Pray “in the Spirit.” As Barclay says, “Let the Spirit be the atmosphere in which you pray.” Build up your relationship with God. Be open to him! Listen to his word! Seek his will! So it’s beyond you – bigger, harder than you thought? Then be strong in the Lord – committed to his will, yet knowing that, apart from him, you can’t do it!

Paul, the “ambassador in chains”, requests prayer for himself (vv. 19-20). He isn’t requesting release from prison, but that he will declare the gospel “fearlessly”.

The letter is being sent with Tychicus (vv. 21-22) who was also carrying the letter to Colossae (Col. 4.7-9) and a personal letter to Philemon.

“Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 6.23). There is a struggle on in this world. We are actively engaged in it, but we are called to “peace and love” – to receive them “with faith” from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, to live them out in Christian fellowship, to reach out with them to others.

“Peace”, “love” and “faith” are three of the key words in the epistle, but then he adds a fourth – “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus with an undying love” (v. 24). The letter began with praise to God “who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (1.3). It concludes with a benediction of God’s grace – his unmerited favour, freely given to us in Christ.

Peace, love, faith and grace... There is a struggle, but Christ has won the victory! Look up and don’t give up!
We are to stand firm, “with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (v. 14b). In our society, righteousness has taken on a bad name. It makes us think of someone rather smug and superior about it. Sometimes we hear the older generation complain about today’s youth “doesn’t know what’s good for them.” Usually their reverence is to a better life that should just fall into their lap. But then, haven’t we sometimes thought that it would be nice to have a joint account with someone else in another place? And, as far as gambling interests are concerned, there can only be winners if there are whole lot of losers.

The introduction of CST goods and services tax has promoted a fairer tax system into the future—broadly speaking the CST will continue to use and develop. We share a rich cultural heritage of music, literature. There are many today who continue to add to our cultural treasure chest.

The concept of receiving free what others have provided at great personal cost isn’t foreign to us. We thought Paul was a prisoner when he wrote to the Ephesians. The theme that keeps coming through is the “redemption through grace” to which Paul adds the definition “through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.” The idea of the Son of God giving himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others, is a beautiful way of looking at the concept of redemption through grace. Our minds are challenged to think differently about the grace of God.

In addition to all this, Paul says “...so as we thought Paul was a prisoner in Rome, when he wrote to the Ephesians. The theme that keeps the redemptive force coming through is the forgiveness of God that is the “redemption through grace.” To which Paul adds the definition “...through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.” The idea of the Son of God giving himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others, is a beautiful way of looking at the concept of redemption through grace. Our minds are challenged to think differently about the grace of God.
That's why we have this struggle—against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12).

The devil has set his sights on us. He doesn't want us to experience the blessings of our Christian life. He doesn't want us to spread the good news of Jesus.

**God's Full Armour**

**Full Battle Dress**

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the soldier's strong army boots were

---

**God's Full Armour**

Stand, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, and the breastplate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 

---

**Notes**

1. That's why we have this struggle—against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12).

2. The devil has set his sights on us. He doesn't want us to experience the blessings of our Christian life. He doesn't want us to spread the good news of Jesus.

3. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the soldier's strong army boots were made of leather and covered with leather straps. They were designed to provide protection and stability during combat.

4. The breastplate covered the body from neck to thigh. It was made of bronze and iron and was riveted to the soldier's body. The breastplate provided protection for the chest and upper abdomen.

5. The sword of the Spirit refers to the Word of God, which is the powerful weapon that Christian soldiers should use in their spiritual battle.

6. The belt of truth is the foundation of the Christian's armour. It represents the solid grounding in truth that believers need to stand against the forces of evil.

7. The breastplate of righteousness represents the righteousness that comes from faith in Christ and the hope of glory.

8. The sword of the Spirit is the powerful weapon that Christians should use in their spiritual battle.

9. The full battle dress refers to the complete suite of protective gear that a soldier would wear in battle.
And what is this power that is “for us” — available to us now? That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms… (vv. 19b,20).

But God’s power is available to us. Jesus didn’t live a “superman” life. He emptied himself, despising the glory of being God. He lived here with the same resources as any human and was able to be led by the same kind of God’s Spirit. His death and resurrection gave us access to the divine power which is available to us. It is a relationship. We don’t hold a little cache of divine power which we can carry around with us. We live in relationship with God and his power is available to us.

Christ, of course, was unique. His status was far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that could be given, not only in the present age but also in the ages to come. And God placed all things under his feet, and appointed him to be head over everything (vv. 21,22).

The church is the body of Christ, the means by which he works in the world. One older writer has put it this way, “Here the congregation is that plenitude of the divine powers which is Christ’s, imbued by his presence, filled with his gifts and energies in every way.” (S. D. Salmond, E.G.T.)

Do you live under God’s grace — with the awareness of God’s riches at Christ’s expense? Do you know the riches of his grace to you in Christ, in a deepening knowledge of God and his availability to you as his agents in this world? To whom else will God, by his grace, entrust the storehouse of the fullness of God, who fills everything in every way? We’ve got a long way to go! And yet, that is our calling! Let us step forward together in confidence with him!
Such an attitude towards relationships isn’t typical of our age. It is said that Abraham Lincoln was once criticised for his attitude to his enemies. “Why do you try to make friends with them?” a colleague asked. “You should try to destroy them.” To which Lincoln replied, “Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?”

Christ has set us free. When we exercise our Christian freedom in service to others, we will see a transformation in human relationships such as we could never imagine. The principle is not restricted to the three basic human relationships to which Paul refers.

Rights go hand in hand with responsibilities. Christ has set us free. Let’s use our freedom in mutual submission and willing service.

Saved and Included
Reading: Ephesians 2

Some people “make a statement” by putting a bumper-sticker on their car. They may be letting us know their preferences for a republic or a new flag. Or it could be a smart “take-off” of a popular opinion. Or they may be advertising a business or product – or their membership of a community organisation. Sometimes the intention is obvious. At other times...

A few years ago I saw a sticker that said, “Jesus saves, but not on my income.” Is that meant to be smart, corny or what? Is the person taking a Christian catch-phrase and simply commenting on their inadequate income? Is it a statement, “I’m not a Christian myself and I think Christians are rather amusing”?

The word “save” is used commonly enough. We “save” by being careful not to spend all our money. In a different way, the life savers “save” someone in trouble by rescuing them from dangerous seas. The medical staff in an emergency ward may likewise “save” a casualty brought in from a serious accident.

In our common usage, we don’t use the noun “salvation” – that has become an exclusively religious word. The shop doesn’t entice you to make “great salvations” – no, you hope to make “savings”. In spite of their name, the life savers “rescue” rather than “save” people. Even when a medical team “saves” a life, we stick to the verb, not the noun.

Objects of Wrath

Our talk about salvation is against the grim picture of the human situation. There are those today who would prefer us to talk about “affirmation”. Many people, it is true, suffer from low self-esteem – so badly that they can’t function properly. That is a serious, but different, problem. “God doesn’t make junk,” one affirming slogan goes. True enough, but are we – and the world we live in – just the way God made us to be?

Paul describes his readers as having been “dead in your trespasses and sins,” following “the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (i.e. Satan), “graftifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desire and thoughts”... We were “by nature”... – in other words, by the character and manner of our life – we were “objects of wrath.”

God didn’t make junk. But remember what he said about Noah’s generation? In Genesis 6.6-7 we read, “The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them’.” God is the Creator. He has the perfect right to judge and dispose of what he has created.

Our society is in two minds about the issue of punishment and reform of criminals. There should always be hope for reform, but is the sentence fair to the victim? Is it a just punishment? And how are we to handle emotions? On the one hand, we are supposed to
Within Families

Paul goes on to extend the principle of mutual submission to family relationships. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1-2). "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, lest they become discouraged" (v. 4).

This refers to the family situation. We have a continuing obligation to honor father and mother (Ex. 20:12). Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His time for avoiding "teaching" of this commandment (Matt. 15:4-6). Marriage, of course, involves "teaching" each other and "submitting" to each other. "Love one another. As a family, we have to release our children to their new roles and responsibilities.

But, even where slave or master wasn’t a Christian, the other could still apply the principle of freedom and love (Eph. 6:7). So the slaves were saying the Lord. "Do not treat them, since you know that they are chosen, as mere slaves, but as fellow slaves, exercising the same freedom that God gave you." (vv. 9).
Marriage is one of the areas in which this freedom to serve is to be displayed. Paul writes, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, the body of Christ. (v. 22)

But for Paul, marriage is part of God's good creative purpose. He quotes his own words to us. "Not one can serve two masters, for a man will either hate or love. Either you will serve or hate. You can't serve both."

So we hear Paul writing to the Gentile believers: "Therefore, as the Church is made of Christ, so you are made of Christ. (v. 23)"

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

In Marriage

In our marriage, the two will become one flesh. (v. 27) Jesus used the same verse when referring to God's purpose that the marriage relationship be permanent. (Matt. 19:5)

The question of their past - and of the surrounding pagan culture - was such that it seemed not to be married that was an issue in Corinth. (1 Cor. 7) For others also, celibacy seemed a sensible option in view of the prospect of Christ's imminent return.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. (v. 28) What does God mean by marriage? He means that the two become one. - "Wives, submit to your husbands, just as Christ loves the Church and gives himself up for her. (v. 22)

I. Died and rose again as head. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v. 22)"

The Church has always been in danger of becoming just another human institution which seeks approval by responding to the political truth of the time. The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)

Jesus is Lord. He is the Son of God, who has made him Lord, who has given him power over the heavenly and earthly powers. (v. 21)

The Church is called to be the body of Christ making known that Jesus is Lord and his message. By grace and members of God's household. (v. 19) But not only so - we have been made a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (v. 22)
Reading: Ephesians 3

Reading: Ephesians 5.21-6.9

How good are we at keeping a secret?

On 10 December 1948, the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This important document sets out the intention of the international community to ensure certain basic rights and freedoms for every human being on the face of the earth.

The Preamble begins by acknowledging that "recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." The Declaration then goes on to list a series of rights and freedoms that are considered fundamental to human dignity and liberty.

We have heard the end of what has been done, but we begin to face some other issues. Towards the end of the Declaration, we read, "In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are required by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society (Art. 29 [2])."

Can human beings be trusted to be just and fair with personal self-regulation?

Yes, we can expect people to be just and fair when they have a reason to believe it will be to their advantage. But what happens when they don't have a reason? Do we believe that God is trustworthy? God's Open Secret

Alfred, when we were considering Ephesians 1, we came across Paul's reference to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to the put his will into effect when the times shall have reached their fulfillment, God revealing that to the Gentiles (Eph. 1:9-10). In Ephesians 3:18, he speaks of the mystery of God's plan for the church (Eph. 3:10). This mystery is "God's own secret, which he pleased to reveal to the Gentiles, so that the Gentiles might believe - and so that the church might come to its fulfillment, the mystery of Christ, who is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

The mystery of Christ is "God's own secret, which he pleased to reveal to the Gentiles, so that the Gentiles might believe - and so that the church might come to its fulfillment, the mystery of Christ, who is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27)." Paul was writing to the Ephesians to help them understand the mystery of Christ and how it affects their lives.

Mutual Submission

When we consider Ephesians 5:21, we see that God has a plan for our relationship with each other. He wants us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This is a cornerstone of the Christian faith, and it is central to understanding how we live together as God's people.

I believe that God always intended us to be - his service is "perfect freedom."
In the Great Commission, however, the global scope of the mission and gospel is quite clear to us: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:18-20). But how clearly did they understand this? It took time — and a vision — to both Romans centurian Cornelius and Jewish believer Peter (Acts 11:10) and the expressive Peter of Christian Antioch (the first place where believers were called “Christians”) who began reaching out to Gentiles as well as Jews, and he went to Tarsus to find Paul to help teach all these new believers. Not surprisingly, it was also in Antioch that Gentile missions were first recognized. Peter, who had been told to “go and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:19), had been thinking of their own Jewish people. But here in Antioch, the first Christian community outside of Jerusalem, the church was reaching out to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:19-28). So many were converted that Peter was sent to encourage them, and he went to Antioch that Gentile world.

So what is the “mystery”? This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are included in the family of Christ. “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together”, “members together”, “sharers together” (v. 6).

Paul is just amazed — why me? The gift of God’s grace to him has been “to preach to the Gentiles the unspeakable riches of Christ” (v. 8).

In the Fall, not only have humanity and human relationships been broken, but the whole creation has become disjoined. The costly redemptive ministry of Christ aims at restoration — bringing “all things in heaven and earth under one head, even Christ” (1.10).

Prayer for the Family

To the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and earth derives its name” (vv. 14-15). The footnote has “from whom all fatherhood.” There is much broken “fatherhood” in our world. For too many the word “father” evokes painful memories. There are many absent fathers and single-parent families. The Greek word for “family” (oikos) comes from the word “father” (pathe). The divine purpose was always to be the source and model of true fatherhood. His Fatherhood is experienced by the whole family, whether Jew or Gentile. At this point Paul has two particular Prayers for his “strange” (two different words used) which is fully available from the Father’s “glorious riches”.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... (v. 16).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said that the gift of the Holy Spirit is “for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). In the midst of some recent teaching on the Holy Spirit, we have somehow got the impression that there are first-class and second-class Christians. We have needed to understand our inheritance — that the Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in Christ.
Already in chapter 4, we have seen how Paul says we should ‘put off’ our old self and ‘put on’ the new self (4.22-24). To describe this transformation as a change of clothes may make it appear simpler than it is. Perhaps even for ourselves, we may have taken them off, but then still hold on to them for sentimental reasons or ‘just in case.’

When Paul writes about ‘putting off’ our old self, he means getting rid of them. For some that may mean destroying unhelpful CD’s, books or magazines. For others, the termination of unhealthy relationships. Receiving Christ in to our hearts through faith is the foundation of Christian life and the grace of God’s forgiveness, his salvation—a whole new self. We cannot ‘go back’ without suffering the consequences.

So in our ‘life of love,’ there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed. For these are not proper for God’s holy people.

Surprise! Surprise! The secret is out! Come to the party!

But God, ‘affirmed’ us in a cross—‘salvation’—these days. God offers us his love, his grace, his forgiveness, his salvation—a whole new self. We cannot ‘go back’ without suffering the consequences.

That has never been God’s purpose—we know that! If we didn’t know it before, we ought to know it now, because the secret is out! The plan for reconciliation is fulfilled! All are called to repent and believe the good news. The promise is that God will live not just within us, but within our community—and ourselves—the evidence of human brokenness, of self-seeking, of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us. Instead of being divided by teaching about the one given to unite us, we need to live in the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives within us.
Paul is writing to people who have already made that first choice. They have put their trust in Christ as their Savior and Lord. They are “saved by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8). From time to time we receive advertising brochures which, among many other things, promote a Night Scope – a cheaper version of what defence personnel use to see at night without using a light which would alert others to their presence. The technology is clever, but it serves to highlight the fact that human beings are creatures of the light. Blind folk may develop a sort of “sixth sense” which helps compensate for some of their loss. But, in spite of our best efforts, it is a sighted world we inhabit. Paul goes further than that. He writes, “For we are once darkness, but now we are light. Live as children of light” (Eph. 5:8-10).

We belong to the light – spiritually and physically. We are “children of the light” because of the grace of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Light of the world. Having made that first choice, we belong in God’s light. There are no longer “hiding” in our life. They are incompatible in the life of any child of the light.

Our Old Self

That First Choice

We have tended to operate that way as a Church. For example, we can make agreed statements on the Bible without even being aware of our own diversity of understanding. On current issues in the Church, we pick up “politically correct” phrases – unity in diversity – and think to accept one another in love and move forward in diversity. Our unity is real. We are “all one body in Christ. As all work together under the headship of Christ, the body fulfils its proper function and “grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16). It is a unity which flows from the nature of the three-in-one God – one Lord – one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all; It is a unity which is the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells us and builds us together in the peace. But it is a gift to be kept – fostered, maintained (v. 3). Within this oneness which we have received from God’s “glorious grace”, there are a variety of “grace-gifts” that we have received. Notice v. 7. But to each one of us grace has been given different amounts of saving grace. After all, “it is by grace you have been saved, in chapter 2(8). That saving work is quite complete for all who have faith. In chapter 3, Paul wrote of the call to the Gentiles as the “administration” (v. 2) or “gift” riches of Christ (v. 8). Within this one body, there are various gifts, but God has given “some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (v. 11).

Within this one body, there are various gifts, but God has given “some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (v. 11).
Their purpose is to prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ can lead us into sin. It needs to be curbed lest it become an entry point for the devil’s wrong attitudes and motives and becomes far from “righteous.” Even legitimate anger can lead us into sin. It needs to be curbed lest it become an entry point for the devil’s activity (vv. 26-27).

James Kennedy, author of *Evangelism Explosion*, identified the most serious heresy in the Church as “Let spiritual George do it.” Sometimes the clergy have jealously claimed that role for themselves. At other times it is forced on them by the expectations of the people. It was never the Lord’s purpose for the Church, and no church can grow when minister and people operate on that basis. The purpose of full-time ministry is to prepare, equip, and enable all to exercise our own grace-gifts to build up the body until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (v. 13).

The Old and the New

This chapter begins with Paul’s insistence that they “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (v. 1). Now in v. 17 the idea is that “no longer live as Gentiles” (v. 19) does, “in the fullness of their thinking” (v. 20). A life of sensuality and lust is not how they came to know Christ (v. 17). A new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (v. 24).

We are saved. We are forgiven. We are, to use Paul’s words from 2 Cor. 5:17, a new creation in Christ, the old has passed away, the new has come. That is our stance before God because of the redemption work of Christ. But God’s plan of salvation is directed to bring about many practical changes in our lives. That is going to depend on our cooperation.

Too easily we accept the wrong “ment” of our lives as what we have always been and will always be. But God expects us to “put off” the old — to put it of in repentance, to put it off in trusting faith to say to God, “I know this part of my life isn’t as I mean it to be. By the continuing work of God’s Holy Spirit, I want it to be renewed in my heart. To put it off in my life. By your grace, enable me to be renewed in my heart and to put off the old I want to put off.”

But God expects us to “put on” the new — to put it on in repentance, to put it on in trusting faith to say to God, “I know this part of my life isn’t as I mean it to be. By the continuing work of God’s Holy Spirit, I want it to be renewed in my heart. To put it on in my life. By your grace, enable me to be renewed in my heart and to put on the new I want to put on.”

But God expects us to trust in the Spirit to help us both. We need the cooperation of the Holy Spirit to put off sin and to put on the new. Paul goes on to spell out some of the practical implications — but don’t let yourself off lightly if your own particular “besetting sin” isn’t in this list!

Falsehood must be replaced with truthfulness (v. 25). On the other hand, relationships sometimes break down because of our perceived right to “speak out the truth.” There certainly can be “righteous anger” — such as Jesus exercised in driving the money-changers and traders out of the Temple. But human anger is so often twisted by motives and actions that we need to be wary of the Spirit’s and to other people’s anger.