

May ²¹ 14, 2000

"Saved And Sealed"
Eph. 1

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Of the four letters which appear in God's Word and which were written by Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome, we now consider the last in our series, Ephesians. This letter organizes and presents the implications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such a comprehensive way that many believe its contents were intended to be shared with several of the congregations in and around Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia. I also believe that it actually is a Gospel treatise designed for more general use, primarily because it involves no controversy and deals with no specific problems in any particular congregation. Since Ephesus was the foremost of the Asian churches, this letter, in any case, eventually became associated exclusively with that location. After the book of Romans, the book of Ephesians is the most carefully written presentation of Christian theology in the New Covenant. The apostle wrote this letter to make believers more aware of the great and unique riches they have in Jesus Christ and also to encourage them to lean upon and practice this spiritual resource in their daily living. Ephesians was written at about the same time as Colossians, 60-63 AD, during the time noted in Acts 28:16-31. These two letters do have a common content arrangement in that the first chapters are doctrinal (spiritual teachings), and the last portions are practical applications of those teachings for daily practicing a believer's faith in Jesus Christ.

II. As mentioned above the Ephesian congregation was foremost among the groups in the area. A main reason for its being so well established was the fact that Paul himself had been instrumental in teaching and serving there in its first years of existence. At the end of his second missionary journey, Paul visited Ephesus where he left Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 18:18-21. It was at Ephesus that Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthian congregation. The apostle's effective service in Ephesus began seriously to hurt magic and idol image sales which led to an uproar in the huge Ephesian Theater (held 25,000 to 35,000 persons), Acts 19:23-41. The uproar was led by one Demetrius who evidently was a chief silversmith. His business was making icons relating to the goddess Diana (Greek Artemis), and Paul's spread of the Gospel had adversely affected the sales of the talismans and temple likenesses sold to locals and tourists by the silversmiths. This fertility cult was promoted by the belief that a meteoric stone which had fallen there was actually Diana's image. At the head of the harbor was a temple of Artemis which was known to be very magnificent throughout the former Greek world and the then present Roman Empire.

III. Jesus in speaking to John in Rev. 2:1-7 made the congregation at Ephesus the first of the seven groups addressed. The Lord's admonition to Ephesus involved those in or related to the congregation who were falsely claiming to be apostles. Jesus said that they were not apostles and commended the Ephesians for disbelieving their claims, Rev. 2:2. In Rev. 2:3 note that Jesus said that they had ignored the false "apostles" and served with patience "for

my name's sake" instead. They were to confirm their "first love" and "do the first works," i.e., return to the doctrines and works of service with which they had begun, Rev. 2:3-5, before the influence of the false "apostles."

IV. The Ephesian letter was addressed to a group of believers who were spiritually rich beyond measure in Jesus Christ but were living as beggars, because they were unaware of their spiritual wealth. Jesus told of believers who had trusted and served the Lord during their earthly sojourn and who were so involved in their service that they did not even realize that they were earning rewards in heaven at the time of their service. Now Jesus was back to receive his own and finally to establish his Kingdom of God. They will ask the Lord, "Then the righteous (believers) shall ask him 'Lord, when saw we thee hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or in prison and met your needs?' Then the King (Jesus) shall answer, 'truly, as you have served with my family, you have served me.'" We believers are to love our Lord and serve him by doing his bidding (be led of the Holy Spirit), and not be concerned about our pay, Matt. 6:6; 25:31-40. What believers have in their heavenly bank accounts (Matt. 19:21) only God knows for sure, I Cor. 2:9; 13:12. Paul addressed the Ephesians as saints (believers who are trusting Jesus Christ) who are being blessed by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We believers were chosen by God (John 15:16; Rom. 9:16-24) even before the world was created by him through Jesus Christ, and through whom we are holy and blameless. God the Father did this through pure love. This selection by God was simply because of "the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us acceptable in the beloved (Jesus, God's Son)." Jesus' blood redeems (salvages) us, forgives our sins, again, by means of the riches of his grace. As a result of God's call of us believers, he leads us into all wisdom and understanding (in the person of his Holy Spirit, John 14:26). God's plan is ultimately to gather together all things in Christ, i.e., those in Jesus whom he has brought to heaven before (at physical death) and those believers who are still alive (physically) when he returns for his own, I Thess. 4:13-18. This arrangement is true because God has elected us as inheritors of everything good. The initiation of this spiritual inheritance began when we first trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord. After we commit ourselves to be trusting Jesus, we are sealed with God's Holy Spirit of promise until our spiritual salvation is completed, I Cor. 15:50-58, and forever. God's sealing us with his Holy Spirit is our guarantee of the ultimate redemption of our spirits which are God's purchased possessions (through his Son's blood), vs. 13-14. Paul then (beginning in vs. 15) assures the Ephesian believers that his prayer for them is that they can understand the wonderful blessings they (and we believers) have in store for them (and us) through the Almighty God's power to carry out what he has promised to all believers in Christ. He worked out the believers' glorious condition by raising Christ from physical death and seating him at his own right hand in heaven. In that position he is above all possible hindrances to us believers as he serves as head of God's ecclesia, those whom he is calling to be believers in Jesus his Savior.

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May 24, 2000

"God's Gift of Grace"
Eph. 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The first word in Chap. 2 of Ephesians, "And," signifies that Paul is coordinating what he has just stated in Chap. 1 with what he is about to state in Chap. 2. Chap. 1 has outlined briefly God's undisputed power which he demonstrated by raising his Son, Jesus Christ, from death. Furthermore, the Almighty Father brought that same Jesus back to heaven and seated him at his (God's) right hand where he has been made to be head of those whom God is calling out from among the peoples of the world, a body of which Jesus Christ is the head. In Chap. 2 Paul addresses those believers at Ephesus as those whom God has made alive spiritually (quicken) who, before God's quickening, had been dead spiritually, i.e., separated from their loving Creator because of their trespasses and sins. The clear implication is that God, in making spiritually dead people alive, demonstrates the same power of God that raised our Lord from the grave alive. If faith in God's Word (John 1:1-4,14;3:16; Heb. 11:6) is what makes a person righteous in God's sight, it follows that a lack of faith in God's Word leaves one separated from God, dead in trespasses and sins, Gal. 3:6-9. In vss. 2-3 God reveals that before the Ephesians were quickened by God, their lives were lived as people who gave no thought to what God wanted them to be or to do. Their way of living reflected a spirit of disobedience toward God. Their lord (prince) was Satan who has captured the hearts and minds of those who desire to ignore God's will for them. Before accepting Jesus as Lord, the Ephesians had given themselves over to temporary matters as that which is important for humans to dedicate their lives to. An unbeliever's conversation involved primarily bodily lust, desires of the body, and the unregenerate mind. Their very nature served those actions which have goals leading to ultimate wrath and destruction.

II. One of Paul's favorite literary methods of emphasis was using two antipodean (two opposites) factors. In vss. 1-3 the previous conditions of believers were listed, and then in vss. 4-10 the apostle gives the tremendous changes which take place after one becomes a follower of Jesus Christ. Note that vs. 4 begins with another coordinating conjunction, "But." You believers were headed down a one-way, dead-in street where nothing lives but destruction, misery and death (eternal separation from a loving God). But what a change takes place when one embraces God's plan of spiritual reclamation through faith in his only begotten (through God's Holy Spirit) Son, Jesus Christ! The entire process rests upon the initial call of God (John 15:15-16), and it is his "mercy which signifies his great love wherewith he has loved us." God exercised that singular love even when we were "dead in sins" making us alive together with Christ (And don't ever forget that we have been saved solely by means of God's free grace, vs. 8-10.) We believers have been raised up together and have been made to sit together in heaven in Christ Jesus. God has taken such a miraculous action so that in the forever he can illustrate his love for us by pointing to this exceeding richness of his grace (favor without commensurate merit to pay for the favor) and of his kindness in Christ Jesus.

The word "kindness" is highly significant in this revelation, because it means that God recognizes a oneness with us in Jesus who was truly human as well as truly God (Divine) than he had before he sent his Son to earth to be born of a woman, live with people, and die a cruel physical death at the hands of fellow human beings, Heb. 2:5-18. This change brought about a new, distinct Covenant with all of humanity by God in Christ. Nothing can be more worthwhile for anyone than what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ. God wants us to know, to realize, and to appreciate the fact that we have been given this new nature and status through God's grace alone because of our simple, childlike faith (trust) in Jesus Christ. It is not merited by our own goodness or by the doing of good deeds. The only, exclusive, singular, sole reason for our being right with God is that God gave us this new relation with him, because we are trusting Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We trust Jesus because that trust pleases God. We can not trust anything or anyone else to please God lest anyone should boast that they have attained eternal life (spiritual rebirth) apart from or without God's loving grace. We, simply put, are God's workmanship (recreation), created in Christ Jesus for doing what pleases God. God prepared and implemented a New (second) Covenant with mankind so that believers in Jesus Christ will feel motivated to do what pleases the Father, because we have God's unconditional promise to be with us and forgive our sins, Matt. 28:18-20; I John 1:8-10-2:2; 2:12.

III. Having established the fact that God had begun a new provision in the earth in and through Jesus Christ, Paul explains that that new arrangement makes no distinction among what had been a definite cleavage during the period before the coming of Christ Jesus. Those who had been allied with God the Creator in a special way, the circumcision (Jews), had kept God's Covenant (the Old) by means of using their hands to circumcise all male infants, Gen. 17:7,10-14. During that Covenant period nonJews were not included in the nation (commonwealth) of Israel. In fact, all Gentiles (nonJews) were not included in God's family and were alienated from God's covenanted promise. Gentiles were without spiritual hope and "without God in the world." What makes nonJews acceptable now (and Jews as well) to God and his promises is the shed blood of Christ Jesus. Our spiritual peace has been brought into existence through our Lord. Now there is no difference in God's sight between a Jew and a Gentile, a man or a woman, or any other biological distinction. What God did for humankind in and through Jesus Christ brought down ALL spiritual walls of separation. Any person is free to appropriate God's plan of spiritual salvation through trusting the person of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is God's Savior by being both human and divine, he has in himself, who was two (God and man), eliminated the animosity between God the Father, and any rebellious and unworthy person who will trust (have faith in) Jesus Christ. God has established a method of reconciliation between himself and every believer. This Good News (Gospel) has been made known and accessible to anyone through God's Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and believers are the building blocks which make up the dwelling place (Temple) of God on earth today, I Cor. 3:9-17.

June 4
May 28, 2000

"God's Eternal Purpose"
Eph. 3

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chap. 3 begins with a prepositional phrase, "For this cause" which directly links with what he has stated at the end of Chap. 2. The relative pronoun, "this," in that phrase indicates even a dearer relationship with what has been related. The antecedent of "this" is the concept that in Christ Jesus all believers (including us) are a called-out group who are led by God's Holy Spirit and who have direct, complete access to our heavenly Father by means of God, the Son. Jesus is the chief corner stone of a building (the ekklesia or called out ones) which was promised to the Jews during the period of God's speaking to them through the prophets, e.g., Isa. 9:6; 49:6; 60:3-5. After Jesus came and was sacrificed for our forgiveness, the Lord ordained (through his Holy Spirit) that the apostles (2:20 and 3:5) would speak for God in his relating to humankind, Acts 10:9-20,28,34-48; Gal. 2:2-8,21. The apostle Peter had a special assignment in the Gospel for the Jews, but Paul was especially commissioned to deliver the Gospel to the Gentiles, Acts 14:26-28; 18:1-6; Rom. 1:16. Now, in Eph. 3 the apostle Paul refers to the miraculous efforts of God in "leveling the playing field" for both Jews and everyone else (Gentiles or all nonJews) through Christ Jesus. This glorious condition which God himself has brought to pass in the earth, Paul characterized as a former mystery (hidden truth). In former times this truth (the Gospel) "was not made known unto the sons of men, as it now is revealed unto his holy (especially set aside and sent) apostles [just as it was formerly] to the prophets by the Holy Spirit." What a tremendous circumstance God has caused to happen, i.e., that the Gentiles (nonJews) should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his [God's] promise in Christ by the Gospel!" Paul then expresses his amazement and awe that God would honor him with such an assignment of spreading the Gospel. Paul who earlier tried so conscientiously to annihilate this new "Jewish sect" consisting of a rapidly growing group of followers of this one Jesus (the Way) who had "falsely" claimed to be the Jews' long awaited Messiah.

II. We all know the story: Paul, with authority from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, was headed for Damascus up north to do his part "for God" by going from house to house calling these "falsely led" Jews to account for their "heresy." And, while en route to Damascus from Jerusalem, the Lord, Jesus Christ, himself appeared to Paul (Acts 22:7-8,18) and told him to get away from the influence of Jerusalem. Paul left and went to Arabia (a desert or wilderness area) and remained there about three years, Gal. 1:15-24. The Scriptures are absolutely silent about what happened during those three years. We do know that the instructions he received there caused him to see no need to confer or consult with anyone else, including the other apostles, about what God wanted him to do. God's Word which we have in his letters to the various local congregations let us (who are led by God's Holy Spirit) know that his three-year "schooling" could only have come from the Lord, and we do have Scriptural evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ himself

came to Paul, noted above at Acts 22:8, and see also at I Cor. 15:8. At I Cor. 15:9-10 Paul states that he considered himself "the least of the apostles" [but an apostle nevertheless], and here at Eph. 3:8 he further expresses humility again by referring to himself as "who am less than the least of all the saints (all believers)." But all that he is, is because of "Unto me - - - is this [God's] grace given - - by the effective working of his (God's) power." Paul who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil. 3:5), and through Jesus, the Messiah, revealing to anyone who would listen that God's mystery of spiritual salvation is available to every person who will believe, John 3:16. Through Jesus Christ (God himself) the world was created.

III. God now wants everyone, even the powers that be outside and away from the earth (heavenly places), to know the part God's Son, the God-man, has in God's relating to humankind. This plan of God was not an afterthought because man sinned and was displeasing to God from the outset of mankind's existence, Gen. 3:15. No, this plan was "according to the eternal purpose which he (God) purposed in his beloved Son, Jesus, our Lord," vs. 11. Included in this plan was that believers in the plan (accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord of life) are to relate boldly to God (through his atonement) with full confidence that faith in Jesus Christ makes such believers pleasing to God, our Creator. Because of this boldness Paul (God's Word) encourages us believers not to lose heart (faint not) even in periods of trials and tribulations. Even in times when unbelievers may be troubled and anxious, we believers are to "look up for our redemption draweth nigh (Jesus is never far from us.)," Lk 21:28. Paul notes that his belief in and service to the Gospel is what has caused him to undergo tribulations (including imprisonment at Rome), but his service in God's Kingdom has brought glory to many, i.e., those who have believed because of his testimony. Here he repeats the same sentiment given in vs. 1 where he states, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ (Note, not of the Romans.) for you Gentiles. Was Paul complaining about his temporary troubles? No, he felt humble to be a part of God's eternal purpose in calling out a select group of believers who are to be recognized both on the earth and forever in heaven as the family of the Living God (trusting in and living for God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.). Paul, bowing (yielding) to God, vs. 14, was in reverence and awe as he prayed that God would "grant, according to the riches of his grace [to believers], to be strengthened with power by his Holy Spirit in the inner self," vs. 16b, and see also at Rom. 7:22 and II Cor. 4:16. Paul further prays that we believers may realize that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that as we are grounded in love, we will be able to understand along with all believers how all inclusive is the love of Christ, which is infinite (beyond believers abilities to go away from). In fact, God's intent is to do so exceedingly abundantly that we are limited (as mortals) in our abilities to think about or ask for those things he has for us, vs. 20, and see also I Cor. 2:16. We called-out-ones (ekklesia) will enjoy God's glory, his eternal purpose for us, forever, to which Paul says, "Amen!," vs. 21.

"Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail, in thee do we trust,
nor find thee to fail:
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end. Our Maker, Defender,
Redeemer, and Friend." With Paul we say, Amen and Amen!

June ¹⁸ 4, 2000

"New Family, New Attitude"
Eph. 4

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Chapter 4 begins by Paul repeating that he is a prisoner of (in) the Lord and makes his circumstance a valid reason to plead with the Ephesian believers to live their lives worthy of God's having called them to live for him (God). In fact, this entire chapter is devoted to factors involved in the service of believers as new members of God's family who have become such members through their childlike faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ. These family members are relying upon God's Holy Spirit for instructions and strength, because now Jesus is their Savior for eternal life with God, and Lord also of the mortal life yet to be lived in the flesh. The first suggestion made by Paul (God's Word) is found in vss. 2-3. The new believers are to be humble as Jesus said that his followers should be, Matt. 5:5, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." The meekness comes from a sense of gentleness, long-suffering patience and "putting up with" some fellow believers who may not always be gentlemanlike or genteladylike as Paul is suggesting here. The reason for such mutual respect is given in vs. 3, "Attempting to maintain coherence (sticking together) by the Spirit in the bond of peace," i.e., not letting internal disagreements and dissensions sap the strength of the local congregation so that influencing those outside the fellowship will be retarded. After all, Paul notes in vs. 4, since Jesus Christ is the only head of the ekklesia, it follows that there is only one body. [Paul develops this concept more fully at I Cor. 12:12-31. Note there that this loyalty within the fellowship culminates in the famous love Chap. 13 in which love motivates the "more excellent way," I Cor. 12:31b.] In vss. 7-11 Paul indicates the reason for the unity which he calls forth in vs. 3. God's grace is dispensed to every individual in a local congregation in different types and measures. He underscores this phenomenon by quoting Psa. 68:18 in vs. 8, "When he [Jesus Christ] ascended up on high, he led captivity captive [defeated Satan's power over all who will trust the Lord], and dispensed gifts [abilities to serve for spiritual purposes] to various individual believers." In verses in vss. 9-10 the Scripture states that, "he [Jesus Christ] went back up far above all heavens only after he had gone down into the lower parts of the earth," Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31; I Pet. 3:18-22.

II. Among the gifts which Jesus left for members of his new family were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. I say "among the gifts," because other spiritual gifts are noted at Rom. 12:3-8 and I Cor. 12:4-11, 28-31. We should note carefully these spiritual gifts listed in vs. 11. The first gift is apostles, and we should be especially careful in determining who the apostles were. In the Ephesian letter Paul has already stated that members of the household of God are likened to stones with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, Eph. 2:20-22. At that point in the letter Paul states that the foundation of this spiritual building is builded upon God's promise to the Old Covenant prophets and God's Word through apostles (apostolic period - New Covenant) ending at approximately 100 AD. We have also noted that there were

individuals in the Ephesian congregation who claimed to be apostles, but Jesus said that they were liars, Rev. 2:2. The only exception that the Scriptures make to the original twelve apostles (Acts 1:26) was Paul himself, Rom. 1:5; I Cor. 4:9; 9:1-2. So it is evident that the gift of apostleship was rather limited in scope, and I say that fully aware that there are some in "Christendom" who claim, through their tradition and misinterpreting of Matt. 16:13-20, that there have been a continuation of "apostles" (vicars of Christ on earth) since Peter. Peter himself did not claim to hold such a vicarious position, Acts 10:25-26; I Pet. 2:4-9. And Jesus corrected Peter dramatically when the latter was presumptuous in assuming too much authority (Mk 8:27-33) immediately following Peter's correctly identifying Jesus as God's promised Messiah, Savior. The other gifts: prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are more obvious. The prophets were those who spoke forth God's Word, and evangelists were probably itinerant prophets. Philip was a deacon (Acts 6:5) and an evangelist (Acts 8:5) while his four daughters were prophets, Acts 21:8-9. Peter and Paul served God as both apostles and evangelists.

III. In vss. 12-16 Paul gives the reason for the Lord's giving gifts to believers following his ascension. Jesus wanted his body to be unified in their faith in him and mature, not "tossed to and fro" by "the trickery of men." To ensure this maturity believers should be loyal to the congregation by "speaking the truth in love" by each member supplying his or her own gift effectively so that the whole congregation will be edified (built up) in love. To accomplish the desired result the Ephesian believers, who had been unbelieving Gentiles, should now, as new creatures in Christ, leave their past style of living. For example, their hearts should no longer be hardened (be blind concerning) to God's will for them. Before being quickened by their faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, they were spiritually ignorant and licentious (lacking legal or moral restraints, especially regarding sexual lusts) and greedy (putting self before everyone else) or materialistic, Matt. 6:24. "But all of you have not so learned the truth [of God's will] in Christ," vs. 20. Their old conversation and conduct had been corrupt and according to deceitful lust. Now in Christ an entirely new attitude should be assumed. The believers should don new dress which reflected renewed spirits of their minds. Believers should become people who are to follow God's Son completely and thereby be recreated in righteousness and genuine holiness (separated from their earlier lives of evil). Practically speaking, these believers should stop lying and start speaking truthfully with his or her neighbor, because they were now members of the same spiritual family. Being angry was no problem unless such anger caused one to perform acts contrary to God's will, e.g., consider actions of God and the Lord Jesus Christ at Num. 25:4; Mk 3:5; 11:15-18; John 2:13-17. A further admonition is given in relationship to being angry (vs. 26) which is not to permit the day to expire before a believer's wrathful attitude is quieted. A believer is not to fear the devil, because he (Satan) has been defeated by our Lord whom we trust and serve. One who serves the Lord Jesus Christ must work to meet his or her own needs rather than steal what is needed. Do not speak corruptly but positively, gracefully. The "bottom line" is that a believer should do nothing which will pain God's Holy Spirit who lives within and who has sealed us "unto the day of redemption," Eph. 1:13; 4:30. We are now permanent members of an eternal family. Let's make sure our attitudes and actions demonstrate as much!

I. Life-style bases

A. Ethos (Gk - custom, character) guiding beliefs

1. Ethic = the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; the principles of conduct governing an individual or group, can be codified as law
2. Ethnic (Gk - nation, people) originally in English, being neither Christian nor Jewish, i.e., heathen or, today, somewhat like the "third world"

B. Pathos (Gk - suffering in experience or emotional disorder) evoking pity or sympathy

1. Pathetic = pitiable, sad
2. Pathology = the study of that which is abnormal whether physical, mental, or emotional, i.e., a human disorder

II. Some human activities and attitudes requiring moral choice (Mores = the fixed morally binding customs (manners) of a particular person or group)

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| 1. Abortion | 2. Adultery | 3. Anger |
| 4. Sinner associating | 5. Autoeroticism | 6. Bathing mixed |
| 7. Birth control | 8. Blood transfusion | 9. Card playing |
| 10. Child molesting/abuse | 11. Bastard children | 12. Child obedience to pars. |
| 13. Church attendance | 14. Conceit | 15. Caffeine and nicotine |
| 16. Nonmarital cohab. | 17. Cosmetic/jewelry | 18. Covetousness |
| 19. Dishonesty | 20. Dishonor parents | 21. Divorce |
| 22. Alcohol consumption | 23. Drug use | 24. Effeminacy |
| 25. Envy | 26. Euthanasia | 27. Fornication |
| 28. Gambling | 29. Gluttony | 30. Gossiper |
| 31. Hatred | 32. Homosexuality | 33. Hypocrisy |
| 34. Impatience | 35. Incest | 36. Jealousy |
| 37. Laziness | 38. Liar | 39. Lust |
| 40. Marital fidelity | 41. Military service | 42. Movies or theater attend. |
| 43. Murder | 44. Pornography | 45. Pride |
| 46. Cursing | 47. Prostitution | 48. Prejudice |
| 49. Rape | 50. Revenge | 51. Self-righteousness |
| 52. Sharp tongue | 53. Pool, billiards | 54. Social dancing |
| 55. Spiteful | 56. Sunday activities | 57. Stealing |
| 58. Swearing | 59. Tithing | 60. Court settling of church affairs |
| 61. Use of medicine and/or medical doctors | 62. Women deacon/minister | |
| 63. Women teachers of men | 64. Wearing clothing of opposite sex | |

III. Evaluating Christian behavior

- A. I Cor. 5:1-6:20 (The final result of wrong activities)
- B. Rom. 14:1-15:4 (The brother's keeper concept)
- C. God's way: individual, volitional, "whosoever will" but doing wrong as God's children does not go without chastisement (Heb. 12:6)
- D. God, through his Holy Spirit, works with each believer as he or she grows in his grace. (II Pet. 3:18)
- E. A believer's actions will be subject to the temporary results of such actions, but the eternal status with God is not broken. (I Cor. 3:14-23)
- F. A given activity can be wrong for one believer and all right for another believer. (Rom. 14:2-5)

- IV. The church family's (and individual believer's) responsibility in helping each other practice Christian activities
- A. Present God's will through his Word and by example as his Holy Spirit leads.
 - B. Love all who seek knowledge of God's will and support.
 - C. Strive to distinguish between traditions/customs of people and God's will, can be same but not necessarily.
 - D. Recognize different levels of Christian maturity in each believer.
 - E. One of the believer's chief snares is self-righteousness.
 - F. Final authority: the church and individual church members are essentially a referral service, the final authority rests with Jesus Christ and the Comforter God sent at Jesus' request. (John 14:15-21, 25-26; Matt. 20:25-27; II Tim. 4:8)

IV. Characteristics, nature of Jehovah God

- A. Eternal-Deut. 33:27; I Tim. 1:17
- B. Constant-Jas. 1:17
- C. Immortal-I Tim. 1:17
- D. Invisible-John 1:18; I Tim. 1:17
- E. Loving-John 3:16; I John 4:8
- F. Just-Isa. 45:21
- G. One of a kind-Isa. 45:21
- H. Savior-Isa. 45:21
- I. Spirit-John 4:24
- J. Cannot be tempted to err-Jas. 1:13
- K. Does not tempt people to sin-Jas. 1:13
- L. Patient-II Pet. 3:9
- M. Triune, but one-Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Matt. 28:19; John 10:30; 14:11, 16, 20, 26; 15:26
- N. Progressive Revealer of himself to humanity-Heb. 8:6-13
- O. Alive-Rom. 9:26
- P. Impartial-Matt. 5:43-48
- Q. Incapable of lying-Titus 1:2
- R. Emmanuel-Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23

June 18, 2000

"Offspring of God"

Eph. 5:1-24

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. As the beginning of Chap. 4 continued the ending thought in Chap. 3, so does Chap. 5 begin with the ending thought in Chap. 4. We believers are sealed by God's Holy Spirit to ensure that we will finish our mortal lives equipped for the culmination of our spiritual salvation, 4:30. Our willingness in expressing kindness to and forgiveness of one another is to be based upon the example of what God did for us in Christ. Chap. 5:1 admonishes us to be followers of God as his dear children as we, in fact, are. Our lives are to be lived in a sacrificial style (mode) which, figuratively speaking, brings a pleasant fragrance to God. Those activities which are contrary to what pleases God are begun in vs. 3. In contrast to what pleases God is fornication, sexual activity outside marriage. Uncleanness which we noted at Col. 3:5 as "lustful luxurious, profligate (completely given over to dissipation and licentiousness [lacking legal or moral restraints, especially sexual restraints]); (For further use of the Greek term here translated "unclean," see Rom. 1:24-27; II Cor. 12:21; I Thes. 4:7-8.)." Covetousness is a greedy desire to have more than one needs at whatever cost to self or others. Jesus spoke to covetousness at Matt. 6:19-24. It is possible for those who call themselves Christians to incorporate covetous manners (lifestyles) into what they consider acceptable to God, Mk 7:1-9, 13-23; Col. 3:5. Vs. 3b makes clear that neither fornication, uncleanness, nor covetousness should be practiced at all ("not once be named among you"), for such activities are not "becoming for saints (believers)." Other things which are not in keeping with the Holy Spirit's leadership and which grieve him are dirty stories, foul language (vulgarism), and raw jokes. Instead ones communication should be "spiritually efficient," i.e., use opportunities of conversation to speak of God's grace and goodness and to give thanks to God for what he has done for us through Jesus Christ. Such self-discipline will cause believers to become accustomed to relating to others in a Godly way when Christ returns to establish his Kingdom of God on the earth. In Rev. 21:2,9 John (God's Word) tells us that we believers will be presented as the bride of Christ. We should, therefore, act and think as a bride even in this life, for he loves us and cherishes us on a moment by moment basis. We should be faithful to him as our Lord, and not commit adultery with the prince (ruler) of this world, John 12:28-32; 14:30; 17:20-26. Again, we are reminded in vs. 5 that God's kingdom will have no place for whoremongers. We who are subject to God and his Son as Lord are not to communicate with others in the world in an unbelieving language. Partaking of the body of the opposite sex for money is not a proper way of demonstrating and communicating that God sacrificed his Son so that we believers can enjoy heavenly citizenship. Because God's Spirit indwells and leads us believers, we can judge such behavior and whether our own actions grieve God's Spirit, I Cor. 11:31-32. In other words, if "everyone else is doing it" in no way excuses a believer for participating in such unGodly activities, Rom. 1:20; 12:1-2. Rom. 1:20 refers specifically to unbelievers, but how much more are believers without excuse who grieve God's Holy Spirit! Vss. 6-12 describe

the differences between "followers of God as his dear children," vs. 1, and the "sons of disobedience," vs. 6. There are those who will try to deceive believers to compromise the righteous leading of God's Spirit, but we are not to be "partakers with them," vs. 7. Before accepting "the Way," Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord, the Ephesians were walking in darkness and without God in the world, but now they are believers, "children of light." Vs. 9 states plainly that the attitudes and actions of believers are "the fruit of the Spirit [Remember that you are now the temple of God's Spirit.], in all goodness and righteousness and truth." The Holy Spirit of God will continually prove to you "what is acceptable unto the Lord," vs. 10 and John 16:13. Believers can associate with unbelievers for the sake of witnessing (John 17:11,14-19; I Cor. 5:9-11), but God's children (believers) are to act and think like who they are: the offspring (reborn of God's Spirit) of the Almighty God whose children can have no fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness," vs. 11. A Spirit-led believer should feel shame even to speak of things done and revered by unbelievers, vs. 12.

II. Beginning with vs. 13 Paul again uses his literary style of contrast for emphasis. He has pointed out those things which are unacceptable to God and God's Spirit's condemnation of such activities for his children. Now, he turns to those things which please (do not grieve) God. The illumination of God's Spirit in the believer makes (manifests) God's Lordship evident, vs. 13. It is highly significant that when Paul refers to the concepts in Isa. 16:19 and 60:1, he states that Jesus Christ will be the one who gives God's light (understanding). As those who bear the name of Christ, we should, therefore, "conduct our lives carefully (circumspectly), as wise ones, not as fools," vs. 15. The times are evil and we have such short lives during which we can bear the true testimony of what our loving heavenly Father has done and is doing for us in and through his Son, our Savior. Our spirits are to be constantly elated as God's Spirit saturates our desires to act like God's offspring. To help in this Godly living we should also lean upon one another for encouragement, vs. 21.

III. In the remainder of Chap. 5, Paul gives spirit-led admonitions regarding a believing family. As in all social settings in which Christ is Lord, there should be decency and orderliness, I Cor. 14:33-40. The sequence or order of Paul's suggestions is important. First, in vss. 18-21 the instruction is to be "filled with the Holy Spirit," or given completely to God's will. Second, in vss. 22-24 Paul speaks to believing wives in the households. In general, final decision-making is to rest with the husband. In our social setting today with the many changes which have occurred in the last 2,000 years, a believer must keep in mind what Jesus taught in Matt. 5-7 to the multitudes. In this teaching Jesus defied those who taught their incorrect interpretation of God's law. Proper living by the Spirit of God's Law was quite different from the Jewish religious leaders of that day. When Jesus lived in human flesh among men, women were not allowed education as were the men, nor were they generally active in business and public affairs. This arrangement was cultural and not necessarily what God preferred. But in that culture with its limitations on women's training and expected performance, the ekklesia would have been hampered had men not been given the leadership assignments. [MORE NEXT WEEK]

July 2
June 25, 2000

"In God's Uniform"
Eph. 5:25-6:24

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. We come now, sadly, to the end of our study of Paul's communication (God's) to the group of believers living in the city of Ephesus in about 62 AD (and to us as well in 2000). We could get bogged down in many details which are all important, but we should also note the general force of Paul's intent. At the time, Paul's imprisonment in Rome, believing Jesus as God's Savior of the world (the Way) was considered by the Roman government and many Jews as a new sect of Judaism. Paul was determined to keep all believers seen as one body, whether they were Jewish or Gentile. He spent over thirty years of his life proclaiming that believing on Jesus was not a new patch on an old garment, Matt. 9:16, but an entirely new faith in the world. Christ Jesus had made the difference. The Creator's Spirit (the same Spirit who was in Christ) is available for residence only in those who are willing to trust and to commit themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Understanding that the overview of the meaning of the message to the Ephesians involves the ekklesia, God's called out ones, is basic to understanding fully the letter to the Ephesians. The first chapter in vss. 3-6 notes that all believers are chosen by the Father; in vss. 7-12 believers are redeemed by the Son, Christ Jesus; in vss. 13-14 believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit; and in vss. 15-23 believers (saints, vs. 15) are asked to realize the significance of their circumstance, i.e., that absolutely nothing could possibly be better for persons on earth, Matt. 13:44-46. This estate of being offspring of God for eternity is further stated at Chap. 4:30-32 where also believers are admonished to live lives that will not grieve God's Holy Spirit who lives within every believer. Chap. 4 reveals that God's ekklesia had been a secret before Christ Jesus came from heaven to earth to make spiritual redemption available to any person who will believe in (trust) Christ Jesus. In Chap. 4 Paul begs all believers to be united (both Jewish and Gentile) around the Holy Spirit's leadership and exercise the gifts Jesus assigns. To do this believers must realize that they are new creatures, born from above (of the Spirit), John 3:3; II Cor. 5:17.

II. Beginning at Chap. 4:31 and to the end of the letter, Paul outlines practical applications to be practiced (working in love) by believers, "as dear children of God." We began examining these practical implications, really privileges, for believers last week in Chap. 5. Now we begin where we left off with 5:25 where Paul has begun admonitions for believing family members. It is absolutely essential when attempting to understand the spousal relationship of believing husbands with believing wives and vice versa, that one must keep in mind the fact that Paul is relating these two (husband and wife) with Christ and his ekklesia, 5:23-24. Also, remember that for the best chance for a believing married couple to be what the Lord wants them to be, they must be saturated (led by) with God's Holy Spirit, 5:18, which fact we discussed at some length last week. Given that the husband-wife relationship can be likened to Christ and the ekklesia, it follows that for believing

the differences between "followers of God as his dear children," vs. 1, and the "sons of disobedience," vs. 6. There are those who will try to deceive believers to compromise the righteous leading of God's Spirit, but we are not to be "partakers with them," vs. 7. Before accepting "the Way," Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord, the Ephesians were walking in darkness and without God in the world, but now they are believers, "children of light." Vs. 9 states plainly that the attitudes and actions of believers are "the fruit of the Spirit [Remember that you are now the temple of God's Spirit.], in all goodness and righteousness and truth." The Holy Spirit of God will continually prove to you "what is acceptable unto the Lord," vs. 10 and John 16:13. Believers can associate with unbelievers for the sake of witnessing (John 17:11,14-19; I Cor. 5:9-11), but God's children (believers) are to act and think like who they are: the offspring (reborn of God's Spirit) of the Almighty God whose children can have no fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness," vs. 11. A Spirit-led believer should feel shame even to speak of things done and revered by unbelievers, vs. 12.

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III. In the remainder of Chap. 5, Paul gives spirit-led admonitions regarding a believing family. As in all social settings in which Christ is Lord, there should be decency and orderliness, I Cor. 14:33-40. The sequence or order of Paul's suggestions is important. First, in vss. 18-21 the instruction is to be "filled with the Holy Spirit," or given completely to God's will. Second, in vss. 22-24 Paul speaks to believing wives in the households. In general, final decision-making is to rest with the husband. In our social setting today with the many changes which have occurred in the last 2,000 years, a believer must keep in mind what Jesus taught in Matt. 5-7 to the multitudes. In this teaching Jesus defied those who taught their incorrect interpretation of God's law. Proper living by the Spirit of God's Law was quite different from the Jewish religious leaders of that day. When Jesus lived in human flesh among men, women were not allowed education as were the men, nor were they generally active in business and public affairs. This arrangement was cultural and not necessarily what God preferred. But in that culture with its limitations on women's training and expected performance, the ekklesia would have been hampered had men not been given the leadership assignments. [MORE NEXT WEEK]

I. God's names in the Old Testament

- A. Elohim, the Creator of the physical universe (translated God in KJV)
1. Plural of Eloah ("Allah" in Arabic)
 - a. Plural of majesty
 - b. Fullness and infinite divine strength
 - c. Sum of powers displayed by God
 2. El is the shortened form (a word meaning strength, e.g., El-Shaddai meaning God-Almighty (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; Ex. 6:3))
- B. Jehovah, the eternal living One (translated Lord in KJV)
1. Denotes the one true God, the unizuely self-existent One, the I AM (Ex. 3:14; 6:3; Psa. 83:18; Isa. 12:2; 26:4)
 2. Never applies to a false god (Ex. 12:12; 15:11; 18:11; 20:3, 23)
 3. Not spoken by early rabbis because of their improper interpretation of Lev. 24:15-16
 - a. "Adonai" used instead of Jehovah (Lord)
 - b. Uttering "Jehovah" constituted a capital offence. (Lev. 24:16)
 - c. According to Jewish tradition, "Jehovah" was pronounced but once per year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement as he entered the Holy of Holies.
 4. Designates the Creator's nature as he stands in relation to his creation, people, as the only almighty, true, personal, holy Being, a Spirit and "the Father of Spirits" (Num. 16:22; Jn4:24), who revealed himself through the Law in the first Covenant and later through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, his ultimate grace in forgiveness of those who will believe that later revelation of the second and last Covenant. (Matt. 22:29-33; John 1:16-18; Rom. 14:8-9)
 5. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Father of the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ, is the only Being worthy of humanity's worship. Only God's Holy Spirit can reveal Jehovah, the Revealer of himself to people, and his spiritual salvation through Jesus Christ, God's Messiah. (Matt. 11:25-27; Jn 14:16-21)

II. God's names in the New Testament

- A. *Κύριος* = Lord (Psa. 110:1-6; Matt. 22:41-46)
- B. *ὁ Θεός* = God (Matt. 3:9)

III. Titles of God the Father

A. Old Testament

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Almighty-Gen. 17:1 | 2. Eternal-Deut. 33:27 |
| 3. Fortress-II Sam. 22:2 | 4. Holy One-Psa. 71:22 |
| 5. I AM-Ex. 3:14 | 6. Jehovah-Ex. 6:3 |
| 7. Judge-Gen. 18:25 | 8. Living-Josh. 3:10 |
| 9. Lord of Hosts-I Sam. 1:11 | 10. Lord of Lords-Deut. 10:17 |
| 11. Most High-Deut. 32:8 | 12. Our Father-I Chron. 29:10 |
| 13. Our Strength-Ex. 15:2 | |

B. New Testament

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Father of Lights-Jas. 1:17 | 2. Living-Rom. 9:26 |
| 3. Lord of Sabaoth-Jas. 5:4; | 4. Heavenly Father-Matt. 6:26 |
| 5. Our Father-Matt. 6:9 | |

I. Marriage: its origin and history

- A. Instituted at time of human creation (Gen. 2:18-25)
 1. Unity of man (Ish) and woman (Isha)
 - a. Adam = the man as distinguished from other animals
 - b. Eve = source of all human life
 2. Man and wife as implied in her being formed out of the man
 3. The permanency and indissolubleness of the marriage bond, except on the strongest grounds (Mat. 19:9; Rom. 7:1-3)
 4. Monogamy, as the original law of marriage (Mat. 19:3-8)
 5. The social equality of husband and wife (I Cor. 11:11-12; Gal. 3:28)
 6. The subordination of the wife to her husband (Gen. 3:16; I Cor. 11:8-9; I Tim. 2:13)
 7. Although polygamy prevailed during the patriarchal period, the wives' and concubines' offspring were considered to have a different status. (Gen. 16:4; 25:1,6; 28:9; 29:23,28; I Chron. 7:14)
- B. Divorce was permitted, contrary to God's plan, during the first Covenant, but only one specific case is cited. (Gen. 21:14; Mat. 19:8)
- C. Jesus reestablished the integrity and sanctity of the marriage bond by the following measures:
 1. Confirming the original charter of marriage as the basis which all regulations were to reflect (Mat. 19:4-5)
 2. By the restriction of divorce to the case of fornication, and the prohibition of remarriage of all persons divorced on improper grounds (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Rom. 7:3; I Cor. 7:10-11)
 3. By the enforcement of moral purity generally, (Heb. 13:4, etc.), and especially by the formal condemnation of fornication (Acts 15:20, etc.)
- D. Conditions of legal marriage during the first Covenant
 1. Prohibited between Israelite and non-Israelite
 - a. Total in regard to Canaanites on either side
 - b. Total on male side regarding Ammonites and Moabites
 - c. Temporary for males to Edomites and Egyptians
 - d. Marriages with females in b. and c. were legal
 - e. Progeny of Israelites contrary to provisions a. - c. were considered bastards. (Deut. 23:2)
 2. Prohibited between certain Israelites
 - a. Relations by blood kin or marriage (Lev. 18:6-18)
 - b. Exception was made for a brother's wife in case of the brother's death when the dead brother left no children. (Gen. 38:8; Deut. 25:5-10)
- E. Events relating to Jewish marriages during biblical times
 1. Choice of bride responsibility of relations or groom-appointed friend, but she was sometimes asked (Gen. 24:58)
 2. The betrothal (engagement) announcement was the beginning of the espousal period which was celebrated by a feast, oaths, gifts to the bride, and bridegroom's placing a ring on the bride's finger. Ring giving was regarded by the Hebrews as a token of fidelity, Gen. 41:55, and adoption into the family, Lk 15:22.
 3. The betrothal period lasted a few days during the patriarchal era (Gen. 24:55) to a full year for virgins and a month for widows in later years.
 4. During betrothal the bride-elect lived with her friends, and communications between her and the groom-elect were through a "friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29).
 5. The bride was virtually regarded as the wife of her future husband, and faithlessness on her part was punishable with death. (Deut. 22:23-24) The husband could however, under such breach of

- faith, "put her away." (Deut. 24:1; Mat. 1:19)
6. The marriage ceremony consisted of the bride's being taken from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or of his father. The bridegroom donned festive dress including a nuptial turban.
 7. The bride wore a white robe (Rev. 19:8), sometimes embroidered with gold thread (Psa. 45:13), covered with perfume (Psa. 45:8), was decked with jewels (Isa. 49:18; 61:10; Rev. 21:2), and veiled with a thick veil.
 8. At the time of the ceremony, usually late in the evening, the bridegroom left his house attended by his groomsmen ("companions" Judges 14:11, "children of the bride-chamber" Mat. 9:15) preceded by musicians (Jer. 25:10; Rev. 18:23), picked up the bride at her residence, and took her back to his place (Matt. 25:6).
 9. A feast was prepared and all friends and neighbors were invited. (Gen. 29:22; Mat. 22:1-10; Lk 14:8; John 2:2)
 10. At last, after much festivity by such activities as riddle-telling (Judges 14:12), the veiled bride was taken to the bridal chamber where a canopy had been prepared. (Judges 15:1; Joel 2:16; Psa. 19:5) (The bride usually was so heavily veiled, note what happened in Gen. 29:23.)
 11. The newly-married man was exempt from public duty, including military service which would take him from home, for one year. (Deut. 24:5)

II. Biblical forbidden sexual activities

- A. Birth control under certain conditions (Gen. 38:1-10)
- B. Bestiality by male or female (Lev. 18:23)
- C. Adultery with neighbor's wife (Lev. 18:20)
- D. During a woman's menses (Lev. 18:19)
- E. With same sex (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27)
- F. As a worship experience (Lev. 18:21; IIChron 21:11)
- G. Fornication, i.e., outside the marriage bond (Acts 15:20, 29; Rom. 7:2-3; I Cor. 5:1)
- H. Rape (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:23-29)