

FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!

***Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound:
Letters from Prison
(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon,
then later, Philippians)***

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

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A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

II. Inappropriate Methods

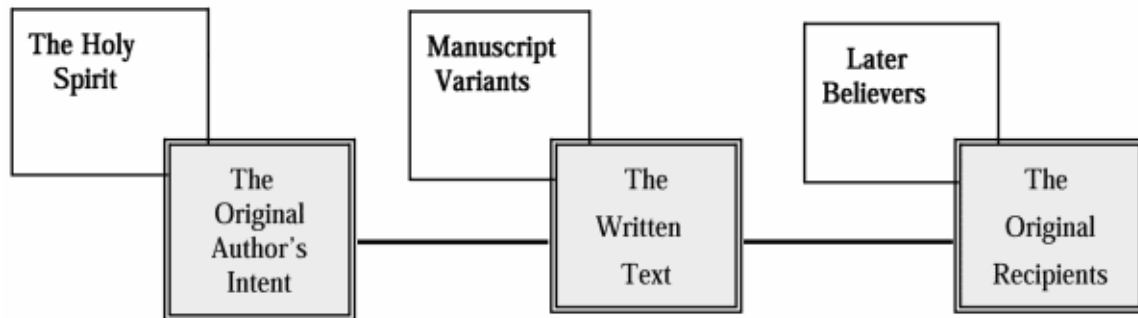
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
 - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - (1) Old Testament
 - a) Hebrew narrative
 - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - d) Law codes
 - (2) New Testament
 - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - b) Parables (Gospels)
 - c) Letters/epistles
 - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - (1) the author
 - (2) the date
 - (3) the recipients
 - (4) the specific reason for writing
 - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - (6) references to historical people and events
 - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
 - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - (3) contrasting concepts
 - c. List the following items
 - (1) significant terms
 - (2) unusual terms
 - (3) important grammatical structures
 - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances

- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - (1) study Bibles
 - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - (3) Bible introductions
 - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible Interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

VI. This Commentary's Method

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
 - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
 - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - a. literary context
 - b. historical, cultural insights
 - c. grammatical information
 - d. word studies
 - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 - a. manuscript variations
 - b. alternate word meanings
 - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
 - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Passing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Thank God for the heretics at Colossae; because of them Paul wrote this powerful letter. Remember that to understand the book, we must relate it to its historical setting. Paul's letters are called "occasional documents" because he was addressing local problems with universal gospel truths. The heresy at Colossae was an unusual mixture of Greek philosophy (Gnosticism) and Judaism.
- B. The cosmic Lordship of Jesus (or to put it another way, Jesus as creator, redeemer, and Lord of all creation and its implications for Christian living) is the central theme (cf. Col. 1:15-17). The Christology of this book is unsurpassed! Colossians forms the basic outline for Ephesians. Paul knew the heresy would spread in Asia minor. Colossians attacks the false teachings while Ephesians develops its central themes to prepare other churches for the coming heresy. The emphasis of Colossians is Christological while the emphasis of Ephesians is the unity of all things in Christ, who is Lord of all things.
- C. Paul refutes legalism, both Jewish and Greek, in very powerful terms (Col. 2:6-23). Taking this letter as a model, one wonders how Paul would address modern heresies. He surely would have engaged them!

THE CITY

- A. Originally the city of Colossae was part of the kingdom of Pergamum within Phrygia. In 133 b.c. it was given to the senate of Rome.
- B. Colossae was a large commercial center before Paul's day (cf. Heroditus' *Histories* VII:30 and Xenophon *Anabasis* 1:2:6).
1. The valley in which Colossae was located was the ancient Mediterranean world's leading producer of wool, especially black wool, and dyed wool, purple and scarlet. The volcanic soil produced excellent pasture land and the chalky water aided the dyeing process (Strabo, 13:4:14).
 2. Volcanic activity (Strabo, 12:8:6) caused the city to be destroyed several times in its history; the latest time being a.d. 60 (Tacitus) or a.d. 64 (Eusebius).
- C. Colossae was located on the Lycus River, a tributary of the Maeander River which ran by Ephesus, 100 miles downstream. In this one valley were several small cities where Epaphras started churches: Hierapolis (6 miles away) and Laodicea (10 miles away, cf. Col. 1:2; 2:1; 4:13, 15-16) and Colossae.
- D. After the Romans built their major east-west highway, *Via Ignatia*, which bypassed Colossae, it dwindled to almost nothing (Strabo). This was similar to what happened to Petra in the Trans-Jordan area of Palestine.
- E. The city was made up mostly of Gentiles (Phrygians and Greek settlers), but there were numerous Jews also. Josephus tells us that Antiochus III (223-187 b.c.) transported 2,000 Jews from Babylon to Colossae. Records show that by a.d. 76 11,000 Jewish males lived in the district of which Colossae was the capital.

AUTHOR

- A. There are two senders, Paul and Timothy (cf. Col. 1:1). However, the main author is Paul; Timothy was sending his greeting as Paul's co-worker and possibly his scribe (*amanuensis*).
- B. The ancient literature is unanimous that Paul the Apostle was the author:
 1. Marcion (who came to Rome in a.d. 140's), the anti-Old Testament heretic, included it in his Pauline corpus.
 2. It was listed with Paul's letters in the Muratorian Canon (a list of canonical books from Rome around a.d. 180-200)
 3. Several early church fathers quote from it and identify Paul as author
 - a. Irenaeus (wrote a.d. 177-190)
 - b. Clement of Alexandria (lived a.d. 160-216)

THE LITERARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

- A. The historical relationship between these two prison letters follows this outline
 1. Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 1:23) was converted during Paul's Ephesian Campaign (Acts 19).
 - a. Epaphras took his new-found faith back to his home area, the Lycus River valley (cf. Col. 4:12).
 - b. Epaphras started three churches: Hierapolis, Laodicea (cf. Col. 4:13), and Colossae.
 - c. Epaphras asked Paul for advice on how to combat this merging of Christianity, Judaism, and Greek thought, which the heretics were teaching. Paul was imprisoned (cf. Col. 4:3,18) at Rome (early 60s).
 2. False teachers advocated Greek metaphysics
 - a. Spirit and matter were co-eternal
 - b. Spirit (God) was good
 - c. Matter (creation) was evil
 - d. A series of *aeons* (angelic levels), especially in the writings of the Valentinians, existed between a good high God and a lesser god who formed matter
 - e. Salvation was based on knowledge of secret passwords which helped people progress through the angelic levels (*aeons*) to the high good God
- B. The literary relationship between Paul's two letters
 1. Paul heard of the heresy in these churches which he had never personally visited (cf. Col. 1:7-8).
 2. Paul wrote a hard-hitting letter in short, emotional sentences, directed at the false teachers. The central theme was the cosmic lordship of Jesus. This is known as Paul's letter to the Colossians.
 3. Apparently, soon after writing Colossians, with time on his hands in prison, he developed the themes in the letter we know as Ephesians. He knew that this attempt to merge Greek thought and the gospel for the purpose of making Christianity "relevant" to Greek culture would spread to all the new churches in Asia Minor. Ephesians is characterized by long sentences and developed theological concepts (Col. 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-10, 14-18, 19-22; 3:1-12, 14-19; 4:11-16; 6:13-20). It takes Colossians as a starting point and draws out its theological implications. Its central theme is the unity of all things in Christ, which is a contrast to the *aeons* (angelic levels) of incipient Gnosticism.
- C. Related literary and theological structure
 1. The basic structure
 - a. They have very similar openings
 - b. They each have a doctrinal section dealing primarily with Christ

- c. Each has a practical section which emphasizes Christian lifestyle using the same categories, terms, and phrases
- d. They have virtually identical closing verses. In Greek they share 29 consecutive words; Colossians adds only two additional words ("and fellow bond slave"). Compare Eph. 6:21-22 with Col. 4:7-9.

2. Exact words or short phrases

Eph. 1:1c and Col. 1:2a	"faithful"
Eph. 1:4 and Col. 1:22	"holy and blameless"
Eph. 1:7 and Col. 1:14	"redemption. . .forgiveness"
Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20	"all things. . .heaven. . .earth"
Eph. 1:15 and Col. 1:3-4	"heard. . .love for all the saints"
Eph. 1:18 and Col. 1:27	"the riches of the glory"
Eph. 1:27 and Col. 1:18	"head. . .church"
Eph. 2:1 and Col. 1:13	"you were dead"
Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20	"reconcile. . .cross"
Eph. 3:2 and Col. 1:25	"stewardship"
Eph. 3:3 and Col. 1:26,27	"mystery"
Eph. 4:3 and Col. 3:14	"unity"
Eph. 4:15 and Col. 2:19	"head" and "grow"
Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10, 12, 14	"put on . . ."
Eph. 4:31 and Col. 3:8	"anger" "wrath" "malice"
Eph. 5:3 and Col. 3:5	"slander"
Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5	"immorality" "impurity" "greed"
Eph. 5:6 and Col. 3:6	"idolatry" (coveting)
Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5	"the wrath of God"
	"making the most of the time"

3. Exact phrases or sentences

- Eph. 1:1a and Col. 1:1a
- Eph. 1:1b and Col. 1:2a
- Eph. 1:2a and Col. 1:2b
- Eph. 1:13 and Col. 1:5
- Eph. 2:1 and Col. 2:13
- Eph. 2:5b and Col. 2:13c
- Eph. 4:1b and Col. 1:10a
- Eph. 6:21,22 and Col. 4:7-9 (29 consecutive words except for "kai syndoulos" in Colossians)

4. Similar phrases or sentences

- Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:16
- Eph. 2:1 and Col. 1:13
- Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20
- Eph. 3:7a and Col. 1:23d, 25a
- Eph. 3:8 and Col. 1:27
- Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:12
- Eph. 4:29 and Col. 3:8; 4:6
- Eph. 5:15 and Col. 4:5
- Eph. 5:19,20 and Col. 3:16

5. Theologically synonymous concepts

- Eph. 1:3 and Col. 1:3

Eph. 2:1,12 and Col.
1:21
Eph. 2:15 and Col.
2:14
Eph. 4:1 and Col 1:10 a prayer of thanks
Eph. 4:15 and Col. alienation from God
2:19 hostility of Law
Eph. 4:19 and Col. 3:5 worthy walk
Eph.4:22,31 and Col. Christ's body growing to maturity from
3:8 its Head
Eph.4:32 and Col. sexual impurity
3:12-13 "lay aside" sins
Eph. 5:4 and Col. 3:8 Christians kind to one another
Eph. 5:18 and Col. Christian speech
3:16 filling of Spirit = word of Christ
Eph. 5:20 and Col. thanksgiving to God for all things
3:17 wives be subject to husbands
Eph. 5:22 and Col. husbands love your wives
3:18 children obey your parents
Eph. 5:25 and Col. fathers do not provoke children
3:19 slaves obey masters
Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 masters and slaves
Eph. 6:4 and Col. Paul's request for prayer
3:21
Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22
Eph. 6:9 and Col. 4:1
Eph. 6:18 and Col.
4:2-4

6. Terms and phrases used in both Colossians and Ephesians which are not found in other Pauline literature

a. "fullness" (which was the Gnostic term for the angelic levels)

	"the fullness of Him who fills all in all"
Eph. 1:23	"be filled up to all the fullness of God"
Eph. 3:19	"to the fullness of Christ"
Eph. 4:13	"for all the fullness to dwell in Him"
Col. 1:19	"for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells"
Col. 2:9	

b. Christ as "Head" of the church

Eph. 4:15; 5:23 and Col. 1:18; 2:19

c. "alienated"

Eph. 2:12; 4:18 and Col. 1:21

d. "redeeming the time"

Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5

e. "rooted"

Eph. 3:17 and Col. 1:5

f. "the word of truth, the gospel"

Eph. 1:13 and Col. 1:5

g. "forbearing"

Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:13

h. unusual phrasing and terms ("held together," "supply")

Eph. 4:16 and Col. 2:19

D. Summary

1. Over one third of the words in Colossians are also in Ephesians. It has been estimated that 75 of the 155 verses in Ephesians have a parallel in Colossians. Both claim Paul's authorship while in prison.
2. Both were delivered by Paul's friend Tychicus.
3. Both were sent to the same area (Asia Minor).
4. Both deal with the same Christological topic.
5. Both emphasize Christ as Head of the church.
6. Both encourage Christian living.

E. Major Points of Dissimilarity

1. The church is always local in Colossians but universal in Ephesians. This may be because of the circular nature of Ephesians.
2. Heresy, which is such a prominent feature of Colossians, is totally absent in Ephesians. However, both letters use characteristic Gnostic terms ("wisdom," "knowledge," "fullness," "mystery," "principalities and powers" and "stewardship").
3. The Second Coming is immediate in Colossians but delayed in Ephesians. The church was, and is, called to serve in a fallen world (Col. 2:7; 3:21; 4:13).
4. Several characteristically Pauline terms are used differently. One example is the term "mystery." In Colossians the mystery is Christ (Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3), but in Ephesians (Col. 1:9; 5:32) it is God's previously hidden, but now revealed, plan for the unity of Gentiles and Jews.
5. Ephesians has several Old Testament allusions (Eph. 1:22 -- Ps. 8; Eph. 2:17-- Isa. 57:19) (Eph. 2:20 -- Ps. 118:22) (Eph. 4:8 -- Ps. 68:18) (Eph. 4:26 -- Ps. 4:4) Eph. 5:15 -- Isa. 26:19, 51:17, 52:1, 60:1) (Eph. 5:31 -- Gen. 2:24) (Eph. 6:2-3 -- Exod. 20:12) (Eph. 6:14 -- Isa. 11:5, 59:17) (Eph. 6:15 -- Isa. 52:7) but there are only one or two in Colossians, Col. 2:3 -- Isa. 11:2, and possibly Col. 2:22 -- Isa. 29:13.

F. Though very similar in words, phrases, and often outline, the letters also include unique concepts:

1. The Trinitarian blessing of grace, Eph. 1:3-14
2. The grace passage, Eph. 2:1-10
3. The merging of Jews and Gentiles into one new body, Eph. 2:11-3:13
4. The unity and giftedness of the body of Christ, Eph. 4:1-16
5. "Christ and the church" as the pattern for "husband and wife," Eph. 5:22-33
6. The spiritual warfare passage, Eph. 6:10-18
7. The Christological passage, Col. 1:13-18
8. Human religious rituals and rules, Col. 2:16-23
9. The theme of the cosmic significance in Christ in Colossians versus the theme of the unity of all things in Christ in Ephesians.

G. In conclusion, it seems best to follow A. T. Robertson and F. F. Bruce in asserting that Paul wrote both letters in close proximity and developed the thoughts of Colossians into his capstone presentation of truth, Ephesians.

DATE

A. The date of Colossians is linked to one of Paul's imprisonments (Ephesus, Philippi, Caesarea, or

Rome). A Roman imprisonment best fits the facts of Acts.

- B. Once Rome is assumed to be the place of imprisonment, the question arises-which time? Acts records that Paul was imprisoned in the early 60's. However, he was released and wrote the Pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) and was then rearrested and killed before June 9, a.d. 68 (the date of Nero's suicide), probably in a.d. 67.
- C. The best educated guess for the writing of Colossians (Ephesians and Philemon) is Paul's first imprisonment, in the early 60's. (Philippians was the last of the prison letters, probably written toward the mid 60s.)
- D. Tychicus, along with Onesimus, probably took the letters of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon to Asia Minor. Later, possibly several years later, Epaphroditus, recovered from his physical illness, took the letter of Philippians back to his home church.
- E. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations.

	<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7-10	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60's	Rome	
	Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11-13	Fourth Missionary Journey		Ephesus (?)	
	1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
	Titus	63 but before		
	2 Timothy	64 a.d. 68)	Rome	

RECIPIENTS AND OCCASION

- A. The church was apparently started by Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:7,8; 2:1; 4:12-13), who was probably converted by Paul at Ephesus (cf. Col. 1:7-8 and compare Col. 2:1). It was mostly made up of Gentiles (cf. Col. 1:21; 3:7). Epaphras came to Paul in prison to report a problem with false teachers who taught a mixture of Christianity with Greek philosophy called Gnosticism (Col. 2:8) and Jewish legalism (cf. Jewish elements, Col. 2:11, 16, 17; 3:11; angel worship, Col. 1:16; 2:15, 18 and asceticism Col. 2:20-23). There was a very large Jewish community in Colossae which had become very Hellenistic. The essence of the problem centered around the person and work of Christ. The Gnostics denied that Jesus was fully man but affirmed that He was fully divine because of their eternal antagonistic dualism between matter and spirit. They would affirm His Deity but deny His humanity. They also denied His mediatorial preeminence. For them there were many angelic levels (*aeons*) between a good high god and humanity; Jesus, even though the highest, was only

one of the gods. They also tended to be intellectually elite (cf. Col. 3:11, 14, 16, 17) and emphasized a special exclusive secret knowledge (cf. Col. 2:15, 18, 19) as the path to God instead of Jesus' atoning, vicarious sacrifice and mankind's repentant faith response to His free offer of forgiveness.

- B. Because of this theological, philosophical atmosphere, the book of Colossians emphasizes
1. The uniqueness of the person of Christ and His finished work of salvation.
 2. The cosmological ownership, reign and significance of Jesus of Nazareth - His birth, His teachings, His life, His death, His resurrection and His ascension! He is Lord of all!

PURPOSE

Paul's purpose was to refute the Colossian heresy. To accomplish this goal, he exalted Christ as

1. the very image of God (Col. 1:15) the Creator (Col. 1:16)
2. the preexistent sustainer of all things (Col. 1:17)
3. the head of the church (Col. 1:18)
4. the first to be resurrected (Col. 1:18)
5. the fullness of deity in bodily form (Col. 1:19, 2:9)
6. the reconciler between God and mankind (Col. 1:20-22)

Thus, Christ was completely adequate. Paul uses the title "Christ" 25 times in this short book! Believers "have been given fullness in Christ" (Col. 2:10). The Colossian heresy was completely theologically inadequate to provide spiritual salvation. It was a hollow and deceptive philosophy (Col. 2:8), lacking any ability to restrain the old sinful nature (Col. 2:23).

A recurring theme in Colossians is the complete adequacy of Christ as contrasted with the emptiness of mere human philosophy. This adequacy is expressed in the cosmic Lordship of Jesus. He is owner, creator and sovereign over all things, visible and invisible (cf. Col. 1:15-18).

OUTLINE

- A. Traditional Pauline openings
1. Identification with sender, Col. 1:1
 2. Identification with recipients, Col. 1:2a
 3. Greetings, Col. 1:2b
- B. The Supremacy of Christ (topics 1-10 taken from NKJV paragraph outline)
1. Faith in Christ, Col. 1:3-8
 2. The Preeminence of Christ, Col. 1:9-18
 3. Reconciliation in Christ, Col. 1:19-23
 4. Sacrificial service for Christ, Col. 1:24-29
 5. Not philosophy, but Christ, Col. 2:1-10
 6. Not legalism, but Christ, Col. 2:11-23
 7. Not carnality, but Christ, Col. 3:1-11
 8. Put on Christ, Col. 3:12-17
 9. Let Christ affect your home, Col. 3:19-4:1
 10. Let Christ affect your daily life, Col. 4:2-6
- C. Paul's messengers, Col. 4:7-9
- D. Paul's friends send their greetings, Col. 4:10-14
- E. Paul sends greetings, Col. 4:15-17

F. Paul's closing in his own hand, Col. 4:18

GNOSTICISM

- A. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (Dead Sea Scrolls).
- B. The problem at Colossae was a hybrid of Christianity, incipient Gnosticism, and legalistic Judaism.
- C. Some stated tenets of Valentinian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century:
1. Matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter.
 2. There are emanations (*aeons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the Old Testament who formed the universe (*kosmos*).
 3. Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be divine. He just appeared human, but was really a spirit (cf. 1 John 1:1-3; 4:1-6).
 4. Salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by certain persons of the group. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.
- D. The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems:
1. For some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*aeons*).
 2. For others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. In this book, the false teachers emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as an evidence of true spirituality (cf. Col. 2:16-23).
- E. Some good reference materials:
- The Gnostic Religion* by Hans Jonas, published by Beacon Press
 - The Gnostic Scriptures* by Bentley Layton, Anchor Bible Reference Library
 - The Dictionary of New Testament Background*, IVP, "Gnosticism" pp. 414-417

READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words (reading cycle #1).

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects (reading cycle #2) and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

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COLOSSIANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-2	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1-2
	1:2a	1:2a	1:2a	
	1:2b	1:2b	1:2b	
Paul Thanks God for the Colossians	Their Faith in Christ	Thanksgiving and Intercession	Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving and Prayer
1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8
The Person and Work of Christ	Preeminence of Christ			
1:9-20	1:9-18	1:9-14	1:9-14	1:9-12 1:13-14
		The Supremacy of Christ	The Person and Work of Christ	Christ is the Head of all Creation
	Reconciled in Christ	1:15-20	1:15-20	1:15-20
	1:19-23			The Colossians Have Their Share in Salvation
1:21-23		1:21-23	1:21-23	1:21-23
Paul's Ministry to the Church	Sacrificial Service for Christ	Paul's Interest in the Colossians	Paul's Work as a Servant of the Church	Paul's Labors in the Service of the Gentiles
		(1:24-2:7)	(1:24-2:5)	
1:24-2:5	1:24-29	1:24-2:5	1:24-2:3	1:24-29

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:1-2

¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are at Colossae*: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

1:1 "Paul" Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" (Jews living outside Palestine) had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly

1. others began to call him by this name
2. he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least"

The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name.

1. the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eyebrowed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*
2. passages where Paul calls himself "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)

Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this is somewhat unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

■ **"an apostle"** This came from the Greek word "to send" (*apostellō*). Jesus chose twelve men to be with Him in a special sense and called them "Apostles" (cf. Luke 6:13). This term was often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36, 37, 38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). In Jewish sources, an apostle was someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to "ambassador" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)

■ **"Christ"** This was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "*messiah*," which meant "an anointed one." It implied "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets, were anointed. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

■ **"Jesus"** This Hebrew name meant "YHWH saves," "YHWH is salvation," "YHWH brings salvation." It is the same as the OT name "Joshua." "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, "*hosea*," suffixed to the covenant name for God, "YHWH" (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Col. 1:3). It was

the name designated by God through an angel of the Lord (cf. Matt. 1:21).

■ **"by God's will"** This same introductory phrase is used in 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1 and 2 Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling started at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 23:3-16; 26:9-18). This opening phrase emphasizes Paul's understanding of his God-given authority. See Special Topic: The Will of God at Eph. 1:9.

■ **"Timothy our brother "** Timothy's name meant "honored by God" or "honor of God." He had a Jewish mother (cf. Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:1). He was converted on Paul's first missionary journey to Derbe/Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1). Paul invited him to join the missionary team on the second missionary journey, possibly to replace John Mark (cf. Acts 15:36-41). Paul circumcised him in order to facilitate his work among the Jews (cf. Acts. 16:3). He became Paul's faithful representative, disciple and trouble-shooter (cf. Acts 16:1-17:14; 18:5-19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil 1:2; 2:19; Gal. 1:1; Philem. Col. 1:4; and I and 2 Timothy).

He is mentioned with Paul in several letters (cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1 and Philemon). This does not imply co-authorship, but Timothy's presence and greetings. Timothy may have functioned as Paul's scribe, as did Silas and Tychicus.

1:2 "the saints" "Saints" (*hagioi*) is theologically related to the OT term "holy" (*kadosh*), which implies "set apart for God's service" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). It is plural in the NT except for one time in Phil. 4:21; even there, it is used in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, a family of believers, which we are meant to serve (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Rom. 4 and 2 Cor. 5:21). It is God's will that they live holy lives (cf. Col. 1:22; 3:12; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:1; 5:27; 1 Pet. 1:16). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to a lifestyle of holiness (progressive sanctification). See Special Topic: Sanctification at Eph. 1:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

■ **"faithful brethren"** In a book written to combat a heretical group of false teachers, this qualification is significant! Paul believed that the church was remaining faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, given to Paul, given to Epaphras, given to them!

The words, "faith," "trust" and "believe" all have the same Greek root *pistis* (noun) and *pisteuō* (verb). The word's primary emphasis is on the trustworthiness of God, not the enthusiasm or sincerity of a human response. Believers must receive and trust in His trustworthy character and eternal promises. The key is the object of the believer's faith, not the intensity of that faith (cf. Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6). Christianity is an initial, repentant/faith response followed by a lifestyle of faithfulness. Biblical faith is a series of human choices—repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. God's faithfulness is reproduced in His children. The image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is restored and intimate fellowship is again possible!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Faith, Believe, or Trust (*Pistis* [noun], *Pisteuō*, [verb], *Pistos* [adjective])

■ **"in Christ"** This is a grammatical construction called a locative (of sphere). This was Paul's favorite way to describe Christians. As believers we live and move and have our being in Him (cf. Acts 17:28)! He is the origin and source of all spiritual blessings. Paul uses this phrase 64 times ("in Christ," "in Him," "in the Beloved"). See full note at Eph. 1:4.

■ **"Grace to you and peace"** The normal salutation in Greek letters was the word "greeting" (*charein*, cf. Acts 15:23; 23:36; James 1:1). Paul characteristically changed this to a very similar sounding but Christian term, grace, (*charis*). Many have assumed that Paul was somehow combining the Greek greeting and the Hebrew greeting, peace (*shalom*). Although this is an attractive theory, it may be reading too much into this typically Pauline introductory phrase (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; and Philemon 3).

"Grace" was the special word which described the loving, merciful character of God. Humans are right with God because of who He is, not because of who they are. It is God's kind, generous, loving, forgiving,

slow to anger, abounding in compassion mercy that forms the only hope for fallen mankind (cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-14; Joel 2:13; Mic. 6:18-20)! Christianity is rooted in the unchanging character of God (cf. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17), the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21) and the ministry of the Spirit (cf. John 14:25-26; 16:7-15).

"Peace" is the result of understanding the character of God and the promises of the gospel (cf. John 14:27; 16:33). Peace is an internal joy and stability apart from circumstances, disruptive false teachings or persecution (cf. Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15).

■ **"God our Father"** This reading is found in ancient Greek uncial manuscripts B, D, K, L, the ancient Vulgate, Peshitta and Coptic translations and the Greek texts used by Origen and Chrysostom. The manuscripts κ , A, C, G add "and our Lord Jesus Christ." The phrase is present in Col. 1:3. It was Paul's normal phrasing in opening prayers (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2 and Titus 1:4). The UBS⁴ gives the shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).

"Father" is not used in the sense of sexual generation or chronological sequence, but intimate family relationship. God chose family terms to reveal Himself to humanity (cf. Hosea 2-3, where God is shown as passionate, faithful lover, and chapter 11 where He is shown as loving father and mother).

The Deity of revelation is not the Prime Mover or the First Cause of Greek philosophy, but the Father of Christ Jesus. The Bible is not a human-reasoned philosophy but a Divine self-disclosure, a revelation which cannot be discovered by human analysis.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

³We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard of *it* and understood the grace of God in truth; ⁷just as you learned *it* from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

1:3-8 Verses 3-8 are one sentence in Greek which means they are one sustained prayer of thanksgiving for the church's faith in Christ. Opening prayers of thanksgiving for the recipients was common in Greek letters. In this letter Paul has two opening prayers (i.e., Col. 1:3-8 and Col. 1:9-14).

1:3 "thanks" "Thanks" is a recurrent theme in this letter (cf. Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15; 4:2), as "joy" is in the letter to the Philippians. Remember that Paul was imprisoned at Rome and the church at Colossae was undergoing difficult times. See Special Topic: Thanksgiving at Col. 4:2.

■ **"God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"** Notice the Trinity in Col. 1:3 and 8. See Special Topic at Eph. 1:3.

■ **"Lord"** The term "lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a specific theological sense. It can mean "mister," "sir" (cf. John 4:11,15,19,49; 5:7; 12:21; 20:15), "master," "owner," "husband," or "the full God-man" (e.g., John 4:1; 6:34,68; 11:2,3,12,21,27,34,39). Good examples of both usages in one context is John 9:36 and 9:38.

The OT usage of this term (*adon*) came from the rabbis' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7, Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the

Hebrew word, *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word, *Kurios* (Lord).

The NT authors used this term to describe the full Deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

■ **"praying always for you"** "Always" can relate grammatically to "pray" (NASB, NKJV, NJB) or "thank" (NRSV, TEV). Prayer and thanksgiving are inseparably linked in Paul's theology and practice. Paul prayed for them (cf. Col. 1:9; Eph. 1:16) and requested that they pray for him (cf. Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:25). See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3. Paul mentions this again in Col. 1:9. There seems to be two prayers put together.

1:4 "since we heard" The plural pronoun referred to Paul and his mission team. They had heard about the problems of the false teachers and the faith of the believers from Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:7,8) who founded this church.

1:4-5 "faith . . . love . . . hope" This was a favorite triad of Paul's theology (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8). It expresses the confidence that believers have both now (faith) and in a certain future consummation (hope). This confidence is to be lived out daily in love.

1:4 "your faith" This term (*pistis*) may have three distinct connotations.

1. Its OT background meant "faithfulness" or "trustworthiness," therefore, it was used of believers living godly lives.
2. It was used of believers accepting or receiving God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ.
3. It was used in the collective sense of the Christian doctrine or truths about Jesus (i.e., "the faith," cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 1:3, 20).

In several passages it is difficult to determine which is meant. See Special Topic: Faith, Believe, Trust at Col. 1:2.

■ **"in Christ Jesus"** The usual preposition Paul used for faith was "into" (*eis*) Christ, which spoke of Him as the object of one's faith, but here the preposition is "in" (*en*) which referred to Jesus as the sphere of existence (cf. Col. 1:2; Acts 17:28).

■ **"the love which you have for all the saints"** Faith toward God is expressed in love toward others, especially those of the household of faith (cf. Gal. 6:10). The use of the word "all" is significant in a setting disrupted by the exclusivism of the false teachers. Believers must be able to distinguish between who are saints and who are not! For "saints" see Special Topic at Col. 1:2.

1:5 "the hope" Paul used this term in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. Hope was often associated with "faith" and "love" (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

■ **"laid up for you in heaven"** This was a metaphor for the divine protection of the believers' hope (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4).

The false teachers could not affect the believers' consummated salvation (hope).

■ **"you previously heard"** This is an aorist active indicative of a compound term, "to hear" and "before." This referred to Epaphras' preaching of the gospel, to which the Colossians had already personally responded by faith. Believers must hear, respond, obey, and persevere.

■ **"in the word of truth, the gospel"** This phrase can be understood in several ways.

1. instrumentally they heard the truth by means of the gospel
2. temporally they had heard the gospel
3. appositionally as a way of identifying the gospel as the truthful word

Notice how in Col. 1:6 the gospel is characterized as "the grace of God in truth." See Special Topic: Truth in Paul's Writings at Eph. 1:13.

1:6 "in all the world" This referred to the Greco-Roman world. This was a common NT overstatement (hyperbole), which because of Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8, became a reality.

The Greek term (*kosmos*) had several usages. It could refer to

1. this physical planet
2. humanity that inhabits the surface of this planet
3. the philosophies, governmental structures, educational institutions and religious systems of fallen mankind which allow them to function in independence from God

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF KOSMOS (WORLD)

■ **"constantly bearing fruit and increasing"** These are both present participles. The first is middle voice and the second passive but in this context there is no theological distinction implied, but it does illustrate the covenant balance of human and divine actions. Bearing fruit is the sign of regeneration (cf. Col. 1:10; Matt. 13:1-23; John 15:16; Gal. 5:22-23; James 2:14-26).

NASB	"understood"
NKJV	"knew"
NRSV	"comprehend"
TEV	"came to know"
NJB	"recognized"

This is an intensified Aorist active indicative form of the Greek term *epignōskō* which implies "to fully and experientially know." The Colossians received the gospel which is both a person and a truth (combining the meaning of "know" from Hebrew and Greek). This was Paul's reaction to the heretics' false emphasis on human knowledge (cf. Col. 1:9, 10).

■ **"the grace of God in truth"** This refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which finally and fully expresses the nature and character of deity to the human race. Believers' ultimate hope is in the unchanging, merciful character of God (i.e., Mal. 3:6).

The Greek word "grace" (*charis*) was used in Koine Greek (200 b.c.-a.d. 200) and the Septuagint (250-100 b.c.) in several different senses-charm, beauty, gracefulness, a matter of approval, a benefit, an act of favor, or a provision. In the NT it was primarily used of the undeserved, unmerited love and mercy of the triune God which gives righteousness and restores fellowship to fallen mankind (cf. Eph. 4:4-7). The emphasis was always on the worth of the giver (God), not the receiver (mankind). All that was needed God has provided! All that the individual can do is respond (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)!

For "truth" see Special Topic: "Truth" in Paul's Writings at Eph. 1:13.

1:7 "Epaphras" (cf. Col. 4:12-13; Philemon 23). He was the founder of three of the churches (Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) in the Lycus River Valley, and Paul's representative (cf. Col. 1:7). He was probably converted during Paul's stay at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). His name was a shortened form of Epaphroditus which was etymologically related to the goddess Aphroditus. Another man by this same name is mentioned in Phil. 2:25; 4:18. However, he was from a different geographical area.

NASB	"a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf"
NKJV, NRSV	"of a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf"

TEV
NJB

"Christ's faithful worker on our behalf"

"A trustworthy deputy for us as Christ's servant"

The ancient Greek manuscripts vary on the pronouns. Some have "our" and others have "your." "Our" seems textually best because it is found in the early Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, κ*, A, B, D*, F, and G. But the United Bible Society's scholars felt "your" was original because of its place in the early church fathers' and the early Latin, Aramaic, and Coptic translations (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 619-620).

1:8 "your love in the Spirit" This is, surprisingly, the only specific reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter although He is, perhaps, alluded to in "filled" in Col. 1:9 and "indwell" in Col. 3:16. The object of the Spirit-engendered love may be

1. other believers
2. Paul and his mission team
3. Epaphras
4. all the above and even the lost

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

⁹For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1:9-20 This is one sentence in Greek. Col. 1:9-12 is Paul's prayer for these believers. Col. 1:13-14 describes what the Father has done for believers through the Son. Verses 15-18 are possibly a quote from an early Christian hymn or confessional statement related to the ministry of the Son (i.e., other possible hymns, cf. Phil. 2:6-11, 1 Tim. 3:16, 2 Tim, 2:11-12). This is one of the greatest Christological confession in Paul's writings (compare with Phil. 2:6-11).

1:9 "heard of it" Paul did not start this church, nor did he know its members personally. He heard about their faith and love from its founder, Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:7-8).

▣ **"we have not ceased to pray for you"** The plural refers to (1) Paul himself (i.e., editorial plural) or (2) Paul and his mission team. Leaders should constantly hold up their flocks to the Lord. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3.

▣ **"that you may be filled"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. Believers cannot fill themselves, but they must allow and co-operate with the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18).

"Filled" is the main verb of Col. 1:9-12. It is the first of two requests that Paul made of the Father on behalf of the Colossian believers. The other is for their walk to be worthy (Col. 1:10). Notice he links knowledge of God with a godly lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:14-26).

▣ **"knowledge of His will"** The content of this knowledge (*epignōskō*, i.e., experiential knowledge, cf. v.6) is the gospel. The gospel is (1) a body of truth to be believed; (2) a person to be received; and (3) a life like that person's to live. God's will is that individuals personally respond to Christ (cf. John 6:29,40) who is

the goal of all "spiritual wisdom and understanding."

This verse is a play on the theology of the false teachers. This is confirmed by (1) Paul's use of "filled" (*plerōma*), one of the Gnostics' favorite terms for the aeons between the high god and angelic levels and (2) their emphasis on secret knowledge (cf. Col. 2:3). For Paul, all fullness and knowledge was in Christ, who was God's wisdom (*sophia*, cf. Col. 1:28; 2:3,23; 3:16; 4:5; Eph. 1:8,17; 3:10) and the convergence of all truth (*sunesis*, cf. Col. 2:2).

Notice the threefold repetition: "knowledge," "wisdom," and "understanding." This reflects the false teachers' emphasis on secret truth (cf. Col. 2:3). Christ is the truth of God (cf. John 14:6)!

1:10 "walk in a manner worthy" This is an aorist active infinitive. It is defined by four present participles (cf. Col. 1:10-12) which describes the worthy walk (cf. Col. 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; Eph. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1). God's will is that His children reflect His character daily.

■ **"bearing fruit in every good work"** For "fruit bearing" see note at Col. 1:6. This is the first of four present participles (cf. Col. 1:10-12) which describe worthy lives.

God's will is that believers live godly lives. The moral transformation of believers is evidence that the image of God has been restored! It serves as a bridge to evangelism. It reflects the believer's new family characteristics and shows who our true father is - God.

Biblical salvation is a free gift, which must result in a new and different life (cf. Eph. 2:8-9, 10).

■ **"increasing in the knowledge of God"** This is the second present participle. This is a strong compound term for experiential knowledge (*epignōskō*, cf. Col. 1:9,10; 3:10; Eph. 1:17; 4:13). Believers are to continue to grasp the meaning of the gospel and continue to live out its implications.

1:11 "strengthened with all power" This is the third present participle meaning "with all power being empowered." Like salvation, the Christian life is a supernatural gift, not unaided, strenuous human effort or commitment (cf. Gal. 3:1-3). Believers must yield to the Spirit to produce effective, godly lives (cf. Eph. 5:18). This term is always used of supernatural strength (cf. Eph. 1:19; Phil. 4:13).

■ **"according to His glorious might"** This phrase describes how believers are to be "strengthened with all power." They must yield to God's Spirit, and the energy, power and glory are His!

■ **"steadfastness and patience"** One wonders if these were used synonymously. They had slightly different foci. Steadfastness (*hupomonē*) meant patient endurance and perseverance, while patience (*makrothumia*) meant patient endurance of evil or suffering. They were both frequent admonitions from Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 6:4,6; 2 Tim. 3:10). Believers are only capable of them in God's power. These terms were often used to describe how God treats fallen mankind (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Cor. 6:6) and how redeemed mankind should therefore treat one another (cf. Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12).

■ **"joyously"** This can relate grammatically to Col. 1:11 (NKJV) or Col. 1:12 (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB).

1:12 "giving thanks" This is the last of the four present participles of Col. 1:10-12 which describe the worthy walk as constant thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a characteristic of the Spirit-filled life (cf. Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

■ **"to the Father"** Christians need to be constantly reminded that the NT focus on the ministry of the Son should not diminish their praise of God the Father. He is the One whose character and grace are exhibited in Jesus. He was the sender and sustainer of the Son (cf. Eph. 1:3-14 and 15-23).

There are several Greek manuscript variations of this phrase. However, this reading is supported by the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁶¹, A, C, D, K, and P as well as the Latin Vulgate translation. The UBS⁴ gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). These variations, as is so often true, do not affect the sense, truth or trustworthiness of the text. Early scribes tried to make the texts they copied clearer. See Appendix Two.

NASB, NKJV "qualified"

NRSV	"enabled"
TEV	"has made you fit"
NJB	"has made you able"

This term is used only here and in 2 Cor. 3:5-6 (the adjective is used in 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5 and 2 Tim. 2:2). God has qualified us (1) by declaring us to be righteous in Christ (justification and positional sanctification) and (2) by developing Christlikeness in us (progressive sanctification). See Special Topic: Sanctification at Eph. 1:1.

- ▣ **"us"** The ancient Greek texts are equally divided between "us" (NASB, NKJV) and "you" (NRSV, TEV, NJB). The UBS⁴ gives "you" a "B" rating (almost certain). The "you" may have been written here by a copyist to match Col. 1:13.
- ▣ **"to share in the inheritance"** Inheritance is literally the term "lot." In the OT God promised Abraham a land and a seed (cf. Gen. 12:12). The OT focuses on the land; the NT focuses on the seed. In the OT, the land of Palestine was given as a tribal inheritance to all the children of Jacob (cf. Joshua 12-19) except the Levites because they served God in a unique role (cf. Num. 4:45). God Himself was said to be their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:24). In a sense all the OT people of God were priests (Exod. 19:4-6). They were a kingdom of priests to bring the whole world to God. The NT people of God are spoken of in OT terms as priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). As the Levites had God as their inheritance, so now do all the NT believers (cf. Acts 20:32; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE](#)

- ▣ **"of the saints"** See Special Topic at verse 2.
- ▣ **"in light"** This was either (1) an ethical statement (cf. John 3:19) or (2) a statement about Christlikeness in opposition to the demonic (cf. Eph. 6:12; Acts 26:18).

1:13-14 These verses function as a transition to the wonderful Christological creed of Col. 1:15-20. It describes what God the Father has done for the believers through the Son.

1:13 "He delivered us" The pronoun refers to the Father. This aorist middle (deponent) indicative is used in the sense of rescued (NRSV, TEV, NJB).

▣ **"from the dominion of darkness"** Literally this is "authority (*exousia*) of darkness" (cf. Col. 1:12; Luke 22:53). NJB has "ruling force of darkness." Light and darkness were often used in Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls to represent the two spiritual realms of good and evil (cf. John 3:19-21). Paul uses this term several times in Col. (cf. Col. 1:13, 16; 2:10, 15).

▣ **"transferred"** This is literally "resettled" or "relocated." Both of the verbs in this verse are aorist. These are things God has already accomplished for believers.

▣ **"kingdom"** Jesus used this concept as a present reality with a future consummation. The context emphasized what believers already possess in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:5-6)! See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God at Eph. 5:5.

Paul did not use Jesus' exact phrase "the Kingdom of God" often, possibly because the Gentiles would not have understood this Jewish concept.

▣ **"of His beloved Son"** God the Father gave this title to Jesus at His baptism and transfiguration (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Jesus is the unique Son (*monogenēs*, cf. John 1:18, 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Believers are sons through Him.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD](#)

1:14 "in whom we have" This is a present active indicative. In Christ believers have and continue to have the family blessings of God.

▣ **"redemption"** This may have been an allusion to the OT terms (*paduh*, "to free or redeem" and *gaal*, "to free through the agency of a relative [*go'el*]). Jesus bought us back from slavery (cf. Isa. 53:11-12; Mark 10:45; Eph. 1:7). Redemption is a present reality (cf. Eph. 1:7) and a future consummation (cf. Eph. 4:30).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

▣ **"the forgiveness of sins"** There were several Greek terms for "forgiveness." This one (*aphesis*) meant "to send away," which was an allusion to the ritual of the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). The scapegoat symbolically carried away the sins of the people.

We learn from Irenaeus' *Heresies*, 1:21:2 that some Gnostic teachers separated redemption from remission by a time and maturity factor. Paul may have been addressing this falsehood.

The King James Version adds the phrase "through His blood," which later scribes added from the parallel in Eph. 1:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1:15-20 This wonderful poetic passage may reflect an early church hymn or creed. It deals with (1) the cosmic lordship of Jesus and (2) His redemptive acts. The same dual aspect is seen in Heb. 1:2-3. It reflects several Gnostic terms, "firstborn," "fullness," and concepts like the angelic levels (i.e. aeons) of Col. 1:16, and Jesus' true humanity and death in Col. 1:20.

Notice the term "all" is used seven times (cf. Col. 1:15,16 [twice],17 [twice],18,20). Jesus' ministry is inclusive, all that is, is from Him.

1. by Him all things were created
2. all things have been created through Him
3. He is before all things
4. in Him all things hold together
5. He himself will come to have first place in every thing
6. all the fullness to dwell in Him
7. through Him to reconcile all things to Himself (the pronoun "Himself" probably relates to the Father)

Notice how often the pronoun "Him" is presented with different prepositions.

1. "in Him," Col. 1:16,17,19
2. "through Him," Col. 1:16,20
3. "unto/into Him," Col. 1:16,20 (notice this same thing in Eph. 1:3-14)

1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God" The same word (*eikōn*) is used of Jesus in Col. 3:10 and 2 Cor. 4:4. A similar theological expression occurs in John 1:18; 14:9; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3. The Hebrews 1:3 passage has the stronger Greek term (*charakter*, which means an exact representation, cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). To see Jesus is to see God! The invisible God has become visible! Deity has become a man (cf. John 14:9).

Jesus' ministry was to restore the image of God in humanity. In one sense Eden had been restored through Jesus, the second Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Phil. 2:6). It is even possible that heaven will be a restored Eden:

1. the Bible begins with God, mankind and the animals (cf. Gen. 1-2) and ends with God and mankind in a garden setting (with the animals by implication, cf. Rev. 21-22)
2. the prophecy of Isa. 11:6-9 describes children and animals together in the new age
3. new Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:2)

■ **"the firstborn of all creation"** This was an OT metaphor for Jesus' unique and exalted position.

1. the rabbis said it meant preeminence (cf. Exod. 4:22)
2. in the OT it was used for the eldest son as heir and manager of the family
3. in Ps. 89:27 it was used in a Messianic sense
4. in Pro. 8:22 it referred to Wisdom as God's first creation and agent of creation. In context options #1 and #2 combined seem best

This phrase is not to be understood as Jesus being the first creation (#4). This would have played into the hands of the Gnostic teachers, who taught that Jesus was the highest angelic level next to the high god. It must be interpreted in its Jewish OT setting. Jesus was deity's unique son (cf. John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9), yet Jesus was always Deity (cf. Col. 1:17; John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28). He became a human in time, at Bethlehem, so that fallen mankind could comprehend and understand Deity (cf. John 1:14,18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRSTBORN

1:16 "by Him all things were created" Jesus was God's agent of creation, both of the visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly spheres (cf. John 1:3, 10; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2; 2:10). This refuted the Gnostics' world view of the antithetical relationship between spirit (God) and matter. It was Jesus who spoke the cosmos into existence (cf. Genesis 1). It was Jesus who formed Adam and breathed into him the breath of life (cf. Genesis 2).

The verb "created" is used twice in Col. 1:16. The first is aorist passive indicative and the second at the end of the verse (in Greek) is perfect passive indicative. The thrust is that Jesus is the agent in creation but the Father is the primary cause. Creation was in (*en*) Jesus, through (*dia*) Jesus and for (*eis*) Jesus!

■ **"thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities"** In some contexts these terms could refer to earthly governmental leaders (cf. Romans 13), but in the context of Colossians they refer to the false teachers' angelic levels (*aeons*, cf. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; 1 Pet. 3:22). The ancients saw the world not only in physical cause and effect relationships, but as a spiritual realm as well. It is impossible to have a biblical worldview and deny the spiritual realm. See Special Topic: Angels in Paul's Writings at Eph. 6:12.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ

■ **"and for Him"** Jesus was not only God the Father's agent in creation, but the goal of creation as well (cf. Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10).

■ **1:17 "He is before all things"** There has never been a time when Jesus was not! Jesus is preexistent Deity (cf. John 1:1-2; 8:58; 17:5, 24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 10:5-7)! Notice the emphatic use of "He" (*autos*) in Col. 1:17 and 18, "He, Himself, is before all things" and "He, Himself, is head of the body"!

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "in Him all things hold together"

NKJV "in Him all things consist"

TEV "in union with him all things have their proper place"

This is a perfect active indicative of the "syn" compound "to stand with" (*sunistēmi*) which implies "to continue," "to endure," or "to exist."

This is the doctrine of providence (cf. Heb. 1:3) and it is personal! "All things" refers to creation-material and spiritual. Jesus is the sustainer as well as creator of all things. In the OT these functions describe the work of *Elohim* (God).

1:18 "He is also the Head of the body, the church" As Jesus was preeminent in creation; so He is in the Church. This refers to the universal church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:9). Believers are both individually (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19) and corporately (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) the body of Christ (i.e., the new temple). Paul often spoke of the church as the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27), but it is only in Ephesians and Colossians that Jesus is said to be "the Head" of that body. In reality He is Head of all things, even the principalities and powers (cf. Eph. 1:22).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (EKKLESIA)

■ **"He is the beginning "** At first glance this looks like another allusion to creation (cf. Gen. 1:1), but the context has changed to the church. In this setting the term "beginning" probably relates to the Greek sense of origin or source. Jesus is the Head or source of life of the new people of God, Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (cf. Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). He is the new Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The head of a new race, Christian (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

■ **"the firstborn from the dead"** The definitive NT passage on the resurrection is 1 Cor. 15. Jesus is preeminent, "the first born" (see Special Topic at Col. 1:15) in resurrection as He was in creation (cf. Col. 1:15; Rom. 1:4; Rev. 1:5). His resurrection is a promise and a sign that all believers will be resurrected.

In 1 Cor. 15:20 and 23 Jesus is called the "first fruits." This is a synonymous OT metaphor. Jesus is the forerunner in all areas. He is both "first born" (cf. Rev. 1:5) and "first fruits."

■ **"so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything"** This summary statement is similar to Eph. 1:22-23. The Father has made the Son supreme and preeminent in all things (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28).

1:19 This starts with "for" (*hoti*, a purpose clause). It states God's will for the Messiah which is (1) the fullness of deity to be revealed in Him (cf. Col. 1:19) and (2) the reconciliation of all things through Him (cf. Col. 1:20).

NASB	"for all the fullness to dwell in Him"
NKJV	"that in Him all the fullness should dwell"
NRSV	"For in him all the fullness of God. . .to dwell"
TEV	"that the Son has in himself the full nature of God"
NJB	"all fullness to be found in him"

This is a play on the word "full" (*plerōma*), which was used by the false teachers to describe the angelic levels between the good high god and sinful matter (cf. Col. 2:9; Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13). This was a startling statement to describe a carpenter from Nazareth who was executed for treason! To see Jesus is to see God!

1:20 "and through Him to reconcile" The term (cf. Col. 1:22) meant "to change from hostility to peace" especially between persons. Sin has caused a separation between the creator and the created. God acted in Christ to restore the fellowship (cf. Rom. 5:18-19). This is a double compound word (*apokatallassō*) for theological emphasis (cf. Col. 1:22). Paul used the same word in Eph. 2:16 and the same root in 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

■ **"all things"** This refers to all creation, visible and invisible (cf. Rom. 8:18ff; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:22-

23).

- **"to Himself"** This could theologically refer to the Father or the Son. Context is the only guide. Here the Father seems best.
- **"having made peace through the blood of His cross"** This referred to Jesus' sacrificial death (cf. Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13,16). The reconciliation was not without great cost! The emphasis was possibly on His humanity (blood) as well as His vicarious atonement (sacrifice, cf. Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:21). The false teachers would have affirmed His deity but denied His humanity and death.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (different senses)

- **"His cross"** Deuteronomy 21:23 asserted that anyone who hung on a tree was under a divine curse (cf. Phil. 2:8). Originally this referred to public impaling after death instead of a proper burial. However, by Jesus' day the rabbis interpreted it as crucifixion. Jesus took sinful mankind's curse, the curse of the Old Covenant, on Himself (cf. Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:13; Phi. 2:8).
- **"whether things on earth or things in heaven"** This phrase is directed to the false antithesis between "spirit" (heaven) and "matter" (earth, cf. Col. 1:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

²¹And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged in evil deeds*,
²²yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach- ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

1:21 "you" This refers to Gentile believers. Notice the three characterizations of their former lives in paganism which follow in this verse.

- **"were formerly alienated"** This is a Perfect passive participle of a rare compound word for a stranger or foreigner which describes the Gentiles' previous relationship to God. The theological description of this estrangement is found in Eph. 2:1,3,11-22. The moral description is in Eph. 4:18-19. It is possible that this term is used of slaves in the sense of "being transferred to another owner." If so, 1:13 is the background.
- **"hostile in mind"** Fallen mankind has a mind-set of independence (cf. Rom. 1:28; 8:7; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16). Mankind, not God, becomes the measure of all things (atheistic humanism).

NASB	"engaged in evil deeds"
NKJV	"by wicked works"
NRSV	"doing evil deeds"
TEV	"the evil things you did"
NJB	"your evil behavior"

The rabbis assert that as a person thinks, so he/she becomes. An evil heart/mind eventually reflects itself in acts of evil toward God and other humans (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; Titus 3:3).

1:22 "yet He has now reconciled you" "Reconciled" is the main verb of Col. 1:21-23. See note at Col. 1:20. What a change has occurred because of God's actions in Christ toward these fallen, alienated Gentiles (cf. Col. 1:20)!

God's promise to redeem mankind in Gen. 3:15 has been fulfilled. This promise was accomplished

completely as an act of God. Fallen mankind was unable to return to the Creator (cf. Isa. 53:6, quoted in 1 Pet. 2:25; and Rom. 3:9-18 for a series of OT quotes). What love is this that has pursued sinful, rebellious humanity through time and in time gave His only Son to die on our behalf!

■ **"in His fleshly body through death"** This may have related to the false teachers' rejection of Jesus' humanity (cf. Col. 1:20). Jesus was fully God and fully human (cf. 1 John 4:1-6). He had a physical body (cf. Col. 2:11). He was really one of us.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (sarx)

■ **"in order to present you before Him"** This could refer to (1) the day of salvation; (2) the time of the believers' death; or (3) the Judgment Day/Second Coming (cf. Col. 1:28; Eph. 5:27).

■ **"holy and blameless and beyond reproach"** These three adjectives are used as synonyms. This describes the purity of believers in Christ (cf. Phil. 1:15). They are not only forgiven, they are totally changed! This is very similar to the emphasis of Eph. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27. The goal of justification is not only heaven when we die, but holiness now (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48)!

Sanctification is a current reality for believers as a gift from Christ (cf. Acts. 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2,30; 6:11; Heb. 10:10,14). It is also a progressive, Christlike living (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:12; James 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:14) and an eschatological goal (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23; 1 John 3:2). See Special Topic: Holy at Eph. 1:4.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

1:23 "if indeed you continue in faith" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul assumed their continuance, which was an evidence of their true conversion (cf. 1 John 2:19; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). See Special Topic: Perseverance at Phil. 1:9.

Faith (a dative with no article) refers to either (1) personal trust in Jesus, or (2) faithfulness to Christ; or (3) Christian doctrine (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude 1:3,20, also the Pastoral Epistles). Christian maturity involves (1) a personal faith; (2) a godly lifestyle; and (3) doctrinal correctness. In a context of false teachings, each of these is crucial!

■ **"firmly established"** This is a perfect passive participle (same verbal form as "alienated" in Col. 1:21). "They have been and continue to be firmly established (implication, by God)." This was a construction metaphor for a sure foundation (cf. Col. 2:7; Matt. 7:25; Eph. 3:17). It may have been a play on Colossae's geographical location in an earthquake area.

NASB	"and not moved away from"
NKJV	"and are not moved away"
NRSV	"without shifting from"
TEV	"and must not allow yourselves to be shaken from"
NJB	"never letting yourselves drift away"

This term is used only here in the NT. It is the negative expression of the previous positive statement. It can be passive voice (God keeps us, cf NASB, NKJV) or middle voice (believers must exercise diligence, cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB).

■ **"the hope of the gospel"** Paul often used this term in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. See Special Topic: Hope at Col. 1:5. This can be expressed as "glory," "eternal life," "ultimate salvation," "Second Coming," etc. The consummation is certain, but the time is unknown.

■ **"which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven"** "All creation" is a hyperbole for the Roman Empire (cf. Col. 1:6).

The grammatical form of this is an aorist passive participle. However, this does not fit the context. It must be used in the sense of a present active participle. It must be remembered that grammatical form is subservient to literary context, as is lexical definition of words. Context, not grammatical form or lexical meaning, is always priority!

■ **"minister"** This was the general term for "servant" or "service" (*diakonos*, cf. Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; Eph. 3:7; 6:21). Jesus uses this term for Himself in Mark 10:45. This became the title for local church servants-deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, ²⁶that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. ^{2:1}For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

1:24 "I rejoice in my sufferings for you" Paul saw his imprisonment as benefitting the church (cf. Phil. 2:17 and 2 Cor. 1:5). Paul saw his life as an offering to God on behalf of the church. This is part of the Good News we don't like (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 6:3-10; Phil. 1:29, 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:7-8; 4:12-16)! As Jesus suffered on behalf of others, so must His followers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16). Only the Spirit can turn persecution into joy!

■ **"in my flesh"** See Special Topic at Col. 1:22.

■ **"in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions"** This emphatic double compound verb (*anti, ana, plēroō*) is found only here in the NT. The prepositions strongly affirm "on behalf of" or "and to fill completely." This is a very difficult sentence to interpret. Some theories about the meaning of this verse are:

1. Christ's atonement was not sufficient without the church, i.e., Roman Catholicism's merits of the saints
2. believers, as the church, share Christ's sufferings, (not vicariously), but by doing the Father's will in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Mark 10:39; John 16:1ff; 2 Cor. 4:10; Gal. 2:20; Phil 3:10)
3. Christ suffers with believers (cf. Acts 9:4-5; 2 Cor. 1:5; Isa. 63:9)
4. suffering is needed for maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8)
5. we must fulfill the "birth pains" for the new age (cf. Mark 13:8)
6. Paul was refuting a Gnostic catch phrase

This term for "suffering" was never used in the NT for Christ's death on the cross. The context of Col. 1:13-18 totally rules out #1! I like #5 best!

■ **"the church"** *Ekklesia* was from two Greek words, "out of" and "to call." It is used in Koine Greek to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town meeting (cf. Acts 19:32). The Church chose this term because it was used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, written as early as 250 b.c. for the library at Alexandria, Egypt). This term translated the Hebrew term *qahal* which was used in the phrase "the assembly of Israel" (cf. Num. 20:4). The NT writers asserted that they were the "divinely called out ones" who were to be the People of God in their day. They saw no radical break between the OT People of God and themselves, the NT People of God. Believers must assert that the Church of Jesus Christ, not modern rabbinical Judaism, is the true heir of the OT Scriptures.

In Ephesians, a circular letter, the term "church" always has a universal meaning, but in Colossians it has a local meaning. The church is both corporate, referring to all of the people of God, and individual, referring to a local congregation of believers. In this text Paul is obviously referring to the universal aspect of the church. See Special Topic: Church at Col. 1:18.

1:25 "I was made a minister" Paul is referring to his Apostolic call to preach to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7; Eph. 3:1-2, 8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17). However, Paul viewed his calling and giftedness as a servant, a slave, a steward! In the Bible leadership is servanthood.

■ **"according to the stewardship from God"** Believers are all stewards or trustees of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-5; Eph. 3:2,9; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). Paul uses this term in several different senses.

1. an Apostolic commission to proclaim the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25)
2. an eternal plan of redemption (cf. Eph. 1:10, 3:9; 1 Cor. 4:1)
3. training in the plan of redemption and its accompanying lifestyle (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4)

NASB	"that I might fully carry out the <i>preaching of the word of God</i> "
NKJV	"to fulfill the word of God"
NRSV	"to make the word of God fully known"
TEV	"fully proclaiming his message"
NJB	"that of completing God's message"

This is the same root term "to fill" (*plēroō*) used in Col. 1:24. Paul's imprisonment and preaching were accomplishing God's purpose for the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7; Eph. 3:2,8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

1:26 "the mystery" See Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

■ **"which has been hidden from the *past ages and generations*"** This is a perfect passive participle, it had been and continued to be hidden by God (implication) in the past. This mystery was kept secret from (1) the Gentiles, (2) the Jews, and (3) even the angels (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). The prophets had glimpses of it, but never the full truth (cf. Heb. 1:1). The phrase "ages and generations" was used by the Gnostics to refer to the angelic levels (*aeons*).

■ **"but has now been manifested to His saints"** This is an aorist passive indicative of a verb that means "to clearly reveal" or "bring to light" (cf. Col. 1:27; Rom. 3:21; 16:26). That which was hidden has now been fully revealed. The gospel is clear and open to all, not just a select few! See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

■ **"the riches of the glory"** Paul often uses the term "riches" to describe the benefits of the gospel (cf. Col. 1:27; 2:2; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19).

■ **"Christ in you"** It is grammatically possible that this could be translated "Christ among you," which would refer to the mystery of the gospel and not the indwelling Christ. The same Greek preposition, *en*, is translated "among" in the preceding phrase, "among the Gentiles." This seems to fit the context best.

There is a fluidity between the work of the Son and the Spirit. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is "the other Jesus." The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

1:27 "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles" Paul has used "riches" several times to describe God's gracious acts and provision for fallen man (cf. Col. 1:27; 2:2; Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:33; 2 Cor. 8:2; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:16).

God has always had a plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in salvation (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). The beginnings of this plan of redemption can be seen in

1. God's promise in Gen. 3:15, which applies to all the children of Adam
2. God's call to Abraham which would bless all people (cf. Gen. 12:3)
3. God's calling a kingdom of priests to reach the world (cf. Exod. 19:5)
4. even Solomon's temple had implications for the Gentiles to repent and believe and be a part (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:43, 60)
5. the numerous references in the prophets (especially Isaiah) to God's universal reign and invitation to all mankind

▣ **"the hope of glory"** This refers to Resurrection Day when the saints will receive their new glorified bodies (cf. 1 John 3:2). Election, justification, and sanctification will result in glorification (cf. Rom.8:29-30). See fuller note on "glory" at Eph. 1:6.

1:28 "We proclaim Him" Christianity is not primarily correct theology, ethical standards, or religious ritual, but a personal relationship with Jesus. Once this is established, the other aspects have their appropriate place (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15,16-17).

▣ **"admonishing"** This word is used of "child training" in the Septuagint (cf. Job 5:17). In the NT it is used of believers exhorting each other (cf. Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14). It often carried a negative connotation of warning about inappropriate Christian behavior (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15).

▣ **"every man"** This phrase is used three times in this verse for emphasis. This inclusiveness is so different from the exclusiveness of the false teachers. The gospel is for all humanity (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

▣ **"with all wisdom"** God's wisdom is so different from the exclusivism and secrecy of the false teachers' so-called knowledge.

▣ **"that we may present every man"** God's goal for the church is that every believer be mature in Christ (cf. Col. 4:12; Eph. 4:13; 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Phil. 3:15). There are no special groups, ranks, gifts, knowledge, or privileges in Christ's body, just servants!

NASB	"complete"
NKJV, NJB	"perfect"
NRSV, TEV	"mature"

This is the Greek term *telos* (also commonly used in Gnostic literature of the second century), which meant "fully equipped for an assigned task" (cf. Eph. 4:12). It was used of

1. broken limbs being healed and becoming useful again
2. fishing nets being mended and thereby being able to catch fish
3. ships being fitted with ropes and sails for the sea
4. chickens that had grown large enough to be taken to market. It does not imply sinlessness, but functional maturity

1:29 "I labor, striving" These same two strong Greek terms are used together in 1 Tim. 4:10 to describe Paul's ministry.

▣ **"struggling"** This is a Present middle (deponent) participle. This is either an athletic term (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7) or a military term (cf. Col. 2:1; John 18:36). We get the English term "agony" from this Greek root. Church work is not easy!

▣ **"His power, which mightily works within me"** This is a present middle participle. It is God's power, not the believer's, that "energizes" all ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 2; Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 20; Phil. 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:12) This noun and participle are from the same Greek root which means, "His energy energizes me."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul use a standard introduction in his letters? How is this opening different?
2. Who started this church? What was the reason for Paul writing this letter?
3. List the reasons for Paul's thanksgiving for these saints.
4. List three aspects of God's will (1:9).
5. List four elements of Paul's prayer as related to "worthy lives" (1:10-12).
6. List the things Paul says about Jesus (1:15-19; 2:9-10).
7. Why does Paul emphasize Jesus' death so strongly?
8. Can one fall from a state of grace (1:23; 2:16-23)?
9. What does 1:24 mean?
10. Define "mystery."

COLOSSIANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Ministry to the Church (1:24-2:5)	Not Philosophy, But Christ 2:1-10	Paul's Interest in the Colossians (1:24-2:7)	Paul's Work as a Servant of the Church (1:24-2:3)	Paul's Concern for the Colossians' Faith 2:1-3
Fullness of Life in Christ 2:6-15		Warning Against False Teaching 2:8-15	Fullness of Life in Christ 2:4-5 2:6-7 2:8-10	Live According to the True Faith in Christ, not According to False Teaching 2:4-5 2:6-7 2:8
	Not Legalism But Christ 2:11-23			Christ Alone is the True Head of All Humanity and the Angels 2:9-10 2:11-13 2:14-15
2:16-19		2:16-19	2:16-19	Against the False Asceticism Based on the Principles of This World 2:16-19
The New Life in Christ (2:20-3:17)			Dying and Living with Christ	
2:20-3:4		2:20-23	2:20-3:4	2:20-23

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five

modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. ⁵For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

2:1 "how great a struggle" "Struggle" is an athletic or a military term (cf. Col. 1:29; 4:12). Here it is used as (1) a metaphor for intercessory prayer or (2) Paul's work on behalf of all Gentiles.

■ **"Laodicea"** This was a nearby city, only 10 miles away from Colossae, in the same valley (cf. Col. 4:13, 15,16; Rev. 3:14). Epaphras apparently started a church in each of the cities of the Lycus River Valley-Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (cf. Col. 4:13). This letter was to be read in each one.

■ **"all those who have not personally seen my face"** Paul did not start this church nor the other two in the Lycus River Valley. It was started by Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:7). Yet Paul agonized in prayer for them. Paul loved the Church, and the churches!

2:2 "that their hearts may be encouraged" This is a purpose clause with an aorist passive subjunctive. It is from the same root as "*paracletos*," which is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7 and of Jesus in 1 John 2:1. Its basic meaning is to "call alongside for help and encouragement." It was a metaphor from the Roman legal system; the concept of defense lawyer comes from this word.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

■ **"having been knit together"** This is an aorist passive participle of a *syn* compound. It was used in the Septuagint for "instruction" (cf. Isa. 40:13; 1 Cor. 2:16). In Paul's writings it is used as a metaphor from the physical body growing into a mature unity (cf. Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16). This growth and unity are possible (passive voices) only in Christ, in the Spirit and in love. Unity was so important in a heretical situation (cf. Eph. 4:1-6).

NASB	"all the wealth"
NKJV, NRSV	"all the riches"
TEV	"the full wealth"
NJB	"they are rich"

Paul often uses the term "riches" to describe the love of God in Christ (cf. Rom. 2:4, 9:23; 11:12, 33; Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27; 2:2). Believers are spiritually wealthy (cf. James 1:9) because of God's wealth and generosity in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; 9:15). Here the "wealth" ("all the

treasures," cf. Col. 2:3) is the believers' understanding of the gospel. Stop just a moment and think about the gift of revelation!

▣ **"the full assurance of understanding"** Paul continues to use terms and concepts used by the Gnostic false teachers. In this phrase, "full assurance" is a compound of *plērōma*, which the heretics used to refer to the angelic levels.

The term "understanding" (*sunesis*) is also a *syn* compound. It is linked to *plērōma* in Col. 1:9. Its etymological origin was the coming together of streams of thought. These false teachers were attempting to make Christianity understandable, relevant, and applicable to Greek society and culture. This same motive draws many modern heretics to force the gospel into modern thought forms or categories.

▣ **"true knowledge"** Again this must be viewed against the backdrop of the false teachers' emphasis on and claim to "secret" ultimate knowledge concerning salvation. For Paul, "true knowledge" (*epignōskō*) was found only in the gospel of Christ, who is the "mystery of God."

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "mystery"

TEV "a secret truth"

NJB "a hidden reason for all of this"

God has a unified purpose for humanity's redemption (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13) that even preceded the fall (cf. Genesis 3). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6 and the universal passages in the prophets). However, this full agenda was not yet clear until the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-8). With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit it begins to become more obvious. Paul used the term "mystery" to describe this total redemptive plan (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:9). See Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

▣ **"hearts"** See Special Topic: The Heart at Col. 2:1.

NASB "that is, Christ Himself"

NRSV "that is, Christ Himself"

NKJV "both of the Father and of Christ"

TEV "which is Christ Himself"

There are several Greek manuscript variations. The unusual syntax of P⁴⁶, "of God, of Christ," best explains the origin of all the other variations (cf. Appendix Two, II. B. 1-6). The mystery of God is Christ-His life, teachings, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming! The mystery of the Father's eternal, universal plan of redemption is implemented by the incarnated Son.

See Special Topic: Mystery in Paul's Writings at Eph. 3:3.

2:3 "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" This verse refutes the emphasis of the false teachers and magnified the person of Christ. God's mystery (revelation) is a person, God's plan is a person (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV), and God's salvation is a person, not human knowledge or effort.

It is grammatically possible that this opening phrase is neuter ("in it"), not masculine ("in whom") and therefore, refers to the mystery (cf. NJB).

2:4 "that no one will delude you with persuasive argument" This is a purpose clause with a present middle (deponent) subjunctive. This verb was used in two ways: (1) to deceive or delude oneself (cf. James 1:22) and (2) to reason falsely, defraud or distort.

This delusion was done by means of eloquent reasoning, plausible arguments and/or persuasive speech. False teachers are always logical, attractive, persuasive individuals (so different from Paul cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

2:5 "even though" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the

author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul was obviously not with them physically, but he prayed for them and felt one with them.

- ▣ **"absent in body"** this is literally "absent in the flesh." See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at Col. 1:22.
- ▣ **"I am with you in spirit"** Paul's heart and prayers were constantly with this isolated, small, persecuted outpost of the Kingdom of God! Here the word "spirit" refers to the human person's true self. This same expression is used in 1 Cor. 5:3.

NASB	"good discipline. . .stability"
NKJV	"good order. . .steadfastness"
NRSV	"moral. . .firmness"
TEV	"the resolute firmness with which you stand together"
NJB	"well ordered. . .firm"

These are (1) military terms for organization and steadfastness (cf. Eph. 6:10-17) or (2) construction terms for a solid, sure foundation (cf. 2 Tim. 2:14-19; 1 Pet. 5:9). These terms describe the faith of the Colossian believers even amidst the attacks and confusion of the false teachers.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

⁶Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

2:6 "as you therefore have received Christ" The verb used here (*paralambanō*, aorist active indicative) has two connotations.

1. the welcoming of a person (cf. Matt. 1:20; John 1:11; 14:3)
2. the receiving of "tradition" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1,3; Gal. 1:9,12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6)

The Colossians heard the content of the gospel through Epaphras' preaching; then they personally welcomed the Person of the gospel (John 1:12). Biblical faith is a covenant. God sets the agenda and makes the first contact (cf. John 6:44,65), but individuals must respond by repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance (Col. 2:6)! The false teachers' message distorted the theology of both the content and the Person of the gospel.

▣ **"Christ Jesus the Lord"** "Jesus is Lord" was the early church's public profession of faith at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11). It was an affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth is the OT Messiah and incarnation of Deity (cf. Phil. 2:6-11).

▣ **"so walk in Him"** This is a present active imperative. Christianity is not a theological creed only; it is also a lifestyle of faith ("walk" cf. Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Salvation is not a product believers possess but a person who possesses them! Paul here focuses on the personal aspect of the Christian faith as does the Gospel of John (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 6:40; 11:25-26).

2:7 This verse contains four participles (used as imperatives) which describe the worthy walk (cf. Col. 2:6):

1. **"having been firmly rooted"** This is perfect passive which is an accomplished state of being produced by God. This agricultural metaphorical expression was unique to Col. and Eph.(cf. Col. 3:17).
2. **"being built up in Him"** This is present passive which is an ongoing process produced by God. Paul often used this construction metaphor to describe the people of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 2:20, 22). It might refer to the saints as a temple (individually, 1 Cor. 6:19 and corporately, 1 Cor. 3:16).
3. **"established in your faith"** This is another present passive which is an ongoing process

produced by God. The noun ("confirmation") is found in Phil. 1:7; and Heb. 6:16. The verb implies "to confirm" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:6,8; 2 Cor. 1:21), "to strengthen," and "to verify" often by argument (cf. Rom. 15:8, 1 Cor. 1:8).

The phrase "in your faith" can be understood as (1) subjective faith, trusting in Christ or (2) objective faith, the doctrines about Christ (cf. Jude 3, 20).

4. **"overflowing with gratitude"** This is a present active which is an ongoing process produced by God. The Christian life is a life of thanksgiving to God for His grace in Christ. This is expressed by joyful obedience and perseverance! To know the gospel is to rejoice with inexpressible joy (cf. Col. 1:12) and to live appropriately (cf. Col. 1:10-11) with thanksgiving (cf. Col. 3:17). See Special Topic: Abound (*Perisseuō*) at Eph. 1:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

2:8-15 This is one long sentence, one sustained presentation in Greek.

2:8

NASB, NRSV,

TEV "see to it"

NKJV "beware"

NJB "make sure"

This is a present active imperative. Christians must continue to guard their freedom in Christ from false teachers while yielding it to weaker brothers (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33). It is often difficult to tell the difference between these two groups. False teachers pervert truth, while weak brothers advocate personal preferences.

- **"that no one takes you captive"** This is a negative present active participle. This strong Greek term, used only here in the NT, meant (1) to kidnap, (2) to seduce (2 Tim. 3:6), or (3) to take as a slave. False teachers always want control!
- **"through philosophy"** This is not a condemnation of human rational thinking. Humans are created in the image of God and must worship Him with their entire being, including their minds (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27). This is the rejection of the speculative philosophy/theology of false teachers (cf. Col. 2:23; 1 Cor. 1:26-2:8; Eph. 4:13; 5:6; 1 Tim. 6:20).
- **"empty deceptions"** This term can be translated "deceit, deception, or delusion" (cf. Mt. 13:22; Eph. 4:22; 2 Thess. 2:10; Heb. 3:13). False teachers are often sincere, but deceived!
- **"according to"** This is the Greek term *kata*. It is repeated three times to define "philosophy and empty

deception":

1. **"to the traditions of men"** So much of human's religiosity is cultural, not biblical (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:23). Often we pass on what we have received without checking the Bible for ourselves!
2. **"not according to Christ"** It is based on human reasoning, experience, or speculation.
3. **"the elementary principles"** Most words develop from a literal, physical sense to a metaphorical extension. This term (*stoicheia*) originally referred to something in a row, a series. It developed into several connotations:
 - a. The basic physical building blocks of the world (air, water, earth, and fire, cf. 2 Pet. 3:10, 12).
 - b. The basic teachings of a subject (cf. Heb. 5:12; 6:1 for Judaism).
 - c. The angelic powers behind the heavenly bodies (cf. I Enoch 52:8-9; the early church fathers; Col. 2:8, 20; 1 Cor. 15:24) or the angelic ranks (*aeons*) of the Gnostic false teachers (cf. Col. 2:10, 15; Eph. 3:10).
 - d. Angels hostile to mankind who tried to stop the giving of the Law to Moses (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:2)
 - e. Possibly the impersonal structures of our fallen world that allow fallen mankind to appear independent from God (education, government, medicine, religion, etc. (cf. Gal. 4:3, 8-9 and Hendrik Berkhof's *Christ and the Powers* by Herald Press, p. 32).

■ **"rather than according to Christ"** This was the third use of *kata*. The problem with the world's philosophy is that it defines truth by a standard other than God's revelation, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is human discovery, not divine revelation.

2:9 "in Him" This phrase is in an emphatic position. "In Him" was a key phrase in Paul's theology ("in whom" Col. 2:3; "in Christ" Col. 2:5; "in Him" Col. 2:6,9,10,11; "with Him" Col. 2:12, 13). Notice, also, Eph. 1:3,4,7,9,10,12,13,14). Paul returns again to Christology as he did in Col. 1:15-20. This is the main issue and the main issue is a person!

■ **"all the fullness of Deity"** This dual aspect of Christ's nature refuted the false teachers, (cf. Col. 1:15-20). They agreed that He was fully God, but denied that He was fully human (cf. 1 John 1 and 4:1-3). The term "fullness" (*plērōma*) was a Gnostic term for the angelic levels (*aeons*) between a high good god and evil matter (cf. John 1:16, Col. 1:19, Eph. 1:23, 3:19; 4:13).

This abstract term for "deity" (*theotās*) is only used here in the NT. Jesus is the full and complete revelation of God, not the angelic levels (*aeons*) or the false teachers' secret knowledge. It is possible that this was one of the Gnostic teachers' key terms. Paul often uses their terminology to describe Christ.

■ **"dwells"** This is a present active indicative. Some of the Gnostic false teachers believed that the "Christ spirit" came upon Jesus for a limited period. This verse asserts that Jesus' two natures were in permanent union.

■ **"in bodily form"** This was a truth that Gnosticism could not affirm because of their Greek dualism between a good god and evil matter. It is crucial in Christianity (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

2:10 "you have been made complete" This is a perfect passive participle of *plerōma* (cf. Col. 2:9; John 1:16; Eph. 3:19). The Christian has been and continues to be filled by Him and for Him! Jesus has made us complete!

■ **"He is the head over all rule and authority"** This refers to the Gnostic false teachers' view of salvation. For them salvation consisted in secret knowledge (a password or secret name) which allowed them to move through the angelic spheres between matter (world) and spirit (God, cf. Col. 1:16; 2:15; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:10; 6:12). Paul asserted that salvation is in Christ. He is the head of all angelic/demonic realms (cf. Rom. 8:38-39)! See Special Topic: Angels in Paul's Writings at Eph. 6:12.

George Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, has an interesting paragraph about Paul's

terminology:

"A study of the language Paul uses to designate these angelic spirits suggests that Paul deliberately employed a vague and varied terminology. This is seen particularly in his alternation between the singular and the plural forms of several of the words. It is impossible successfully to group this terminology into clearly defined orders of angelic beings, nor is it at all clear that by the various words Paul purposes to designate different kinds or ranks of angels. Probably Paul was facing views that elaborated distinct orders of angels, and he purposed by his exceedingly flexible language, which may almost be called symbolic, to assert that all evil powers, whatever they may be, whether personal or impersonal, have been brought into subordination by the death and exaltation of Christ and will eventually be destroyed through his messianic reign"(p. 402).

For "authority" see Special Topic at Col. 1:16.

2:11 "you were circumcised with a circumcision" Paul is using the OT covenant sign (cf. Gen. 12:8-14) in a spiritual sense (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). This must be figurative language or else the false teachers had some Judaistic tendencies. There is so much that is unknown and uncertain about the heretical groups of the NT. In some ways these false teachers are a combination of Greek Gnosticism and Jewish legalism (cf. Col. 2:11,16,18). The commentator Lightfoot asserted they were similar to the Essenes (the Dead Sea Scrolls community which was a separatist group of sectarian Jews of the first century who lived in the desert).

■ **"a circumcision made without hands"** This is a metaphorical use of circumcision as the covenant sign in the OT. The "new" circumcision is a new heart and a new relationship with God through Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). Even in the OT when the new covenant is discussed (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-38), circumcision was never even mentioned, much less emphasized.

■ **"the removal of the body of the flesh"** This refers to the old fallen nature, not the physical body (cf. Rom. 6:6; 7:24; Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:5).

2:12 "having been buried with Him in baptism" This is an aorist passive participle of a *syn* compound which means "co-buried." This is the metaphor of baptism as immersion analogous to burial (cf. Rom. 6:4). As believers share Jesus' sufferings, death, and burial, they will also share His resurrection and glory (cf. Col. 2:12b; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 2:5-6).

For Paul baptism was a way of asserting death to the old life (old man) and the freedom of the new life (new creature, cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) to serve God (cf. Rom. 6:2-14; 1 Pet. 2:24).

■ **"you were also raised up with Him"** This compound with *syn* is parallel to "having been buried" (cf. Col. 2:13; 3:1; Rom. 6:4-5; Eph. 2:6). Believers' burial and resurrection are linked as two sides of a complete event. They were "co-buried" and "co-raised" in Eph. 2:5-6, also, using *syn* compounds, which meant "joint participation with."

■ **"who raised Him from the dead"** Jesus is the first-fruit of the Resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20,23). The Spirit that raised Him will also raise believers (cf. Rom. 8:10-11, 23).

This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)

This same Trinitarian emphasis can be seen in Col. 2:9-10.

2:13 "When you were dead" This is a present participle meaning "being dead." This reflects the results of the Fall-spiritual death (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21; Eph. 2:1-3). Gentiles were sinners cut off from the covenant people (cf. Eph. 2:11-12). The Bible speaks of three stages of death.

1. spiritual death (cf. Genesis 3; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 7:10-11; Eph. 2:1; James 1:15)

2. physical death, (cf. Genesis 5)
3. eternal death, "the second death," "the lake of fire" (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8)

- **"uncircumcision of your flesh"** This was a way of referring to Gentiles (cf. Col. 2:11).
- **"He"** This must refer to the Father. If so, the pronouns through Col. 2:15 refer to the Father.
- **"made you live together with Him,"** There are three *syn* compounds in Col. 2:12-13 (co-buried, Col. 2:12; co-raised, Col. 2:12; and co-quickened, Col. 2:13) which show what had already happened to believers spiritually (aorists). This is very similar to Eph. 2:5-6. In Ephesians God has acted on behalf of Jesus in Eph. 1:20 and Jesus has acted on behalf of believers in Eph. 2:5-6.
- **"having forgiven us all our transgressions"** This is an aorist (deponent) middle participle. "Forgiven" is from the same word root as "grace" (cf. Rom. 5:15, 16; 6:23; 2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32). Notice God freely forgives "all" sin through Christ (except unbelief)!

2:14

NASB	"having canceled out the certificate of debt"
NKJV	"having wiped out the handwriting of requirements"
NRSV	"erasing the record"
TEV	"canceled the unfavorable record of our debts"
NJB	"He has wiped out the record of our debt to the Law"

This rather cryptic language probably relates somehow to the false teachers. It refers to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Eph. 2:15, which could be characterized as "do and live"- "sin and die" (cf. Deut. 27:26; Ezek. 18:4). Paul clearly teaches the sinfulness of all mankind (cf. Rom. 3:9,19,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22). Therefore, the OT became a death sentence to all mankind!

The term "certificate" was used of (1) a signed IOU, (2) a signed confession, and (3) a legal indictment. The OT was a curse! This Greek term comes into English as "autograph" (self written).

- **"He has taken it out of the way"** This is a perfect active indicative. This same verb is used in John 1:29 and 1 John 3:5 to refer to the removal of sins. Jesus lived under and fulfilled the Mosaic covenant's requirements. He performed what sinful, fallen mankind could not do. His death was, therefore, not for personal sin, but He became a perfect sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 1-7) for sin. He became "cursed" (cf. Deut. 21:23) that mankind might be delivered from the curse of the Law (cf. Gal. 3:13)!
- **"nailing it to the cross"** This referred to either (1) a public notice or (2) the charges placed over a crucified person. The cross (Jesus' death) overcame the Law's hostility (OT decrees, cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

2:15

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"disarmed"
TEV	"freed"
NJB	"stripped"

This is a rare term, an aorist middle (deponent) participle. Its basic etymology was to take off clothing. It seems to have meant "to strip away from." It referred to taking weapons from dead soldiers (cf. Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 82. In this context it relates deity's (the Father and the Son) destruction of the powers of the spiritual realm that was hostile to mankind. The believer's victory is of God through Christ and by the Spirit.

If this rare verb is interpreted as middle voice then the TEV expresses the thought "freed himself from the power of the spiritual rulers." If it is interpreted as active voice then "He disarmed the rulers" (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV).

▣ **"the rulers and authorities"** These terms were used by the Gnostics (false teachers) for the angelic levels (*aeons*, cf. Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:21, 3:10; 6:11-12; Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 15:24). See Special Topics at Col. 1:16 and Eph. 6:12.

NASB	"He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him"
NKJV	"He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it"
NRSV	"made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it"
TEV	"he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession."
NJB	"and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession"

The historical background to this was a triumphal parade into Rome for a victorious general (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). The captives were marched behind him in chains. By His death on the cross and His resurrection Jesus overcame (1) the curse of the Law and (2) the hostile angelic powers.

As is obvious from the modern translations that the pronoun at the end of the verse can be understood in two related ways: (1) to Christ or (2) to the cross. It is neuter and most translations relate it to Christ's victory over evil by means of His sacrificial death.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WAR IN HEAVEN

▣ **"public display"** See Special Topic below, second paragraph.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (*PARRHĒSIA*)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:16-19

¹⁶Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day- ¹⁷things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

2:16-23 Verses 16-23 are the strongest condemnations of religious legalism in Paul's writings. When Paul was dealing with "weak" believers he was gentle (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8-10), but when he was addressing religious self-righteous legalists (i.e., false teachers) he was uncompromising. This self-righteousness was what brought such condemnation from Jesus on the Pharisees and Scribes. Paul knew well performance-oriented religion. His encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9) changed everything!

There were two types of Gnostic false teachers: (1) salvation is through secret knowledge and, therefore, it does not matter how you live (antinomian libertines) and (2) salvation through secret knowledge plus a very restricted lifestyle (legalists).

2:16

NASB	"let no one act as your judge"
NKJV	"let no one judge you"
NRSV	"do not let anyone condemn you"
TEV	"let no one make rules"
NJB	"never let anyone criticize you"

This is a present imperative with the negative particle, which meant to stop an act already in process. This referred to (1) matters of food (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3); (2) special days (cf. Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:10); or (3) the

worship of these angelic levels (cf. Col. 2:8,20). There is an obvious parallel between Col. 2:16 ("act as your judge") and Col. 2:18 (act as "umpire"). Be careful of religious legalism whether Jewish, Greek, or modern.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

2:17

NASB, NRSV "but the substance belongs to Christ"

NKJV "but the substance is of Christ"

TEV "the reality is Christ"

NJB "the reality is the body of Christ"

There is a contrast between "shadow" (*skia*, Col. 2:17a) and "substance" (*sōma*, lit. "body," Col. 2:17b). Religious ritual, devotion, and special days of worship are not bad in themselves unless they become ultimate issues. Christ, not human performance in any area, is the focus of the gospel.

Paul saw the religious ritualism and required religious performance of the false teachers as a mere shadow of real spirituality. The interpretive question is what does "the body of Christ" mean? The two main theories are: (1) Philo of Alexandria and Josephus interpret "body" in the sense of "substance" (NASB, NKJV) or "reality" (TEV), "true spirituality in Christ" or (2) true spirituality is manifested in the Church which is Christ's body (NJB, cf. Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12,27).

The author of Hebrews also used the term "shadow" (*skia*, Col. 2:17a) to compare the Mosaic covenant to the new covenant in Christ (cf. Heb. 8:5; 10:1).

2:18

NASB "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize"

NKJV "Let no one defraud you of your reward"

NRSV "Do not let anyone disqualify you"

TEV "Do not allow yourselves to be condemned by anyone"

NJB "Do not be cheated of your prize by anyone"

This is a present imperative with negative particle, which meant to stop an act already in process. This term is used only here in the NT. This is one of Paul's athletic metaphors for the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24,27; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:7). Believers must not let legalists act as umpires robbing them of their freedom in Christ (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Corinthians 10-12. The Williams translation of the NT catches the athletic thrust, translating this "defraud you as an umpire"). The "prize" is true freedom in Christ (cf. Gal. 2:4; 5:1,13; 1 Pet. 2:16)! Freedom to serve God, not self. Freedom from past fears and taboos, freedom from, not freedom to (Romans 6)!

NASB "delighting in self-abasement"

NKJV "taking delight in false humility"

NRSV "insisting on self-abasement"

TEV "insist on false humility"

NJB "who chooses to grovel to angels"

This phrase is theologically related to Col. 2:23. In the ancient Greco-Roman world asceticism was seen as religious devotion. This was part of the Gnostic depreciation of the physical. For them, and Greek thought in general, the body was evil. Therefore, to deny the body was a sign of spirituality. This view is still alive in the church!

This Greek word, translated by NASB as "self-abasement," means "lowliness," "modesty," "humility" and is not a negative term in the NT. Paul used it in a positive sense in Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12. It is the motive that turns it into a spiritual charade!

■ **"and the worship of the angels"** This obviously refers to the Gnostic angelic levels (cf. Col. 2:8,10,15). It is also possible that this related to a Jewish theological obsession with the angelic realm. The "New

Age" movement in our own day seems to be headed in this direction. Angels are "ministering spirits" for redeemed humanity (cf. Heb. 2:14).

▣ **"taking his stand"** This term was used of initiates into the Mystery religions (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 206). It refers to the so-called secret revelations or passwords of the Gnostics which they thought brought salvation through the angelic spheres so as to reach the presence of the high, holy god.

▣ **"on visions he has seen"** This possibly refers to the false teachers' claims of special revelations. The King James Version adds a negative, making the verse imply what they had not seen but only claimed to have seen. This, however, is a later scribal addition to the manuscripts $^2\chi$ and D^2 . The ancient Greek manuscripts P^{46} , χ^* , A, B, and D^* do not have the negative. The UBS4 rates the shorter text as "B" (almost certain).

▣ **"inflated without cause"** This is a Present passive participle. Literally it means "in vain puffed up." Paul uses this term often in his first letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). The unexpressed agent of the passive voice was their own fallen minds. Unbelievers and false teachers are often sincere and enthusiastic.

▣ **"by his fleshly mind"** For Paul there is an obvious dichotomy between the thinking of the fallen world and the Christian. Believers have received the mind of Christ which is in conflict with the mind-set of a world operating and functioning apart from God (cf. Col. 1:21; Rom. 7:22-23; 8:5-7; 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 2:3; 4:17-23). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at Col. 1:22.

These legalistic religionists are to be rejected for three reasons.

1. their insights are mere shadows of reality (Col. 2:17)
2. their visions are false because they are informed by a fleshly mind (Col. 2:18)
3. they have stopped holding on to Christ (Col. 2:19)

Legalistic false teachers are still with us! Beware! Be informed!

2:19 Paul again stressed the major truth of fallen mankind's need for a relationship with Christ (individual) and also with His body, the church (corporate, cf. Col. 2:8; Eph. 4:16). We need salvation from sin and wisdom from God on how to live. Christ provides both!

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "not holding fast to the Head"

TEV "have stopped holding on to Christ"

NJB "has no connection to the Head"

This is a negated present active participle. The implication is that at one time the false teachers were holding on to Christ. This can be understood in several ways.

1. they were like the two seeds in the Parable of the Sower (cf. Matt. 13:20-23) that germinated but fell away and did not bear fruit
2. they were like "the believers" of John 8:31-59 who turned against Jesus
3. like the church members who left in 1 John 2:18-19
4. they were like the believers in the church of Ephesus who abandoned their "first love" (cf. Rev. 2:4)

▣ **"the Head"** Paul often uses the analogy of the people of God as a body (cf. Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12,14,20; Eph. 4:4,16; Col. 3:15), but it is only in Ephesians (1:22; 4:15; 5:23) and Colossians (1:18; 2:19) that Christ is specifically identified as "the Head" (see Special Topic: Head at Eph. 5:23).

This whole verse speaks of Christ as the indispensable founder, leader and sustainer of the Church.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:20-3:4

²⁰If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹"Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" ²²(which all refer to things destined to perish with using)- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. ^{3:1}Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

2:20 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Believers are united with Christ and should be separated from the powers and structures of this fallen world system.

■ **"you have died"** This is an aorist active indicative. This death is symbolized in baptism (cf. Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4), and is an image of the believer's death to the old life and the resurrection to the new life of God-eternal life. Baptism, like circumcision, is an outward sign of an inner spiritual reality (cf. Col. 2:11, 13).

Daily death to personal ambition and personal preferences is a mandate of effective ministry (cf. Rom. 6:7; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16). However, this is not a legalism of rules, but a freedom from the tyranny of the fallen self! Daily spiritual death to self brings true life!

■ **"with Christ"** This is another use of the Greek preposition *syn*, which means joint participation with. These three grammatical features: (1) *syn* compounds; (2) the aorist tenses of Col. 2:11, 12, 13, 15, 20; and (3) the first class conditional sentence of Col. 2:20 show what believers already are in Christ!

NASB	"to the elementary principles of the world"
NKJV	"from the basic principles of the world"
NRSV	"to the elemental spirits of the universe"
TEV	"from the ruling spirits of the universe"
NJB	"to the principles of this world"

This term (*stoicheia*) is defined as

1. fundamental principles (cf. Heb. 5:12. 6:1)
2. basic elements of the world, such as earth, wind, water or fire (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10, 12)
3. elementary spirits, (cf. Gal. 4:3, 8-9; Col. 2:8; Eph. 6:10-12)
4. heavenly bodies (cf. *Enoch* 52:9-10 and the early church fathers who thought it referred to the seven planetary spheres, cf. Baur, Arnt, Ginrich, Danker's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 776)

The basic etymology was "something in a series" or "row." See note at Col. 2:8.

Paul viewed life as a spiritual struggle (cf. Eph. 2:2-3; 6:10-18). Humans were beset by evil from within (a fallen nature, cf. Genesis 3), by a fallen world system (cf. Genesis 3) and by personal evil (Satan, the demonic and the *stoicheia*).

James Stewart's, *A Man in Christ*, has an interesting comment:

"Sin was not something a man *did*: it was something that took possession of him, something the man *was*, something that turned him into an open enemy of the God who loved him. It brought outward penalties: 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' But far more appalling than these were its inward results. It tormented the conscience: 'O wretched man that I am!' It brought the will into abject slavery: 'the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.' It

destroyed fellowship with God: men were 'alienated,' 'without God in the world.' It hardened the heart, and blinded the judgment, and warped the moral sense: 'God gave them over to a reprobate mind.' It destroyed life itself: 'the wages of sin is death.'

Such is the apostle's estimate of sin's overwhelming gravity. And through it all, even where sin is regarded as an external force waiting to take advantage of human nature in its frailty, he will allow no blurring of the fact of personal accountability. Principalities and powers may lie in wait, but in the last resort man's is the choice, man's the responsibility, and man's the doom" (pp. 106-107).

For "world" see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* at Col. 1:6.

■ **"decrees"** This term has the same root as Col. 2:14. Christ did not release believers from the Mosaic Law to become entangled again in Gnostic rules or any humanly mandated requirements. Oh, the freedom believers have in Christ! Oh, the pain of well-intended religious legalists!

2:21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" This series has no verbs and no connectors, which makes it emphatic! It may have been a slogan of the false teachers. These are examples of human religious rules which did not bring true righteousness. Humans have always had an ascetic, legalistic tendency (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:10-12; Mark 7:19; Rom. 14:17,21), but it is a hollow religion of self effort, self glory and self sufficiency (cf. Col. 2:22-23).

2:22 "(which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)" In Matt. 15:7-20 and Mark 7:6-23 Jesus discusses this same type of issue in relation to the food laws of Leviticus 11.

■ **"perish"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT (PHTHEIRŌ)

2:23 "the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and the severe treatment of the body" This was Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (cf. Isa. 29:13).

Paul describes the false teachers religious practices by three terms:

- 1. NASB "self-made religion"**
NKJV "self-imposed religion"
NRSV "self-imposed deity"
TEV "forced worship of angels"
NJB "The cultivation of the will"

This term is used only here in the NT. It may have been coined by Paul or earlier Christians. The NASB seems to have caught the essence of the term, "self-made religion." TEV assumes that it reflects Col. 2:18.

- 2. NASB "self-abasement"**
NKJV, TEV "false humility"
NRSV "humility"
NJB (combines the second and third terms)

This same Greek word is used in Col. 2:18. Literally it means "humility," but the context favors the NKJV and TEV translation.

- 3. NASB, NRSV,**
TEV "severe treatment of the body"
NKJV "neglect of the body"
NJB "a humility which takes no account of the body"

This reflects the ascetic religious view that to deny one's bodily needs showed or developed religious piety. Examples are (1) denying the body food; (2) celibacy; (3) lack of clothing in winter, etc. This followed the Greek view that the body (matter) was evil.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN FREEDOM vs. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the false teachers' doctrine. Why were they so dangerous?
2. Who or what are the "elementary principles" (*stoicheia*, cf 2:8,15)?
3. Is Jesus God or man? Why is this so important?
4. How is Jesus related to the angelic powers?
5. Why is legalism-asceticism so dangerous (cf. Col. 2:16-23)?
6. List the Gnostic catch words in this section.

COLOSSIANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The New Life in Christ (2:20-3:4)	Not Carnality but Christ 3:1-11	The True Christian Life 3:1-4	Dying and Living with Christ (2:20-3:4) The Old Life and the New	Life-Giving Union with the Glorified Christ 3:1-4 General Rules of Christian Behaviour
3:5-11	Character of the New Man	3:5-11	3:5-7 3:8-11	3:5-11
3:12-17	3:12-17	3:12-17	3:12-17	3:12-15 3:16-17
Social Duties of the New Life (3:22-4:1)	The Christian Home	The Christian's Duties (3:18-4:6)	Personal Relations in the New Life	The Morals of the Home and Household
3:18-19	3:18-4:1	3:18-19	3:18 3:19	3:18-21
3:20-21		3:20-4:1	3:20 3:21	
3:22-4:1			3:22-4:1	3:22-4:1

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Col. 3:1-4 is the theological basis for Christian ethics and lifestyle. Believers must live out of their new spiritual lives in Christ. They are co-buried and co-raised with Christ (cf. Col. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:3-11). His life flows through them.
- B. Paul lists the things to be shed (put aside, Col. 3:8-9) and incorporated (put on, Col. 3:10) which form a balanced admonition to godliness. Paul often made lists of sins (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5) and virtues (cf. Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18-20; Phil. 1:4-7; 1 Thess. 5:12-22). In many ways these lists parallel the Greek moralists of Paul's day. But the motive and mechanism was Christ/Spirit, not self effort. See Special Topic at Col. 3:5.
- C. Paul's powerful call to unity because of the Trinity's unity, so beautifully spelled out in Eph. 4:1-10, is paralleled in Col. 3:12-17. Also, Paul's powerful demand for each believer to be filled with the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18) is paralleled in Col. 3:16. This parallel is not a word parallel, but an outline parallel. Remember that Colossians and Ephesians are based on almost exactly the same outline.
- D. Paul's admonitions on the family (Col. 3:18-14:1) show how believers' new lives in Christ must impact every area of life. Biblical faith is a radical break with the old nature (fallen nature). The evidence of the change is that we no longer live for self, but for others (cf. 1 John 3:16). This emulates Jesus' life. This totally new orientation is the evidence that we have been redeemed! Chapter 3 (3:18-4:1) is one unified context (cf. Eph. 5:22-6:9).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 (Full paragraph division includes 2:20-3:4)
...^{3:1}**Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.**

3:1 "Therefore" This links the doctrinal section (i.e., chapters 1-2) with the practical section (i.e., chapters 3-4). This is a standard literary form in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:1).

- **"if"** This is a First class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Believers have been co-raised with Christ.
- **"you have been raised up with Christ"** This was a *syn* compound, "co-raised" (cf. Col. 2:12,13; Rom. 6:3-11; Eph. 2:5-6). Believers have resurrection life now, so they must live like it! Verses 1-4 are the theological basis for Christian ethics and lifestyle.
- **"keep seeking the things above"** This is either a present active indicative or present active imperative. Therefore, it is an admonition to pursue spiritual thoughts and things (cf. Col. 3:2; Phil. 2:1-2; 4:8).

Verses 1 and 2 are parallel. Probably both are present active imperatives. Believers become what they think about. The eyes and ears are windows to the soul.

Some scholars think that this context is a contrast between who we are in Christ (indicative) and what we should be in Christ (imperative). Paul does often use this grammatical feature.

- **"where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God"** This was an anthropomorphic phrase (Ps. 110:1),

which Paul rarely uses, for Christ's authority and place of honor (Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). Describing Christ as sitting at the Father's right hand is also a way of referring to His continuing ministry of intercession for the saints (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). It is metaphorical for the throne room of a middle eastern king. I hope when you get to heaven you are not expecting to see "an older man, a young man sitting in a large chair with a dove flying around them!" The Bible uses human, physical terms to describe an eternal, spiritual, holy God. All terms used to describe Him are metaphors, analogies, or negations; they are true but not exhaustive.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (anthropomorphic language)

3:2 "Set your mind on things above" This is parallel with Col. 3:1 and is either a present active indicative or present active imperative. It is probably an imperative. Christianity is both knowledge and action (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-21)! This verse is parallel to Col. 3:1.

▣ **"not on the things that are on the earth"** This phrase defines Paul's intended contrast; believers are to think and live in the Spirit, not in the flesh (cf. Rom. 8:1-17). They have a choice and must set their lifestyle priorities. Being saved does not automatically issue in godly living, but it should.

Paul uses a dualistic contrast, but not between spirit versus matter like the Gnostics; rather, his contrast is between this world (age) versus the Kingdom of God (new age). Believers are citizens of two realms. This knowledge (worldview) gives hope, courage and peace amidst the trials of life (false teaching, suffering, imprisonment, persecution, etc.).

3:3 "you have died" This is another metaphor based on baptism to describe believers' new standing in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:11-12). Believers are dead to sin and alive to God! They were admonished to recognize their new standing in Christ (cf. Col. 3:5; Eph. 2:5-6) and emulate Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16).

▣ **"hidden"** This is a perfect passive indicative. Believers have died (in Christ) and have been and continue to be hidden in God. The Mystery religions of the Greco-Roman period used this word to refer to initiation rites. This concept of hiddenness could relate to (1) protection or (2) the fully shared glory of believers with Christ not yet visible to the world (cf. Col. 3:4).

3:4 "Christ, who is our life" This reflects the theological concept of an "exchanged life" (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21).

▣ **"is revealed"** This refers to the Second Coming (cf. 1 John 3:2).

▣ **"then you also will be revealed with Him in glory"** Believers died with Christ, were raised with Christ, and will be part of His glorious return (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The "hidden" (Col. 3:3) will be revealed (Col. 3:4). See note on "glory" at Eph. 1:6 and Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him- ¹¹*a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised,

3:5

NASB	"consider the members of your earthly body as dead"
NKJV	"put to death your members which are on the earth"
NRSV	"put to death whatever in you is earthly"
TEV	"you must put to death the earthly desires at work in you"
NJB	"you must kill everything in you that is earthly"

This is an aorist active imperative which denotes urgency (cf. Col. 3:8,12). It begins a section which emphasizes the need for believers to strip themselves of evil once and for all (Col. 3:5-11). Paul often used clothing as a metaphor for the spiritual life (cf. Rom. 6:6,11; 8:13; Eph. 4:22,24,25,31, possibly from Zechariah 3). Believers are to die to self, to sin, and to worldliness. The next section emphasizes that Christians should put on Christlike virtues (Col. 3:10-17).

Paul often characterized the sins of the old life and old man in lists which in many ways were similar to the Greek moralists (like the Stoics) of his day.

SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT

■ **"immorality, impurity"** This first Greek term (*porneia*) originally meant "harlot," but it came to be used for sexual immorality in general (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9). We get the English term "pornography" from this word. The second term "impurity" (*akatharsia*) was also a general term for sexual immorality, though it was originally used in the OT in the sense of ceremonial uncleanness or moral uncleanness. Paul intended the second connotation.

■ **"passion, evil desire"** These two terms are also used together in 1 Thess. 4:5 and translated "lustful passion." The first term, "passion" (*pathos*), is used in two very different senses: (1) of suffering and (2) of sexual desire.

The second term, "evil desire" (*epithumia*), is also used in two very different senses, a strong desire for something (1) good or (2) evil. Context must determine which aspect of a word's semantical field is meant by the author.

This list of sexual sins may be related to the false teachers. Gnostic false teachers were of two types: (1) those who lived ascetic lives of self-abasement and (2) others who viewed the body as irrelevant to spiritual life and indulged the body's desires. Often sexual and financial exploitation characterize false teachers.

■ **"greed"** This term is usually used of desire for things, but in a context of sexual exploitation, it may have meant more and more sexual pleasure at any cost! Some see others only as objects for personal, sexual gratification.

■ **"which amounts to idolatry"** Anything that dominates, controls, or demands allegiance becomes an idol which replaces God. For some, sexual pleasure becomes the focus of their lives, thoughts, and plans.

3:6 "the wrath of God will come" In many ways this is similar to Paul's discussion in Rom. 1:18-2:16. God's wrath was viewed in two time frames in the Bible: (1) sin resulted in punishment now, in this life (temporal) and (2) God will judge all mankind one day (eschatological).

There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point. The longer text, which includes the Semitic idiom "upon the sons of disobedience," is in the uncial MSS κ , A, C, D, F, G, H, K, L, and P. It is omitted in MSS P⁴⁶ and B. The longer reading is found in every manuscript of Eph. 5:6 which may be the source of this addition (see Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek NT*, p. 824).

3:7 "in them you also once walked" The background of the Colossian believers was paganism (cf. Rom. 6:19; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:3). These believers used to think and live these kinds of sins.

3:8 "But now" Notice the contrast (old man vs. new man).

- **"put them all aside"** This is an aorist middle imperative which denotes urgency. Believers must be different. Paul used clothing as a metaphor for a person's lifestyle choices. Believers are encouraged to take off the old life and lay it aside like a garment (cf. Col. 3:8,9; Eph. 4:22,25,31; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1). They are to put on Christ (cf. Col. 3:10,12,14; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27). These believers were once controlled and dominated by their evil desires, but now, through Christ, they can turn from them (cf. Rom. 5-6).
- **"anger"** This term means continuing, long-lasting, simmering anger (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31).
- **"wrath"** This term means fast-burning anger or outburst of rage (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31).
- **"malice"** This term means "vicious thoughts" (cf. Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 4:31). It implies a desire to hurt others.
- **"slander and abusive speech"** People are listening; our speech reflects who we really are (cf. Matt. 12:34-35; 15:11,18; Mark 7:20; Eph. 4:29; 5:4; James 2:3-12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH

3:9 "do not lie" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with negative particle which meant stop an action in process. The Greek sentence runs from Col. 3:9 to Col. 3:11. Christian speech must be true, honest, edifying, and spoken in love (cf. Eph. 4:15).

3:10 "the new self who is being renewed" This is a present passive participle with the implied agent being God or the Spirit. The Christian life is both a state (Eph. 2:5,8) and a process of development (1 Cor. 1:18). Its goal is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4), being restored to the image of God. This "renewing" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16 and the noun in Rom. 12:2 and Titus 3:5) is a work of God that each believer must allow, and must cooperate with God to perform it in them (like the "filling" of the Spirit, also a present passive participle in Eph. 5:18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RENEW (ANAKAINŌSIS)

- **"a true knowledge"** This is literally "in full knowledge" (*epignōsin*). In contradistinction to the false knowledge of the Gnostics.

3:11 This verse expresses the same truth as Rom. 3:22,29; 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28 and Eph. 2:11-22. All human barriers and distinctions are removed by the gospel. This does not remove all biblical distinctions, for example, the relationship between husbands and wives (cf. Eph. 5:21-31) or the rich and poor (cf. James 1:9-10), but it does remove all inequality!

- **"no barbarian, Scythian"** This referred to cultured and uncultured Gentiles. The onomatopoeic term "barbarian" originally referred to the way that people of the Greco-Roman Empire heard the European tribes speak which they referred to as "bar bar bar." Greco-Roman society considered the Scythians the most uncivilized and barbaric national entity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM

- **"Christ is all, and in all"** Jesus is the leveling influence and sphere. In Him all human distinctions are removed in the love of God! All may come, all are welcome, all become family (cf. Gal. 3:28). Salvation in Christ is the reversal of the Fall (cf. Col. 3:10, "image") and the Tower of Babel (cf. Genesis 10-11, division

of people).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

3:12 "chosen of God, holy and beloved" These terms were used to describe Israel (i.e., Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:37; 7:7,8; 10:15), but now they describe the church (cf. Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). See Special Topic: Holy at Eph. 1:4.

Notice that the goal of the People of God is holiness by election (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a privileged standing. Israel was chosen as a tool to reach all humans made in the image of God. Israel missed her evangelistic mandate (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5). The church has clearly been given this assignment (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). Believers are called to be holy and to be witnesses. See Contextual Insights to Ephesians 1:1-23, C.

Also notice that election cannot be isolated from a believer's responsibility to act. God's sovereignty and human free will are united in this concept of "covenant." God initiates and sets the condition, but humans must respond and continue to respond!

■ **"put on"** This is an Aorist middle imperative which denotes urgency. This is the continuing use of clothing as a metaphor and mandate for the Christian life (i.e., Col. 3:8,10; Eph. 4:22,24,25). It is even possible that this was baptismal terminology (cf. Gal. 3:27). This context, starting with the "take off" (Col. 3:8-10), parallels Gal. 5:19-21 ("the deeds of the flesh") and 5:22-25 ("the fruit of the Spirit"). Eternal life has observable characteristics!

NASB	"a heart of compassion"
NKJV	"tender mercies"
NRSV, TEV	"compassion"
NJB	"heartfelt compassion"

This is literally "bowels of compassion" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:12; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Philemon 7,12,20). The ancients believed the seat of the emotions was located in the lower viscera (abdomen).

■ **"kindness"** This should be the Christian's response to others (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:4).

■ **"humility"** This is a uniquely Christian virtue (cf. Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3). The Stoics viewed meekness (humbleness) as weakness and did not include it in their list of virtues. Only two people in the Bible are called humble, Moses (cf. Num. 12:3) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:8). This characteristic is the will of God for every believer (cf. Matt. 18:4; 23:12; James 4:6,10; 1 Pet. 5:5,6). This term is used in a negative sense in Col. 2:18,23.

■ **"gentleness"** This originally referred to domesticated animals (horses, camels, donkeys) whose strength had been channeled for their master's purpose. God does not want to break us, but direct His giftedness to His glory. Paul often uses this metaphor for the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25).

■ **"patience"** This is often used of God's patience with people (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; Titus 3:2, 1 Pet. 3:20) or Jesus' patience (cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Peter 3:15). It is used to exhort believers in their treatment of one another (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:2).

3:13

NASB, NKJV "bearing with one another"

NRSV, NJB "bear with one another"

TEV "be tolerant with one another"

This is a present middle participle (used as an imperative), which implies voluntary non-retaliation (cf. Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3-4).

■ **"forgiving each other"** This is a present middle (deponent) participle. It is from the same Greek root as grace, "freely forgive." One sign of believers being forgiven is that they forgive others (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:15; 18:22-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:36-38; Eph. 4:32; James 2:13; 5:9). Forgiveness of others is not the basis of forgiveness, but it is its fruit.

■ **"whoever has a complaint"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which meant probable future action. There will be complaints! Christians will be at odds with other Christians, but Jesus' cross should put a stop to it (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13).

■ **"just as the Lord forgave you"** This is the basis for believers' actions toward others (cf. Eph. 4:32; Rom. 15:7).

There is a Greek manuscript variation between "Lord," "Christ," "God" and "God in Christ." "Lord" is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, A, B, D*, and is probably original.

3:14 "put on love which is the perfect bond of unity" Love, which issues in unity, is the distinctive mark of the Christian (cf. Eph. 4:2-3; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22).

3:15 "Let the peace of Christ" This term originally meant "binding together that which was broken" (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7). There are three ways the NT speaks of peace.

1. as the objective (doctrinal) aspect of our peace with God through Christ (cf. Col. 1:20)
2. as the subjective (experiential) aspect of our being right with God (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7)
3. as God's uniting believing Jews and Gentiles into one new people (body) through Christ which is the mystery of God (cf. Eph. 2:14-17; Col. 3:15)

See Special Topic: Peace at Col. 1:20.

■ **"rule"** This is a Present active imperative. In contrast to the false teachers acting as umpires in Col. 2:18, Christ is our only judge, guide, and arbiter.

■ **"heart. . . hearts"** See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.

■ **"you were called"** God always takes the initiative in calling, electing, and wooing believers to Himself (cf. Col. 3:12; John 6:44, 65; Eph. 1:4-5,11). The term "calling" (*kaleō*) is used in several theological senses.

1. sinners are called by God through Christ to salvation
2. sinners call on the name of the Lord to be saved (cf. Rom. 10:9-13)
3. believers are called to live Christlike lives (cf. Eph. 4:1)
4. believers are called to ministry tasks (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7)

See Special Topic at Eph. 4:1.

■ **"in one body"** This speaks of unity amidst diversity (cf. Col. 1:18,24; Eph. 4:4-6)! Notice that the emphasis is not on personal election, but corporate election. Salvation is corporate, not just individual.

In reaction to the abuses of power in the Roman Church, the Protestant Reformers emphasized the rights and responsibilities of the individual before God. However, their formulation became a biblical overstatement. The Bible does not teach the "priesthood of the believer," but "the priesthood of believers." It is not a doctrine which emphasizes the freedom of the individual, but the (1) body-life responsibility of each believer (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7) and (2) Great-Commission Christianity (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

■ **"be thankful"** This was a Present active imperative, "keep on always being thankful." Thankfulness is a sign of Christian maturity, of the Spirit-filled life (cf. Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18). It is not a resignation to determinism (Islam), but a biblical worldview that God is with us and for us even amidst the difficulties and circumstances of this fallen world!

3:16 "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" This is a present active imperative second person plural. "The word of Christ" can refer to (1) the gospel; (2) His personal presence; or (3) the Spirit. Notice that this indwelling is not automatic (neither individual or corporate). Believers must co-operate in the Christian life as they do in salvation.

There is another Greek manuscript variation here which is similar to that in Col. 3:13 and 15. Scribes tended to unify Paul's expressions. The phrase "word of Christ," is a unique expression found only here in the NT. Therefore, it was changed to "word of God" (MSS A, C*) or "word of the Lord" (MS κ*). By far the best Greek manuscripts, P⁴⁶, 2^x, B, C², D, F, G, and most ancient translations have "word of Christ."

The outlines of Ephesians and Colossians are very similar. The parallel to this verse in Eph. is 5:18! The Spirit-filled life is daily Christlikeness or allowing the word of Christ and the mind of Christ to guide in every area, especially interpersonal relationships.

There is an ambiguity in this verse concerning the Greek preposition "in" (*en*). It can also be translated "among." "In" would have an individual focus, while "among" a corporate focus (cf. Col. 1:27).

■ **"with all wisdom"** This is a play on the false teachers' overemphasis on human knowledge. The word of Christ (the Spirit-filled life) is true wisdom. Wisdom is a person (cf. Pro. 8:22-31) and a lifestyle, not isolated truth or creeds.

■ **"with psalms"** The NKJV and NASB translations imply "teaching with songs," but the NRSV and NJB imply "teachers with songs in their hearts." TEV implies worshiping God with songs.

The modern controversy over musical preference in worship could be addressed by this verse (and Eph. 5:19) in that several different types of music are mentioned: (1) psalms; (2) hymns; and (3) spiritual songs. Although we cannot identify all the types it is obvious that the early church used several different forms of music. The key is the heart of the worshiper, not the form of the music (cf. Col. 3:17).

3:16-17 There is a theological and structural parallel between Eph. 5:18-21 and Col. 3:16-17. In Ephesians there is a present passive imperative, "ever be filled," while in Colossians there is a present active imperative, "let the word of Christ dwell within you." Also in Ephesians the imperative is followed by five present participles which describe the Spirit-filled life.

(1) Col. 3:19, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (present active)

(2) Col. 3:19, singing (present active)

(3) Col. 3:19, making melody (present active)

(4) Col. 3:20, always giving thanks (present active)

(5) Col. 3:21, be subject to one another (present middle)

In Colossians some of the same participles also occur.

(1) Col. 3:16, teaching (present active)

(2) Col. 3:16, admonishing in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (present active)

(3) Col. 3:16, singing (present active)

(4) Col. 3:17, giving thanks (present active)

3:17 "Whatever you do in word or deed" This is a major spiritual truth. Believers must relate all their

motives and actions to God through Christ. Every aspect of our lives is "as unto the Lord." Believers do not live for themselves (cf. Col. 3:23; Rom. 14:7-9; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 6:7; 1 Pet. 4:11). This truth could revolutionize the modern, western, individual-focused church.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. ²⁰Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

3:18 "Wives, be subject to your husbands" This is a present middle imperative. When the word of Christ (i.e., the Spirit-filled life, cf. Eph. 5:18) indwells a believer it impacts every area of life! The parallels are Eph. 5:21-22; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, but remember Colossians was written first. Ephesians expresses the universal principle of submission for all believers in Eph. 5:21 (present middle participle) and uses the Christian home as a three-fold domestic example of how the "Spirit-filled" life works in daily life: (1) husbands-wives, 5:22-31; (2) parents-children, 6:1-4 and (3) masters-slaves, 6:5-9. This discussion seems negative to us today, but in its day it was strikingly positive. The three groups that had total cultural control (husbands, parents, and slave masters) are equally admonished as were those with no civic power or rights (wives, children, and slaves). This selfless mandate is an example of the reversal of the Fall. What a difference Christ makes. See Special Topic: Submission (*hupotassō*) at Eph. 5:21.

3:18-19 In this context and its parallels, submission was between married couples, not men and women in general. The principle of male headship is stated throughout the Bible, from Genesis 3 onward. However, Christian male headship is characterized by, and commanded (present active imperative) to be, sacrificial, self-giving, Christlike love (cf. Eph. 5:25, 28-29). Headship in the NT is servanthood (cf. Matt. 20:25-27; 23:11) with Christ as the model.

In our day "submission" is a negative, sexist term. Originally it was a military term that related to obedience based on the chain of command. In the NT, however, it was often used of Jesus' attitude toward His earthly parents (cf. Luke 2:51) and His heavenly Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28). Paul was fond of this term and used it 23 times. Ephesians 5:21 shows it is a universal spiritual principle connected to the Spirit-filled life. Submission goes against our cultural, western, individual focused mind-set. Selfishness is so ingrained (cf. Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:3; 1 John 4:11)! See Special Topic: Submission at Eph. 5:21.

■ **"as is fitting in the Lord"** The Ephesian parallel has "as to the Lord." The TEV translates the phrase as "for that is what you should do as Christians" (cf. Col. 3:20). Believers should treat others in loving, submitting ways not because others deserve it, but because they are Christians (cf. Col. 3:23-23). The Spirit allows fallen mankind to redirect his self-centeredness into others-centeredness, as Jesus did (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16).

3:19

NASB	"and do not be embittered against them"
NKJV	"and do not be bitter toward them"
NRSV	"and never treat them harshly"
TEV	"and do not be harsh with them"
NJB	"and do not be sharp with them"

This is a present middle imperative with a negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in process. "You, yourselves, stop being bitter." There is no direct parallel to the phrase in Ephesians 5, but Col. 3:28-29 express the same truth in a positive sense. In the biblical context of "one flesh" (cf. Genesis 2) marriages in which husbands treat their wives in loving ways, they bless themselves and vice versa. Loving one's spouse is, in one sense, loving oneself. In the Christian home our love for family reflects our love for God and is a powerful witness to a confused and hurting lost world.

3:20 "Children, be obedient" This is a present active imperative, "continue to be obedient." In Eph. 6:1-4, this mandate is expanded to relate to Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16, "Honor your father and mother." In this context, "for this is well pleasing to the Lord" relates the command to Christian children.

Notice that children are commanded to be obedient, but wives are commanded to submit. In both cases it is Christian families that are addressed. One issue that is difficult to reconcile between this and our day is "How old are children?" In Jewish culture a boy became responsible to the Law and was marriageable at age thirteen, a girl at twelve. In Roman culture a boy became a man at age fourteen and in Greek culture at age eighteen.

3:21 "Fathers, do not exasperate your children" This is a present active imperative with a negative particle which means stop an act in process, "stop exasperating your children." The reciprocal responsibility is clear (cf. Eph. 6:4).

There has always been a generational barrier. Christians (both parents and children) should handle relationships differently because of their ultimate commitment to Christ. Paul's discussion of the appropriate relationships in the home were radically different from the cultural norm of his day. Paul directly addressed the person with cultural power and authority (husbands, parents, and slave masters) and admonished them to treat those under them (wives, children, and domestic servants) with dignity and Christian love (much like Philemon). Believers are stewards of God, not owners! How we treat each other is meant to demonstrate the new age to a lost world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1

²²Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. ²⁵For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. ^{4:1}Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

3:22 "Slaves, in all things obey" There should be no paragraph break at Col. 3:22. This is a present active imperative, "keep on obeying." This is the third example from the Christian home (cf. Eph. 6:5-9). In our day this might relate (i.e., apply to) to Christian employers and employees. In Ephesians, and probably also here in Colossians, it refers to both saved and lost masters.

I personally do not believe this "in all things" refers to evil or sin (cf. Acts 5:29). This is a general statement admonishing obedience, not a license for believers to participate in things which are excluded by Scripture. This is also true of wives (cf. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22). See Special Topic: Paul's Admonitions to Slaves at Eph. 6:5.

▣ **"sincerity of heart"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GENEROUS/SINCERE (HAPLOTES)

3:23 Serving the Lord is the motive for all Christians in all their activities (cf. Col. 3:17; Eph. 6:7; 1 Cor. 10:31)! Believers should be daily, living witnesses of the redeeming power of God!

3:24 In the ancient world slaves had no inheritance rights. But now, in Christ, they do! God is going to reward those who love, worship, and serve Him (cf. Col. 3:23; Eph. 6:8).

3:25 Divine judgment is dispensed without partiality (cf. Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 2:9; 6:9; 1 Pet. 1:17). This principle is expressed clearly in Gal. 6:7. Even believers will give an account unto God, not for sin, but for stewardship (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). Sin has consequences in time and in eternity!

4:1 This shows the reciprocal responsibility (cf. Col. 3:19, 21). Unlike Ephesians, this text speaks to Christian slave owners (cf. Philemon). The NIV Study Bible (p. 1817) adds an interesting comment: "The reason Paul writes more about slaves and masters than about wives, husbands, children, and fathers may be that the slave Onesimus (cf. Col. 4:9) is going along with Tychicus to deliver this Colossean letter and the letter to Philemon, Onesimus' master, who also lived at Colossae."

This verse contextually should go with chapter 3. It concludes Paul's domestic example of Christlike living. See Special Topic: Paul's Admonitions to Slaves at Eph. 6:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How have we died with Christ? What does this mean in our daily lives?
2. Why are verses 11 and 17 so important in the Christian faith?
3. Define "submission." Does it speak of inferiority? Why or why not?
4. Why is the Christian home used as an example of reciprocal submission?

COLOSSIANS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NRSV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Exhortations	Christian Graces	The Christian's Duties (3:18-4:6)	Instructions	Apostolic Spirit
4:2-6	4:2-6	4:2-4 4:5-6	4:2-4 4:5-6	4:2-4 4:5-6
Final Greetings	Final Greetings	Epilogue	Final Greetings	Personal News
4:7-9	4:7-15	4:7-9	4:7-9	4:7-9 Greeting and Final Wishes
4:10-27		4:10-17	4:10-11 4:12-14 4:15-17	4:10-14 4:15-17
	Closing Exhortations and Blessing 4:16-18			
4:18		4:18	4:18a 4:18b	4:18

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

²Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude* of thanksgiving; ³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may

border="1" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

4:2

NASB, NRSV "devote yourselves to prayer"

NKJV "continue earnestly in prayer"

TEV "be persistent in prayer"

NJB "be persevering in your prayers"

This is a present active imperative, "continue to devote yourselves to prayer." Prayer is not optional. Prayer is crucial for effective Christian living and ministry (cf. Eph. 6:18-19; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17). If Jesus, being God incarnate, was characterized by both public and private prayer, how much more do believers need to pray for the gospel, for themselves, and for one another? See Special Topic: Effective Prayer at Eph. 6:19.

NASB, NRSV,

TEV "keeping alert"

NKJV "being vigilant"

NJB "stay awake"

This is a present active participle functioning as an imperative. Prayer takes planning, persistence, and vigilance. It needs to become a lifestyle, not an event.

▣ **"thanksgiving"** Notice the three aspects of prayer in Col. 4:2. Also, remember Paul was imprisoned, yet this letter emphasizes "thanksgiving" (cf. Col. 1:3,12; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2). Biblical truth (worldview) radically change ones perspective on life (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). Thanksgiving is a characteristic of a Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING](#)

4:3 "praying at the same time for us" Paul needed intercessory prayer. In Col. 4:3, 4 (cf. Eph. 6:19-20), he prays for three things related to his preaching the gospel.

1. an open door to preach (cf. Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:8)
2. an ability to explain the mystery of the gospel
3. the ability to speak the gospel clearly

[SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#)

▣ **"that God will open up to us a door for the word"** See Special Topic following.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF THE WORD "DOOR" IN THE NT](#)

▣ **"the mystery of Christ"** See note at Col. 2:2 and Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

▣ **"for which I have also been imprisoned"** If current scholarship is correct Paul was imprisoned in Rome in the early a.d. 60's (cf. Col. 4:18). Paul was not in Rome nor on trial before Caesar by accident! This was predicted at his conversion (cf. Acts 9:15-16; Phil. 1:13).

border="1" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 4:5-6**

⁵Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

⁶Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned, *as it were*, with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

4:5-6 These two verses relate to evangelism. Believers are to live in such a way that non-believers are (1) not turned off, but (2) attracted. Every believer is to be a verbal witness and a lifestyle witness (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)!

4:5
NASB "Conduct yourselves with wisdom"
NKJV "walk in wisdom"
NRSV "conduct yourselves wisely"
TEV "Be wise in the way you act"
NJB "Act wisely"

This is another present active imperative, "always conduct yourselves with wisdom." Believers are to be intentional evangelists. Evangelism is God's will for the church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Every believer is a full time minister of the gospel (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

NASB "making the most of the opportunity"
NKJV "redeeming the time"
NRSV "making the most of the time"
TEV "making good use of every opportunity you have"
NJB "making the best of the present time"

This is a present middle participle. This was the term (*exagorazō*) used to describe redemption (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5). It had an OT connotation of buying someone back from slavery, even sometimes the personal agency of a near relative (*go'el*). It was used metaphorically of making the most of an opportunity by buying something at a good price or at an appropriate time (cf. Eph. 5:16).

Believers must live godly lives and use godly wisdom so that when evangelistic and spiritual opportunities come they can take full advantage of them!

4:6 "speech. . .seasoned. . .with salt" Believers must watch their speech (cf. Eph. 4:29). They are known by their words (cf. Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23) and judged by their words (cf. Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45). Our speech and our lives will open opportunities for witnessing! Intention, not which evangelistic methodology one chooses to use, is the key. Prayer, not perfect presentation, is crucial. Wisdom is helpful but the Spirit is the determinative factor! See Special Topic: Human Speech at Col. 3:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 4:7-9

⁷As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. ⁸For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

4:7-8 "Tychicus" Paul mentions Tychicus several times (cf. Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12). He was the bearer of this letter, and also of Ephesians and Philemon. Paul sent him to explain his circumstances to the churches of Asia Minor so that they might know how better to pray for him and rejoice with him (cf. Col. 4:8 and introduction).

4:8 "hearts" See Special Topic at Col. 2:2.

4:9 "Onesimus" Onesimus was a runaway slave converted in prison by Paul. Paul sent him back to his Christian master, Philemon, who lived in Colossae and was well known to Paul (cf. Philemon). In many ways this tension between slave and free was an effective test of genuine Christian love.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 4:10-17

¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); ¹¹and *also* Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and *also* Demas. ¹⁵Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. ¹⁶When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter *that is coming* from Laodicea. ¹⁷Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

4:10-14 Timothy and six other co-workers sent their personal greetings to the church. Six of these seven co-workers are also mentioned in Philemon. Tychicus was probably the bearer of the letters of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon to Asia Minor.

4:10 "Aristarchus" A Jewish Christian about whom we know little (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2).

■ **"my fellow prisoner"** This refers either metaphorically to Christian service or literally to imprisonment (cf. Rom. 16:7; Philemon 23).

■ **"Mark, the cousin of Barnabas"** John Mark's home may have been the site of the Lord's Supper and Upper Room post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (cf. Acts 12:12). He was the writer of the Gospel of Mark and the friend and scribe of Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13). He was the cause of a great disagreement between Barnabas and Paul after their first missionary journey (cf. Acts 12:25; 13:5; 15:36-39).

■ **"if he comes to you, welcome him"** This is a third class conditional sentence. Paul was very angry with John Mark for leaving the first mission team. However, they apparently reconciled (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).

4:11 "Jesus who is called Justus" The TEV has "Joshua." "Jesus" and "Joshua" are derived from the Hebrew terms "YHWH" and "salvation" and are the same in Hebrew (cf. Matt. 1:21). This Justus is known to God, but unknown to us.

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels (see Special Topic at Eph. 5:5). Jesus' first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now. It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus' parables). In John's Gospel "eternal life" is a key term and metaphor.

The phrase relates to the eschatological (end-time) thrust of Jesus' teachings. This "already, but not yet" theological paradox relates to the Jewish concept of two ages, the current evil age and the righteous age to come, which will be inaugurated by the Messiah. The Jews expected only one coming of a Spirit-empowered military leader (like the Judges in the OT). The two comings of Jesus caused an overlapping of the two ages. The Kingdom of God has broken into human history with the incarnation at Bethlehem. However, Jesus came, not as the military conqueror of Revelation 19, but as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53) and humble leader (cf. Zech. 9:9). The Kingdom, therefore, is inaugurated (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:9,11; 11:20; 21:31-32), but not consummated (cf. Matt. 6:10; 16:28; 26:64).

Believers live in the tension between these two ages. They have resurrection life, but they still are dying

physically. They are freed from the power of sin, yet they still sin. They live in the eschatological tension of the already and the not yet!

▣ **"from the circumcision"** The men listed in Col. 4:7-11 were all Jewish believers (according to their names).

▣ **"they have proved to be an encouragement to me"** The term literally means "relief of pain." This Greek word is the source of the English medicine "paregoric."

4:12 "Epaphras" He was founder of the church at Colossae (cf. Col. 1:7 and introduction).

▣ **"always laboring earnestly for you"** This is a strong athletic term which comes into English as "agony." Epaphras was a prayer warrior (cf. Col. 4:13). His prayer for these believers was that they (1) stand, (2) mature, and (3) be assured in all the will of God.

4:13 "Laodicea and Hierapolis" These were the other two towns (along with Colossae) of the Lycus valley in which Epaphras had started three churches.

4:14 "Luke" He was Paul's close missionary companion and physician. He was a Gentile and the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

▣ **"Demas"** Later he would desert Paul (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10).

4:15 "Nympha" This can be either masculine or feminine. Notice the early church met in private homes (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2).

4:16 "when this letter is read among you" All of Paul's letters, not just Ephesians (a circular letter), were passed around from church to church and read aloud to the whole congregation. The churches believed that the Apostles had a unique, inspired word from God. Their desire to hear all of Paul's letters written to other churches, and on other occasions, shows how the Bible relates to everyone and every age.

▣ **"read my letter *that is coming from Laodicea*"** This letter was probably "Ephesians" which was a circular letter. In Marcion's Canon, Ephesians was called "the letter to the Laodiceans." No early church father ever quotes from a letter known as the letter to the Laodiceans.

4:17 "Archippas" Archippas was the pastor of the house-church (Philemon 2). The early leadership positions were functions performed by local gifted believers, not vocations or offices.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: COLOSSIANS 4:18

¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

4:18 "in my own hand" This was Paul's way of assuring the genuineness of his writings (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2; 3:17). This also implies that he regularly employed a scribe (cf. Rom. 16:22), probably because of his eye problems (cf. Acts 9:8-9,12,18; Gal. 4:15; 6:11), which I believe was his "thorn in the flesh."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the three aspects of prayer in Col. 4:2-3.
2. List the four aspects of the Christian life in Col. 4:5-6.
3. Discuss the individuals mentioned in Col. 4:7-14.

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INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. The truths of this book have impacted the lives of many saints
 - 1. Samuel Coleridge called it "the most divine composition of man"
 - 2. John Calvin called it his favorite book of the Bible
 - 3. John Knox asked that Calvin's sermons on Ephesians be read to him on his deathbed
- B. This book has been called the "crowning jewel," or capstone, of Paul's theology. All of the great themes of Paul started in Galatians, developed in Romans, and are now expressed in Ephesians in a wonderful summary fashion.
- C. As God used Romans to instigate the Reformation, He will use Ephesians to reunite splintered churches and Christendom. Believers' unity and commonality in Christ far overshadow their differences.

AUTHOR

- A. Paul
 - 1. Expressly stated in Eph. 1:1, 3:1
 - 2. Reference to imprisonment (probably in Rome) in Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20
 - 3. Almost unanimous church tradition
 - a. Clement of Rome, in a.d. 95, wrote a letter to Corinth that quotes Eph. 4:4-6
 - b. Ignatius (a.d. 30-107) quotes from Eph. 1:9; 2:19; 3:4-9
 - c. Polycarp (a.d. 65-155), the disciple of John the Apostle, and the bishop of Smyrna asserts Paul's authorship
 - d. Irenaeus (a.d. 130-200) asserts Paul's authorship
 - e. Clement of Alexandria (a.d. 150-210) asserts Paul's authorship
 - 4. It is listed in
 - a. Marcion's (who came to Rome in a.d. 140's) list of accepted books
 - b. Muratorian Fragment (a.d. 180-200), a list of canonical books from Rome and placed it in Paul's writings
 - 5. The closings of both Colossians and Ephesians have 29 words that are almost exactly the same in Greek (there are two additional words in Colossians.).
- B. Another Author
 - 1. Erasmus was the first to doubt Paul's authorship based on
 - a. Style - long sentences that are very uncharacteristic of Paul's other letters
 - b. No personal greetings
 - c. Unique vocabulary
 - 2. 18th-Century critical scholarship began to deny Paul's authorship
 - a. Several verses seem to be from a second generation believer, Eph. 2:20; 3:5
 - b. Theological words were used with differing definitions (example: "mystery")
 - c. Uniqueness of the genre of a cyclical or circular letter
- C. Answers to Erasmus' points
 - 1. The style is different because Paul had time to think when writing Ephesians while in prison.
 - 2. The absence of a personal greeting is explained by the fact that Ephesians was a cyclical letter

- that was to be sent to many churches in the area. A Roman postal route which included Ephesus and the Lycus River Valley can be seen in Revelation 2-3. Paul wrote a twin letter, Colossians, to a specific group of three churches which included several personal greetings.
3. The number of unique words in the book of Ephesians is exactly the same as the number of unique words (*hapax legomena*) in the book of Romans. The purpose, subject matter, recipients and occasion explain the use of new words.
 4. Paul speaks of "apostles and prophets" in 1 Corinthians 12:28, which is similar to Eph. 2:20 and 3:5. No one denies Paul's authorship of 1 Corinthians.

THE LITERARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

A. The historical relationship between Colossians and Ephesians

1. Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23) was converted during Paul's Ephesian campaign (Acts 19)
 - a. He took his newly found faith back to his home area, the Lycus River Valley.
 - b. He started three churches-in Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae.
 - c. Epaphras sought Paul for advice on how to combat the merging of world-views by the heretics. Paul was in prison at Rome (early 60's).
2. False teachers came and began to merge the gospel with Greek ontology
 - a. spirit and matter were co-eternal
 - b. spirit (God) was good
 - c. matter (creation) was evil
 - d. a series of *aeons* (angelic levels) existed between the good high God and a lesser god who formed matter
 - e. salvation was based on knowledge of secret passwords which helped people progress through the *aeons* (angelic levels)

B. The literary relationship between Paul's two letters

1. Paul heard of the heresy in these churches which he had never visited personally from Epaphras.
2. Paul wrote a hard-hitting letter in short, emotional sentences, directed at the false teachers. The central theme was the cosmic lordship of Jesus. This is known as Paul's letter to the Colossians.
3. Apparently, soon after writing Colossians, with time on his hands in prison, he developed these same themes. Ephesians is characterized by long sentences and developed theological concepts (Eph. 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-10, 14-18, 19-22; 3:1-12, 14-19; 4:11-16; 6:13-20). It takes Colossians as a starting point and draws out its theological implications. Ephesians' central theme is the unity of all things in Christ, which was a contrast to the incipient Gnostic concept.

C. Related literary and theological structure

1. Similarity of the basic structure
 - a. they have very similar openings
 - b. they have doctrinal sections dealing primarily with Christ
 - c. they have practical sections admonishing Christian lifestyle using the same categories, terms and phrases
 - d. they have closing verses exactly alike in 29 consecutive words in Greek, with only two different words added in Colossians.
2. Similarity of words or short phrases

Eph. 1:1c and Col. 1:2a	"faithful"
Eph.1:4 and Col. 1:22	"holy and blameless"
Eph. 1:7 and Col. 1:14	"redemption. . .forgiveness"
Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20	"all things. . .heaven. . .earth"

Eph. 1:15 and Col. 1:3-4	"heard. . .love for all the saints"
Eph. 1:18 and Col. 1:27	"the riches of the glory"
Eph. 1:27 and Col. 1:18	"head. . .church"
Eph. 2:1 and Col. 1:13	"you were dead"
Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20	"reconcile. . .cross"
Eph. 3:2 and Col. 1:25	"stewardship"
Eph. 3:3 and Col. 1:26,27	"mystery"
Eph. 4:3 and Col. 3:14	"unity"
Eph. 4:15 and Col. 2:19	"head" and "grow"
Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10, 12, 14	"put on . . ."
Eph. 4:31 and Col. 3:8	"anger" "wrath" "malice"
Eph. 5:3 and Col. 3:5	"slander"
Eph. 5:5 and Col.3:5	"immorality" "impurity" "greed"
Eph. 5:6 and Col. 3:6	"idolatry" (coveting)
Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5	"the wrath of God"
	"making the most of the time"

3. Exact phrases or sentences

Eph. 1:1a and Col 1:1a	
Eph. 1:1b and Col. 1:2a	
Eph. 1:2a and Col. 1:2b	
Eph. 1:13 and Col. 1:5	
Eph. 2:1 and Col. 2:13	
Eph. 2:5b and Col. 2:13c	
Eph. 4:1b and Col. 1:10a	
Eph. 6:21,22 and Col. 4:7-9	(29 consecutive words except for "kai syndoulos" in Colossians)

4. Similar phrases or sentences

Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:16	
Eph. 2:1 and Col. 1:13	
Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20	
Eph. 3:7a and Col. 1:23d, 25a	
Eph. 3:8 and Col. 1:27	
Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:12	
Eph. 4:29 and Col. 3:8; 4:6	
Eph. 5:15 and Col. 4:5	
Eph. 5:19,20 and Col. 3:16	

5. Theologically synonymous concepts

Eph. 1:3 and Col. 1:3	
Eph. 2:1,12 and Col. 1:21	
Eph. 2:15 and Col. 2:14	
Eph. 4:1 and Col 1:10	a prayer of thanks
Eph. 4:15 and Col. 2:19	alienation from God hostility of Law
Eph. 4:19 and Col. 3:5	worthy walk
Eph.4:22,31 and Col. 3:8	Christ's body growing to maturity from its Head
Eph.4:32 and Col.	sexual impurity

3:12-13	"lay aside" sins
Eph. 5:4 and Col. 3:8	Christians kind to one another
Eph. 5:18 and Col. 3:16	Christian speech
Eph. 5:20 and Col. 3:17	filling of Spirit = word of Christ thanksgiving to God for all things wives be subject to husbands
Eph. 5:22 and Col. 3:18	husbands love your wives children obey your parents
Eph. 5:25 and Col. 3:19	fathers do not provoke children slaves obey masters
Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20	masters and slaves
Eph. 6:4 and Col. 3:21	Paul's request for prayer
Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22	
Eph. 6:9 and Col. 4:1	
Eph. 6:18 and Col. 4:2-4	

6. Terms and phrases used in both Colossians and Ephesians which are not found in other Pauline literature

a. "fullness" (which was the Gnostic term for the angelic levels)

	"the fullness of Him who fills all in all"
Eph. 1:23	"be filled up to all the fullness of God"
Eph. 3:19	"to the fullness of Christ"
Eph. 4:13	"for all the fullness to dwell in Him"
Col. 1:19	"for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells"
Col. 2:9	

b. Christ as "Head" of the church

Eph. 4:15; 5:23 and Col. 1:18; 2:19

c. "alienated"

Eph. 2:12; 4:18 and Col. 1:21

d. "redeeming the time"

Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5

e. "rooted"

Eph. 3:17 and Col. 1:5

f. "the word of truth, the gospel"

Eph. 1:13 and Col. 1:5

g. "forbearing"

Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:13

h. unusual phrasing and terms ("held together," "supply")

Eph. 4:16 and Col. 2:19

D. Summary

1. Over one third of the words in Colossians are in Ephesians. It has been estimated that 75 of the 155 verses in Ephesians have a parallel in Colossians. Both claim Paul's authorship while in prison.
2. Both were delivered by Paul's friend Tychicus.

3. Both were sent to the same area (Asia Minor).
4. Both deal with the same Christological topic.
5. Both emphasize Christ as head of the church.
6. Both encourage appropriate Christian living.

E. Major Points of Dissimilarity

1. The church was always local in Colossians but universal in Ephesians. This may be due to the cyclical nature of the letter of Ephesians.
2. Heresy, which was such a prominent feature of Colossians, is not directly mentioned in Ephesians. However, both letters use characteristic Gnostic terms ("wisdom," "knowledge," "fullness," "mystery," "principalities and powers" and "stewardship.")
3. The second coming is immediate in Colossians but delayed in Ephesians. The church was, and is, called to serve in a fallen world. (Eph. 2:7; 3:21; 4:13).
4. Several characteristically Pauline terms are used differently. One example is the term "mystery." In Colossians the mystery is Christ (Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3), but in Ephesians (Eph. 1:9; 5:32) it is God's previously hidden, but now revealed, plan for the unity of Gentiles and Jews.
5. Ephesians has several Old Testament allusions (Eph. 1:22 -- Ps. 8; Eph. 2:17-- Isa. 57:19) (Eph. 2:20 -- Ps. 118:22) (Eph. 4:8 -- Ps. 68:18) (Eph. 4:26 -- Ps. 4:4) Eph. 5:15 -- Isa. 26:19, 51:17, 52:1, 60:1) (Eph. 5:31 -- Gen. 2:24) (Eph. 6:2-3 -- Exod. 20:12) (Eph. 6:14 -- Isa. 11:5, 59:17) (Eph. 6:15 -- Isa. 52:7) but there are only one or two in Colossians, Col. 2:3 -- Isa. 11:2, and possibly Col. 2:22 -- Isa. 29:13.

F. Though very similar in words, phrases and often outline, the letters also include unique truths.

1. The Trinitarian blessing of grace - Eph. 1:3-14
2. The grace passage - Eph. 2:1-10
3. The merging of Jews and Gentiles into one new body - Eph. 2:11-3:13
4. The unity and giftedness of the body of Christ - Eph. 4:1-16
5. "Christ and the church" are the pattern for "husband and wife" Eph. 5:22-33
6. The spiritual warfare passage - Eph. 6:10-18
7. The Christological passage - Col. 1:13-18
8. Human religious ritual and rules - Col. 2:16-23
9. The theme of the cosmic significance of Christ in Colossians versus the theme of the unity of all things in Christ in Ephesians

G. In conclusion, it seems best to follow A. T. Robertson and F. F. Bruce in asserting that Paul wrote both letters in close proximity by developing the thoughts of Colossians into a capstone presentation of truth.

DATE

- A. The date of this letter is linked to one of Paul's imprisonments in Ephesus, Philippi, Caesarea, or Rome. A Roman imprisonment best fits the facts of Acts.
- B. Once Rome is assumed to be the place of imprisonment, the question arises, which time? Paul was in jail in the early 60's, which is recorded in Acts, but he was released and wrote the Pastoral letters (I & 2 Timothy and Titus) and was then rearrested and killed before June 9, a.d. 68, which was the date of Nero's suicide.
- C. The best educated guess for the writing of Ephesians is Paul's first imprisonment in Rome in the early 60's.

D. Tychicus, along with Onesimus, probably took the letters of Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon to Asia Minor.

E. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations.

	<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7-10	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60's	Rome	
	Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11-13	Fourth Missionary Journey		Ephesus (?)	
	1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
	Titus	63 but before		
	2 Timothy	64 a.d. 68)	Rome	

RECIPIENTS

A. Many manuscripts (Chester Beatty Papyri, P⁴⁶; Sinaiticus, α ; Vaticanus, B; Origen's Greek text, and Tertullian's Greek text) omit "in Ephesus" in Eph. 1:1. The RSV and Williams translations omit the phrase.

B. The Greek grammar of Eph. 1:1 can accommodate a place name. Possibly, as a circular letter, the place name of the church was left blank so it could be supplied when read aloud to the churches. This might explain the phrase in Col. 4:15-16, "letter from the Laodiceans," which was possibly the Book of Ephesians (Marcion called Ephesians by the title "letter to the Laodiceans").

C. Ephesians was written primarily to Gentiles, Eph. 2:1; 4:17, whom Paul had not personally met, Eph. 1:15; 3:2. The churches in the Lycus River Valley (Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae) were started, not by Paul, but by Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23).

PURPOSE

A. The theme of the book is found in Eph. 1:10 and 4:1-10, which emphasizes the unity of all things in Christ. Christ restores the image of God in humanity and in the world (*kosmos*).

B. The doctrinal section of chapters 1-3 can be outlined as:

The Trinity's Gracious Character and Provisions for Sinful Mankind

1. God's Trinitarian nature (Eph. 1:3-14)

2. God's gracious character (Eph. 2:1-10)

3. God's eternal plan of redemption (Eph. 2:11-3:13)

C. Ephesians is one of Paul's four prison letters. The outlines of Ephesians and Colossians are very similar. Colossians was written to combat the heresy of incipient Gnosticism in the Lycus River Valley of Asia Minor. Ephesians was written as a circular letter to the same area to prepare the other churches for the coming heresy. Colossians is a terse, hard-hitting letter, while Ephesians is an extended logical presentation of the same truths using very long sentences: (Eph. 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-9; 3:1-7, etc.).

BRIEF OUTLINE

A. The book naturally divides into two parts (as do most of Paul's writings)

1. Unity in Christ, chapters 1-3 (theology)
2. Unity in the Church, chapters 4-6 (application)

B. Suggested thematic outline

1. Traditional Pauline opening, Eph. 1:1-2
2. The Father's plan for the unity of all things in Christ, Eph. 1:3-3:21
 - a. Paul's praise to the Father, Eph. 1:3-14
 - (1) for the Father's love before time
 - (2) for the Father's love in His Son at the right time
 - (3) for the Father's continuing love by the Spirit through time
 - b. Paul's prayer to the Father for the churches, Eph. 1:15-23
 - (1) for the Father's revelation in Christ to be understood
 - (2) for the Father's power to work powerfully in believers
 - (3) for the Father's elevation of Christ above all things
 - c. Paul's understanding of the Father's plan for all humanity, Eph. 2:1-3:13
 - (1) sinful mankind's need
 - (2) the Father's gracious provision
 - (3) mankind's needed covenantal response
 - (4) the Father's plan fully revealed
 - d. Paul's prayer to the Father for the believers, Eph. 3:14-21
 - (1) to receive inner strength (by the Spirit)
 - (2) to fully understand the gospel (not in propositional truths only) in experience and love
 - (3) to be filled with the fullness of God (which is Christ)
 - (4) all this from the God Who is able
3. The Father's desire for the unity of His new people, Eph. 4:1-6:20
 - a. The unity of the Triune God is reflected in the unity of His children, Eph. 4:1-16
 - (1) unity is not uniformity, but lifestyle love
 - (2) Deity is a tri-une unity
 - (3) spiritual gifts are for the good of the body, not individual honor
 - (4) unity demands ministry
 - (5) unity is under angelic attack
 - (6) unity is in Christ
 - b. Christian unity contrasted with pagan self-centeredness, Eph. 4:17-5:14
 - (1) lay aside the deeds of the old life
 - (2) put on Christlikeness
 - c. The means of accomplishing and maintaining unity, Eph. 5:15-6:9
 - (1) ever be filled with the Spirit
 - (2) the Spirit-filled life described
 - (a) five participles, Eph. 5:19-21
 - (b) three domestic examples
 - i. husbands - wives

- ii. parents - children
- iii. masters - slaves
- d. The struggle for Christlike unity, Eph. 6:10-20
 - (1) the spiritual battle
 - (2) God's armor
 - (3) prayer's power
- 4. Closing remarks, Eph. 6:21-24

THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FALSE TEACHERS (GNOSTICISM)

A. Gnostic beliefs of the first and second centuries:

1. An ontological (eternal) dualism between spirit (God) and matter (physical things).
2. Spirit was good, while matter was evil.
3. A series of angelic levels (*aeons*) between a holy high God and a lesser god who structured evil matter.
4. The path to salvation
 - a. knowledge of the secret password which allowed movement through the angelic spheres from earth to heaven
 - b. a divine spark in all men although all would not understand or receive saving knowledge
 - c. knowledge came only to an elite group by special revelation
5. Ethics (two types of Gnostics)
 - a. totally unrelated to the spiritual life (libertarians, antinomians)
 - b. crucial to salvation (legalists).

B. Contradictions with historical, biblical Christianity

1. separating the humanity and Deity of Christ (Gnostics said He could not be fully God and fully human)
2. removing His vicarious death as the only way of salvation
3. substituting human knowledge for free divine grace.

READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words (reading cycle #1).

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects (reading cycle #2) and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit

4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

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EPHESIANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	JB
Salutation	Greetings	Salutation	Salutation	Address & Greeting
1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1a 1:1b 1:2	1:1-2
Spiritual Blessings in Christ	Redemption in Christ	Thanksgiving and Blessing	Spiritual Blessings in Christ	God's Plan of Salvation
1:3-14	1:3-14	1:3-14	1:3-6 1:7-10 1:11-12 1:13-14	1:3-14
Paul's Prayer	Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom		Paul's Prayer	The Triumph and the Supremacy of Christ
1:15-23	1:15-23	1:15-23	1:15-23	1:15-23

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO EPHESIANS 1:1-23

- A. The phrase "in Ephesus" is omitted in the RSV, NJB and Williams translations because it is missing in some of the earliest Greek manuscripts (P⁴⁶, κ, and B). There apparently was a blank space where a place name should have been inserted. It was a circular letter for all of the churches of Asia Minor. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 show an ancient Roman postal route.
- B. The Trinity is praised in Ephesians 1:3-14 (and also Eph. 1:17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6)
1. the Father in eternity, Eph. 1:3-6 (the Father's love and purpose in Himself)
 2. the Son in time, Eph. 1:7-12 (the Father's love and purpose in Christ)
 3. the Spirit in the future, Eph. 1:13-14 (the Father's love and purpose in the Spirit)
- Verses 3-14 form one beautiful prayer of praise to the Triune God! Each section closes with the phrase "to the praise of His glory" (cf. Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Even though all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned, it is God the Father who is emphasized (as in Eph. 1:15-23)! See Special Topic: The Trinity at Eph. 1:3.
- C. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. Eph. 10:9,11-13).
- The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!
- Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (Ex.: God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner; etc.).
- The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from an individual. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of advocating only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 1:1-2

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:1 "Paul" The Greek name "Paul" meant "little." There have been several theories about the origin of his name.

1. A nick name describing his physical height, the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat,

bald, bowlegged, bushy eyebrowed and had protruding eyes is a possible physical description of Paul. This came from a second century non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*.

2. Paul's personal spiritual evaluation, passages like 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15, where he calls himself "the least of the saints" (probably because he persecuted the Church, Acts 9:1-2). Some have seen this sense of "leastness" as the origin of this self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he makes a major emphasis on his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this option is unlikely (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11).
3. Parental, most Jews of the diaspora (Jews living outside Palestine) were given two names at birth. Paul's Hebrew name was Saul and his Greek name was Paul.

■ **"an apostle"** The term "apostle" comes from the Greek verb "to send" (*apostellō*). See Special Topic at Col. 1:11. Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them "Apostles" (cf. Luke 6:13). This term was often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21, 23,25; 20:21). In Jewish sources it was used of someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to "ambassador" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20).

■ **"Christ"** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "*messiah*" (see Special Topic at Col. 1:1; cf. Dan. 9:25-26; John 1:41; 4:25), which meant "an anointed one" (cf. Matt. 1:16). This is a rare title in the OT, but the concept of a special coming savior, called and equipped by YHWH, is recurrent. The royal and priestly aspects can be seen in Ps. 110:1,4 and Zech. 4:11-14. It implies "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

■ **"Jesus"** This Hebrew/Aramaic name meant "YHWH saves" or "YHWH brings salvation." It was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *hosea*, combined with an initial abbreviation of the covenant name for God, "YHWH." It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Col. 1:3.

■ **"by the will of God"** This same introductory phrase is used in Col. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; and 2 Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling began at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26). This was also a theological way of asserting his apostolic authority. See Special Topic at Eph. 1:9.

■ **"to the saints"** "Saints" (*hagioi*) is theologically related to the OT term "holy" (*kadosh*), which meant "set apart for God's service" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is Plural in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. The Bible is a corporate book. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers. See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Romans 4; 2 Cor. 5:21). It is God's will that they live holy lives (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12; Matt. 5:48). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be affirmed together!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

NASB	"who are at Ephesus"
NKJV, NRSV	"who are in Ephesus"
TEV	"who live in Ephesus"
NJB	---(omitted)---

There is a manuscript problem at this point. Some ancient Greek texts (P⁴⁶, κ^{*}, B^{*}, as well as the Greek text used by Origen and Tertullain) omit "in Ephesus." The early heretic Marcion called Ephesians "the Letter to the Laodiceans." The phrase does appear in the uncial manuscripts κ², A, B², D, F, and G. It also appears in the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic and Armenian translations.

The Greek grammar of Eph. 1:1 can accommodate a place name. Therefore, the place name was probably omitted on purpose because the letter functioned as a circular letter, each church inserting its own name when read aloud in public worship. Very early a scribe at Ephesus (the largest church in the area) filled in the blank.

■ **"who are faithful"** The words "faith," "trust," and "believe" used in English translations all have the same Greek root (*pistis*). The word's primary OT emphasis is on the trustworthiness of God, not the enthusiasm or sincerity of a human response. Believers must respond, receive, and trust in His trustworthy character and eternal promises. The key is the object of our faith, not its intensity. Christianity is faith in Christ, not faith in faith. Christianity is an initial repentant and faith response followed by a lifestyle of faithfulness. Biblical faith is a series of human choices—repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance.

See Special Topic: Faith, Believe, Trust at Col. 1:2.

1:2 "Grace to you and peace" The normal Greek salutation was the word greeting (*charein*), "to be of good cheer." Paul characteristically changed this to a very similar sounding, but Christian, term, *charis*, or grace. Many have assumed that Paul was somehow combining the Greek greeting and the Hebrew greeting with the term "peace," which would equal the Hebrew term *shalom*. Although this is an attractive theory, it may be reading too much into this typically Pauline introductory phrase (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; and Philemon 3). Theologically, God's grace always precedes human peace!

■ **"Father"** This term is not used in the sense of sexual generation, or chronological sequence, but of intimate family relationship. God chose family terms to reveal Himself to mankind (Example: Hosea 2-3 as passionate, faithful lover, Hosea 11 as loving father and mother). See Special Topic: Father at Col. 1:2.

■ **"Lord"** The Greek term "Lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a developed theological sense. It can mean "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," "husband" (e.g., John 4:11,15 and 9:36) or "the full God-man" (e.g., John 4:19 and 9:38). The OT (Hebrew, *adon*) usage of this term came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Col. 1:3). They were afraid of breaking the Commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word *kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and a baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:3-14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which ⁸He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. ¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

1:3 Verses 3-14 are one long Greek sentence, which is so characteristic of this book (cf. Eph. 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-10, 14-18, 19-22; 3:1-12, 14-19; 4:11-16; 6:13-20).

■ **"Blessed be the God"** This Greek term "eulogy" (*eulogō*) was always used of praising God. It is a different term from the "blessed" (*makarios*) of the beatitudes (cf. Matt. 5:1-9, 10-11). The Father sent the Son and the Spirit to bring believers into fellowship with Himself and fellowship with one another.

Paul typically opens his letters with a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipients (cf. Eph. 1:15-23), but here in a circular letter, uniquely, he pens an extensive doxology to the Triune God.

■ **"who has blessed us. . . in Christ"** The blessed God blesses believers! Believers receive everything through Christ. Verses 3-14 are one sentence in Greek, which shows the work of the Trinity, before time, in time, and beyond time. However, the Father's instigation is magnified in all three sections (cf. Eph. 1:3-6, 7-12 and 13-14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "in the heavenly places"

TEV "in the heavenly world"

NJB "the spiritual blessings of heaven"

This locative (of sphere) neuter plural adjective "in the heavenly places" (*epouranious*) was only used in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). From the context of all of its usages, it must mean the spiritual realm in which believers live here and now, not heaven.

1:4 "He chose us" This is an aorist middle indicative which emphasized the subject's decisive choice. This focused on the Father's choice before time. God's choice must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism nor in the ultra Calvinistic sense of "God chooses some versus God did not choose others," but in a covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan. God calls all in Christ (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. The believers' choice of trusting in Christ confirms, not determines, God's choice of them. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44, 65). This text and Rom. 8:28-30; 9:1-33 are the main NT texts for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification) but also to sanctification (cf. Col. 1:12)! This could relate to

1. our position in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21)

2. God's desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. Eph. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 4:3)

God's will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

The pronouns in this passage are ambiguous. Most refer to God the Father. This whole passage speaks of His love, purpose and plan to redeem fallen mankind. However, in context it is obvious that the pronouns in Eph. 1:7, 9, 13 & 14 refer to Jesus.

■ **"in Him"** This is a key concept. The Father's blessings, grace and salvation flow only through Christ (cf.

John 10:7-18; 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (locative of sphere) in Eph. 1:3, "in Christ"; Eph. 1:4, "in Him"; Eph. 1:7, "in Him"; Eph. 1:9, "in Him"; Eph. 1:10, "in Christ," "in Him"; Eph. 1:12, "in Christ" and Eph. 1:13, "in Him" (twice). These are parallel to "in the Beloved" of Eph. 1:6. Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (cf. John 3:16). All of God the Father's blessings flow through Christ.

■ **"before the foundation of the world"** This phrase is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; 1 Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God's redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* at Col. 1:6. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present, or future, but not to God. History for Him is eternally present.

■ **"that we should be holy and blameless before Him"** The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God's call is not to a selected few of Adam's children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself, i.e., Christlikeness, (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:15); in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our *a priori* systematic theologies speak louder than biblical texts!

The term "blameless" (*amōmos*) or "free from blemish" is used of

1. Jesus, (cf. Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19)
2. Zacharias and Elizabeth, (cf. Luke 1:6)
3. Paul (cf. Phil 3:6)
4. all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23)

See Special Topic at Col. 1:22.

God's unalterable will for every believer is not only heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15). Believers are to reflect God's characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY](#)

■ **"in love"** Grammatically, this phrase could go with either verse 4 or verse 5. However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. Eph. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

1:5

NASB	"He predestined us"
NKJV	"having predestined us"
NRSV	"He destined us"
TEV	"God had already chosen us"
NJB	"marking us out for himself beforehand "

This is an aorist active participle. This Greek term is a compound of "before" (*pro*) and "mark off" (*horizō*). It refers to God's predetermined redemptive plan, see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan at Eph. 3:6, (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23, 4:28; 13:29; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Notice God's plan is corporate (cf. Acts 13:48). American individualism has turned this inclusive, corporate emphasis into an exclusive, personalized, individual focus. God chose a people who would choose Him. Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind's salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled, paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (examples: predestination vs. human free will; security of the believer vs. perseverance; original sin vs. volitional sin; sinlessness vs. sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification vs. progressive sanctification; faith vs. works; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility; transcendence vs. immanence).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: Predestination \(Calvinism\) Versus Human Free Will \(Arminianism\)](#)

■ **"to adoption as sons"** This is Paul's familial metaphor (cf. Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5). It is one of several metaphors Paul uses to describe salvation with emphasis on security. It was difficult and expensive to adopt a child in the Roman legal system, but once it was done, it was very binding. A Roman father had the legal right to disinherit or even kill natural children, but not adopted children. This reflects the believer's security in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:5,9; John 6:37,39; 10:28).

NASB "according to the kind intention of His will"
NKJV, NRSV "according to the good pleasure of His will"
TEV "this was his pleasure and purpose"
NJB "Such was his purpose and good pleasure"

God's choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. Eph. 1:7, "according to the riches of His grace"; Eph. 1:9, "according to His kind intention"; Eph. 1:11, "according to His purpose"). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern day ultra Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23, 32; John 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:11). God's grace (God's character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. Eph. 1:6a; 7c; 9b), as God's mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Romans 9-11.

Fallen mankind's only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; 5:15; Eph. 2:5,8) and His unchanging character (cf. Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5).

■ **"through Jesus Christ to Himself"** This phrase describes the Father's love, as does John 3:16 (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14). Jesus is God the Father's plan for restoring all things (i.e., the Messiah, cf. Eph. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:25-28; Col. 1:15-23). There is only one way and that way is a person (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). The theme of Ephesians is the unity of all things in Christ.

1:6 "to the praise of the glory of His grace" The Father's initiating love in Jesus Christ reveals His very essence (cf. John 1:14,18). This phrase is repeated three times (cf. Eph. 1:6,12,14) and accents the work of the three persons of the Trinity. See Special Topic at 1:3.

1. God the Father before time, Eph. 1:3-6
2. God the Son in time, Eph. 1:7-12
3. God the Spirit through time, Eph. 1:13-14

However, in the long Greek sentence from Eph. 1:3-14, it is God the Father who is repeatedly praised.

■ **"glory"** In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kabod*) was originally a commercial term (which related to a pair of scales), which meant "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. The concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (i.e., the *Shekinah* cloud of glory). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 20:19; 33:20; Judg. 6:22-23; 13:22). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

The term "glory" is somewhat ambiguous.

1. It may be parallel to "the righteousness of God."
2. It may refer to the "holiness" or "perfection" of God.
3. It could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through a rebellious desire for independence (cf. Gen. 3:1-22).

NASB "which He freely bestowed on us"
NKJV "by which He has made us accepted"
NRSV "that He freely bestowed on us"
TEV "for the free gift he gave us"
NJB "his free gift to us"

The Greek term "favored" (*charitoō*) has the same root as "grace" (*charis*). The Father's grace, mercy,

and love flow (cf. Eph. 1:8) through a suffering Messiah to fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 53). God's love flows to fallen mankind because of who He is, not who we are! The key is God's character, not human performance!

■ **"in the Beloved"** This is a perfect passive participle. Jesus was and is the Beloved Son and shall always be. This title was used in the Septuagint (LXX) for the Messiah. It was substituted for "Jeshurun" (Jerusalem) in Deut. 32:15; 33:5, 26; and Isa. 44:2. The Father used this descriptive title for Jesus in Matt. 3:17 (at Jesus' baptism); Matt. 12:18 (an OT quote, i.e., Isa. 42:1-3); and Matt. 17:5 (at Jesus' transfiguration). Paul uses this same term for Jesus in Col. 1:13.

1:7 "we have" This verb is in the present tense, while the surrounding verbs are all aorist tense. We currently possess the benefits of all that God has accomplished in Christ. However, notice in the same Greek sentence (Eph. 1:14) that redemption is future. Salvation begins with the call of God, the wooing of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). It issues in a repentant/faith decision followed by a life of trust, obedience, and perseverance that will one day be consummated into complete Christlikeness (cf. 1 John 3:2). Salvation is a relationship as well as a pronouncement, a person as well as a message.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

■ **"redemption"** This is literally "to be delivered from" (cf. Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14). It is a synonym of an OT term (*gaal*) meaning "to buy back" sometimes with the agency of a near kin (*go'el*). This term was used in the OT to refer to buying back slaves and military prisoners. Paul uses the Greek equivalent four times in Ephesians and Colossians (cf. Eph. 1:7, 14 and 4:30; Col. 1:14). It reflects a personal agency by which God brings salvation. It does not focus on to whom or the amount of the payment. Mark 10:45 states clearly that Jesus came to pay the ransom for fallen mankind (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Humans were slaves to sin (cf. Isa. 53:6; several OT quotes in Rom. 3:9-18; 1 Pet. 2:24-25). See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at Col. 1:14.

■ **"through His blood"** Blood is a metaphor for death (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14). This refers to Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary, sacrificial death. He died in our place for our sin (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 53; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:22).

Because of the presence of Greek false teachers (i.e., Gnostics) who denied the humanity of Jesus, this may have been a way to refer to Jesus as being truly human (blood, body, etc.).

■ **"the forgiveness"** This is literally "sending away." On the Day of Atonement there were two scapegoats involved in the yearly ritual of Leviticus 16.

1. one was sent away, symbolically carrying away Israel's sins (i.e., when God forgives, God forgets, cf. Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 44:22; and Micah 7:18)

2. the other was sacrificed, symbolizing the fact that sin costs a life

Jesus took fallen mankind's sin away by dying in their place (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:14) thus combining the two meanings.

■ **"trespasses"** This is the Greek term for sin, (*paraptōma*), literally "to fall to one side." It is related to the OT words for sin which meant a deviation from a standard. The term "reed" was a construction term used metaphorically of God's character. God is the only standard by which all humans are crooked and perverted (cf. Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:9-23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22).

■ **"according to the riches of His grace"** Our forgiveness in Christ cannot be earned (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). The term "riches" is used often in Paul's prison letters: "riches of His grace," Eph. 1:7; 2:7; "riches of His glory," Eph. 1:18; 3:16; "rich in mercy," Eph. 2:4; "riches in Christ," Eph. 3:8. In Christ redeemed mankind has been granted the riches of God's character!

1:8 "lavished" Paul uses this term (*perisseuō*) over and over again (cf. Rom. 5:15; 15:13; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 1:5; 8:2,7; 9:8; Eph. 1:8; Phil. 1:9; 4:12,18; Col. 2:7; 1 Thess. 4:1). It expresses Paul's sense of the full measure and beyond of God's grace and provisions in Christ. God's love in Christ is like an overflowing fountain or an artesian well!

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOUND (*perisseuō*)

▣ **"In all wisdom and insight"** This refers to God's gift of understanding (not the Gnostic false teachers' secret knowledge), which He gave so that fallen mankind might grasp the implications of the gospel (cf. Eph. 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 18-23; Luke 1:17; Col. 1:9). The false teachers were emphasizing secret wisdom. God's wisdom is Christ. He is available to all!

1:9 "mystery" Paul often uses this term (cf. Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 4:1; Eph. 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 6:19; Col. 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). It has several different connotations for different aspects of God's redemptive plan. In Eph. 2:11-3:13, it refers to the uniting of all people, Jew and Gentile, in Christ, to God. This had always been God's plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; Exod. 19:4-6; Eph. 2:11-3:13). This had always been the implication of monotheism (one and only one God). This truth had been hidden in the past, but is now fully revealed in Christ. See Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

▣ **"of His will"** See the following Special Topic: The Will of God

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

1:10

NASB	"administration"
NKJV	"dispensation"
NRSV	"a plan"
TEV	"this plan"
NJB	"for him to act upon"

This is literally "stewardship of a household" (*oikonomia*). Paul uses the term in several different senses.

1. an Apostolic commission to proclaim the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25)
2. an eternal plan of redemption, "mystery" (cf. Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9, 1 Cor. 4:1)
3. training in the plan of redemption and its accompanying lifestyle (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4)

This verse is a foreshadowing of the central theme of the book (the unity of all things in Christ), which is fully developed in Eph. 4:1-6.

▣ **"the fullness of the times"** This phrase emphasizes (as does predictive prophecy) that God is in control of history. At just the right moment, God sent Christ and, at just the right moment, He will come again.

▣ **"the summing up of all things in Christ"** In Koine Greek (the language of commerce in the Mediterranean world from 200 b.c. to a.d. 200, it was the language of the common man) this compound term is literally "the uniting of several things under one head." This is a reference to the cosmic significance of the work of Christ (as is seen so clearly in 1 Cor. 15:24-28 and Col. 1:17-22). This is the central theme of Colossians. Christ is the "head" not only of His body, the church, but of creation (*kosmos*).

1:11

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"we have obtained an inheritance"
TEV	"God chose us to be his own people"
NJB	"we have received our heritage"

This is literally "we were chosen as an inheritance," an aorist passive indicative. Originally in the OT this referred only to the Levites (the tribe of Levi became the priests, Temple servants, and local teachers of the Law), who did not inherit land in the Promised Land (cf. Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27,29). They did receive several cities, Jos. 20-21. It came to refer to the truth that God Himself is the inheritance of all believers and they are His (cf. Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; Lam. 3:24). It also came to be a metaphor for God's people (cf. Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 9:26,29; 14:2; 2 Sam. 21:3; 1 Kgs. 8:51,53; 2 Kgs. 21:14; Ps. 28:9; 33:12; 68:9; 78:62,71; 94:14; 106:5,40; Isa. 19:25; 47:6; 63:17; Jer. 10:16; 51:19). The NT replaces the promises of a land with the promise of being part of God's family. NT writers universalize the Jewish-Gentile distinction into the believer-unbeliever model. The same is true of the city of Jerusalem which becomes the New Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10), which is a metaphor of heaven, not a geographical location.

■ **"having been predestined according to His purpose"** This aorist passive participle expresses the truth that election is according to the grace of God and not human merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9, which has three disclaimers: "and that not of yourselves;" "it is the gift of God," and "not as a result of works, that no one should boast"). This same terminology is found in Rom. 8:28-29. The purpose there is Christlikeness. See fuller note on predestination at Contextual Insights to 1:1-23, #C and 1:4 and 1:5.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance

1:12 "we" This refers to believing Jews (cf. Rom. 1:16).

■ **"glory"** See note at Eph. 1:6

1:13 "you" This refers to believing Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:12).

■ **"after listening to the message of truth, the gospel. . .having also believed"** These are both aorist active participles. Salvation is both a message to believe and a person to trust. It involves both a mental acceptance of the truthfulness of the Bible (worldview) and a personal welcoming of Jesus! The gospel must be personally received (cf. John 1:12; 3:16,18,36; 6:40; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9-13). The essence of the gospel can be summarized as

1. a person to welcome/receive (personal relationship)
2. truths about that person to believe (worldview)
3. a life like that person to live (Christlikeness)

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

■ **"you were sealed in Him"** In the Greco-Roman culture sealing was a sign of security, genuineness, and ownership (cf. Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Rev. 7:1-4). This sealing (aorist passive indicative) is theologically parallel to the Spirit's baptizing new believers in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; possibly Eph. 4:4-5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL

■ **"with the Holy Spirit of promise"** The coming of the Spirit was the sign of the New Age (cf. Joel 2:28; John 14:26ff). He was the Father's promise (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Acts 1:4-5; 2:33). The Spirit indwelling believers is the assurance of their resurrection (cf. Rom. 8:9-11).

1:14 "who is given as a pledge" This concept of a pledge had an OT precedent.

1. a promise to pay a debt (cf. Gen. 38:17,18,20; Deut. 24:10-13)
2. a promise of providing sustenance (cf. 1 Sam. 17:18)
3. a personal promise (cf. 2 Kgs. 18:23; Isa. 36:8).

This Greek term refers to a "down-payment" or earnest money (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). In modern Greek it is used of an engagement ring, which is the promise of a marriage to come. The Spirit is the fulfilled promise of a new age of righteousness. This is part of the "already" and "not yet" tension of the NT, which is the

overlapping of the two Jewish ages because of the two comings of Christ (see the excellent discussion in *Howto Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 129-134). The Spirit is a pledge given now for a future consummation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

- **"redemption"** See note at Eph. 1:7 and Special Topic at Col. 1:14.
- **"God's own possession"** This may be an allusion to Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2. The Jews were God's special treasure for the purpose of reaching the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:6), now His agent is the church, Christ's body.
- **"to the praise of His glory"** See note at Eph. 1:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:15-23

¹⁵For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

1:15-23 This is Paul's prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the recipients (i.e., churches of Asia Minor). It is one long sentence in Greek, as is Eph. 1:3-14 (i.e., Paul's prayer of praise to God the Father for His gracious gift of Christ and the Spirit). These long sentences are characteristic of Paul's literary style only in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:3-14,15-23; 2:1-10,14-18,19-22; 3:1-12,14-19; 4:11-16; 6:13-20).

Also notice Paul's prayer for himself in Eph. 6:19-20! Paul was a man of prayer and praise (i.e., 3:20-21).

1:15

NASB "the faith. . .among you"

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV, NJB "your faith"

Ephesians, being a circular letter, shows that Paul is referring to several churches, not just the church at Ephesus. He had heard of the problems of the churches in the Lycus Valley (Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae) through Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:6-8).

The term "faith" can refer to

1. initial, personal trust in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:19 "toward us who believe")
2. ongoing faithful Christian living (i.e., OT sense, of Col. 1:9-10)
3. Christian doctrine "the faith," with the definite article, (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude 3, 20)

Here it has the article and probably option #3 is best.

■ **"your love"** This is not in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, κ , A, or B, nor the Greek text used by Origen, Jerome, or Augustine, but it is present in the Colossians parallel (cf. Eph. 1:4) and Philemon 1:5. It is obviously a scribal addition here in Ephesians. They tended to standardize Paul's phrasing.

■ **"saints"** See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

1:16 This verse reveals two aspects of Paul's prayer life: (1) thankfulness and (2) persistence. Paul continually prayed for all of Christ's churches (cf. Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3,9; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 2 Tim. 1:3, Philemon 4).

This is a good theological balance between trusting in God and intercessory prayer. The proclamation of the gospel and the development of churches was God's will. Yet Paul sensed a need to continue to pray for them. Somehow believers' prayers unleash the power of God in fresh, new ways. The sovereign God has chosen to limit Himself to the prayers of His people (cf. James 4:2)! Intercessory prayer is a mystery of God's power linked to believers' volitional requests. See Special Topic on Thanksgiving at Col. 4:2. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3.

1:17

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of"

NKJV "Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of"

TEV "Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit"

Notice the emphasis on the Trinity seen in TEV translation of (1) Eph. 1:3-14; (2) Eph. 1:17; (3) Eph. 2:18; (4) Eph. 3:14-17; and (5) Eph. 4:4-6. See Special Topic: The Trinity at Eph. 1:3.

■ **"the Father of glory"** This was an OT title for God (cf. Ps. 24:7; 29:3; Acts 7:2). The genitive modifier (of glory) is also used of Jesus in 1 Cor. 2:8 and James 2:1. Paul's prayer is that YHWH will give these new believers a full and complete understanding of true wisdom which is Jesus Christ, not the intellectual false wisdom of the Gnostic teachers. There is no human secret wisdom. Jesus is the wisdom of God who fully reveals Him! See fuller note on "Glory" at Eph. 1:6.

■ **"may give to you a spirit"** The term "spirit" is anarthrous (no definite article), but really serves the double purpose of referring to the human spirit energized by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 describes God's gifts of the Spirit as "a spirit of wisdom," and "understanding," "a spirit of counsel," and "strength," "a spirit of knowledge," and "fear of the Lord."

In the NT there is a series of passages which describe what the Spirit produces in the lives of believers.

1. "a spirit of holiness," Rom. 1:4
2. "a spirit of adoption as sons," Rom. 8:15
3. "a spirit of gentleness," 1 Cor. 4:21
4. "a spirit of faith," 2 Cor. 4:13
5. "a spirit of wisdom and revelation," Eph. 1:17
6. "the spirit of truth," vs. "the spirit of error," 1 John 4:6

■ **"of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him"** The pronouns in the paragraph refer to God the Father, as most do in Eph. 1:3-14. This wisdom and revelation was not just for some, but for all believers (cf. Eph. 4:13). This was used to refute the intellectual and exclusivistic emphases of the false teachers. Gospel knowledge is God-given and Jesus-focused (cf. Col. 1:9). He is the truth (cf. John 8:32; 14:6)!

1:18-19 Knowledge of God the Father's provisions in Christ involves three aspects.

1. the believers' predestined hope
2. the believers' glorious inheritance
3. the believers' understanding of God's surpassingly great power, manifested in Christ

1:18 "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened" This is a metaphor of the gospel bringing understanding to fallen humanity (cf. Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4-6). This has always been God's will. See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.

■ **"hope of His calling"** For a full note on "hope" see Special Topic at Col. 1:5.

The term "calling" (*kaleō*) is used in several theological senses in the NT.

1. sinners are called by God through Christ to salvation
2. sinners call on the name of the Lord to be saved
3. believers are called on to live Christlike lives
4. believers are called to ministry tasks

The thrust of this text is #1. For "calling" see Special Topic at Eph. 4:1.

■ **"the riches of the glory"** Paul often speaks of gospel truths as "riches" (cf. Eph. 1:7,18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16). See note at Eph. 1:7.

■ **"inheritance"** See full note at Eph. 1:11.

1:19

NASB	"surpassing greatness"
NKJV	"exceeding greatness"
NRSV	"immeasurable greatness"
TEV	"how very great"
NJB	"how extraordinarily great"

This term *hyperballō* is used only by Paul in the NT. It expresses his overwhelming emotion of what God in Christ has done for rebellious mankind in redemption (cf. 2 Cor. 3:10; 9:14; Eph. 1:19; 2:7; 3:19).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF "HUPER" COMPOUNDS

■ **"toward us who believe"** This phrase shows the falsehood of the doctrine of "universalism" which asserts that eventually all people will be saved. This universalism is usually based on proof-texting isolated passages like Rom. 5:18. God has chosen to allow humans to participate (conditional covenant) in their own spiritual salvation and pilgrimage. Christians must repent and believe (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

The gospel's inclusivism (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Titus 2:11; 1 Pet. 3:9) was in contrast to the exclusivism of the false teachers. The gospel is universal in its invitation (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9) to all who will call on the name of the Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9-13).

■ **"the working of the strength of His might"** This may be another allusion to Isa. 11:2 (cf. Eph. 1:17). This phrase is made up of three Greek words (*energias*, *kratos*, and *ischus*) which indicate God's power. A fourth term for power (*dunamis*) is used earlier in the verse. The focus of salvation is God's powerful actions through Christ, not individual human actions or intellectual concepts.

1:20 The next three phrases describe what God the Father's tremendous, mighty power has done for Jesus.

1. It "raised Him from the dead" Eph. 1:20. This was the sign of His accepted sacrifice (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).
2. It "seated Him on His right hand," Eph. 1:20. This was the place of exaltation and preeminence (cf. Col. 3:1). This represented Christ's ongoing intercessory ministry (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1 and was fulfillment of OT prophecy, cf. Ps. 110:1; Acts 7:56).
3. It "made Him supreme Head of the church," Eph. 1:22. This use of the term church refers to the unique new people of God, which includes all who believe, both Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13;

Gal. 3:27-29).

The things that the Father has done for Christ, Christ has done for His followers (cf. Eph. 2:5-6). All three terms in Eph. 2:5-6 are compounds with the preposition *syn* which means "joint participation with."

■ **"in the heavenly places"** This locative (of sphere) neuter plural adjective (*epouranious*) is only used in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). From the context of all of its usages, it must mean the spiritual realm in which believers live here and now, not heaven by and by.

1:21 "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" This phrase may refer to ranks or orders of spiritual powers or angelic levels that are hostile to humanity (cf. Eph. 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 15:24). Jesus is superior to all angelic ranks (cf. Hebrews 1-2). This refuted the Gnostic false teachers' emphasis on angelic levels (*aeons*). These ranks may also refer to impersonal structures in our world which allow humans to function apart from God. Examples are philosophy, education, government, medicine, religion, etc. (cf. Hendrik Berkhof's *Christ and the Powers*, Herald Press).

See Special Topic: Angels in Paul's Writings at Eph. 6:12.

Further, for "far above" see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19.

For "authority" see Special Topic: *Archē* at Col. 1:16.

■ **"and every name that is named"** This may refer to the false teachers' secret passwords or names used to pass through the angelic spheres. They were trusting in their secret knowledge of magical names to bring salvation. Paul asserts that salvation or union with God is found only in Jesus' name (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). In the OT a person's name represented his character. The Father's character is fully revealed in the Son (cf. John 14:8-14; 17:11).

■ **"not only in this age but also in the one to come"** The Jews believed in two ages, the current evil age and the new righteous age which would come through the Messiah. This new righteous age of the Spirit came at Pentecost! (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Matt. 12:32, Mark 10:30; Luke 16:8; 18:30; 20:34; 1 Tim. 6:17; 2 Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:12, Heb. 6:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

1:22 "He has put all things in subjection under His feet" "Subjection" is a military term for a chain of command (cf. Ps. 110:1; 8:6). The Father has given the Son first place in all things (cf. Col. 1:18-19). In the end, the Son will turn all things back to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28).

Jesus' submission to the Father does not imply, in any sense, inequality, but an administrative, functional division of labor within the Trinity. See fuller note on "submission" at Eph. 5:21.

■ **"gave Him as head over all things"** The extended metaphor of Jesus as the Head of His body, the church, is only found in Ephesians and Colossians (cf. Eph. 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18-19; 2:19). The people of the ancient Mediterranean world believed the head gave life to the body.

■ **"church"** In secular Greek, this term meant an assembly (cf. Acts 19:32). *Ekklesia* was used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Hebrew term "assembly (*qahal*) of Israel" (cf. Exod. 16:3, 12:6; Lev. 4:13; Num. 20:4). This is the first of several uses of this term in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32). Both in Eph. (1:22-23) and in Col. (1:24) Paul calls the church the body of Christ. The early church saw themselves as the fulfilled people of God with Christ Jesus, the Messiah, as their Head.

One of the unusual literary relationships between Ephesians and Colossians is that in Ephesians this term refers to the church universal (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6), while in Colossians it usually refers to the local church. This points toward Ephesians as a circular letter.

See Special Topic at Col. 1:18.

1:23

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"the fullness of Him who fills all in all"
TEV	"The completion of Him who Himself completes all things everywhere" (footnote ". . .who is Himself completely filled with God's fullness")
NJB	"The fullness of Him who is filled, all in all"

Grammatically this is a present middle participle. Here are some possible interpretations of this phrase:

1. Christ is filling the church
2. the church is filling Christ (cf. Col. 1:24)
3. the church is being filled to the full number of believers (numerical aspect, cf. Rom. 11:25)

This terminology was meant to attack the incipient Gnostic false teachers' theological system of *aeons*, emanations or angelic ranks. The terms "fulness" and "filled" are forms of the Greek term *plērōma*, which later in the second century became the technical Gnostic term for the total number of angelic levels (cf. Eph. 1:21) between the high, holy, spiritual god and the lesser god who fashioned evil matter. See notes on Gnosticism in the Introduction to Ephesians.

This is a powerful definition of the church. She is meant to fully reflect her head, Jesus. As Jesus revealed the Father, so too, the church is to reveal the Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is being praised in Eph. 1:3-14?
2. Define "Gnosticism."
3. How is election (Eph. 1:4,5,11) related to human response (Eph. 1:13)?
4. List the things that occurred before creation (Eph. 1:4; Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8).
5. Are we God's inheritance or is He ours (Eph. 1:11)?
6. To whom does the recurrent phrase "to the praise of His glory" refer?
7. How is Eph. 1:20 related to Eph. 2:5-6?
8. Who is referred to in Eph. 1:21 (angels, demons, fallen world structures)?
9. Describe the two Jewish ages.

EPHESIANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
From Death to Life	By Grace Through Faith	Christ's Benefits	From Death to Life	Salvation in Christ, a Free Gift
2:1-10	2:1-10	2:1-10	2:1-3 2:4-10	2:1-6 2:7-10
One in Christ	Brought Near by His Blood		One in Christ	Reconciliation of the Jews and the Pagans with Others and with God
2:11-13	2:11-13 Christ Our Peace	2:11-22	2:11-12 2:13-18	2:11-18
2:14-22	2:14-22		2:19-22	2:19-22

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:1-22

- A. The Gnostic and Jewish emphasis on human works-oriented salvation is depreciated by Paul's emphasis on
 1. God's election in Eph. 1:3-14
 2. God's wisdom, knowledge and revelation, Eph. 1:15-23
 3. God's initiating grace in Eph. 2:1-10
 4. the mystery of God's redemptive plan hidden from the ages (i.e., Jew and Gentile now are one in Christ) in Eph. 2:11-3:13
 Paul emphasizes the four things in which humans have no part! Salvation is all of God (cf. Eph.

1:3-14; 2:4-7), but individuals must personally respond (cf. Eph. 2:8-9) and live in light of the New Covenant (Eph. 2:10).

B. There are three enemies of fallen humanity delineated in Eph. 2:2-3 (cf. James 4:1,4,7):

1. the fallen world system, Eph. 2:2
2. the angelic adversary, Satan, Eph. 2:2
3. mankind's fallen nature (Adamic nature), Eph. 2:3

Verses 1-3 show the hopelessness and helplessness of fallen mankind apart from and in rebellion to God (cf. Rom. 1:18-2:16).

C. As Eph. 2:1-3 describe the pitiable state of humanity, Eph. 2:4-6 contrast the riches of God's love and mercy for fallen mankind. Human sin is bad, but God's love and mercy are greater (cf. Rom. 5:20)! What God did for Christ (cf. Eph. 1:20), Christ has now done for believers (cf. Eph. 2:5-6).

D. There is real tension in the New Testament between the free grace of God and human effort. This tension can be expressed in paradoxical pairs:

1. indicative (a statement) and imperative (a command);
2. grace/faith objective (the content of the gospel) and subjective (one's experience of the gospel);
3. won the race (in Christ) and now run the race (for Christ).

This tension is clearly seen in Eph. 2:8-9, which emphasizes grace, while Eph. 2:10 emphasizes good works. It is not an either/or but a both/and theological proposition. However, grace always comes first and is the foundation of a Christlike lifestyle. Verses 8-10 are a classical summary of the paradox of the Christian gospel-free, but it costs everything! Faith and works (cf. James 2:14-26)!

E. A new topic is introduced in Eph. 2:11-3:13. It is the mystery, hidden from the beginning, that God desires the redemption of all mankind, Jew (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32) and Gentile (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9), through personal faith in the substitutionary atonement of the Messiah. This universal offer of salvation was predicted in Gen. 3:15 and 12:3. This radically free forgiveness (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) shocked the Jews and all religious elitists (Gnostic false teachers, Judaizers) and all modern "works-righteousness" proponents.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

2:1 Either Eph. 2:1-7 or Eph. 2:1-10 form one sentence in Greek, with the main verb in Eph. 2:5. It is one sustained argument. Paul's presentation includes

1. the hopelessness, helplessness, and spiritual lostness of all mankind, Eph. 2:1-3
2. the unmerited grace of God, Eph. 2:4-7
3. the necessary human response, faith and life, Eph. 2:8-10

■ **"you"** In Colossians and Ephesians this plural pronoun always refers to believing Gentiles (cf. Eph. 1:13; 2:12).

■ **"were dead"** This is a present active participle meaning "being dead." This refers to spiritual death (cf. Eph. 2:5; Rom. 5:12-21; Col. 2:13). The Bible speaks of three stages of death:

1. spiritual death (cf. Gen. 2:17; Genesis 3; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 7:10-11; James 1:15)
2. physical death (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:4-5; 5)
3. eternal death, called "the second death" (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8)

■ **"trespasses"** This Greek term (*paraptōma*) means "falling to one side" (cf. Eph. 1:7). All Greek words for "sins" are related to the Hebrew concept of deviation from the standard of God's righteousness. The terms "right," "just," and their derivatives in Hebrew are from a construction metaphor for a measuring reed. (see Special Topic at Eph. 4:24). God is the standard. All humans deviate from that standard (cf. Ps. 14:1-3; 5:9; 10:7; 36:1; 53:1-4; 140:3; Isa. 53:6; 59:7-8; Rom. 3:9-23; 1 Pet. 2:25).

■ **"sins"** This Greek term (*hamartia*) means "missing the mark" (cf. Eph. 4:26). The two terms for sin in verse 1 are used as synonyms to illustrate mankind's fallen, estranged condition (cf. Rom. 3:9,19,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22).

2:2 "in which you formerly walked" "Walk" is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15).

NASB, NKJV "according to the course of this world"

NRSV "following the course of this world"

TEV "followed the world's evil way"

NJB "living by the principles of this world"

This current fallen world system (i.e., age) is personified as an enemy (cf. Gal. 1:4). It is fallen mankind attempting to meet all needs apart from God. In John's writing it is called "the world" (cf. 1 John 2:2,15-17; 3:1,13,17; 4:1-17; 5:4,5,19) or "Babylon" (cf. Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21). In our modern terminology it is called "atheistic humanism." See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* at Col. 1:6.

NASB, NKJV "according to the prince of the power of the air"

NRSV "following the rules of the power of the air"

TEV "you obeyed the ruler of the spiritual powers in space"

NJB "obeying the ruler who governs the air"

This is the second enemy of fallen mankind, Satan the accuser. Mankind is subjected to a personal angelic tempter (cf. Genesis 3, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3). He is called the ruler or god of this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19).

In the NT the air is the realm of the demonic. The lower air (*aēr*) was seen by the Greeks to be impure and therefore the domain of evil spirits. Some see this use of "air" as referring to the immaterial nature of the spiritual realm. The concept of "the rapture of the church" comes from the Latin translation of 1 Thess. 4:17, "caught up." Christians are going to meet the Lord in the midst of Satan's kingdom, "the air," to show its overthrow!

[SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#)

NASB, NKJV "in the sons of disobedience"
NRSV "among those who are disobedient"
TEV "the people who disobey God"
NJB "in the rebellious"

This was a Hebrew idiom for rebellion and permanent character (cf. Eph. 5:6).

2:3 "we too all formerly lived" In Ephesians "we" refers to the Jewish believers, in this case, Paul and his ministry team. The ending phrase "even as the rest," makes it possible that this phrase refers to all of the OT chosen people, the Jews. This verb is an aorist passive indicative. The passive voice would emphasize that fallen mankind was being manipulated by outside evil spiritual forces, like Satan or the demonic, mentioned in Eph. 2:2 and 3:10; 6:12.

NASB, NKJV "in the lusts of our flesh"
NRSV "in the passions of our flesh"
TEV "according to our natural desires"
NJB "sensual lives"

This is the third enemy of fallen man. Although it is not listed in a grammatically parallel structure ("according to. . .") with the two enemies in Eph. 2:2, it is a theological parallel. Mankind's fallen, egocentric self (cf. Genesis 3) is its worst enemy (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). It twists and manipulates everything and everyone to one's own self interest (cf. Rom. 7:14-25).

Paul uses the term "flesh" in two distinct ways. Only context can determine the distinction. In Eph. 2:11,15; 5:29,31; 6:5 and 12 it means "the human person," not "the fallen sin nature" as here. See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at Col. 1:22.

NASB "indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind"
NKJV "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"
NRSV "following the desires of the flesh and senses"
TEV "and did whatever suited the wishes of our own bodies and minds"
NJB "ruled entirely by our own physical desires and our own ideas"

This is a Present active participle which emphasizes continual, ongoing, habitual action. The human body and the mind are not evil in and of themselves, but they are the battleground of temptation and sin (cf. Eph. 4:17-19; Romans 6 and 7).

■ **"by nature"** This refers to mankind's fallen, Adamic propensities (cf. Genesis 3; Ps. 51:5; Job 14:4; Rom. 5:12-21; 7:14-25). It is surprising that the rabbis in general do not emphasize the fall of humanity in Genesis 3. They instead assert that mankind has two intents (*yetzers*), one good, one bad. Humans are dominated by their choices. There is a famous rabbinical proverb: "Every man has a black and a white dog in his heart. The one he feeds the most is the one that becomes the biggest." However, the NT presents several theological reasons for mankind's sin (1) the fall of Adam; (2) willful ignorance; and (3) sinful choices.

■ **"children of wrath"** "Children of. . .", like "sons of. . .", is an Hebraic idiomatic phrase for a person's character. God is opposed to sin and rebellion in His creation. The wrath of God is both temporal (in time) and eschatological (at the end of time).

NASB "even as the rest"
NKJV "made us sit together"
NRSV, TEV "like everyone else"
NJB "as the rest of the world"

This refers to the lostness of all humans, both Jew and Gentile (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:21). Paul uses the term

"rest" to refer to the lost (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:6).

2:4 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" There is such a dramatic switch between the hopelessness and helplessness of fallen mankind in Eph. 2:1-3 and the marvelous grace and mercy of God in Eph. 2:4-7.

What a great truth! God's mercy and love are the keys to salvation (cf. Eph. 2:7). It is His merciful character (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8-9; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:8,16;), not mankind's performance, that offers a way of righteousness (cf. Rom 3:21-31). See note on "riches" at Eph. 1:7.

It is significant that this verse on God's grace contains a present participle and an aorist active indicative. God has loved us in the past (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10) and continues to love us (cf. 1 John 4:7-8, 16)!

2:5 "even when we were dead in our transgressions," This phrase is parallel to Eph. 2:1a. Paul returns to his original thought after his parenthetical thought (cf. Eph. 2:1-3) about the lostness of mankind. In the midst of our need, God acted in love (cf. Rom. 5:6,8).

▣ **"made us alive together with Christ"** This English phrase reflects one Greek word (*suzōpōieō*). This is the main verb of the sentence (aorist active indicative) which begins in Eph. 2:1. This is the first of three compound aorist verbs with the Greek preposition, *syn*, which meant "joint participation with." Jesus was raised from the dead in Eph. 1:20 and believers have been quickened to spiritual life through Him (cf. Col. 2:13; 3:1). Believers are now truly alive with Christ. We have resurrection life now! Death, the last enemy, has been defeated (cf. 1 Cor. 15).

▣ **2:5,8 "by grace you have been saved"** This is a Perfect passive periphrastic participle, repeated in Eph. 2:8 for emphasis. This meant that believers have been saved in the past, by an outside agent, with abiding results; "they have been and continue to be saved by God." This same construction is repeated in Eph. 2:8 for emphasis. See Special Topic at Eph. 1:7.

This is one of the biblical passages which forms the basis for the doctrine of the security of the believer (cf. John 6:37, 39; 10:28; 17:2, 24; 18:9; Rom. 8:31-39). Like all biblical doctrines, it must be balanced (held in tension) with other truths and texts.

2:6 "raised us with Him" This is the second of the aorist compounds with *syn*. Believers have already been raised with Christ. Believers were buried with Him in baptism (cf. Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-11) and raised with Him by the Father (cf. Col. 2:13; Rom. 6:4-5) who raised Jesus (raised by the Spirit in Rom. 8:11). These are special redemptive analogies. Believers spiritually participate in the major events of Jesus' experience: crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement! Believers share His life and suffering; they will also share His glory (cf. Rom. 8:17)!

NASB, NRSV "seated us with Him"
NKJV "made us sit together"
TEV "to rule with him"
NJB "gave us a place with him"

This is the third of the aorist compounds with *syn*. Our position in Him is one of present, as well as future, victory (cf. Rom. 8:37)! The concept of sitting down with Him meant reigning with Him. Jesus is the King of Kings sitting on the throne of God the Father and believers are even now co-reigning with Him (cf. Matt. 19:28; Rom. 5:17; Col. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: REIGNING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV "in the heavenly places"
TEV "in the heavenly world"
NJB "in heaven"

This locative (of sphere) neuter plural adjective, "in the heavenly places," is only used in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). From the context of all of its usages, it must mean the spiritual realm in which believers live here and now, not heaven.

2:7 "in the ages to come" The Jews believed in two ages, the current evil age (Gal. 1:4) and the coming righteous age (see Special Topic at Eph. 1:21). This New Age of righteousness would be inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah in the power of the Spirit. In Eph. 1:21 "age" is singular, here it is plural (cf. 1 Cor 2:7; Heb. 1:2; 11:3). This implies that (1) there are at least two ages or (2) the plural is used to accentuate and magnify the coming age—a rabbinical idiom called a "plural of majesty." This use of the plural in a symbolic sense can be seen in the passages that refer to the past "ages" (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2).

Some scholars believe this was simply a metaphor for eternity because of the way the phrase was used in secular Koine Greek and in several places in the NT (cf. Luke 1:33, 55; John 12:34; Rom. 9:5; Gal. 1:5; 1 Tim. 1:17).

■ **"He might show"** This is an aorist middle subjunctive. God clearly manifested His own character (cf. Eph. 1:5-7). This term means "to publicly display" (cf. Rom. 9:17,22). God's mercy and purpose in Christ are clearly manifested to the angels by His treatment of fallen mankind (cf. Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 4:9).

■ **"surprising"** *Huperballō*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19.

2:8 "For by grace" Salvation is by the "grace" of God (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). The character of God is revealed through His mercy (cf. Eph. 2:4-6). Believers are the trophies of His love. Grace is best defined as the unmerited, undeserved love of God. It flows from God's nature through Christ and is irrespective of the worth or merit of the one loved.

■ **"you have been saved"** This is a perfect passive periphrastic participle which is a repeat of Eph. 2:5 (see note there). Its thrust is that "believers have been and continue to be" saved by God.

In the OT the term "save" spoke of "physical deliverance" (cf. James 5:15). In the NT this meaning has taken on a spiritual dimension. God delivers believers from the results of the fall and gives them eternal life. He restores the image of God and enables fellowship with God again.

See Special Topic at Eph. 1:7.

■ **"through faith"** Faith receives God's free gift in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:22,25; 4:5; 9:30; Gal. 2:16; 3:24; 1 Pet. 1:5). Mankind must respond to God's offer of grace and forgiveness in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16-17,36; 6:40; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9-13).

God deals with fallen mankind by means of a covenant. He always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44, 65) and sets the agenda and the boundaries (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). He allows fallen mankind to participate in their own salvation by responding to His covenant offer. The mandated response is both initial and continuing faith. It involves repentance, obedience, service, worship, and perseverance.

The term "faith" in the OT is a metaphorical extension of a stable stance. It came to denote that which is sure, trustworthy, dependable, and faithful. None of these describe even redeemed fallen mankind. It is not mankind's trustworthiness, or faithfulness, or dependability, but God's. We trust in His trustworthy promises, not our trustworthiness! Covenant obedience flows from gratitude! The focus has always been on His faithfulness, not the believers' faith! Faith cannot save anyone. Only grace saves, but it is received by faith. The focus is never on the amount of faith (cf. Matt. 17:20), but on its object (Jesus).

SPECIAL TOPIC: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the Old Testament (אמן)

■ **"and that"** This is the Greek demonstrative pronoun (*touto*), which is neuter in gender. The closest nouns, "grace" and "faith," are both feminine in gender. Therefore, this must refer to the whole process of our salvation in the finished work of Christ.

There is another possibility based on a similar grammatical construction in Phil. 1:28. If this is the case then this adverbial phrase relates to faith, which is also a gift of God's grace! Here is the mystery of God's

sovereignty and human free will.

- **"not of yourselves"** This is the first of three phrases which clearly show that salvation is not based on human performance: (1) "not of yourselves" Eph. 2:8; (2) "gift of God" Eph. 2:8; and (3) "not as a result of works" Eph. 2:9.
- **"the gift of God"** This is the essence of grace-love with no strings attached (cf. Rom. 3:24; 6:23). The paradox of salvation as both a free gift and a mandated covenant response are difficult to grasp. Yet both are true! Salvation is truly free, yet costs everything. Most biblical doctrines are presented as tension-filled pairs of truths (security vs. perseverance, faith vs. works, God's sovereignty vs. human free will, predestination vs. human response and transcendence vs. immanence).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE FOR ONE'S SALVATION

2:9 "not as a result of works," Salvation is not by merit (cf. Rom. 3:20, 27-28; 9:11, 16; Gal. 2:16; Phil 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). This is in direct contrast to the false teachers.

- **"so that no one may boast"** Salvation is by God's grace, not human effort, so there is no room for human glorying (cf. Rom. 3:27; 4:2). If believers boast, let them boast in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31, which is a quote from Jer. 9:23-24).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

2:10 "we are His workmanship," The English word "poem" comes from this Greek term (*poiēma*). This word is only used two times in the NT, here and Rom. 1:20. This is the believers' position in grace. They are paradoxically His finished product which is still in process!

- **"created in Christ Jesus"** This is an aorist passive participle. The Spirit forms believers through Christ's ministry by the will of the Father (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). This act of a new spiritual creation is described in the same terms used of the initial creation in Genesis (cf. Gen. 3:9; Col. 1:16).
- **"for good works"** Believers' lifestyles after they meet Christ are an evidence of their salvation (cf. James and 1 John). They are saved by grace through faith unto works! They are saved to serve! Faith without works is dead, as are works without faith (cf. Matt. 7:21-23 and James 2:14-26). Salvation is a gate and a way/road. The goal of the Father's choice is that believers be "holy and blameless" (cf. Eph. 1:4).

Paul was often attacked for his radically free gospel because it seemed to encourage godless living. A gospel so seemingly unconnected to moral performance must lead to abuse. Paul's gospel was free in the grace of God, but it also demanded an appropriate response, not only in initial repentance, but in ongoing repentance. Godly living is the result, not lawlessness. Good works are not the mechanism of salvation, but the result. This paradox of a completely free salvation and a cost-everything response is difficult to communicate, but the two must be held in a tension-filled balance.

American individualism has distorted the gospel. Humans are not saved because God loves them so much individually, but because God loves fallen mankind, mankind made in His image. He saves and changes individuals to reach more individuals. The ultimate focus of love is primarily corporate (cf. John 3:16), but it is received individually (cf. John 1:12; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 15:1).

- **"which God prepared beforehand"** This strong term (*pro + hetoimos*, "to prepare before") relates to the theological concept of predestination (cf. Eph. 1:4-5,11) and is used only here and in Rom. 9:23. God chose a people to reflect His character. Through Christ, the Father has restored His image in fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

¹¹Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands-¹²remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

2:11 "Therefore" This could refer to (1) Eph. 2:1-10, or (2) Eph. 1:3-2:10. Paul often uses this word to start a new literary unit by building on the combined truths of previous units (cf. Rom. 5:1; 8:1, 12:1).

This is the third major truth of Paul's doctrinal section (Eph. 1-3). The first was God's eternal choice based on His gracious character, the second was the hopelessness of fallen humanity, saved by God's gracious acts through Christ which must be received and lived out by faith. Now the third, God's will has always been the salvation of all humans (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5), both Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). No human intellect (i.e., Gnostics) understood these revealed truths.

▣ **"remember"** This is a present active imperative. These Gentiles are commanded to continue to remember their previous alienation from God, Eph. 2:11-12.

▣ **"that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh"** This is literally "nations" (*ethnos*). It refers to all peoples who are not of the line of Jacob. In the OT the term "nations" (*go'im*) was a derogatory way of referring to all non-Jews.

▣ **"who are called 'Uncircumcision'"** Even in the OT, this rite was an outward sign of inner faith (cf. Lev. 26:41-42; Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4). The "Judaizers" of Galatians claimed that this was still God's will and was indispensable for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1ff; Gal. 2:11-12). This was probably a term of derision. Be careful not to confuse the symbol with the spiritual reality for which it stands (cf. Acts 2:38 for another example).

2:12

NASB "separate from Christ"

NKJV, NRSV "without Christ"

TEV "apart from Christ"

NJB "you had no Christ"

This is literally "on separate foundations." These next few phrases, like Eph. 2:1-3, show the helplessness and hopelessness of the Gentiles without Christ.

NASB, NJB "excluded"

NKJV, NRSV "being aliens"

TEV "foreigners"

This is a perfect passive participle meaning "have been and continued to be excluded." In the OT this term referred to resident non-citizens with limited rights (aliens). The Gentiles had been and continued to be separated, alienated from the Covenant of YHWH.

■ **"the commonwealth of Israel"** This is literally "citizenship" (*politeia*). This word came into English as "politics." It refers to the chosen descendants of Abraham. Their benefits are enumerated in Romans 9:4-5.

■ **"to the covenants of promise,"** The NT can refer to the OT as one covenant or as several covenants. This theological tension can be viewed as one faith covenant expressed in (1) differing requirements or (2) given to different persons. God confronted OT persons in different ways. His word to Adam was about things in the garden of Eden, to Noah about the ark, to Abraham about a son and a place to live, to Moses about leading the people, etc. But to all it involved obedience to the word of God! Some groups (dispensationalists) focus on the differentness. Other groups (Calvinists) focus on the unifying faith aspect. Paul focused on the covenant of Abraham (cf. Romans 4) as setting the paradigm for all faith relationships.

The New Covenant is like the old covenants in its demand for obedience and personal faith in God's revelation. It is different in how one is right with God (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). The Mosaic covenant focused on human obedience and performance, while the NT focuses on the obedience and performance of Christ. This New Covenant is God's way of uniting Jews and Gentiles by faith in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). The New Covenant, like the old, is both unconditional (God's promise of grace and forgiveness) and conditional (human response). It reflects both the sovereignty of God (predestination) and the free choices of mankind (faith, repentance, obedience, perseverance).

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

■ **"having no hope and without God in the world"** If there is truly one creator God and Israel was His chosen people, the Gentiles were cut off without any hope, lost in idolatry and paganism (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13 and Rom. 1:18-2:16).

2:13 "But now" There is a contrast between the hopeless past of the Gentiles, Eph. 2:11-12, and their great hope in the gospel, Eph. 2:13-22.

■ **"you who formerly were far off have been brought near"** This same concept is repeated in Eph. 2:17, where Isa. 57:19 is quoted. In Isaiah this text referred to Jewish exiles but here in Ephesians it refers to Gentiles. This is one example of Paul's typological use of OT passages. The NT Apostles have universalized the OT hope. As the exiled Jews were apart from God, so too, the Gentiles were alienated from God.

■ **"by the blood of Christ."** This referred to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:25; 5:6-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:14,28; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5). God's family is no longer national, but spiritual (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:16-25).

The blood of Christ was a sacrificial metaphor (cf. Leviticus 1-2) for the death of the Messiah (cf. TEV). John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (cf. John 1:29). Jesus came to die (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53; Mark 10:45).

It also was a way to assert the true humanity of Jesus, (cf. Eph. 2:15) which the Gnostics denied.

2:14 This verse has three verbals. The first is a present indicative. Jesus continues to be and to provide our peace. The second and third are aorist active participles ("made both one" and "broke down the barrier"); all that is necessary has been accomplished to unite Jews and Gentiles into one new entity (the church).

Peace between Jew and Gentile is the focus of this literary unit, Eph. 2:11-3:13. This was the mystery of the gospel hidden in ages past. The term "peace" refers to

1. peace between God and mankind (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1-11; Phil. 4:7,9)
2. peace between Jew and Gentile, Eph. 2:14, 15, 17 (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)

See note at Eph. 2:15.

■ **"He Himself is our peace,"** "He Himself" (*autos*) is emphasized (cf. Eph 2:15). The term "peace" means to "restore that which was broken" (reconciliation). Jesus the Messiah is called the Prince of Peace (cf. Isa. 9:6 and Zech. 6:12-13). God's peace in Christ has several aspects. See note at Eph. 2:15 and Special Topics: Peace and The Christian and Peace at Col. 1:20.

NASB "who made both *groups into one*"
NKJV "who has made both one"
NRSV "he has made both groups into one"
TEV "by making Jews and Gentiles one people"
NJB "has made the two into one"

Believers are no longer Jew or Gentile, but Christian (cf. Eph. 1:15; 2:15; 4:4; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). This was the mystery of God as revealed in Ephesians. This has always been God's plan (Gen. 3:15). God chose Abraham to choose a people, to choose a world (Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). This is the unifying theme of the Old and New Covenants (Testaments). See Special Topic: Racism at Col. 3:11.

NASB "the barrier of the dividing wall,"
NKJV "the middle wall of division"
NRSV "the dividing wall"
TEV "the wall that separated"
NJB "the barrier which used to keep them apart"

This is literally "the middle wall of partition." This was a rare term. In context it obviously refers to the Mosaic law (cf. v.15). Some commentators have asserted that it was an allusion to the wall in Herod's Temple between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the Women which separated Jewish and Gentile worshipers. This same symbolism of the removal of barriers is seen in the veil of the Temple rent from top to bottom at Jesus' death (cf. Matt. 27:51). Unity is now possible. Unity is now the will of God (cf. Eph. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-10).

In Gnosticism this term referred to a barrier between heaven and earth which may be alluded to in Eph. 4:8-10.

2:15

NASB "abolishing"
NKJV "having abolished"
NRSV "has abolished"
TEV "abolished"
NJB "destroying"

The term "abolish" is a favorite of Paul's (cf. Rom. 3:31; 6:6; Col. 2:14). It literally means "to make null and void" or "to bring to no effect." It is an aorist active participle. Jesus has totally eliminated the death sentence of the OT Law (cf. Eph. 2:16; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:13).

This does not mean to imply that the OT is not inspired and important revelation for the NT believer (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). It does mean that the Law is not the means of salvation (cf. Acts 15; Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews). The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36) is based on a new heart and a new spirit, not human performance of a legal code. The Law functions in sanctification, but not justification. Believing Jews and believing Gentiles now have the same standing before God-the imputed righteousness of Christ.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: NULL AND VOID \(KATARGEŌ\)](#)

NASB, NKJV "in His flesh"
NRSV(2:14) "flesh"
TEV(2:14) "in his own body"

NJB(2:14) "in his own person"

This emphasizes Jesus' humanity (cf. Col. 1:22) as well as His Incarnational ministry (cf. Eph. 4:8-10). The Gnostic false teachers would have denied both because of their ontological dualism between spirit, which they saw as good, and matter, which they saw as evil. See Intro. to Ephesians "The Philosophical and Theological Background of the False Teachers [Gnosticism];(cf. Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:22).

▣ **"the enmity"** The balanced structure equates "the enmity" (cf. Eph. 2:16) with "the Law of commandment contained in the ordinances." The OT said "do and live," but fallen mankind was unable to perform the Mosaic Law. Once broken, the OT laws became a curse (cf. Gal. 3:10); "the soul that sins will surely die" (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20). The New Covenant removed the enmity by giving humans a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27). Performance becomes the result, not the goal. Salvation is a gift, not a reward for work accomplished.

NASB	"the Law of commandments <i>contained</i> in ordinances,"
NKJV	"the law of commandments <i>continued</i> in ordinances"
NRSV	"the law with its commandments and ordinances"
TEV	"the Jewish Law, with its commandments and rules"
NJB	"the rules and decrees of the Law"

This referred to the way of salvation which was thought to be found only through performance of the Law of Moses (cf. Rom. 9:30-32; Gal. 2:15-21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN

▣ **"that in Himself He might make"** The pronoun "Himself" is emphatic. God's eternal purpose of uniting all humans in salvation (cf. Gen. 3:15) and fellowship was accomplished exclusively through the performance of the person of the Messiah, not the Mosaic Law.

▣ **"one new man,"** This Greek term means "new" in kind, not time. The people of God are not Jews, not Gentiles, but Christians! The Church is a new entity, in and through and for Christ (cf. Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10).

▣ **"establishing peace"** This is a favorite term for Paul. It is used eleven times in Romans and seven times in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:2; 2:14,15,17; 4:3; 6:15,23). He uses it in three ways:

1. peace between God and mankind, Col. 1:20
2. subjective peace with God through Christ, John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7
3. peace between peoples, Eph. 2:11-3:13.

This is a present passive participle. Christ continues to make peace for those fallen children of Adam who will respond by repentance and faith. Christ's peace is not automatic (aorist subjunctive of Eph. 2:16) but it is available to all (cf. Rom. 5:12-21).

2:16 "might reconcile" The Greek term means to transfer someone from one state of being to another. It implies an exchange of contrasting positions (cf. Rom. 5:10-11; Col. 1:20,22; 2 Cor. 5:18,21). In a sense reconciliation is the removal of the curse of Genesis 3. God and mankind are restored to intimate fellowship even in this life, in this fallen world system. This reconciliation with God expresses itself in a new relationship with other humans and ultimately with nature (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25; Rom. 8:18-23; Rev. 22:3). The reuniting of Jews and Gentiles through Christ (cf. Eph. 1:7) is one beautiful example of God's unifying work in our world.

▣ **"in one body"** This metaphor of unity is used in several different ways in Paul's writings.

1. the physical body of Christ (cf. Col. 1:22) or the body of Christ, the church (cf. Col. 1:23; Eph. 4:12; 5:23,30)

2. the new humanity of both Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:16)

3. a way of referring to the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13,27)

In a sense they are all related to #1.

■ **"through the cross"** The Jewish leaders meant Christ's cross to be a curse (cf. Deut. 21:23). God used it as a means of redemption (cf. Isaiah 53). Jesus became "the curse" for us (cf. Gal. 3:13)! It became His victory chariot (cf. Col. 2:14-15), giving believers victory over (1) the OT curse; (2) the evil powers; and (3) the enmity between Jew and Gentile.

NASB	"by it having put to death the enmity"
NKJV	"thereby putting to death the enmity"
NRSV	"thus putting to death that hostility through it"
TEV	"Christ destroyed the enmity"
NJB	"in his own person he killed the hostility"

The English translations show that this phrase can be understood in two ways. This is because the singular pronoun can be a dative masculine (TEV, NJB) or dative neuter (NASB, NRSV). In context either is possible. The emphasis of the larger context is on Christ's finished redemptive work.

2:17 This is an allusion to Isa. 57:19 or possibly 52:7. Paul, by typological exegesis, applied OT texts to exiled Jews to Gentiles. Even the rabbis, going back to Isa. 56:6, used this phrase to refer to Gentile proselytes.

2:18 The work of the Trinity is clearly stated in this book (cf. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 4:4-6). Although the term "trinity" is not a biblical word, the concept surely is (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:33-34,38-39; Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 1 Thess. 1:2-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21). See Special Topic at Eph. 1:3.

■ **"we both have our access"** This is a present active indicative meaning "we continue to have access." This is the concept of Jesus personally bringing believers into the presence of God and giving them a personal introduction (cf. Rom. 5:2; it is also used in the sense of confidence in Heb. 4:16; 10:19,35).

■ **"in one Spirit"** This is also emphasized in Ephesians 4:4. The false teachers were causing disunity, but the Spirit brought unity (not uniformity)!

2:19 The Gentiles who were estranged (Eph. 2:11-12) are now fully included. This is clearly stated by the use of four common biblical metaphors.

1. fellow citizens (city)
2. saints (holy nation set apart for God)
3. God's household (family members)
4. a spiritual building (temple, Eph. 2:20-22a)

■ **"saints"** See Special Topic at Col. 1:2.

2:20 "having been built upon" This is an aorist passive participle. The foundation (cf. Eph. 2:12) of our faith has been fully, finally, and completely laid by the Triune God. God's good news was proclaimed by the Apostles and prophets (cf. Eph. 3:5).

■ **"the foundation of the apostles and prophets"** Jesus laid the foundation of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus is the new temple (cf. John 2:19-22). The OT prophesied the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus' Spirit-led life, death, and resurrection accomplished it, and the Apostles preached its reality. The only question is, to whom does the term "prophets" refer? Are they OT prophets or NT prophets (cf. Eph. 3:5; 4:1)? The order of the terms implies NT prophets (cf. Eph. 2:3:5; 4:11), but the OT Messianic allusion to the

"cornerstone" implies OT prophecy.

The reason for the distinction between OT and NT prophets is the issue of revelation. OT prophets wrote Scripture. They were God's instrument of inspired self-disclosure. However, prophecy is an ongoing gift in the NT (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Does Scripture writing continue? There must be a distinction drawn between inspiration (Apostles and OT prophets) and illumination and spiritual giftedness (NT gifted believers).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

■ **"the cornerstone"** This is an OT Messianic metaphor (cf. Isa. 28:16; Ps. 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:4-8). In the OT God's stability, strength and perseverance are often visualized in "Rock" as a title (cf. Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30; Ps. 18:2, 31, 46; 28:1; 31:3; 42:9; 71:3; 78:15).

The metaphor of Jesus as a stone.

1. a rejected stone - Ps. 118:22
2. a building stone - Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16
3. a stone to stumble over - Isa. 8:14-15
4. an overcoming and conquering stone (kingdom) - Dan. 2:45
5. Jesus used these passages to describe Himself (cf. Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17)

He was the key construction item who was ignored in OT ritualism and legalism (cf. Isa. 8:14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE

2:21-22 The collective or corporate idea of God's people seen in Eph. 2:19 (twice), 21 and 22 was expressed in the plural "saints." To be saved is to be part of a family, a building, a body, a temple (cf. Eph. 1:23; 4:16; Col. 2:19).

The concept of the church as a temple is expressed in 1 Cor. 3:16-17. This is an emphasis on the corporate nature of the church. The individual aspect was expressed in 1 Cor. 6:16. Both are true! Jesus is the new temple, cf. John 2:19-22.

The verbs in Eph. 2:21-22 also have a corporate focus. They have the compound *syn* which means "joint participation with." They are both present passive. God is continuing to build/add to His church.

There is a Greek manuscript problem connected with the phrase "the whole building." The ancient uncial manuscripts κ^* , B, D, F and G have no article, while κ^c , A, C, and P do. The question is, was Paul referring to one large building (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NIV, TEV, REB) or to several smaller buildings (ASV, NJB, Phillips) united in some way? The United Bible Society's 4th Edition Greek text gives a "B" rating to the anarthrous construction, which indicates they are "almost certain" that it refers to one building. This one building is not finished. It is in the process of growing. The building metaphor alluded to the spiritual temple (the people of God).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Are all humans really estranged from God?
2. Do humans have a significant part in their own salvation?
3. Why is the union of Jew and Gentile so significant?
4. How did Jesus make the Law "null and void"?
5. Is the Law of God eternal? How do Christians relate to the Mosaic Law and the entire Old Testament?

6. Why does Paul emphasize the building metaphor in Eph. 2:19-23?

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EPHESIANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles	The Mystery Revealed	A Prayer for Wisdom	Paul's Work for the Gentiles	Paul, a Servant of the Mystery
3:1-13	3:1-7 Purpose of the Mystery 3:8-13	3:1-6 3:7-13	3:1-6 3:7-13	3:1-13
To Know the Love of Christ	Appreciation of the Mystery		The Love of Christ	Paul's Prayer
3:14-19	3:14-21	3:14-19	3:14-19	3:14-19
3:20-21		3:20-21	3:20-21	3:20-21

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 3:1-21

A. Considering the theological purpose(s) for the cyclical letter of Paul known as Ephesians, it is clear that Paul's three main truths in the doctrinal section relate to the Gnostic false teachers. (See Introduction.)

1. Eph. 1 praises the Father for His "before time" love expressed in Christ's substitutionary atonement and the Spirit's continuing presence.
2. Eph. 2:1-10 reveals the Father's great love and mercy for fallen, helpless humanity.
3. Eph. 2:11-3:13 reveals the eternal plan of God to include all humans in a free salvation through Christ (cf. Gen. 3:15), Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free.

In effect, Eph. 2:11-3:13) reveals the eternal, universal redemptive plan of God (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan); Eph. 2:1-10) reveals the loving heart of God and Eph. 1:3-14) reveals the eternal purpose of God, mankind's Christlikeness. God was fully aware of mankind's rebellion and made plans for dealing with the problem, even before creation (cf. Eph. 1:4).

- B. Eph. 2:11-22 and 3:2-13 specify one of several definitions of the mystery of God found in Paul's writings. Jew and Gentile were united in one new entity, the Church of Jesus Christ. See Special Topic at Eph. 3:3
- C. Paul begins a prayer of praise in Eph. 3:1, but gets sidetracked concerning his ministry to the Gentiles and resumes his prayer in verses 14-21.
- D. The prayer which began in verse 1 and finishes in Eph. 3:14-21 divides into three clauses. (See full note at Eph. 3:16-19)
1. believers receive inner strength, Eph. 3:16-17a
 - a. by the Spirit's power
 - b. by Christ's indwelling
 2. saints may fully comprehend the truth of the gospel and the mystery, Eph. 3:17b-19a
 - a. to grasp so as to hold on to
 - b. to know by experience
 3. believers are filled with the fullness (*plērōma*) of God, Eph. 3:19b

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:1-13

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles²if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; ³that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. ⁸To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; ¹⁰so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. ¹³Therefore, I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

3:1 "For this reason" Ephesians 3:2-13 is a theological continuation of Eph. 2:11-22. Paul repeats this phrase in Eph. 3:14, where he returns to his prayer to God. (After a parenthesis of 2:2-13 about his call and ministry to Gentiles).

▣ **"the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles"** When Paul wrote this book he was imprisoned at Rome because of a riot in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 21:27-22:22). The riot occurred when the Jews accused Paul of taking Trophimus, an Ephesian convert, into the Temple. The Jews knew him to be a Gentile and were outraged (cf. Eph. 2:14).

Paul felt a specific call to the Gentiles (cf. Eph. 3:2,8; Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:16,18; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

3:2 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective

or for his literary purposes. Verses 2-7 form one sentence in Greek. These believers had heard about Paul's ministry and calling. Paul was not the founder of all the churches in Asia Minor.

▣ **"of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you"** Paul felt he had been entrusted with the gospel (cf. Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 9:17; Gal. 2:7; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 4:10). God's grace came to Paul as a gift, vv.7-8, and as a stewardship, Eph. 3:2. This is the twin aspect of God's covenant.

As a matter of fact, all believers have been gifted by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11; Eph. 4:7) and declared stewards of the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). It is not the Great Option! It involves both intentional evangelism and Christlike maturity. It is impossible to be a good and faithful steward and not comprehend the assignment!

3:3 "by revelation" This could refer to

1. his Damascus road experience (cf. Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18)
2. Ananias' teachings in Damascus (cf. Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-16)
3. the vision in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 22:17)
4. Paul's training by the ascended and glorified Jesus in Arabia (cf. Gal. 1:12, 17-18)

▣ **"the mystery"** Paul used the term "mystery" over twenty times with several different meanings. Often it is associated with the how and why of the union of believing Jews and Gentiles into one new community, the church (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 1:26-27).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION, "MYSTERY"

NASB	"as I wrote before in brief"
NKJV	"(as I wrote before in a few words)"
NRSV	"as I wrote above in a few words"
TEV	"(I have written briefly about this. . .)"
NJB	"as I just described it very shortly"

The great reformer, John Calvin, thought this referred to something Paul had written in a previous letter, but it may better be understood to refer to a previous part of Ephesians, probably 2:11-22. This common use of the aorist tense is called an epistolary aorist.

3:4 "when you read" This probably refers to the public readings of Paul's letters in the churches (cf. Col.4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Rev.1:3). Remember that Ephesians was a circular letter.

3:5

NASB	"in other generations"
NKJV	"in other ages"
NRSV	"in former generations"
TEV	"in past times"
NJB	"In past generations"

God is now clearly revealing His age old plan of the redemption of all mankind (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-9; Col. 1:26a), Jew and Greek, rich and poor, slave and free, male and female (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28).

▣ **"was not made known. . .has now been revealed"** These are two passive verbs, which show God's actions in the revelation of this great truth before time (1:3-6), in time (1:7-12), and through time (1:13-14). NT believers know more about God and His plan and His Messiah than any OT person!

▣ **"to His holy apostles and prophets"** This phrase is also found in Eph. 2:20; 4:11. They are "holy" because they were set apart for a specific task. This refers to NT prophets (see Special Topic at Eph. 2:20, cf. Eph. 4:11; Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9,10; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1-40). Both groups, Apostles and

prophets (along with evangelists and pastor/teachers, cf. Eph. 4:11), proclaimed this newly revealed mystery of the gospel, that believing Jew and Gentile now formed one new body, the church.

3:6

- NASB** "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-members of the promise"
- NKJV** "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise"
- NRSV** "the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise"
- TEV** "the Gentiles have a part with the Jews in God's blessings; they are members of the same body, and share in the promise"
- NJB** "pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them"

What a startling revelation of the age-old mystery of God's redemptive plan. In Christ there is no more Jew or Greek (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 3:22; 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:7-9, 28-29; Col. 3:11). This same word, "fellow-heirs," is also used in Rom. 8:17; Heb. 11:9 and 1 Pet. 3:7.

There are three *syn* compounds here: (1) "fellow-heirs"; (2) "fellow members of one body"; and (3) "fellow partakers of the promise." Paul uses these *syn* compounds often to describe the believer's new life in Christ. This is very similar to the three compounds with *syn* in Eph. 2:5-6.

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

3:7 This could refer to Paul's initial salvation, but in context it seems to refer to God's special gift for his apostolic Gentile mission (cf. Eph. 3:2; 6:20; Rom. 12:3; 15:15-16; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:9; Col. 1:25).

▣ **"a minister"** We get the English word "deacon" from this generic Greek verb for minister (*diakoneō*, cf. Matt. 8:15 or *diakonia*, cf. Eph. 4:12).

▣ **"according to the working of His power"** Salvation and effective ministry are of God, not Paul (cf. Eph. 1:19; Col. 1:29).

3:8-12 This is one Greek sentence. These long sentences are characteristic of Ephesians.

3:8 "the very least of all saints" This is literally "most least," which is a comparative of a superlative (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:15). Paul was humbled by his previous life of religious self-righteousness, and aggressive persecution. He was also amazed by God's love for such a persecutor of His church. See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

- NASB** "unfathomable"
- NKJV** "unsearchable"
- NRSV** "boundless"
- TEV, NJB** "infinite"

What a powerful word to describe God's riches in Christ (cf. Rom. 11:33 and the Septuagint translation of Job 5:9; 9:10). Mankind cannot discover God, but God has chosen to reveal Himself.

▣ **"riches of Christ"** "Riches" is one of Paul's favorite words (cf. Eph. 1:7,18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16). In chapter 1 he spoke of the riches of God the Father. Here Paul transfers them to the Son! NT authors often allude to Jesus' deity by transferring to Him the titles and functions of YHWH (for example see "God our Savior" and "Christ Jesus our Savior" in Titus 1:3 and 1:4; 2:10 and 2:13; 3:4 and 3:6).

3:9

NASB	"to bring to light"
NKJV	"to make all people see"
NRSV	"to make everyone see"
TEV	"to make all men see"
NJB	"explaining"

This is literally "to turn on a light" (cf. Eph. 1:18; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). Only the Spirit can bring this revelation to a darkened heart (cf. John 1:4-5; 6:44, 65). We get the English term "photo" from the Greek word.

NASB	"the administration of the mystery"
NKJV	"the fellowship of the mystery"
NRSV	"the plan of the mystery"
TEV	"God's secret plan is to be put into effect"
NJB	"how the mystery is to be dispensed"

This is literally "stewardship of a household (*oikonomia*)." This is one of Paul's favorite words for God's eternal plan of redemption in Christ for all the children of Adam (cf. Eph. 1:10; 3:2,9; Col. 1:25).

There is a Greek manuscript problem with the term "stewardship" versus "fellowship." "Stewardship" is found in P⁴⁶, all uncial manuscripts, most minuscule manuscripts, all ancient versions, and all early church father quotes, therefore, "stewardship" is the original word. See the discussion of textual criticism in Appendix Two. For "mystery" see Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

■ **"God, who created all things"** This refuted the Gnostic dualism between matter and spirit (cf. Eph. 2:10). In the Colossian parallel, Jesus is identified as God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2-3; 2:10).

3:10

NASB, NKJV	"the manifold wisdom of God"
NRSV	"the wisdom of God in its rich variety"
TEV	"God's wisdom, in all its different forms"
NJB	"how comprehending God's wisdom really is"

This is a compound word stressing the "many-colored" wisdom of God. In 1 Pet. 1:6 it refers to the manifold sufferings and in 1 Pet. 4:10 it refers to the manifold graces of God. This great multi-faceted truth of God can best be seen in Paul's doxologies in Rom. 11:33-36 and Eph. 3:18-21.

■ **"the church"** *Ekklesia* was used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Hebrew term "assembly (*qahal*) of Israel" (cf. Exod. 12:6; 16:3; Num. 20:4; Lev. 4:13). This is one of several uses of this term in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32). Paul calls the church the body of Christ both in Eph. 1:22-23 and in Colossians 1:24. The early church saw itself as the true OT people of God with Christ Jesus the Messiah as Head.

One of the unusual literary relationships between Ephesians and Colossians is that in Ephesians this term refers to the church universal (cf. Matt. 16:18; Gal. 1:13), while in Colossians it usually refers to the local church (1 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal. 1:12; Phil. 3:6). This points toward Ephesians as a circular letter.

See Special Topic at Col. 1:18.

■ **"be made known"** The angels longed to know God's plan (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). God used His love for the Church to reveal Himself to mankind and to angels (cf. Eph. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:9).

■ **"to the rulers and the authorities"** This refers to angelic levels of authority, both good and evil (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 2:8; Eph. 1:21; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15, 20). This was a major theological aspect of

the Gnosticism. For them, salvation was the procurement of secret knowledge so that one could pass through these angelic levels (*aeons*) to reach the high, good god.

A full list of the terms used in the NT for these angelic levels can be seen in George E. Ladd's *Theology of the New Testament*, p. 401. These orders and ranks of angelic beings are not defined and discussed in detail anywhere in the NT. Be careful of curiosity and systems of theology that attempt to definitively answer that which the NT leaves ambiguous!

A good example of this caution relates to these angelic ranks. In some passages, they are not evil but possibly structures of this fallen world which enable humans to live apart from God. A good book on this theory would be Hendrik Berkhoff's *Christ and the Powers*, Herald Press. See Special Topics: Angels in Paul's Writings at Eph. 6:12 and *Archē* at Col. 1:16.

▣ **"in heavenly places"** This locative (of sphere) neuter plural adjective (*epouranious*) "in the heavenly places" is only used in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). From the context of all of its usages, it must mean the spiritual realm in which believers live here and now, not heaven.

3:11 "eternal purposes" This is literally "purpose of ages" (cf. Eph. 1:9-10). This term is used in the Greek Classics to refer to a set plan. God is not surprised and He has no plan B (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan)!

What was God's eternal plan? This is clarified in Genesis 1-3. God created mankind for fellowship (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8); that fellowship was broken by human rebellion (cf. Gen. 3). The restoration of God's image and fellowship with mankind (Jew and Gentile) is the goal of God's activity in the Bible. This goal is met through the work of Christ (cf. Gen. 3:15) and the ministry of the Spirit (cf. John 16:8-14).

3:12

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "boldness"

TEV "freedom"

NJB "bold"

This term is used for freedom of speech, but it came to mean confidence in approaching someone in authority (cf. Heb. 4:16; 10:19,35; 1 John 2:28; 3:21). In Christ, believers have boldness!

NASB "confident access"

NKJV "access with confidence"

NRSV "confidence"

TEV "with all confidence"

NJB "in complete confidence"

This term is used in the Septuagint (LXX) for a personal introduction to royalty. The concept is emphasized in Eph. 2 and Rom. 5:2. Believers approach the Father through Christ alone (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). He is their only mediator (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). In Christ, believers have confident access!

The Reformation emphasis on "the priesthood of the believer" was a reaction to the authoritarian approach of the Catholic Church. However, biblically, the focus is never on "the believer," but on "believers." Western Christianity has magnified the individual to the exclusion of the corporate body. Christians are to be priests in an evangelistic and corporate sense, not an individual privileged position. It is true that humans become believers individually, but Christianity is a corporate experience.

▣ **"Through faith in Him"** Jesus is God's channel for all spiritual blessings (cf. Eph. 1:4, 7, 9, 10 (twice), Eph. 1:12, 13 (twice)).

This is literally "faithfulness of him" (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:22). If it is an objective genitive, believers trust in Christ. He is the trustworthy One! If it is a subjective genitive, it refers to Christ's "faithfulness" (OT sense or the term). Faithfulness in fulfilling the OT Law (His life) and offering Himself as a sacrifice for sins (His death).

3:13 "I ask you not to lose heart" This is present middle indicative, meaning "you, yourselves, continue to not lose heart." Grammatically, this can refer to Paul or to the Ephesian church. Most commentators agree that it refers to the churches Paul is addressing in this cyclical letter. Paul uses this phrase often (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16; Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13).

■ **"at my tribulation on your behalf"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION

■ **"for they are your glory"** Exactly how Paul's sufferings (cf. Eph. 3:1) are the glory of these Gentile churches is not revealed. Possibly they refer to Paul's salvation and ministry assignment in Acts 9:15-16 (cf. Acts 20:23). Paul was fulfilling his ministry among the Gentiles, therefore, his sufferings opened the door to their salvation. See fuller note on "glory" at Eph. 1:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:14-19

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

3:14 "For this reason" Paul returns to his initial purpose (cf. Eph. 3:1, i.e. his prayer): Notice the doctrinal section opens with a prayer to the Triune God (cf. Eph. 1:3-14) and closes with prayer.

■ **"I bow my knees"** Standing, not bowing, was the usual position for Jewish prayer. This shows Paul's intensity (cf. Matt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 12; 22:41; Acts 7:60; Phil. 2:10).

3:14-15 "Father. . . family" This is a play on the Greek name *pater* and *patria*. Notice the emphasis on the Father, as in Eph. 1:3-14. The Creator God is the paradigm for all living beings and their social units (i.e. tribes/nations).

3:14-17 "Father. . . Spirit. . . Christ" Notice the work of the Trinity as in Eph. 1:3-14. It is true that the term "Trinity" is not used in the NT. However, there are numerous passages where the three divine persons are mentioned in a unified context (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:33-34, 38-39; Rom. 1:4-5; 5:15; 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14, 17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 1:20-21). See Special Topic: The Trinity.

The KJV translation adds "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," but this phrase is not in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, κ , A, B, C, nor the Greek texts used by Jerome and Augustine. The addition does occur in the uncial manuscripts κ ^C, D, G, K, and the Greek text used by Chrysostom.

The concept of three divine persons with one divine essence (i.e., monotheism) is difficult to understand. Yet, if Jesus is deity and the Spirit is a person, then Bible believers are forced to affirm a triune unity. See Special Topic The Trinity at Eph. 1:3.

3:15 "in heaven and on earth" This refers to believers alive and dead (cf. Phil. 2:10).

3:16-19 Paul's prayer can be outlined using two grammatical features.

1. Three purpose clauses (*hina*)
 - a. Eph. 3:16, God would grant (aorist subjunctive)
 - b. Eph. 3:18, God would fully enable (aorist subjunctive)

- c. Eph. 3:19b, God would fill (aorist subjunctive)
- 2. Four aorist infinitives
 - a. Eph. 3:16, "you to be strengthened"
 - b. Eph. 3:17, "Christ to dwell in your hearts"
 - c. Eph. 3:18, "you to comprehend"
 - d. Eph. 3:19, "you to know"

This paragraph reflects Paul's prayer for the believers in all these churches that they be stable and established by God's power through Christ's acts and the Holy Spirit's empowering to resist (1) the false teachers and (2) the persecution of a fallen world.

3:16 "according to the riches of His glory" "Riches" is one of Paul's favorite terms to describe the grace of God in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:7,18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16). God's nature is the key to God's power and provisions.

■ **"in the inner man"** Spiritual growth is internal, but it is stimulated by external pressure. Paul often uses the contrast between the inner man and the outer man. The inner man is the spiritual aspect, while the outer man is the physical aspect. The inner man is already part of the New Age, the kingdom of God, but the outer man is still dying and struggling with the old age, the old fallen nature, and the fallen world system (cf. Eph. 2:1-3).

3:17 "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" This is an aorist active infinitive which points toward a specific act of faith. There is a fluidity in the NT between the indwelling of the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit's task (cf. John 14-16) is to

1. reveal the need for Jesus (i.e., human sin)
2. reveal Jesus (i.e., the gospel)
3. draw to Jesus
4. baptize into Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13)
5. form Jesus in believers (i.e., Christlikeness), see Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2

See Special Topic: Jesus and the Spirit at Col. 1:26.

■ **"being deeply rooted"** This is a perfect passive participle which could be translated "have been and continue to be rooted by God." Paul uses this agricultural metaphor only here and in Col. 2:7. These two perfect passive participles are a way of showing his confidence in these believers and these churches.

■ **"and grounded"** This is a second perfect passive participle. This is a construction metaphor. The same mixing of agriculture and construction metaphors is found in Eph. 2:20-22 and 1 Cor. 3:9.

3:18-19 "to comprehend. . .to know" These are both aorist infinitives (i.e., there are four aorist infinitives in this prayer, Eph. 3:16-19). This emphasis on knowledge counteracted the exclusive intellectual claims of the Gnostic false teachers. It may refer to the newly revealed mystery of God, the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (cf. Eph. 3:9).

3:18 "may be able" This is the second purpose clause. Paul is praying that all believers be strengthened and enabled to fully understand the gospel (i.e., "comprehend" and "know").

■ **"with all the saints"** This term is always plural, except in Phil. 4:21, which also has a corporate context. To be a Christian is to be in community. Also, notice that God's will is the maturity of all believers (cf. Eph. 4:13). See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

3:19 "surpasses" Christ's love is greater than human knowledge! *Huperballō*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19. This word is used in Eph. 1:19; 2:7; and 3:19. Another *huper* compound is used in Eph. 3:20 (*huper ekperissou*), which is also used in 1 Thess. 3:10 and 5:13.

■ **"filled up to all the fullness of God"** This is the third purpose clause in this prayer. This does not refer to the indwelling Christ or Spirit, Eph. 3:17, but is a play on the false teachings of the Gnostics, who emphasized fullness (*plērōma*) as special knowledge which enabled one to pass through all the angelic spheres (*aeons*) to heaven. Christ is the true "fullness of God" (cf. Eph. 1:23; Col. 2:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:20-21

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

3:20 "to Him who is able" This begins one of Paul's marvelous doxologies which closes the doctrinal section of this circular letter. This is a wonderful title for God used three times in the NT (cf. Rom. 16:25; Jude 24). Each of these texts deal with different aspects of God's activities.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S PRAISE, PRAYER, AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

NASB, NKJV "exceeding abundantly"
NRSV "abundantly far more"
TEV "so much more"
NJB "infinitely more"

This is a characteristic Pauline compound superlative meaning, "exceeding, abundantly more" (cf. 1 Thess. 3:10; 5:13). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19. It is bad grammar, but great theology!

■ **"according to the power that works within us,"** This is a reference to the indwelling Christ through the Spirit (cf. Eph. 3:7, 16-17; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). This permanent indwelling Spirit in each and every believer is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New, i.e. "new heart," "new mind," "new spirit" (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27).

3:21 "be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus" Here is the exalted place of Jesus' Bride and Body, the Church (cf. Eph. 1:23), His blood-bought, Spirit-filled people! The term "church" is from two Greek terms, "out of" and "to call." It was used in Greco-Roman culture for town meetings (cf. Acts 19:32). In Jewish life this term was used to translate the significant theological concepts of "the assembly of Israel" or *qahal* (cf. Exod. 12:6; 16:3; Lev. 4:13; Num. 14:5; 20:6; Deut. 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16). The early believers saw themselves as the true and ongoing "People of God" (cf. Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:6).

■ **"forever and ever"** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOM)

■ **"amen"** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How did Paul learn his theology?
2. Why does Paul call himself "the least of the saints"?
3. Why was the mystery of God hidden in ages past?
4. What is the purpose of the church to the angelic realm?
5. List the three things Paul asked God to grant the believers in Eph. 3:16-19.
6. What does it mean that Christians are indwelt?

EPHESIANS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Unity of the Body	Walk in Unity	An Appeal to Maintain the Unity of the Faith	The Unity of the Body	A Call to Unity
4:1-8	4:1-6	4:1-16	4:1-6	4:1-6
	Spiritual Gifts			
	4:7-16		4:7-16	4:7-16
4:9-16				
The Old Life and New	The New Man	An Appeal to Renounce Pagan Ways	The New Life in Christ	The New Life in Christ
		(4:17-5:20)		
4:17-24	4:17-24	4:17-24	4:17-19	4:17-24
			4:20-24	
Rules for the New Life	Do Not Grieve the Spirit			
4:25-5:5	4:25-32	4:25-5:2	4:25-32	4:25-5:20

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS 4:1-32

A. Chapter 4 begins the practical section of the letter (i.e., "walk," cf. Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2,15). Doctrine must affect lifestyle! Truth is relational! Salvation is not a product, a fire insurance policy, or a ticket to heaven, but an ongoing repentance/faith relationship with Christ which issues in Christlikeness.

B. Verses 1-6 focus on the theme of the entire book-unity (cf. Eph. 1:10). Unity of believers is based on the unity of the Triune God. The corporate fellowship of the gospel challenges the exclusivism of the false teachers and the Jews. The spiritual qualities that lead to unity are stated in verses 2-3.

Unity is every believer's responsibility. Unity is the prayer of Jesus (cf. John 17:11,21-22; also note Eph. 4:23).

- C. Unity must be continuously and intentionally pursued because of the diverse giftedness of the people of God. Every believer has been given an effective ministry gift at salvation (1 Cor. 12:7,10). The fact that believers are gifted ministers of Jesus, not which particular gift one possesses, is the key to unity in the church. Believers are one body and must function together.
- D. The modern western church desperately needs the truth of Eph. 4:11-12. Church leaders are gifts to Christ's body (the church), given to help and encourage the entire body to function in ministry. Ministry is the task of all believers. There are no "clergy-laity" categories in the New Testament. If you are a Christian, you are a called, gifted, full-time minister. Not all are called vocationally, but all are called to serve!
The task of church leaders (Eph. 4:11) is to train the people of God to do the work of ministry, which is to evangelize the lost and mature the saved (Eph. 4:12; Matt. 28:19-20).
- E. Ephesians 4:17-5:20 describes the sins of either paganism (cf. Eph. 4:17) or the teachings of the Antinomian Gnostic false teachers. How believers live is crucial! No fruit, no root (cf. Matthew 6; 7:15-23)! Eternal life has observable characteristics! The changed and changing lives of believers are evidence of their salvation (cf. James; 1 John).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:1-6

¹Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

4:1 "the prisoner of the Lord" Literally "in the Lord." This is one of Paul's prison letters, probably written in Rome in the early 60's. It is different from 3:1, which has "prisoner of Christ Jesus." Paul saw believers as encompassed by Christ. They live and move and have their being in Him (cf. Job 12:10; Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:28).

■ **"walk in a manner worthy"** This begins the practical section of the letter. Unity is maintained by purposeful actions of Christlike living (cf. Eph. 2:2, 10; 4:1,17; 5:2, 15; Col. 1:10; 2:6). Christianity is an initial decision followed by lifestyle discipleship (i.e., a gate and a road, cf. Matt. 7:13-14). This follows the same concept as the early designation for the church, "the Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The term "worthy" is described beautifully in 1 John 2:6.

Notice that we are to walk worthy because of our calling, not to receive a calling. This pattern follows Eph. 2:8-9, 10. We are to do good works because we are saved by grace through faith. Good works and the worthy walk are only possible because we are saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit! They are the result, not the means (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).

Salvation is a gate followed by a way! It is a free gift followed by a "cost everything" lifestyle.

■ **"the calling with which you have been called"** This is an aorist passive indicative. The call always comes from God (cf. John 6:44, 65). The word "call" is etymologically related to the term "church" in Eph. 3:21. There is an obvious word play on this term (cf. Eph. 4:1 [twice] and 4 [twice]).

Believers are called to holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4). This is the theological balance to the doctrine of election; mankind must receive God's initiating call (cf. Eph. 1:13). The sovereign God has chosen to receive fallen

mankind through Christ's work and their repentant faith response (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). The sovereign call and necessary response are the theological twin pillars of both the OT and NT covenants, but the third pillar is godly living. God wants a people who reflect His character (i.e., Holy ones, cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-25).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

4:2

NASB, NRSV	"all humility"
NKJV	"all lowliness"
TEV	"be humble"
NJB	"complete selflessness"

This term begins a list of Christian virtues which produces unity. "Humility" is uniquely a Christian virtue which was not included in the Greek moralist's (Stoics) list of virtues. Both Moses (cf. Num. 12:3) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) are described by this term. Paul uses it several times (cf. Phil. 2:3; Col. 2:18, 23; 3:12).

■ **"gentleness"** This refers to "domesticated strength" like a trained animal. The KJV translates it "meekness." Wild animals have been tamed to serve mankind. Believers have been "tamed" to serve one another, not compete with one another. The focus is corporate, not individual. God does not want to break believers' spirits (cf. Psalm 139, He made them), but channel their energies for His purposes. This is one of Paul's favorite metaphors for the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2).

■ **"patience"** This term is another favorite of Paul (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2). Believers are patient with one another because God is patient with them. Both gentleness and patience are fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

■ **"showing forbearance to one another in love"** This is a present middle participle. Forbearance is another word Paul used often, twelve times in his writings. As God has long-suffering patience with unbelievers (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22) believers should continue to deal with the faults and weaknesses (cf. 1 Tim. 1:6) of other believers in the same gracious way. Believers must put others for whom Christ died before themselves (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 2:3; 4:5; Col. 3:12-13). This self-giving emulates Jesus (cf. 1 John 3:16), and is evidence of the reversal of the tendencies of the fall.

4:3

NASB	"being diligent to preserve"
NKJV	"endeavoring to keep"
NRSV	"making every effort to maintain"
TEV	"do your best to preserve"
NJB	"do all you can to preserve"

This is a present active participle with a present active infinitive. The New English Bible translates it as "spare no effort." Unity is the recurrent motif of the entire letter, much like Philippians. Unity is the will of God for His church (cf. John 17:11,21,23), but it must be aggressively, continually, intentionally and individually pursued!

■ **"the unity"** Remember, the goal is unity, not uniformity! This passage emphasizes oneness to refute the Gnostic emphasis on (1) many emanations and (2) intellectual exclusivism. Believers must sense the need for the health of Christ's Body (the church) and take personal responsibility for its maintenance! This is such a needed truth in our day of individual rights and privileges and personal preferences!

■ **"the bond of peace"** Believers are personally responsible for the corporate health and vitality of

Christ's body (the church cf. Col. 3:14-15 and 1 Cor. 12:7). This means you! Only active submission to the good of the whole can maintain peace (cf. Eph. 5:21). See note at Eph. 2:15.

4:4 "one body" Paul uses this metaphor often in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; also Col. 1:18). This refers to the universal church because of the cyclical nature of the book (i.e. sent out to many churches). Most uses of the term "church" in the NT refer to local congregations. The universal church is addressed in Matt. 16:18 and Ephesians. The emphasis is on the unity and oneness of all of God's people and churches.

▣ **"one Spirit"** This refers to the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit it is impossible to know God, to come to Christ, and to live the Christian life in unity (cf. John 16:8-15). See note at Eph. 3:17. The Gnostics asserted several "spirits" or *aeons* (i.e., angelic levels).

The term "Trinity" is not a biblical word, but the concept surely is. It is expressed in several passages (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:33-34,38-39; Rom. 1:4-5;5:15; 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21). If Jesus is divine and the Spirit is a person, then the monotheism of Judaism (cf. Deut. 6:4-6 but notice Isa. 63:9-10) must be reinterpreted in light of one divine essence but three eternally co-existent, co-dependent, personal manifestations. There is mystery here but also clear biblical teaching! See Special Topic at Eph. 1:3.

▣ **"one hope"** Paul uses this term often in several different but related senses. Often it is associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. See Special Topic: Hope at Col. 1:5.

4:5 "one Lord" This title has both an OT background for YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Col. 1:3), and a NT usage in connection with Jesus' deity (cf. Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9-11). There is only one way to be right with God-faith in Christ (cf. John 1:9-18, 3:16; 10:7-18; 14:6; 20:31).

▣ **"one faith"** This refers either to doctrine (cf. Gal. 1:23; 3:23, 25; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3, 20), which fits the larger context of Ephesians and Colossians, or personal trust, which fits this immediate context best (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:6-9).

▣ **"one baptism"** Because of the Trinity being mentioned earlier in this context, this probably refers to water baptism, which was the early church's public confession of faith (cf. Matt. 28:19; Rom. 10:9-13). It symbolized death to the old life and the beginning of the new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

However, it could refer to Spirit baptism (cf. Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13). Even though the Spirit is mentioned in Eph. 4:4, these two initial events, one inward (Spirit baptism) and one outward (water baptism), are closely linked in the NT.

4:6 "one God and Father of all" It is somewhat shocking to call God Father (cf. Mal. 2:10). In one important sense all humans are related to God. They have been created by Him, in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). But in this context, the focus is not on creation but recreation, the second birth, redemption through the efforts of the Triune God (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). All humans are not right with God by means of creation, but by personal repentance and faith in the finished work of Christ (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

▣ **"who is over all and through all and in all"** The NT stresses the ultimacy of the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 15:28). This context is one example of how the Bible merges the redemptive actions of the three persons of the Godhead. Here, the Father's indwelling (cf. John 14:23) is emphasized. In Matthew 28:20 and Col. 1:27 the Son's indwelling was emphasized. It is the Spirit, however, to whom this task is normally assigned (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 8:9). This context expresses the priority of the Father (cf. Eph. 1:3-14;

Rom. 11:36). In Col. 1:16 the same terminology is applied to the Son. There is a fluidity and equality that flows among the persons of the Trinity in their actions which bring salvation to mankind.

The term "all" (*pas*) is repeated several times for emphasis. Grammatically, it could be neuter, referring to all creation, or masculine, referring to the body of Christ (the church) both corporately and individually.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:7-16

⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." ⁹(Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) ¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, *even Christ*, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

4:7 "to each one of us grace was given" Notice the switch from the corporate aspect of the church to the individual aspect. Every believer has a spiritual gift, given at salvation by the Spirit for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 11). The NT lists of the gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:1-13, 28-29; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11) are representative, not exhaustive. This can be seen from the fact that the listing of the gifts and the order in which they are listed varies.

Believers are often counterproductive if they

1. boast over their gifts
2. compare one gift to another
3. define the exact characteristics of each gift

The NT does not dwell on these issues. The reality of a called, gifted family of ministers, a kingdom of priests is the issue (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). Believers are called to service, not privilege!

■ **"according to the measure of Christ's gift"** Jesus is God's gift to fallen humanity. His personality ("gifts of the Spirit," 1 Cor. 12) and ministry ("the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22-23) are divided among His people to assure the furtherance of the gospel through their unity and cooperation in the Spirit.

4:8 This is a quote from Psalm 68:18, which originally referred to YHWH. The phrase "gave gifts to men" is found in one Aramaic Targum, the Peshitta (Syriac), and Chaldee translations, while "received gifts from men" is in the Masoretic Text (Hebrew text) and the Septuagint (Greek translation). Paul obviously picked an OT translation that reflected his theological purposes. God in Christ has gifted His people. He gifted them for service, not for a privileged position (cf. Matt. 20:25-28; 23:1-12).

■ **"He led captive a host of captives"** The Colossian parallel (cf 2:15) implies that this verse refers to a Roman military triumphal parade, in which the defeated forces were displayed. Here it refers to Christ's victory over the hostile spiritual forces of the universe (possibly related to the Gnostic *aeons*).

4:9 This verse refers to either (1) the Incarnation (cf. Phil. 2:6-11) or (2) Jesus' descent into Hades (cf. Acts 2:31; Rom. 10:6-7; or possibly 1 Pet. 3:18-20; 4:6; which is reflected in the early creeds of the Church,

"descended into hell").

4:10 "far above all the heavens" This is the parallel contrast to "the lower parts of the earth." Jesus left heaven to become a human. He returned to the highest heaven as the victorious Savior! Note the plural, "heavens" (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2). The rabbis argued whether there were three or seven heavens. It refers to God's presence or throne room as in Revelation 4-5.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS

■ **"that He might fill all things"** Jesus came to fulfill God's eternal plan for the uniting and redeeming of all mankind as well as physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:19-21). This term "fill" (plēroō, cf. Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; 5:18) was a special term used by the false teachers to describe the angelic levels (*aeons*). Salvation is not in human knowledge but in repentant faith in Christ's finished work—His incarnation, life, teachings, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, intercession and promised return.

4:11

NASB	"He gave"
NKJV	"He Himself gave"
NRSV	"the gifts He gave"
TEV	"It was he who gave gifts to men,"
NJB	"and to some, his gift was"

Christ Himself, or rather the Trinity (cf. Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-6), gives spiritual gifts to His/their people. Believers are all gifted ministers. Some are leaders, but all are ministers. We are saved to serve.

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in Paul's writing (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11). These lists are not identical. This implies that these lists are not exhaustive, but representative. For Paul the gifts are aspects of Jesus' ministry given to His body (the church) to continue His ministry. The NT never gives a definitive list of the gifts or a guideline for believers' knowing which gifts they are given. The focus is not on identifying gifts, but on the diverse aspect of ministry. One of the best practical guidelines for knowing one's spiritual gift is found in an IVP booklet called "Affirming the Will of God" by Paul Little. The same guidelines for knowing God's will apply to discovering one's spiritual gift.

■ **"apostles"** This is the ongoing usage of the term beyond "The Twelve" (cf. Acts 14:4, 14, Barnabas; Rom. 16:7, Andronicus and Junias; 1 Cor. 4:6, 9; 12:28-29; 15:7, Apollos; Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus; 1 Thess. 2:6, Silvanus and Timothy). Their exact task is uncertain, but it involves proclamation of the gospel and servant leadership of the church. It is even possible that Rom. 16:7 (KJV "Junia") refers to a feminine apostle!

■ **"prophets"** The exact function of these gifted believers is also uncertain (cf. Acts 11:28; 21:9-11; 15:32). They are not the same as OT prophets who wrote Scripture. New Testament prophets apply Scripture to new and different situations. They are linked with apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers because they all proclaim the gospel, but with different emphases. See Special Topic at Eph. 2:20.

■ **"evangelists"** Surprisingly, in light of Matt. 28:19-20, this gift is mentioned only three times in the NT. Their task in the early church, like the previous two, is uncertain (cf. Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5), but again obviously involved proclamation of the gospel and servant leadership. It is possible that these first three gifted leaders had itinerant or regional ministries.

■ **"pastors and teachers"** The titles "elders" (*presbuteroi*), "bishops" (*episkopoi*), and "pastors" (*poimenas*) all refer to one function and later office (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; and Titus 1:5-7). The term "elder" had an OT background, while the term "bishop" or "overseer" had a Greek city-state background. The Greek syntax (one conjunction [*de*] and one article [*tous*]) links these two titles together as one function, one gifted person who proclaims and explains the gospel to a local situation.

It is interesting that in Rom. 12:7 and 12:28 teachers are listed as a separate gift and pastors are not mentioned at all (unless it is "he who exhorts" in Rom. 12:8). There is so much we moderns do not know about the early church.

4:12

NASB	"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service"
NKJV	"For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry"
NRSV	"to equip the saints for the work of ministry"
TEV	"He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service"
NJB	"so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service"

Leaders are God's gifts given to train the Body of Christ for the work of ministry! The church needs to recapture the power, giftedness and biblical assignment of all the members of the church (clergy - laity, old - young, male - female, cf. Joel 2:28 quoted in Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2). Every Christian is a full-time, God-called, God-gifted minister.

The term "equip" means to cause something to be ready for its assigned purpose. It is used of:

1. broken limbs being healed and made useful again
2. torn fishing nets being mended and thereby able to catch fish
3. ships being fitted with ropes and sails and tacked for sea
4. chicks who had grown large enough to be taken to market

Also, notice the goal is not that only some believers became mature, but all (cf. Eph. 4:13). For "saints" see Special Topic at Col. 1:2.

The gifts are given to every believer for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11). Every believer is a called, gifted, full-time minister of Christ. Not all are "vocational" ministers, but all are servants. The modern church is crippled by (1) a clergy/laity mentality and (2) the concept of salvation as a product instead of a relational process of servanthood!!!

■ **"to the building up of the body of Christ"** Paul mixes his building metaphor (cf. Eph. 2:20-27) with his body metaphor (cf. Eph. 1:23; 4:12; 5:30). Believers are gifted for the common good, not for individual acclaim (1 Cor. 12:7). The focus is not on the individual but on the body (cf. Eph. 4:4-6). Spiritual gifts are servant towels, not merit badges! Believers are worker bees! See Special Topic: Edify at Eph. 2:21.

4:13 "until we all attain" This is an Aorist active subjunctive which denotes an aspect of contingency. It literally means "to arrive at a destination." Note that "all" speaks of our corporate responsibility. Notice the three aspects of maturity mentioned: (1) unity of the faith; (2) knowledge of the Son of God; unto a (3) Christlike maturity. Also, notice the goal is not that some mature, but all!

■ **"the knowledge"** This is the compound Greek term (*epiginōskō*), which implies a full experiential knowledge. This was an obvious rejection of the Gnostic false teachers' emphasis on secret, exclusive knowledge. The believers' knowledge is complete in Christ. This may be a play on the Hebrew concept of "know" as personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5; Phil. 3:8,10) versus the Greek concept known as cognitive information. Both are needed for a mature Christianity.

■ **"mature man"** This is in contrast to "children" of verse 14. The Greek root (*telos*) means "complete," "fully equipped," not sinless or perfect (KJV).

4:14 "as a result, we are no longer to be children" This implies that many believers were saved but immature (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14). They still did not sense the necessary submission and dedication needed to be servant ministers. Believers must die to self and be alive to God (cf. Rom. 6:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

NASB	"tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming"
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NKJV	"tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive"
NRSV	"tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming"
TEV	"carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful men, who lead others to error by the tricks they invent"
NJB	"or tossed one way and another and carried along by every wind of doctrine, at the mercy of all the tricks men play and their cleverness in practicing deceit"

This obviously refers to the false teachers, who seem to be a combination of Greek philosophers and Jewish legalists. This phrase refers both to human deception (the false teachers) and angelic deception (craftiness in deceitful scheming). Behind these false teachers lay the activity of the fallen angelic levels (cf. Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Cor. 10:20; Daniel 10). God's people are tricked, manipulated and deceived because they have not matured in Christ. There is a spiritual battle even after conversion. The goal of the Christian is not just heaven when they die but Christlikeness and ministry now (cf. Eph. 4:15; Rom. 8:28-30; Gal. 4:19)!

4:15 Believers are not just to speak the truth, but to live and to teach the truth in love (cf. Ezra 7:10). The goal is unity (Eph. 4:2-3)! How different this was from the confusion and rivalry of the false teachers.

4:16 Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to emphasize unity in love, amidst diversity. Disunity opens the door to Satan, his angels, and false teachers (cf. Col. 2:8). See Special Topic: Edify at Eph. 2:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:17-24

¹⁷So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²²that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new self, which in *the likeness* of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

4:17

NASB	"This I say, and affirm together with the Lord"
NKJV	"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord"
NRSV	"Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord"
TEV	"In the Lord's name, then, I say this and warn you"
NJB	"In particular, I want to urge you in the name of the Lord"

This claim of co-affirmation with the Lord shows Paul's apostolic authority and knowledge of Jesus' teachings.

■ **"that you walk no longer"** In Eph. 4:17-19 there is a series of characteristics of the heathen lifestyle. These new believers themselves used to live like this (cf. Eph. 4:28). Paul lists the characteristics of fallen humanity several times in his writings (cf. Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:19,31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9). See Special Topic at Col. 3:5.

How to produce holiness was the major conflict between Paul and the Jewish legalists. Both Paul and the Judaizers wanted a righteous lifestyle in converts. Paul acknowledged the past pagan sins of these

believers, but believed that free grace, an indwelling Spirit, and a growing knowledge of the gospel would produce what legalism could not. The performance of the Old Covenant has been replaced by the new heart and mind of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32).

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV "in the futility of their mind,"
TEV "whose thoughts are worthless"
NJB "the empty-headed life"

This term means "vain," "empty," "aimless" (cf. Rom. 1:21). Verses 17-19 refer to either (1) the false teachers' speculations or (2) the believers' previous lives in paganism.

4:18 "being darkened in their understanding" This is a perfect passive participle. Their current state of spiritual blindness (as is ours) is a result of (1) supernatural temptation; (2) heretical influence; and (3) personal choice.

■ **"excluded from the life of God"** This is another perfect passive participle. This refers to separation from the OT covenant God and His promises (cf. Eph. 2:12).

■ **"because of the ignorance that is in them"** This refers to self-willed ignorance (cf. Romans 1:18-3:20).

■ **"because of the stubbornness of their hearts"** This is the abiding results of the fall (cf. Gen. 3; John 3:17-25). See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.

4:19

NASB "having become callous"
NKJV "being past feeling"
NRSV "have lost all sensitivity"
TEV "have lost all feeling of shame"
NJB "sense of right and wrong once dulled"

This is another perfect active participle. Fallen humanity had become, and remained, insensitive or hardened beyond feeling, to both natural revelation (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-2:16) and special revelation of the Bible and the Son, the written word (cf. Ps. 19:7-12) and the living Word (cf. John 1:1-14).

NASB "having given themselves over to sensuality"
NKJV "having given themselves over to licentiousness"
NRSV "have abandoned themselves to licentiousness"
TEV "give themselves over to vice"
NJB "have abandoned themselves to sexuality"

This literally means "open shamefulness" (cf. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Fallen humanity has abandoned all restraints, social and spiritual. These false teachers even shocked other pagans.

NASB "for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness"
NKJV "to work all uncleanness with greediness"
NRSV "greedy to practice every kind of impurity"
TEV "and all sorts of indecent things without restraint"
NJB "eagerly pursue a career of indecency of every kind"

This means more and more for me at any cost (cf. Col. 3:5). Fallen humanity has lost the sense of corporate good. Humans live only for themselves, for the moment. This is the curse of the Fall of Genesis 3. It is so clearly manifested in modern western society!

4:20 "but you did not learn Christ in this way" This is a strong contrast between Christ's preachers and the false teachers. Verse 17 implies a contrast between their previous life in paganism and their new life in Christ.

4:21 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. These believers had heard the truth.

▣ **"Jesus"** This was a rare use of the name "Jesus" by itself, in Paul's writings. It may be related to the false teachings concerning Jesus the man (i.e., His humanity) versus Christ the Spirit (i.e., His deity). In Gnosticism Jesus could not be fully God and fully man because "spirit" (i.e., God) is good, but matter (i.e., humanity) is evil. They would assert His deity but deny His humanity (cf. 1 John 4:1-6). It is interesting that modern society has reversed this heresy.

4:22 "lay aside" There are three aorist infinitive clauses in Eph. 4:22, 23 and 24. Clothing is used as a metaphor to describe spiritual characteristics (cf. Job 29:14; Ps. 109:29; and Isa. 61:10). This was also an emphasis on the need for repentance and a resulting changed life (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

NASB	"your former manner of life"
NKJV	"your former conduct"
NRSV	"your former way of life"
TEV	"which made you live as you used to"
NJB	"give up your old way of life"

The KJV translation has "conversation," which meant "lifestyle" in a.d. 1611 when that translation was written. This clearly shows the need for updating translations! No translation is inspired. Their job is to communicate the gospel to one or more generations. Only the original message given by God is inspired.

▣ **"the old self"** This refers to mankind's fallen characteristics and propensities in Adam (cf. Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9). It is the priority of self, independence from God, more and more for me at any cost!

4:23 "you be renewed in the spirit of your mind," This is a present passive infinitive. Believers are to continue to be made new in their thinking by allowing the Spirit to develop the mind of Christ in them (cf. Rom. 12:2; Titus 3:5). This is an aspect of the "new covenant" from Jer. 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

4:24 "put on" This is an aorist middle infinitive. This is the clothing metaphor which emphasizes the continuing decision to be in Christ (cf. Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:8,10,12,14; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1). This terminology of putting on Christ may have even been connected to the ordinance of baptism in the early church, where new converts put on clean, white clothing after baptism. It denotes a volitional choice!

▣ **"new self"** This is a metaphor for the new life in Christ. Peter called it "partaking of the divine nature" in 2 Pet. 1:4. This is in contrast to the old fallen Adamic nature of Eph. 4:22.

▣ **"in the likeness of God"** Believers should have the family characteristics of God (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). The Bible emphasizes our position in Christ and also our need for progressive Christlikeness. Salvation is free, but maturity costs everything! Christianity is both a death and a life, a point and a process, a gift and a reward! This paradox is very difficult for modern people to grasp. They tend to emphasize one aspect or the other. See Special Topic below.

▣ **"in righteousness"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

25Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. **26**be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27**and do not give the devil an opportunity. **28**He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. **29**Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need of *the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. **30**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32**Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

4:25 "lay aside" This is an aorist middle participle used as an imperative. It continues the metaphor of clothing (cf. Eph. 4:24). The believer needs to make an initial decision followed by repeated (i.e., daily, even hourly) decisions to live a holy life. See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues in the NT at Col. 3:5.

■ **"falsehood"** This refers to either

1. lying
2. "the lie" of unbelief as it was used in 1 John 2:22
3. the message of the false teachers

■ **"speak truth each one of you with his neighbor,"** This is a quote from Zechariah 8:16. Notice Paul quotes the OT as encouragement for new covenant believers (cf. Eph. 4:26). The OT is not a means of salvation, but it is still the revealed and authoritative revelation of God (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). The OT still functions in sanctification, just not in justification. See Special Topic: Truth at Eph. 1:13.

■ **"for we are members of one another"** The "body" is one of Paul's metaphors for the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-30). Believers are gifted for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). Believers live for the family. They cannot live as isolated individuals.

4:26 "Be angry, and yet do not sin" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. This is a quote from Ps. 4:4. There are some areas of life where anger is appropriate, but it must be handled properly (i.e., Jesus cleansing the temple, cf. John 2:13-17).

This begins a series of present imperatives with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in progress (cf. Eph. 4:26, 27, 28, 29, and 30).

■ **"Do not let the sun go down on your anger"** This may have been an allusion to Deut. 24:15. The Jewish day began at sunset (cf. Gen. 1:5). Anger is a powerful emotion which must be dealt with quickly. This may refer metaphorically to time or literally to sleep which allows anger to become a subconscious force.

4:27

NASB	"do not give the devil an opportunity"
NKJV	"nor give a place to the devil"
NRSV	"do not make room for the devil"
TEV	"don't give the Devil a chance"
NJB	"or else you will give the devil a foothold"

This is a present active imperative with the negative particle which usually implies to stop an act in process. Anger which is not godly is an opening for spiritual attack; even godly anger (cf. John 2:13-17; Matt. 21:12-13) must be dealt with quickly (cf. Eph. 6:10-18).

The term "devil" is a Greek compound (*diabolos*) which meant "to throw across" (cf. Acts 13:10; Eph.

4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:6,7; 2 Tim. 2:26). It was a metaphorical way of referring to Satan the accuser. Paul referred to Satan in several passages (cf. Acts 26:18; Rom. 10:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:15). Satan was apparently an angelic being who rebelled against God (cf. Gen. 3; Job 1-2; Zech. 3). It is biblically difficult to talk about Satan because

1. the Bible never speaks definitively of the origin or purpose of evil
2. the OT texts which are usually seen as possibly related to Satan's rebellion are specifically directed to the condemnation of prideful earthly rulers (King of Babylon, Isaiah 14 and King of Tyre, Ezekiel 28) and not Satan (see Special Topic: Personal Evil at Eph. 2:2)

It is obvious from several NT passages that there was conflict in the spiritual realm (Matt. 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; John 13:27; 14:30; 16:11; Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:4. Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 2:9,13,24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2,7). Where, when, and how are all mysteries. Believers do have an angelic enemy (cf. Eph. 2:2)!

The relationship between God and Satan has developed from one of service to antagonism. Satan was not created evil. His adversarial work in Genesis 3, Job 1-2 and Zechariah 3 were within God's will (cf. A. B. Davidson's *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 300-306, for the development of evil in the Bible). It provided a test for human loyalty and trustworthiness. Mankind failed!

4:28 "he who steals must steal no longer" The new life in Christ has the potential and goal to radically and permanently change one's actions and character. This change is an evidence of one's salvation and a witness to the lost.

■ **"he must labor"** This is a present active imperative. Judaism held manual labor in high regard; so too, did early Christianity (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:10-12).

■ **"in order that he may have something to share with him who has need"** Labor is not only the will of God for mankind, (i.e. Adam worked in the garden of Eden before sin came), but a way to share with those in need. Believers are stewards of God-given prosperity (cf. Deut. 8:11-20), not owners. Our giving is a true barometer of our spiritual health (cf. 2 Corinthians 8-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

4:29

NASB	"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth"
NKJV	"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth"
NRSV	"Let no evil talk come out of your mouth"
TEV	"Do not use harmful words in talking"
NJB	"Guard against foul talk"

This term literally was used of something rotten or of crumbling stone work (cf. Matt. 7:17-18; 12:37; Luke 6:43). It came to be used metaphorically of something "corrupt," "depraved," "vicious," "foul," or "impure." In context it refers to the teachings and lifestyles of the false teachers (cf. Col. 3:8). It does not, in this context, refer to jokes, or coarse jesting (cf. Eph. 5:4; Col. 4:6). Jesus taught that speech reveals the heart (cf. Mark 7:15; 18-23). See Special Topic: Human Speech at Col. 3:8.

■ **"but only such a word as is good for edification"** One evidence of God-given spiritual gifts is that they edify the whole body (cf. Rom. 14:13-23; 1 Cor. 14:4,5,12,17,26). Believers must live, give, and minister for the good of the body (the church, cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), not for themselves (cf. Eph. 4:3). Again the corporate aspect of biblical faith is emphasized above individual freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). See Special Topic: Edify at Eph. 2:21.

■ **"that it may give grace to those who hear"** In context this cannot mean "grace," as in salvation, but goodness or favor to other believers, especially those tempted and tested by (1) false teachers (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1-21) or (2) the pull of one's previous life in paganism (cf. 2 Pet. 2:22).

4:30 "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" This is a present active imperative with the negative

particle which usually means to stop an act in process. This expresses the truth that the Spirit is a person. It also shows that believers' actions cause pain to the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19). This may be an allusion to Isa. 63:10. The Spirit's goal for all believers is Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at Eph. 1:14.

■ **"by whom you were sealed"** This is an aorist passive indicative. This sealing is done by the Spirit at salvation (cf. Eph. 1:13-14; Rev. 7:2-4). Sealing was a cultural sign of ownership, security, and genuineness. Believers belong to Christ! See Special Topic: Seal at Eph. 1:13.

■ **"for the day of redemption"** This refers to the Second Coming, Resurrection Day, or Judgment Day, depending on one's relationship to Christ. See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at Col. 1:14. For a good discussion of this verse see Gordon Fee, *To What End Exegesis?* pp. 262-275.

4:31 "all bitterness" This refers to a settled state of animosity with no chance of reconciliation.

■ **"wrath"** This (*thumos*) refers to a fast burning anger or rage (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Col. 3:8).

■ **"anger"** This (*orgē*) refers to a slow burning or settled resentment (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Col. 3:8).

■ **"clamor"** This refers to an outcry (cf. Matt. 25:6; Acts 23:9). In this context it might refer to loud threats or charges of wrong doing by the false teachers or their followers.

■ **"slander. . .with all malice"** This may also reflect the techniques of the false teachers. This list shows the problems caused by (1) the false teachers or (2) the characteristics that cause disunity. These same sins are also listed in Col. 3:8.

■ **"put away"** This is an aorist passive imperative. Believers must allow the Spirit to remove these characteristics of the old, fallen, Adamic nature once and for all. As salvation involves a decisive personal choice, so does the Christian life.

4:32 "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other" This is contrasted with Eph. 4:31. It is a present middle (deponent) imperative. These are the positive continuing commands (cf. Col. 3:12-13) that

1. please the Spirit
2. build the fellowship of the saints
3. attract lost people

■ **"just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"** This is the underlying motive for believers' actions, the actions of Christ toward them (cf. Matt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 John 3:16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the characteristics of "worthy lives." How does your life compare?
2. Why is unity so important?
3. What is Paul stressing in verses 4-6?
4. Does every Christian have a spiritual gift? When do they receive it? Who gives it? For what purpose?

5. What is the goal of the church?
6. List the plight of the heathen (Eph. 4:17-19).
7. List three things that the Christian should do (Eph. 4:22-24).
8. List the four vices of Christians listed in Eph. 4:25-31.

EPHESIANS 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Rules for the New Life	Walk in Love	An Appeal to Renounce Pagan Ways (4:17-5:20)	Living in the Light	The New Life in Christ (4:17-5:20)
4:25-5:5	5:1-7	4:25-5:2	5:1-2	4:25-5:20
		5:3-5	5:3-5	
Walk as Children of Light	Walk in Light			
5:6-14		5:6-14	5:6-14	
	5:8-14			
	Walk in Wisdom			
5:15-20	5:15-21	5:15-20	5:15-17 5:18-20	
Wives and Husbands	Marriage and the Church	The Christian Household	Wives and Husbands	The Morals of the Home
5:21-32		(5:21-6:9)	5:21	(5:21-6:9)
	5:22-33	5:22-24	5:22-24	5:21-6:4
		5:25-6:3	5:25-33	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO EPHESIANS 5:1-6:9

- A. Eph. 5:1-14 is an extension of Eph. 4:17-32. It deals with the Christian life and expresses what Christians should and should not do.
- B. Eph. 5:3-5 turns from the self-giving love of Christ in verse 2 to the self-centered, worldly love of fallen mankind (cf. Eph. 4:25-32).
- C. Eph. 5:8-18 contrasts the false teachers with the true believers
1. darkness, Eph. 5:8 light, Eph. 5:8
 2. unfruitful deeds of darkness, Eph. 5:11 the fruit of light, Eph. 5:9
 3. disgrace. . .in secret, Eph. 5:12 expose them, Eph. 5:11,13
 4. unwise men, Eph. 5:15 wise, Eph. 5:15
 5. foolish, Eph. 5:17 understand God's will, Eph. 5:17
 6. filled with wine, Eph. 5:18 filled with the Spirit, Eph. 5:18
- D. The present passive imperative of Eph. 5:18, "ever be filled with the Spirit," is defined by five present participles (cf. Eph. 5:19-21). This is the definitive passage on the filling of the Spirit in the NT.
- E. Paul illustrates the Spirit-filled life by using the Christian home as an example. He writes of
1. husbands and wives, Eph. 5:22-31
 2. parents and children, Eph. 6:1-4
 3. masters and household slaves, Eph. 6:5-9

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:1-2

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

5:1 "be imitators of God," This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. The English word "mimic" comes from this Greek root. In Eph. 4:32 and 5:2 an imitator of God is defined as one who (1) forgives and (2) walks in love and selflessness like Jesus. These actions establish and maintain unity (cf. Eph. 4:2-3). Believers must strive for the corporate good of the body, not individual rights, privileges, or freedoms (cf. Eph. 4:3).

▣ **"as beloved children"** Believers were called by the same theologically significant title as Jesus (cf. Eph. 1:6). Believers are loved because He is loved. They are to reflect the family characteristics of the Father. Jesus and the Spirit restore the image of God in human beings marred in the fall of Genesis 3.

5:2 "walk" This is a present active imperative, which is a biblical metaphor of lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2,15). Christianity is an initial decision followed by lifestyle discipleship. It is a point in time, a process through time, and a culmination beyond time! See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses for Salvation at Eph. 1:7.

▣ **"just as Christ also loved you"** The ancient Greek manuscripts differ between "us" and "you." "Us" is in P⁴⁶, κ^a, D, G, and K; "you" is in κ, A, and B. "You" seems best in context. Jesus is our example (cf. 1 John 4:11).

▣ **"gave Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God"** This refers to the substitutionary, vicarious atonement of Christ (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Thess. 5:9). The Greek preposition *hyper* with the genitive (ablative) is almost synonymous to the Greek

preposition "*anti*" meaning "instead of." The Greek manuscript evidence for "you" instead of "us" in this phrase is overwhelming: "you" is in P⁴⁶, P⁴⁹, κ , A, D; "us" is only in B.

■ **"as a fragrant aroma"** This was an OT sacrificial metaphor for God's acceptance of a sacrifice (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18; Lev. 1:9, 13; Ezek. 20:41; 2 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 4:18). As the sacrifice burned it produced smoke which rose upward. It was removed from the visible realm to the invisible, from the physical realm to God's realm.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:3-5

³But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and *there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

5:3 "immorality" This is the Greek term (*porneia*), from which we get the English "pornography." In the NT it spoke of going beyond the accepted sexual guidelines. It could refer to

1. sexual immorality (cf. Matt. 21:31-32; Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20, 29)
2. adultery (cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9)
3. incest (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1)
4. lewdness (cf. Rom. 1:29)

In the OT there was a marked difference between the terms "adultery," where one party was married, and "fornication" which referred to pre-marital sexual activity. This distinction is lost in NT Greek where it refers to inappropriate sexual activity of any kind (extra-marital, pre-marital, homosexual, or bestial).

■ **"any impurity"** This is the Greek term "clean" with the alpha privative which negates the word to which it is prefixed. These three terms in Eph. 5:3, "immorality, impurity and greed," all relate to (1) the activities of the false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6), and/or (2) the pagan culture out of which these converts had come, where sexual activity was often associated with pagan worship.

■ **"greed"** This term conveys the idea of "more and more for me at any cost." Because it is in a list of sexual sins it probably relates to self-centered sexual exploitation (cf. Col. 3:5).

■ **"even be named among you"** This is a present passive imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act in process. These sins were occurring in the church. Believers must guard against sins, and rumors/suspicions of sins (cf. 1 Thess. 5:22). We must model as well as speak the gospel.

■ **"is proper among saints"** This is parallel to "which is not fitting" in Eph. 5:4. See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

5:4 Believers must be careful of their speech. It reveals who they truly are (cf. Mark 7:15, 18-23; Col. 3:18; Eph. 4:19; James 3:1-12). See Special Topic at Col. 3:8. This is the second group of sins mentioned in chapter 5. Both groups had three elements. This is similar to 4:17-32.

■ **"but rather giving of thanks"** True believers are revealed by their thankful heart which is not related to circumstances (cf. Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:18). See Special Topic: Thanksgiving at Col. 4:2.

5:5 "for this you know with certainty" This phrase is very emphatic. It has two forms of the two Greek verbs "to know": (1) the perfect active indicative or imperative form of *oida* and (2) the Present active participle form of *gnōskō*. The false teachers claimed to have full, secret knowledge about God, but

believers must understand that a person's lifestyle reveals true knowledge and wisdom (cf. Matthew 7).

- **"that no immoral or impure person or covetous man,"** All these terms are repeated from Eph. 5:3 "immoral" (*porneia*). This is the masculine form of the term in Eph. 5:3, it is possibly a reference to male prostitutes, sodomites, or the sexual activities of the false teachers.
- **"who is an idolater"** The parallel is in Col. 3:5. A similar statement is found in 1 John 5:21. When sex becomes the focal point of our lives, it becomes our god! When money becomes the focal point of our lives, it also becomes idolatrous (cf. Matt. 6:24). Some commentators see this phrase as referring to all of the sins mentioned in the context (Eph. 5:3-5).
- **"has an inheritance"** Believers' lifestyles show who their father is, God or the evil one (cf. Matt. 7; 1 John 3:6, 9).
- **"in the Kingdom of Christ and God"** The grammatical structure and genitive article link Christ and God as one (cf. Luke 22:29; Col. 1:13). This is one way NT authors assert Christ's Deity.

The "kingdom" was a recurrent and central topic in Jesus' preaching. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now which will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). One day all humans and angels will acknowledge Christ as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10-11), but only those humans who have repented and believed the gospel will be part of His eternal kingdom (Dan. 7:13; 1 Cor. 15:27-28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:6-14

⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

5:6 "Let no one deceive you" This is a present active imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act in process. This referred to the message and lifestyle of the false teachers, who were a mixture of libertine Gnostics and Jewish legalists (which seem so incompatible). There is so much we moderns do not know about the heretics of the first century.

- **"with empty words"** This may refer to the libertine or Gnostic teachings that sex sins do not affect the spiritual life. For them salvation was found in secret knowledge of the angelic levels. They totally separated justification from sanctification. This heresy is still alive and well!

- **"the wrath of God comes"** This is a Present tense. It refers to either (1) temporal judgment (cf. John 3:36; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:8-9; 9:22; Col. 3:6 1 Thess. 2:16); and/or (2) future eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 25:31ff; Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). God's wrath is as revelatory as God's love.

While on this subject of the wrath of God, let me be clear about my understanding of its implications. First it is a theological tragedy to over-emphasize or under-emphasize this truth. God is angry with the way mankind treats His word, His world, His will, and each other. This is not the world that God intended it to be! All human beings will give an account to God for how they lived their lives (cf. Gal. 6:7; 2 Cor. 5:10). However, it is important to recognize the biblical perspective on this doctrine. Deuteronomy 5:9 compared

with 5:10 and 7:9 sets the pattern. As judgment runs to the third and fourth generations, God's love and faithfulness runs to a thousand generations. In Isaiah 28:21 judgment is called God's "strange" work (cf. Lam. 3:32-33; Ps. 103:8-14). Judgment is necessary in a moral universe, but is unpleasant to God. Hell is an open bleeding sore in God's heart that will never be healed. He loves all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6). He wants to redeem all humans and He has promised to do so for all who will repent and believe in His Son (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ezek. 18:23,32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

■ **"the sons of disobedience"** This is a Hebraic idiom (cf. Eph. 2:2; Col. 3:6). Covenant obedience is a characteristic of God's children. Disobedience is a characteristic of Satan's followers.

5:7 "do not be partakers with them" This is literally "co-holders." It is a present imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in process. Paul uses a compound with *syn* here as he did in Eph. 2:5-6 and 3:6. This same phrase is repeated in verse 11. Not only must believers flee entanglement in sin or even the appearance of sin, they must also carefully choose their friends and associates. The close friends we choose, like the words we speak, reveal our hearts.

5:8-9 "darkness. . .light" This is very similar to John's dualism (cf. Eph. 1:4-5,7-8; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). These contrasting terms were universal symbols for good and evil which predate Greek thought and are common in the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which was a Jewish separatist desert community.

The imperfect active verb in the first phrase describes their previous life as continuously sinning (cf. Gen. 6:5, 11-12; 8:21; Ps. 14:3; 58:3; Jer. 12:9).

5:8 "but now you are light in the Lord" What a strong contrast (cf. Matt. 5:19; John 8:12).

■ **"walk as children of light"** This is another present active imperative (cf. John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:7). Believers' words, lifestyles, and priorities reveal who they are!

■ **"children of"** This is a Hebrew idiom for "characteristics," as is "sons of" in Eph. 5:6. Conversion is evidenced by a changed life. This was spelled out in Eph. 5:9. No fruit, no root (cf. Matt. 5-7; James, and 1 John).

5:9 "fruit of light" The KJV has "fruit of the Spirit," which is in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, D^c, and I. However, P⁴⁹, κ, A, B, D, G, P and the immediate context (Eph. 5:8), demand "fruit of light." Even the NKJV has this. The KJV follows the Western family of Greek manuscripts which assimilated the wording from Gal. 5:22.

■ **"righteousness"** See Special Topic at Eph. 4:24.

5:10

NASB	"trying to learn"
NKJV	"proving"
NRSV	"trying to find out"
TEV	"try to learn"
NJB	"try to discover"

This Greek term (*dokimazō*) "prove" (cf. Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 8:8,22; 13:5; Gal. 6:4; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Tim. 8:10; Heb. 3:9) or "try" (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 John 4:1) has the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval." This was a metallurgical term used of testing coins for genuineness. See Special Topic at Phil. 2:22.

5:11 "do not participate in" This is literally "co-fellowshippers." It is another *syn* compound. This is a present active imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in process. This refers to

1. intimate social contact

2. pagan worship settings
3. false teachers' meetings (cf. Eph. 5:12)

■ **"expose them"** This is another present active imperative. How do believers expose evil? Because of Eph. 5:12 this phrase seems to mean "to expose by our own godly lifestyle" or by the proclamation of the gospel. Light cannot coexist in fellowship with darkness (cf. John 3:17-19).

5:14 "awake, sleeper. . .Christ will shine on you" This is either a loose quote from Isa. 29:19 or possibly 51:17; 52:1; 60:1 or an early Christian hymn (cf. Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-13). It is in metrical form. Paul used lyrical material from

1. the OT (from several translations)
2. Christian hymns
3. Christian creeds
4. even pagan writers

■ **"sleeper. . .dead"** This refers to the spiritual blindness, and the spiritual deadness of unbelievers (cf. Eph. 2:1; 2 Cor. 4:4).

■ **"Christ will shine on you"** Jesus is depicted here as the glorified morning star (cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 59:8; 60:1; Luke 1:78-79), the opposite of Lucifer, (cf. Isa. 14:12). Light is an ancient symbol of healing, health, truth, knowledge, and goodness (cf. Mal. 4:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:15-21

¹⁵Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

5:15 "be careful how you walk" This is a present active indicative, not another present active imperative. It is a statement of fact, not a command. "Walk" is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2).

■ **"not as unwise men, but as wise"** Wisdom is revealed in godly living (cf. Col. 4:5), not in the false teachers' knowledge or godless freedom.

5:16 "making the most of your time" This is a Present middle participle. It is a marketing term which meant "to buy out something completely" at a good time or price. Believers are to take advantage of every spiritual opportunity (cf. Col. 4:2-6; 1 Pet. 3:15) because we know that the night is coming when no one can work. There is an open window in time for the gospel. We must seize the moment!

5:17 "do not be foolish" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act in process. They were being foolish.

■ **"the will of the Lord"** There is no article with "will." Therefore, this is a will of God. The will of God is that we trust in Christ (cf. John 6:29,40), then there are several "wills" for believers. See Special Topic: The Will of God at Eph. 1:9.

5:18 "do not get drunk" This is a present passive imperative with the negative particle which usually

means to stop an act in process (cf. Pro. 23:30-31). Alcohol and drugs are often used to promote religious experiences. They are also an example of something that controls and characterizes one's life but must be intentionally repeated for effect (addiction). Just as alcohol must be repeated for effect, so too, "the filling" of the Spirit is repeated for effect. As believers volitionally receive Christ for salvation, they must volitionally and repeatedly (present passive) open themselves to the Spirit's ongoing (daily) guidance and control.

■ **"but be filled with the Spirit"** This is a present passive imperative meaning "you must continue to be filled with the Spirit" or "ever be filled with the Spirit." This is a command, not an option! It is the normal state for all believers, not the exception. This phrase implies that believers are to be available, sensitive, and obedient to the Spirit's forming of Christ in their daily lives (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; Col. 1:28). Believers cannot fill themselves, but must allow the Spirit to have freedom and influence. Human performance is not the key to effective living but the Spirit (cf. Gal. 3:1-3). However, believers must volitionally open themselves to the Spirit's leadership and control on a recurrent basis.

The term "filled" is used often in the NT for that which motivates and characterizes one's life. Believers have a choice in what fills their lives. In Acts being "filled" with the Spirit is associated with evangelism. Peter was "filled" several times in Acts 2:4; 4:8,31. Filling was an ongoing need and experience.

The structural parallel (Colossians & Ephesians are based on almost the same outline) in Col. 3:16 changed the "ever be filled with the Spirit" to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." They both refer to daily intentional submission to the Spirit's producing Christlikeness, particularly as it relates to dealing with people. Jesus died for people. People are priority; people are eternal.

5:19 "speaking. . .singing. . .making melody" These are the first three of four present active participles which describe the Spirit-filled life. The first three have to do with singing or quoting Psalms. The Spirit has put a song in the hearts of believers for God (cf. Col. 3:16). Praises to God break forth!

This verse is helpful in dealing with the different musical preferences in the church. Notice the variety of musical categories named. Music in worship is a matter of personal taste, not one correct form versus an improper form. It is the attitude of the heart, not the ear. The theology expressed is a concern, but the form of the music is always secondary. Dare we disrupt the church of God over personal preferences! Worship is a matter of the heart, not the beat! Please read Rom. 14:1-15:13 again and again.

■ **"heart"** See Special Topic at Col. 2:2.

5:20 "always giving thanks" This is the fourth present active participle. Thanksgiving is another evidence of the Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:4; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18). It is the biblical worldview by which believers can give thanks in "all things" (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). The Spirit-filled believers know that God is for them and that circumstances are not the source of joy and peace. A book that has been so helpful to my life in this area is Hannah Whithall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life!* See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at Eph. 3:20.

5:21

NASB, NRSV "be subject"

NKJV "submitting"

TEV "submit yourselves"

NJB "give way"

This is a present middle or passive participle (see 5:22). It forms a transition from Eph. 5:1-20 to 22-31 and the context continues through 6:9. These five participles define what it means to be Spirit-filled. The parallel passage in Col. 3:16 shows that it refers to daily Christlikeness.

In our day "submission" is a negative, sexist term. Originally it was a military term which related to obedience based on the chain of command. But in the NT it is often used of Jesus' attitude toward His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) and His heavenly Father (1 Cor. 15:28). Paul was fond of this term and used it 23 times. Verse 21 is a universal spiritual principle of mutual submission between believers connected to the Spirit-filled life. Submission goes against our cultural, western, individual focused mind-set. Selfishness

and dominance are so culturally ingrained, but biblically inappropriate (cf. Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:3; 1 John 4:11)!

This verse emphasizes reciprocal submission on the part of all believers. This was not directed toward one group. It needs to be reaffirmed that this context (Eph. 5:22-31) deals with the domestic relationship between Christian husbands and Christian wives, not men and women in general. Women are not spiritually inferior in any sense (cf. Acts 2:16-21; Gal. 3:28).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION \(HUPOTASSŌ\)](#)

[SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE](#)

5:21 "to one another " Mutual submission is a universal principle which relates to all believers, but which can only be accomplished through yieldedness to the Spirit (i.e., death to the self-life). It is an evidence of the reversal of the Fall.

NASB, NKJV "in the fear of Christ"

NRSV "out of reverence for Christ"

TEV "because of your reverence for Christ"

NJB "in obedience to Christ"

"Fear" is an OT concept of reverential awe. The holiness and uniqueness of YHWH, or even the presence of the spiritual realm (angels), causes a strong reaction in fallen humanity!

Believers' interpersonal relationships are affected by their faith commitment to Christ. Respect for Him gives respect to all humans for whom He gave His life (cf. Rom. 14:1; 15:13). Believers show their love for Christ by how they love others (cf. 1 John 4:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:22-24

²²Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

5:22 "wives, be subject" There is no verb in the Greek text of Eph. 5:22. It is supplied from Eph. 5:21 (which is one of five present participles describing the spirit-filled life). In this context it is not a command, but a present middle or passive participle. The only command was directed toward husbands in Eph. 5:25 (present active imperative)! Husbands are to act in sacrificial, self-giving love toward their wives, who then voluntarily submit.

However there are several parallel passages which urge the submission of wives to husbands:

1. a Present passive imperative in Col. 3:18
2. a present passive participle in Titus 2:5 used as an imperative
3. another present passive participle in 1 Pet. 3:5 used as an imperative

These parallel passages force interpreters to take the participle in Eph. 5:21 as a present passive participle used as an imperative (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1). It is still significant that the voice is passive. Wives must allow the Spirit to perform this task in their lives.

Both the *Analytical Greek New Testament* by Barbara and Timothy Friberg and *An Analysis of the Greek New Testament* by Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor call this verb a passive voice, but *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, edited by Harold K. Moulton; *Word Pictures In the New Testament* by A. T. Robertson; and "Ephesians" in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* by Markus Barth call it a middle voice. Koine Greek was in the process of merging these two voices into one.

Paul illustrates the Spirit-filled life by using the three members of the Greco-Roman domestic scene who had no rights-wives, children, and slaves. He showed how the Spirit changes cultural relationships into spiritual relationships, rights into responsibilities.

■ If the participle is middle it emphasizes the wife's voluntary participation in marital submission for the benefit which comes from a peaceful, loving marriage with a believing spouse. If the participle is passive it denotes the wife's need to allow the Spirit to do His work in her heart (cf. Eph. 5:18) which affects both the husband and the children, as well as the domestic slaves.

■ **"as to the Lord"** One should compare Col. 3:18, "in the Lord." It is not that the husband is the ultimate authority, but that wives are to respect their husbands because of their own relationship to Christ. Jesus sets the pattern for both submission to authority (i.e., always the Father's will) and the exercise of authority (i.e., over the church, cf. Eph. 5:25).

5:23 "the husband is the head. . .as Christ is the Head" Christ is depicted as the husband and the church as the bride (cf. Rev. 19:7; 21:2,9). Husbands need to act in their God-given leadership position just as Christ did. He gave Himself for the church. It is not a control issue, but a giving-of-self issue.

Male headship is a very controversial issue in our modern western society. This is for several reasons:

1. we do not understand servant leadership
2. we do not like patriarchal societies because of our modern egalitarian emphasis on the worth of the individual
3. we are confused by the Bible's paradoxical way of asserting male headship in some passages and equality in others

In my opinion the answer lies in the example set by Jesus of true headship in relationship to the church and true servanthood (submission) to God the Father. This submission in no way expresses inequality, but administrative functional design. Male headship addresses a kind of leadership which serves the needs of others in a self-giving way. Our modern society rejects authority, yet seeks power!

I can personally accept male headship as a result of the fall (cf. Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:12-14). I can also affirm it as a biblical concept in light of Jesus' leadership of the church (cf. Eph. 5:22-33). But what I find difficult to accept is a patriarchal mandate (i.e., male dominated societies) as God's revealed plan for every age and society (cf. Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:7, 13; Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Does the mutuality so obvious in Gen. 1:27; 2:18 which was lost in Adam and Eve's rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:16), return in salvation? Is the curse of sin and subservience both dealt within Jesus' redemption? As the new age breaks into the lives of believers now, does also the restoration of complete fellowship with God as in Eden also begin now?

I would also like to make a hermeneutical point. As an interpreter of what I believe to be the self-revelation of the one true God and His Christ, I am surprised by the cultural aspect of Scripture. We see it obviously in the OT (circumcision, food laws, leprosy laws, etc.) But it is much more difficult for us as modern Christians to see it in the NT. I am sure this is (1) because of our love and respect for the Bible and (2) our tendency toward propositional literalism.

The two issues which stand out to me to have obvious cultural aspects (1) male dominated societies (patriarchy) and (2) slavery. The NT never attempts to address the unfairness of these cultural pillars of the ancient world. Possibly because to do so would have meant the destruction of Christianity. Yet the gospel through time is abolishing both! God's truth never changes but societies do change. It is a grave mistake for us to attempt to turn first century Greco-Roman culture into God's will for all people in all places and of course the same is true for Israelite culture. Into each of them God revealed Himself in powerful and permanent ways. The real task is how to get the eternal absolutes out of its cultural husk. A good book which discusses this very issue is Fee and Stuart, *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*.

One way to try to determine what is eternal and, therefore, binding on all believers in all periods and what is cultural or personal preference it is to see if the Bible (OT & NT) gives a uniform message or does it record a variety of opinions (cf. Fee and Stuart's *Howto read The Bible for All Its Worth*).

My fear is that I might let my denominational training, personality, culture and personal preferences silence or diminish a revealed truth! My ultimate authority is God and His revelation (i.e., in His Son and in a written record, the Bible). But I realize He revealed Himself to a specific period of history, to a particular culture and everything in that culture was not His will. Yet, God had to speak to people of that culture in terms and categories they could understand. The Bible then is a historical document. I dare not ignore its

supernatural aspect or its cultural aspect.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAD (KEPHALĒ)

5:24 "but as the church is subject" The form of this verb is either present passive or Present middle indicative (see note at paragraph four at Eph. 5:22). As the wife submits to her husband for (1) her own best interest (middle voice) or (2) because she is enabled by God's Spirit (passive voice), so too, the church must submit to Christ.

▣ **"church"** See notes at Eph. 3:10 and Special Topic at Col. 1:18.

▣ **"in everything"** Christ, not husbands, must be the ultimate authority (cf. Matt. 10:34-39). This verse does not chain a believing wife to an abusive husband nor does it condone evil actions or deeds demanded by an authoritarian husband.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:25-6:3

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰because we are members of His body. ³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see *to it* that she respects her husband. ^{6:1}Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

5:25 "Husbands, love your wives" This is a present active imperative which is the only imperative in the paragraph. The husband should set the spiritual atmosphere in the home by continuing to love his wife as Christ loved the church. This was a radically positive statement in its day, but in our day the whole passage seems negative because it reflects the theological concept of male headship in the home (cf. Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; 2 Tim. 2:13). However, Christian husbands are servant leaders, not bosses.

▣ **"gave Himself up for her"** The Greek preposition *huper* means "on behalf of." This refers to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ. It is also the kind of self-giving love required of husbands.

5:26 "He might sanctify her" The main verbs in Eph. 5:26,27 are both aorist active subjunctives (cf. John 17:17-19; Titus 2:14; Heb. 10:10,14,29; 13:12). The word sanctify is from the root "holy." The purpose of justification is sanctification (cf. Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29-20). The subjunctive mood adds a note of contingency. As the church must cooperate, so too, the wife.

NASB	"having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."
NKJV	"cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"
NRSV	"by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word"
TEV	"by his word, after making it clean by the washing in water"
NJB	"He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words"

This is possibly an OT metaphor for cleansing (cf. John 15:3; Titus 3:5). It may refer to

1. the liturgy of baptism (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5)
2. the public confession of faith at baptism (cf. Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11)
3. a continuation of the marital imagery, a ritual bath of the bride before the ceremony, as a cultural symbol of purity

"The word" probably does not refer to the Bible, but to the words of the administrator of the baptism or of the profession of faith of the candidate.

5:27 "He might present to Himself the Church" This is another aorist active subjunctive, which presents an element of contingency. This seems to refer to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 19:6-9). Just as Jesus' love for the church revolutionized the church, so too, a husband's love for his wife should stabilize and bless the Christian home.

■ **"spot"** This is literally "no impurity."

■ **"wrinkle"** Literally this means "no sign of age."

■ **"holy"** This is from the same root as "sanctify" in Eph. 5:26 (cf. Eph. 1:4). See Special Topic: Holy at Eph. 1:4.

■ **"blameless"** This is an Old Testament sacrificial term (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19). This same concept is mentioned as God's will for the church in Eph. 1:4. See Special Topic: Blameless at Col. 1:22.

The cumulative weight of all of these terms is that God desires the complete holiness of His people (Eph. 1:4). The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:14). The image of God in man will be restored!

5:28 "as their own bodies" When Christian husbands love their Christian wives, they love themselves because in Christ they are "one flesh" (cf. Gen. 2:24). As the Church is the extension of Christ, husbands and wives are an extension of each other.

5:29 "nourishes" This is a bird metaphor that means "to feed to maturity." It is used of the rearing of children in Eph. 6:4.

■ **"cherishes"** This is another bird metaphor, "to warm." These two terms should motivate every mature Christian husband's actions toward his wife. Husbands are stewards of their wives' (and children's) gifts as well as their own! The spiritual leader of the home must seek the maturity of each member of the family in Christ.

5:30 "we are members of His body" The church as a physical body is one of Paul's corporate metaphors which stresses unity amidst diversity (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

5:31 This is a quote from the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 2:24. As the Christian family is an organic unit, so is the church and Christ. The family is to be one inseparable unit, just as the church and her Lord are (cf. John 17:11,21-22) one body (cf. 1 Corinthians 12). This truth rejects the exclusivism of the false teachers of that day and every day.

5:32 "mystery" The Latin Vulgate has "sacrament," but this is a textual insertion following Roman Catholic sacramentalism. Paul uses the term "mystery" several times probably because it was a favorite term of the Gnostic false teachers. Paul uses it in several ways. Here it relates to the metaphorical comparison between husbands and wives/Christ and the church. For a full discussion see 1:9 and 3:3.

5:33 "love. . . respect" This is a present active imperative and present middle (deponent) subjunctive. The husband is commanded to continue to love his wife as himself (one flesh, Eph. 5:31) and wives are called on to yield to and respect their husbands, which would enhance and strengthen the bonds of love

between them. This is the summary statement of the entire passage (Eph. 5:21-33).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it so important that believers live godly lives?
2. Why are sex sins emphasized in this context?
3. Can Christians fall from grace by their lifestyles? (cf. Eph. 5:5)
4. What does being "filled with the Spirit" involve?
5. Why was 5:22-6:9 seen as so radically positive in its day but so negative in our day?
6. Does 5:22-33 teach that women are to be subject to men?
7. Why does Paul compare the Christian home to Christ and the church?

EPHESIANS 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Children and Parents	Children and Parents	The Christian Household (5:21-6:9)	Children and Parents	The Morals of the Home (5:21-6:9)
6:1-4	6:1-4	6:1-3 6:4	6:1-3 6:4	6:1-4
Slaves and Masters	Servants and Masters		Slaves and Masters	
6:5-9	6:5-9	6:5-8 6:9	6:5-8 6:9	6:5-9
The Battle Against Evil	The Whole Armor of God	God's Armor and the Christian's Warfare	The Whole Armor of God	The Spiritual Warfare
6:10-20	6:10-20	6:10-17 6:18-20	6:10-13 6:14-20	6:10-13 6:14-17 6:18-20
Final Greetings	A Gracious Greeting	Personal Matters and Benediction	Final Greetings	Personal News and Final Salutation
6:21-22	6:21-24	6:21-22	6:21-22	6:21-22
6:23-24		6:23-24	6:23-24	6:23-24

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 6:1-9

A. This literary unit begins in Eph. 5:22 as Paul uses the Christian home as one example of how the

Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:18) impacts daily life.

B. Paul's domestic example addresses three pairs:

1. wives and husbands
2. children and parents
3. house slaves and masters

C. Paul first addresses those who had no cultural rights or power (wives, children, slaves), but he also addresses those in power (husbands, parents, slave owners).

D. This domestic example deals exclusively with a Christian home. The power of mutual respect and love sets the pattern. This context does not address the issue of only one party of the three pairs being Christian. Believers' actions toward others is determined by their relationship to Christ and not by the worth or performance of the other party.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 6:1-3

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

6:1 "children" It is uncertain what age is referred to here. In Jewish life a boy became a man, responsible to the Law and marriageable, at the age of 13 (i.e., *bar mitzvah*); a girl became a woman at the age of 12 (i.e., *bath mitzvah*). In Roman culture a boy became a man at age 14, in Greek culture, at age 18.

▣ **"obey"** This is a present active imperative which is a compound Greek term from "to hear" and "under." The Colossians parallel adds "in all things." This obedience must be for a set period of time (childhood). Even this command must be balanced with Matt. 10:34-39. Ultimate authority is not parental, but divine.

▣ **"in the Lord"** This phrase is omitted in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts B, D⁴, F and G, but it is present in P⁴⁶, κ, A, and D¹ as well as the Vulgate, Peshitta, Coptic and Armenian translations. Its inclusion makes definite that the context is the Christian home. This context implies both a Christian child and Christian parents.

▣ **"for this is right"** The Bible clearly expresses the God-given relationship between parents and children (cf. Col. 3:20; Pro. 6:20; 23:27). Strong families make strong societies.

6:2 "honor" This is a present active imperative. It is a quote from the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). "Honor" was a commercial term which meant "to give due weight to." It reflected the OT concept of that which is "heavy" is valuable. Parents are to be respected and valued by Christian children. There are no perfect parents (as there are no perfect children).

▣ **"father and mother"** This shows that both parents deserve honor and respect.

▣ **"(which is the first commandment with a promise)"** This quote in Eph. 6:3 is used in Deuteronomy in several different contexts (cf. Eph. 4:40; 5:16,33; 30:17-18). It is not an individual promise of longevity but a cultural promise of societal stability. Notice that Paul, by quoting the Ten Commandments, shows that the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) was still in effect as far as revelatory guidance for the Christian (cf. Eph. 4:25,26; Rom. 10:4; 13:9-10; Gal. 2:15-21) but not for salvation (cf. Galatians 3).

6:3 "on earth" Paul adapted the OT quote from "In the land that the Lord your God has given you" (cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) and turned it into a general principle. The NT authors often took OT promises to Israel and adapted them into universal truths.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:4

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

6:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "fathers"

TEV, NJB "parents"

The Greek text has "fathers." The modern English dynamic equivalent translations (TEV and NJB) have widened the meaning because of Eph. 6:2, where both father and mother are mentioned. However, in the larger context of Eph. 5:21-6:9, Paul addresses first the three groups who had no social rights-wives, children, slaves-and then addresses the ones who had all the rights-husbands, fathers, and masters. There is a spiritual responsibility for every member of a Christian home.

■ **"do not provoke"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in process (cf. Col. 3:21). Like 5:25, this was the needed balance, in the Greco-Roman world, and ours. Fathers are not ultimate authorities, but Christian stewards of their families.

Christian fathers must understand their stewardship role in the lives of their children. Fathers are not to teach personal preferences, but spiritual truths. The goal is not parental authority, but passing on God's authority to children. There is always a generation gap, but never a divine authority gap. Children do not have to reflect parental habits, choices, or lifestyle to be pleasing to God. We must be careful of the desire to mold our children into our current cultural understanding or to reflect our personal preferences.

As a local pastor near a large state school, I noticed that many of the wildest young people came from conservative Christian homes which allowed them no personal choices or freedoms. Freedom is a heady experience and must be introduced in responsible stages. Christian children must develop lives based on personal conviction and faith, not second-hand parental guidelines.

■ **"bring them up"** This is a present active imperative which comes from the same word root, "to feed to maturity," as in Eph. 5:29. As it is the husband's responsibility to continue to help his wife grow to spiritual maturity and giftedness, he is also to help his children reach their full spiritual maturity and giftedness (cf. Eph. 4:7).

NASB, NRSV "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"

NKJV "in the training and admonition of the Lord"

TEV "Christian discipline and instruction"

NJB "correct them and guide them as the Lord does"

The first term is from the Greek root for "child" and refers to the parental training of children (cf. Heb. 12:5,7,8,11) and for the Lord's training of believers (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16).

The second term is the general term for warning, correction, or admonition (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; Titus 3:10). The training of children in the faith was a major emphasis of Judaism (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:7-9, 20-25; 11:18-21; 32:46). Parental training recognizes the necessity of passing on the personal faith and the Scriptural truths of God, not the personal preferences, or cultural opinions of parents, to the next generation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:5-8

⁵Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶not by way of eye service, as men-

pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

6:5 "slaves" This is Paul's third domestic example to show how being filled with the Spirit makes a difference in daily life (cf. Col. 3:22). "Slaves" (*douloi*) refers to household servants.

■ **"be obedient"** This is a Present active imperative. There is a great parallel passage in 1 Pet. 2:18-21. There is an obvious parallel between wives, children and servants, except that wives were not commanded to obey as children (for a period) and slaves are.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S ADMONITIONS TO SLAVES

■ **"who are your masters according to the flesh"** Here the Greek term flesh (*sarx*) is used in the sense of the physical, not of evil. This general truth relates to both the Christian masters and pagan masters (i.e., to both kind and unkind bosses). Notice the phrase "in the Lord" is not found here as in the two previous domestic examples (cf. Eph. 5:21 and 6:1).

Modern western culture does not have slaves, yet this spiritual truth surely applies to Christian employers and Christian employees.

■ **"with fear and trembling"** This is a metaphor of respect (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 2:12).

■ **"in sincerity of heart"** This is a metaphor from the term "singleness." It is used in two ways in the NT (1) sincerity (cf. II Col. 1:12; 11:3; Col. 3:22) or (2) liberality (cf. Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13). In this context it is obviously #1. A believer's motivation is always the key to proper action, not observation (cf. Eph. 6:6-7). Believers live out their lives in every area as unto the Lord (cf. Col. 3:22-25 and Rom. 14:7-9)! They are motivated not by the worth or merit of another, but by who they are in Christ.

Christian husbands love their wives not because the wives are perfect or deserve it but because they are Christians. This is true of all human interpersonal relationships. Believers love God by loving others made in His image, for whom He died (cf. 1 John 2:9,11; 4:20). See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.

■ **"as to Christ"** Believers act toward others because of their relationship to Christ, not because of what the others deserve (cf. Eph. 5:22; Rom. 14:7-9). This is true of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves. Believers make people priority because of God's image and love for them, not because of their personal merit.

6:8 "knowing that whatever good thing" This context is not a worship setting but believers' daily relationships with others, fellow Christians and nonbelievers. God is concerned with all our actions. There is no secular; all is sacred!

Verse 8a is a third class conditional sentence meaning potential future action. Believers are expected to do good works (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:17-5:14). Believers are not right with God *by* good works but they are saved *unto* good works.

■ **"will receive back from the Lord"** God is watching believers' lives and they will give an account (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). The Bible does speak of rewards (cf. Matt. 5:12,46; 6:1-2; 10:41-42; Luke 6:23, 35; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 9:17-18; 2 John 8; Rev. 11:18; 14:13; 22:12) and crowns (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:23; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10). Paul was stating a general principle similar to Gal. 6:7-9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:9

⁹And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

6:9 "masters" This is still the same literary context as 5:22-6:9, which is Paul's domestic example of the

"Spirit-filled" life in action. In this verse the masters referred to are obviously believers, while in Eph. 6:5 they might be either believers or nonbelievers.

- ▣ **"do the same things to them"** This is a present active imperative. Here again is the needed balance to slave owners, as 5:29 is to husbands and 6:4 is to parents. Each must act out of godly (Spirit-filled) principles, not social privilege. Jesus' golden rule (Matt. 7:12) applies here.
- ▣ **"give up threatening"** This is a present active participle used as an imperative. The word literally means "to loosen up."
- ▣ **"there is no partiality with Him"** The term "partiality" is a compound from "face" and "to lift." It denotes an OT judge acting fairly without lifting the face of the accused to see if he recognized him/her. God is no respecter of persons (cf. Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). All earthly distinctions fade away in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:22; Gal. 3:26,28; Col. 3:11). See Special Topic: Racism at Col. 3:11.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was this passage so startling for Paul's day?
2. Does it stress rights or duties?
3. What is this passage saying about women? Should this passage be used as a guideline for our day?
4. How is Eph. 6:21 related to 5:22-6:9?
5. Should children always obey parents? Define "children."
6. Can the slave/master relationship be analogous to employee/employer?
7. How are wives and children related to slaves?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT TO 6:10-24

- A. The Christian life is a spiritual struggle. Problems, suffering, and persecution are not abnormal, but normal, for Christians in a fallen world (cf. Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17-18; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; 2:11; 4:12-17; 5:10).
- B. The spiritual battle may be related contextually to the present passive imperative, "be filled with the Spirit," of Eph. 5:18 and the present passive (or middle, see note at Eph. 5:22) imperative "be made strong in the Lord," 6:10. As the filling is related to daily Christlikeness (Col. 3:16) so too, is the spiritual battle. People are priority with God. The battleground is interpersonal relationships on a daily basis. Only people are eternal. Although these passives speak of God's power, the Christian must allow the Spirit to work in their lives. Covenant involves two parties, two choices.
- C. We must be careful of two extremes: (1) Satan causes everything and (2) there is no personal evil. I assume because of OT monotheism that Satan is a created being and a controlled being (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1-5). He is neither omnipresent, nor omniscient. Satan has been mentioned earlier in the letter in Eph. 2:2 and 4:14,27! He is only one of three enemies that Christians face daily-the world, Satan (and his), and the flesh (cf. Eph. 2:2-3; James 4).
- D. God provides our spiritual armor and weapons, but believers must (1) recognize the daily spiritual battle and (2) avail themselves, by faith, of God's resources and then (3) stand (cf. Eph. 6:11,13,14).

Spiritual maturity is not automatic, nor is it based on longevity, IQ (i.e., intelligence), or giftedness..

E. Verses 21-22 are almost identical to Col. 4:7-8. This is additional evidence of the close relationship between these two books. However, it is interesting that the entire discussion of spiritual warfare is omitted in Colossians. Each book has its own uniqueness.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-17

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

6:10 "finally" Literally this is "for the rest." This is a characteristic Pauline phrase implying he is about to close his letter (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:1; 4:8; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:1). It usually marks a transition to a new point.

■ **"be strong in the Lord"** This is either a present passive imperative, "be made strong," or a present middle imperative, "be strong." The grammatical form is the same, only the function is different. The theology is clear: believers must continue to allow the Spirit to strengthen them for the ongoing spiritual struggle (cf. Eph. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:13). This paradox between the passive voice (God's power flowing through believers) and the middle voice (believers actively involved in living for Christ) is the dialectical tension found throughout the Bible. Basically it is the tension of a covenant relationship (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). God always takes the initiative, always sets the agenda, but He has also chosen that humans must respond (initially and continually). Sometimes the Bible emphasizes mankind's response (Ezek. 18:31, "Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit") and sometimes God's provision (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you."). Both are true!

Four Greek terms (*dunamis* = power; *energeia* = energy; *kratos* = strength and *ischus* = might) are used in Eph. 1:10 to describe God's power in Christ. Here, three of these same words are used.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BE MADE STRONG

■ **"in the strength of His might"** YHWH was often described in the OT as a warrior wearing armor (cf. Isa. 42:13; 49:24-25; 52:10 and especially 59:16-17). It is His armor, not ours. Our victory is in Him (cf. Phil. 2:13), but we must cooperate (cf. Phil. 2:12).

6:11 "put on the full armor of God" This is an aorist middle imperative which conveys a sense of urgency (cf. Eph. 6:13). This is a decisive act of the believer's will. God has provided our needed spiritual equipment, but we must recognize the need and avail ourselves of God's provision and apply it to our daily lives (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8). Justification (Romans 4; 6) does not provide a deliverance from spiritual struggle and temptation (cf. Romans 7). The presence of the "new man" does not imply the total removal of the "old man." Often the battle is intensified. If Satan cannot keep us from being saved, he will attempt to keep us spiritually defeated and silenced!

■ **"that you may be able to stand firm"** This is a present passive infinitive followed by an aorist active infinitive, which refers to the daily struggle, not one decisive "battle" or temptation (this is similar to Jesus' temptation in Luke 4:13, where Satan departs until a more opportune time). The term "stand" is a military term for holding one's position. It is repeated in Eph. 6:13 and 14. It is the key purpose of the believer's armor.

SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND (HISTĒMI)

NASB "against the schemes of the devil"
NKJV, NRSV "against the wiles of the devil"
TEV "against the devil's evil tricks"
NJB "the devil's tactics"

Christians are attacked by an angelic tempter, Satan (cf. Eph. 2:2; 4:14,27; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Satan uses many schemes (*methodia*).

1. disunity
2. personal sin
3. false teachers
4. discouragement
5. apathy
6. suffering

These are just some things that the recipients of this letter faced. However, believers cannot attribute all sin and problems to angelic temptation or attack. Fallen mankind, even redeemed fallen mankind, faces (1) a continuing sin nature; (2) a fallen world system; and (3) an angelic and demonic attack (cf. Eph. 2:2-3; James. 4:1,4,7). The battle starts in the mind but moves quickly to sinful acts. For the Special Topic: Personal Evil see 2:2.

Notice the numbers of times "against" appears in this context (once in v.11 and four times in Eph. 6:12). The panoply of evil is thwarted by the panoply of God's armor!

6:12

NASB, NRSV "our struggle is not"
NKJV "we do not wrestle"
TEV "we are not fighting against"
NJB "we have to struggle"

This is a present tense verb which implies an ongoing struggle, not a one-time temptation. This was either a military or athletic metaphor. It literally refers to hand-to-hand combat. The Christian life is tough! The Christian life is a supernatural gift lived out by repentance and faith, as is salvation.

■ **"against flesh and blood"** The word order is literally "blood and flesh." Notice the abnormal sequence of these terms. It is found only here and in Heb. 2:14. The reason is uncertain, but it may be related to the Gnostic false teachers' depreciation of the physical (Jesus' humanity). Believers must remember the spiritual problem is sin, evil, and Satan, not competition from other human beings!

■ **"against the rulers; against the powers"** These terms can be used of human authorities as in Rom. 13:1-7, but here the context demands angelic levels (*aeons*) of authority (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 1 Pet. 3:22). This was part of the Gnostic false teachers' worldview. These angelic levels (*aeons*) may be

1. evil, that is, fallen angels under Satan's control, the demonic
2. the angelic authorities called the *stoichea* who are not necessarily evil (cf. Gal. 4:3,9; Col. 2:8)

For a good discussion of the subject see Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Herald Press).

For "rulers" see Special Topic: *Archē* at Col. 1:16.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (UNCLEAN SPIRIT)

NASB	"against the world-forces of this darkness"
NKJV	"against the rulers of the darkness of this age"
NRSV	"against the cosmic powers of this present darkness"
TEV	"against the cosmic powers of this dark age"
NJB	"the spiritual army of evil in the heavens"

This is the Greek term *kosmocrator* in its plural form. This term is used in the Greek Classics and the writings of the Jewish rabbis to describe someone bent on world control. This seems to speak of Satan (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) and the demonic (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6,8 15:24; Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 2:15).

▣ **"against the spirit-forces of wickedness"** This phrase was used in Paul's day by astrologers who believed there were angels or gods behind the heavenly bodies (cf. Rom. 8:39) that affected human life (zodiac). This all began with Babylonian astrology. It is still alive and well (horoscopes).

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"in the heavenly places"
TEV	"in the heavenly world"
NJB	"in the heavens"

This locative (of sphere) neuter plural adjective "in the heavenly places" is used only in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). From the context of all of its usages (esp. 3:10 and 6:12), it must mean the spiritual realm in which believers live here and now, not heaven by and by.

6:13 "you must take up the full armor of God" This is an aorist active imperative which showed the need for decisive action (cf. v.11). It is another military term. It is possibly an allusion to YHWH as warrior from Isa. 59:17. The armor is mentioned in the order in which it would have been put on by a soldier (remember Paul wrote this from prison chained to two Roman soldiers).

Notice the full armor is God's armor! He provides, but believers must recognize the battle and implement God's sufficient provision.

▣ **"you may be able to resist"** This is an aorist passive (deponent) subjunctive with an aorist active infinitive. There is a spiritual battle before and after conversion. Some believers do not know there is an ongoing, spiritual battle; they do not take up God's armor and they do not resist. The terminology is similar to James 4:7 and 1 Pet. 5:9. Christians can lose or damage their peace, assurance, and gifted ministry through (1) ignorance; (2) neglect; and/or (3) sin (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27; 15:2; Gal. 2:2; 3:4; Phil. 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:19). This does not refer to heaven or hell, but effective kingdom service!

▣ **"in the evil day"** This is an OT idiom which could refer to (1) a day of temptation; (2) the whole evil age in which we live; or (3) a day of adversity (cf. Ps. 49:5ff).

▣ **"having done everything"** This term had the connotation of one having done everything that was required. Paul uses this term more than eighteen times in his letters. In the spiritual realm (1) preparation; (2) consistency; and (3) knowledge are crucial!

▣ **"stand firm"** This is an aorist active infinitive meaning "to stand fast." The same term is used in Eph. 6:11 (present passive infinitive) and 14 (aorist active imperative). Believers are commanded and encouraged to resist, overcome, and stand against the schemes of the devil (cf. Eph. 4:14). This is done by means of

1. the believers' knowledge of the gospel (the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6:17)

2. the believer's position in Christ
3. the believers' yieldedness to the indwelling Spirit
4. the believers' implementation of the armor provided by God
5. the believer's decisive choices and actions
6. prayer (cf. Eph. 6:18)

See Special Topic: Stand at Eph. 6:11.

6:14 Three of the following four participles are taken from passages in Isaiah. They are all grammatically related to this aorist active imperative, "stand" in Eph. 6:13 (this structure is like 5:18, imperative followed by five participles, 5:19-21).

1. **"having girded"** aorist middle participle (Eph. 6:14). This is a quote from Isa. 11:5 where it was used of the Messiah.
2. **"having put on"** aorist middle participle (Eph. 6:14). This is a quote from Isa. 59:17, where it is used of God as a warrior on behalf of sinful Israel (cf. Eph. 59:12).
3. **"having shod"** aorist middle participle (Eph. 6:15). This is a quote from Isa. 52:7, where the Lord comes to His people as a King bringing good news (cf. Eph. 61:1).
4. **"taking up"** aorist active participle (Eph. 6:16, cf. Eph. 6:13). This is implied in Isa. 59:17. God's provisions must be implemented in daily life.

▣ **"truth"** There is not an article in Greek, so it may be translated in the OT sense of "truthfulness" or "trustworthiness." See Special Topic at Eph. 1:13.

▣ **"the breastplate"** This is one of the pieces of armor listed in Isa. 59:17, as is the helmet of Eph. 6:17.

▣ **"of righteousness"** This refers to Christ's righteousness (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). However, like the dialectical tension related to strengthening in Eph. 6:10, it is both Christ's imputed righteousness (positional justification and sanctification) and His followers' progressive Christlikeness (progressive sanctification) that brings victory in the daily spiritual struggle. See Special Topic at Eph. 4:24.

6:15 "having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" This either refers to (1) readiness (cf. Isa. 52:7) or (2) a sure foundation (cf. NEB translation). Believers must be prepared for the spiritual struggle that will surely come.

6:16 "in addition" The KJV translates this as "above all," but it means in addition to the above mentioned military battle armor.

▣ **"the shield"** This term is related to the Greek word for "door." It refers to the large 4' x 2' full-body shield. It was made of wood with leather coverings surrounded by metal. It was soaked in water before battle so as to extinguish the fire-tipped arrows. It was a symbol of full protection.

▣ **"flaming missiles"** This refers to arrows dipped in pitch and lighted. These were metaphorical of spiritual attacks.

▣ **"the evil one"** There is an ambiguity as to whether it refers to evil in general (neuter) or Satan in particular (masculine). This same ambiguity can be seen in Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:38; John 17:15; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 2:13-14. The form of the word in Greek is the same (therefore, the gender can only be ascertained from context). In Matt. 13:19; 1 John 5:18-19 it obviously refers to Satan (see Special Topic at Eph. 2:2).

6:17 "take the helmet of salvation" This is an aorist middle (deponent) imperative. It is symbolic of believers' knowledge of the gospel and their hope in Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8).

▣ **"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"** Paul specifically defines the believers' offensive

weapons (i.e., Bible knowledge and prayer, Eph. 6:18). This was an allusion to an OT metaphor for God speaking to His people (cf. Isa. 49:2; Hosea 6:5). God's revelation (both the living Word, Jesus Christ, and the written word, the Bible) is described in these same terms in Heb. 4:12. Although a different Greek term for "word" (*rhēma* versus *logos*) is used in Hebrews, the term for "sword" is the same (the small tongue-shaped Roman weapon).

It is dangerous to draw too sharp a distinction between parallel terms in Koine Greek (it was the language of commerce and the distinctions of Classical Greek were fading) like "*rhēma*" and "*logos*." This may refer to the use of the Scriptures during temptation, like Jesus did in Matt. 4:1ff. Believers' knowledge of the gospel will protect them in their daily spiritual struggles. This is why Scripture memorization and personal Bible study are so valuable (cf. Ps. 19:7-11; 119:105; Pro. 6:23). This is the only offensive weapon listed among the armor (although I think prayer in Eph. 6:18 is another). It is for protection. As in Eph. 6:18-20 it can be used for Kingdom advance!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:18-20

¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

6:18 "with all prayer and petition, pray at all times" Notice the number of times the inclusive term "all" is used in Eph. 6:18. Prayer is another powerful weapon in the spiritual battle which is the Christian's daily life in this fallen age. Paul requested prayer for himself in Eph. 6:19 (cf. Col. 4:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:17). He did not ask for personal issues but for clarity and boldness in gospel proclamation (cf. Col. 4:3-4). It is interesting to note that Paul does not discuss the spiritual battle in Colossians but he does emphasize the need for prayer (cf. Col. 4:2).

■ **"in the Spirit"** The term "spirit" has no article (anarthrous). This can be understood in different ways. It may refer to

1. the Spirit praying for believers (cf. Rom. 8:26-27)
2. Christians praying in spiritual power (cf. Jude 1:20)
3. parallel to John 4:23 "in spirit and truth"
4. "spirit" as distinct from "mind" (cf. 1 Cor. 14:14-15)

Effective, fervent prayer is impossible without the Spirit's involvement!

Notice the aspects of spirit-led prayer:

1. at all times
2. in the Spirit
3. be alert with perseverance
4. pray for all the saints

■ **"for all the saints"** See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

6:19 "pray on my behalf" Paul asked for prayer, not for himself personally, but for the power to present the gospel clearly as he spoke during his trials before the Roman authorities (cf. Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1):

1. "that utterance may be given me" (Eph. 6:19)
2. "to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph. 6:19 "freedom of speech," cf. Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:16; 10:19,35).
3. "I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:20; Col. 4:4).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

■ **"with boldness"** See Special Topic: Boldness (*Parrhēsia*) at Col. 2:15.

■ **"mystery of the gospel"** Paul uses this term in several different ways describing God's redemptive plan. Here it refers to the believing Jews and Gentiles being one body in Christ. This concept is clearly spelled out in Eph. 2:11-3:13. The term appears in Eph. 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32. See Special Topic at Eph. 3:3.

6:20 "I am an ambassador in chains" Paul understood his apostleship to the Gentiles as both a stewardship (1 Cor. 4:1; 9:17; Titus 1:7) and an ambassadorship (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). He was in prison to preach the gospel to the Roman authorities in Rome, as he had to the authorities in Judea (cf. Acts 9:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:21-22

²¹But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

6:21 "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" He is mentioned in Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7; Titus 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:12. He was the bearer of the letter. Also, he probably carried the letters of Colossians and Philemon to Asia Minor and was accompanied by Onesimus. He also possibly may have carried the letter of Ephesians to all the churches of Asia Minor. He also may have functioned as Paul's scribe, like Tertius of Rom. 16:22.

6:21-22 These verses are the same in Greek as Col. 4:7-8, except Colossians adds "fellow bond servant," which shows that Paul probably wrote the two books close to the same time.

6:22 Paul wanted the churches to know of his circumstances so that they could pray for him and not worry about him. He felt he was in God's plan for his life and ministry (cf. Acts 9:15).

■ **"hearts"** See Special Topic at Col. 2:2.

■ One wonders if Paul himself did not pen this verse as well as 6:23-24.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:23-24

²³Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

6:23-24 These same themes opened the letter! Paul usually penned the closing thoughts himself to authenticate his letters.

6:24

NASB "with a love incorruptible"

NKJV "in sincerity"

NRSV "an undying love"

TEV "with undying love"

NJB "eternal life"

This term usually means "incorruptible" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 15:52; 1 Tim. 1:17). It had the connotation of something unchanging and eternal. This was an encouragement in light of the confusion and conflict caused by the false teachers and the personal spiritual battle.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is there a personal force of evil in our world?
2. What is our responsibility in spiritual struggle?
3. Why does Paul use warfare as a description of the Christian life?
4. What does Paul ask for himself?

INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. This book is an example of a private letter, so common in the first century Greco-Roman world. It probably fit on one papyrus sheet (cf. 3 John). It is uncertain to whom it is primarily addressed.
 - 1. Philemon
 - 2. Apphia and Archippus (cf. Col. 4:17)
 - 3. or in some sense, the entire house church
- B. This letter provides a window into
 - 3. the pastoral methods of the Apostle Paul
 - 2. the home churches of the first century (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 10:19; Col. 4:15)
- C. Christianity was already radically changing the social milieu of the Mediterranean world. Social barriers to the gospel were falling (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

AUTHOR

- A. The personal nature of the letter convinces most readers (one exception, F.C. Baur) that the author was Paul, the Apostle.
- B. Philemon and Colossians are closely related
 - 1. Same origin
 - 2. Same people give greetings
 - 3. Same closing
 - 4. Tychicus delivered the letter of Colossians and traveled with Onesimus (cf. Col. 4:7,9). If Philemon is Pauline, so is Colossians (which has been doubted by several modern scholars).
- C. It is listed among Paul's letters by both the early heretic Marcion (who came to Rome in a.d. 140's) and the list of canonical books, the Muratorian Fragment (written in Rome between a.d. 180-200).

DATE

- A. The date of this letter is linked to one of Paul's imprisonments (Ephesus, Philippi, Caesarea, or Rome). A Roman imprisonment fits the facts of Acts the best.
- B. Once Rome is assumed to be the place of imprisonment, the question arises-which time? Paul was in jail in the early 60's and this is recorded in Acts. However, he was released and wrote the Pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) and was then rearrested and killed before June 9, a.d. 68 (Nero's suicide). The best educated guess for the writing of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon is Paul's first imprisonment, early 60's. Philippians was probably written toward the mid 60's.
- C. Tychicus, along with Onesimus, probably took the letters of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon to Asia Minor. Later (possibly several years later), Ephaphroditus, recovered from his physical illness, took the letter of Philippians back to his home church.
- D. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F .F. Bruce and Murray Harris (with minor adaption).

	<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7-10	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60's	Rome	
	Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11-13	Fourth Missionary Journey		Ephesus (?)	
	1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
	Titus	63 but before		
	2 Timothy	64 a.d. 68)	Rome	

OCCASION FOR THE LETTER (people mentioned in Philemon)

- A. Philemon was the slave owner of Onesimus. He lived in Colossae. He was probably a convert of Paul, possibly while Paul was ministering in Ephesus.
- B. Onesimus was a runaway slave of Philemon. He was also a convert of Paul, while in prison at Rome (a.d. 61-63). It is uncertain how Paul and Onesimus met. Perhaps
 1. both were imprisoned
 2. Onesimus was sent on an errand to Paul
 3. Onesimus sought Paul for advice after changing his mind about running away
- C. Epaphras was a believer from Asia Minor and the founder of the Churches in the Lycus River Valley (Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis). He brought word to Paul in prison about the heresy in Colossae and about Philemon's faithfulness.
- D. Tychicus was the bearer of Paul's three letters to this area: Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon (cf. Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21-22). Onesimus also went back with him to face his master (cf. Phlm. 1:11). Philemon is one of two private letters preserved in the New Testament (cf. 3 John).
About fifty years later (a.d. 110) Ignatius, on his way to Rome to be martyred, wrote a letter ("To the Ephesians" 1:3) to the bishop of Ephesus named Onesimus! It could have been this converted slave!

PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

- A. It shows how Paul used his apostolic authority and pastoral encouragement.
- B. It shows how Christianity made brothers and sisters out of slaves and slave owners, rich and poor! This truth would, in time, radically change the Roman Empire.
- C. It shows Paul's belief that he would be released from Roman imprisonment and return to Asia

Minor.

READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words (reading cycle #1).

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects (reading cycle #2) and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

PHILEMON

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation Phlm. 1:1-3 v. 3	Greeting v. 1a v. 1b v. 2 v. 3	Salutation v. 1a v. 1b-2 v. 3	Salutation v. 1a vv. 1b-2 v. 3	Address vv. 1-3
Philemon's Love and Faith vv. 4-7	Philemon's Love and Faith vv. 4-7	Thanksgiving vv.4-7	Philemon's Love and Faith vv. 4-7	Thanksgiving and Prayer vv. 4-7
Paul Pleads for Onesimus vv. 8-16 vv. 17-20 v. 21-22	The Plea for Onesimus vv. 8-16 Philemon's Obedience Encouraged vv. 17-22	Paul's Plea for Onesimus vv. 8-16 vv. 17-21 Concluding Hopes and Greetings v. 22 vv. 23-24 v. 25	A Request for Onesimus vv. 8-11 vv. 12-14 vv. 15-16 vv. 17-20 vv. 21-22 Final Greetings vv. 23-24 v. 25	The Request about Onesimus Phlm. 1:8-21 A Personal Request. Good Wishes v. 22 vv. 23-23 v. 25

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:1a

^{1a}, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

Philemon 1:1 "Paul" The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name.

1. a nickname describing his physical height, from a second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bowlegged, bushy eyebrowed, and had protruding eyes, which came from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*, is a possible source of the name
2. Paul's personal spiritual evaluation, he often called himself the "least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)
3. most Jews of the diaspora (Jews living outside of Palestine) were given two names at birth; one Hebrew (Saul) and one Hellenistic (Paul)

■ **"a prisoner"** The NT specifically states that Paul was in prison three times: (1) in Caesarea; (2) in Philippi; and (3) in Rome (with a possible allusion to imprisonment at Ephesus, cf. 1 Cor. 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:8). This writer assumes a Roman imprisonment in the early 60's.

Because of the loving pastoral nature of this brief letter, many commentators have assumed that Paul chose this title instead of his usual opening affirmation of his apostleship.

■ **"Christ Jesus"** The variety of the titles for Jesus used in this short letter is amazing. Notice: Christ Jesus; Phlm. 1:1; the Lord Jesus, Christ, Phlm. 1:3; the Lord Jesus, Phlm. 1:5; Christ, Phlm. 1:8; Christ Jesus, Phlm. 1:9; the Lord, and Christ, Phlm. 1:20; Christ Jesus, Phlm. 1:23; and the Lord Jesus Christ, Phlm. 1:25.

"Christ" is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew term *"messiah,"* which means "an anointed one" (see Special Topic at Col. 1:1). It implied "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders were anointed: priests, kings, and prophets. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

"Jesus" meant "YHWH saves" or "salvation is of YHWH" (cf. Matt. 1:21). It was the OT name "Joshua." "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *"hosea,"* suffixed to the covenant name for God, "YHWH" (see Special Topic at Col. 1:3).

■ **"Timothy"** His name meant "honored by God" or "honor of God." He was converted through Paul's witness on the first missionary journey to Derbe/Lystra (cf. Acts 26:1). Paul invited him to join the missionary team on the second missionary journey, possibly to replace John Mark (cf. Acts 15:36-41). He had a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5). Paul circumcised him to facilitate his work among the Jews (cf. Acts. 16:3). He became Paul's faithful representative, disciple and troubleshooter (cf. Acts 16:1-17:14; 18:5-19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil 1:2; 2:19; Gal. 1:1; Phlm. 1:4; and the two books 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy).

He is mentioned with Paul in several letters (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). This does not imply co-authorship, but Timothy's presence and greetings. Timothy may have functioned as Paul's secretary, or scribe, as did Silas, Tertius, and Tychicus.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:1b-3

^{1b}To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker, ² and to Apphia our sister, and to

Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

■ **"Philemon"** an active member of the church of Colossae. This person is only mentioned in this letter. Apparently the local church at Colossae met in his home. Paul's comments to him imply that he personally knew this man. Epaphras, not Paul, started the church in Colossae (cf. Col. 1:6-7), therefore, Paul must have met him earlier, possibly in Ephesus (Phlm. 1:10, 19). However, it is remotely possible that Paul did not know him personally (cf. Phlm. 1:5) and that Epaphras informed him about this man's ministry.

Philemon 1:2 "Apphia" This is possibly Philemon's wife, because her name appears second.

■ **"Archippus"** Some think that this was Philemon's son, but he could have been the pastor of the church that met in Philemon's home (cf. Col. 4:17) or someone else unknown to us. E. J. Goodspeed and J. Knox postulate that Archippus was the owner of Onesimus, and that Philemon was the local pastor enlisted to help encourage Archippus to have mercy on his runaway slave.

■ **"fellow-soldier"** Paul envisioned the Christian life as a military struggle (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). He uses this characterization several times (cf. Phil. 2:25; 2 Tim. 3:2).

■ **"the church"** *Ekklesia* is from two Greek words, "out of" (*ek*) and "to call" (*kalaō*). It was used in Koine Greek (200 b.c.-a.d. 200) to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town assembly (cf. Acts 19:32). The Church chose this term because it was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, written as early as 250 b.c. for the library at Alexandria, Egypt. This term translated the Hebrew term *qahal* which was used in the covenant phrase "the assembly of Israel" (cf. Num. 20:4). The NT writers asserted that they were the "divinely called out ones" who were to be the People of God in their day. They saw no radical break between the OT People of God and themselves, the NT People of God. Christians assert that the Church of Jesus Christ, not modern rabbinical Judaism, is the true interpreter and fulfillment of the OT Scriptures. See Special Topic: Church at Col. 1:18.

■ **"that meets in their home"** There were no church buildings until the third century (cf. Acts 2:40; 5:42; 20:20; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15). These "house churches" followed the Jewish pattern of local synagogues (scripture readings, prayers, songs, etc.). The Greek text is ambiguous as to which of the two men mentioned in Phlm. 1:1-2 owned the home where the church met.

Philemon 1:3 "Father" This term is not used in the sense of sexual generation or chronological sequence, but of intimate family relationship. God chose family terms to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (cf. Hosea 2-3 as passionate, faithful lover, Hosea 11 as loving father and mother). See Special Topic: Father at Col. 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:4-7

⁴I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; ⁶and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. ⁷For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Philemon 1:4 "I thank my God" It was traditional in the Greco-Roman world to begin a letter with a standard form: (1) from whom; (2) to whom; and (3) a blessing or thanksgiving. Paul followed this pattern (thanksgiving for readers, cf. Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; blessing of God, cf. 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; thanksgiving to God, cf. 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:3). See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving to God at Eph. 3:20.

■ **"making mention of you in my prayers** See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3.

Philemon 1:5 "I hear of your love" Paul did not start the church at Colossae. Apparently Epaphras had brought him information about the developing heresy at Colossae (cf. Col. 1:4) and of Philemon's ministry to the saints (cf. Phlm. 1:7).

■ **"the faith"** (cf. Col. 1:4). The Greek term (*pistis*) is translated into English in three ways: "faith," "believe," and "trust." The Greek term had three distinct connotations.

1. its OT background meant "faithfulness" or "trustworthiness," therefore, it was used of believers trusting in the trustworthiness of God
2. it was used in the NT of accepting or receiving God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ
3. it was used in the collective sense of the Christian doctrine or truth about Jesus (cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 1:3, 20)

In several passages it is difficult to determine which is meant (cf. 2 Thess. 3:3). See Special Topics: NT Faith at Col. 1:2 and OT Faith at Eph. 2:8.

■ **"toward all the saints"** This is literally "holy ones," those set apart exclusively for God's service. This is not a reference to a sinless lifestyle, but to believers' forensic (legal) position in Christ. It is always plural except in Phil. 4:21, but even there it is used in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of a family. This term reflects an OT usage for corporate Israel as a holy people (cf. Exod. 13:5; 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; and Rev. 1:6).

Although the term "saints" relates to the believers' standing in Christ, it is not incidental that the root word is "holy." Believers are called not only to salvation but to a progressive sanctification (cf. Gal. 2:15-18, 19-20). Believers are predestined to "holiness" (cf. Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4), not just heaven; to service, not privilege. See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

Philemon 1:6

NASB "that the fellowship of your faith"
NKJV, NRSV "that the sharing of your faith"
TEV "that our fellowship with you as believers"
NJB "that your fellowship in faith"

This verse has been interpreted in several senses.

1. the fellowship of believers with each other (cf. 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 2:1-5)
2. the sharing of the gospel with unbelievers (cf. Phil. 1:5)
3. the sharing of good things with others

SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA

NASB "through the knowledge of every good thing"
NKJV "by the acknowledgment of every good thing"
NRSV "when you perceive all the good that we may do"
TEV "will bring about a deeper understanding of every blessing"
NJB "may come to expression in full knowledge of all the good"

There are some questions involved in interpreting this phrase:

1. to whom does this knowledge refer-Philemon, the church in his house, Onesimus, or Paul
2. to what does this knowledge (*epignōskō*, cf. Phil. 1:10; Col. 1:9; 3:10) refer-forgiveness, slavery, apostolic authority, or the gospel?

In Paul's writings wisdom and knowledge are not separated from ethical living, but form a unified whole (cf. Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10).

NASB	"which is in you for Christ's sake"
NKJV	"which is in you in Christ Jesus"
NRSV	"that we may do for Christ"
TEV	"which we have in our life in union with Christ"
NJB	"we can do for Christ"

There are two clear options of interpretation in these translations: (1) things we do as believers for Christ or (2) things we have as believers in Christ.

Philemon 1:7 "love" Paul uses this term (*agapē*) three times in this small book. He had heard of their love and faith for Jesus and His followers (Phlm. 1:5); he had much joy and comfort in their love (Phlm. 1:7); and he appealed to this God-inspired love to motivate Philemon (Phlm. 1:9).

▣ **"hearts"** This is literally the term for "bowels" (*splagchna*, cf. Acts 1:18). This is possibly related to the OT sacrifice of these specific body parts on the altar (cf. Exod. 29:13; Lev. 3:3-4,10, 15; 4:8-9; 7:3-4; 8:16, 25; 9:10,16). The ancients located the emotions in the lower viscera or abdomen (cf. Isa. 63:15; Jer. 4:19). For Paul it relates to Christian love (cf. 2:1; 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8, 21; Col. 3:12; Philemon 1:7,12,20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:8-16

⁸Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do what is proper*, ⁹ yet for love's sake I rather appeal to *you* since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, ¹¹ who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. ¹² I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *sending my very heart*, ¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while, that you would have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Philemon 1:8

NASB	"to order you to do what is proper"
NKJV	"to command you what is fitting"
NRSV	"to command you to do your duty"
TEV	"to order you to do what should be done"
NJB	"telling you what your duty is"

This reflects Paul's apostolic authority. However, Paul preferred to use encouragement and tactfulness (Phlm. 1:9,10,17,20).

Philemon 1:9

NASB, NKJV	"Paul the aged"
NRSV	"I, Paul, do this as an old man"
TEV	"the ambassador"
NJB	"I am, Paul, an old man"

This is not a Greek manuscript problem, for all Greek manuscripts have "the aged" (*presbutēs*). Scholars have pointed out that in Koine Greek the term "the aged" and "ambassador" (*presbutēs*) may

have been spelled the same or at least often confused (cf. MSS of LXX; 2 Chr. 32:31). The English translations TEV, RSV, and NEB have "ambassador," while NJB and NIV have "an old man."

Paul lists several reasons why Philemon should honor his request.

1. Paul's apostleship (Phlm. 1:8)
2. Paul's age (Phlm. 1:9)
3. Paul's imprisonment (Phlm. 1:9)
4. Paul's ministry in Onesimus' life (Phlm. 1:10)
5. Onesimus' possible ministry to Paul (Phlm. 1:11,13)
6. Paul's love for him (Phlm. 1:12)
7. Onesimus has been changed from a slave to a brother in Christ (Phlm. 1:15-16)
8. Philemon's attitude toward Paul (Phlm. 1:17)
9. Philemon's salvation at Paul's witness (Phlm. 1:19)
10. Philemon's ministry to Paul (Phlm. 1:20)

▣ **"a prisoner of Christ Jesus"** See note at Phlm. 1:1.

Philemon 1:10 "my child" Rabbis use this phrase to describe their students, but in this context it refers to Onesimus' salvation through Paul's witness (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14-15; 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14; Gal. 4:19, 1 Thess. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; and Titus 1:4).

▣ **"in my imprisonment"** This is literally "in my bonds." It is uncertain how Onesimus met Paul in prison:

1. Onesimus was imprisoned with Paul
2. Onesimus had been sent on an errand to Paul in prison
3. he came to Paul because he knew that Philemon was a friend of his

Philemon 1:10-11 "Onesimus" The name meant "useful" or "profitable" (cf. Phlm. 1:20). Paul uses this wordplay to appeal to Philemon. This converted slave was formerly useless (*achrēstos*), but is now "useful" (*euchrētos* cf. 2 Tim. 4:11) to both Paul and Philemon.

F. F. Bruce's translation of this section in *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, is very helpful in seeing the word play:

"His name is Onesimus - profitable by name and profitable by nature. I know that in former days you found him quite unprofitable, but now, I assure you, he has learned to be true to his name - profitable to you, and profitable to me" (p. 393).

Philemon 1:12 "I have sent him back to you" This phrase had a legal connotation of "referring his case to you." This also shows that believers must face the consequences of their actions even if they were committed before salvation. It also affirmed the legal rights of slave owners (cf. Phlm. 1:14,18).

▣ **"that is, sending my very heart"** This is such a strong statement! Paul felt deeply for his converts. This surely reveals the pastoral heart of Paul, as does his tender yet firm treatment of Philemon.

Philemon 1:13 Paul was apparently a financially independent person. He often refused help from those he preached to because false teachers accused him of financial exploitation. Yet as the years went by he was able to receive help from some of the churches he ministered to. This help was in two specific ways.

1. the church of Philippi (cf. Phil. 1:5,7; 4:15) and possibly the church of Thessalonica (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9) sent him money to help with his expenses in prison
2. the church at Philippi sent a representative, Epaphroditus, to help Paul, (cf. Phil. 2:25)

In a similar sense Paul saw Onesimus as a gift from Philemon and the church at Colossae.

Philemon 1:14 God looks at the heart, the motives, first (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24). Paul wanted Philemon to be blessed for his generosity and love for Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 8-9), not just for his obedience to Paul's command (cf. Phlm. 1:8).

Philemon 1:15 "For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while" This is a passive voice verb. This phrase can be understood in two ways: (1) in the sense of God's predestined plan (NASB marginal has the Scriptural parallel of Gen 45:5,8) or (2) that God used the inappropriate behavior of Onesimus as an opportunity for his salvation and for Philemon's service to Christ and friendship with Paul (cf. Phlm. 1:16).

Philemon 1:16 "no longer as a slave. . . a beloved brother" Christianity did not attack slavery openly (cf. Eph. 6:5-9), but destroyed it through its view of the dignity and worth of human beings (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). See Special Topic: Paul's Admonitions to Slaves at Eph. 6:5.

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "both in the flesh and in the Lord"

TEV "both as a slave and as a brother in the Lord"

NJB "both on the natural plane and in the Lord"

This phrase states that the benefit of Onesimus' return was on two planes, one natural (physical) and one supernatural (spiritual). Philemon would benefit as a man and a Christian.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:17-20

¹⁷If then you regard me a partner, accept him as *you would me*. ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

Philemon 1:17-18 "if" There are two first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Philemon was Paul's friend and Onesimus did wrong him (cf. Phlm. 1:18).

■ **"a partner"** This is the term *koinōnus*, which is a form of the term *koinōnia* "to share in common with," "to be associated with" or "to be party to." Paul uses it to refer to a financial contribution (cf. Phil. 4:15). Therefore it may be a wordplay relating to Paul's friendship (Phlm. 1:19) and Onesimus' bill (Phlm. 1:17).

■ **"accept him as you would me"** Paul's statement may have derived from Jesus' words in Matt. 25:44-45 or Paul's experience with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:4). By persecuting Christians, Paul was persecuting Christ. By accepting Onesimus, Philemon was accepting Paul. True love is wonderfully corporate and reciprocal. We show our love for God by how we love one another (cf. 1 John 2:9,11; 4:20).

Philemon 1:18 The implication of the grammar of verse 18 is that Onesimus did steal from Philemon (first class conditional sentence), that Onesimus did owe Philemon (present active indicative), and that Paul pled with Philemon to put the charge to Paul's account (present active imperative).

Philemon 1:19 "I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand" Apparently Paul used scribes to write for him (cf. Tertius in Rom. 16:22), probably because of his eye problems (cf. Gal. 4:15; 6:11), possibly caused at his conversion experience (cf. Acts 9:8,18; 22:11; 26:13). However there may have been some forged letters claiming to be written by Paul which circulated among the churches (cf. 2 Thess. 3:17). Therefore, Paul took the pen and wrote the last few verses himself (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philemon 1:19).

■ **"you owe to me even your own self as well"** This strongly implies that Paul led Philemon to faith in Christ. When and where is uncertain, for Paul did not start the church at Colossae. The best guess is that Philemon, like Epaphras, was saved during Paul's two-year revival at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10,20).

Philemon 1:20 This verse is similar to Rom. 1:12. How we live as Christians encourages and refreshes other believers.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:21

²¹ Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

Philemon 1:21 This was Paul's tactful way of assuring Philemon's compliance.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:22

²² At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.

Philemon 1:22 "prepare me a lodging" Paul was expecting to be released (cf. Phil. 1:25; 2:24). The Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) record this fourth missionary journey, while Acts ends with Paul still in prison after his third missionary journey.

It is surprising that Philemon is thought to be grouped with Colossians and Ephesians, occurring early in Paul's imprisonment. In these books, Paul is uncertain of the outcome of his trial. In Philippians, which was written towards the end of Paul's imprisonment, he expected to be released. Therefore, this comment in Phlm. 1:22 may have been (1) a way to remind Philemon that he would have to face Paul personally-and possibly soon-about his request to forgive and accept Onesimus or (2) an idiom for hospitality.

■ **"through your prayers"** Paul believed in the power of prayer (cf. Eph. 6:18-19). He also practiced what he preached (note the different Greek terms used: *deomai*, 2 Cor. 5:20; 8:4; 1 Thess. 3:10; *proseuchomai*, Acts 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:3,9; 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:17,25; 2 Thess. 1:11; 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:8; *proseuchē*, Acts 16:13,16; Rom. 1:9; 12:12; 15:30; 1 Cor. 7:5; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2,12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5; Philemon 4,22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:23-24

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

Philemon 1:23-25 This is very similar to the close of Colossians. These books (Philemon and Colossians) issue from the same historical setting.

Philemon 1:23 "Epaphras" He was the founder of three of the churches (Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) in the Lycus River Valley (cf. Col. 4:12-13; Philemon 1:23). He was probably converted during Paul's revival at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). His name was a shortened form of Epaphroditus, which was etymologically related to the goddess Aphrodite. Another man by this same name was mentioned in Phil. 2:25; 4:18. However, he was from a different geographical area.

Philemon 1:24 "Mark" He was also known as John Mark. His home may have been the site of the Lord's Supper and Upper Room appearances (cf. Acts 12:12). He was Barnabas' cousin. He was the writer of the Gospel of Mark and a scribe for Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13). He was the cause of a great fight between Barnabas and Paul (cf. Acts 12:25; 13:5; 15:36-39). Later, however, Paul forgave and affirmed him (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).

■ **"Demas"** Demas was one of Paul's confidants and co-workers. He was mentioned along with Epaphras, Luke, Aristarchus, and Mark in Col. 4:10-12. 2 Timothy 4:9 lists two of these same co-workers, Luke and Mark. Scripture states that "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me." Paul had

many helpers. Some, such as Luke, were always faithful. Others, such as John Mark, were once unfaithful but returned to ministry. Demas apparently left Paul's service for some unnamed temptation or opportunity. There is no implication that he left Christ.

■ **"Luke"** He was Paul's faithful traveling friend, co-worker, and physician (cf. Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11). He was with Paul during many of his preaching stops in Acts. This is confirmed by the "we" statements in Acts (cf. Acts 16:11,16; 20:6,7,13; 21:1,5, 7,10,12,15,17,25; 27:1,18,26,27). Luke may have been the "man of Macedonia" in Acts 16:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILEMON 1:25

²⁵The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Philemon 1:25 This is an example of a typical Pauline closing blessing. Note that the phrase "be with your spirit" is a good example of the small "s" (spirit) which is used of man's spirit, (or self, cf. Acts 7:59; 2 Tim. 4:22) not the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23). However, in many instances in the NT, it refers to man's spirit which is energized by the Holy Spirit. This is probably the implication here.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Where did the early church meet?
2. To whom was this letter addressed?
3. How does this letter reveal the pastoral techniques of Paul?
4. How does this book relate to the issue of slavery?
5. Why is Phlm. 1:22 surprising?
6. Why is the term "spirit" in small letters?

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. This is one of Paul's most informal letters. With this church he did not feel the need to assert his Apostolic authority. His overflowing love for them is obvious. He even allowed them to send him money (cf. Phil. 1:5,7; 4:15), which was very unusual for him.
- B. Paul is imprisoned, yet he uses the term for joy (noun and verb) over sixteen times. His peace and hope were not based on circumstances.
- C. There is an element of false teaching present in the church (cf. Phil. 3:2, 18-19). These heretics seem to be similar to those in the churches of Galatia, who were called Judaizers. They insisted that one had to become a Jew before one could be a Christian.
- D. This letter includes an example of an early Christian hymn, creed, or liturgical poem (cf. Phil. 2:6-11). It is one of the finest Christological passages in the entire New Testament (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-20; Heb. 1:2-3). Paul uses it as an example of Christ's humility to be imitated by every believer (cf. Phil. 2:1-5), not primarily in a doctrinal sense.
- E. In a book of 104 verses, Jesus' name or title occurs 51 times. It is obvious who is central in Paul's heart, mind, and theology.

PHILIPPI AND MACEDONIA

- A. The city of Philippi
 1. In 356 b.c. it was captured and enlarged by Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father. The original Thracian village was named *Krenides* (springs). The city was important because of the gold ore in the region.
 2. At the battle of Pydna in 168 b.c. the region became a Roman Province and later one of four in Macedonia.
 3. In 42 b.c., Brutus and Cassius (who advocated a Republican form of government) fought Antony and Octavian (who advocated an Imperial form of government) near Philippi, over governmental reform in Rome. After that battle, Antony settled some of his victorious veterans here.
 4. In 31 b.c., after the battle of Actium in which Octavian defeated Antony, Antony's supporters in Rome were deposed and exiled here.
 5. In 31 b.c. Philippi became a Roman Colony (cf. Acts 16:12). The townspeople were declared citizens of Rome. Latin was spoken and the city became like a little Rome. It was located on the Ignatian Way, the major east-to-west Roman highway. The special privileges they enjoyed as Roman citizens were:
 - a. no poll taxes and no land taxes
 - b. the right to buy and sell property
 - c. all protection and rights of Roman law
 - d. special local governmental leaders (praetors and lictors)
- B. The gospel comes to Philippi
 1. On Paul's second missionary journey he wanted to turn north to enter north central Asia (modern Turkey, biblical Bithynia). Instead, in a vision he saw a man (possibly Luke) of

Macedonia (northern Greece) calling to him to come and help them (Acts 16:6-10). By this vision the Spirit directed Paul to Europe.

2. Paul was accompanied by his helpers

a. Silas (Silvanus)

- (1) Silas was a leader from the Jerusalem church and a prophet who replaced Barnabas as Paul's missionary co-worker (cf. Acts 15:15:22,32; 36-41).
- (2) Silas and Paul were both imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16:16-26).
- (3) Paul always called him Silvanus (cf. 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).
- (4) It is possible that Silas later became a companion of Peter, as John Mark did (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12).

b. Timothy

- (1) He was a convert from Paul's first missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15)
- (2) His grandmother and mother were Jewish, but his father was Greek (cf. Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5).
- (3) Because he was well spoken of by the brothers (cf. Acts 16:2) and Paul saw the gifts of ministry in him (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), he chose him as a helper to replace John Mark (cf. Acts 13:13).
- (4) Paul circumcised Timothy so that he would be accepted by the Jews (cf. Acts 16:3).
- (5) Timothy became Paul's trusted apostolic representative (cf. Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 3:2,6; 2 Cor. 1:1,19).

c. Luke

- (1) He was the anonymous, but probable, author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts was Luke.
- (2) He was apparently a Gentile physician (cf. Col. 4:14). Some think the term "physician" meant "highly educated." It is certainly true that he was informed in several technical areas besides medicine, such as sailing. However, Jesus used this same Greek term for "physician" (cf. Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17; 5:26; Luke 4:23; 5:31)
- (3) He was Paul's traveling companion (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 1:24).
- (4) It is interesting that the "we" sections of Acts begin and end at Philippi. In *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (p. 219), F. F. Bruce suggests that Luke stayed on at Philippi to help the new converts and collect the Gentile relief fund for the Jerusalem church.
- (5) Luke may have been, in a sense, Paul's personal physician. Paul had several physical problems due to his conversion (cf. Acts 9:3,9), his ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-29) and his special weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10).

3. Paul returned to Philippi on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 20:1-3,6). He had sent Silas and Timothy earlier (cf. Acts 19:19-24; Phil. 2:19-24).

C. Philippi as a Roman Colony (cf. Acts 16:12)

1. Paul used the status of this city as a Roman colony in his terminology

- a. "praetorian guard," Phil. 1:13
- b. "citizenship," 3:20 (Acts 16:22-34, 35-40)
- c. "Caesar's household," Phil. 4:22

2. The city was populated by retired and exiled Roman soldiers. In many ways it was "a little Rome." The fads of Rome could be seen on the streets of Philippi (cf. Acts 26:21).

3. Both Paul (Acts 22:25; 26:32) and Silas (Acts 16:37) were Roman citizens, which allowed them legal rights and social standing.

D. The Province of Macedonia

1. Women had more social freedom and economic opportunities in Macedonia than anywhere in

the Roman Empire.

2. This is illustrated by
 - a. presence of many women worshiping by the river outside Philippi (cf. Acts 16:13)
 - b. the business woman Lydia (cf. Acts 16:14)
 - c. women co-workers in the gospel (cf. Phil. 4:2-3)
 - d. several leading women mentioned at Thessalonica (also in Macedonia, cf. Acts 17:4).

AUTHOR

- A. This highly personal letter has always been attributed to Paul. The first person pronouns "I" and "my" appear 51 times.
- B. It is quoted or alluded to by early authors (for a complete list of citations see H. C. G. Moule, *Studies in Philippians*, pp. 20-21, published by Kregel):
 1. Clement of Rome in *I Clement*, written to the Corinthian church about a.d. 95
 2. Ignatius, in *Letters of Ignatius*, about a.d. 110
 3. Polycarp, the Apostle John's companion, in *Letter to the Philippians*, about a.d. 110
 4. a Marcionite prologue (a follower of the heretic Marcion) to Paul's letter to the Philippians about a.d. 170
 5. Irenaeus, about a.d. 180
 6. Clement of Alexandria, about a.d. 190
 7. Tertullian of Carthage, about a.d. 210
- C. Although Timothy is mentioned along with Paul in Phil. 1:1, he was a co-worker, not a co-author (although he may have acted as a scribe for Paul from time to time).

DATE

- A. The date is contingent on where Paul was imprisoned (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23)
 1. Philippi, Acts 16:23-40
 2. Ephesus, 1 Cor. 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:8
 3. Jerusalem/Caesarea, Acts 21:32-33:30
 4. Rome, Acts 28:30 (stated in Marcionite Prologue to Philippians)
- B. Most scholars believe that a Roman imprisonment fits the context of Paul's life and Acts best. If so, a date in the early 60's seems most likely.
- C. This book is known as one of Paul's "prison epistles" (Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians). From internal considerations it appears that Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon were written early during Paul's Roman imprisonment and taken together to Asia Minor by Tychicus (Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21). Philippians has a different tone. Paul seemed confident he would be released from prison (Phil. 1:17-26) and would get to visit them (2:24).

This structure also provides a period of time for: (1) Paul's influence to have reached the Imperial soldiers (cf. Phil. 1:13; Acts 28:16) and servants (cf. Phil. 4:22) and (2) several trips between Paul and messengers from the church at Philippi.

PURPOSE(S) OF THE LETTER

- A. To communicate Paul's thanksgiving to this loving church that helped him monetarily several times and even sent a helper, Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 1:3-11; 2:19-30; 4:10-20). The letter also may have been written to explain Epaphroditus' early return home while Paul was still in prison.

- B. To encourage the Philippians concerning his circumstances. The gospel was actually progressing in prison. Paul was bound, but the gospel was unbound!
- C. To encourage the Philippians amidst the false teachings which were very similar to the Judaizers of Galatians. These heretics demanded that new converts become Jewish first and then Christian (cf. Acts 15).
However because the list of sins in Phil. 3:19 fits the Greek false teachers (Gnostics) more than the Jewish, the identity of the heretics is uncertain. It is possible that some believers had reverted to their previous pagan lifestyle.
- D. To encourage the Philippian believers to joy even amidst internal and external persecution. Paul's joy was not dependent on circumstances but on his faith in Christ.
This joy amidst problems was not a Stoic resignation, but a Christian worldview and a constant struggle. Paul drew metaphors from several areas of life to communicate the tension of the Christian life.
1. athletic (cf. Phil. 3:12,14; 4:3)
 2. military (cf. Phil. 1:7,12,15,16,17,22,28,30);
 3. commercial (cf. Phil. 3:7,8; 4:15,17,18)

CONTEXT OUTLINE

- A. It is difficult to outline Philippians because it is so personal and informal. Paul was talking to friends and trusted co-workers in Christ. His heart overflowed before his mind could organize the thoughts. In wonderfully transparent ways this book reveals the heart of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul felt "joy" in Christ, in any and all circumstances and in service to the gospel!
- B. Literary Units
1. a typical Pauline introduction, Phil. 1:1-2
 - a. greeting
 - (1) from Paul (and Timothy) Phil. 1:1
 - (2) to saints at Philippi (including overseers and deacons), Phil. 1:1
 - (3) Paul's stylized prayer, Phil. 1:2
 - b. prayer, Phil. 1:3-11:
 - (1) co-workers in the gospel from the first, Phil. 1:5
 - (2) supporters of Paul's ministry, Phil. 1:7
 - (3) Paul's request for:
 - (a) abundant love, Phil. 1:9
 - (b) abundant knowledge, Phil. 1:9
 - (c) abundant discernment, Phil. 1:9
 - (d) abundant holiness, Phil. 1:10
 2. Paul's concern for them over their concern for him, in prison, Phil. 1:12-26
 - a. God had used his time in prison to spread the gospel
 - (1) to the Imperial guard, Phil. 1:13
 - (2) to others of Caesar's house, Phil. 1:13; 4:22
 - (3) Paul's imprisonment also emboldened preachers, Phil. 1:14-18
 - b. Paul's confidence for release because of
 - (1) their prayers, Phil. 1:19
 - (2) Holy Spirit, Phil. 1:19
 - c. Paul's confidence whether in release or in death, Phil. 1:20-26
 3. Paul's encouragement, Phil. 1:27-2:18
 - a. call to Christlike unity amidst persecution, Phil. 1:27-30
 - b. live in Christlike selflessness, Phil. 2:1-4

- c. Christ our example, Phil. 2:5-11
- d. in light of Christ's example to live in peace and unity, Phil. 2:12-18
- 4. Paul's plans related to Philippi, Phil. 2:19-30
 - a. send Timothy, Phil. 2:19-24
 - b. return Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:25-30
- 5. stand firm against false teachers, Phil. 1:27; 4:1
 - a. the dogs, the false circumcisers, the Judaizers (Acts 15, Galatians), Phil. 3:1-4
 - b. Paul's Jewish heritage
 - (1) in light of the false teachers, Phil. 3:5-6
 - (2) in light of Christ, Phil. 3:7-16
 - c. Paul's grief for them, Phil. 3:17-21
- 6. Paul repeats his admonitions
 - a. unity, Phil. 4:1-3
 - b. Christlike characteristics, Phil. 4:4-9
- 7. Paul repeats his gratitude for the Philippians' help
 - a. their recent gift, Phil. 4:10-14
 - b. their previous gift, Phil. 4:15-20 (1:5)
- 8. a typical Pauline closing, Phil. 4:21-23

READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words (reading cycle #1).

- 1. Theme of entire book
- 2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects (reading cycle #2) and express the subject in a single sentence.

- 1. Subject of first literary unit
- 2. Subject of second literary unit
- 3. Subject of third literary unit
- 4. Subject of fourth literary unit
- 5. Etc.

PHILIPPIANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV ⁴	NJB
Salutation	Greeting	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1a 1:1b 1:2	1:1a 1:1b 1:2	1:1-2
Paul's Prayer for the Philippians	Thankfulness and Prayer	Thanksgiving	Paul's Prayer for His Readers	Thanksgiving and Prayer
1:3-11	1:3-11	1:3-8 1:9-11	1:3-8 1:9-11	1:3-11
To Me to Live Is Christ	Christ is Preached	Paul's Present Circumstances	To Live Is Christ	Paul's Own Circumstances
1:12-14	1:12-18	1:12-14	1:12-14	1:12-26
1:15-26		1:15-18a 1:18b-26	1:15-17 1:18-26	
	To live is Christ			
	1:19-26			
	Striving and Suffering for Christ			Fight for the Faith
1:27-30	1:27-30	1:27-30	1:27-30	1:27-30

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five

modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Phil 1:1-2 forms a general introduction to the whole letter. The introduction is typically Pauline except for the fact that there is no emphasis on his apostleship. This church and Paul had a wonderful relationship. He did not need to invoke his apostolic authority. This church apparently sent Paul financial help from time to time (cf. Phil. 1:5,7; 4:15). The only other Pauline church from which we know he accepted help was Thessalonica (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9).
- B. Greek letters of the first century typically opened with a prayer of thanksgiving. Phil. 1:3-8 is Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the Philippian church. They incorporate the main truths of Christianity and set the agenda for the letter.
- C. This book has an unusual number of compounds with *syn* (Greek "*sun*") which meant "joint participation with":
1. Phil. 1:7; 4:14 *syn* + fellowship (*koinōnia*, same root, Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14,16)
 2. Phil. 1:27 *syn* + strive (*athleō* in Phil. 4:3 a proper name)
 3. Phil. 2:2 *syn* + soul (*psuchē*, same sense in Phil. 1:27)
 4. Phil. 2:17-18 *syn* + rejoice (*chairō*)
 5. Phil. 2:25; 4:3 *syn* + worker (*ergon*, cf Rom. 16:3,9,21; 2 Cor. 1:24)
 6. Phil. 2:25 *syn* + soldier (*stratiōtē*, cf. Philemon 1:2)
 7. Phil. 3:10 *syn* + form (*morphē*)
 8. Phil. 3:17 *syn* + initiator (*animeomai*, same root in 1 Cor. 4:16)
- D. Phil. 1:9-11 is Paul's prayer for the spiritual growth and maturity of the church. These verses focus on the Philippians' Christlike lifestyle, while verses 3-8 focus on their position in Christ thus combining the two aspects of salvation: our position in Christ (forensic justification and positional sanctification) and our possessing of that position in Christlikeness (progressive sanctification).
- E. There are several hints that Paul expected to be released from prison in Phil. 1:17-26:
1. the term "deliverance" in Phil. 1:19
 2. the first class conditional sentence of Phil. 1:22
 3. Paul's statement in Phil. 1:25
 4. the ambiguous phrasing of Phil. 1:26

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2

¹Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:1 "Paul" The Greek name "Paul" meant "little." There have been several theories about the origin of his name.

1. a nickname describing his physical height, the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bowlegged, bushy eyebrowed and had protruding eyes is a possible physical description of Paul. This came from a second century non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*.
2. Paul's personal spiritual evaluation, passages like 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15, where he calls himself "the least of the saints" (probably because he persecuted the Church, Acts 9:1-2). Some have seen this sense of "leastness" as the origin of this self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he makes a major emphasis on his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this option is unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).
3. parental, most Jews of the diaspora (Jews living outside Palestine) were given two names at birth. Paul's Hebrew name was Saul and his Greek name was Paul.

■ **"Timothy"** His name means "honored by God" or "honorer of God." He was converted on Paul's first missionary journey to Derbe/Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1). Paul invited him to join the missionary team on the second missionary journey, possibly to replace John Mark. He had a Jewish mother (cf. Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:1). Paul circumcised him in order to help with his work among Jews (cf. Acts 16:3). He became Paul's faithful apostolic representative and troubleshooter (cf. Acts 16:1-17:14; 18:5-19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1,19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Gal. 1:1; Philemon 1:4; and two books, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. Paul sent him specifically to Philippi to help the church (cf. Acts 19:22; Phil. 2:19-24).

■ **"bond servants"** This refers to

1. an OT honorific title in relation to YHWH (cf. Moses, Exod. 14:31; Joshua, Judg. 2:8; the prophets, Ezra 9:11; Jer. 7:25; prophets, Dan. 9:6; Amos 3:7; and David, Ps. 78:70)
2. an emphasis on Jesus as Lord (*kurios*) and believers as His servants (*doulos*)

■ **"to all the saints"** This is literally "holy ones" (*hagioi*), those set apart exclusively for God's service. This is not a reference to a sinless lifestyle, but the believers' forensic (legal) position in Christ. It is always plural except in Phil. 4:21, but even there it is used in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of a family. This term reflects an OT usage for corporate Israel as a holy people (cf. Exod. 13:5; 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; and Rev. 1:6).

Although the term "saints" relates to the believers' standing in Christ, it is not incidental that the root word is "holy" (*hagios*). Believers are called not only to salvation, but to a progressive sanctification. Believers are predestined to "holiness" (*hagiasmos*, cf. Eph. 1:4), not just heaven; to service, not privilege. See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

■ **"in Christ Jesus"** This is a locative (of sphere). This is Paul's favorite description for believers. It speaks of the necessary atmosphere or environment in which Christians live (cf. Acts 17:28). Theologically it is parallel to John's "abide in Him" (cf. John 15).

This construction is often associated with an intimate fellowship with Christ. It refers to the believer's theological position, and the believer's subjective experience (cf. Rom. 3:24; 4:17; 8:39; 15:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 2:17; Eph. 1:4,7; Phil. 1:13; 2:1,5; 4:7,13). In some passages "in Christ" is almost synonymous with "in the church" (cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 1:22; 3:28; Eph. 3:6; Col. 1:2). To illustrate Paul's use of this term notice Eph. 1:3-14: (1) in Christ, Phil. 1:3,10,12; (2) in Him, Phil. 1:4,7,10,13 [twice]; (3) in the Beloved, Phil. 1:6.

■ **"at Philippi"** This was a Roman colony (see introduction).

NASB	"overseers"
NKJV, NRSV	"bishops"
TEV	"church leaders"
NJB	"presiding elders"

The titles (1) "pastor," (2) "elder," (3) "bishop," or (4) "overseer" all refer to the same function in the local church (cf. Acts 20:17, 28 and Titus 1:5,7). The term "overseers" (*episkopoi*) had a Greek city-state background, while "elders" (*presbuteroi*) had a Jewish background. It is also possible that "overseer" also had a Jewish background from the Dead Sea Scroll's use of *mebaqqerim* (1QS 6:11,20). Also notice the plural (cf. Acts 20:17; Eph. 4:21). Philippi had one church with multiple leaders.

The tendency to make an administrative (polity) distinction between these terms caused some Greek manuscript variations in Phil. 1:1; MSS B³, D^c and K change "with (*syn*) bishops (*episcopois*)" into "fellow bishops" (*synepiscopois*).

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV, NJB "deacons"
TEV "helpers"

This is the Greek term for household servants (*diakonoi*). Its original etymology was "to raise dust by cleaning." It was a general term for ministry used of Jesus in Mark 10:43-45, for the Apostles in Acts 1:17 and for all spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:5. This text supports two leadership functions in the local church, although older women (widows' roles) are also mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:11. These terms were originally functions but became titles and offices very quickly (cf. I Clement 42 and Ignatius' *Letter to Tralles*, 3:1 and *Letter to Smyrna*, 8:1). Ignatius of Antioch (early second century) began the Catholic tradition of using the term "Bishop" (overseer) as one who was superior to other local leaders.

The NT reflects all three forms of church polity:

1. the episcopal system (apostles)
2. the presbyterian system (elders)
3. the congregational model

All three can be seen in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. The form is not as crucial as the spirituality of the leaders (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13)! The gaining and maintaining of power tends to corrupt all it touches.

1:2 "grace" This Greek word (*charis*) is similar to the regular Greek opening "greetings" (*charein*, cf. James 1:1). Paul made the traditional Greek epistolary opening uniquely Christian. The absence of any reference to Paul's apostleship is significant. Most of his letters start by asserting his apostolic authority (cf. Rom.; I and 2 Cor.; Gal.; Eph.; Col.; I and 2 Tim. and Titus). Paul had a wonderful relationship with this local church.

▣ **"and peace"** This may reflect the Hebrew term *Shalom*. Paul may have combined a Greek and Hebrew greeting as a way to recognize these two groups within the church.

Some assert that there is a theological significance to Paul's use of grace before peace. This is certainly true, but this is not a theological statement but an opening greeting. See Special Topic at Col. 1:20.

▣ **"from God our Father"** Jesus taught believers to call YHWH by the intimate familial title, Father (cf. Matt. 6:9). This totally changes the way one looks at Deity (cf. Hosea 11). The concept of "God" brings connotations of transcendence while "Father" adds a note of immanence, even family intimacy! See Special Topic at Col. 1:2.

▣ **"Lord Jesus Christ"** This full designation emphasizes Jesus' deity (Lord, like YHWH), humanity (His human name), and title (Messiah, the anointed one). This full designation is linked grammatically to "God our Father" with only one preposition for both. This was one way that NT authors asserted Jesus' deity and equality. There is only one divine essence, but three personal manifestations. See full note at Col. 1:1 and Eph. 1:1-2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always offering prayer with joy in my every

prayer for you all, ⁵in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

1:3 "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you," This "remembrance" can refer to (1) their monetary gifts to Paul; the Greek preposition "*epi*" can express cause or thanks (cf. James Moffatt's translation and Phil. 1:5, 7) or (2) Paul's normal opening emphasis on "remember," as in Rom. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 3:6; Philemon 1:4.

1:4 "always offering prayer with joy" Joy is a recurrent emphasis in the book (*chara*, cf. Phil. 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1); "rejoice" (*chairō*, cf. Phil. 1:18; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10); "rejoice with" (*sunchairō*, cf. Phil. 2:17, 18). This is even more significant in light of Paul's being imprisoned and facing the prospect of death.

■ **"for you all"** The terms "all," "always," and "every" are characteristic of Philippians (cf. Phil. 1:3,4,7,8,25; 2:17; 4:4,5,6,8,13,21). They may relate historically and theologically to the divisions caused by Greek false teachers or Jewish exclusivism.

1:5

NASB	"your participation in the gospel"
NKJV	"your fellowship in the gospel"
NRSV	"your sharing in the gospel"
TEV	"the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel"
NJB	"your partnership in the gospel"

This key term (*koinōnia*) means

1. "joint participation in"
2. "fellowship in" (cf. Phil. 4:15)
3. an idiom for giving money (cf. Phil. 4:15; Rom. 12:13; 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 6:18), therefore, it may refer to this church's monetary gift to Paul (cf. Phil. 1:7; 4:10,14-18)

See Special Topic at Phil. 2:1.

■ **"from the first day until now"** This relates to Acts 16:12-40. This phrase tends to define the previous phrase as referring to their participation in the gospel ministry rather than to a financial gift.

1:6 "I am confident" This is a perfect active participle from the root "to persuade," meaning "I have been and continue to be certain."

■ **"He who began a good work in you"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) participle. God (*Theos*) is not in the text but He is assumed (cf. Rom. 8:11; Gal. 1:6, 15 and 1 Thess. 5:24). The middle voice emphasizes the subject's participation in the action of the verb. However, the form is deponent, which means that this term did not have an active form in Paul's day, therefore, the middle may function as an active voice. There must be a theological balance between God's initiating love and mankind's initial and continuing faith response. It could refer to

1. the beginning of the church

2. the beginning of their participation in the gospel
3. the beginning of their personal salvation

NASB	"will perfect it"
NKJV	"will complete it"
NRSV	"will bring it to completion"
TEV	"will carry it on until it is finished"
NJB	"will go on completing it"

This is a Future active indicative, which can refer to the certainty of the event. Believers live in the tension between the "already" and "the not yet" of the Kingdom of God. Full and complete kingdom benefits are future, while citizenship and status are present. Believers live in the overlapping of the two Jewish ages. The new age has arrived (Bethlehem-Pentecost) but the old age remains (fallen nature both in the physical creation and in fallen mankind).

■ **"the day of Jesus Christ"** The reference to the Second Coming is a common element of Paul's opening words in his letters (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7,8; 2 Cor. 1:10; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:10 and 2 Thess. 1:4ff). This eschatological event appears in Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16 also.

The eschatological emphasis of a special coming day when humans will meet Jesus (as Savior or Judge) goes by several designations in Paul's writings:

1. "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8)
2. "the day of the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2)
3. "the day of the Lord Jesus" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14)
4. "the day of Jesus Christ" (cf. Phil. 1:6)
5. "the day of Christ" (cf. Phil 1:10; 2:16)
6. "His day (Son of Man)" (cf. Luke 17:24)
7. "the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (cf. Luke 17:30)
8. "the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7)
9. "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7)
10. "in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19)

In the OT the writers saw two ages, an evil age and a coming age of righteousness, the age of the Spirit (see Special Topic at Eph. 1:21). God would intervene in history through His Messiah to set up this new age. This event was known as the day of the Lord. Notice that NT writers attribute this to Christ. His first coming, the Incarnation, was foretold in many OT texts. The Jews did not expect a divine person, just a divine intervention. The two comings of the Messiah, one as Suffering Servant and Savior, one as Judge and Lord, were not obvious to OT people.

■ **"He who began. . .will perfect it"** Both the terms "began" and "perfect" were technical terms for the beginning and ending of a sacrifice (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

1:7

NASB, NKJV	"I have you in my heart"
NRSV	"You hold me in your heart"
TEV	"you are always in my heart"
NJB	"you have a place in my heart"

The Greek phrase is ambiguous. It can refer to Paul's love for them (NASB, NKJV, TEV, NKJV) or their love for Paul (NRSV). See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"the defense and confirmation of the gospel"
TEV	"defend the gospel and establish it firmly"
NJB	"defending and establishing the gospel"

These were technical terms for a "legal defense." The first term is *apologia* (cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16; 2 Tim. 4:16), the second term is *bebaiōsis*, (cf. Heb. 6:16 and James Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources*, p. 108, which says it was used "to guarantee legally"). This could have referred to Paul's appearance before (1) Nero or other governmental leaders or (2) his preaching of the gospel.

■ **"you all are partakers of grace with me"** This is a compound term with "syn" and "koinonia." It showed Paul's feelings of unity with these believers. This book has an unusual number of compounds with "syn," which meant "joint participation with":

1. Phil. 1:7; 4:14 *syn* + fellowship (*koinonia*)
2. Phil. 1:27 *syn* + cooperation
3. Phil. 2:2 *syn* + soul or mind
4. Phil. 2:17-18 *syn* + rejoice
5. Phil. 2:25; 4:3 *syn* + worker
6. Phil. 2:25 *syn* + soldier
7. Phil. 3:10 *syn* + form
8. Phil. 3:17 *syn* + initiator
9. Phil. 4:3 *syn* + laborer (or proper name)

The different forms of the word for "fellowship with" (*koinōnia*) appear often also (cf. Phil. 1:5,7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14,16). Paul felt one with the church in soul and ministry.

1:8 "For God is my witness" Paul is making an oath. This was a common technique of asserting his veracity (cf. Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10).

■ **"how I long for you all"** Paul uses this term to describe his strong desire to be with these friends (cf. Phil. 4:1; Rom. 1:11; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4).

■ **"with the affection of Christ"** The KJV translates this phrase as "the bowels of Christ." This is possibly related to the OT sacrifice of the lower internal organs (which the Canaanites ate) on the altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 29:13; Lev. 3:3-4,10, 15; 4:8-9; 7:3-4; 8:16, 25; 9:10,16). The ancients located the emotions in the lower viscera or abdomen (cf. Isa. 63:15; Jer. 4:19). For Paul it is related to love (cf. Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8,21; Col. 3:12; Philemon 7,12,20).

1:9-11 This is Paul's prayer on behalf of the church. These verses focus on the believers' Christlike lifestyle, while Phil. 1:3-8 focuses on their position in Christ. This combines the two aspects of salvation: our position in Christ (forensic justification and positional sanctification) and our possessing of that position in Christlikeness (progressive sanctification). Phil. 1:9-11 is one sentence in Greek.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

1:9 "your love may abound still more and more" This is present active subjunctive which emphasized his prayer that their love would keep growing (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12). Love is the evidence and sign of a true believer (cf. 1 Cor. 13; 1 John 4:7-20). See Special Topic: Abound (*Perisseuō*) at Eph. 1:8.

NASB	"real knowledge and all discernment"
NKJV	"knowledge and all discernment"
NRSV	"knowledge and full insight"
TEV	"true knowledge and perfect judgment"
NJB	"the knowledge and complete understanding"

Both of these requests involve full spiritual insight which leads to Christlikeness (cf. Col. 1:9). The first, *epignōksō*, is usually used in the NT for the knowledge needed for salvation (both a true message to be

believed and a person to be welcomed). The second (*aisthēsis*) was more practically oriented and emphasized lifestyle choices (cf. Phil. 2:15). Christian maturity involves all three elements:

1. correct doctrine (cf. 1 John 4:1-6)
2. personal relationship (cf. John 1:12; 3:16)
3. godly lifestyle (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:6)

It also requires perseverance (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:11-13; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).

1:10 "so that you may approve" This was a metallurgical term (*dokimazaō*). It was used for testing the genuineness of coins or precious metals. It came to have the connotation of "test with a view toward approval" (cf. Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 16:3; 1 Thess. 2:4). See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing and Their Connotations at Phil. 2:22.

NASB, NKJV "the things that are excellent"
NRSV, TEV "what is best"
NJB "true discernment"

Literally this is "things that really count." This same phrase is in Rom. 2:18.

NASB, NKJV "sincere"
NRSV "pure"
TEV "free from impurity"
NJB "innocent"

This is a compound term from "sunshine" (*eilē*) and "judge" (*krinō*). It literally meant "tested in the light." It came to have the metaphorical extension of unmixed and, therefore, (1) sincere (cf. 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:1) or (2) "morally pure" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12).

NASB, NRSV "blameless"
NKJV "without offense"
TEV "free from. . .blame"
NJB "free of any trace of guilt"

This is literally, "without offense" or "not causing another to stumble" (similar to 2 Cor. 8:16). The term means a life without blame (cf. Acts 24:16; 1 Cor. 10:32).

This concept of blame refers to OT guilt (cf. Gen. 44:10; Jos. 2:17; Jdgs. 15:3). This guiltlessness is referred to several times in Philippians (cf. Phil. 2:15; 3:6). Believers are responsible for their brothers in Christ as well as being a positive witness (lifestyle and verbal) to unbelievers (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2,7).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH](#)

■ **"until the day of Christ"** See Special Topic: NT Terms for Christ's Return at Col. 3:4.

1:11 "having been filled" This is a Perfect passive participle. The concept of "filling" is connected to the power of God, the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18). He produces Christlikeness in those who believe and cooperate with Him, which is the goal of salvation (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19).

NASB "the fruit of righteousness"
NKJV "the fruits of righteousness"
NRSV "the harvest of righteousness"
TEV "the truly good qualities"
NJB "the fruits of uprightness"

Notice the term "fruit" is singular, as it is in Gal. 5:22, where the fruit of the Spirit is love. Here the fruit is righteousness. The term "righteousness" in Paul's writing usually refers to a believer's legal standing (positional justification and sanctification, see Special Topic: Sanctification at Eph. 1:1) before God (cf. Romans 4-8). Here, however, it implies the practical outworking of inner salvation (progressive sanctification, cf. Phil. 1:10; James 3:18). See Special Topic: Righteousness at Eph. 4:24.

■ **"to the glory and praise of God"** (cf. Matt. 5:16; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Believers' lives need to bring honor to God! Justification must produce sanctification. No fruit, no root! Christ is both saving us and restoring the image of God in fallen mankind. Believers must exhibit the family characteristics of God! See note on "glory" at Eph. 1:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18

¹²Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. ¹⁵Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

1:12 "now I want you to know" This implies that the church had asked Paul some questions (like Corinth, cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1) through Epaphroditus who had brought a monetary gift to him while he was in prison (cf. Phil. 2:25).

■ **"that my circumstances"** This referred to Paul's arrest, imprisonment, and trial(s). Agabus, the prophet, predicted Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Acts 21:10ff. The fact that Paul would speak before Gentile kings was revealed to Ananias in Acts 9:15. God did accomplish His stated purpose for Paul's ministry, but in a way that Paul apparently did not foresee. This same truth is evident in believers' lives. They are not controlled by luck, chance, or fate. God uses even the things that seem derogatory and negative in a marvelous way for His honor and glory (cf. Phil. 1:20; Rom. 8:28-29).

■ **"have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel"** The term "progress" is used again in Phil. 1:25 and in 1 Tim. 4:15. It had two primary etymological backgrounds that may relate to Paul's use of the term:

1. it was a military term for the advance of troops through rough terrain by means of the advance scouts removing barriers

2. it was used by Greek philosophers (Stoics) as a catchword for the difficult path to wisdom

Although the gospel is progressing it is sometimes difficult. It is interesting to note that the progress mentioned is specified

1. in Phil. 1:13 as the gospel being spread through the elite Imperial Guard and the Roman palace itself

2. in Phil. 1:14 that other Christian preachers in Rome were taking courage from Paul's attitude and actions to proclaim the gospel while Paul himself was imprisoned

NASB	"praetorian guard"
NKJV	"palace guard"
NRSV	"imperial guard"
TEV	"the whole palace guard"
NJB	"praetorium"

The KJV, NKJV, and TEV translations have "palace," which is quite possible because the word is used this way in Acts 23:35.

In this context it refers to a body of soldiers, not a place, because of the use of the phrase, "and all the rest," which apparently refers to persons. The exact identity of these people is uncertain, but they were probably imperial servants, legal advisers, or court officials who were involved in Paul's legal trial(s).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAETORIAN GUARD

1:14 The Greek phrase "in the Lord" can go with "brothers" or with the term "more courage" expressing the basis for the confidence of the other preachers in seeing how Paul faced imprisonment. It is significant to note that one's demeanor, attitude and actions during times of stress and pressure are often a source of great encouragement to other Christians (cf. Job, Jeremiah, Paul).

▣ **"to speak the word of God without fear"** The phrase "word of God" has some Greek manuscript variations. The ancient Greek uncial manuscripts, κ , A, B, and P have the genitive phrase "word of God." However, in P⁴⁶, D^C, and K, the genitive phrase is omitted. UBS⁴ gives the omission a "B" rating (almost certain). As is true of most of these manuscript variations, they affect the sense of the passage very little.

1:15 The identity of these jealous Christian preachers (cf. Phil. 1:15,17,18) has caused great debate among commentators. It seems obvious from Phil. 1:11-18 that they were truly preaching Jesus, but from poor motives, not primarily directed toward Jesus and the gospel message but toward Paul in particular. Some have asserted that these are the established Christian leaders (Jewish and Gentile) who were eclipsed by Paul's intellect and spiritual presence at his coming to Rome. Possibly they were the Judaizers like in Galatia but of a less powerful strain. However, because of Paul's sharp words in the book of Galatians (3:2ff), it is improbable that this text refers to the false teachers. Here these are simply preachers with poor motives. This sounds much like our day-jealousy, rivalry, and partisanship often characterize the church of Jesus Christ, instead of love and acceptance which are demanded in 1 Cor. 13; Rom. 14; Gal. 5:26.

1:16

NASB, NKJV "I am appointed"

NRSV "I have been put here for"

TEV "God have given me the work of"

NJB "I remain firm"

The term "appointed" (*keimai*) was a military term for a soldier on watch. It is used metaphorically of one's being appointed to a task (cf. Luke 2:34). Paul's imprisonment and trial at Rome was not an accident, but was the predetermined plan of God (cf. Acts 9:15). Jesus' life was also "appointed" (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). It is helpful to see our lives in this same theological world-view!

▣ **"the defense of the gospel"** This is the same Greek term (*apologia*) used in Phil. 1:7. From it we get the English word "apology" which means "a legal defense." This phrase would imply governmental trials (cf. Acts 22:1) but could also refer to his Jewish synagogue preaching.

1:16-17 It is interesting to note that in the Textus Receptus the phrases in Phil. 1:16 and 17 are reversed in an attempt to match the order of verse 15. This Greek manuscript variation (as so many of them) does not affect the sense of the passage.

1:17 "selfish ambition" This term originally meant "to spin wool for hire," but came to be used in the sense of an aristocratical arrogance against those who had to work for a living. It came to be used metaphorically for selfish ambition. The greatness of Paul's heart can be seen (Phil. 1:18) in the fact that he rejoiced that Christ was being preached even if the proclaimer had poor motives. The power is in the Word, not in the proclaimer!

1:18 Paul understood that the gospel message superseded personal rivalries. This verse has tremendous implications for the denominational divisions that are found in the Church today and how believers relate to them personally and theologically (cf. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10).

▣ **"in truth"** See Special Topic: Truth in Paul's Writings at Eph. 1:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

¹⁹Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.* ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²But if I *am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that is very much better*; ²⁴yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

1:19 "my deliverance" Literally the term (*sōtēria*) meant "salvation." Paul most often uses it to speak of spiritual salvation in Christ. (Some examples: Rom. 1:16; 11:14; 1 Cor. 1:21; 7:6; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:10; 3:15; 4:18; Titus 3:5.) However, here it is used in the OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. 2 Tim. 4:18; James 5:15). It was often used in contexts that relate to trials (cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12). It is even possible that it is an allusion to Job 13:16 in the Septuagint (LXX), in which Job is finally vindicated by God (cf. Job 42).

Paul felt he was going to be released (cf. the first class conditional sentence of Phil. 1:22). It seems that Colossians and Ephesians were written early during Paul's Roman imprisonment and Philipians toward the end. Paul was released and conducted a fourth missionary journey which was described in the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy) and then apparently was rearrested and beheaded before Nero's suicide in a.d. 68.

Paul's confidence is based on two elements: (1) the prayers of the Philippian Christians and (2) the power of the Spirit of God. It is interesting to note how often Paul requested prayer from the churches (cf. Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25). There is a mystery concerning intercessory prayer; God has limited Himself to the prayers of His children (cf. Matt. 7:7-11; 18:19; 21:22; Luke 11:9-13; John 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:23-24; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15). Somehow, sincere, persistent intercession releases the power of the Spirit in a most unusual way; "we have not because we ask not" (cf. James 4:2).

NASB	"provision"
NKJV	"supply"
NRSV, TEV	"help"
NJB	"support"

This term originally is used of a wealthy patron equipping a choir. It came to be used metaphorically for a complete sufficiency and abundant provision.

▣ **"of the Spirit of Jesus Christ"** Quite often the Holy Spirit is described in terms of His relationship to Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:6; and 1 Pet. 1:11). G. Campbell Morgan's title for the Spirit was "the Other Jesus"! This is completely in line with the purpose of the Spirit found in John 16:7-15. The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring humans into a place of conviction, to reveal to them the gospel found in the person and work of Jesus Christ, to baptize them into Christ, and then to form

Christ in them.

Paul's linking of Jesus and the Spirit was to show that the New Age had come. It was the "age of the Spirit." The Spirit brought in the New Age of righteousness. Yet the New Age was also Messianic. Jesus was the Father's mechanism for inaugurating the New Age of the Spirit. See Special Topics: Jesus and the Spirit at Col. 1:26 and The Personhood of the Spirit at Eph. 1:14.

1:20 "according to my earnest expectation" This term may have been coined by Paul. It is also used in Rom. 8:19. It is metaphorical of someone with an outstretched neck looking intently for something or someone.

NASB "that I shall not be put to shame in anything"
NKJV "that in nothing I shall be ashamed"
NRSV "that I will not be put to shame in any way"
TEV "that I shall never fail in my duty"
NJB "that I shall never have to admit defeat"

This refers to Paul's sense of responsibility in his assigned task but recognizing the difficulties and temptations (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-29; 9:27).

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV "with all boldness"
TEV "full of courage"
NJB "complete fearlessness"

This Greek word has the basic meaning of "a boldness to speak" (1) in the presence of a superior (God, a judge, a king, etc.) or (2) in tense situations (cf. Acts 4:13,29,31; Eph. 3:12; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:9; 1 John 4:17). This was Paul's recurrent prayer (cf. Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3). See Special Topic: Boldness (*Parrhēsia*) at Col. 2:15.

NASB "Christ shall even now as always, be exalted in my body"
NKJV "as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body"
NRSV "Christ will be exalted now as always in my body"
TEV "with my whole being I shall bring honor to Christ"
NJB "so that now, as always, Christ will be glorified in my body"

This is a Future passive verb which shows that Paul was not the main actor or ingredient in God's being honored, but that Christ will be honored through Paul by means of the prayers of the brothers and the power of the Holy Spirit (Phil. 1:19). It is significant that Paul closes this phrase with the Greek term for "body." Believers will honor God with their bodies (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20) or they will not honor Him at all! For the Greeks the body was evil. For Paul it was morally neutral but it was and is the battleground of temptation and the place for honoring and glorifying Christ.

■ **"whether by living or dying"** Believers are to exalt Christ, some by their deaths and some by their lives of faithfulness (cf. Rom. 14:8; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 5:20; Rev. 13:14).

1:21 "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" "To live" is a present active infinitive, while "to die" is an aorist active infinitive. This means that the act of continuing to live is Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). This is a difficult phrase to understand, but when we look at Paul's other writings, we see that it meant that believers are dead to sin, dead to self, and dead to the law, but alive unto God for service (cf. Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14). However, in this context, it must refer to physical death. Paul was on trial for his life, yet his life had already been taken, taken by Christ!

■ **"to die is gain"** For Paul, death meant perfect fellowship with God (cf. Phil. 1:23). This does not imply that Paul was totally unconcerned about death. He discussed his fears and reservations in 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

There is an element of fear in death for all of us, but the gospel enables believers to boldly face physical death and a holy God. We must understand, however, that the word "gain" here does not mean personal gain for Paul but gain for the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:12).

1:22 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence.

▣ **"in the flesh"** See Special Topic at Col. 1:22.

▣ **"this will mean fruitful labor for me"** This has been interpreted in two ways: (1) some see it as the fruition and culmination of his work which was already begun (2) others view it as his desire for new work. There is much evidence in the early Church that Paul was released from prison and had a few months of missionary activity before he was rearrested and beheaded by a.d. 68, which is the year in which Nero killed himself.

The evidence for his release is as follows:

1. use of the term "deliverance" in Phil. 1:19
2. the first class conditional sentence in Phil. 1:22
3. the Pastoral Epistles do not fit the chronology of Acts
4. Clement of Rome, in his first letter to the Corinthians (a.d. 95), particularly in chapter 5, states that Paul was released from prison and went to the bounds of the west
5. expressed in the introduction to Paul's letters in the Muratorian Fragment
6. expressed in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical Histories*, 2:22
7. expressed in the sermons of Chrysostom, which mention his later activities

▣ **"I do not know which to choose"** This term usually means "declare." Paul did not really have the choice concerning his living or dying, but he asserts that God did. However, he was struggling mentally between the two options: (1) one would be beneficial to himself, i.e., a martyr's death or (2) his release would be beneficial to the church because he would have more time to preach, teach, and encourage.

1:23 "I am hard pressed from both directions" The term *sunechō* means "to be tightly pressed or held together" (cf. Luke 12:50; 19:43) and it shows the intense personal struggle that Paul felt related to his ministry options.

▣ **"I desire to depart"** The term "desire" is a very strong Greek term often translated "lust," but here it is used in a positive sense of a strong desire.

The term "depart" is a very interesting Greek word that referred to a ship being loosed from its mooring or for a military camp being taken down and moved (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6). Because of Paul's use of this term in 2 Cor. 5:1,11, it probably refers to his physical death.

▣ **"and be with Christ"** The Pharisees had always expected an end-time resurrection, (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2). This is evident from many passages in the NT which refer to the Second Coming, the Judgment and the life beyond. However, in this passage, an added insight is brought into the traditional Jewish concept of *Hades*: when believers die, they do not enter an unconscious sleep or descend to a semi-conscious holding place, but are present with the Lord (cf. Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8). There is much biblical ambiguity in this area. The Bible seems to teach an intermediate conscious, bodiless state (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13, 17; Rev. 6:9; 20:4). At death believers will be with the Lord but in a limited fellowship and this fellowship will not be fully consummated until Resurrection Day (cf. 1 John 3:2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

▣ **"for that is very much better"** This is a series of three comparatives which shows Paul's exhilaration at the thought of being with Jesus.

1:25 This implies that Paul expected to be released.

■ **"for your progress and joy in the faith"** Phil. 1:25-26 forms one sentence in Greek. If it is true that the term "progress" (cf. 1 Tim. 4:15) implies a difficult journey, then it is significant that the term "joy," so characteristic of this book, is linked with the difficulty of the Christian life. From other NT passages it becomes obvious that one unique characteristic of the Christian is joy amidst physical problems and persecution (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3; 8:18; 1 Thess. 5:16; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16).

1:26

NASB "your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus"

NKJV "your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ"

NRSV "that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus"

TEV "when I am with you again, you will have even more reason to be proud of me in your life in union with Christ Jesus"

NJB "so that my return to be among you may increase to overflowing your pride in Jesus Christ on my account"

This phrase has two possible objects: (1) Christ or (2) Paul. Were they rejoicing in Christ and the gospel or in Paul's return and ministry among them? The context favors the latter. Paul's ministry would glorify Christ. See Special Topic: Abound (*Perisseuō*) at Eph. 1:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO 1:1-26

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the overseers and deacons? What were their responsibilities?
2. Why was this church so special to Paul?
3. Why is verse 6 so significant? How is it related to verses 5 and 10?
4. List the things Paul prays for this church.
5. How could Paul's imprisonment further the gospel?
6. What is the identity of the Christian preachers who preached out of jealousy, rivalry and partisanship?
7. Why is verse 18 so significant in how we treat denominationalism today?
8. Why is the Holy Spirit called the Spirit of Jesus Christ? What is the significance of this interchange?
9. What does Paul mean by "living is Christ and dying is gain"? How does this apply to your daily, Christian world-view?
10. What happens to the Christian at death?
11. How are problems and joy related to the Christian experience?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

²⁷Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸in no way alarmed by *your* opponents which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God. ²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be*

1:27 "only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel" Phil. 1:27-30 forms one extended sentence in the Greek text. This is a present middle (deponent) imperative from the Greek root for city (*polis* cf. Phil. 3:20; Acts 23:1; Eph. 2:19). It could be translated "you must continue to live as citizens" (cf. Phil. 3:20). This is reflected in several English translations:

1. *The Berkeley Version of the New Testament* (Gerrit Verkuyl)
2. *The New Testament: An American Translation* (Edgar J. Goodspeed)
3. *The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation* (J. B. Rotherham)

This would have reflected the historical setting of Philippi as a Roman colony. It also implies theologically that believers are citizens of two worlds and have obligations in both. Paul's usual metaphor for the Christian life is the word "walk." The early Christians were first called "the Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22). Believers are to live worthy lives (cf. Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12).

▣ **"so that whether I come and see you or remain absent"** This same truth about the need for consistency in our Christian life can be found in Phil. 2:12 and in Eph. 6:6 as Paul admonishes Christian slaves to be diligent whether they are being watched by their masters or not. God is always present!

▣ **"that you are standing firm in one spirit"** This is a present active indicative. Paul often uses the phrase "standing firm" in one of two senses: (1) our position in Christ (cf. Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:1) or (2) our need to maintain Christlikeness (cf. Phil. 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:1; 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:11,13,14; 1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 2:15). This is a call to church unity (cf. Acts 4:32; Eph. 4:1-6).

The concept of "one spirit" has been greatly debated. It can refer to the human redeemed spirit, or to the Holy Spirit. This context, as well as Phil. 2:1, combines both aspects. Notice believers are to stand in one spirit, in one mind (*psuchē*). Unity is crucial (cf. Eph. 4:1-6).

▣ **"striving together"** This is a present active participle. This *syn* compound is either (1) an athletic term for a team's participation in the Greek games or (2) a military term. We get the English term "athlete" from this Greek word (cf. Phil. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:5). The Christian life as a spiritual battle is discussed in Eph. 4:14; 6:10-20.

Notice NJB translation "battling, as a team with a single aim, for the faith."

▣ **"For the faith of the gospel"** The definite article is present which makes it "the faith." The context demands that this is used in the sense of Christian truths (cf. Eph. 4:5; 1 Tim. 4:20; 2 Tim. 1:14 and Jude 3, 20).

Believers ask many questions that the Bible does not address (the exact process of creation, the origin of Satan, the origin of angels, the exact nature of heaven and hell, etc.). Everything that is necessary for salvation and an effective Christian life has been revealed. Holy curiosity must not demand more than what has been given (revelation).

1:28 "in no way alarmed by your opponents" This is a present passive participle which is used to describe a stampede of animals (cf. Acts 18:9,10; 1 Cor. 2:3). The opponents could be

1. local Jews, although there was no synagogue mentioned in Philippi
2. traveling Jewish opponents, as in Acts 17:13, or like the Judaizers of the Galatian churches (cf. Phil. 3:2-6)
3. local pagans (cf. Acts 16:16-21)
4. local civil authorities (cf. Acts 16:21-40)

▣ **"which is a sign of destruction for them"** This Greek term, "sign," meant proof based on evidence (cf. Rom. 3:25,26; 2 Cor. 8:24). "Destruction" was a military metaphor which meant "to lose," "bring to nought," or "destroy." The Christians' fearless testimony and lifestyle were witnesses to the judgment of the opponents and the salvation of the believers.

▣ **"but you"** The "you" in both Phil. 1:28 and 29 is emphatic. What a contrast exists between believers and non-believers.

▣ **"of salvation for you"** This term is rather ambiguous, as in Phil. 1:19. It could be used (1) in its full salvatory sense or (2) in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15). In the context of false teachers and external persecution it is difficult to choose between the two options.

▣ **"and that too, from God"** The terms "sign" and "salvation" in Phil. 1:28 are both feminine while the term "that" is neuter. Therefore, the term "that" may refer to the courage God gives believers to face these opponents. This is a similar construction to Eph. 2:8,9 where the "that" referred not to "grace" or "faith," which are also feminine, but to the whole process of salvation.

1:29 "for to you it has been granted" This is an aorist passive indicative from the root *charis* (cf. Phil. 2:9; Rom. 8:32). God's gracious gifts are the key both to salvation and the Christian life (cf. Phil. 1:28).

▣ **"not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake"** These are two present infinitives which specify what God has given believers in Christ. One relates to continuing faith and the other to continuing maturity. It is hard for believers in modern western culture to discuss suffering. In the NT it was often the norm of the Christian life (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-16). A brief breakdown of some of the purposes of suffering might be

1. it was beneficial for Christ (cf. Heb. 2:10; 5:8), therefore,
2. it will be beneficial for believers (cf. Phil. 2:10; Rom. 5:3; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6,7), and
3. it brings joyous assurance of believers' place in Christ (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 3:14; and 4:12-16)

1:30 "experiencing the same conflict" The Philippian believers were undergoing persecution. The term "struggle," used so often by Paul, was either an athletic or military metaphor. We get the English word "agony" from this Greek word.

▣ **"which you saw in me"** We learn something of Paul's persecution at Philippi from Acts 16:22-24 and 1 Thess. 2:2. Paul modeled Christianity for them and us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS to Phil. 1:27-30

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is Paul asking the believers to do in Phil. 1:27?
2. Who are the opponents that are mentioned in Phil. 1:28?
3. How are suffering and persecution beneficial to believers?

PHILIPPIANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Christian Humility and Christ's Humility 2:1-11	Unity Through Humility 2:1-4 The Humbled and the Exalted Christ 2:5-11	Humility and the Example of Christ 2:1-11	Christ's Humility and Greatness 2:1-11	Preserve Unity in Humility 2:1-11
Shining as Lights in the World 2:12-18	Light Bearers 2:12-18	2:12-13 2:14-18	Shining as Lights in the World 2:12-13 2:14-16 2:17-18	Work for Salvation 2:12-18
Timothy and Epaphroditus 2:19-24	Timothy Commended 2:19-24 Epaphroditus Praised	Timothy and Epaphroditus 2:19-24	Timothy and Epaphroditus 2:19-24	The Mission of Timothy and Epaphroditus 2:19-3:1a
2:25-30	2:25-30	2:25-3:1a	2:25-30	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:1-11

A. This context is obviously related to one of the themes of the book, "a call for unity among the Christians at Philippi" (cf. Phil. 1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2-3,5,7,9 and Eph. 4:1-6).

B. There has been much discussion among commentators on how this wonderful hymn to Christ (cf.

Phil. 2:6-11) functions for ethics or for salvation.

1. It functions as an example to believers to live selfless, giving lives (cf. Phil. 2:1-5).
2. It also deals with the humiliation and exaltation of the pre-existent, incarnated Messiah.
3. In different ways it functions in both areas.

C. 2:6-11 seems to be an early Christian hymn

1. the form is metric, poetical, or lyrical
2. it contains several rare Greek terms not used by Paul
3. it is lacking some of the uniquely Pauline theological elements concerning Christ
4. Paul quotes other early church hymns, poems, or liturgical structures in 1 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Tim. 2:11-13
5. for another opinion see Gordon Fee, *To What End Exegesis?* pp. 1731-189

D. The structure of the hymn to Christ has been debated. It seems to divide into two equal emphases.

1. Jesus' person and work
 - a. pre-existence, Phil. 2:6
 - b. incarnation, Phil. 2:7
 - c. substitutionary death, Phil. 2:8
2. God the Father's response
 - a. universal Lordship, Phil. 2:9
 - b. universal confession, Phil. 2:10
 - c. supreme title (Lord), Phil. 2:11

E. A brief outline of this great hymn to Christ

1. Verses 6-8
 - a. Christ's humiliation
 - b. OT background is Genesis 3 (Adam/Christ typology)
 - c. focuses on Jesus' actions
2. Verses 9-11
 - a. Christ's exaltation
 - b. OT background is Isa. 52:13-53:12 (the Suffering Servant)
 - c. focuses on God the Father's actions
3. Bibles that print poetry differently from prose are crucial in seeing the metric pattern and parallelism (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB)

F. The basic truths found in this Christological hymn

1. Jesus is truly God (in essence, *morphē*)
2. Jesus is truly man (in form, *schēma*)
3. Jesus truly sought our best, not His own, so should Christians
4. Jesus is the true object of worship by the will of the Father

G. The hymn was non-Pauline

1. It omits the resurrection which was a major and recurrent emphasis of Paul
2. It omits Paul's regular emphasis on Jesus' relation to the Church
3. It uses several terms not used by Paul anywhere else
4. Paul does quote other early church hymns, catechismal poems, or liturgical structures in 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-13 and possibly Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

¹Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ²make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:1 "if" This is the first in a series of four first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Verses 1-4 are one sentence in the Greek.

▣ **"any encouragement in Christ"** This term can be translated several ways: "stimulus" "appeal," "comfort," "encouragement" or "exhortation." This phrase is similar to Paul's discussion of the attitudes that bring and maintain unity within the local bodies of Christ in Eph. 4:2-3.

"In Christ" (a locative of sphere) is Paul's most common way of identifying believers. For life, true life, abundant life, believers must remain in vital union with Christ by faith (cf. John 15).

▣ **"any consolation of love"** Love has always been the root and fruit for the Christian life (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 3:11,27; 4:7-21). Jesus lived it, taught it and commanded it to His followers.

▣ **"any fellowship of the Spirit"** This is the Greek term *koinōnia*, which meant "joint participation with" (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14). Again, the question is, "Does this refer to believers' new redeemed, human spirit being energized by the Holy Spirit," or "the Holy Spirit being given to them"? There is no article with the term "spirit." This may be a purposeful ambiguity. It may theologically refer to both.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA

▣ **"any affection"** This is literally "bowels," which is also used in Phil. 1:8. The ancients believed that the lower viscera (abdomen) was the seat of the emotions. Both of these terms are also used in Col. 3:12.

▣ **"compassion"** Paul uses this term four times: (1) to describe God's character (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:3) and (2) to describe how Christians ought to treat each other (cf. Phil. 2:11; Col. 3:12). God desires to produce His character (image) in His children. The restoration of God's image lost in the Fall is the purpose of Jesus' coming.

2:2 "make my joy complete" This is an aorist active imperative and shows how Paul felt about these believers even though he was far away in prison. Their actions and choices caused Paul joy or pain.

▣ **"by being of the same mind"** This is a present active subjunctive that is defined by four present participles (possibly used as imperatives) beginning in Phil. 2:2 and running through Phil. 2:4 They deal with the very difficult pragmatic question of maintaining unity within the Christian fellowship (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33). Paul's guidelines are crucial, not only for Philippi in the first century, but for the Church of every age. The four participles are

1. maintaining the same love

2. unifying in spirit and focusing on one purpose
3. regarding others as more important than oneself
4. looking out for the interest of others

Beware of individualistic religion. Christianity is a family experience.

Paul often uses this term "think" (*phroneō*) in Philippians it becomes another theme (cf. Phil. 1:7; 2:2 [twice]; 2:5; 3:15 [twice]; 3:19; 4:2; and 4:10).

2:3 "do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit" This may describe the situation in the Philippian church caused by the false teachers or by persecution (cf. Phil. 1:15,17; Gal. 5:26). There is no verb, but the thrust of the verse is imperative. The repetition of "think" (*phroneō*) in the context may imply that this verb is to be assumed.

▣ **"but with humility of mind"** Humility was not a sought-after virtue in the Greco-Roman world, but Christ made it a unique aspect of His own life and called on His followers to emulate it in their Christian lives (cf. Phil. 2:8; Matt. 11:29; 1 Pet. 5:5,6). It is the contextual opposite of "selfishness and empty conceit."

▣ **"regard one another as more important than yourselves"** This is a Present middle (deponent) participle. This goes against all of our natural, human tendencies, but it is the will of God (cf. Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 10:24, 33; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 5:2). For "more important" see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19.

2:4 "do not merely look out for your own personal interests" This is a present active participle with the negative particle (used as an imperative) which usually means to stop an act in process. It meant "to look attentively at something" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18). The term "interest" can refer to (1) things; (2) spiritual gifts; or (3) affairs. The real key here is the word "only." It's not that believers are not to take interest in their own affairs (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8), but they are not to make them a priority to the exclusion of others, especially other believers. The balance is seen in Gal. 6:1-2. Believers are to keep a sharp watch on themselves so that they can watch out for others.

2:5 "have this attitude in yourself" This is a present active imperative. Believers are commanded to continue to think (*phroneō*) like Christ. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness in thought and deed (cf. Col. 3:16). This is the beginning of a quote by Paul from an early Christian hymn. There are several terms in this poetic section not found elsewhere in Paul. Other examples of Paul quoting from this type of material are Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-13 and possibly Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16.

Christians are admonished to follow Christ's example in two ways: (1) He left His pre-existent, divine glory to become a human, not for Himself, but for others and (2) He was willing to die, not because of His own sins, but for others'. Christ's followers are to emulate these self-giving, self-abasing characteristics (cf. 1 John 3:16). We are our brothers' keeper because our brother is in the image and likeness of God!

2:6 "who although He existed" Literally this is "who being in the form of God." This is one of two present tenses (here a participle) in the midst of a series of Aorist tense verbs and participles. It emphasizes the pre-existence of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:1; 8:57-58; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:17; Heb. 10:5-7). Jesus' pre-existence is another proof of His deity. Jesus did not come into being at Bethlehem. There has never been a time when Jesus did not exist and was not divine.

▣ **"in the nature of God"** This is the Greek word *morphē* which is used in several senses.

1. an Aristotlian sense of essence
2. the sense of the nature of something or unchanging essence of something (this is how the early Church fathers interpreted it)
3. the outward form of something, as in the Septuagint (LXX). This does not mean that YHWH has a physical body, but that the attributes and characteristics-the very essence of God the Father-are evident in God the Son.

It is another way of asserting the full deity of Christ. See Special Topic: Monotheism at Eph. 4:6.

■ **"did not regard equality with God"** Literally this is "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This is the other present tense (here an infinitive). The Greek term "equality" comes into English as "isometric." It is another way of asserting that Jesus is fully God (cf. John 1:1; Titus 2:13).

NASB	"a thing to be grasped"
NKJV	"robbery"
NRSV	"something to be exploited"
TEV	"that by force"
NJB	"something to be grasped"

This rare Greek word, *harpagmos*, originally meant "the act of seizing something" or "a sought after prize" (*harpagma*). However, it could be used in a passive sense (Greek *mos* ending) meaning "that which is seized or held on to." A third possibility is "something that someone has but does not use for personal advantage." This is reflected in the Phillip's translation of Phil. 2:7: "stripped Himself of every advantage."

Jesus already possessed full equality with God. The theological reason for this phrase's ambiguity is the Adam/Christ typology, where Adam tried to grasp equality with God by eating the forbidden fruit (cf. Genesis 3). Jesus, the second Adam (cf. Rom 5:12ff), followed God's plan in perfect obedience where suffering preceded exaltation (cf. Isaiah 53).

2:7

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB	"emptied Himself"
NKJV	"made Himself of no reputation"
TEV	"of His own free will He gave up all He had"

The pronoun is emphatic. This was Jesus' own choice! There are several theories about what it meant that Jesus emptied Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).

1. Paul uses this term several times (cf. Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor. 9:3). Apparently Jesus chose to live as a human. He voluntarily left His divine glory and accepted the limitations of flesh. Surely He still had greater insight and spiritual power than ordinary fallen mankind. He was what all humans were intended to be. He is the second Adam and more.
2. Jesus did not become less than God in His Incarnation, but He apparently added humanity to His deity. He left the outward glory of Deity and took on the outward form of a man. This involved addition, not subtraction. During Jesus' earthly ministry, He was filled and empowered by the Spirit, but also He was both fully God and fully human (tempted, Matthew 4; tried, John 4; afraid in Gethsemane, Mark 14:32-42). He truly knew and revealed the Father (cf. John 1:18). He was truly one with our humanity (cf. John 1:4).
3. It is possible that this emptying was a way of alluding to Isa. 53:1-3. If so, it related not to his humanity (Phil. 2:7-8a) but to His crucifixion (Phil. 2:8b) as the servant of YHWH (cf. Mark 10:45-15:53).

■ **"taking the form of a bond-servant"** This is an exact literary parallel to the phrase "the nature of God" (cf. Phil. 2:6). The term "bond-servant" (*doulos*) here could be used in the sense of the Suffering Servant of Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12. Jesus left His heavenly glory for a manger (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). This is also the background of Phil. 2:9-11. This verse emphasizes Jesus' Incarnation (aorist participle), not His crucifixion, which is spelled out in Phil. 2:8.

Jesus clearly demonstrated that true leadership, true power is a servant's heart. To lead, one must serve (cf. Mark 10:42-45; Matt. 20:25-28). His humility is a sign of true strength. His self-giving love is a true sign of deity.

■ **"and being made in the likeness of man"** The RSV & NRSV translate this word as "being born." This is the second major emphasis of this early Church hymn: the full humanity of Christ. This was done to refute the Gnostic false teachers, who held to an eternal (ontological) dualism between spirit and matter. The dual

nature of Jesus is a major NT theological issue (cf. 1 John 4:1-6). Jesus' use of the OT term "Son of Man" points in this direction. In Ps. 8:4 and Ezek. 2:1 the term has its normal Jewish meaning of human person. However, in Dan. 7:13 it took on divine characteristics (i.e., riding on the clouds of heaven and receiving the eternal kingdom). Jesus used this phrase for Himself. It was not widely used by the rabbis and had no militaristic, nationalistic, or exclusivistic connotations.

The beginning of Phil. 2:8 emphasizes this same theological truth with the distinction that although Jesus was fully human, He did not participate in mankind's fallen nature (cf. Rom. 8:3; 1 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

2:8 "in appearance as a man" There is some confusion among the translations as to whether this phrase should go with verse 7 or 8. This is the Greek term "*schēma*," which was usually contrasted with "*morphē*." In Greek philosophy *morphē* meant "the inner form of something that truly reflected its essence," while "*schēma*" meant "the outer changing form of something that did not fully represent its inner essence" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31). Jesus is like us in all ways except fallen mankind's sin nature.

■ **"He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death"** This may be an allusion to the Septuagint's (LXX) translation of Isa. 53:8. Jesus followed the Father's eternal redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28) even unto physical torture and death (aorist active indicative and aorist participle).

■ **"even death on a cross"** The cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). They were not expecting a suffering Messiah, but a conquering Messiah. Also because of Deut. 21:23, which implies that if someone was publicly exposed after death, it was a sign of a curse by God. The Jews could not see how their Messiah could be cursed by God, but this is exactly the truth of Gal. 3:13, that He became a curse for us. The concept of a suffering Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22) was repugnant to them. Yet this is how YHWH deals with the human sin problem, the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:19). The cross is the central truth of the NT where the love and justice of God meet and are merged.

2:9

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

"therefore"

TEV

"For this reason"

NJB

"And for this"

The NT presents Jesus in two ways: (1) fully pre-existent Deity (cf. John 1:1-3,14; 8:57-58; Col. 1:17) and (2) exalted Deity because of His obedient, holy earthly life (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:9). In the early church this led to a conflict between orthodox and adoptionist theologians. However, as so often, they both had an aspect of truth. What Jesus was is confirmed by what He did! There are not two Christologies, but two ways of viewing the same truth. Our response should not be to try to decide which is true, but to thank God for Christ before time, in time, and beyond time!

■ **"God highly exalted Him"** This is an allusion to the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Isa. 52:13. The intensified form of the term *huperupsoō* is found only here in the NT and rarely in secular Greek. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19. This was not adoptionist Christology, which asserted that Jesus was rewarded with deity. Jesus was restored to divine pre-existent glory (cf. Eph. 4:10). In John's Gospel Jesus' death is referred to as His glorification (cf. Phil. 7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31-32; 16:14; 17:1). The humble servant is now King of Kings!

■ **"and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name"** This special exalted name is "Lord" (cf. Phil. 2:11). The verb (*echarisato*) in Phil. 2:9 means "graciously given" as in Phil. 1:29. The term "Lord" is an allusion to the OT covenant name for God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14; 6:3), which the Jews were afraid to pronounce lest they break one of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they

substituted the name *Adon*, which meant Lord, owner, husband. Jesus, who came in the form of a servant, was returned to His cosmic Lordship (cf. John 17:5; Col. 1:15-20). "Jesus is Lord" was the public, personal confession of faith for the early Church (cf. Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3). Jesus of Nazareth is given the supreme title of Deity (cf. Eph. 1:21 and Heb. 1:4). See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Col. 1:3.

2:10 "every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" One day everyone will acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The only question is whether they will do it in time by faith, and thereby become a part of the family of God, or do it on the Day of the Lord and be judged by Him (cf. Matt. 25:31-48; Rev. 20:11-15).

The parallel phrases in this verse refer to angels, both free and bound and humans, both living and dead. All conscious creatures shall acknowledge Jesus' Lordship, but only humans can be redeemed. Verses 10-11 seem to be an allusion to Isa. 45:23, which is quoted in Rom. 14:11. In its original context it was the worship of YHWH that has now been transferred to the Messiah (cf. John 5:23). The transfer of titles and functions between YHWH and Jesus is another way the NT authors assert the full deity of Jesus. See Special Topic: Angels in Paul's Writings at Eph. 6:12.

2:11 "and every tongue should confess" This is an aorist middle subjunctive (used as future, some MSS have the future, i.e., A, C, D, F, G) of *exomologeō* which acknowledges the fact that public, verbal acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ will be an end-time reality. This acknowledgment of Jesus' Lordship was an early profession of faith (i.e., baptismal liturgy). Paul used this term as he used several OT quotes from the Septuagint (cf. Phil. 2:11 and Rom. 14:11 from Isa. 45:23 and Rom. 15:9 from Ps. 18:49. Also the related term *homologeō* in Rom. 10:13 from Joel 2:37).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

■ **"to the glory of God the Father"** The worship of Jesus is the purpose of God the Father in sending Him. This phrase "to the glory of God" relates to believers' lifestyle in Phil. 1:11 and here in Phil. 2:11 for their salvation, brought through the work of Christ. This same key phrase is used three times in Paul's prayer of praise to the triune God in Eph. 1:3-14. Ultimately Jesus will turn all power, authority, and praise over to the Father to whom it belongs (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28). See full note on "glory" at Eph. 1:6.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30

A. Phil. 2:12-18, like Phil. 2:1-11, relate to Christian living.

B. Phil. 2:19-30 relates to Paul's helpers, Timothy and Epaphroditus and their coming to Philippi.

1. Timothy, Phil. 2:19-24

2. Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:25-30

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

2:12-13 This is one sentence in Greek.

2:12 "So then" This is obviously connected to the previous discussion of the humility and obedience of Christ. In light of Christ's ultimate example in Phil. 2:6-11, these believers were implored to live (1) humbly and caringly, Phil. 2:1-5, and (2) like Christ, Phil. 2:14-18.

■ **"my beloved"** Paul loved this church in a special way (cf. Phil. 4:15-16). Paul uses this phrase often to describe those converted under his ministry (cf. Rom. 11:2,19; 16:8,9,12; 1 Cor. 4:14,17; 10:14; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; 12:19; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 4:1 [twice]; Col. 4:7,9,14; 1 Tim. 6:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Philemon 1:1,2,16).

NASB, NKJV "as you have always obeyed"

NRSV, TEV "as you have always obeyed me"

NJB "you have always been obedient"

The text does not state who they obeyed. It could have been (1) Father/Son/Spirit; (2) the Christian faith; or (3) Paul. The obedience of Christ, mentioned in Phil. 2:8, was given as an example for the Philippians to follow (cf. Luke 6:46). This phrase may refer to the church's obedience to Paul's teaching (cf. Phil. 2:12b). Christianity is a process which involves repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance!

■ **"not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence"** Christianity is what we are, not what we do! Believers must not perform acts to be seen (cf. Phil. 1:27; Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22).

■ **"work out your salvation"** This verb is a mathematical term used of a problem brought to its conclusion. Its form is present middle (deponent) imperative plural.

Verses 12-13 have been the focus of much theological discussion relating to the sovereignty of God, which is emphasized in Phil. 2:13 (cf. Phil. 1:6), and the free will of human persons which is called on in Phil. 2:12. The term "salvation" in Phil. 2:12

1. refers to a believer's spiritual relationship with Christ. Paul has just mentioned becoming a Christian in Phil. 2:9-10. This is another example of the tension between sovereignty and free-will, both initial and ongoing (cf. Phil. 2:16)
2. does not refer to eternal spiritual salvation, but either to
 - a. OT "physical deliverance"
 - b. "wholeness," as it does in Phil. 1:19

This aspect of salvation as "wholeness" can also be seen in Acts 4:10; 14:9; 27:34. The initiating grace of God and the required faith response of a repentant human are clearly seen in Eph. 2:8-9. Obviously, believers do not work for their salvation, but after they are saved, they cooperate with the Spirit to live in Christlike maturity (cf. Phil. 2:14-17; Eph. 2:10; 5:18). Salvation is all of God and totally free but it requires an active, costly, repentant, continuing faith response (cf. Matt. 13:44-46).

The context militates against an individualistic interpretation because the "your" in Phil. 2:12, "you" in Phil. 2:13, and all the verbs are plural, which refers to the entire Philippian church, not to an individual's spiritual salvation. If it did refer to spiritual salvation it is corporate (cf. Phil. 1:28) and progressive (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15). The thrust of the passage may have been to encourage them to trust in God's presence and purpose for the church at Philippi (cf. Gal. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:2).

■ **"with fear and trembling"** This was an OT idiom of respect and awe towards God (cf. Ps. 2:11; 119:120). It is used several times in Paul's writings (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5). Believers need to remember the transcendent Holiness of God!

2:13 "for it is God who is at work in you" "God" is placed first in the sentence for emphasis. The term "work" is a present active participle which refers to "continuous effective work" (cf. Gal. 5:6). This is a different compound term from Phil. 2:12 but the same root. The phrase "in you" is plural and may mean "among you," which focuses on God's activity in the life of the Church (cf. Col. 1:27).

NASB "both to will and to work for His good pleasure"

NKJV "both to will and to do His good pleasure"

NRSV "both to will and to work for his good pleasure"

TEV "to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose"

NJB "for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act"

Believers' attitudes and actions are produced by the Spirit. The present active participle of Phil. 2:13a is

repeated as a present active infinitive in Phil. 2:13b. This is the paradox of a sovereign God and a covenant-making God. Salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything commitment! Paul is a good example of God's undeserved grace (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10). In this context (cf. Gal. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:2) God's will is for a united, loving, witnessing, effective church.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. ¹⁷But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

2:14-16 These verses are one sentence in Greek.

2:14 "do all things without grumbling or disputing" There was obviously disunity in the Philippian congregation. Whether the source was

1. Christian leaders who were jealous (cf. Phil. 1:14-17)
2. the two women who were at war with each other (cf. Phil. 4:2-3)
3. the false teachers (cf. Phil. 3:2ff)

is uncertain The text does not specify whether Paul, other Christians, or unbelievers were the object of the grumbling.

2:15

NASB	"that you may prove yourselves to be"
NKJV	"that you may become"
NRSV, TEV	"so that you may become"
NJB	"so that you remain"

This is an aorist middle (deponent) subjunctive. As believers choose to be saved, so they must choose to live for Christ! The NT is a new covenant. The believer has rights and responsibilities!

■ **"blameless"** This is literally "without defect" (cf. Phil. 3:6). Originally in the OT it referred to sacrificial animals but came to be used metaphorically for humans (cf. Noah, Gen. 6:9,17 and Job, Job 1:1). It is applied to Jesus in Heb. 9:14 and 1 Pet. 1:19. This was another way of referring to the Christlike life. This is God's will for His people (cf. Lev. 19:2; Deut. 18:13; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16). God wants to reflect Himself in believers ("children of God," cf. Eph. 1:4, 6:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24) and thereby draw the lost world to Himself (cf. Phil. 2:15). See Special Topic: Blameless at Col. 1:22.

■ **"spotless"** This is a term from the wine industry for "unmixed wine." It is used in the NT metaphorically for moral purity (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19).

■ **"above reproach"** This was used in the Septuagint (LXX) for sacrificial animals. The term is often used metaphorically in the NT to indicate moral uprightness (cf. Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5,6). This does not imply sinlessness, but maturity.

■ **"in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"** In Deut. 32:5 this phrase refers to Israel, but in this context it refers to the unbelieving world. This is another example of NT author's universalizing OT passages to fit all mankind. The root of the terms "crooked" and "perverse" is related to the OT concept of the righteousness of God which is described as a "measuring reed" (a straight edge or ruler). Any deviation from His standard was described in terms of "crooked" or "bent." These terms are translated by

"sin," "iniquity," or "trespass" in English. Notice that in this context it is the Church that is called on to be the light in a darkened world.

NASB	"you appear as lights in the world"
NKJV	"you shine as lights in the world"
NRSV	"you shine like stars in the world"
TEV	"You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky"
NJB	"shining out among them like bright stars in the world"

Notice the plurals indicating a corporate context. This does not refer to individuals, as in Daniel 12, but to churches as a whole (cf. Phil. 2:12). There have been two possible understandings of this term:

1. as related to Dan. 12:3, where believers are described as luminaries or stars shining in the sky
2. those who bear light (i.e., the gospel of Phil. 2:16) to the world (*kosmos*).

In Matt. 5:14-16 believers are to be light-bearers, with Jesus as our example (cf. John 8:12; Eph. 5:14).

2:16

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"hold fast the word of life"
TEV	"so you offer them the message of life"
NJB	"Proffering to it the Word of life"

This is a present tense participle which can be interpreted in two ways: (1) "holding fast," referring to believers' continued faithfulness or (2) "holding forth," referring to believers as witnesses. Both could fit this context (esp. Phil. 2:12).

▣ **"in the day of Christ"** This refers to the Second Coming of Christ. A very similar phrase is used in Phil. 1:6,10. Often in the NT the Second Coming is used as a motivation for current Christian living. See Special Topic at Phil. 1:10.

▣ **"I may have cause to glory"** The godliness of the Philippian Christians (i.e., churches) was evidence of Paul's apostleship (cf. Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19-20).

▣ **"I did not run in vain nor toil in vain"** This is literally "that not in vain I ran nor in vain labored" (i.e., for the purpose of establishing effective, reproducing gospel churches). These are two aorist tense verbs. The first term, "ran," was used in the Egyptian papyri for water running to no purpose. In this context, "vain" must refer to their Christlike maturity (not their salvation) as they shine forth for Christ! Paul often expresses his anxiety about the new churches' maturity and steadfastness by using metaphors such as these (cf. Gal. 2:2; 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:1; 3:3,5). Paul often spoke of his ministry as an athletic contest (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7).

2:17,18 These verses contain four terms which are usually translated "rejoice." This shows that even at the prospect of death (Roman capital punishment while in prison), Paul was glad to be serving Christ and them (i.e., the churches he established). He also admonishes them to do the same. Believers are to give their lives on behalf of others as Christ gave His life for them (cf. Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:13-14; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

2:17 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. This should not be taken as Paul's expecting the death sentence. In this same book he expressed his hope and expectation for release (cf. Phil. 1:25; 2:24).

NASB, NKJV	"I am being poured out as a drink offering"
NRSV	"I am being poured out as a libation"
TEV	"my life's blood is to be poured out like an offering"

This is a present passive indicative. Paul views himself as a sacrifice on behalf of the faith of the Philippians (i.e., Gentiles, cf. Rom. 15:16). Paul refers to his ministry as a sacrifice several times (cf. Rom. 15:16; 2 Tim. 4:6). This Greek term reflects an OT term for a wine libation (cf. Exod. 29:38-41; Num. 15:3-10).

■ **"upon the sacrifice and service of your faith"** Paul saw his life and ministry as a sacrifice to God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). He was offering the Gentiles to God (cf. Rom. 15:16). Jesus was a sacrifice for all mankind (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:2). Believers are to emulate Jesus and Paul (cf. 4:19).

The Greek word translated "service" (*leitourgia*) comes into English as "liturgy." It was used in the Septuagint (LXX) for a priest providing an offering. This may be another allusion to Paul's self sacrifice for the gospel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:19-3:1

¹⁹But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. ²⁰For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. ²¹For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father. ²³Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; ²⁴and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly. ²⁵But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*. ²⁹Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me. ^{3:1}Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2:19 "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send" Paul knew his life and plans were not his own, but were controlled by the will of God (cf. Phil. 2:24; 1 Cor. 4:19; James 4:13-17).

■ **"so that I also may be encouraged"** This is a present active subjunctive. This term is used in the sense of a "farewell" and "good luck" and has been found on many ancient tombs. This is the only usage in the NT and seems to be used in the sense of "cheered" (NRSV).

2:20

NASB	"kindred spirit"
NKJV	"like-minded"
NRSV	"like him"
TEV	"who shares my feelings"
NJB	"cares as sincerely for your well-being"

This is literally "like- souled" (*isopsuchos*) This implies that Timothy had the same love for the Philippian church as Paul did. A similar compound "like-minded" (*sumpsuchos*) is used in Phil. 2:2.

NASB, NRSV "who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare"

NKJV	"who will sincerely care for your state"
TEV	"who really cares about you"
NJB	"cares as sincerely for your well-being"

Originally this term meant "legitimately born," but it came to be used metaphorically for "genuine." The term "concerned" appears in Phil. 4:6 and means "anxious" and had a negative connotation. In this verse it has a positive connotation.

2:21 It is uncertain to whom Paul was referring, but he obviously meant his associates in the ministry. This is probably related to the jealous preachers in the Roman church (cf. Phil. 1:14-17). Others see it as being related to the false teachers of chap. 3. However, this seems unusual because Paul would not refer to them as "preachers of Christ" (cf. Phil. 1:15). A good example of the kind of mixed priorities Paul is referring to can be seen in Demas (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10). Self-interest was, and is, a recurrent problem (cf. 1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5; Phil. 2:4).

2:22 "his proven worth" This term is used of testing coins or precious metals to prove their genuineness. Timothy had been with Paul at Philippi as recorded in Acts 16 and 20. He was well acquainted with this church and he loved them dearly.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

■ **"like a child *serv*ing his father"** This was Paul's way of referring to a good, loyal, and faithful helper (cf. Titus 1:4). However, in Timothy's case, it also meant convert (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

2:23 "as soon as I see how things go with me" Paul did expect some word concerning his legal case soon, but he was still uncertain whether he would be put to death or be able to return and visit with them. The order of Paul's prison letters seems to be: (1) Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon early in the trial process and (2) Philippians toward the conclusion of the case.

2:24 "I trust" This is a perfect active indicative used in the sense of "to be assured or confident" (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3; Heb. 13:18). Paul's confidence was in the Lord (Phil. 2:24), in the Spirit (1:19b), and in their prayers (1:19a). Paul had much more confidence in his release from prison in this book than in Colossians or Ephesians.

2:25 "I thought" These are epistolary aorists. Paul was writing as if he had already done it.

■ **"necessity"** This is a very strong Greek word (cf. Acts 1:24; 13:46; 2 Cor. 9:5; Heb. 8:3). It is placed first in the sentence for emphasis.

■ **"Epaphroditus"** His name is related to the goddess, Aphrodite. He is not the same as Epaphras who was mentioned in Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23, although Epaphras is an abbreviation of Epaphroditus.

■ **"my brother and fellow-worker and fellow soldier"** Paul saw this man as a close associate. Apparently he had been sent by the Philippians to bring a monetary gift to Paul in prison and to stay on and help him. While there, he became deathly ill (Phil. 2:27). Paul was returning him to his home church and expressing his thanksgiving to them for sending him. Paul did not want the church to be angry with him because he had returned early.

■ **"your messenger and minister to my needs"** "Messenger" is the term "apostle" which means "a sent one." Here, it is used in its non-technical sense (cf. Phil. 4:18; 2 Cor. 8:23). Remember context determines word meaning, not the lexicon/dictionary.

2:26 "for he was longing for you all" This is a strong term used of Paul's longing to see this church as in Phil. 1:8 and 4:1. Epaphroditus was homesick as well as physically ill.

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV "distressed"
TEV "is very upset"
NJB "was worrying"

This term can mean "homesick" from one usage found in the Koine Greek papyri found in Egypt. Here it describes his mental anguish over the report of his physical illness reaching the Philippian church. This same term is used of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).

2:27 "he was sick to the point of death" Apparently Paul was unable to heal him (cf. Phil. 2:30). It is difficult to determine when and how the Apostles used the gift of healing and why they were unable to do so on some occasions (cf. 2 Cor. 12; 2 Tim. 4:20). Healing is not automatic. Do those modern preachers who claim that God desires all to be healed really believe that Paul the Apostle did not have enough faith on this occasion? Faith is not the key to divine healing, but God's will and plan for the ones healed.

Paul wanted the Philippians to know that Epaphroditus was truly and seriously ill. Possibly some in the church at Philippi would be upset when he returned home early (cf. Phil. 2:28-30).

2:30 "risking his life" This is an aorist middle participle which literally means "gambled." It must refer to his sickness. Paul uses the Greek term "soul" (*psychē*) to refer to Epaphroditus' life. The Bible does not follow the Greek concept that humans have "an immortal soul" but the Hebrew concept that humans are a "living soul" (cf. Gen. 2:7). The physical body is the outward boundary of our earthly existence. Humans are related to this planet like the animals, but they are also related to God. Human beings, however, are a unity, not a dichotomy or trichotomy (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). This unity is discussed in the NT in contrasting ways:

1. old man-new man
2. external-internal
3. present age-age to come
4. flesh-spirit
5. resurrection life-resurrection day

Be careful of a proof-texted theology that picks one or two verses out of their literary context and asserts that they are the "key" to interpret the rest of the bible. If the interpretive key to the Scriptures is the trichotomous humanity (body, soul, spirit) then where is the clear teaching passage from Jesus or Paul? Anyone can pick an isolated verse and claim it as the key. This would imply that God's truth is not clearly written for the common man, but only for an elite group with secret knowledge of this "key" verse or perspective (Gnosticism). This approach to interpretation is a plague in modern Christianity.

NASB "to complete what was deficient in your service to me"
NKJV "to supply what was lacking in your service to me"
NRSV "to make up for those services that you could not give me"
TEV "in order to give me the help that you yourselves could not give"
NJB "to do the duty to me which you could not do yourselves"

In English this sounds somewhat negative, however, it was a Greek idiom showing lack of opportunity but with a positive desire (cf. Phil. 4:10; Rom. 1:10).

3:1 "finally" This is literally "for the rest" (*loipon*). Paul often used this term to make the transition to a new subject, usually at the close of the letter (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1).

There is a new trend in NT interpretation called "chiasim" which seeks to discern a type of inverted outline (ex. A, B, C, B, A). This pattern of parallelism is known from the OT and many assert that it was also common in Greek thought. Often Paul's finale seems to introduce the middle truth of this structured parallelism.

▣ **"rejoice in the Lord"** This is a recurrent theme. Rejoice in suffering, rejoice in salvation, rejoice in Him!

■ **"To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you"** Major truths need to be repeated for emphasis, impact, and retention. Paul must have said these things to them orally while in Philippi and could possibly have written to them in a previous letter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the meaning of Phil. 2:12-13 (both contextually and theologically).
2. Why would the Philippian Christians be grumbling and disputing (Phil. 2:14)?
3. Why were Paul's co-ministers seen as having mixed interests (Phil. 2:21)?
4. Why could Paul not heal Epaphroditus?

PHILIPPIANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The True Righteousness	All for Christ	A Warning	The True Righteousness	The True Way of Christian Salvation
3:1-11	3:1-11	3:1b 3:2-4a 3:4b-6 3:7-11	3:1-11	3:1b-16
Pressing Toward the Mark	Pressing Toward the Goal	Confession and Exhortation	Running Toward the Goal	
3:12-16	3:12-16	3:12-16	3:12-14 3:15-16	
	Our Citizenship in Heaven			
3:17-4:1	3:17-4:1	3:17-4:1	3:17-21	3:17-4:1

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:1

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

3:1 "finally" This is literally "for the rest" (*loipon*). Paul often used this term to make the transition to a new subject, usually at the close of the letter (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1).

▣ **"rejoice in the Lord"** This is a recurrent theme. Rejoice in suffering, rejoice in salvation, rejoice in Him!

▣ **"To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you"** Major truths need to be repeated for emphasis, impact and retention. Paul must have said these things to them orally while in Philippi and could possibly have written to them in a previous letter.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:2-6

²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

3:2 "Beware of the dogs" This is a present active imperative of "look out for" (*blepō*), repeated three times for emphasis. The rabbis called the Gentiles "dogs." Paul changed the phrase to refer to the false teachers. The term "dogs" in the OT referred to (1) male prostitutes (cf. Deut. 23:18) or (2) evil people (cf. Ps. 22:16,20). Culturally the idiom refers to vicious street mongrels. These false teachers were like ravenous dogs and vicious unbelievers (cf. Matt. 7:6; Gal. 5:15; Rev. 22:15).

NASB	"false-circumcision"
NKJV	"the mutilation"
NRSV	"those who mutilate the flesh"
TEV	"who insist on cutting the body"
NJB	"self-mutilation"

This is a reference to the Judaizers' insistence on circumcision (cf. Acts 15:1,5; Gal.5:2-3, 12). They basically taught that one had to be Jewish before he could be Christian. Becoming a proselyte Jew involved being circumcised, baptizing yourself, and offering a sacrifice in the temple. Circumcision became a metaphor for taking on "the yoke" of the Mosaic Law.

3:3

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"the true circumcision"
TEV	"the true circumcision"
NJB	"the true people of the circumcision"

This spiritual/faith circumcision is described in Rom. 2:28-29 and Gal. 3:29. The church in some ways is spiritual Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16). In the OT, circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen. 17:11,14,23-25). It involved a proper attitude, not just a physical ritual (cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; and Jer. 4:4). True spiritual circumcision is described by three present active participles:

1. the ones worshiping in or by the Spirit of God
2. the ones glorying in Christ
3. the ones not putting confidence in the flesh

NASB	"glory in Christ Jesus"
NKJV	"rejoice in Christ Jesus"
NRSV	"and boast in Christ Jesus"
TEV	"rejoice in our life in union with Christ Jesus"
NJB	"and make Christ Jesus our boast"

Paul often uses this word (cf. Rom. 2:23; 3:27; 4:2; 5:2,3,11; 11:18; 15:17; 1 Cor. 1:31; 3:21; 4:7; 5:6; 7:14; 8:24; 9:2,4,11, 15,16; 10:8,13,15,16; 11:10,12; 2 Cor. 1:14; 5:12; 7:4; 10:17; 11:17,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9,11; Gal. 6:4,13,14; Eph. 2:9; Phil. 1:26; 2:16; 3:3; 2 Thess. 1:4). It is translated according to the context as "rejoice," "boast," "confident pride," or "exalt."

NASB "put no confidence in the flesh"
NKJV, NRSV "have no confidence in the flesh"
TEV "we do not put any trust in external ceremonies"
NJB "not relying on physical qualifications"

This term implies a confident boasting in something or someone. This phrase is in contrast to the previous phrase. Paul's relationship with Christ and his understanding of the gospel gave him confidence.

This may refer to the Jewish pride of lineage from Abraham (cf. Phil. 3:4-5; Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,37,39). It surely refers to Jewish rituals like circumcision (cf. Acts 15 and Galatians).

3:4 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"I far more"** Paul reluctantly compares his Jewish credentials with those of the Judaizers. They had no racial or religious superiority over him (cf. Phil. 3:5-6; 2 Cor. 11:22). Paul defended himself because by attacking him, they were attempting to discredit the gospel.

3:5 "circumcised the eighth day" The Jews circumcised on the 8th day after birth (cf. Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12:3). Flavius Josephus tells us that the Arabs circumcised at the age of 13, following Gen. 17:23-27.

▣ **"of the nation of Israel"** For a list of the privileges of the Jewish people, see Rom. 9:4-5, 11:1.

▣ **"tribe of Benjamin"** This was the tribe of Israel's first king, Saul. It was also part of the southern kingdom, Judah, after the tribes divided in 922 b.c.

▣ **"a Hebrew of Hebrews"** This idiom refers to either (1) pure racial stock or (2) his speaking the Hebrew (Aramaic) language.

3:6 "as to the Law, a Pharisee" This was the conservative popular sect within Judaism which developed during the Maccabean period (cf. John 3:1). They desired to keep the Mosaic Law in every detail (cf. Acts 26:4-5). They had detailed regulations for every area of life which had developed over time in the discussion between the two schools of rabbis (Shammai and Hillel). Their oral traditions were later codified into the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were positive examples of their sincerity and dedication.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES

▣ **"as to zeal"** Enthusiasm is not automatically from God (cf. Rom. 10:2).

▣ **"a persecutor of the church"** Saul apparently imprisoned and possibly even killed believers (cf. Acts 8:3; 9:1,13,21; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13-14,23; 1 Tim. 1:13). This is an obvious reference to the Church universal (cf. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23-32). See Special Topic: Church (*Ekklesia*) at Col. 1:18.

▣ **"concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"** Paul was speaking of his pre-Christian understanding of the Mosaic Law (cf. Mark 10:20) and its interpretation (Talmud). If these false teachers wanted to rejoice in their Jewishness, Paul could also (cf. 2 Cor. 11:16-23). See Special Topic at Eph. 4:24.

The term "blameless" was originally used in the OT of sacrificial animals (cf. Phil. 2:15). It does not mean "sinless" (cf. Gen. 6:9,17; Job 1:1), but one who had fulfilled that which he understood of God's will.

See Special Topic: Blameless at Col. 1:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

3:7 "I have counted as loss" This is a perfect middle (deponent) indicative. Paul came to see how useless ritual and rules were as a means of obtaining and maintaining true righteousness (cf. Col. 2:16-23). This was a major theological shift of emphasis from Paul's previous religious training and lifestyle which occurred at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 23:3-16, 26:9-18).

3:8-11 These verses are one sentence in Greek.

3:8 "I count" This is a present middle (deponent) indicative. This term is used three times in Phil. 3:7, 8. This is a business term for "forfeit." All Paul previously trusted in for righteousness (his race and religious performance) he now was counting as "loss."

NASB, NRSV "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"

NKJV "for the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"

TEV "for the sake of what is much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"

NJB "because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"

The key to Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus. In Hebrew "know" implies intimate personal relationship, not facts about something or someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5).

The gospel is (1) a person to welcome; (2) a content to believe; and (3) a life to be lived! For "the surpassing value" (*huperechō*) see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19. This same word is used in Phil. 2:3; 3:8; and 4:7.

▣ **"I have suffered the loss of all things"** This is an aorist passive indicative. This could refer to his family, his inheritance, his religious merit and/or his rabbinical training. Everything he had previously considered valuable suddenly lost all its value! Everything changed on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9; 22:3-16; 26:9-18).

NASB, NKJV "count them but rubbish"

NRSV "regard them as rubbish"

TEV "I consider it all as mere garbage"

NJB "and look on them all as filth"

This is literally the term for "dung" or possibly a popular abbreviation of the phrase "thrown to the dogs" (cf. Phil. 3:2). Metaphorically it meant "of no value."

▣ **"that I may gain Christ"** This is an aorist active subjunctive. Paul uses this commercial term metaphorically, "to gain" or "to win" Christ or the gospel as in Phil. 1:21; 3:7,8; and 1 Cor. 9:19-22 [five times]. In Titus 1:11 he uses it in a literal sense.

3:9 "and may be found in Him" This is an aorist passive subjunctive. It expresses Paul's deepest prayer. "In Him" or "in Christ" was Paul's favorite grammatical construction for believers (for a good example notice Eph. 1:3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 [three times], 12, 13 [twice]).

▣ **"not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*"** This is the key issue (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,21-31). How is a mankind right with God? Performance or grace? This was once and for all answered for Paul on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). See Special Topic at Eph. 4:24.

▣ **"but that which is through faith in Christ"** Faith is how individuals receive the gift of the grace of God in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Faith and repentance are two necessary aspects of mankind's response to the new covenant (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

▣ **"The righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith"** Righteousness is a gift from God (cf. *dōrea*, Rom. 5:15; 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:7; *dōrēma*, Rom. 5:16; *dōron*, Eph. 2:8; *charisma*, Rom. 6:23). He always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65). God desires that all humans be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9); He has provided a way for all humans to be saved! They must respond and continue to respond to God's offer by

1. repentance
2. faith
3. obedience
4. service
5. perseverance

See Special Topic at Eph. 4:24.

3:10 "the power of His resurrection" This must refer to believers' new life in Christ. This series of phrases in Phil. 3:10 may reflect Paul's sufferings for the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12,16; 6:4-10; 11:23-28) which included his current imprisonment.

Others see all these phrases in Phil. 3:10 as aspects of believers' mystical union with Christ or their Christlike maturity. As Jesus was perfected by the things He suffered (cf. Heb. 5:8) so believers are matured by suffering (cf. Rom. 5:1-5).

▣ **"the fellowship of His sufferings"** Suffering is a common theme of the Christian experience of the first several centuries as it is in many societies in the world today (cf. Rom. 8:17; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-19). As believers share Jesus' victory, they also share His ministry (cf. Matt. 10:24; Luke 6:40; John 13:14-16; 15:20; 17:18; 20:21; 2 Tim. 3:12). See Special Topic: *Koinōnia* at Phil. 2:1.

▣ **"being conformed to His death"** This is a present passive participle. Believers must be dead to sin and self and alive to God (cf. Matt. 16:24-26; Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3). True life is preceded by death to the old life!

3:11 This is a third class conditional sentence which meant probable future action. Verse 11 must be interpreted in light of verse 10. This phrase does not express doubt about salvation, but humility!

▣ **"I may attain"** Here again is the dialectical or paradoxical model of Paul's theology. Paul knew he was a Christian and that as Christ was raised by the Spirit so he would also be raised (cf. Rom. 8:9-11). However, Paul saw salvation not only as a past completed event (cf. Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5), but also an ongoing process (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15) and ultimately in a future consummation (cf. Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9; 1 Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28). Christianity is resting in the character and gift of God in Christ and an aggressive, constant, vigorous life of grateful service to God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10). George E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 521-522, has a good discussion on this subject.

▣ **"resurrection"** This is an unusual compound term. It is found only here in the NT. It is literally "out of the

dead into resurrection *life*." Paul has been discussing the intimate personal relationship between himself and the resurrected Christ. He longed for the end-time day when he, too, would experience physical resurrection as he already had experienced spiritual resurrection (cf Rom. 6:4-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:2). This is part of the "already but not yet" tension of the Kingdom of God, the overlapping of the two Jewish ages.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

3:12 "Not that I have already obtained it" Paul lived in the tension of the present but not yet consummated Kingdom of God. He knew Christ, he knew who he was in Christ, he knew he was accepted by Christ but he struggled with Christlike living (cf. Romans 7). Paul had arrived but had not fully arrived; he was complete but not fully complete.

Some ancient Greek manuscripts, P⁴⁶, D*, and G, add "or have been righteous." This addition is also found in the Greek texts used by Irenaeus and Ambrosiaster. However, the shorter text is supported by MSS P⁶¹, κ , A, B, D^c, K, and P as well as the ancient translations, the Vulgate, the Syrian, and the Coptic.

NASB, TEV "or have already become perfect"
NKJV "or am already perfected"
NRSV "or have already reached the goal"
NJB "nor yet reached my goal"

This is a perfect passive indicative with the implication that something happened in the past which has become a settled state and this was accomplished by God. The term itself meant

1. fully developed
2. fully equipped
3. complete
4. mature
5. adequate

It did not have the English connotation of perfection or sinlessness.

■ **"I press on"** This is a present active indicative. This was originally a hunting term meaning "to pursue an animal." It came to be used metaphorically of a foot race. Paul did not pursue salvation (cf. Rom. 9:30) but a maturity, a Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 6:4-9).

NASB "in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus"
NKJV "that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"
NRSV "to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own"
TEV "to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself"
NJB "in the attempt to take hold of the prize for which Christ Jesus took hold of me"

This section starts with a third class conditional sentence (using *ei* instead of *ean*) which means probable future action (cf. Phil. 3:11). It can refer to (1) salvation (Phil. 3:9); (2) Christlikeness (Phil. 3:10); or (3) resurrection (Phil. 3:11).

This is a strong Greek word. Paul was "snatched" by Christ on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). The One whose followers he persecuted now confronted him as the resurrected Lord. Theology and personal experience merged! Paul now sought to be like those and Him whom he once attacked.

3:13 "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet" This is a Perfect active infinitive. This term is used three times in Phil. 3:12-13. Paul strove to be mature in Christ but he knew that he fell short of Christlike maturity (cf. Romans 7). Yet the great truth of the gospel is that in Christ he (and all believers) were already complete (justified and sanctified, cf. Rom. 8:29-30).

The terms "regard," "impute," or "reckon" (cf. Rom 4:3; 6:11; 1 Cor. 13:5) all refer to a mental affirmation whereby fallen mankind understands the gospel and chooses to live in light of its new truth and new worldview in Christ!

There is a manuscript variation in this sentence with the word "yet" versus "not." The ancient texts are split between these two options. The best explanation is that scribes changed Paul's "not" to "not yet" because they perhaps thought he was being too modest. Like most manuscript variations this affects interpretation very little.

■ **"forgetting what lies behind"** This is a present middle (deponent) participle. Paul started over spiritually. He had left his Jewish past. However, because it is present tense this phrase may include his Apostolic work or present imprisonment. His spiritual standing before God was not based on human performance, past or present!

■ **"reaching forward to what lies ahead"** This is another present middle (deponent) participle. This is the first in a series of athletic terms. It meant "a runner stretching for the goal." It is an intensified compound with two prepositions, *epi* and *ek*. Paul vigorously lived a life of gratitude. After being saved his intensity level remained high but the motive was radically changed from self-effort to gospel service.

3:14 This is a series of athletic metaphors. They show us the strenuous effort needed for the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24,27; Heb. 12:1).

■ **"upward call of God"** See Special Topic: Called at Eph. 4:1.

3:15 "as many as are perfect" This is the same term "perfect" as Phil. 3:12 but Paul is using it in two different senses. Christians can be mature without being sinless (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 5:14; 6:1).

■ **"let us . . . have this attitude"** Paul often refers to the mental processes. Paul uses several of the Greek words for reasoning or thinking. This is a present active subjunctive of "*phroneō*" (cf. Phil. 1:7; 3:15,19); "*ginosko*" (cf. Phil. 1:12); "*psuchē*" (cf. Phil. 1:27); "*noēma*" (cf. Phil. 4:7); "*logizomai*" (cf. Phil. 4:9); "*manthano*" (cf. Phil. 4:9, 11). Believers are to worship God with their minds (cf. Deut. 6:23, quoted in Matt. 22:36-38; Mark 12:29-34; Luke 10:27-28). True Christianity cannot be anti-intellectual. However, we must not trust in our fallen human reasoning, but in God's self disclosure (Scripture).

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. There were those in the fellowship who did have a "different attitude."

■ **"God will reveal that also to you"** There is disagreement among believers about many aspects of the faith. Paul felt confident that the new covenant which involved an indwelling Spirit, a new heart, and a new mind would eventually inform and reform all believers (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; John 6:45; Eph. 1:17; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 2:27).

In context this phrase reveals Paul's view about the authority of his message. He felt he was led by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10; 7:10-12; 11:23; 14:37-38; 2 Cor. 10:8; 12:1; Gal. 1:12,16; 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:14). This was another way to reflect his sense of apostolic authority.

This could be interpreted in two ways: (1) God will reveal His truth to errant believers or (2) God will

reveal to believers those who are errant in their doctrine or practice. In context #2 seems best.

3:16

NASB "however, let us keep living by the same standard to which we have attained"

NKJV "Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind"

NRSV "Only let us hold fast to what we have attained"

TEV "However that may be, let us go forward according to the same rules we have followed until now"

NJB " Meanwhile, let us go forward from the point we have each attained"

This verse is Paul's admonition to continue to live as Christians (cf. Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2,15). Believers are justified and sanctified by God's gift through faith in Christ, but they must continue to strive toward Christlike maturity (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

There is a series of additions to the verse in the ancient Greek manuscripts. The shortest text (NASB and NRSV) is found in the Greek manuscripts P¹⁶, P⁴⁶, κ^* , A, B. The UBS⁴ gives this shorter text an "A" rating (certain). The Textus Receptus adds "let us be of the same mind" (NKJV) which is found in MSS κ^c , K, and P. There are several other additions which seems to show the scribal tendency to modify and add to this verse.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:17-4:1

¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. ^{4:1}Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

3:17 "Join in following my example" This verse has two present imperatives. Paul is encouraging them to follow him as he followed Christ (cf. Phil. 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9). This phrase is logically linked to Phil. 3:15-16. Notice how Paul's example is expanded to include his missionary team and possibly Epaphroditus ("my"-"us").

▣ **"Example"** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (TUPOS)

3:18 "for many walk of whom I often told you" There were, and are, false teachers in the church. In this book they could be either Judaizers (cf. Phil. 3:2-16), as in the book of Galatians and Acts 15, or Gnostics (cf. 1 John 2:18,22; 4:1-6). The only way to protect oneself from error is to know, embrace, and live the truth! False teachers are sharp, logical, articulate, and attractive people. Trust the Son; follow the Book; yield to the Spirit!

▣ **"even weeping"** This is a term for intense grief (cf. Matt. 2:18; 26:75; Mark 5:38-39; John 11:31; James 4:9; 5:1). Paul took no joy in others who were in moral or theological error.

▣ **"enemies of the cross of Christ"** There is uncertainty about the identity of these "enemies of the cross." The phrases used by Paul are so intense they seem to refer to the unbelieving false teachers of

Phil. 3:2-16. The sins listed in Phil. 3:19 do not fit legalistic Jews, but Greek antinomian false teachers or possibly Christian converts who have reverted to former pagan lifestyles (cf. Col. 2:16-23; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). The context favors the last option. But, if so, the contrast of Phil. 3:20 implies that Paul thought they were not truly saved (cf. Matt. 7:13; 1 John 2:19; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Rev. 2:4-5; 10-11; 16-17; 25-26; 3:2,5,11,21).

Be careful that your systematic (denominational, experiential, cultural) theology does not interpret this text. Literary context and the original author's intent must be the major criteria. The NT is not a systematic presentation of truth but an eastern, paradoxical genre. The NT regularly presents truths in seemingly contradictory pairs (paradox). The Christian life is a tension-filled life of assurance and hope as well as responsibility and warning! Salvation is not a product but a new life!

3:19

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "whose end is destruction"

TEV "they are going to end up in hell"

NJB "they are destined to be lost"

These were sincere, informed, religious people. Paul uses this term *apōleia* to describe God's ultimate judgment (cf. Phil. 1:28; Rom. 9:22; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:9). However, in the Gospels it must be admitted that it was used in the sense of "wasted" (cf. Matt. 26:8; Mark 14:4). Therefore, it is impossible to know to whom Paul is referring (believers or nonbelievers).

NASB "whose god is *their* appetite"

NKJV, NRSV "whose god is their belly"

TEV "because their god is their bodily desires"

NJB "their god is their stomach"

This shows their tendency toward (1) antinomian practices or (2) gluttony and materialism. This sounds more like Greek false teachers (cf. Rom. 16:17-18) than Jewish legalists (cf. Phil. 3:2-6). TEV may have captured the metaphorical meaning, "because their god is their bodily desires."

- ▣ **"whose glory is in their shame"** This could refer to
 1. the Judaizers' emphasis on circumcision or Jewish pride
 2. the Gnostics' emphasis on knowledge
 3. the Libertines' immoral lifestyle

These false teachers were proud of the very things for which they should have been ashamed! The false teachers of the NT are often characterized by financial and/or sexual exploitation.

- ▣ **"who set their minds on earthly things"** This shows the origin of much of humanity's religiosity (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23; 3:1-2).

3:20

NASB, NKJV "For our citizenship is in heaven"

NRSV "But our citizenship is in heaven"

TEV "We, however, are citizens of heaven"

NJB "But our homeland is in heaven"

This verse is a contrast to Phil. 3:18-19. The pronoun "our" is emphatic. "Heaven" is plural (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 4:14; 7:26) following the Hebrew usage (*shamayim*). Possibly Paul was using the Roman colonial status of this city as an illustration (cf. Phil. 1:27).

- ▣ **"we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"** Paul often uses this term "eagerly wait" in relation to the Second Coming (cf. Rom. 8:19,23,25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Heb. 9:28). Believers' desire for the Second Coming is one evidence of their relationship with Christ and an impetus for Christlike living (cf. Rom. 8:19, 23; 1 Cor. 1:7).

Paul's emphasis on the Lord's return is recurrent, but his understanding of the time element is ambiguous. There are several passages in which Paul includes himself in the group who would be alive at the Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Corinthians 5; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:15,17). However, there are other passages where he asserts a future return beyond his own lifetime (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14 and especially 2 Thessalonians). It is possible that the "we" of the first group of texts is literary, or that Paul's views on this subject developed. It is difficult to suppose that an inspired author "developed" his theology. A better approach is to assert a dialectical model. Paul, like all NT writers, asserted the certainty and "soon-ness" of the Second Coming. Believers are to live in light of the any-moment return of the Lord! However, Jesus (Matthew 24) and Paul (2 Thessalonians 2) spoke of historical events that must occur before the Second Coming. Both are somehow true! The return of Jesus is a motivating hope of every generation of believers but the reality of only one generation!

This is one of two times Paul calls Jesus "Savior" (cf. Eph. 5:23) before the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus), in which he uses the title ten times. This term came to be a title for the Roman Emperor. In Titus there is a parallel in the use of this term between God the Father and Jesus the Son (cf. Phil. 1:3 vs. 1:4; 2:10 vs. 2:13; 3:4 vs. 3:6). The early Christians were willing to face death rather than relinquish this title to the Emperor. Both "Savior" and "Lord" were Imperial Roman titles used by Christians exclusively for Jesus.

3:21 "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" Paul put a positive emphasis on believers' bodily existence (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-10), both here and in heaven. This is referred to theologically as glorification (cf. Rom. 8:30; 1 John 3:2), when salvation will be consummated and fully realized. Our body of dust (cf. Ps. 103:14) will be exchanged and remade (1 Thess. 4:13-18) into a spiritual body like Jesus' (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 John 3:2).

■ **"He has even to subject all things to Himself"** The resurrected Christ is Lord of all (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Col. 1:20).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is Paul referring to in Phil. 3:2?
2. Why does Paul give his Jewish credentials?
3. Practically, how does Phil. 3:10 relate to believers?
4. Are these false teachers saved?

PHILIPPIANS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Exhortations	Be United, Joyful and in Prayer	Final Appeals	Instructions	Last Advice
(3:17-4:1)	(3:17-4:1)	(3:17-4:1)	4:1	(3:17-4:1)
4:2-7	4:2-7	4:2-3 4:4-7	4:2-3 4:4 4:5-7	4:2-3 4:4-9
4:8-9	4:8-9	4:8-9	4:8-9	
Acknowledgment of the Philippian Gift	Philippian Generosity		Thanks for the Gift	Thanks for Help Received
4:10-14	4:10-20	4:10-14	4:10-13 4:14-20	4:10-20
4:15-20		4:15-20		
Final Greetings	Greetings and Blessing		Final Greetings	Greetings and Final Wish
4:21-23	4:21-23	4:21-22 4:23	4:21-22 4:23	4:21-22 4:23

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED TEXT: 4:1

¹Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand

firm in the Lord, my beloved.

4:1 "my beloved brothers" Paul combined two of the typical NT terms for believers: "beloved" [twice] and "brothers." This affectionate combination showed his great love for this church as is seen in the next phrase and the parallel in Phil. 1:8.

- ▣ **"whom I long to see"** This same strong term (*epipothēō*) is also used in Phil. 1:8; 2:26; 2 Cor. 9:14.
- ▣ **"my joy and crown"** The term "crown" (*stephanos*) meant a victor's crown in an athletic contest. This same exuberance can be seen in Paul's comments to another Macedonian church (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 3:9). This church was the proof of Paul's effective apostleship (cf. 1 Cor. 9:2; 1 Thess. 2:19).
- ▣ **"stand firm"** This is a Present active imperative. This military metaphor refers to the Christian's ability to remain faithful amidst problems (cf. Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:11-14). It also relates to perseverance (see Special Topic at Phil. 1:9-11), which is only possible "in the Lord" (cf. Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

This is another biblical paradox in the relationship between God's sovereignty and humanity's free will (compare Ezek. 18:31 with Ezek. 36:26-27). In this verse believers are commanded to "stand firm," while in Jude 1:24 it is God who keeps them standing. Somehow, both are true.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3

¹Urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ²Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of the gospel*, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4:2 "Euodia...Syntyche" Apparently, even in this loving church there is still internal tension. This does not refer to doctrinal tension, which was mentioned in chapter 3, but to fellowship tension of some sort. This first proper name means "a prosperous journey or success." The second name means "pleasant acquaintance" or "good luck." Their names did not match their current actions. In Macedonia women had more freedom than anywhere in the ancient Roman world (cf. Acts 16:12-15). Sometimes freedom turns into personal preference or even license.

- ▣ **"live in harmony in the Lord"** The key to harmony is the believers' relationship to Christ which radically transforms their relationships with their covenant brothers and sisters. Believers' love for God is clearly seen in their love for one another (cf. Eph. 4:1-6; 2:1-5; 1 John 4:20-21).

4:3

NASB, NKJV	"true comrade"
NRSV	"loyal companion"
TEV	"faithful partner"
NJB	"partner"

This is often translated literally as "yoke-fellow" (cf. Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p.783). However, it is a masculine singular noun which, in a list of so many other names, possibly was a proper name itself, *Syzygus* (cf. NJB and Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 607), which would have been a play on the meaning of the name.

It is possible that this was Paul's way of referring to Luke. The "we" sections of Acts start and stop at Philippi. Luke may have stayed there to help the new converts and collect the offering for the church in Jerusalem.

- ▣ **"to help these women"** This is a present middle imperative which literally means "take hold with." Paul

was admonishing one of the members of the Philippian church to help these two women overcome their differences in the Lord (cf. Gal. 6:1-4).

NASB	"who shared my struggle in <i>the cause of the gospel</i>"
NKJV	"labored with me"
NRSV	"struggled beside me"
TEV	"have worked hard with me"
NJB	"have struggled hard"

This term is only used here and in Phil. 1:27. It is a military or athletic term for a "hard fight." It is metaphorical for the intensity of gospel work. These women helped Paul in his evangelistic mission work. Many of Paul's helpers mentioned in Romans 16 were women. Even missionaries have disagreements (cf. Acts 15:36-41). How they solve them as Christians is the issue, and the witness!

▣ **"Clement"** This is a common name in the Roman world. This person is mentioned nowhere else in the NT. However, Origen of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Jerome believed that it refers to Clement of Rome who wrote a letter to the Corinthian church sometime toward the end of the first century (a.d. 95). However, this identification seems highly speculative.

▣ **"and the rest of my fellow-workers"** Paul was willing to use many helpers in his gospel work. He was no prima-donna; he apparently delegated responsibility to other men and women. It is interesting to note in Romans 16 how many women's names appear as helpers of Paul.

▣ **"whose names are in the book of life"** This may refer to the registration of the covenant people in the OT (cf. Dan. 7:10; 12:1) which was metaphorical of God's memory. There are two books mentioned in Dan. 7:10 and Rev. 20:12-15: (1) the book of remembrances and (2) the book of life. The book of remembrances includes the names and deeds of both the redeemed and the lost (cf. Ps. 58:6; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16). The book of life includes the names of the redeemed and can be seen in Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27. God knows those who are His. He will reward His followers and judge the wicked (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). In the Greco-Roman world this term referred to the official registration of a city; if so, it might have been another play on this city's official status as a Roman colony (cf. Phil. 1:27; 3:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

4:4 There are two present active imperative forms of the term "rejoice" in Phil. 4:4. The term can be translated as a farewell, but in this context they must be translated "rejoice" (cf. 1 Thess. 5:16). This is a major theme in Philippians. Notice the number of times the terms "all" and "every" are used in Phil. 4:4-13 as in Phil. 1:1-8. Joy must not be linked to circumstances. The key is the believers' relationship to Christ ("in the Lord").

4:5

NASB	"gentle <i>spirit</i>"
NKJV, NRSV	"gentleness"
TEV	"a gentle attitude"
NJB	"good sense"

This call to Christian lifestyle began in Phil. 3:1, but the discussion of the false teachers drew Paul's mind

away until this point where he renews the emphasis. The term itself is best translated "kind," "gentle," or "yielding" (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:18).

▣ **"be known to all men"** This verse has been interpreted in two ways:

1. believers are to have this gentleness toward other believers so that those outside the church will notice and be attracted to Christ (cf. Matt. 5:16)
2. this gentleness is to be applied to all people, regardless of their relationship to the Lord, as a witness to His power in the lives of these converted pagans and as a deterrent to unfair criticism by unbelievers (cf. Rom. 12:17; 14:18; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Pet. 2:12,15; 3:16)

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "The Lord is near"

NKJV "The Lord is at hand"

TEV "The Lord is coming soon"

This word "near" is used of time (cf. Matt. 24:32,33). The Second Coming is a recurrent theme in Philippians. This has a very similar meaning to the Aramaic word *maranatha* (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:10). The any-moment expectation of the Second Coming was and is an encouragement to Christian living (cf. Rom. 13:12; James 5:8-9).

It is also possible that this could have referred to the Lord's moment-by-moment presence with believers (cf. Matt. 28:20; Rom. 10:8 and F. F. Bruce's *Answers to Questions*, p. 201).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MARANATHA

4:6 "be anxious for nothing" This is a present active imperative. The church at Philippi was under great tension, both from without and within. Anxiety is not an appropriate characteristic for the Christian life (cf. Matt. 6:25-34 and 1 Pet. 5:7). There is nothing that should worry believers except possibly their standing fast in the Lord and serving Him. The great enemy of peace is anxiety.

▣ **"but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"** This is a key answer to anxiety-prayer, for others and ourselves, mixed with thanksgiving. It is interesting how often Paul uses the term "thanksgiving" in combination with prayer (cf. Eph. 5:20; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17-18; 1 Tim. 2:1). There is an obvious contrast between "for nothing" and "in everything." See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at Eph. 3:20.

▣ **"Let your requests be made known to God"** This a present passive imperative. There are several passages in the NT which emphasize that believers should persist in prayer (cf. Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 18:2-8). Possibly, thanksgiving and perseverance are the two missing elements in a proper theology of prayer. God knows what is needed but He desires the fellowship and trust involved in prayer. God has limited Himself in many areas to the prayers of His children; "We have not because we ask not" (cf. James 4:2).

4:7 "the peace of God" It is interesting that in this context the peace of God is mentioned in Phil. 4:7 and the God who gives it is mentioned in Phil. 4:9. The first emphasizes what God gives and the second His character. Peace is used in several different senses in the NT:

1. it can be a title (cf. Isa. 9:6; Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16)
2. it can refer to the peace of the gospel in an objective sense (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Col. 1:20)
3. it can refer to the peace of the gospel in a subjective sense (cf. Eph. 2:14-17; Col. 3:15)

Sometimes 2 and 3 are combined as in Rom. 5:1. See Special Topic: Peace at Col. 1:20.

▣ **"which surpasses all comprehension"** This is a present active participle. It has been interpreted in two ways: (1) God's peace is better than human reason or (2) God's peace is beyond human reason. The parallel passage in Eph. 3:20 is helpful. God's ways are beyond our ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). An example of this peace that passes all human ability to understand is found in the life of Paul in this very chapter (cf.

Phil. 4:11-13). The peace of God must be unconnected with circumstances and locked securely to the person and work of Christ. For "surpasses" (*huperechō*) see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Eph. 1:19.

- **"shall guard your hearts and your minds"** God's peace acts as a soldier guarding believers. This same beautiful truth of God's garrisoning of His children can be seen in 1 Peter 1:4, 5. The two Greek terms "heart" (*kardia*) and "mind" (*nous*) are synonymous in speaking about the whole person (feeling and thinking). Paul emphasizes Christian thinking throughout this letter. See note at Phil. 3:15. See Special Topic: Heart at Col. 2:2.
- **"in Christ Jesus"** He is the key to Paul's theology. All of God's benefits and blessings flow to fallen mankind through the life, teachings, death, resurrection, Second Coming and personal union with Jesus Christ. Believers are vitally united with Him. This is theologically synonymous with John's "abide in me" of John 15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

4:8-9 This continues the emphasis on the believer's thought life. The rabbis saw the mind as the seed-bed of the soul. What we think becomes who we are. These verses are much needed in the life of the modern western church in a day of such socially accepted evil. Paul's list is similar to the Stoics' lists of virtues. Paul was exposed to Greek philosophy as a citizen of Tarsus. He even quotes several Greek writers (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:37 and Titus 1:12). See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues in the NT at Col. 3:5.

4:8 "finally" See note at Phil. 3:1.

- **"true"** This is truth in contrast to falsehood, however, it is not academic truth, but rather a lifestyle of godly living. This very term is used of God in Rom. 3:4.
- **"honorable"** This literally means "dignified." This term is often translated "grave" and is used for church leaders in 1 Tim. 3:8,11 and Titus 2:2. It seems to have been used in the sense of "dignity" with "attractiveness" toward both the saved and the lost.
- **"right"** This refers to one conforming to the standard of God's character, thereby being a morally upright person. In the OT the Hebrew term for "right" comes from the word for "measuring reed" and refers to God's nature as the standard by which all humans are judged. This does not mean that humans can be perfectly right with God on their own effort, but that God has freely imputed the righteousness of Christ to those who believe in Him by faith. Once given, God's character transforms the receiver!
- **"pure"** This is used in the sense of moral purity (cf. 1 John 3:3).
- **"lovely"** This term is used only here in the NT. It seems to mean "pleasing," "amiable," "congenial," or "pleasant." This is another call for believers to live attractive lives.

NASB	"of good repute"
NKJV	"praiseworthy"
NRSV	"commendable"
TEV	"deserve praise"
NJB	"admire"

This term is used only here in the NT. It refers to that which is "praise-worthy" or "attractive."

- ▣ **"if there is any excellence"** The grammatical form of these eight items used in Phil. 4:8 changes after the sixth one and becomes a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true. The term "excellent" is used only here in Paul's writings and only three times in Peter's (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3, 5). It refers to doing something well with its accompanying prestige. It was a common word in the Greek moral philosophers (Stoics). It is used to express goodness in its fullest practical expression.
- ▣ **"worthy of praise"** This meant "that which was approved both by God and by man" (cf. Phil. 1:11). It refers to being socially acceptable to a culture for the purpose of attracting people to God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2,7,10; 5:7; 6:14).

NASB	"dwell on these things"
NKJV	"meditate on these things"
NRSV	"think about these things"
TEV	"fill your minds with those things"
NJB	"let your minds be filled with"

This is a present middle imperative. This commercial term (*logizomai*) implies a process of calculating or reasoning that was continual and priority. Dwell on these things so that they can shape your thinking and living (see note at Phil. 3:15). God will do His part in the believers' lives through grace, but they must participate by removing those things that they know will draw their heart away from the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21-22).

4:9 "the things you have learned and received and heard and seen" All four of these verbs are aorist active indicatives. These relate to Paul's activities in Philippi. Both the content of believers' theology and their lifestyle (cf. Ezra 7:10) are crucial if believers are to reflect who the Lord is and attract others to Him.

It is interesting that the second word "received" (*paralambanō*) became an official term for "received tradition" and was used in that sense by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3.

- ▣ **"seen"** This emphasis began in Phil. 3:17. As Paul followed Christ, believers are to follow him.
- ▣ **"Practice these things"** This is a present active imperative, "keep on practicing these things!" Do not be just hearers, but doers (cf. Luke 11:28; James 1:22). It is very similar to the Hebrew concept, *Shema* (cf. Deut. 5:1; 6:4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9-10), which meant "to hear so as to do." Christianity must not be turned into a creed isolated from daily godly living.
- ▣ **"the God of peace"** As verse 7 emphasizes the peace that God gives, this verse emphasizes the very nature of the One who gives it. This emphasis on the peace-giving God can be seen in Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20. Jesus is called the Lord of peace in 2 Thess. 3:16.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:10-14

¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

4:10 "I rejoiced" Paul is so appreciative of this church's help (money, concern, prayers, Epaphroditus).

NASB, NRSV "that now at last you have revived your concern for me"
NKJV "that now at last your care for me has flourished again"
TEV "after so long a time you once more had the chance of showing that you care for me"
NJB "now that at last your consideration for me has blossomed again"

At first glance this seems to be a negative statement in English. It is very similar to the phrase found in Rom. 1:10. The term "revived" means "to bloom again." Paul is simply stating that they had the desire to help him but they had not had an opportunity (imperfect tense of both the verb and the infinitive of Phil. 4:10b). This probably refers to a monetary gift (cf. Phil. 4:14). For a good article see Gordon Fee, *To What End Exegesis?* pp. 282-289.

4:11 "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" This is an aorist tense employing a Stoic term (*autarkēs*). The Stoic philosophers used this term translated "contented" as the goal of their philosophy, which was a passionless distancing from the affairs of life, "a self-sufficiency." Paul was not saying that he was self-sufficient, but that he was Jesus-sufficient ("in the Lord," Phil. 4:10). The peace of God is not connected with circumstances, but with the person and work of Christ. This contentment is both a Christian worldview and friendship with the Savior. The theological concept of Christian contentment is also found in 2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6,8; Heb. 13:5.

4:12 This verse has three perfect tense verbs and six present infinitives. It is a beautiful, artistic affirmation of Paul's trust in God's moment-by-moment provision "in Christ." See Special Topic: Wealth at Eph. 4:28.

- ▣ **"I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity"** The two "I knows" are perfect active indicatives. Paul knew about want and plenty! The first term is translated "humbled" in Phil. 2:8, where it is used of Jesus. Here it means "less than what is needed for daily life." The second word means "much more than is needed for daily life." There are two dangers facing believers in their Christian lifestyle: poverty and wealth (cf. Pro. 30:7-9). The danger is that with poverty one becomes discouraged with God and with wealth one becomes self-sufficient apart from God.
- ▣ **"prosperity. . .assurance"** See Special Topic: Abound at Eph. 1:8.

NASB, NRSV,
TEV "I have learned the secret"
NKJV "I have learned"
NJB "I have mastered the secret"

This literally means "I have been initiated." This is another perfect passive indicative. This term is used only here in the NT. It was used in the mystery religions for one who was initiated into their cult. Paul was asserting that he has learned by experience and by theology that the true secret of happiness is found in Christ, not in circumstances (cf. *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whithall Smith).

4:13 The term "Christ" found in the King James Version does not occur in this verse in the oldest Greek manuscripts (κ*, A, B, or D*). However, the pronoun "Him" certainly refers to Jesus. This is the flipside of the truth found in John 15:5. Biblical truth is often presented in tension-filled pairs. Usually one side emphasizes God's involvement and the other, mankind's. This eastern method of presenting truth is very difficult for western people to grasp. Many of the tensions between denominations are a misunderstanding of this type of dialectical presentations of truth. To focus on one aspect or the other is to miss the point! These isolated proof texts have developed into systems of theology which are in fact only "half truths!"

- ▣ **"strengthens"** This is a Present active participle, "the one who continues to strengthen" (cf. Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17). Believers need to be strengthened by Christ. They also need to be strong (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13 Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1). This is the paradoxical tension found so often in Scripture.

Christianity is a covenant; God initiates it and sets the conditions and privileges, but humans must respond and obey and continue! These believers were under internal and external pressure from false teachers and persecutors! As Paul was content in all circumstances, so must they be (and us, too).

4:14 These believers shared with Paul in the spreading of the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:5) and the persecution that it brought. See Special Topic: Tribulation at Eph. 3:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:15-20

¹⁵You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

4:15,16 This has been understood to be a contradiction to 2 Cor. 11:8-9, which implies that the other churches of Macedonia also helped Paul. However, the time element is significant. Paul is saying that at this particular time no other church besides this church at Philippi had helped him. Paul was very hesitant to accept financial contributions (cf. 1 Cor. 9:4-18; 2 Cor. 11:7-10; 12:13-18; 1 Thess. 2:5-9; and 2 Thess. 3:7-9).

4:15 "You yourselves also know" This is an emphatic "you" and a perfect active indicative. Paul shared himself with this church and they reciprocated.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (EKKLESIA)

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving"

TEV "shared my profits and losses"

NJB "made common account with me in the matter of expenditure and receipts"

There is a series of commercial terms in Phil. 4:15-18 which can be verified and defined from the Koine Greek papyri found in Egypt and the ostraca (broken pottery used as writing material). This first one was a banking term for an open account.

Paul was acutely aware of the problems caused by money. As a rabbi he was not allowed to take money for his teaching. The false accusations by the factions at Corinth reinforced his need to refuse monetary help from the churches. Paul must have felt uniquely comfortable with this congregation.

4:17 "I seek. . . seek" This is a very strong Greek term used twice to show Paul's ambiguous feelings about his thanksgiving for the gift and yet his not actively seeking their help. He realized that they would receive a blessing from God for their stewardship and generosity in the gospel. For this he was glad.

▣ **"the profit which increases to your account"** This is another commercial metaphor which refers to the interest that accrued and was deposited in another's account. Giving to gospel causes results in gospel blessings (cf. Phil. 4:19).

4:18 "I have received everything in full," This is another business term for a receipt of a payment in full. Paul felt this church had done everything expected and far more. (The use of the term "abound" or "abundance" and the perfect passive indicative "amply supplied").

■ **"Epaphroditus"** He was the Philippian church's representative sent to deliver the monetary gift and stay on to help Paul (cf. Phil. 2:25-30).

■ **"a fragrant aroma; an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God"** This came from an OT metaphor of an accepted sacrifice on the altar of burnt offerings (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25,41; Lev. 1:9,13; Ezek. 20:41). This same type of metaphor is used by Paul in 2 Cor. 2:15 and Eph. 5:2.

The help given to Paul as a minister of the gospel is in reality given to God and will be repaid and blessed by Him!

4:19 "My God shall supply all your needs" This is not a blank check from God! "Needs" must be defined. This must be seen in light of the principles of spiritual giving found in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, particularly 9:6-15. This is not a promise that can be taken out of context and be applied to every human desire. In this context it relates to Paul's provision for ministry. God will always supply those who are generous givers with more to give. This does not mean that they will have more for personal use, but more to give to gospel causes!

■ **"according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"** It must be remembered that this whole chapter is motivated by the work of Christ and that all that is accomplished in the Christian life is by the help of the Lord, "in the Lord," (cf. Phil. 4:1, 2, and 4). All of God's blessings come through Christ.

4:20 "to our God and Father be glory forever and ever" This is very similar to Paul's closing prayer in other books. The term "forever and ever" is literally "to the ages of the ages," which is a Greek idiom for "forever." See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at Eph. 3:20.

The description of God as Father is one of the greatest truths of the Bible (cf. Hosea 11). The family metaphors used for God (Father, Son) help humans understand His nature and character. God accommodates Himself to human understanding by using human titles, human analogies, and negation. For fuller note on "glory" see Eph. 1:6.

■ **"Amen"** is the Hebrew word for "faith" or "faithfulness" (cf. Hab. 2:4). Originally this term was used to describe a stable stance, sure footing. It came to be used metaphorically of someone who was faithful, stable, steadfast, dependable, trustworthy. Later it came to be commonly used in the sense of an affirmation of a trustworthy statement. See Special Topic at Eph. 3:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:21-23

²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

4:21-23 It is possible that this was written in Paul's own hand which became a common technique to verify the authenticity of his letters (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philemon 1:19). This was also a common practice in the Koine Greek papyri found in Egypt. Most of Paul's letters were penned by a scribe (cf. Rom. 16:22).

4:21 "greet every saint" This is the only use of the word "saint" in the NT in the singular. It is followed in Phil. 4:22 by the plural form. Even Phil. 4:21 is used in a corporate sense. To be saved makes one a part of a family, a body, a field, a building, a people! It is impossible to be a spiritual "lone ranger." The gospel is received individually but results in a collective fellowship.

Be careful of the modern western overemphasis on individual rights and freedoms. Christianity is a corporate experience. Even well-known Reformation (Luther) slogans like "the Priesthood of the Believer" are biblically inaccurate. The NT people of God are described by the OT priestly phrases (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:60. But note that they are all plural, "a kingdom of priests."

Remember, believers are individually gifted at salvation for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve. Our modern cultural milieu has changed the biblical focus into "what's in it for me?" thereby turning salvation into a ticket to heaven instead of a life of ministry. Believers are not saved so that they might exercise their freedoms nor actualize their potential, they are saved from sin to serve God (cf. Romans 6). See Special Topic: Saints at Col. 1:2.

4:22 "especially those of Caesar's household" This obviously relates to servants, slaves, and minor officials in Rome in governmental service (cf. Phil. 1:13). Paul's gospel had even invaded the Emperor's own staff and would one day cause the whole pagan system to collapse.

4:23

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "be with your spirit"

NKJV, TEV "be with you all"

This refers to the human person. In the NT it is often very difficult to know if the author is referring to the Holy Spirit (with a capital "S") or the human spirit which is motivated by the Holy Spirit (with a little "s"). In this context it is obviously a little "s."

There is a manuscript variation in the Pauline closing (cf. Gal. 6:18 and Philemon 25). Some Greek texts, κ^c , K, and the Textus Receptus (NKJV), have "with you all," which was Paul's close in 1 Cor. 16:24; 2 Cor. 13:13; 2 Thess. 3:18 and Titus 3:15. The majority of ancient Greek papyrus and uncial manuscripts have "with your spirit."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the key phrase of this chapter?
2. What does it mean "to stand firm"?
3. What are the principles for solving disunity in a local church?
4. Give the aspects of prayer that Paul mentions in verses 4-7.
5. Describe in your own words the significance of verses 8 and 9 to our day.
6. Is verse 10 a negative statement by Paul to chide the Philippians for not helping him?
7. What is the true secret of happiness expressed in verses 11-13?
8. List and explain the three commercial terms found in verses 15, 17 and 18.
9. Explain how the context affects the proper interpretation of verse 19a.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
 1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
 2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
 3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
 4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
 1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
 2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
 3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
 1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
 2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
 3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
 4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
 5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."

6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

2. Logical connectors

a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
 - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
 - (2) *kai* - "and"
 - (3) *tei* - "and"
 - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
 - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
 - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
 - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
 - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
 - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
 - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
 - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
 - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
 - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
 - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
 - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
 - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
 - c. what the author felt deeply about
 - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
 - a. for linking verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) complement
 - b. for transitive verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) object
 - (4) indirect object
 - (5) prepositional phrase
 - c. for noun phrases
 - (1) noun
 - (2) modifier
 - (3) prepositional phrase
 - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
 - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of

- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
- b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
 - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
 2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
 - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
 - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
 - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
 - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
 3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
 4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
 - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
 - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
 - c. figures of speech
 - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
 - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
 - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
 - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
 - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
 - (6) sound plays between words
 - (a) "church"
 - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
 - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (b) "free"
 - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
 - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
 - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
 - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
 - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
 - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
 - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
 - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
 6. The special use of *autos*
 - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
 - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)

with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
 - A. Old Testament
 - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible

A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
 - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
 - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
 - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
 - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
 - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
 - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
 - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
 - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter \aleph (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
 - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
 - (1) P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶ (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
 - (2) P⁴⁶ (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
 - (3) P⁷² (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
 - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
 - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
 - (6) other MSS which show this text type are \aleph , C, L, W, 33
 - b. Western text from North Africa
 - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
 - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
 - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
 - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
 - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
 - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
 - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
 - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
 - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
 - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
 - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
 - (2) some witnesses to it are P⁴⁵ and W

II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
 - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
 - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
 - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
 - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

Alexandrian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

Alexandrinus. This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

Allegory. This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

Analytical lexicon. This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

Analogy of Scripture. This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

Ambiguity. This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

Anthropomorphic. Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

Antiochian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

Antithetical. This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

Apocalyptic literature. This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

Apologist (Apologetics). This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

A priori. This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

Arianism. Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

Aristotle. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

Autographs. This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

Bezae. This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

Bias. This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

Biblical Authority. This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

Canon. This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Christocentric. This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

Commentary. This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

Concordance. This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

Dead Sea Scrolls. This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

Deductive. This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

Dialectical. This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

Diaspora. This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

Dynamic equivalent. This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.

Eclectic. This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

Eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

Etymology. This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

Exegesis. This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

Genre. This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

Gnosticism. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

Hermeneutics. This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

Higher Criticism. This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

Idiom. This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

Illumination. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for

mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Inductive. This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

Interlinear. This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

Inspiration. This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

Language of description. This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

Legalism. This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Literal. This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

Literary genre. This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

Literary unit. This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

Lower criticism. See "textual criticism."

Manuscript. This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

Masoretic Text. This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

Metonymy. This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

Muratorian Fragments. This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

Natural revelation. This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

Nestorianism. Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

Original author. This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

Papyri. This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

Parallel passages. They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

Paraphrase. This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

Paragraph. This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

Parochialism. This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

Paradox. This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

Plato. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

Presupposition. This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

Proof-texting. This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

Rabbinical Judaism. This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

Revelation. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Semantic field. This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

Septuagint. This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

Sinaiticus. This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

Spiritualizing. This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

Synonymous. This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

Syntax. This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

Synthetical. This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

Systematic theology. This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian

theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

Talmud. This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

Textual criticism. This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

Textus Receptus. This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

Torah. This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

Typological. This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

Vaticanus. This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

Vulgate. This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

Wisdom literature. This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

World picture and worldview. These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the

Who, not the how, of creation.

YHWH. This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.