



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XV
Issue 361

The Fellowship of the Mystery

A Study of the Book of Ephesians

Part 3 of 3

by — Ike T. Sidebottom (1899-1970)

EPHESIANS 4:12-16

Paul sums up in a few words the working out of God's purpose through the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of :11. These men are not *only* gifted servants of the Lord, but they are themselves gifts to the church.

It is God's order that through the combined efforts of these gifts, the saints should be perfected unto

the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (:12-16).

The apostles of :11 are *not* the twelve apostles, chosen by our Lord before His death and resurrection. They are Paul and the eight men who were called by the risen Christ after His ascension into glory.

The names of the twelve are listed in Matthew 10:2-4. This includes Judas, whose place was later filled by Matthias (Acts 1:26). The ministry of these apostles was



to "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" and concerned the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 10:1-8).

The names of the apostles mentioned in :11 are Paul and Barnabas, who were first called Apostles in Acts 14:4, 14, Andronicus and Junia, who are referred to in Romans 16:7 as "*of note among the apostles.*" In I Thessalonians 1:1 Paul associates Silvanus and Timothy with himself, and tells us in 2:1-2 that they were bold to speak "*the gospel of God with much contention.*"

Epaphroditus is mentioned by Paul in Philippians 2:25 as his "*brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.*" Sosthenes and Apollos are certainly included with Paul in I Corinthians 4:9, where he said, "*I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it was appointed unto death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men*" (cf. I Corinthians 1:1; 4:6).

The ministry of these men was to "*the Jew first and also the Greek [Gentile]*" (Romans 1:16), and chiefly concerned the Body of Christ.

The church, which is the Body of Christ, is "*a perfect man*" and not "*a bride.*" Christ is our Head, and we, as members of His Body, are moving forward "*unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (:13).

In God's own time the church will be completed and presented to Christ "*a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*" It will be "*holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27). This presentation will

(see *FELLOWSHIP*, page 3251) ↗

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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FELLOWSHIP (continued from front page)

take place when our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall come from heaven and catch us up to meet Him in the air, changing our body

that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

We draw our strength to grow from Christ, our Head,

from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (:16).

The body of Christ “is not one member, but many,” and,

whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it (I Corinthians 12:14, 26).

This is why we are admonished to hold fast

the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (Colossians 2:19).

God Himself furnishes the “joints and bands” whereby the members of His church are held together in conscious fellowship one with another and with Christ, the Head. Men may join themselves together and band themselves together in organized churches with earthly headquarters, but only God, through the Holy Spirit, can join believers together in the church, which is the Body of Christ with headquarters in glory.

Let us take our stand outside of the camp of organized Christendom with our Lord and the faithful few, who own no name but His. While the organized churches are working under the name of hundreds of different denominational divisions, let us remember the admonition of the Holy Spirit:

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Colossians 3:17).

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

In this section we find continued instructions to the believers. Having reminded us of our responsibility in connection with the vocation wherewith we are “called” (:1-3), and having informed us of the seven-fold unity, we are to endeavor to keep “in the bond of peace” (:4-6), and having called our attention to the gift of “grace” for the individual members of the Body of Christ, and the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the body as a whole (:7-11), and having shown us clearly the purpose of the ministry of these gifts (:12-16), Paul closes the chapter by setting forth a few things that we should not do and a few things we should do.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (:17-19).

We are not to walk as these other Gentiles walk because we “have not so learned Christ” (:20). They walked according to the vanity of their mind, but we are told to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16); to

walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us (Ephesians 5:2);

to

walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15-16);

to

walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10),

and to

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time (Colossians 4:5).

God has provided the one way whereby it is possible for His children to walk according to the Scriptures set ►



forth in the above passages. Christ is this one way. We have been “*baptized into Jesus Christ.*” This means that we have been

buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

We have the Scriptural right to know

that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin (Romans 6:6-7).

We are privileged to say, with Paul,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Such an experience should bring the believer to the place of saying, with Paul again,

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

We begin to realize and enjoy these rich, deep truths when we begin to reckon ourselves “*to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” This is what God tells us to do in Romans 6:11.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:22 to

put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.

He goes on to tell us in :23-24 that we should “*be renewed*” in the spirit of our mind, and that we should “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” In other words, we are privileged as new creatures in Christ Jesus to “*put off*” the old man and to “*put on*” the new man.

Since we are new creatures in Christ, God tells us,

Be angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down

upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (:26-29).

As we come to the closing verses of this chapter, we are reminded of the fact that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God “*unto the day of redemption*” (:30). We are sealed as His “*purchased possession*” (Ephesians 1:13-14). This sealing is until we are presented to Christ,

a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27).

Even though God’s Spirit has sealed us and will not leave us, it is possible for us to grieve Him. Thus Paul’s admonition, “*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*” followed up by,

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you (:30-32).

It is evident that bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice, lack of kindness and lack of forgiveness on the part of God’s children grieves God.

It takes grace from above to enable the believer not to grieve the Holy Spirit who lives with him. However, we need to remember that this grace has been given to us “*according the measure of the gift of Christ*” (:7), and that such a measure of grace is entirely sufficient for all of our need. God has not asked us to do more than His grace will enable us to do. He has made it possible for us to draw on Him for wisdom and strength and power to do all things through His Son, Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13).

We have Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. He is also the Head over all things to the church to which we belong. We have the Holy Spirit living within our very bodies, and the truth will set us free from the bondage of sin and enable us to deny “*ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” and to

live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:12-13).

EPHESIANS 5:1-17

Paul shows us that, as “*dear children,*” we should follow God in our daily walk. The heavenly Father knows that if we can walk in His love, all of the rest of our walk and behavior will take care of itself. Therefore, He says, “*walk in love.*”

In what kind of love is the believer to walk? Notice,

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor (:2).

How can we walk in such love? Remember that God has said,

Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7).

This measure of grace is amply sufficient to enable every one of us to “*walk in love, as Christ hath loved us.*”

How much love would we be walking in if we manifested the same love that God had manifested toward us? The Father

so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have ever lasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

He

spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Romans 8:32).

The God of glory, Whom we follow, also warns us, saying,

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as

children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable unto the Lord (:6-10).

It is interesting to note with what clearness God has warned His dear children against the works of men. He has said,

Let no man deceive you with vain words (Ephesians 5:6).

Let no man beguile you of your reward (Colossians 2:18).

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days (Colossians 2:16).

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit (Colossians 2:8).

It was the doctrines of men that caused Paul to fear for the spiritual welfare of the church at Ephesus when he was about to leave them for Jerusalem. He said,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His Own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

In these days of organized “churches” and hireling preachers who serve them, it is of the utmost importance to call the “*dear children*” of God back to the first love, and to the walk in light, and to the proving of all things by the Word. God tells us to

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are

evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (:11-17).

EPHESIANS 5:18-6:9

In this passage we see the highest demonstration of the Spirit's power: namely, the elevation of the everyday duties of the Christian life into the spiritual realm.

The realization of such natural and social relationships is a greater exhibition of power than that of healing the sick, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, or any other of the extraordinary gifts in connection with Israel's Kingdom message of I Corinthians, chapters 12-14.

To the wives (5:22) and to the husbands (5:25), to the children (6:1), and to the fathers (6:4), to the servants (6:5), and to the masters (6:9); God has said,

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:18-21).

Wives,

Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Husbands,

Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it: that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh. But nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of His body, of His

flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:25-33).

Children,

Obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Fathers,

Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Servants,

Be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free (Ephesians 6:5-8).

Masters,

Do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him (Ephesians 6:9).

These orders are given to us and we can carry them out only when we are "filled with the Spirit" (5:18). However, when we are all filled with the Spirit, there is no room within us for the evil one who would keep us from speaking to ourselves according to 5:19, or giving thanks according to 5:20, or submitting ourselves according to 5:21 to 6:9.

After reading these verses and prayerfully meditating on them, we are brought to the conclusion that, to

put them into practice in our everyday life, we must be “filled with the Spirit.”

Paul speaks of the indwelling of the Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16); the sealing of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); the earnest of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:14); the anointing of the Spirit (II Corinthians 1:21); and the fullness of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). It is the fullness of the Spirit that makes possible the behavior and walk set forth in this lesson text. God has made it possible for us to do what He has told us to do in these verses. His grace is sufficient.

Our part is to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” and not “give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:24, 27).

EPHESIANS 6:10-24

Now our attention is attracted by the word “finally” (:10). The final words of this epistle remind us of those spoken at the beginning. As we are enlightened concerning our “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (1:3-14), so are we warned concerning our spiritual enemies “in high places” in these verses of the closing chapter.

The members of the church, which is Christ’s Body, are seated “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (2:6); therefore, both our blessings and our warfare are in the *heavens*. This position we have in our risen Lord gives us a clear title to all spiritual blessings in the realm of glory, and it also gives us free access to all of the strength, power and might of our Lord Who has triumphed over our enemies, “made a show of them openly” (Colossians 2:15), and is now seated “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21). Such divine provision makes it entirely possible for us to fight a good fight, finish our course, and keep the faith.

Let us meditate on :10-13.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

These words of instruction are given to every member of the Body of Christ. We are warriors and God expects us to fight. He wants us to be daring in battle for His glory. Like David of old, we should discard the armor of Saul and “put on the whole armor of God.”

Above all things, we are to remember that our enemies are not “flesh and blood,” but principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. Such enemies are too much for the arm of flesh and for carnal weapons. It takes the “whole armor of God” to enable us to “stand against the wiles of the devil” in this “evil day.”

The “whole armor of God” is defined in :14-17.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Each piece of the armor, referred to in the above quotation, is defined elsewhere in the Word of God as being Jesus Christ Himself.

The girdle of TRUTH about our loins (:14) is the One who said,

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me (John 14:6).

Our breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS (:14) is none other than

Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, “He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord” (I Corinthians 1:30-31).

We can say with Jeremiah of old, He is

the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6).

Our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of PEACE” (:15) is suggestive of our walk in Christ, Who is spoken of in Ephesians 2:14 as being “our peace.”

✦ That shield of FAITH, wherewith we are able to stop anything thrown at us (:16), is *“the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8), none other than

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Our helmet of SALVATION (:17) is clearly defined in the words of the Psalmist,

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).

Our sword, the WORD OF GOD (:17), is the Word Who was

made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Thus we see that to *“put on the whole armor of God”* is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the full meaning of Paul’s admonition to the Romans:

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Romans 13:14).

It is one thing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is entirely another thing to put Him on and wear Him in

the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, using Him as the whole armor of God to give you victory in the day of battle.

Those who have put on Christ, the whole armour of God, are admonished to engage themselves in constant

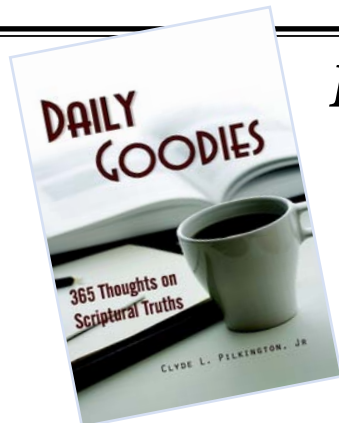
prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6:18).

Paul coveted the prayers of this group for himself and his ministry, *“that utterance”* would be given to him that he might open his mouth boldly *“to make known the mystery of the gospel,”* for which he was an ambassador in bonds (:19-20).

We find the closing of the book indeed comforting,

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. (Ephesians 6:23-24).

(Abridged)



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