God, and

distinguished and marked as belonging to him. The Spirit *is the earnest of our inheritance*, v. 14. The earnest is part of payment, and it secures the full sum: so is the gift of the Holy Ghost; all his influences and operations, both as a sanctifier and a comforter, are heaven begun, glory in the seed and bud. The Spirit's illumination is an earnest of everlasting light; sanctification is an earnest of perfect holiness; and his comforts are earnest of everlasting joys. He is said to be the earnest, *until the redemption of the purchased possession*. It may be called here the possession, because this earnest makes it as sure to the heirs as though they were already possessed of it; and it is purchased for them by the blood of Christ. The redemption of it is mentioned because it was mortgaged and forfeited by sin; and Christ restores it to us, and so is said to redeem it, in allusion to the law of redemption. Observe, from all this, what a gracious promise that is which secures the gift of the Holy Ghost to those who ask him.

The apostle mentions the great end and design of God in bestowing all these spiritual privileges, *that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ*—we to whom the gospel was first preached, and who were first converted to the faith of Christ, and to the placing of our hope and trust in him. Note, Seniority in grace is a preferment: *Who were in Christ before me*, says the apostle (Rom. 16:7); those who have for a longer time experienced the grace of Christ are under more special obligations to glorify God. They should be strong in faith, and more eminently glorify him; but this should be the common end of all. For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of our Christianity, and of God in all that he has done for us: *unto the praise of his glory*, v. 14. He intends that his grace and power and other perfection should by this means become conspicuous and illustrious, and that the sons of men should magnify him.

### **Verses 15-23**

We have come to the last part of this chapter, which consists of Paul's earnest prayer to God in behalf of these Ephesians. We should pray for the persons for whom we give thanks. Our apostle blesses God for what he had done for them, and then he prays that he would do more for them. He gives thanks for spiritual blessings, and prays for further supplies of them; for God *will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*. He has laid up these spiritual blessings for us in the hands of his Son, the Lord Jesus; but then he has appointed us to draw them out, and fetch them in, by prayer. We have no part nor lot in the matter, any further than we claim it by faith and prayer. One inducement to pray for them was the good account he had of them, *of their faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints*, v. 15. Faith in Christ, and love to the saints, will be attended with all other graces. Love to the saints, as such, and because they are such, must include love to God. Those who love saints, as such, love all saints, how weak in grace, how mean in the world, how fretful and peevish soever, some of them may be. Another inducement to pray for them was because they had received the earnest of the inheritance: this we may observe from the words being connected with the preceding ones by the particle *wherefore*. "Perhaps you will think that, having received the earnest, it should follow, therefore you are happy enough, and need take no further care: you need not pray for yourselves, nor I for you." No, quite the contrary. *Wherefore—I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*, v. 16. While he blesses God for giving them the Spirit, he ceases not to pray that he would give unto them the Spirit (v. 17), that he would give greater measures of the Spirit. Observe, Even the best of Christians need to be prayed for:

and, while we hear well of our Christian friends, we should think ourselves obliged to intercede with God for them, that they may abound and increase yet more and more. Now what is it that Paul prays for in behalf of the Ephesians? Not that they might be freed from persecution; nor that they might possess the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world; but the great thing he prays for is the illumination of their understandings, and that their knowledge might increase and abound: he means it of a practical and experimental knowledge. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are communicated to the soul by the enlightening of the understanding. In this way he gains and keeps possession. Satan takes a contrary way: he gets possession by the senses and passions, Christ by the understanding. Observe,

I. Whence this knowledge must come from *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 17. *The Lord is a God of knowledge*, and there is no sound saving knowledge but what comes from him; and therefore to him we must look for it, who is *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* (see v. 3) *and the Father of glory*. It is a Hebraism. God is infinitely glorious in himself all glory is due to him from his creatures, and he is the author of all that glory with which his saints are or shall be invested. Now he gives knowledge by giving the Spirit of knowledge; for the Spirit of God is the teacher of the saints, *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*. We have the revelation of the Spirit in the word: but will that avail us, if we have not the wisdom of the Spirit in the heart? If the same Spirit who indited the sacred scriptures do not take the veil from off our hearts, and enable us to understand and improve them, we shall be never the better.—*In the knowledge of him*, or for the acknowledgment of him; not only a speculative knowledge of Christ, and of what relates to him, but an acknowledgment of Christ's authority by an obedient conformity to him, which must be by the help of *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*. This knowledge is first in the understanding. He prays that *the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened*, v. 18. Observe, Those who have their eyes opened, and have some understanding in the things of God, have need to be more and more enlightened, and to have their knowledge more clear, and distinct, and experimental. Christians should not think it enough to have warm affections, but they should labour to have clear understandings; they should be ambitious of being knowing Christians, and judicious Christians.

II. What it is that he more particularly desire they should grow in the knowledge of. 1. *The hope of his calling*, v. 18. Christianity is our calling. God has called us to it, and on that account it is said to be his calling. There is a hope in this calling; for those who deal with God deal upon trust. And it is a desirable thing to know what this hope of our calling is, to have such an acquaintance with the immense privileges of God's people, and the expectations they have from God, and with respect to the heavenly world, as to be quickened thereby to the utmost diligence and patience in the Christian course. We ought to labour after, and pray earnestly for, a clearer insight into, and a fuller acquaintance with, the great objects of a Christian's hopes. 2. *The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*. Besides the heavenly inheritance prepared for the saints, there is a present inheritance in the saints; for grace is glory begun, and holiness is happiness in the bud. There is a glory in this inheritance, riches of glory, rendering the Christian more excellent and more truly honourable than all about him: and it is desirable to know this experimentally, to be acquainted with the principles, pleasures, and powers, of the spiritual and divine life. It may be understood of the glorious inheritance in or among the saints in heaven, where God does, as it were, lay forth all his riches, to make them happy and glorious, and where all that the saints are in possession of is transcendently glorious, as the

knowledge that can be attained of this upon earth is very desirable, and must be exceedingly entertaining and delightful. Let us endeavour then, by reading, contemplation, and prayer, to know as much of heaven as we can, that we may be desiring and longing to be there. 3. *The exceeding greatness of God's power towards those who believe*, v. 19. The practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, and of the omnipotence of divine grace, is absolutely necessary to a close and steady walking with him. It is a desirable thing to know experimentally the mighty power of that grace beginning and carrying on the work of faith in our souls. It is a difficult thing to bring a soul to believe in Christ, and to venture its all upon his righteousness, and upon the hope of eternal life. It is nothing less than an almighty power that will work this in us. The apostle speaks here with a mighty fluency and copiousness of expression, and yet, at the same time, as if he wanted words to express the *exceeding greatness of God's almighty power*, that power which God exerts towards his people, and by which *he raised Christ from the dead*, v. 20. That indeed was the great proof of the truth of the gospel to the world: but the transcript of that in ourselves (our sanctification, and rising from the death of sin, in conformity to Christ's resurrection) is the great proof to us. Though this cannot prove the truth of the gospel to another who knows nothing of the matter (there the resurrection of Christ is the proof), yet to be able to speak experimentally, as the Samaritans, "*We have heard him ourselves*, we have felt a mighty change in our hearts," will make us able to say, with the fullest satisfaction, *Now we believe, and are sure, that this is the Christ, the Son of God*. Many understand the apostle here as speaking of that *exceeding greatness of power* which God will exert for raising the bodies of believers to eternal life, even the same *mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him*, etc. And how desirable a thing must it be to become at length acquainted with that power, by being raised out of the grave thereby unto eternal life! Having said something of Christ and his resurrection, the apostle digresses a little from the subject he is upon to make some further honourable mention of the Lord Jesus and his exaltation. He sits at the Father's *right hand in the heavenly places*, etc., v. 20, 21. Jesus Christ is advanced above all, and he is set in authority over all, they being made subject to him. All the glory of the upper world, and all the powers of both worlds, are entirely devoted to him. The Father *hath put all things under his feet* (v. 22), according to the promise, Ps. 110:1. All creatures whatsoever are in subjection to him; they must either yield him sincere obedience or fall under the weight of his sceptre, and receive their doom from him. God *GAVE him to be head over all things*. It was a gift to Christ, considered as a Mediator, to be advanced to such dominion and headship, and to have such a mystical body prepared for him: and it was a gift to the church, to be provided with a head endued with so much power and authority. *God gave him to be the head over all things*. He gave him all power both in heaven and in earth. *The Father loves the Son, and hath given ALL things into his hands*. But that which completes the comfort of this is that he is the head over all things to the church; he is entrusted with all power, that is, that he may dispose of all the affairs of the providential kingdom in subserviency to the designs of his grace concerning his church. With this therefore we may answer the messengers of the nations, that the Lord hath founded Zion. The same power that supports the world support the church; and we are sure he loves his church, for *it is his body* (v. 23), his mystical body, and he will care for it. It is *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*. Jesus Christ filleth all in all; he supplies all defects in all his members, filling them with his Spirit, and even with *the fulness of God*, ch. 3:19. And yet the church is said to be his fulness, because Christ as Mediator would not be complete if he had not a church. How could he

be a king if he had not a kingdom? This therefore comes in to the honour of Christ, *as Mediator, that the church is his fulness.*

## Chapter 2

This chapter contains an account, I. Of the miserable condition of these Ephesians by nature (v. 1-3) and again (v. 11, 12). II. Of the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace (v. 4-10) and again (v. 13). III. Of the great and mighty privileges that both converted Jews and Gentiles receive from Christ (v. 14-22). The apostle endeavours to affect them with a due sense of the wonderful change which divine grace had wrought in them; and this is very applicable to that great change which the same grace works in all those who are brought into a state of grace. So that we have here a lively picture both of the misery of unregenerate men and of the happy condition of converted souls, enough to awaken and alarm those who are yet in their sins and to put them upon hastening out of that state, and to comfort and delight those whom God hath quickened, with a consideration of the mighty privileges with which they are invested.

### Verses 1-3

The miserable condition of the Ephesians by nature is here in part described. Observed, 1. Unregenerate souls are dead in trespasses and sins. All those who are in their sins, are dead in sins; yea, in trespasses and sins, which may signify all sorts of sins, habitual and actual, sins of heart and of life. Sin is the death of the soul. Wherever that prevails there is a privation of all spiritual life. Sinners are dead in state, being destitute of the principles, and powers of spiritual life; and cut off from God, the fountain of life: and they are dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is said to be a dead man. 2. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world, v. 2. In the first verse he speaks of their internal state, in this of their outward conversation: *Wherein*, in which trespasses and sins, *in time past you walked*, you lived and behaved yourselves in such a manner as the men of the world are used to do. 3. We are by nature bond-slaves to sin and Satan. Those who walk in trespasses and sins, and according to the course of this world, walk *according to the prince of the power of the air*. The devil, or the prince of devils, is thus described. See Mt. 12:24, 26. The legions of apostate angels are as one power united under one chief; and therefore what is called *the powers of darkness* elsewhere is here spoken of in the singular number. The air is represented as the seat of his kingdom: and it was the opinion of both Jews and heathens that the air is full of spirits, and that there they exercise and exert themselves. The devil seems to have some power (by God's permission) in the lower region of the air; there he is at hand to tempt men, and to do as much mischief to the world as he can: but it is the comfort and joy of God's people that he who is *head over all things to the church* has conquered the devil and has him in his chain. But wicked men are slaves to Satan, for they walk according to him; they conform their lives and actions to the will and pleasure of this great usurper. The course and tenour of their lives are according to his suggestions, and in compliance with his temptations; they are subject to him, and are led captive by him at his will, whereupon he is called the god of this world, and *the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*. *The children of disobedience* are such as choose to disobey God, and to serve the devil; in these he works very powerfully and effectually. As the good Spirit works that which is good in obedient souls, so this evil spirit works that which is evil in wicked men; and he now works, not only heretofore, but even since the world has been blessed with the light of the glorious gospel. The apostle adds, *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past*, which words refer to the Jews,

whom he signifies here to have been in the like sad and miserable condition by nature, and to have been as vile and wicked as the unregenerate Gentiles themselves, and whose natural state he further describes in the next words. 4. We are by nature drudges to the flesh, and to our corrupt affections, v. 3. By *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*, men contract that filthiness of flesh and spirit from which the apostle exhorts Christians to cleanse themselves, 2 Co. 7:1. The fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and of the mind includes all the sin and wickedness that are acted in and by both the inferior and the higher or nobler powers of the soul. We lived in the actual commission of all those sins to which corrupt nature inclined us. The carnal mind makes a man a perfect slave to his vicious appetite.—*The fulfilling of the wills of the flesh*, so the words may be rendered, denoting the efficacy of these lusts, and what power they have over those who yield themselves up unto them. 5. We are *by nature the children of wrath, even as others*. The Jews were so, as well as the Gentiles; and one man is as much so as another by nature, not only by custom and imitation, but from the time when we began to exist, and by reason of our natural inclinations and appetites. All men, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath: God is angry with the wicked every day. Our state and course are such as deserve wrath, and would end in eternal wrath, if divine grace did not interpose. What reason have sinners then to be looking out for that grace that will make them, of children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory! Thus far the apostle has described the misery of a natural state in these verses, which we shall find him pursuing again in some following ones.

#### **Verses 4-10**

Here the apostle begins his account of the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace, where observe, I. By whom, and in what manner, it was brought about and effected. 1. Negatively: *Not of yourselves*, v. 8. Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not the mere product of any natural abilities, nor of any merit of our own: *Not of works, lest any man should boast*, v. 9. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, and therefore all boasting is excluded; he who glories must not glory in himself, but in the Lord. There is no room for any man's boasting of his own abilities and power; or as though he had done any thing that might deserve such immense favours from God. 2. Positively: *But God, who is rich in mercy*, etc., v. 4. God himself is the author of this great and happy change, and his great love is the spring and fountal cause of it; hence he resolved to show mercy. Love is his inclination to do us good considered simply as creatures; mercy respects us as apostate and as miserable creatures. Observe, God's eternal love or good-will towards his creatures is the fountain whence all his mercies vouch-safed to us proceed; and that love of God is great love, and that mercy of his is rich mercy, inexpressibly great and inexhaustibly rich. And then *by grace you are saved* (v. 5), and *by grace are you saved through faith-it is the gift of God*, v. 8. Note, Every converted sinner is a saved sinner. Such are delivered from sin and wrath; they are brought into a state of salvation, and have a right given them by grace to eternal happiness. The grace that saves them is the free undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves them, not *by the works of the law*, but through faith in Christ Jesus, by means of which they come to partake of the great blessings of the gospel; and both that faith and that salvation on which it has so great an influence are the gift of God. The great objects of faith are made known by divine revelation, and made credible by the testimony and evidence which God hath given us; and that we believe to salvation and obtain salvation through

faith is entirely owing to divine assistance and grace; God has ordered all so that the whole shall appear to be of grace.

Observe,

II. Wherein this change consists, in several particulars, answering to the misery of our natural state, some of which are enumerated in this section, and others are mentioned below. 1. We who were dead are quickened (v. 5), we are saved from the death of sin and have a principle of spiritual life implanted in us. Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul. As death locks up the senses, seals up all the powers and faculties, so does a state of sin, as to any thing that is good. Grace unlocks and opens all, and enlarges the soul. Observe, A regenerate sinner becomes a living soul: he lives a life of sanctification, being born of God; and he lives in the sense of the law, being delivered from the guilt of sin by pardoning and justifying grace. *He hath quickened us together with Christ.* Our spiritual life results from our union with Christ; it is in him that we live: *Because I live, you shall live also.* 2. We who were buried are raised up, v. 6. What remains yet to be done is here spoken of as though it were already past, though indeed we are raised up in virtue of our union with him whom God hath raised from the dead. When he raised Christ from the dead, he did in effect raise up all believers together with him, he being their common head; and when he placed him at his right hand in heavenly places, he advanced and glorified them in and with him, their raised and exalted head and forerunner.—*And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* This may be understood in another sense. Sinners roll themselves in the dust; sanctified souls sit in heavenly places, are raised above the world; the world is as nothing to them, compared with what it has been, and compared with what the other world is. Saints are not only Christ's freemen, but they are assessors with him; by the assistance of his grace they have ascended with him above this world to converse with another, and they live in the constant expectation of it. They are not only servants to the best of masters in the best work, but they are exalted to reign with him; they sit upon the throne with Christ, *as he has sat down with his Father on his throne.*

III. Observe what is the great design and aim of God in producing and effecting this change: And this, 1. With respect to others: *That in the ages to come he might show,* etc. (v. 7), that he might give a specimen and proof of his great goodness and mercy, for the encouragement of sinners in future time. Observe, The goodness of God in converting and saving sinners heretofore is a proper encouragement to others in after-time to hope in his grace and mercy, and to apply themselves to these. God having this in his design, poor sinners should take great encouragement from it. And what may we not hope for from such grace and kindness, from riches of grace, to which this change is owing? *Through Christ Jesus,* by and through whom God conveys all his favour and blessings to us. 2. With respect to the regenerated sinners themselves: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,* etc., v. 10. It appears that all is of grace, because all our spiritual advantages are from God. *We are his workmanship;* he means in respect of the new creation; not only as men, but as saints. The new man is a new creature; and God is its Creator. It is a new birth, and we are born or begotten of his will. *In Christ Jesus,* that is, on the account of what he has done and suffered, and by the influence and operation of his blessed Spirit. *Unto good works,* etc. The apostle having before ascribed this change to divine grace in exclusion of works, lest he should seem thereby to discourage good works, he here observes that though the change is to be ascribed to nothing of that nature (*for we are the workmanship of God*), yet God, in his new creation, has designed and prepared us for good works: *Created unto good works,* with a design that

we should be fruitful in them. Wherever God by his grace implants good principles, they are intended to be for good works. *Which God hath before ordained*, that is, decreed and appointed. Or, the words may be read, *To which God hath before prepared us*, that is, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and with the assistance of his Holy Spirit; and by producing such a change in us. *That we should walk in them*, or glorify God by an exemplary conversation and by our perseverance in holiness.

### **Verses 11-13**

In these verses the apostle proceeds in his account of the miserable condition of these Ephesians by nature. *Wherefore remember*, etc., v. 11. As if he had said, "You should remember what you have been, and compare it with what you now are, in order to humble yourselves and to excite your love and thankfulness to God." Note, Converted sinners ought frequently to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of the state they were in by nature. *Gentiles in the flesh*, that is, living in the corruption of their natures, and being destitute of circumcision, the outward sign of an interest in the covenant of grace. *Who are called uncircumcision by that*, etc., that is, "You were reproached and upbraided for it by the formal Jews, who made an external profession, and who looked no further than the outward ordinance." Note, Hypocritical professors are wont to value themselves chiefly on their external privileges, and to reproach and despise others who are destitute of them. The apostle describes the misery of their case in several particulars, v. 12. *"At that time*, while you were Gentiles, and in an unconverted state, you were," 1. "In a Christless condition, without the knowledge of the Messiah, and without any saving interest in him or relation to him." It is true of all unconverted sinners, all those who are destitute of faith, that they have no saving interest in Christ; and it must be a sad and deplorable thing for a soul to be without a Christ. Being without Christ, they were, 2. *Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*; they did not belong to Christ's church, and had no communion with it, that being confined to the Israelitish nation. It is no small privilege to be placed in the church of Christ, and to share with the members of it in the advantages peculiar to it. 3. *They are strangers from the covenants of promise*. The covenant of grace has ever been the same for substance, though, having undergone various additions and improvements in the several ages of the church, it is called covenants; and the covenants of promise, because it is made up of promises, and particularly contains the great promise of the Messiah, and of eternal life through him. Now the Ephesians, in their gentilism, were strangers to this covenant, having never had any information nor overture of it; and all unregenerate sinners are strangers to it, as they have no interest in it. Those who are without Christ, and so have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant, have none in the promises of the covenant. 4. They had no hope, that is, beyond this life—no well-grounded hope in God, no hope of spiritual and eternal blessings. Those who are without Christ, and strangers from the covenant, can have no good hope; for Christ and the covenant are the ground and foundation of all the Christian's hopes. They were in a state of distance and estrangement from God: *Without God in the world*; not without some general knowledge of a deity, for they worshipped idols, but living without any due regard to him, any acknowledged dependence on him, and any special interest in him. The words are, *atheists in the world*; for, though they worshipped many gods, yet they were without the true God.

The apostle proceeds (v. 13) further to illustrate the happy change that was made in their state: *But now, in Christ Jesus, you*

*who sometimes were far off*, etc. They were far off from Christ, from his church, from the promises, from the Christian hope, and from God himself; and therefore from all good, like the prodigal son in the far country: this had been represented in the preceding verses. Unconverted sinners remove themselves at a distance from God, and God puts them at a distance: *He beholds the proud afar off*. "But now in Christ Jesus, etc., upon your conversion, by virtue of union with Christ, and interest in him by faith, you are made nigh." They were brought home to God, received into the church, taken into the covenant, and possessed of all other privileges consequent upon these. Note, *The saints are a people near to God. Salvation is far from the wicked*; but God is a help at hand to his people; and this is *by the blood of Christ*, by the merit of his sufferings and death. Every believing sinner owes his nearness to God, and his interest in his favour, to the death and sacrifice of Christ.

### **Verses 14-22**

We have now come to the last part of the chapter, which contains an account of the great and mighty privileges that converted Jews and Gentiles both receive from Christ. The apostle here shows that those who were in a state of enmity are reconciled. Between the Jews and the Gentiles there had been a great enmity; so there is between God and every unregenerate man. Now Jesus Christ is our peace, v. 14. He made peace by the sacrifice of himself; and came to reconcile, 1. Jews and Gentiles to each other. He *made both one*, by reconciling these two divisions of men, who were wont to malign, to hate, and to reproach each other before. He *broke down the middle wall of partition*, the ceremonial law, that made the great feud, and was the badge of the Jews' peculiarity, called *the partition-wall* by way of allusion to the partition in the temple, which separated the court of the Gentiles from that into which the Jews only had liberty to enter. Thus *he abolished in his flesh the enmity*, v. 15. By his sufferings in the flesh, to took away the binding power of the ceremonial law (so removing that cause of enmity and distance between them), which is here called *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, because it enjoined a multitude of external rites and ceremonies, and consisted of many institutions and appointments about the outward parts of divine worship. *The legal ceremonies were abrogated by Christ, having their accomplishment in him*. By taking these out of the way, he formed one church of believers, whether they had been Jews or Gentiles. Thus he made *in himself of twain one new man*. He framed both these parties into one new society, or body of God's people, uniting them to himself as their common head, they being renewed by the Holy Ghost, and now concurring in a new way of gospel worship, *so making peace* between these two parties, who were so much at variance before. 2. There is an enmity between God and sinners, whether Jews and Gentiles; and Christ came to slay that enmity, and to reconcile them both to God, v. 16. Sin breeds a quarrel between God and men. Christ came to take up the quarrel, and to bring it to an end, by reconciling both Jew and Gentile, now collected and gathered into one body, to a provoked and an offended God: and this *by the cross*, or by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, *having slain the enmity thereby*. He, being slain or sacrificed, slew the enmity that there was between God and poor sinners. The apostle proceeds to illustrate the great advantages which both parties gain by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 17. Christ, who purchased peace on the cross, came, partly in his own person, as to the Jews, who are here said to have been nigh, and partly in his apostles, whom he commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, who are said to have been afar off, in the sense that has been given before. *And preached peace*, or published the terms of reconciliation with God and of eternal life. Note here,

When the messengers of Christ deliver his truths, it is in effect the same as if he did it immediately himself. He is said to preach by them, insomuch that he who receiveth them receiveth him, and he who despiseth them (acting by virtue of his commission, and delivering his message) despiseth and rejecteth Christ himself. Now the effect of this peace is the free access which both Jews and Gentiles have unto God (v. 18): *For through him*, in his name and by virtue of his mediation, *we both have access* or admission into the presence of God, who has become the common reconciled Father of both: the throne of grace is erected for us to come to, and liberty of approach to that throne is allowed us. Our access is by the Holy Spirit. Christ purchased for us leave to come to God, and the Spirit gives us a heart to come and strength to come, even grace to serve God acceptably. Observe, We draw nigh to God, through Jesus Christ, by the help of the Spirit. The Ephesians, upon their conversion, having such an access to God, as well as the Jews, and by the same Spirit, the apostle tells them, *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners*, v. 19. This he mentions by way of opposition to what he had observed of them in their heathenism: they were now no longer *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, and no longer what the Jews were wont to account all the nations of the earth besides themselves (namely, strangers to God), *but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, that is, members of the church of Christ, and having a right to all the privileges of it. Observe here, The church is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is free of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the domestics, one of the family, a servant and a child in God's house. In v. 20 the church is compared to a building. The apostles and prophets are *the foundation* of that building. They may be so called in a secondary sense, Christ himself being the primary foundation; but we are rather to understand it of the doctrine delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New. It follows, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*. In him both Jews and Gentiles meet, and constitute one church; and Christ supports the building by his strength: *In whom all the building, fitly framed together*, etc., v. 21. All believers, of whom it consists, being united to Christ by faith, and among themselves by Christian charity, *grow unto a holy temple*, become a sacred society, in which there is much communion between God and his people, as in the temple, they worshipping and serving him, he manifesting himself unto them, they offering up spiritual sacrifices to God and he dispensing his blessings and favours to them. Thus the building, for the nature of it, is a temple, a holy temple; for the church is the place which God hath chosen to put his name there, and it becomes such a temple by grace and strength derived from himself—*in the Lord*. The universal church being built upon Christ as the foundation-stone, and united in Christ as the corner-stone, comes at length to be glorified in him as the top-stone: *In whom you also are built together*, etc., v. 22. Observe, Not only the universal church is called the temple of God, but particular churches; and even every true believer is a living temple, is *a habitation of God through the Spirit*. God dwells in all believers now, they having become the temple of God through the operations of the blessed Spirit, and his dwelling with them now is an earnest of their dwelling together with him to eternity.

### Chapter 3

This chapter consists of two parts. I. Of the account which Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God to be the apostle of the Gentiles (v. 1–13). II. Of his devout and affectionate prayer to God for the Ephesians (v. 14–21). We may observe it to have been very much the practice of this apostle to intermix, with his instructions and counsels, intercessions and prayers to God for those to whom he wrote, as knowing that all his instructions and teachings would be useless and vain, except God did co-operate with them, and render them effectual. This is an example that all the ministers of Christ should copy after, praying earnestly that the efficacious operations of the divine Spirit may attend their ministrations, and crown them with success.

#### **Verses 1-13**

Here we have the account which Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God the apostle of the Gentiles.

I. We may observe that he acquaints them with the tribulations and sufferings which he endured in the discharge of that office, v. 1. The first clause refers to the preceding chapter, and may be understood either of these two ways:—1. "*For this cause,*—for having preached the doctrine contained in the foregoing chapter, and for asserting that the great privileges of the gospel belong not only to the Jews, but to believing Gentiles also, though they are not circumcised,—for this I am now a prisoner, but a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, as I suffer in his cause and for his sake, and continue his faithful servant and the object of his special protection and care, while I am thus suffering for him." Observe, Christ's servants, if they come to be prisoners, are his prisoners; and he despises not his prisoners. He thinks never the worse of them for the bad character which the world gives them or the evil treatment that they met with in it. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him, when he was in prison.—*For you, Gentiles*; the Jews persecuted and imprisoned him because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. We may learn hence that the faithful ministers of Christ are to dispense his sacred truths, however disagreeable they may be to some, and whatever they themselves may suffer for doing so. Or, 2. The words may be thus understood:—"*For this cause,*—since *you are no more strangers and foreigners* (as ch. 2:19), but are united to Christ, and admitted into communion with his church,—*I Paul*, who am *the prisoner of Jesus Christ*, pray that you may be enabled to act as becomes persons thus favoured by God, and made partakers of such privileges." To this purport you find him expressing himself in v. 14, where, after the digression contained in the several verses intervening, he proceeds with what he began in the first verse. Observe, Those who have received grace and signal favours from God stand in need of prayer, that they may improve and advance, and continue to act as becomes them. And, seeing Paul while he was a prisoner employed himself in such prayers to God in behalf of the Ephesians, we should learn that no particular sufferings of our own should make us so solicitous about ourselves as to neglect the cases of others in our supplications and addresses to God. He speaks again of his sufferings: *Wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulation for you, which is your glory*, v. 13. While he was in prison, he suffered much there; and, though it was upon their account that he suffered, yet he would not have them discouraged nor dismayed at this, seeing God had done

such great things for them by his ministry. What a tender concern was here for these Ephesians! The apostle seems to have been more solicitous lest they should be discouraged and faint upon his tribulations than about what he himself endured; and, to prevent this, he tells them that his sufferings were their glory, and would be so far from being a real discouragement, if they duly considered the matter, that they ministered cause to them for glorying and for rejoicing, as this discovered the great esteem and regard which God bore to them, in that he not only sent his apostles to preach the gospel to them, but even to suffer for them, and to confirm the truths they delivered by the persecutions they underwent. Observe, Not only the faithful ministers of Christ themselves, but their people too, have some special cause for joy and glorying, when they suffer for the sake of dispensing the gospel.

II. The apostle informs them of God's appointing him to the office, and eminently fitting and qualifying him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him. 1. God appointed him to the office: *If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward*, v. 2. They could not have heard of this, and therefore he does not design to speak doubtfully of this matter. *Eige* is sometimes an affirmative particle, and we may read it, *Since you have heard*, etc. He styles the gospel *the grace of God* here (as in other places) because it is the gift of divine grace to sinful men; and all the gracious overtures that it makes, and the joyful tidings that it contains, proceed from the rich grace of God; and it is also the great instrument in the hands of the Spirit by which God works grace in the souls of men. He speaks of the dispensation of this grace given to him; he means as he was authorized and commissioned by God to dispense the doctrine of the gospel, which commission and authority were given to him chiefly for he service of the Gentiles: *to you-ward*. And again, speaking of the gospel, he says, *Whereof I was made a minister*, etc., v. 7 Here he again asserts his authority. He was MADE a minister—he did not make himself such; he took not to himself that honour—and he was made such *according to the gift of the grace of God unto him*. God supplied and furnished him for his work; and in the performance of it suitably assisted him with all needful gifts and graces, both ordinary and extraordinary, and that *by the effectual working of his power*, in himself more especially, and also in great numbers of those to whom he preached, by which means his labours among them were successful. Observe, What God calls men to he fits them for, and does it with an almighty power. An effectual working of divine power attends the gifts of divine grace. 2. As God appointed him to the office, so he eminently qualified him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him. He makes mention both of the mystery that was revealed and of the revelation of it. (1.) The mystery revealed is *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel* (v. 6); that is, that they should be joint-heirs with the believing Jews of the heavenly inheritance; and that they should be members of the same mystical body, be received into the church of Christ, and be interested in the gospel-promises, as well as the Jews, and particularly in that great promise of the Spirit. And this *in Christ*, being united to Christ, *in whom all the promises are yea and amen; and by the gospel*, that is, in the times of the gospel, as some understand it; or, *by the gospel* preached to them, which is the great instrument and means by which God works faith in Christ, as others. This was the great truth revealed to the apostles, namely, that God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, and that without the works of the law. (2.) Of the revelation of this truth he speaks, v. 3-5. Here we may observe that the coalition of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church

was a mystery, a great mystery, what was designed in the counsel of God before all worlds, but what could not be fully understood for many ages, till the accomplishment expounded the prophecies of it. It is called a mystery because the several circumstances and peculiarities of it (such as the time and manner and means by which it should be effected) were concealed and kept secret in God's own breast, till he an immediate *revelation he made them known* to his servant. See Acts 26:16–18. And it is called the mystery of Christ because it was revealed by him (Gal. 1:12), and because it relates so very much to him. Of this the apostle has given some hints *afore*, or a little before; that is, in the preceding chapters. *Whereby, when you read*; or, as those words may be read, *unto which attending* (and it is not enough for us barely to read the scriptures, unless we attend to them, and seriously consider and lay to heart what we read), *you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*; so as to perceive how God had fitted and qualified him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, which might be to them an evident token of his divine authority. *This mystery*, he says, *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* (v. 5); that is, "It was not so fully and clearly discovered in the ages before Christ as it is now revealed unto the prophets of this age, the prophets of the New Testament, who are immediately inspired and taught by the Spirit." Let us observe, that the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith of Christ was an adorable mystery, and we ought to bless God for it. Who would have imagined that those who had been so long in the dark, and at so great a distance, would be enlightened with the marvellous light, and be made nigh? Let us learn hence not to despair of the worst, of the worst of persons, and the worst of nations. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to do: none so unworthy but God may please to confer great grace upon them. And how much are we ourselves interested in this affair; not only as we live in a time in which the mystery is revealed, but particularly as we are a part of the nations which in times past were foreigners and strangers, and lived in gross idolatry; but are now enlightened with the everlasting gospel, and partake of its promises!

III. The apostle informs them how he was employed in this office, and that with respect to the Gentiles, and to all men.

1. With respect to the Gentiles, he *preached* to them *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, v. 8. Observe, in this verse, how humbly he speaks of himself, and how highly he speaks of Jesus Christ. (1.) How humbly he speaks of himself: *I am less than the least of all saints*. St. Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, calls himself *less than the least of all saints*: he means on account of his having been formerly a persecutor of the followers of Christ. He was, in his own esteem, as little as could be. What can be less than the least? To speak himself as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Observe, Those whom God advances to honourable employments he humbles and makes low in their own eyes; and, where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other grace. You may also observe in what a different manner the apostle speaks of himself and of his office. While he magnifies his office, he debases himself. Observe, A faithful minister of Christ may be very humble, and think very meanly of himself, even when he thinks and speaks very highly and honourably of his sacred function. (2.) How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ: *The unsearchable riches of Christ*. There is a mighty treasury of mercy, grace, and love, laid up in Christ Jesus, and that both for Jews and Gentiles. Or, the riches of the gospel are here spoken of as the riches of Christ: the riches which Christ purchased for, and bestows upon, all believers. And they are unsearchable riches, which we cannot find the bottom of, which human sagacity could never have discovered, and men could no otherwise attain to the knowledge of

them but by revelation. Now it was the apostle's business and employment to *preach* these *unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles*: and it was a favour he greatly valued, and looked upon it as an unspeakable honour to him: "*Unto me is this grace given; this special favour God has granted to such an unworthy creature as I am.*" And it is an unspeakable favour to the Gentile world that to them *the unsearchable riches of Christ* are preached. Though many remain poor, and are not enriched with these riches, yet it is a favour to have them preached among us, to have an offer of them made to us; and, if we are not enriched with them, it is our own fault.

2. With respect to all men, v. 9. His business and employment were *to make all men see* (to publish and make known to the whole world) *what is the fellowship of the mystery* (that the Gentiles who have hitherto been strangers to the church, shall be admitted into communion with it) *which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God* (kept secret in his purpose), *who created all things by Jesus Christ*: as Jn. 1:3, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*; and therefore no wonder that he saves the Gentiles as well as the Jews; for he is the common Creator of them both: and we may conclude that he is able to perform the work of their redemption, seeing he was able to accomplish the great work of creation. It is true that both the first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God*, v. 10. This was one things, among others, which God had in his eye in revealing this mystery, that the good angels, who have a pre-eminence in governing the kingdoms and principalities of the world, and who are endued with great power to execute the will of God on this earth (though their ordinary residence is in heaven) may be informed, from what passes in the church and is done in and by it, *of the manifold wisdom of God*; that is, of the great variety with which God wisely dispenses things, or of his wisdom manifested in the many ways and methods he takes in ordering his church in the several ages of it, and especially in receiving the Gentiles into it. The holy angels, who look into the mystery of our redemption by Christ, could not but take notice of this branch of that mystery, that among the Gentiles is preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is *according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*, v. 11. Some translate the words *kata prothesin toyn aiouonon* thus *According to the fore-disposing of the ages which he made*, etc. So Dr. Whitby, etc. "In the first of the ages," says this author, "his wisdom seeing fit to give the promise of a Saviour to a fallen Adam: in the second age to typify and represent him to the Jews in sacred persons, rites, and sacrifices: and in the age of the Messiah, or the last age, to reveal him to the Jews, and preach him to the Gentiles." Others understand it, according to our translation, of the eternal purpose which God purposed to execute in and through Jesus Christ, the whole of what he has done in the great affair of man's redemption being in pursuance of his eternal decree about that matter. The apostle, having mentioned our Lord Jesus Christ, subjoins concerning him, *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him* (v. 12); that is, "By (or through) whom we have liberty to open our minds freely to God, as to a Father, and a well-grounded persuasion of audience and of acceptance with him; and this by means of the faith we have in him, as our great Mediator and Advocate." We may come with humble boldness to hear from God, knowing that the terror of the curse is done away; and we may expect to hear from him good words and

comfortable. We may have access with confidence to speak to God, knowing that we have such a Mediator between God and us, and such an Advocate with the Father.

### Verses 14-21

We now come to the second part of this chapter, which contains Paul's devout and affectionate prayer to God for his beloved Ephesians.—*For this cause*. This may be referred either to the immediately foregoing verse, *That you faint not*, etc., or, rather, the apostle is here resuming what he began at the first verse, from which he digressed in those which are interposed. Observe, I. To whom he prays—to God, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, of which see ch. 1:3.

II. His outward posture in prayer, which was humble and reverent: *I bow my knees*. Note, When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts, and express our reverence in the most suitable and becoming behaviour and gesture. Here, having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without an honourable encomium of his love, v. 15. The universal church has a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ: *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*. The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father, but now Jews and Gentiles are both denominated from Christ (so some); while others understand it of the saints in heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth who are going on in the work of grace here. Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from him they are *named* CHRISTIANS, as they really are such, acknowledging their dependence upon, and their relation to, Christ.

III. What the apostle asks of God for these his friends—spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought and prayed for by every one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends. 1. Spiritual strength for the work and duty to which they were called, and in which they were employed: *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened*, etc. *The inner man* is the heart or soul. To be *strengthened with might* is to be mightily strengthened, much more than they were at present; to be endued with a high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for discharging duty, resisting temptations, enduring persecutions, etc. And the apostle prays that this may be *according to the riches of his glory*, or according to his glorious riches—answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy, and power, which resides in God, and is his glory: and this by his Spirit, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Observe from these things, That strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man is the best and most desirable strength, strength in the soul, the strength of faith and other graces, strength to serve God and to do our duty, and to persevere in our Christian course with vigour and with cheerfulness. And let us further observe that *as the work of grace is first begun so it is continued and carried on, by the blessed Spirit of God*. 2. The indwelling of Christ in their hearts, v. 17. Christ is said to dwell in his people, as he is always present with them by his gracious influences and operations. Observe, It is a desirable thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts; and if the law of Christ be written there, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. Christ is an inhabitant in the soul of every good Christian. Where his spirit dwells, there he swells; and he dwells in the heart by faith, by means of the continual exercise of faith upon him. Faith opens the door of the soul, to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ, and have an interest in him. 3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul: *That you being rooted and grounded in love*, stedfastly fixed in your love to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and

to all the saints, the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have some love to God and to his servants, but it is a flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it makes a great noise, but is gone presently. We should earnestly desire that good affections may be fixed in us, that we may be *rooted and grounded in love*. Some understand it of their being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them, which would inspire them with greater ardours of holy love to him, and to one another. And how very desirable is it to have a settled fixed sense of the love of God and Christ to our souls, so as to be able to say with the apostle at all times, *He has loved me!* Now the best way to attain this is to be careful that we maintain a constant love to God in our souls; this will be the evidence of the love of God to us. *We love him, because he first loved us*. In order to this he prays, 4. For their experimental acquaintance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance we have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake: *That you may be able to comprehend with all saints*, etc. (v. 18, 19); that is, more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe, the wonderful love of Christ to his, which the saints do understand and believe in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter. Christians should not aim to comprehend above all saints; but be content that God deals with them as he uses to do with those who love and fear his name: we should desire to comprehend *with all saints*, to have so much knowledge as the saints are allowed to have in this world. We should be ambitious of coming up with *the first three*; but not of going beyond what is the measure of the stature of other saints. It is observable how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable: *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height*. By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, the unsearchable riches of his love, which is *higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*, Job 11:8, 9. Some describe the particulars thus: By the breadth of it we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men; by the length of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting; by the depth of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery; by its height, its entitling and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love: it is the character of all the saints that they do so; for they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ: *And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*, v. 19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? We must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though, after the best endeavours, none can fully comprehend it: in its full extent it surpasses knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by Christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven. 5. He prays that they may *be filled with all the fulness of God*. It is a high expression: we should not dare to use it if we did not find it in the scriptures. It is like those other expressions, of being *partakers of a divine nature*, and of being *perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*. We are not to understand it of his fulness as God in himself, but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us, as a God to his people: such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill them all to the utmost of their capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces which he sees they need. Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness may be said to be *filled with the fulness of God*, according to their capacity, all which is in order to their arriving at the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and an entire conformity to him.

The apostle closes the chapter with a doxology, v. 20, 21. It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God, and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that *is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is still able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more. Open thy mouth ever so wide, still he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power. *According to the power which worketh in us*. As if he had said, We have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness he gives to experience his power. Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellences and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, The seat of God's praises is in the church. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world is from the church, a sacred society constituted for the glory of God, every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, concurs in this work of praising God. The Mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from his to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*; for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. *Amen*. So be it; and so it will certainly be.

## Chapter 4

We have gone through the former part of this epistle, which consists of several important doctrinal truths, contained in the three preceding chapters. We enter now on the latter part of it, in which we have the most weighty and serious exhortations that can be given. We may observe that in this, as in most others of Paul's epistles, the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, the latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners, all Christians being bound to endeavour after soundness in the faith, and regularity in life and practice. In what has gone before we have heard of Christian privileges, which are the matter of our comfort. In what follows we shall hear of Christian duties, and what the Lord our God requires of us in consideration of such privileges vouchsafed to us. The best way to understand the mysteries and partake of the privileges of which we have read before is conscientiously to practise the duties prescribed to us in what follows: as, on the other hand, a serious consideration and belief of the doctrines that have been taught us in the foregoing chapters will be a good foundation on which to build the practice of the duties prescribed in those which are yet before us. Christian faith and Christian practice mutually befriend each other. In this chapter we have divers exhortations to important duties. I. One that is more general (v. 1). II. An exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them (v. 2–16). III. An exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of life; and that both more general (v. 17–24) and in several particular instances (v. 25 to the end).

### Verse 1

This is a general exhortation to walk as becomes our Christian profession. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome; and he was the *prisoner of the Lord*, or in the Lord, which signifies as much as for the Lord. See of this, ch. 3:1. He mentions this once and again, to show that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer: and likewise to recommend what he wrote to them with the greater tenderness and with some special advantage. It was a doctrine he thought worth suffering for, and therefore surely they should think it worthy their serious regards and their dutiful observance. We have here the petition of a poor prisoner, one of Christ's prisoners: "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you,*" etc. Considering what God has done for you, and to what a state and condition he has called you, as has been discoursed before, I now come with an earnest request to you (not to send me relief, nor to use your interest for the obtaining of my liberty, the first thing which poor prisoners are wont to solicit from their friends, but) that you would approve yourselves good Christians, and live up to your profession and calling; *That you walk worthily*, agreeably, suitably, and congruously to those happy circumstances into which the grace of God has brought you, whom he has converted from heathenism to Christianity. Observe, Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the gospel by which they are called, and to the glory to which they are called; both are their vocation. We are called Christians; we must answer that name, and live like Christians. We are called to God's kingdom and glory; that kingdom and glory therefore we must mind, and walk as becomes the heirs of them.

### Verses 2-16

Here the apostle proceeds to more particular exhortations. Two he enlarges upon in this chapter:—To unity and love, purity and

holiness, which Christians should very much study. We do not *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called* if we be not faithful friends to all Christians, and sworn enemies to all sin.

This section contains the exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them. Nothing is pressed upon us more earnestly in the scriptures than this. Love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Observe,

I. The means of unity: *Lowliness and meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love*, v. 2. By lowliness we are to understand humility, entertaining mean thoughts of ourselves, which is opposed to pride. By *meekness*, that excellent disposition of soul which makes men unwilling to provoke others, and not easily to be provoked or offended with their infirmities; and it is opposed to angry resentments and peevishness. *Long-suffering* implies a patient bearing of injuries, without seeking revenge. *Forbearing one another in love* signifies bearing their infirmities out of a principle of love, and so as not to cease to love them on the account of these. The best Christians have need to bear one with another, and to make the best one of another, to provoke one another's graces and not their passions. We find much in ourselves which it is hard to forgive ourselves; and therefore we must not think it much if we find that in others which we think hard to forgive them, and yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Now without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility; without this there will be no meekness, no patience, or forbearance; and without these no unity. Pride and passion break the peace, and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness restore the peace, and keep it. *Only by pride comes contention*; only by humility comes love. The more lowly-mindedness the more like-mindedness. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called if we be not meek and lowly of heart: for he by whom we are called, he to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart, and has commanded us therein to learn of him.

II. The nature of that unity which the apostle prescribes: it is *the unity of the Spirit*, v. 3. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart or spirit: it does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship, but in one heart and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of the Spirit of God; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. *Endeavouring* is a gospel word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others will despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. *In the bond of peace*. Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct bind Christians together, whereas discord and quarrelling disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs, bound together, become strong. The bond of peace is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined that all good people, and all the members of societies, should be in every thing just of the same length, and the same sentiments, and the same judgment: but the bond of peace unites them all together, with a *non obstante* to these. As in a bundle of rods, they may be of different lengths and different strength; but, when they are tied together by one bond, they are stronger than any, even than the thickest and strongest was of itself.

III. The motives proper to promote this Christian unity and concord. The apostle urges several, to persuade us thereto.

1. Consider how many unities there are that are the joy and glory of our Christian profession. There should be one heart; for

*there is one body, and one spirit*, v. 4. Two hearts in one body would be monstrous. If there be but one body, all that belong to that body should have one heart. The Catholic church is one mystical body of Christ, and all good Christians make up but one body, incorporated by one charter, that of the gospel, animated by one Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who by his gifts and graces quickens, enlivens, and governs that body. If we belong to Christ, we are all actuated by one and the same Spirit, and therefore should be one. *Even as you are called in one hope of your calling*. Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for, the heavenly inheritance, to the hope of which we are called. All Christians are called to the same hope of eternal life. There is one Christ that they all hope in, and one heaven that they are all hoping for; and therefore they should be of one heart. *One Lord* (v. 5), that is, Christ, the head of the church, to whom, by God's appointment, all Christians are immediately subject. *One faith*, that is, the gospel, containing the doctrine of the Christian faith: or, it is the same grace of faith (faith in Christ) whereby all Christians are saved. *One baptism*, by which we profess our faith, being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and so the same sacramental covenant, whereby we engage ourselves to the Lord Christ. *One God and Father of all*, v. 6. One God, who owns all the true members of the church for his children; for he is the Father of all such by special relation, as he is the Father of all men by creation: and he *is above all*, by his essence, and with respect to the glorious perfections of his nature, and as he has dominion over all creatures and especially over his church, *and through all*, by his providence upholding and governing them: *and in you all*, in all believers, in whom he dwells as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace. If then there be so many *ones*, it is a pity but there should be one more—one heart, or one soul.

2. Consider the variety of gifts that Christ has bestowed among Christians: *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ*. Though the members of Christ's church agree in so many things, yet there are some things wherein they differ: but this should breed no difference of affection among them, since they are all derived from the same bountiful author and designed for the same great ends. Unto every one of us Christians is given grace, some gift of grace, in some kind or degree or other, for the mutual help of one another. Unto every one of us ministers is given grace; to some a greater measure of gifts, to others a less measure. The different gifts of Christ's ministers proved a great occasion of contention among the first Christians: one was for Paul, and another for Apollos. The apostle shows that they had no reason to quarrel about them, but all the reason in the world to agree in the joint use of them, for common edification; because all was given *according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, in such a measure as seemed best to Christ to bestow upon every one. Observe, All the ministers, and all the members of Christ, owe all the gifts and graces that they are possessed of to him; and this is a good reason why we should love one another, *because to every one of us is given grace*. All to whom Christ has given grace, and on whom he has bestowed his gifts (though they are of different sizes, different names, and different sentiments, yet), *ought to love one another*. The apostle takes this occasion to specify some of the gifts which Christ bestowed. And that they were bestowed by Christ he makes appear by those words of David wherein he foretold this concerning him (Ps. 68:18), *Wherefore he saith* (v. 8), that is, the Psalmist saith, *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*. David prophesied of the ascension of Christ; and the apostle descants upon it here, and in the three following verses. *When he ascended up on high*. We may understand the apostle both of the place into which he ascended in his human nature,

that is, the highest heavens, and particularly of the state to which he was advanced, he being then highly exalted, and eminently glorified, by his Father. Let us set ourselves to think of the ascension of Jesus Christ: that our blessed Redeemer, having risen from the dead, in gone to heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, which completed the proof of his being the Son of God. As great conquerors, when they rode in their triumphal chariots, used to be attended with the most illustrious of their captives led in chains, and were wont to scatter their largesses and bounty among the soldiers and other spectators of their triumphs, so Christ, when he ascended into heaven, as a triumphant conqueror, *led captivity captive*. It is a phrase used in the Old Testament to signify a conquest over enemies, especially over such as formerly had led others captive; see Judges 5:12. Captivity is here put for captives, and signifies all our spiritual enemies, who brought us into captivity before. He conquered those who had conquered us; such as sin, the devil, and death. Indeed, he triumphed over these *on the cross*; but the triumph was completed at his ascension, when he became Lord over all, and had the keys of death and hades put into his hands. *And he gave gifts unto men*: in the psalm it is, *He received gifts for men*. He received for them, that he might give to them, a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly, he enriched his disciples with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The apostle, thus speaking of the ascension of Christ, takes notice that he *descended first*, v. 9. As much as if he had said, "When David speaks of Christ's ascension, he intimates the knowledge he had of Christ's humiliation on earth; for, when it is said that he ascended, this implies that he first descended: for what is it but a proof or demonstration of his having done so?" *Into the lower parts of the earth*; this may refer either to his incarnation, according to that of David, Ps. 139:15, *My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*; or, to his burial, according to that of Ps. 63:9, *Those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth*. He calls his death (say some of the fathers) *his descent into the lower parts of the earth*. He descended to the earth in his incarnation. He descended into the earth in his burial. *As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man in the heart of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens* (v. 10), far above the airy and starry (which are the visible) heavens, into the heaven of heavens; *that he might fill all things*, all the members of his church, with gifts and graces suitable to their several conditions and stations. Observe, Our Lord humbled himself first, and then he was exalted. He descended first, and then ascended. The apostle next tells us what were Christ's gifts at his ascension: *He gave some apostles*, etc., v. 11. Indeed he sent forth some of these before his ascension, Mt. 10:1-5. But one was then added, Acts 1:26. And all of them were more solemnly installed, and publicly confirmed, in their office, by his visibly pouring forth the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure upon them. Note, The great gift that Christ gave to the church at his ascension was that of the ministry of peace and reconciliation. The gift of the ministry is the fruit of Christ's ascension. And ministers have their various gifts, which are all given them by the Lord Jesus. The officers which Christ gave to his church were of two sorts—*extraordinary* ones advanced to a higher office in the church: such were *apostles, prophets, and evangelists*. The apostles were chief. These Christ immediately called, furnished them with extraordinary gifts and the power of working miracles, and with infallibility in delivering his truth; and, they having been the witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, he sent them forth to spread the gospel and to plant and govern churches. The prophets seem to have been such as expounded the writings of the Old

Testament, and foretold things to come. The evangelists were ordained persons (2 Tim. 1:6), whom the apostles took for their companions in travel (Gal. 2:1), and sent them out to settle and establish such churches as the apostles themselves had planted (Acts 19:22), and, not being fixed to any particular place, they were to continue till recalled, 2 Tim. 4:9. And then there are *ordinary* ministers, employed in a lower and narrower sphere; as *pastors* and *teachers*. Some take these two names to signify one office, implying the duties of ruling and teaching belonging to it. Others think they design two distinct offices, both ordinary, and of standing use in the church; and then pastors are such as are fixed at the head of particular churches, with design to guide, instruct, and feed them in the manner appointed by Christ; and they are frequently called bishops and elders: and the teachers were those whose work it was also to preach the gospel and to instruct the people by way of exhortation. We see here that it is Christ's prerogative to appoint what officers and offices he pleases in his church. And how rich is the church, that had at first such a variety of officers and has still such a variety of gifts! How kind is Christ to his church! How careful of it and of its edification! When he ascended, he procured the gift of the Holy Ghost; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are various: some have greater, others have less measures; but all for the good of the body, which brings us to the third argument,

3. Which is taken from Christ's great end and design in giving gifts unto men. The gifts of Christ were intended for the good of his church, and in order to advance his kingdom and interest among men. All these being designed for one common end is a good reason why all Christians should agree in brotherly love, and not envy one another's gifts. All are *for the perfecting of the saints* (v. 12); that is, according to the import of the original, to bring into an orderly spiritual state and frame those who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin, and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein, that so each, in his proper place and function, might contribute to the good of the whole.—*For the work of the ministry, or for the work of dispensation*; that is, that they might dispense the doctrines of the gospel, and successfully discharge the several parts of their ministerial function.—*For the edifying of the body of Christ*; that is, to build up the church, which is Christ's mystical body, by an increase of their graces, and an addition of new members. All are designed to prepare us for heaven: *Till we all come*, etc., v. 13. The gifts and offices (some of them) which have been spoken of are to continue in the church till the saints be perfected, which will not be *till they all come in the unity of the faith* (till all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith) *and of the knowledge of the Son of God*, by which we are to understand, not a bare speculative knowledge, or the acknowledging of Christ to be the Son of God and the great Mediator, but such as is attended with appropriation and affection, with all due honour, trust, and obedience.—*Unto a perfect man*, to our full growth of gifts and graces, free from those childish infirmities that we are subject to in the present world.—*Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, so as to be Christians of a full maturity and ripeness in all the graces derived from Christ's fulness: or, according to the measure of that stature which is to make up the fulness of Christ, which is to complete his mystical body. Now we shall never come to the perfect man, till we come to the perfect world. There is a fulness in Christ, and a fulness to be derived from him; and a certain stature of that fulness, and a measure of that stature, are assigned in the counsel of God to every believer, and we never come to that measure till we come to heaven. God's children, as long as they are in this world, are growing. Dr Lightfoot understands the apostle as speaking here of Jews and Gentiles knit in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, so

making a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The apostle further shows, in the following verses, what was God's design in his sacred institutions, and what effect they ought to have upon us. As, (1.) *That we henceforth be no more children*, etc. (v. 14); that is, that we may be no longer children in knowledge, weak in the faith, and inconstant in our judgments, easily yielding to every temptation, readily complying with every one's humour, and being at every one's back. Children are easily imposed upon. We must take care of this, and of being *tossed to and fro*, like ships without ballast, *and carried about*, like clouds in the air, with such doctrines as have no truth nor solidity in them, but nevertheless spread themselves far and wide, and are therefore compared to wind. *By the sleight of men*; this is a metaphor taken from gamesters, and signifies the mischievous subtlety of seducers: *and cunning craftiness*, by which is meant their skilfulness in finding ways to seduce and deceive; for it follows, *whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, as in an ambush, in order to circumvent the weak, and draw them from the truth. Note, Those must be very wicked and ungodly men who set themselves to seduce and deceive others into false doctrines and errors. The apostle describes them here as base men, using a great deal of devilish art and cunning, in order thereunto. The best method we can take to fortify ourselves against such is to study the sacred oracles, and to pray for the illumination and grace of the Spirit of Christ, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be established in it. (2.) *That we should speak the truth in love* (v. 15), or follow the truth in love, or be sincere in love to our fellow-Christians. While we adhere to the doctrine of Christ, which is the truth, we should live in love one with another. Love is an excellent thing; but we must be careful to preserve truth together with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet it is requisite that we speak it in love, and not in contention. These two should go together—truth and peace. (3.) *That we should grow up into Christ in all things*. Into Christ, so as to be more deeply rooted in him. In all things; in knowledge, love, faith, and all the parts of the new man. We should grow up towards maturity, which is opposed to being children. Those are improving Christians who grow up into Christ. The more we grow into an acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, dependence upon him, the more we shall flourish in every grace. He is the head; and we should thus grow, that we may thereby honour our head. The Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ. (4.) *We should be assisting and helpful one to another*, as members of the same body, v. 16. Here the apostle makes a comparison between the natural body and Christ's mystical body, that body of which Christ is the head: and he observes that as there must be communion and mutual communications of the members of the body among themselves, in order to their growth and improvement, so there must be mutual love and unity, together with the proper fruits of these, among Christians, in order to their spiritual improvement and growth in grace. *From whom*, says he (that is, from Christ their head, who conveys influence and nourishment to every particular member), *the whole body of Christians, fitly joined together and compacted* (being orderly and firmly united among themselves, every one in his proper place and station), *by that which every joint supplies* (by the assistance which every one of the parts, thus united, gives to the whole, or by the Spirit, faith, love, sacraments, etc., which, like the veins and arteries in the body, serve to unite Christians to Christ their head, and to one another as fellow-members), *according to the effectual working in the measure of every part* (that is, say some, according to the power which the Holy Ghost exerts to make God's appointed means effectual for this great end, in such a measure as Christ judges to be sufficient and proper for every member, according to its respective place and office in the

body; or, as others, according to the power of Christ, who, as head, influences and enlivens every member; or, according to the effectual working of every member, in communicating to others of what it has received, nourishment is conveyed to all in their proportions, and according to the state and exigence of every part) *makes increase of the body*, such an increase as is convenient for the body. Observe, Particular Christians receive their gifts and graces from Christ for the sake and benefit of the whole body. *Unto the edifying of itself in love*. We may understand this two ways:—Either that all the members of the church may attain a greater measure of love to Christ and to one another; or that they are moved to act in the manner mentioned from love to Christ and to one another. Observe, Mutual love among Christians is a great friend to spiritual growth: it is in love that the body edifies itself; whereas *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*.

### **Verses 17-32**

The apostle having gone through his exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, in the foregoing verses, there follows in these an exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of heart and life, and that both more general (v. 17–24) and in several particular instances, v. 25–32. This is solemnly introduced: "*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord; that is, seeing the matter is as above described, seeing you are members of Christ's body and partakers of such gifts, this I urge upon your consciences, and bear witness to as your duty in the Lord's name, and by virtue of the authority I have derived from him.*"

Consider,

I. The more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life.

1. It begins thus, "*That you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk*—that for the time to come you do not live, and behave yourselves, as ignorant and unconverted heathens do, who are wholly guided by an understanding employed about vain things, their idols and their worldly possessions, things which are no way profitable to their souls, and which will deceive their expectations." Converted Gentiles must not live as unconverted Gentiles do. Though they live among them, they must not live like them. Here,

(1.) The apostle takes occasion to describe the wickedness of the Gentile world, out of which regenerate Christians were snatched as brands out of the burning. [1.] Their *understandings were darkened*, v. 18. They were void of all saving knowledge; yea, ignorant of many things concerning God which the light of nature might have taught them. They sat in darkness, and they loved it rather than light: and by their ignorance they were *alienated from the life of God*. They were estranged from, and had a dislike and aversion to, a life of holiness, which is not only that way of life which God requires and approves, and by which we live to him, but which resembles God himself, in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. Their wilful ignorance was the cause of their estrangement from this life of God, which begins in light and knowledge. Gross and affected ignorance is destructive to religion and godliness. And what was the cause of their being thus ignorant? It was *because of the blindness* or the *hardness of their heart*. It was not because God did not make himself known to them by his works, but because they would not admit the instructive rays of the divine light. They were ignorant because they would be so. Their ignorance proceeded from their obstinacy and the hardness of their hearts, their resisting the light and rejecting all the means of illumination and knowledge. [2.] Their consciences were debauched and seared: *Who being past feeling*, v. 19. They

had no sense of their sin, nor of the misery and danger of their case by means of it; whereupon they *gave themselves over unto lasciviousness*. They indulged themselves in their filthy lusts; and, yielding themselves up to the dominion of these, they became the slaves and drudges of sin and the devil, *working all uncleanness with greediness*. They made it their common practice to commit all sorts of uncleanness, and even the most unnatural and monstrous sins, and that with insatiable desires. Observe, When men's consciences are once seared, there are no bounds to their sins. When they set their hearts upon the gratification of their lusts, what can be expected but the most abominable sensuality and lewdness, and that their horrid enormities will abound? This was the character of the Gentiles; but,

(2.) These Christians must distinguish themselves from such Gentiles: *You have not so learned Christ*, v. 20. It may be read, *But you not so; you have learned Christ*. Those who have learned Christ are saved from the darkness and defilement which others lie under; and, as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others. It is a good argument against sin that we have not so learned Christ. Learn Christ! Is Christ a book, a lesson, a way, a trade? The meaning is, "You have not so learned Christianity—the doctrines of Christ and the rules of life prescribed by him. Not so as to do as others do. *If so be*, or since, *that you have heard him* (v. 21), have heard his doctrine preached by us, *and have been taught by him*, inwardly and effectually, by his Spirit." Christ is the lesson; we must learn Christ: and Christ is the teacher; we are taught by him. *As the truth is in Jesus*. This may be understood two ways: either, "You have been taught the real truth, as held forth by Christ himself, both in his doctrine and in his life." Or thus, "The truth has made such an impression on your hearts, in your measure, as it did upon the heart of Jesus." The truth of Christ then appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus.

2. Another branch of the general exhortation follows in those words, *That you put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man*, etc., v. 22–24. "This is a great part of the doctrine which has been taught you, and which you have learned." Here the apostle expresses himself in metaphors taken from garments. The principles, habits, and dispositions of the soul must be changed, before there can be a saving change of the life. There must be sanctification, which consists of these two things:—(1.) The old man must be put off. The corrupt nature is called a man, because, like the human body, it consists of divers parts, mutually supporting and strengthening one another. It is the old man, as old Adam, from whom we derive it. It is bred in the bone, and we brought it into the world with us. It is subtle as the old man; but in all God's saints decaying and withering as an old man, and ready to pass away. It is said to be corrupt; for sin in the soul is the corruption of its faculties: and, where it is not mortified, it grows daily worse and worse, and so tends to destruction. *According to the deceitful lusts*. Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts: they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable, and if not subdued and mortified betray them into destruction. These therefore must be put off as an old garment that we should be ashamed to be seen in: they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed against them in their *former conversation*, that is, during their state of unregeneracy and heathenism. (2.) The new man must be put on. It is not enough to shake off corrupt principles, but we must be actuated by gracious ones. We must embrace them, espouse them, and get them written on our hearts: it is not enough to cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. *"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (v. 23); that is, use the proper and prescribed means in order to have the mind, which is a spirit, renewed more and more." *And that you put on the new man*, v.

24. By the new man is meant the new nature, the new creature, which is actuated by a new principle, even regenerating grace, enabling a man to lead a new life, that life of righteousness and holiness which Christianity requires. This new man *is created*, or produced out of confusion and emptiness, by God's almighty power, whose workmanship it is, truly excellent and beautiful. *After God*, in imitation of him, and in conformity to that grand exemplar and pattern. The loss of God's image upon the soul was both the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state; and that resemblance which it bears to God is the beauty, the glory, and the happiness, of the new creature. *In righteousness* towards men, including all the duties of the second table; *and in holiness* towards God, signifying a sincere obedience to the commands of the first table; *true holiness* in opposition to the outward and ceremonial holiness of the Jews. We are said to put on this new man when, in the use of all God's appointed means, we are endeavouring after this divine nature, this new creature. This is the more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life.

II. The apostle proceeds to some things more particular. Because generals are not so apt to affect, we are told what are those particular limbs of the old man that must be mortified, those filthy rags of the old nature that must be put off, and what are the peculiar ornaments of the new man wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession. 1. Take heed of lying, and be ever careful to speak the truth (v. 25): "*Wherefore*, since you have been so well instructed in your duty, and are under such obligations to discharge it, let it appear, in your future behaviour and conduct, that there is a great and real change wrought in you, particularly by *putting away lying*." Of this sin the heathen were very guilty, affirming that a profitable lie was better than a hurtful truth; and therefore the apostle exhorts them to cease from lying, from every thing that is contrary to truth. This is a part of the old man that must be put off; and that branch of the new man that must be put on in opposition to it is *speaking the truth* in all our converse with others. It is the character of God's people that they are *children who will not lie*, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. All who have grace make conscience of speaking the truth, and would not tell a deliberate lie for the greatest gain and benefit to themselves. The reason here given for veracity is, *We are members one of another*. Truth is a debt we owe to one another; and, if we love one another, we shall not deceive nor lie one to another. We belong to the same society or body, which falsehood or lying tends to dissolve; and therefore we should avoid it, and speak truth. Observe, Lying is a very great sin, a peculiar violation of the obligations which Christians are under, and very injurious and hurtful to Christian society. 2. "Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. *Be you angry, and sin not*," v. 26. This is borrowed from the Septuagint translation of Ps. 4:4, where we render it, *Stand in awe, and sin not*. Here is an easy concession; for as such we should consider it, rather than as a command. *Be you angry*. This we are apt enough to be, God knows: but we find it difficult enough to observe the restriction, *and sin not*. "If you have a just occasion to be angry at any time, see that it be without sin; and therefore take heed of excess in your anger." If we would be angry and not sin (says one), we must be angry at nothing but sin; and we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own. One great and common sin in anger is to suffer it to burn into wrath, and then to let it rest; and therefore we are here cautioned against that. "If you have been provoked and have had your spirits greatly discomposed, and if you have bitterly resented any affront that has been offered, before night calm and quiet your spirits, be reconciled to the offender, and let all be well again: *Let not the sun go down upon*

*your wrath.* If it burn into wrath and bitterness of spirit, O see to it that you suppress it speedily." Observe, Though anger in itself is not sinful, yet there is the upmost danger of its becoming so if it be not carefully watched and speedily suppressed. And therefore, though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, *it rests only in the bosom of fools. Neither give place to the devil,* v. 27. Those who persevere in sinful anger and in wrath let the devil into their hearts, and suffer him to gain upon them, till he bring them to malice, mischievous machinations, etc. "*Neither give place to the calumniator, or the false accuser*" (so some read the words); that is, "let your ears be deaf to whisperers, talebearers, and slanderers." 3. We are here warned against the sin of stealing, the breach of the eighth commandment, and advised to honest industry and to beneficence: *Let his that stole steal no more,* v. 28. It is a caution against all manner of wrong-doing, by force or fraud. "Let those of you who, in the time of your gentilism, have been guilty of this enormity, be no longer guilty of it." But we must not only take heed of the sin, but conscientiously abound in the opposite duty: not only not steal, *but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good.* Idleness makes thieves. So Chrysostom, *To gar kleptein argias estin—Stealing is the effect of idleness.* Those who will not work, and who are ashamed to beg, expose themselves greatly to temptations to thievery. Men should therefore be diligent and industrious, not in any unlawful way, but in some honest calling: *Working the thing which is good.* Industry, in some honest way, will keep people out of temptation of doing wrong. But there is another reason why men ought to be industrious, namely, that they may be capable of doing some good, as well as that they may be preserved from temptation: *That he may have to give to him that needeth.* They must labour not only that they may live themselves, and live honestly, but they may distribute for supplying the wants of others. Observe, Even those who get their living by their labour should be charitable out of their little to those who are disabled for labour. So necessary and incumbent a duty is it to be charitable to the poor that even labourers and servants, and those who have but little for themselves, must cast their mite into the treasury. God must have his dues and the poor are his receivers. Observe further, Those alms that are likely to be acceptable to God must not be the produce of unrighteousness and robbery, but of honesty and industry. *God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.* 4. We are here warned against corrupt communication; and directed to that which is useful and edifying, v. 29. Filthy and unclean words and discourse are poisonous and infectious, as putrid rotten meat: they proceed from and prove a great deal of corruption in the heart of the speaker, and tend to corrupt the minds and manners of others who hear them; and therefore Christians should beware of all such discourse. It may be taken in general for all that which provokes the lusts and passions of others. We must not only put off corrupt communications, but *put on that which is good to the use of edifying.* The great use of speech is to edify those with whom we converse. Christians should endeavour to promote a useful conversation: *that it may minister grace unto the hearers;* that it may be good for, and acceptable to, the hearers, in the way of information, counsel, pertinent reproof, or the like. Observe, It is the great duty of Christians to take care that they offend not with their lips, and that they improve discourse and converse, as much as may be, for the good of others. 5. Here is another caution against wrath and anger, with further advice to mutual love and kindly dispositions towards each other, v. 31, 32. By *bitterness, wrath,* and *anger,* are meant violent inward resentment and displeasure against others: and, by *clamour,* big words, loud threatenings, and other intemperate speeches, by which bitterness, wrath, and anger, vent themselves. Christians should not entertain these

vile passions in their hearts not be clamorous with their tongues. *Evil speaking* signifies all railing, reviling, and reproachful speeches, against such as we are angry with. And by *malice* we are to understand that rooted anger which prompts men to design and to do mischief to others. The contrary to all this follows: *Be you kind one to another*. This implies the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expressions of it, in an affable, humble, courteous behaviour. It becomes the disciples of Jesus to be kind one to another, as those who have learned, and would teach, the art of obliging. *Tender-hearted*; that is, merciful, and having tender sense of the distresses and sufferings of others, so as to be quickly moved to compassion and pity. *Forgiving one another*. Occasions of difference will happen among Christ's disciples; and therefore they must be placable, and ready to forgive, therein resembling God himself, who *for Christ's sake hath forgiven them*, and that more than they can forgive one another. Note, With God there is forgiveness; and he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ, and on account of that atonement which he has made to divine justice. Note again, Those who are forgiven of God should be of a forgiving spirit, and should forgive even as God forgives, sincerely and heartily, readily and cheerfully, universally and for ever, upon the sinner's sincere repentance, as remembering that they pray, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*. Now we may observe concerning all these particulars that the apostle has insisted on that they belong to the second table, whence Christians should learn the strict obligations they are under to the duties of the second table, and that he who does not conscientiously discharge them can never fear nor love God in truth and in sincerity, whatever he may pretend to.

In the midst of these exhortations and cautions the apostle interposes that general one, *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*, v. 30. By looking to what precedes, and to what follows, we may see what it is that grieves the Spirit of God. In the previous verses it is intimated that all lewdness and filthiness, lying, and corrupt communications that stir up filthy appetites and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. In what follows it is intimated that those corrupt passions of bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and malice, grieve this good Spirit. By this we are not to understand that this blessed Being could properly be grieved or vexed as we are; but the design of the exhortation is that we act not towards him in such a manner as is wont to be grievous and disquieting to our fellow-creatures: we must not do that which is contrary to his holy nature and his will; we must not refuse to hearken to his counsels, nor rebel against his government, which things would provoke him to act towards us as men are wont to do towards those with whom they are displeased and grieved, withdrawing themselves and their wonted kindness from such, and abandoning them to their enemies. O provoke not the blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence and his gracious influences from you! It is a good reason why we should not grieve him that *by him we are sealed unto the day of redemption*. There is to be a day of redemption; the body is to be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection-day, and then God's people will be delivered from all the effects of sin, as well as from all sin and misery, which they are not till rescued out of the grave: and then their full and complete happiness commences. All true believers are sealed to that day. God has distinguished them from others, having set his mark upon them; and he gives them the earnest and assurance of a joyful and glorious resurrection; and the Spirit of God is the seal. Wherever that blessed Spirit is as a sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of the redemption-day; and we should be undone should God take away his Holy Spirit from us.



## Chapter 5

We had several important exhortations in the close of the foregoing chapter, and they are continued in this: particularly, I. We have here an exhortation to mutual love and charity (v. 1, 2). II. Against all manner of uncleanness, with proper arguments and remedies proposed against such sins: and some further cautions are added, and other duties recommended (v. 3–20). III. The apostle directs to the conscientious discharge of relative duties, from v. 21, throughout this, and in the beginning of the next chapter.

### Verses 1-2

Here we have the exhortation to mutual love, or to Christian charity. The apostle had been insisting on this in the former chapter, and particularly in the last verses of it, to which the particle *therefore* refers, and connects what he had said there with what is contained in these verses, thus: "Because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you, therefore be you followers of God, or *imitators* of him;" for so the word signifies. Pious persons should imitate the God whom they worship, as far as he has revealed himself as imitable by them. They must conform themselves to his example, and have his image renewed upon them. This puts a great honour upon practical religion, that it is the imitating of God. We must be holy as God is holy, merciful as he is merciful, perfect as he is perfect. But there is no one attribute of God more recommended to our imitation than that of his goodness. Be you imitators of God, or resemble him, in every grace, and especially in his love, and in his pardoning goodness. *God is love; and those that dwell in love dwell in God and God in them.* Thus he has proclaimed his name, *Gracious and merciful, and abundant in goodness. As dear children,* as children (who are wont to be greatly beloved by their parents) usually resemble them in the lineaments and features of their faces, and in the dispositions and qualities of their minds; or as becomes the children of God, who are beloved and cherished by their heavenly Father. Children are obliged to imitate their parents in what is good, especially when dearly beloved by them. The character that we bear of God's children obliges us to resemble him, especially in his love and goodness, in his mercy and readiness to forgive. And those only are God's dear children who imitate him in these. It follows, *And walk in love,* v. 2. This godlike grace should conduct and influence our whole conversation, which is meant by walking in it. It should be the principle from which we act; it should direct the ends at which we aim. We should be more careful to give proof of the sincerity of our love one to another. *As Christ also hath loved us.* Here the apostle directs us to the example of Christ, whom Christians are obliged to imitate, and in whom we have an instance of the most free and generous love that ever was, that great love wherewith he hath loved us. We are all joint sharers in that love, and partakers of the comfort of it, and therefore should love one another, Christ having loved us all and given such proof of his love to us; for *he hath given himself for us.* The apostle designedly enlarges on the subject; for what can yield us more delightful matter for contemplation than this? Christ gave himself to die for us; and the death of Christ was the great sacrifice of atonement: *An offering and a sacrifice to God;* or an offering, even a sacrifice—a propitiatory sacrifice, to expiate our guilt, which had been prefigured in the legal oblations and sacrifices; and this *for a sweet-smelling savour.* Some observe that the sin-offerings were never said to be of a sweet-smelling savour; but this is said of *the Lamb of God, which taketh away*

*the sin of the world.* As he offered himself with a design to be accepted of God, so God did accept, was pleased with, and appeased by, that sacrifice. Note, As the sacrifice of Christ was efficacious with God, so his example should be prevailing with us, and we should carefully copy after it.

### **Verses 3-20**

These verses contain a caution against all manner of uncleanness, with proper remedies and arguments proposed: some further cautions are added, and other duties recommended. Filthy lusts must be suppressed, in order to the supporting of holy love. *Walk in love, and shun fornication and all uncleanness.* *Fornication* is folly committed between unmarried persons. *All uncleanness* includes all other sorts of filthy lusts, which were too common among the Gentiles. Or *covetousness*, which being thus connected, and mentioned as a thing which should not be *once named*, some understand it, in the chaste style of the scripture, of unnatural lust; while others take it in the more common sense, for an immoderate desire of gain or an insatiable love of riches, which is spiritual adultery; for by this the soul, which was espoused to God, goes astray from him, and embraces the bosom of a stranger, and therefore carnal worldlings are called adulterers: *You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* Now these sins must be dreaded and detested in the highest degree: *Let it not be once named among you*, never in a way of approbation nor without abhorrence, *as becometh saints*, holy persons, who are separated from the world, and dedicated unto God. The apostle not only cautions against the gross acts of sin, but against what some may be apt to make light of, and think to be excusable. *Neither filthiness* (v. 4), by which may be understood all wanton and unseemly gestures and behaviour; *nor foolish talking*, obscene and lewd discourse, or, more generally, such vain discourse as betrays much folly and indiscretion, and is far from edifying the hearers; *nor jesting*. The Greek word *eutrapelia* is the same which Aristotle, in his Ethics, makes a virtue: pleasantness of conversation. And there is no doubt an innocent and inoffensive jesting, which we cannot suppose the apostle here forbids. Some understand him of such scurrilous and abusive reflections as tend to expose others and to make them appear ridiculous. This is bad enough: but the context seems to restrain it to such pleasantries of discourse as is filthy and obscene, which he may also design by that *corrupt*, or putrid and rotten, communication that he speaks of, ch. 4:29. Of these things he says, *They are not convenient*. Indeed there is more than inconvenience, even a great deal of mischief, in them. They are so far from being profitable that they pollute and poison the hearers. But the meaning is, Those things do not become Christians, and are very unsuitable to their profession and character. Christians are allowed to be cheerful and pleasant; but they must be merry and wise. The apostle adds, *But rather giving of thanks*: so far let the Christian's way of mirth be from that of obscene and profane wit, that he may delight his mind, and make himself cheerful, by a grateful remembrance of God's goodness and mercy to him, and by blessing and praising him on account of these. Note, 1. We should take all occasions to render thanksgivings and praises to God for his kindness and favours to us. 2. A reflection on the grace and goodness of God to us, with a design to excite our thankfulness to him, is proper to refresh and delight the Christian's mind, and to make him cheerful. Dr. Hammond thinks that *eucharistia* may signify gracious, pious, religious discourse in general, by way of opposition to what the apostle condemns. Our cheerfulness, instead of breaking out into what is vain and sinful, and a profanation of God's name, should express itself as becomes Christians, and in what may

tend to his glory. If men abounded more in good and pious expressions, they would not be so apt to utter ill and unbecoming words; for shall *blessing* and *cursing*, lewdness and thanksgivings, *proceed out of the same mouth?*

I. To fortify us against the sins of uncleanness, etc., the apostle urges several arguments, and prescribes several remedies, in what follows,

1. He urges several arguments, As, (1.) Consider that these are sins which shut persons out of heaven: *For this you know*, etc., v. 5. They knew it, being informed of it by the Christian religion. By *a covetous man* some understand a lewd lascivious libertine, who indulges himself in those vile lusts which were accounted the certain marks of a heathen and an idolater. Others understand it in the common acceptation of the word; and such a man is an idolater because there is spiritual idolatry in the love of this world. As the epicure makes a god of his belly, so the covetous man makes a god of his money, sets those affectations upon it, and places that hope, confidence, and delight, in worldly good, which should be reserved for God only. He serves mammon instead of God. Of these persons it is said that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*; that is, the kingdom of Christ, who is God, or the kingdom which is God's by nature, and Christ's as he is Mediator, the kingdom which Christ has purchased and which God bestows. Heaven is here described as a kingdom (as frequently elsewhere) with respect to its eminency and glory, its fulness and sufficiency, etc. In this kingdom the saints and servants of God have an inheritance; for it is the *inheritance of the saints in light*. But those who are impenitent, and allow themselves either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, are not Christians indeed, and so belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they ever come to the kingdom of glory. Let us then be excited to be on our guard against those sins which would exclude and shut us out of heaven. (2.) These sins bring the wrath of God upon those who are guilty of them: *"Let no man deceive you with vain words*, etc., v. 6. Let none flatter you, as though such things were tolerable and to be allowed of in Christians, or as though they were not very provoking and offensive unto God, or as though you might indulge yourselves in them and yet escape with impunity. These are *vain words*." Observe, Those who flatter themselves and others with hopes of impunity in sin do but put a cheat upon themselves and others. Thus Satan deceived our first parents with vain words when he said to them, *You shall not surely die*. They are *vain words* indeed; for those who trust to them will find themselves wretchedly imposed upon, *for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*. By *children of disobedience* may be meant the Gentiles, who disbelieved, and refused to comply with, and to submit themselves to, the gospel: or, more generally, all obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed, but are given over to disobedience. Disobedience is the very malignity of sin. And it is by a usual Hebraism that such sinners are called children of disobedience; and such indeed they are from their childhood, going astray as soon as they are born. *The wrath of God comes upon* such because of their sins; sometimes in this world, but more especially in the next. And dare we make light of that which will lay us under the wrath of God? O no. *Be not you therefore partakers with them*, v. 7. "Do not partake with them in their sins, that you may not share in their punishment." We partake with other men in their sins, not only when we live in the same sinful manner that they do, and consent and comply with their temptations and solicitations to sin, but when we encourage them in their sins, prompt them to sin, and do not prevent and hinder them, as far as it may be in our power to do so. (3.) Consider what obligations Christians are

under to live at another rate than such sinners do: *For you were sometimes darkness, but now, etc.*, v. 8. The meaning is, "Such courses are very unsuitable to your present condition; for, whereas in your Gentile and your unregenerate state you were darkness, you have now undergone a great change." The apostle calls their former condition *darkness* in the abstract, to express the great darkness they were in. They lived wicked and profane lives, being destitute of the light of instruction without and of the illumination and grace of the blessed Spirit within. Note, A state of sin is a state of darkness. Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God had produced a mighty change in their souls: *Now are you light in the Lord*, savingly enlightened by the word and the Spirit of God. *Now*, upon your believing in Christ, and your receiving the gospel. *Walk as children of light*. Children of light, according to the Hebrew dialect, are those who are in a state of light, endued with knowledge and holiness. "Now, being such, let your conversation be suitable to your condition and privileges, and accordingly live up to the obligation you are under by that knowledge and those advantages you enjoy—*Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord* (v. 10), examining and searching diligently what God has revealed to be his will, and making it appear that you approve it by conforming yourselves to it." Observe, We must not only dread and avoid that which is displeasing to God, but enquire and consider what will be acceptable to him, searching the scriptures with this view, thus keeping at the greatest distance from these sins.

2. The apostle prescribes some remedies against them. As, (1.) If we would not be entangled by the lusts of the flesh, we must bring forth *the fruits of the Spirit*, v. 9. This is expected from the children of light, that, being illuminated, they be also sanctified by the Spirit, and thereupon bring forth his fruit, which *is in all goodness*, an inclination to do good and to show mercy, *and righteousness*, which signifies justice in our dealings. Thus they are taken more strictly; but, more generally, all religion is goodness and righteousness. And in and with these must be *truth*, or sincerity and uprightness of heart. (2.) We must have no fellowship with sin nor sinners, v. 11. Sinful works are works of darkness: they come from the darkness of ignorance, they seek the darkness of concealment, and they lead to the darkness of hell. These works of darkness are *unfruitful works*; there is nothing got by them in the long run, whatever profit is pretended by sin, it will by no means balance the loss; for it issues in the utter ruin and destruction of the impenitent sinner. We must therefore *have no fellowship* with these unfruitful works; as we must not practise them ourselves, so we must not countenance others in the practice of them. There are many ways of our being accessory to the sins of others, by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And, if we share with others in their sin, we must expect to share with them in their plagues. Nay, if we thus have fellowship with them, we shall be in the utmost danger of acting as they do ere long. But, rather than have fellowship with them, we must *reprove them*, implying that if we do not reprove the sins of others we have fellowship with them. We must prudently and in our places witness against the sins of others, and endeavour to convince them of their sinfulness, when we can do it seasonably and pertinently, in our words; but especially by the holiness of our lives, and a religious conversation. Reprove their sins by abounding in the contrary duties. One reason given is, *For it is a shame even to speak of those things*, etc., v. 12. They are so filthy and abominable that it is a shame to mention them, except in a way of reproof, much more must it be a shame to have any fellowship with them. *The things which are done of them in secret*. The apostle seems to speak here of the Gentile idolaters, and of their horrid mysteries,

which abounded with detestable wickedness, and which none were permitted to divulge upon pain of death. Observe, A good man is ashamed to speak that which many wicked people are not ashamed to act; but, as far as their wickedness appears, it should be reprov'd by good men. There follows another reason for such reproof: *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light*, v. 13. The meaning of this passage may be this: "All those unfruitful works of darkness which you are called upon to reprove are laid open, and made to appear in their proper colours to the sinners themselves, by the light of doctrine or of God's word in your mouths, as faithful reprovers, or by that instructive light which is diffused by the holiness of your lives and by your exemplary walk." Observe, The light of God's word, and the exemplification of it in a Christian conversation, are proper means to convince sinners of their sin and wickedness. It follows, *For whatsoever doth make manifest is light*; that is, it is the light that discovers what was concealed before in darkness; and accordingly it becomes those who are *children of light*, who are *light in the Lord*, to discover to others their sins, and to endeavour to convince them of the evil and danger of them, thus shining as lights in the world. The apostle further urges this duty from the example of God or Christ: *Wherefore he saith*, etc. (v. 14); as if he had said, "In doing this, you will copy after the great God, who has set himself to awaken sinners from their sleep, and to raise them from the death of sin, that they might receive light from Christ." *He saith*. The Lord is constantly saying in his word what is more particularly expressed in Isa. 60:1. Or, Christ, by his ministers, who preach the everlasting gospel, is continually calling upon sinners to this effect: *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*. The same thing in the main is designed by these different expressions; and they serve to remind us of the great stupidity and the wretched security of sinners, how insensible they are of their danger, and how unapt they naturally are to spiritual motions, sensations, and actions. When God calls upon them to awake, and to arise, his meaning is that they would break off their sins by repentance, and enter on a course of holy obedience, and he encourages them to essay and do their utmost that way, by that gracious promise, *And Christ shall give thee light; or Christ shall enlighten thee, or shall shine upon thee*. "He shall bring thee into a state of knowledge, holiness, and comfort, assisting thee with his grace, and refreshing thy mind with joy and peace here and rewarding thee with eternal glory at length." Observe, When we are endeavouring to convince sinners, and to reform them from their sins, we are imitating God and Christ in that which is their great design throughout the gospel. Some indeed understand this as a call to sinners and to saints: to sinners to repent and turn; to saints to stir up themselves to their duty. The former must arise from their spiritual death; and the latter must awake from their spiritual deadness. (3.) Another remedy against sin is circumspection, care, or caution (v. 15): *See then*, etc. This may be understood either with respect to what immediately precedes, "If you are to reprove others for their sins, and would be faithful to your duty in this particular, you must look well to yourselves, and to your own behaviour and conduct" (and, indeed, those only are fit to reprove others who walk with due circumspection and care themselves): or else we have here another remedy or rather preservative from the before-mentioned sins; and this I take to be the design of the apostle, being impossible to maintain purity and holiness of heart and life without great circumspection and care. *Walk circumspectly*, or, as the word signifies, accurately, exactly, in the right way, in order to which we must be frequently consulting our rule, and the directions we have in the sacred oracles. *Not as fools*, who walk at all adventures, and who have no understanding of their duty, nor of the worth of their souls, and through

neglect, supineness, and want of care, fall into sin, and destroy themselves; *but as wise*, as persons taught of God and endued with wisdom from above. Circumspect walking is the effect of true wisdom, but the contrary is the effect of folly. It follows, *redeeming the time* (v. 16), literally, *buying the opportunity*. It is a metaphor taken from merchants and traders who diligently observe and improve the seasons for merchandise and trade. It is a great part of Christian wisdom to redeem the time. Good Christians must be good husbands of their time, and take care to improve it to the best of purposes, by watching against temptations, by doing good while it is in the power of their hands, and by filling it up with proper employment—one special preservative from sin. They should make the best use they can of the present seasons of grace. Our time is a talent given us by God for some good end, and it is misspent and lost when it is not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must endeavour to redeem it by doubling our diligence in doing our duty for the future. The reason given is *because the days are evil*, either by reason of the wickedness of those who dwell in them, or rather "as they are troublesome and dangerous times to you who live in them." Those were times of persecution wherein the apostle wrote this: the Christians were in jeopardy every hour. When the days are evil we have one superadded argument to redeem time, especially because we know not how soon they may be worse. People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that would stir them up to redeem time. "*Wherefore*," says the apostle (v. 17), "because of the badness of the times, *be you not unwise*, ignorant of your duty and negligent about your souls, *but understanding what the will of the Lord is*. Study, consider, and further acquaint yourselves with the will of God, as determining your duty." Observe, Ignorance of our duty, and neglect of our souls, are evidences of the greatest folly; while an acquaintance with the will of God, and a care to comply with it, bespeak the best and truest wisdom.

II. In the three following verses the apostle warns against some other particular sins, and urges some other duties. 1. He warns against the sin of drunkenness: *And be not drunk with wine*, v. 18. This was a sin very frequent among the heathens; and particularly on occasion of the festivals of their gods, and more especially in their Bacchanalia: then they were wont to inflame themselves with wine, and all manner of inordinate lusts were consequent upon it: and therefore the apostle adds, *wherein*, or in which drunkenness, *is excess*. The word *asotia* may signify *luxury* or *dissoluteness*; and it is certain that drunkenness is no friend to chastity and purity of life, but it virtually contains all manner of extravagance, and transports men into gross sensuality and vile enormities. Note, Drunkenness is a sin that seldom goes alone, but often involves men in other instances of guilt: it is a sin very provoking to God, and a great hindrance to the spiritual life. The apostle may mean all such intemperance and disorder as are opposite to the sober and prudent demeanor he intends in his advice, to redeem the time. 2. Instead of being filled with wine, he exhorts them to *be filled with the Spirit*. Those who are full of drink are not likely to be full of the Spirit; and therefore this duty is opposed to the former sin. The meaning of the exhortation is that men should labour for a plentiful measure of the graces of the Spirit, that would fill their souls with great joy, strength, and courage, which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these: nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but to be aspiring after measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit. Now by this means we shall come to *understand what the will of the Lord is*; for the Spirit of God is given as a Spirit of wisdom and of

understanding. And because those who are filled with the Spirit will be carried out in acts of devotion, and all the proper expressions of it, therefore the apostle exhorts, 3. To sing unto the Lord, v. 19. Drunkards are wont to sing obscene and profane songs. The heathens, in their Bacchanalia, used to sing hymns to Bacchus, whom they called the god of wine. Thus they expressed their joy; but the joy of Christians should express itself in songs of praise to their God. In these they should *speak to themselves* in their assemblies and meetings together, for mutual edification. By *psalms* may be meant David's psalms, or such composes as were fitly sung with musical instruments. By *hymns* may be meant such others as were confined to matter of praise, as those of Zacharias, Simeon, etc. *Spiritual songs* may contain a greater variety of matter, doctrinal, prophetic, historical, etc. Observe here, (1.) The singing of psalms and hymns is a gospel ordinance: it is an ordinance of God, and appointed for his glory. (2.) Though Christianity is an enemy to profane mirth, yet it encourages joy and gladness, and the proper expressions of these in the professors of it. God's people have reason to rejoice, and to sing for joy. They are to *sing and to make melody in their hearts*; not only with their voices, but with inward affection, and then their doing this will be as delightful and acceptable to God as music is to us: and it must be with a design to please him, and to promote his glory, that we do this; and then it will be done to the Lord. 4. Thanksgiving is another duty that the apostle exhorts to, v. 20. We are appointed to sing psalms, etc., for the expression of our thankfulness to God; but, though we are not always singing, we should never want a disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it. We must continue it throughout the whole course of our lives; and we should give thanks *for all things*; not only for spiritual blessings enjoyed, and eternal ones expected (for what of the former we have in hand, and for what of the other we have in hope), but for temporal mercies too; not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions; not only for what immediately concerns ourselves, but for the instances of God's kindness and favour to others also. It is our duty in *every thing to give thanks unto God and the Father*, to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in him, in whose name we are to offer up all our prayers, and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable to God.

### **Verses 21-33**

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties. As a general foundation for these duties, he lays down that rule v. 21. There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another, condescending to bear one another's burdens: not advancing themselves above others, nor domineering over one another and giving laws to one another. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, for he *became all things to all men*. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God has allotted to us in the world. *In the fear of God*, that is, so far as is consistent with the fear of God, for his sake, and out of conscience towards him, and that hereby we may give proof that we truly fear him. Where there is this mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed. From v. 22 to the end he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection, and Christ as an example of love in husbands. I. The duty prescribed to wives is submission to their husbands in the Lord (v. 22), which submission includes the honouring and obeying of them, and that from a principle of love to them. They must do this in compliance with God's authority, who has

commanded it, which is doing it *as unto the Lord*; or it may be understood by way of similitude and likeness, so that the sense may be, "as, being devoted to God, you submit yourselves unto him." From the former sense we may learn that by a conscientious discharge of the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures we obey and please God himself; and, from the latter, that God not only requires and insists on those duties which immediately respect himself, but such as respect our neighbours too. The apostle assigns the reason of this submission from wives: *For the husband is the head of the wife*, v. 23. The metaphor is taken from the head in the natural body, which, being the seat of reason, of wisdom, and of knowledge, and the fountain of sense and motion, is more excellent than the rest of the body. God has given the man the pre-eminence and a right to direct and govern by creation, and in that original law of the relation, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*. Whatever there is of uneasiness in this, it is an effect of sin coming into the world. Generally, too, the man has (what he ought to have) a superiority in wisdom and knowledge. He is therefore the head, *even as Christ is the head of the church*. There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church in that superiority and headship which God has appointed to the husband. The apostle adds, *and he is the Saviour of the body*. Christ's authority is exercised over the church for the saving of her from evil, and the supplying of her with every thing good for her. In like manner should the husband be employed for the protection and comfort of his spouse; and therefore she should the more cheerfully submit herself unto him. So it follows, *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ* (v. 24), with cheerfulness, with fidelity, with humility, *so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing*—in every thing to which their authority justly extends itself, in every thing lawful and consistent with duty to God.

II. The duty of husbands (on the other hand), is to love their wives (v. 25); for without this they would abuse their superiority and headship, and, wherever this prevails as it ought to do, it will infer the other duties of the relation, it being a special and peculiar affection that is required in her behalf. The love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example of this, which love of his is a sincere, a pure, an ardent, and constant affection, and that notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that she is guilty of. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his giving himself unto the death for it. Observe, As the church's subjection to Christ is proposed as an exemplar to wives, so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as a pattern to husbands; and while such exemplars are offered to both, and so much is required of each, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunctions. The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife will make amends for the subjection which he demands from her to her husband; and the prescribed subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband which God has made her due. The apostle, having mentioned Christ's love to the church, enlarges upon it, assigning the reason why he gave himself for it, namely, that he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next: *That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word* (v. 26)—that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin. The instrumental means whereby this is affected are the instituted sacraments, particularly the washing of baptism and the preaching and reception of the gospel. *And that he might present it to himself*, etc., v. 27. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the apostle alludes here to the Jews' extraordinary carefulness in their washings for purification. They were careful that there should be no wrinkle to keep the flesh from the

water, and no spot nor dirt which was not thoroughly washed. Others understand him as alluding to a garment come newly out of the fuller's hand, purged from spots, stretched from wrinkles, the former newly contracted, the latter by long time and custom. *That he might present it to himself*—that he might perfectly unite it to himself in the great day, *a glorious church*, perfect in knowledge and in holiness, *not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing*, nothing of deformity or defilement remaining, but being entirely amiable and pleasing in his eye, *holy and without blemish*, free from the least remains of sin. The church in general, and particular believers, will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. From this and the former verse together we may take notice that the glorifying of the church is intended in the sanctifying of it: and that those, and those only, who are sanctified now, will be glorified hereafter.—*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*, etc., v. 28. The wife being made one with her husband (not in a natural, but in a civil and in a relative sense), this is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and as ardent an affection as that which he loves himself. *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh*, v. 29—(no man in his right senses ever hated himself, however deformed, or whatever his imperfections might be); so far from it that *he nourishes and cherishes it*; he uses himself with a great deal of care and tenderness, and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good for him, with food and clothing, etc. *Even as the Lord the church*: that is, as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church, which he furnishes with all things that he sees needful or good for her, with whatever conduces to her everlasting happiness and welfare. The apostle adds, *For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones*, v. 30. He assigns this as a reason why Christ nourishes and cherishes his church—because all who belong to it *are members of his body*, that is, of his mystical body. Or, we are members *out of his body*: all the grace and glory which the church has are from Christ, as Eve was taken out of the man. But, as one observes, it being the manner of the sacred writings to express a complex body by the enumeration of its several parts, as the heaven and earth for the world, evening and morning for the natural day, so here, by body, flesh, and bones, we are to understand himself, the meaning of the verse being that we are members of Christ.—*For this cause* (because they are one, as Christ and his church are one) *shall a man leave his father and mother*; the apostle refers to the words of Adam, when Eve was given to him for a meet help, Gen. 2:24. We are not to understand by this that a man's obligation to other relations is cancelled upon his marriage, but only that this relation is to be preferred to all others, there being a nearer union between these two than between any others, that the man must rather leave any of those than his wife.—*And they two shall be one flesh*, that is, by virtue of the matrimonial bond. *This is a great mystery*, v. 32. Those words of Adam, just mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating to the union between Christ and his church, of which the conjugal union between Adam and the mother of us all was a type: though not instituted or appointed by God to signify this, yet it was a kind of natural type, as having a resemblance to it: *I speak concerning Christ and the church*.

After this, the apostle concludes this part of his discourse with a brief summary of the duty of husbands and wives, v. 33. *"Nevertheless* (though there be such a secret mystical sense, yet the plain literal sense concerns you) *let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself*, with such a sincere, peculiar, singular, and prevailing affection as that is which he bears to himself. *And the wife see that she reverence her husband.*" Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce a

care to please, and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given. That the wife thus reverence her husband is the will of God and the law of the relation.

## Chapter 6

In this chapter, I. The apostle proceeds in the exhortation to relative duties which he began in the former, particularly he insists on the duties of children and parents, and of servants and masters (v. 1-9). II. He exhorts and directs Christians how to behave themselves in the spiritual warfare with the enemies of their souls; and to the exercise of several Christian graces, which he proposes to them as so many pieces of spiritual armour, to preserve and defend them in the conflict (v. 10–18). III. We have here the conclusion of the epistle, in which he takes his leave of them, recommending himself to the prayers of the believing Ephesians, and praying for them (v. 19–24).

### Verses 1-9

Here we have further directions concerning relative duties, in which the apostle is very particular.

I. The duty of children to their parents. *Come, you children, hearken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* The great duty of children is to obey their parents (v. 1), parents being the instruments of their being, God and nature having given them an authority to command, in subserviency to God; and, if children will be obedient to their pious parents, they will be in a fair way to be pious as they are. That obedience which God demands from their children, in their behalf, includes an inward reverence, as well as the outward expressions and acts. Obey in the Lord. Some take this as a limitation, and understand it thus: "as far as is consistent with your duty to God." We must not disobey our heavenly Father in obedience to earthly parents; for our obligation to God is prior and superior to all others. I take it rather as a reason: "Children, obey your parents; for the Lord has commanded it: obey them therefore for the Lord's sake, and with an eye to him." Or it may be a particular specification of the general duty: "Obey your parents, especially in those things which relate to the Lord. Your parents teach you good manners, and therein you must obey them. They teach you what is for your health, and in this you must obey them: but the chief things in which you are to do it are the things pertaining to the Lord." Religious parents charge their children to keep the ways of the Lord, Gen. 18:19. They command them to be found in the way of their duty towards God, and to take heed of those sins most incident to their age; in these things especially they must see that they be obedient. There is a general reason given: *For this is right*, there is a natural equity in it, God has enjoined it, and it highly becomes Christians. It is the order of nature that parents command and children obey. Though this may seem a hard saying, yet it is duty, and it must be done by such as would please God and approve themselves to him. For the proof of this the apostle quotes the law of the fifth commandment, which Christ was so far from designing to abrogate and repeal that he came to confirm it, as appears by his vindicating it, Mt. 15:4, etc. *Honour thy father and mother* (v. 2), which honour implies reverence, obedience, and relief and maintenance, if these be needed. The apostle adds, *which is the first commandment with promise.* Some little difficulty arises from this, which we should not overlook, because some who plead for the lawfulness of images bring this as a proof that we are not bound by *the second commandment.* But there is no manner of force in the argument. The second commandment has not a particular promise; but only a general declaration or assertion, which relates to the whole law of God's keeping mercy for thousands. And then by this is not meant the first commandment of the decalogue that has a promise, for there is no other after

it that has, and therefore it would be improper to say it is the first; but the meaning may be this: "This is a prime or chief commandment, and it has a promise; it is the first commandment in the second table, and it has a promise." The promise is, *That it may be well with thee*, etc., v. 3. Observe, Whereas the promise in the commandment has reference to the land of Canaan, the apostle hereby shows that this and other promises which we have in the Old Testament relating to the land of Canaan are to be understood more generally. That you may not think that the Jews only, to whom God gave the land of Canaan, were bound by the fifth commandment, he here gives it a further sense, *That it may be well with thee*, etc. Outward prosperity and long life are blessings promised to those who keep this commandment. This is the way to have it well with us, and obedient children are often rewarded with outward prosperity. Not indeed that it is always so; there are instances of such children who meet with much affliction in this life: but *ordinarily* obedience is thus rewarded, and, where it is not, it is made up with something better. Observe, 1. The gospel has its temporal promises, as well as spiritual ones. 2. Although the authority of God be sufficient to engage us in our duty, yet we are allowed to have respect to the promised reward: and, 3. Though it contains some temporal advantage, even this may be considered as a motive and encouragement to our obedience.

II. The duty of parents: *And you fathers*, v. 4. Or, you parents, 1. "*Do not provoke your children to wrath*. Though God has given you power, you must not abuse that power, remembering that your children are, in a particular manner, pieces of yourselves, and therefore ought to be governed with great tenderness and love. Be not impatient with them, use no unreasonable severities and lay no rigid injunctions upon them. When you caution them, when you counsel them, when you reprove them, do it in such a manner as not to *provoke them to wrath*. In all such cases deal prudently and wisely with them, endeavouring to convince their judgments and to work upon their reason." 2. "*Bring them up well, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, in the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction, and in the knowledge of that duty which God requires of them and by which they may become better acquainted with him. Give them a good education." It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children: "Not only bring them up, as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them up in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as men, in nurture and admonition, but as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to, the whole of their duty towards God."

III. The duty of servants. This also is summed up in one word, which is, *obedience*. He is largest on this article, as knowing there was the greatest need of it. These servants were generally slaves. Civil servitude is not inconsistent with Christian liberty. Those may be the Lord's freemen who are slaves to men. "*Your masters according to the flesh* (v. 5), that is, who have the command of your bodies, but not of your souls and consciences: God alone has dominion over these." Now, with respect to servants, he exhorts, 1. That they obey *with fear and trembling*. They are to reverence those who are over them, fearing to displease them, and trembling lest they should justly incur their anger and indignation. 2. That they be sincere in their obedience: *In singleness of heart*; not pretending obedience when they design disobedience, but serving them with faithfulness. 3. They should have an eye to Jesus Christ in all the service that they perform to their masters (v. 5-7), *doing service as to the*

*Lord, and not to men*; that is, not to men only or principally. When servants, in the discharge of the duty of their places, have an eye to Christ, this puts an honour upon their obedience, and an acceptableness into it. Service done to their earthly masters, with an eye to him, becomes acceptable service to him also. To have an eye to Christ is to remember that he sees them and is ever present with them, and that his authority obliges them to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of their station. 4. They must not serve their masters *with eye-service* (v. 6)—that is, only when their master's eye is upon them; but they must be as conscientious in the discharge of their duty, when they are absent and out of the way, because then their Master in heaven beholds them: and therefore they must not act as *men-pleasers*—as though they had no regard to the pleasing of God, and approving themselves to him, if they can impose upon their masters. Observe, A steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make men faithful and sincere in every station of life. 5. What they do they must do cheerfully: *Doing the will of God from the heart*, serving their masters as God wills they should, not grudgingly, nor by constraint, but from a principle of love to them and their concerns. This is *doing it with good-will* (v. 7), which will make their service easy to themselves, pleasing to their masters, and acceptable to the Lord Christ. There should be *good-will* to their masters, good-will to the families they are in; and especially a readiness to do their duty to God. Observe, Service, performed with conscience, and from a regard to God, though it be to unrighteous masters, will be accounted by Christ as service done to himself. 6. Let faithful servants trust God for their wages, while they do their duty in his fear: *Knowing that whatsoever good thing* (v. 8), how poor and mean soever it may be, considered in itself,—*the same shall he receive of the Lord*, that is, by a metonymy, the reward of the same. Though his master on earth should neglect or abuse him, instead of rewarding him, he shall certainly be rewarded by the Lord Christ, *whether he be bond or free*, whether he be a poor bond-servant or a freeman or master. Christ regards not these differences of men at present; nor will he in the great and final judgment. You think, "A prince, or a magistrate, or a minister, that does his duty here, will be sure to receive his reward in heaven: but what capacity am I, a poor servant, in, of recommending myself to the favour of God." Why, God will as certainly reward thee for the meanest drudgery that is done from a sense of duty and with an eye to himself. And what can be said more proper either to engage or to encourage servants to their duty?

IV. The duty of masters: "*And you masters, do the same things unto them* (v. 9); that is, act after the same manner. Be just to them, as you expect they should be to you: show the like good-will and concern for them, and be careful herein to approve yourselves to God." Observe, Masters are under as strict obligations to discharge their duty to their servants as servants are to be obedient and dutiful to them. "*Forbearing threatening; anientes*—*moderating* threatening, and remitting the evils with which you threaten them. Remember that your servants are made of the same mould with yourselves, and therefore be not tyrannical and imperious over them, *knowing that your Master also is in heaven*:" some copies read, both *your* and *their* Master. "You have a Master to obey who makes this your duty; and you and they are but fellow-servants in respect of Christ. You will be as punishable by him, for the neglect of your duty, or for acting contrary to it, as any others of meaner condition in the world. You are therefore to show favour to others, as ever you expect to find favour with him; and you will never be a match for him, though you may be too hard for your servants." *Neither is there respect of persons with him*; a rich, a wealthy,

and a dignified master, if he be unjust, imperious, and abusive, is not a jot the nearer being accepted of God for his riches, wealth, and honour. He will call masters and servants to an impartial account for their conduct one to another, and will neither spare the former because they are more advanced nor be severe towards the latter because they are inferior and mean in the world. If both masters and servants would consider their relation and obligation to God and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more careful of their duty to each other. Thus the apostle concludes his exhortation to relative duties.

### **Verses 10-18**

Here is a general exhortation to constancy in our Christian course, and to encourage in our Christian warfare. Is not our life a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the common calamities of human life. Is not our religion much more a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the opposition of the powers of darkness, and with many enemies who would keep us from God and heaven. We have enemies to fight against, a captain to fight for, a banner to fight under, and certain rules of war by which we are to govern ourselves. "*Finally, my brethren* (v. 10), it yet remains that you apply yourselves to your work and duty as Christian soldiers." Now it is requisite that a soldier be both stout-hearted and well armed. If Christians be soldiers of Jesus Christ,

I. They must see that they be stout-hearted. This is prescribed here: *Be strong in the Lord*, etc. Those who have so many battles to fight, and who, in their way to heaven, must dispute every pass, with dint of sword, have need of a great deal of courage. *Be strong therefore*, strong for service, strong for suffering, strong for fighting. Let a soldier be ever so well armed without, if he have not within a good heart, his armour will stand him in little stead. Note, spiritual strength and courage are very necessary for our spiritual warfare. Be strong in the Lord, either in his cause and for his sake or rather in his strength. We have no sufficient strength of our own. Our natural courage is as perfect cowardice, and our natural strength as perfect weakness; but all our sufficiency is of God. In his strength we must go forth and go on. By the actings of faith, we must fetch in grace and help from heaven to enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do, in our Christian work and warfare. We should stir up ourselves to resist temptations in a reliance upon God's all-sufficiency and the omnipotence of his might.

II. They must be well armed: "*Put on the whole armour of God* (v. 11), make use of all the proper defensives and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan—get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armour, that no part be naked and exposed to the enemy." Observe, Those who would approve themselves to have true grace must aim at all grace, the whole armour. It is called the armour of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armour of our own that will be armour of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand us in stead but the armour of God. This armour is prepared for us, but we must put it on; that is, we must pray for grace, we must use the grace given us, and draw it out into act and exercise as there is occasion. The reason assigned why the Christian should be completely armed is *that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*—that he may be able to hold out, and to overcome, notwithstanding all the devil's assaults, both of force and fraud, all the deceits he puts upon us, all the snares he lays for us, and all his machinations against us. This the apostle enlarges upon here, and shows,

1. What our danger is, and what need we have to put on this whole armour, considering what sort of enemies we have to deal

with—the devil and all the powers of darkness: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood*, etc., v. 12. The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies, not barely against men compounded of *flesh and blood*, nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered, but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world. (1.) We have to do with a subtle enemy, an enemy who uses wiles and stratagems, as v. 11. He has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls: hence he is called a serpent for subtlety, an old serpent, experienced in the art and trade of tempting. (2.) He is a powerful enemy: *Principalities*, and *powers*, and *rulers*. They are numerous, they are vigorous; and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Yea, they are usurping princes over all men who are yet in a state of sin and ignorance. Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light. (3.) They are spiritual enemies: *Spiritual wickedness in high places*, or wicked spirits, as some translate it. The devil is a spirit, a wicked spirit; and our danger is the greater from our enemies because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware of them. The devils are wicked spirits, and they chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice, etc. These enemies are said to be *in high places*, or in heavenly places, so the word is, taking heaven (as one says) for the whole *expansum*, or spreading out of the air between the earth and the stars, the air being the place from which the devils assault us. Or the meaning may be, "*We wrestle* about heavenly places or heavenly things;" so some of the ancients interpret it. Our enemies strive to prevent our ascent to heaven, to deprive us of heavenly blessings and to obstruct our communion with heaven. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts; and therefore we have need to be upon our guard against them. We have need of faith in our Christian warfare, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, as well as of faith in our Christian work, because we have spiritual strength to fetch in. Thus you see your danger.

2. What our duty is: to take and put on the whole armour of God, and then to stand our ground, and withstand our enemies.

(1.) We must *withstand*, v. 13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults, but oppose them. Satan is said *to stand up against us*, 1 Chr. 21:1. If he stand up against us, we must stand against him; set up, and keep up, an interest in opposition to the devil. Satan is the wicked one, and his kingdom is the kingdom of sin: to stand against Satan is to strive against sin. *That you may be able to withstand in the evil day*, in the day of temptation, or of any sore affliction.

(2.) We must stand our ground: *And, having done all, to stand*. We must resolve, by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and he will flee. If we distrust our cause, or our leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. Our present business is to withstand the assaults of the devil, and to stand it out; and then, having done all that is incumbent on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall be finally victorious.

(3.) We must stand armed; and this is here most enlarged upon. Here is a Christian in complete armour: and the armour is divine: *Armour of God*, *armour of light*, Rom. 13:12. *Armour of righteousness*, 2 Co. 6:7. The apostle specifies the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. The military girdle or belt, the breast-plate, the greaves (or soldier's shoes), the shield, the helmet, and the sword. It is observable that, among them all, there is none for the back; if we turn our back upon the enemy, we lie exposed. [1.] Truth or sincerity is our girdle, v. 14. It was prophesied of Christ (Isa. 11:5) that *righteousness*

*should be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.* That which Christ was girded with all Christians must be girded with. God desires truth, that is, sincerity, in the inward parts. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds on all other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it of the doctrine of the truths of the gospel: they should cleave to us as the girdle does to the loins, Jer. 13:11. This will restrain from libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body. This is the Christian soldier's belt: ungirded with this, he is unblest. [2.] Righteousness must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals, shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle explains this in 1 Th. 5:8, *Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love.* Faith and love include all Christian graces; for by faith we are united to Christ and by love to our brethren. These will infer a diligent observance of our duty to God, and a righteous deportment towards men, in all the offices of justice, truth, and charity. [3.] Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs: *And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*, v. 15. Shoes, or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour (1 Sa. 17:6): the use of them was to defend the feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way, to obstruct the marching of the enemy, those who fell upon them being unfit to march. *The preparation of the gospel of peace* signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart, to adhere to the gospel and abide by it, which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be in it. It is styled *the gospel of peace* because it brings all sorts of peace, peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another. It may also be meant of that which prepares for the entertainment of the gospel, namely, repentance. With this our feet must be shod: for by living a life of repentance we are armed against temptations to sin, and the designs of our great enemy. Dr. Whitby thinks this may be the sense of the words: "That you may be ready for the combat, be shod with the gospel of peace, endeavour after that peaceable and quiet mind which the gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, nor prone to quarrel: but show all gentleness and all long-suffering to all men, and this will certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those galltraps," etc. [4.] Faith must be our shield: *Above all*, or chiefly, *taking the shield of faith*, v. 16. This is more necessary than any of them. Faith is all in all to us in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. *This is the victory over the world, even our faith.* We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises and threatenings, such a faith being of great use against temptations. Consider faith as it is *the evidence of things not seen and the substance of things hoped for*, and it will appear to be of admirable use for this purpose. Faith, as receiving Christ and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a sort of universal defence. Our enemy the devil is here called *the wicked one*. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called *darts*, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul; *fiery darts*, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called, as the serpents with poisonous stings are called fiery serpents. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts,

wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us. Observe, Faith, acted upon the word of God and applying that, acted upon the grace of Christ and improving that, quenches the darts of temptation. [5.] Salvation must be our helmet (v. 17); that is, *hope*, which has salvation for its object; so 1 Th. 5:8. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation, well founded and well built, will both purify the soul and keep it from being defiled by Satan, and it will comfort the soul and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him. [6.] The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier's furniture. The word of God is very necessary, and of great use to the Christian, in order to his maintaining the spiritual warfare and succeeding in it. It is called *the sword of the Spirit*, because it is of the Spirit's inditing and he renders it efficacious and powerful, and *sharper than a two-edged sword*. Like Goliath's sword, none like that; with this we assault the assailants. Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel temptation with. Christ himself resisted Satan's temptations with, *It is written*, Mt. 4:4, 6, 7, 10. This, being hid in the heart, will preserve from sin (Ps. 119:11), and will mortify and kill those lusts and corruptions that are latent there. [7.] Prayer must buckle on all the other parts of our Christian armour, v. 18. We must join prayer with all these graces, for our defence against these spiritual enemies, imploring help and assistance of God, as the case requires: and we must pray always. Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray, for there are other duties of religion and of our respective stations in the world that are to be done in their place and season; but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own and others' necessities call us to it. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer, and should intermix ejaculatory prayers with other duties, and with common business. Though set and solemn prayer may sometimes be unseasonable (as when other duties are to be done), yet pious ejaculations *can* never be so. We must pray *with all prayer and supplication*, with all kinds of prayer: public, private, and secret, social and solitary, solemn and sudden; with all the parts of prayer: confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray *in the Spirit*; our spirits must be employed in the duty and we must do it by the grace of God's good Spirit. We must *watch thereunto*, endeavouring to keep our hearts in a praying frame, and taking all occasions, and improving all opportunities, for the duty: we must watch to all the motions of our own hearts towards the duty. When God says, *Seek my face*, our hearts must comply, Ps. 27:8. This we must do *with all perseverance*. We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must persevere in a particular prayer; not cutting it short, when our hearts are disposed to enlarge, and there is time for it, and our occasions call for it. We must likewise persevere in particular requests, notwithstanding some present discouragements and repulses. And we must pray *with supplication*, not for ourselves only, but *for all saints*; for we are members one of another. Observe, None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers, and they ought to have them. The apostle passes hence to the conclusion of the epistle.

#### **Verses 19-24**

Here, I. He desires their prayers for him, v. 19. Having mentioned *supplication for all saints*, he puts himself into the number.

We must pray for all saints, and particularly for God's faithful ministers. *Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.* Observe what it is he would have them pray for in his behalf: "*That utterance may be given unto me; that I may be enlarged from my present restraints, and so have liberty to propagate the faith of Christ; that I may have ability to express myself in a suitable and becoming manner; and that I may open my mouth boldly,* that is, that I may deliver the whole counsel of God, without any base fear, shame, or partiality." *To make known the mystery of the gospel;* some understand it of that part of the gospel which concerns the calling of the Gentiles, which had hitherto, as a mystery, been concealed. But the whole gospel was a mystery, till made known by divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to publish it. Observe, Paul had a great command of language; they called him Mercury, because he was the chief speaker (Acts 14:12), and yet he would have his friends ask of God the gift of utterance for him. He was a man of great courage, and often signaled himself for it; yet he would have them pray that God would give him boldness. He knew as well what to say as any man; yet he desires them to pray for him, that he may *speak as he ought to speak.* The argument with which he enforces his request is that for the sake of the gospel he was *an ambassador in bonds,* v. 20. He was persecuted and imprisoned for preaching the gospel; though, notwithstanding, he continued in the embassy committed to him by Christ, and persisted in preaching it. Observe, 1. It is no new thing for Christ's ministers to be in bonds. 2. It is a hard thing for them to speak boldly when that is their case. 3. The best and most eminent ministers have need of, and may receive advantage by, the prayers of good Christians; and therefore should earnestly desire them. Having thus desired their prayers,

II. He recommends Tychicus unto them, v. 21, 22. He sent him with this epistle, that he might acquaint them with what other churches were informed of, namely, how he did, and what he did; how he was used by the Romans in his bonds, and how he behaved himself in his present circumstances. It is desirable to good ministers both that their Christian friends should know their state and that they should be acquainted with the condition of their friends; for by this means they may the better help each other in their prayers.—*And that he might comfort their hearts,* by giving such an account of his sufferings, of the cause of them, and of the temper of his mind and his behaviour under them, as might prevent their fainting at his tribulations and even minister matter of joy and thanksgiving unto them. He tells them that Tychicus was *a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord.* He was a sincere Christian, and so a brother in Christ: he was a faithful minister in the work of Christ, and he was very dear to Paul, which makes Paul's love to these Christian Ephesians the more observable, in that he should now part with so good and dear a friend for their sakes, when his company and conversation must have been peculiarly delightful and serviceable to himself. But the faithful servants of Jesus Christ are wont to prefer the public good to their own private or personal interests.

III. He concludes with his good wishes and prayers for them, and not for them only, but for all the brethren, v. 23, 24. His usual benediction was, *Grace and peace;* here it is, *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith.* By peace we are to understand all manner of peace—peace with God, peace with conscience, peace among themselves: and all outward prosperity is included in the word; as if he had said, "I wish the continuance and increase of all happiness to you." *And love with faith.* This in part explains what he means in the following verse by grace; not only grace in the fountain, or the love and favour of

God, but grace in the streams, the grace of the Spirit flowing from that divine principle, faith and love including all the rest. It is the continuance and increase of these that he desires for them, in whom they were already begun. It follows, *from God the Father*, etc. All Grace and blessings are derived to the saints from God, through the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord. The closing benediction is more extensive than the former; for in this he prays for all true believers at Ephesus, and every where else. It is the undoubted character of all the saints that they love our Lord Jesus Christ. Our love to Christ is not acceptable, unless it be in sincerity: indeed there is no such thing as love to Christ, whatever men may pretend, where there is not sincerity. The words may be read, *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption*, who continue constant in their love to him, so as not to be corrupted out of it by any baits or seductions whatsoever, and whose love to him is uncorrupted by any opposite lust, or the love of any thing displeasing to him. Grace, that is, the favour of God, and all good (spiritual and temporal), that is, the product of it, are and shall be with all those who thus love our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is, or ought to be, the desire and prayer of every lover of Christ that it may be so with all his fellow-christians. *Amen*, so be it.