

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE

Ephesians

The evangel according to Paul

“To make known the secret of the evangel” (6:20)

BOB EVELY

2011.

“To me ... was granted this grace: to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God...”

Ephesians 3:8-9

*All Scriptures taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament
and the Concordant Version of the Old Testament unless otherwise noted.
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About the Author

Paul begins by identifying himself as the writer of this letter (1:1) Let us recall the commission Paul received on the road to Damascus: *He is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel.* (Acts 9:15-16) And we know from Acts that Paul did go first to the synagogues to proclaim Christ to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Peter, John, James and other New Testament writers had a commission to Israel only. Paul alone was commissioned to go to the Gentiles.

We cannot assume Paul's message to the Gentiles was the same as the message proclaimed by the others unto Israel. Paul stressed that the gospel he proclaimed was not received from man, *but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 1:11-12) If he preached the same gospel, why would he not have studied under the Twelve who had heard and observed Christ Himself during His earthly ministry? And why would Paul refer to his proclamation as "my evangel" instead of "the evangel?" (Romans 2:16; 16:25-26). Paul notes that he had been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, and Peter had been trusted with the evangel of the Circumcision. (Galatians 2:7). He did not say that his was the evangel *to* the Uncircumcision; but *of* the Uncircumcision. It was a different message, and this can be clearly seen if we examine the details. Paul is the only one to have mentioned the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, or the expectation of the body of Christ in the celestials in Ephesians 2:6. Israel's expectation was always upon the earth, not in the celestials or heavens.

Paul was abandoned by nearly all at the end of his ministry (see 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16; Acts 21:20). Note in the Acts passage that when Paul returned to Jerusalem he was opposed not by unbelieving Jews, but by believing Jews who were zealous for the law – a clear signal that Paul's message was different than that of the Twelve, and as a result Paul was opposed by Jewish *believers*.

Paul, in his writings, refers to a mystery that had been previously concealed, but which he was now revealing as God had instructed him. ... *His body, which is the ecclesia of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, **to complete the word of God** ... the **secret** which has been **concealed** from the eons and from the generations, yet now was **made manifest** to His saints ...* (Colossians 1:24-16) ... *by revelation the secret is made known to me ... the secret of the Christ, which, in other generations, is not made known to the sons of humanity ...* (Ephesians 3:3-5)

Clearly Paul was commissioned to address a group not previously addressed by the Twelve (the Gentiles), with a different message that had been revealed to him not by man but by Christ Himself.

Part I: Doctrine

Introduction: The address on the envelope of this letter

Paul opens this letter by identifying himself as the author. *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God ...* (1:1) And the letter is directed to *all the saints who are also believers in Christ Jesus* (1:1). *Saints* is literally “holy ones” ... those who have been made holy, or set apart for some purpose, by God.

Spiritual blessings

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every **spiritual blessing** among the celestials, in Christ ...* (1:3) These are not, then, blessings realized in the flesh upon this earth as was the case with Israel, but spiritual blessings among the celestials, or heavenly realms.

Chosen before the disruption

... He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son ... (1:4) *Disruption* (*katabole* in the Greek) is often translated “foundation,” but it is clearly not a “building upon.” It is instead a “casting down.” This seems to make reference to the event described in Genesis 1:1 which, when translated properly, tells us the earth *became* a chaos and was then subsequently remolded by God in six days.

Us in *He chooses us* refers to those who Paul is associating with himself; the *saints* (holy ones; set apart ones) to whom he is writing. We do not choose to become saints, but are *chosen* by God. Furthermore we were chosen long ago; before the disruption of the world. God does not develop His plan along the way. His plan was formulated long ago.

Holy and flawless

Why were we chosen? *To be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace ...* (1:5) Certainly no man, living in these mortal bodies of flesh, can ever become truly flawless. But we are holy and flawless *in His sight*. Our sin and shortcomings have been addressed by Christ, God’s solution to the sin problem. And as a result of this miraculous solution, out of all mankind we who have been chosen by God are seen as holy and flawless *in His sight* – because Christ was in reality holy and flawless, and we have been made to become His body.

Why would God do this? It is not for our own benefit, but because the plan He is unfolding is *in accord with the delight of His will*, and it is *for the laud of the glory of His grace*. This position we are granted is nothing we have earned or deserved, else we could boast. It is purely God’s grace at work. God has chosen to *grace us in the Beloved* (1:6) and as a result we have *deliverance*

and *forgiveness of offenses* (1:7) ... *in accord with the riches of His grace, which He lavishes on us* ... (1:7-8) Again we note that our position is purely **God's grace at work**. We are chosen by Him, and He has graced us with sonship, deliverance and forgiveness. Why would God do this for a portion of humanity that He has chosen?

The secret

... making known to us the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him) to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth ... (1:9-10)

God chose us, a subset of humanity, to make known a secret. The Greek *musterion* is clearly not a “mystery” in the sense that it is something we can solve or figure out. It is a **secret** that was concealed in the past and is now made known by God. And the secret is this. As a complement to the eras, the history of mankind that has preceded and that is a display of man's wickedness, sinfulness and imperfection, God now reveals His plan to head up **all** in Christ, not only that which is in the heavens but also that which is on the earth. Despite the chaos, wickedness and destruction we see all around us in this world, God's secret is that He is in the process of solving all of this. A *complement* is something that brings completion. There is one part, and by adding a complement that part is made whole, or complete. All of the chaos in the world today is in the process of being made whole or complete by the *complement* that God has provided. *All*, not just some but *all*, will be headed up by Christ. (Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to see this taking place.)

Here is something to remember. God ***is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will*** ... (1:12). If this is so, what can possibly prevent Christ from heading up all that is in the heavens and upon the earth? Furthermore, if God *is the Saviour of all mankind, especially* (though not exclusively) *of believers* (1 Timothy 4:10), and if it is God's will or desire *that all mankind be saved and come into a realization of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:4), and if God *is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:12), then what can possibly prevent these things from taking place?

Pre-expectant in the Christ

There is an interesting phrase at the end of 1:12. We are here referred to as *pre-expectant in the Christ*. This implies that what we, the saints, enjoy (sonship, forgiveness, grace) is just step one. All of humanity is *expectant* of these things, for God is in the process of heading up *all* in Christ. We who have been chosen beforehand, to serve God's purpose in some way, are *pre-expectant*.

The process God is using to accomplish His will

Now we will see the process God is using to accomplish His will. First there is *the word of truth* (1:13) that is brought forth by God, *the evangel* (gospel; good news) *of your salvation* (1:13). This good news is *heard* (1:13) and it is

believed (1:13), and the believer is then *sealed with the holy spirit of promise* (1:14). The holy spirit is described as *an earnest of* (or a deposit toward) *the enjoyment of our allotment*. We see, then, that the *deliverance* that has been *procured* for us is not yet realized, and therefore we have been given an earnest deposit to assure us of what has been promised.

Paul's prayer

[I] do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers ... (1:16) The emphasis Paul gives to prayer and giving thanks to God should be an example for us.

Coming to a realization of God

Paul prays that God *may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, which is operative in the Christ, raising Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship ...* (1:18-21)

So the believers were not yet enlightened; they did not yet realize what they could expect in terms of their allotment, or the glory of what they could expect in the future. God had demonstrated His power in rousing Christ from among the dead and seating Him among the celestials (the heavens) with a position above all of creation.

It is this failure to fully understand their expectation that would seem to give cause to Paul to write this letter. Whereas Romans provides basic doctrine, Ephesians goes beyond that (as a graduate course) and provides more advanced doctrine intended to further enlighten the believers.

This eon and that which is impending

In 1:18-21 we read that Christ's seating among the celestials pertains *not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending ...* (1:22) We see that *eon* (*aion* in the Greek), which is often translated "eternal" or "endless," is clearly a finite period of time. A close study of the Scriptures will show us there seems to be five eons, a period of time before the eons, and a conclusion to the eons (when timeless "eternity" would seem to begin). In this passage we see mention made of two distinct eons ... the current eon, and the eon which is impending.

Purpose of the ecclesia, the body of Christ

... subjects all under His [Christ's] feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all. (1:22-23)

Ecclesia is often translated “church,” but it would be better if this was not so. The word simply means “out-called-ones” ... those who have been called out of humanity at large for some purpose. As God may have occasion to call out different subsets of humanity in different eras, each may be referred to as the *ecclesia*, but they should not be confused with each other if we want to correctly understand what God is revealing. At one time Israel was the *ecclesia*. In most of Acts Jewish believers were the *ecclesia*. When Paul introduces the body of Christ (Jew and Gentile with no preference or distinction), the body of Christ is the *ecclesia*. But we cannot look at *ecclesia* in every instance as the same group of “out-called-ones” as this is clearly not the case. We must *correctly cut* or *rightly divide* (2 Timothy 2:15) the Scriptures if we are to correctly understand the truth that God has revealed.

We also see in this passage that God subjects all under Christ (1:22), and Christ is *the One completing the all in all* (1:23). We see this process being completed in 1 Corinthians 28 when God does, in fact, become all in all.

But we also see in this passage an amazing fact that tells us, at least in part, why God has “out-called” the *ecclesia*, which is here referred to as Christ’s body. The body of Christ is the *complement of the One completing the all in all* (1:23). Remember that a “complement” is something that completes the whole. Christ is the One commissioned by God to bring all into subjection to Him so that He will ultimately become all in all, and the body of Christ is the complement to Christ in this process.

How does the body of Christ serve as Christ’s complement? I think the best description is found in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. *Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ’s sake, ‘Be conciliated to God!’*

We are charged, then, with announcing the fact that God has, through Christ, become conciliated to man. Despite man’s wickedness and sin, because of Christ God is now conciliated to man and is not reckoning man’s offenses to him. But all are not yet conciliated to God. Much of mankind is alienated from God. There is not yet reconciliation, but only a one-sided conciliation on God’s part. We are charged, as *ambassadors*, to proclaim as if God were proclaiming through us, *Be conciliated to God!* This is the part we play as Christ’s complement. And when, in fact, all have become conciliated to God, there will be a total and complete reconciliation ... all will be subjected to God through the work of Christ (the One completing the all in all) and His complement (the body of Christ), and then we will see the triumphant conclusion to the eons when God becomes all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The body seated among the celestials

The eon of this world is under the influence of the Deceiver; Satan. ... *the chief of the jurisdiction of the air, the spirit now operating in the sons of stubbornness ... doing the will of the flesh and of the comprehension ... children of indignation* (2:1-4). Those whom Paul now addresses (the body of Christ) once walked in sin and offenses (2:1). We once behaved as the “sons of stubbornness,” doing the will of the flesh, and following the lusts of the flesh (2:3). We were, *in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest ...* (2:3-4).

YET ... *God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us (we also being dead to the offenses and the lusts), vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.* (2:4-8).

So despite the fact that we were just as the rest of humanity, walking in sin and the lusts of the flesh, children of indignation even in our very nature, God saves us and vivifies us (makes us alive) and seats us in the celestials. We are no better than the rest of humanity, yet God displays His grace and mercy in this way. Why would God do this?

Remember that God desired to have a complement to Christ, the One completing the all in all. We also see another part of the reason why God chose a subset of humanity to be His ecclesia. *That, in the oncoming eons, He will display the riches of His grace and kindness* (2:7). While we serve as ambassadors in this present eon, Christ’s complement ... in the coming eon when God seats us in the celestials (the heavens), all of creation will come to see God’s grace and mercy through this display.

Our expectation in the eon to come is not here upon this earth. We do not await Christ to return to reign. We await His call to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and to serve our place in the celestials, where we will be a display of God’s grace and mercy.

As for now, Christ is already seated in the celestials, having been roused from among the dead. We in the body of Christ have *figuratively* been roused and vivified and are seated in the celestials, but we have not yet fully realized this in a literal way. One day, though, we too will be roused from among the dead (just as Christ, the Firstfruit) and seated in the celestials.

His achievement are we

For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God’s approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them (2:8-10).

It is all God at work here! Salvation is God's gift. We are God's achievement. We are created in Christ Jesus. We have nothing to boast about. Another purpose of the body of Christ is noted here ... *being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them.* We are not saved because of our works ... but because we are saved we walk in the good works that God has intended for us.

A new humanity

In the past the nations ... the Uncircumcision ... had no expectation as did Israel, and at best were only *guests of the promise covenants* (2:11-12). But Paul now announces a *new humanity* (2:15). The barrier between Israel and the nations has been razed, and the law of precepts in decrees (Israel's law) has been nullified (2:15). What had been two (Israel and the nations ... the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision) has now been created *into one new humanity ... reconciling both in one body* ... (2:15-16).

Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God's family ... (2:19-20). This is a new proclamation. Always in the past God has worked through Israel as His chosen people. Those of the nations could only enjoy the covenants by sojourning with Israel and observing the law that was given to Israel. In His earthly ministry Jesus came to the sheep of Israel. The ministry of the Twelve was to the sheep of Israel. Even the apostle Paul would always go first to Israel, and only after being rejected would he approach the Gentile. Not so any longer. God now has a new creation ... the body of Christ, comprised of Jew and Gentile with no barrier, preference or distinction.

This is something new, not proclaimed in the past. We see this good news only in Paul's writings. It had not been revealed to others before Paul; not even by Christ Himself during His earthly ministry. This is why Paul found it necessary to note that his evangel was not something he learned from man; it was revealed to him by Christ (Galatians 1:12). This is why Paul refers to this as a *secret* (3:1-5). And this is why Paul was so strongly opposed by Jews who believed but were zealous for the law (Acts 21:20).

Can we therefore understand why it is so crucial to *correctly cut or rightly divide* the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15)? If we choose from the writings of the Twelve which were directed to Israel without distinguishing them from the writings of Paul which were directed to the body of Christ, we would be mixing together two different things, and we would fail to understand this secret that Paul shares with us. We would be "stealing" truth that was intended only for Israel in a certain era, and we would fail to understand this precious secret concerning a new thing that God has created. God is moving beyond what He had established through Israel ... which was the basis of the entire Old Testament, the four Gospels, most of the book of Acts, and the letters from the Circumcision apostles ... and He has now proclaimed something new and far superior and advanced through Paul. Let us, therefore, look beyond the more elemental truths that were proclaimed in the majority of the Scriptures. Let us

rightly divide the Scriptures so as to fully appreciate this new creation that Paul shares with us.

Revealing the secret

On this behalf I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you, the nations – since you surely hear of the administration of the grace of God that is given to me for you, for by revelation the secret is made known to me (according as I write before, in brief, by which you who are reading are able to apprehend my understanding in the secret of the Christ, which, in other generations, is not made known to the sons of humanity as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets): in spirit the nations are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which I became the dispenser ... (3:1-7)

Again we see that Paul's gospel is not the same as the gospel that had been shared by the apostles before him. The gospel he shares was *revealed* to him; it was a *secret* not made known to others before him.

It was granted to Paul *to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons ... (3:8-11)*

That which Paul now reveals concerning the body of Christ is *untraceable*. It is not something that man could have discerned on his own from God's previous revelation, since it was a **secret** that had been concealed in the past and is only now revealed through Paul. Even those in the celestial (heavenly) realm did not see this coming. God's wisdom was not fully revealed until now. If what Paul writes here is true ... if this is a secret that God had concealed in times past and that is now being revealed ... how can we possibly think Paul is sharing the same gospel (good news) that others before him had shared (i.e. the Twelve)?

It may have seemed as though God's plan was failing. God chose Israel and provided the law to set His chosen people apart. But Israel could not keep the law. How could God save mankind from a final death when even the means provided to rescue man (the law, and Israel) had failed. But now we see an even greater wisdom that had not previously been made known ... a multifarious wisdom in accord with the purpose of the eons. This, then, is the purpose of the eons ... the purpose of the history of God's dealings with mankind ... to bring us to this point where now we are ready to see the unveiling of this secret that is far superior to anything God has revealed before.

It is not just Israel that God has chosen, with dictates of law to be observed (which Israel found impossible to observe). The body of Christ has now been

revealed ... those of all nations with no preference or distinction, for the purpose of serving as Christ's complement to bring about the total subjection of all mankind to God, that God may become all in all. Those of us who are within the body of Christ find ourselves here only because of God's grace. We have done nothing to deserve this. We are no better than the balance of mankind. And we find ourselves in this position only to display God's grace to all of creation, both in the heavens and upon the earth, and to serve as Christ's ambassadors in proclaiming the evangel that is intended for this era, and in doing so we are acting as Christ's complement in bringing about God becoming all in all.

His faith

Returning for a moment to 2:8 we read, *For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievements are we ...* But if all humanity is given a chance to believe, and if some believe and others do not, could we not say that we *do* have reason to boast? We were smart enough to believe, while others were not!

In 3:13 we read, *Christ Jesus, our Lord; in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence, through His faith ...* It is *His* faith, not our faith, that gives us our position. [Our English words *faith* and *belief* both come from the same Greek word, "pistis." We may, at times, try to make a distinction, but there is no distinction in the Greek.]

Every kindred

Again Paul shows how important prayer is to him in 3:14. *On this behalf am I bowing my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, after Whom every kindred in the heavens and on earth is being named ...* Is it only the believer that finds blessing? Here Paul notes that every kindred in the heavens and on earth (i.e. all of creation) is being named after the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grasping Christ's love

Paul prays that those to whom he writes (the body of Christ) should be *strong to grasp* the love of Christ which transcends knowledge, *that you may be completed for the entire complement of God* (3:18-19). Clearly, then, those within the ecclesia had not previously grasped the magnitude of God's grace or the love of Christ, but with these revelations being shared by Paul perhaps it will now be possible to do so. But again, if we fail to rightly divide the Scriptures and understand that Paul is revealing new truth, and if we continue to go back to the law and steal truths intended only for Israel in eras past, we will not grasp the magnitude of what God is doing.

Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending ... (3:20) What an expression of the magnitude of what Paul is now sharing with us!

Eon of the eons (3:21)

Let us take a moment to consider this phrase. Eon (singular) and eons (plural) are often translated “endless” or “eternal.” But if eon is intended to express endlessness, why is the plural form needed? And what would a phrase like *eon of the eons* mean? Clearly eon is a period of time that has a beginning and an end, and since the plural is used we know there are multiple periods of time being referred to. In this present case reference is made to a single eon (the present eon in which we live) as compared with all of the eons.

When Bible translations fail to distinguish things like this, and when these distinct periods of time are simply mixed together into “eternity,” how can we ever hope to fully understand all that God has revealed to us? We must go beyond the modern English versions and use study tools that are available to seek out truth. *Young’s Analytical Concordance*, for example, will help us to search individual words as they appear in the Greek, not just as the words have been translated into English. *The Concordant Literal New Testament With the Keyword Concordance* will also let us go beyond the English translation and consider the precise distinctions made in the original Greek. If we are to understand truth, and share the correct message with the world today as Christ’s ambassadors, we cannot place our faith in Bible translators who clearly disagree with each other in many passages. *Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15)

Part II: Behavior

Walk worthily (4:1)

I am entreating you ... walk worthily of the calling with which you were called ... This is not a command or a legal requirement. As a response to God’s grace that Paul has already proclaimed, he entreats the believers to walk worthily. This walk is described by Paul in specific ways ... *patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace ...* And the *one baptism* Paul refers to is clearly a spiritual baptism, not a water baptism that had been used in a previous era to model the forthcoming and superior spirit baptism.

Over all and through all and in all (4:6)

There are no qualifications in this statement. God is over, through and in **all**, not just believers.

Grace in varying degrees (4:7)

Now to each one of us was given grace in accord with the measure of the gratuity of Christ. All have not been given, therefore, the same measure of grace. Some have grace enough to believe in this present era, while others do not. Whatever grace we have to believe has been given to us by God as He chooses, toward the accomplishment of His purposes through us.

That He should be completing all (4:10)

Christ descended to the earth, and he then ascended ... something none other has ever done. And we see here the reason Christ ascended to the heavens first, as the firstfruit of what we will one day experience at the resurrection ... *that He should be completing all*. We remember that Christ is the One completing the all in all (1:23) ... bringing all of creation into subjection to God the Father that He may become All in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Gifts are given in varying degrees (4:11)

Not all parts of the body of Christ are the same. *And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these are prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers, toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception.* (4:11-14)

Not all parts of the body of Christ are the same. There are different degrees of grace given, and different gifts ... though all are given for the purpose of **adjusting** the saints for the work of dispensing (i.e. sharing the evangel in some way), and for **upbuilding** the body, for **unity** of the faith, for **maturity** and the **realization** of what it means to be a son of God. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians they were minors who were not ready for solid food (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). We could not therefore expect to see any deeper truths in that letter. But in Ephesians we do see deeper truths, for those who are mature within the body of Christ.

The systematizing of the deception (4:14)

Paul refers here to those using *human caprice* and *craftiness* with the intent of deceiving in a systemic manner. What could this possibly refer to other than those within the majority of organized religion? Remember that by the end of Paul's lifetime he had been abandoned by nearly everyone (2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16; Acts 21:20). There were those who had been proclaiming a *different evangel* ... a *distortion* of the evangel (Galatians 1:7). There were those who followed Paul everywhere to distort his evangel of grace and freedom from the law, attempting to integrate the law into the evangel. The majority within "organized religion" were working against Paul, as they did not understand the evangel that God had revealed to him, which was different from the evangel that had been previously revealed and proclaimed by others.

Remember that Jesus, too, was opposed by "organized religion" during His earthly ministry. And the prophets of the Old Testament were often opposed by "organized religion" in their day.

We live in a day of apostasy, as both Peter and Paul warned of in their later letters ... where the majority within “organized religion” do not understand that which God has revealed. They attempt to systematize (or “religion-ize”) deception through organized structure and teachings. This is, in my opinion, *the systematizing of the deception* that Paul refers to in 4:14.

Making all grow into Him (4:15)

Now, being true, in love we should be making all grow into Him, Who is the Head – Christ – out of Whom the entire body, being articulated together and united through every assimilation of the supply, in accord with the operation in measure of each one’s part, is making for the growth of the body, for the upbuilding of itself in love. (4:15-16)

Here, then, is a part of our purpose as individual members of Christ’s body ... to cause all to grow into Him. Is this not our part in the process of serving as Christ’s complement ... He being the One completing the all in all? (1:23)

We note again that each of us plays a part in accord with the measure of grace given us, and the goal is toward the upbuilding of the body; not the tearing down, condemning or criticizing of other members. Love is to be kept in mind (4:16). Love, after all, is the greatest thing (1 Corinthians 14).

Not continuing to walk as those of the nations (4:17)

As Paul entreats the believer to *walk worthily of the calling with which you were called* (4:1) ... he reminds them not to continue walking as those of the nations (non-believers) ... in *vanity*, and with *darkened comprehensions*, in *ignorance, callousness, greed and uncleanness* (4:17-19).

Instead, Paul calls on the believer to *put off the old humanity which is corrupted*, and instead *put on the new humanity, rejuvenated in spirit* (4:20-25). We are to speak the truth, and not falsehood, with our associates, because being a part of Christ’s body *we are members of one another* (4:25).

Paul calls on the believer *not to be giving place to the Adversary* (4:28). Those who steal must no longer steal. Instead of tainted words proceeding from our mouths, all should be toward *edification ... giving grace to those hearing* (4:29). This should be our goal. Paul calls on the believer not to be *causing sorrow to the holy spirit of God ... removing from ourselves all bitterness and fury and anger and clamor and calumny* (4:30-31).

Instead ... *become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, dealing graciously among yourselves, according as God also, in Christ, deals graciously with you* (4:32). Our behavior is **not commanded as a requirement** for salvation or justification. It is, instead, **encouraged as an appropriate response**, because of the grace that has been shown to us by God when we did nothing to deserve it.

Imitators of God, walking in love (5:1)

According as Christ also loves you, and gives Himself up for us (5:1-2), so also Paul calls upon believers to be imitators of God, and to be walking in love. Again, this is not a command or requirement (as if we were under law), but is instead a call to respond to the grace given to us.

Once darkness ... now light (5:3-8)

Paul calls for the believer to avoid behaviors associated with darkness ... prostitution, uncleanness, greed, vileness, stupid speaking. Instead we are to exhibit *thanksgiving* (5:4).

No paramour at all or unclean or greedy person, who is an idolater, has any enjoyment of the allotment in the kingdom of Christ and of God (5:5). Paul is not saying that salvation is dependent upon works, for he has countless times stressed that salvation and justification is by grace, not works. Remember that all mankind was destined to experience tribulation and judgment, in the day of God's indignation (Romans 1:18; 2:5). But the believer is conciliated to God and saved from indignation (Romans 5:9). What Paul is saying in 5:5 is a reminder that those of the nations who have not yet experienced God's grace in the form of salvation will not enjoy an allotment in the kingdom when it is established upon the earth. (Remember that the kingdom to come upon the earth, as proclaimed by Jesus in His earthly ministry, was extremely works-based.) So since this behavior will keep those without salvation from having an allotment of the kingdom, Paul is entreating the believer to remember this, and to avoid such behavior. Again, Paul is not issuing a command upon which salvation is based. He continues to entreat the believer to live a life that is worthy of God's calling that they have experienced.

Therefore ... let no one be seducing you with empty words, for because of these things the indignation of God is coming on the sons of stubbornness. Do not, then, become joint partakers with them, for you were once darkness, yet now you are light in the Lord (5:6-8).

As children of light be walking (5:9)

Again Paul encourages the children of light to be walking as such, remembering that *the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth* (5:9). We are to *test what is well pleasing to the Lord*. And beyond the fact that we are not to be *joint participants in the unfruitful acts of darkness*, we are to *expose* acts of darkness (within the body of Christ).

Be observing accurately, then, brethren, how you are walking, not as unwise, but as wise, reclaiming the era, for the days are wicked. Therefore do not become imprudent, but understand what the will of the Lord is (5:15-16). Our walk must be a conscious walk, with an eye toward the will of the Lord.

Instead of being drunk with wine, we are to be filled with spirit ... *speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing*

music in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things ... (5:18-21).

Being subject to one another (5:21)

Let the wives be subject to their own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is Head of the ecclesia ... (5:22) As the ecclesia is subject to Christ, thus are the wives also to their husbands in everything (5:24).

God has an established hierarchy. All things are to work together toward the purpose already stated ... that all become subjected to God, and that He becomes all in all. Without order there is chaos.

But beyond subjection, there is also to be **love**. *Husbands, be loving your wives according as Christ also loves the ecclesia ... (5:25).*

Christ gave Himself up for the sake of the ecclesia, to *hallow* it (i.e. set it apart from humanity at large) and to *cleanse* it, that it may be holy and flawless (5:25-28). This is stated as a fact ... despite its imperfection the ecclesia is made to be flawless because of Christ. And this is why Paul encourages the ecclesia to *walk worthily*. Parents will sometimes say to their children, “Act your age!” Paul says something similar to the ecclesia ... “Act worthily!”

Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies, nurturing and cherishing them ... just as Christ does so with the ecclesia ... *for we are members of His body. (5:30). For this a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh (5:31).*

This secret is great: yet I am saying this as to Christ and as to the ecclesia (5:32). Is it not a great secret that Paul shares with us? Never before Paul had the truth concerning the body of Christ been revealed!

There are other examples of subjection that Paul shares. Children are to obey their parents ... while at the same time fathers are to nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, and not vex them (6:1-4). Slaves are to obey their masters according to the flesh, as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God (6:5-7).

Now here is the most important principle in the matter of subjection within the hierarchy God has established. *And masters, be doing the same toward them [slaves], being lax in threatening, being aware that their Master as well as yours is in the heavens, and there is no partiality with Him (6:9). ... whatsoever good each one should be doing, for this he will be requited by the Lord, whether slave or free (6:8).*

Subjection is always within the broader context that we are all subjected to God. All must one day answer to the Lord Who is over all. All will one day be requited, or paid, for behavior, good or bad ... the way, for example, that

slaves serve their masters, and the manner in which masters treat their slaves; remembering that all are serving the Lord, whether slave or free. God has established a hierarchy not to show preference to one versus another, but to establish order toward the end that all are subjected to Him.

With the authority one may be granted over another (husbands over wives, masters over slaves) there is responsibility to love ... and to serve the Lord.

Spiritual forces, and spiritual armor (6:11)

Put on the panoply of God, to enable you to stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary, for it is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh, but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. Therefore take up the panoply of God that you may be enabled to withstand in the wicked day ... (6:11-13). There is more to this universe than what is visible to our eyes of flesh. In the celestial realm there is a created order, and some of it is wicked. The struggles we face are not always driven by the obvious; the things that we can see; and therefore we must be on guard and equip ourselves with spiritual mechanisms that God has provided if we are to stand in the midst of these struggles. In 6:14-17 Paul describes some of what God provides for this purpose ... *truth, righteousness, the evangel of peace, faith, salvation, and the declaration (or word) of God.*

By way of example, when the wicked one attacks with his fiery arrows that challenge what we know to be truth as revealed by God, *faith* is our shield (6:16-17). If we allow our faith to go un-nurtured, we will succumb to the challenges we are faced with (that are coming from spiritual forces). We will lose our faith and will be unable to stand and perform our role as Christ's complement. It is because of our role as Christ's complement that we receive challenges from the celestial realm ... *for the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials* (6:12) are working against the plans of God. Since we play a part in those plans, we can expect challenges from the celestial realm that seek to prevent us from serving our role.

Prayer is needed (6:18)

During every prayer and petition be praying on every occasion (in spirit being vigilant also for it with all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, and for me), that to me expression may be granted, in the opening of my mouth with boldness, to make known the secret of the evangel, for which I am conducting an embassy in a chain, that in it I should be speaking boldly, as I must speak (6:18-20).

Connected with the spiritual struggle Paul has just described, he calls for prayer on every occasion ... with perseverance ... for the secret of the evangel to be shared. Can we not see, then, that the forces which seek to prevent the secret of the evangel from being shared will seek to prevent the ecclesia from persevering in prayer? If we face struggles only with fleshly mechanisms

(logic, philosophy, eloquence in public speaking, knowledge), how can we hope to succeed against the strategies of the Adversary?

Clearly from all of this we see that the Adversary seeks to prevent the secret of the evangel from being proclaimed. How can he accomplish this?

If God's Word is dumbed-down and inconsistently translated, thereby concealing and confusing truth that God has intended to reveal, is this not preventing the secret of the evangel that was revealed to Paul from being recognized? If the Deceiver can "systematize deception" (4:14) – deceiving in an organized fashion that appears to be legitimate and true – can he not prevent the secret of the evangel from being recognized? If the Deceiver can allow the evangel of grace to be distorted by adding elements of the law, even as was done among the Galatians in Paul's day, can he not hide the secret of the evangel that Paul is sharing in Ephesians? If the Deceiver can cause Peter's message to the Circumcision believers to be mixed with the different message that Paul proclaimed to the body of Christ, can he not prevent the secret of the evangel from being proclaimed?

I personally believe that all of these things are accomplished by the Deceiver, in a systematized fashion, through the organized church today. Orthodox teachings that are passed from one generation to the next without challenge, contaminated Bible translations, churches, pastors, Bible teachers, mainstream Christian authors, seminaries and Bible colleges that simply pass "truth" along to every new generation of believers ... all of these things have worked together to systematize deception ... to prevent the body of Christ from recognizing the secret of the evangel and from serving its role as the complement of Christ. I am convinced that to recognize the secret of the evangel and to fulfill our role as Christ's complement, we must escape the bonds of organized religion and its experts and authorities, and turn to the Word of God in its purest form.

Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me ... (2 Timothy 1:13).

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

If ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! (Galatians 1:8)

... attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception (Ephesians 4:13-14).

EPILOGUE.

Ephesians was written to proclaim doctrine of a higher nature than has been seen in any previous letter. In Ephesians we hear details concerning a secret that had been concealed in the past and which is now being revealed. We would not expect, therefore, to read of things in Ephesians that have been introduced by others beyond Paul, or even that has been discussed by Paul in previous letters. Let us consider the purpose of this letter, and the purpose of the body of Christ, as has been presented by Paul.

Purpose of this letter

- ✓ *To make known the secret* of God's will; to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth (1:9-10)
- ✓ *To enlighten* believers as to their expectation, and to the transcendent greatness of God's power
- ✓ To bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God ... (3:8-11)

Purpose of the ecclesia (the body of Christ)

- ✓ To make known the secret of His will ... to head up all in the Christ (1:9-10)
- ✓ To serve as the complement of the One completing the all in all ... i.e. Christ's complement (1:23)
- ✓ To be Christ's ambassadors, as if God were entreating through us (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) To assist in bringing about God's becoming all in all, through the faithful proclamation of the evangel in the capacity of ambassadors
- ✓ In the oncoming eons to be a display of the riches of God's grace and kindness (2:7)
- ✓ Created in Christ Jesus (as His body) for good works which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them (2:10)
- ✓ To make known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, the multifarious wisdom of God ... (3:8-11)
- ✓ To make all grow into Him, Who is the Head – Christ (4:15-16)

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