

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 1:1-23

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Jews had a *legend* based on Psalms 118:22. According to the *legend*, when the temple of Solomon was being built, the masons sent up from the quarry below a stone different in size and shape from all the others. Looking at it, the builders said, "There must be some mistake." They rolled it down the edge of the cliff into the valley of Kidron. As time went on, the workmen were ready for the chief cornerstone. When they asked for it they were told, "We sent it up to you long ago." One of the workmen said "I recall it now. There was a stone altogether different from the rest and we thought there was no place for it and rolled it down to the valley below." Men were sent down to find the stone. They succeeded in doing so, and when the stone was brought up it fitted perfectly into its place--it was the headstone of the corner.

That *legend* has a lovely ending. But the fact of history is that most of the Jews "rejected the *true* head of the corner" (Matt. 21:42-43), Jesus Christ. It was Jesus's claim to deity that the Jews rejected. But the church of Christ (God's eternal dwelling) must be built on **Jesus's deity** for that is the **cornerstone** (Eph. 2:20; Matt. 16:18; 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Men try to build churches by programs, contests, entertainment, money, and a 100 other gimmicks, but Jesus said the church is built by preaching his deity. David Brainard, famous missionary to the American Indians said, "I never got away from Jesus and him crucified in my preaching. I found that once the Indians were gripped by the great meaning of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, I did not have to give them many instructions about changing their behavior."

"Sir, I am in the hands of a merciful God. I have full confidence in his goodness and mercy. The Bible is true. I have tried to conform to its spirit as near as possible. Upon that sacred volume I rest my hope for eternal salvation, through the merits and blood of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." --Andrew Jackson, 7th U.S. President, May 29, 1845, just a few days before his death.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are spiritual blessings? 1:3. What if you lost most of your material blessings--would spiritual ones satisfy you? Where are these spiritual blessings enumerated?
2. Where are the heavenly places? 1:3; 2:6 (cf. Heb. 8:5; 12:22-24). Is being a member of the church like heaven on earth to you? Matt. 6:10.
3. Is the uniting of all things 1:9-10 talking about Christian unity?
4. Are we "predestined" 1:5,12 to being saved or lost without choice?
5. What is being sealed with the Holy Spirit? 1:13. How does one know one is sealed with the Holy Spirit?
6. How are people given from God a spirit of wisdom? 1:17. Is it miraculous?
7. What is the immeasurable power of God in us who believe? 1:19
8. Where is that power made available?
9. Where is the fulness of Christ 1:23
10. What does all the above have to do with building the Church?

"Monday Evening. Most gracious Lord God, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift, I offer to Thy Divine Majesty my unfeigned praise and thanksgiving for all Thy mercies toward me...I have sinned and done very wickedly, be merciful to me, O God, and pardon me for Jesus Christ's sake...Thou gavest Thy Son to die for me, and hast given me assurance of salvation, upon my repentance and sincerely endeavoring to conform my life to His holy precepts and example."

--from George Washington's personal prayer book, (24 pages in his field notebook, written in his own handwriting).

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-22

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Judge Kaufman presided at the trial of the Rosenbergs infamous American traitors. They were charged with, and convicted of treason against the United States for giving secret atomic data to Russia and sentenced to death. In his summation at the end of the long and bitter trial, the lawyer for the Rosenbergs said animatedly, "Your honor, what my clients ask for is justice." Judge Kaufman replied calmly, "The court has given what you ask for--justice! What you really want is mercy. But that is something this court has no right to give."

Do you remember the prophet Nathan's parable to David the king, about the rich man who had very many flocks and the poor man who had but one ewe lamb? David was the rich man, and Uriah, the man whose wife (Bathsheba) David had taken, was the poor man. David was guilty before God. Nathan said, in effect, "David, what should this guilty man in my parable get--justice or mercy?" David, of course, said the man in the parable should get justice! Then Nathan said, "Thou art the man!"

Sinners deserve justice, but God offers them mercy! Jesus took the awful justice of God upon himself. We are begged to take his vicarious mercy for our selves. But, like David, we will want God's mercy only after we acknowledge we need it (see Psa. 51). Come to Bible School and study with us Ephesians chapter 2.

"Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish
to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say
I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan.
I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge
that by the grace of God I am what I am!"
--John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why must humans be declared dead when they sin against God? 2:1
2. Why is sinful man said to be "by nature" a child of wrath? 2:3
3. How did God make some people alive together with Christ? 2:5
4. What is sitting with Christ in the heavenly places? 2:6
5. Why does Paul say our salvation by faith is the gift of God? 2:8. Is faith a gift of God?
6. What are the good works for which Christians are created? 2:11
7. Why were the Gentiles excluded from the "commonwealth" of Israel? When did God do this? Did God arbitrarily condemn all Gentiles? 2:12
8. What was the wall of hostility Christ broke down? 2:14. How?
9. Who was at war for whom Christ had to make peace? 2:15
10. What is the access Christ made possible? Don't all men have access to God? 2:18
11. What's so great about being a member of the household of God? 2:19
12. Why must the church be built upon the doctrine of grace?

*"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see:
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy shows to me"*

Alexander Pope (1688-1744 English poet who also wrote, "To err is human, to forgive divine."

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 3:1-21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Power! Such a little word with such a big meaning. Henry Kissinger once said, "Power is the great aphrodisiac." Every human mind and heart longs for power. People expect to possess power from many different sources--from money, fame, position, votes, knowledge, expertise. Most people seek power to glorify themselves believing that will bring satisfaction to their lives.

Ask, "What is the great power known and available to man today?" and many would reply, "All the money in the world!" Wrong! The Spirit of God, the power at work within us is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." Man has harnessed the power of the atom; through politics a man may become the President of the USA in probably the most powerful position on earth. Some men exercise power through their great wealth. But far more powerful than all that put together is the power of God's Spirit in you, to be filled with God's fulness. Now that's power! It alone will give you everlasting life!

But the greatest power of all does not glorify man, it glorifies Jesus Christ in the church, now and forever. That is what will bring satisfaction and fulfillment to the soul of man. That is what plants and sustains man in love. With Christ in him, man is no longer fleshly debris, jetsam and flotsam of the universe, drifting without anchor and purpose. Man with Christ in him is an instrument of Almighty God for good, functioning as a participant in the divine plan of cosmic redemption, the establishment of a *new* creation for eternity. Now that's power! Read Rom. 15:13; 16:25; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:19; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:3---and be in Bible School!

The body of believers called the church is to grow from inside out in response to the Spirit. Built that way, the church prevails against anything—Charles Colson, prison minister

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a mystery? 3:3. What mystery was made known to Paul?
2. What is revelation? 3:3. Do you accept the Biblical teaching that salvation is by revelation?
3. By what process would the Ephesians be able to perceive Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ? 3:4. May we use the same process to perceive the mystery?
4. Why was the fact that the Gentiles would be fellow heirs of the promise in Christ totally hidden from other generations? 3:5
5. How are all men to see what is the plan of God? 3:8-9
6. What has the church to do with all men seeing God's plan? 3:10
7. Where is the church to get the power to make known the manifold wisdom of God? 3:14-19
8. What is the instrumentality by which Christ dwells in the heart of a person? 3:17. Is this beyond human comprehension?
9. How great is the power of God at work within a believer? What is the focus of that power? 3:18-20
10. Does the indwelling presence of God's Spirit build the church? How?

The only way to keep a broken vessel full
is to keep it always under the tap
--Dwight L. Moody

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 4:1-32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A young man once came to the venerable Greek philosopher Socrates and said, in substance, “Dr. Socrates, I have come 1500 miles to gain wisdom and learning. I want learning, so I come to you.” Socrates replied, “Come, follow me,” and he led the way down to the seashore. They waded out into the water until they were up to their waists. Socrates seized his companion and forced his head under the water. In spite of his struggles Socrates held him under. Finally, when most of his resistance was gone, Socrates laid him out on the shore and returned to the market place. When the visitor had regained his strength he returned to Socrates to learn the reason for his behavior! Socrates said, “When you want knowledge and understanding as badly as you wanted air, you won’t have to ask anyone to ‘give’ it to you!”

When the saints are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine sometimes the church becomes foolish, imprudent and its members turn back from the holy commandments and are entangled again in the defilements from which they escaped.

The church is built when Christians discern the truth that is in Christ. The primary ministry of the church is the equipping of the saints unto a spiritual maturity where Biblical truth has become as air to a drowning man—absolutely necessary to live! When the church members want truth as imperatively as a drowning man wants air, they will come to Bible School, study the truth of Christ and do it—and the church will get life back into its gasping body!

People, like trees, are sustained through their roots. A tree dies when its roots become blocked.

A Christian dies spiritually when the roots of his mind become blocked from God’s word!

—Paul T. Butler

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the work of the ministry have to do with maintaining the unity of the Spirit? 4:1-6. Wouldn’t people be more single-minded if they weren’t allowed to know so much?
2. What is the purpose of Christ’s gifts of ministry? 4:7-14. How are the saints to be equipped? What if they aren’t?
3. If every joint of the body is to work *properly* what work are you doing? 4:15-16. What works do children, teens, adults, seniors do?
4. What is the futility of the mind? 4:17-19. Are all unbelievers futile in mind, darkened in understanding, ignorant, callous, licentious, greedy, and unclean?
5. How do you feel about being indoctrinated (Greek *edidachthete*, taught) 4:20-21. What becomes of those who refuse Christian indoctrination?
6. Who is the new man we are to put on? 4:22-24. How do we put him on? (Cf. Gal. 4:19; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Col. 3 & 4).
7. Are Christians really to speak the truth with one another? 4:15,25. The whole truth and nothing but the truth?
8. How does one be “angry and sin not?” 4:26
9. Why admonish Christians to do honest work with their hands? 4:28. Is the Puritan work ethic scriptural (1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-13).
10. Would modern-day irreverence, disrespect, and over-familiarity with God’s Spirit grieve him? 4:29-30 (Eph. 5:4; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Cor. 14:1-40)
11. What does tenderheartedness have to do with building the church? 4:32

“Anybody can become angry, that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way--- that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.”

---Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) father of formal logic

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 5:1-33

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Jacob Walker, keeper of the old lighthouse on Robbin's Reef, off the rocky shore of New England, took pneumonia and died after years of faithful service. His wife buried his body on the hillside above the shore, on the mainland, in plain view of the lighthouse. She applied for and received the appointment as the keeper of the light. For 20 years she carried on alone, and then a New York reporter went out to get her story. In the course of the interview she told him: "Every evening I stand in the door of the lighthouse and look across the water to the hillside where my husband sleeps. I always seem to hear his voice saying, as he often said when he was alive,—Mind the light! Mind the light! Mind the light!"

Across the troubled waters and the crashing breakers of life there comes another voice to us...a voice from heaven. And the message of the Son of God is the same, "Mind the light! Mind the light! Mind the light."

Our Bible School lesson for Ephesians 5 will be Building the Church Through Dispelling the Darkness. Since every Christian is a "light of the world, you will want your family to be in Bible School for this lesson on what you are supposed to do as one of those "lights of the world."

Darkness symbolizes ignorance, fear, judgment, evil, and death. Permanent darkness in the physical world would bring physical death to all physical life. There would be constant crime and fear, people could learn very little about anything; people would stumble and fall and hurt one another. The Christian alone has the spiritual light to dispel spiritual darkness. Christian, Mind the Light!

"Once I knew the depth where no hope was and darkness lay on the face of all things. Then love came and set my soul free...I do not know the meaning of the darkness, but I have learned the overcoming of it." ---Helen Keller

QUESTIONS:

1. If we are to "imitate" God, where do we find information on how God would act? 5:1. And could we imitate if it we found it?
2. What is "covetousness"? 4:5. Why is it synonymous with idolatry?
3. What must we do to keep from being deceived? 5:6
4. Must "all" Christians be actively engaged in exposing darkness? 5:11.
5. What is the Christian's responsibility to "time"? 5:15. How does one fulfill it?
6. How much of the will of the Lord must a Christian understand? 5:17. How does understanding come? Do we have to work at it?
7. What is "debauchery"? 5:18
8. What does it mean, "address one another with psalms?" 5:19 (cf. 1 Cor. 14:13-19). What is "melody"? What is the Biblical *raison de-etre* for music?
9. Give thanks for "everything"? 5:20. Evil? Temptation? Death? Suffering?
10. What is "being subject to *one another*"? 5:21. Must we "subject" ourselves to everyone?
11. What is the mysterious connection between marriage and Christ and the church? 5:32

"I believe in marriage and the marriage contract...I believe in standing up and committing yourself before God, the law and your family and friends to another person and a way of life. Anything less is playing house. I've always wanted to belong to somebody and to love somebody who belonged to me. I always wanted someone to take care of me."

---Nancy Reagan, in *Nancy*, 1980

LESSON TEXT: Ephesians 6:1-24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Bobby Lech, the Englishman, startled the world by going over Niagara Falls in a barrel without suffering serious harm. Some years later he was walking down the street, slipped on an orange peeling, and was taken to the hospital with a badly fractured leg. Some great temptations, which roar around us like Niagara Falls, may leave us unharmed; but a little, insignificant incident may cause our downfall simply because we are not looking out for it.

Our lesson in Ephesians 6 is Building the Church by Defeating the Devil. One thing is certain, the devil is out to destroy the church. We learn from Revelation 12 that when the devil discovered he could not destroy the “man-child” (Christ), he turned his wicked wrath upon the “woman in the wilderness” (the church A.D. 100-450) by using the “beast” (Roman empire). But God “nourished” the church through her experiences “in the wilderness” (persecution).

Man’s problem (even with believers) is understanding that the devil most often attacks in the places, circumstances and events man least suspects. The devil knows we are most vulnerable at home, on the job, in our thoughts, and in relation to Christian brethren.

At the famous battle of Bannockburn in Scottish history, the highlanders, led by “The Bruce”, leaped onto the horses carrying the heavily armor-clad English knights and then inserted their deadly dirks in the cracks between the pieces of armor. Those chinks in their armor cost the knights their lives. Could the “chinks” in a Christian’s armor be his home, his job, his thoughts? Come to Bible School and learn how to defeat the devil.

We may keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us if, through the word of God we are not ignorant of his devices (Greek, *noemata*, mind-games, schemes)
---2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:

QUESTIONS:

1. Why, in this great theological treatise, does Paul insert an admonition for children to obey their parents? 6:1. Is it that important?
2. Who is responsible to see that children obey their parents? 6:4. What is “nurturing”? What provokes children to wrath?
3. What is “honoring” one’s parents? 6:2. How does this build the church?
4. How does a slave obey his master in “singleness of heart”? 6:5. If this is the Biblical expectation for slaves, what about American employees?
5. What is the responsibility of Christian masters? 6:9
6. In what realm of life does the Christian contend or wrestle? 6:12. (See also 2 Cor. 10:3-5).
7. What purpose does the Christian’s armor serve? 6:13. How does this build the church?
8. Why is the word of God called the sword of the Spirit? 6:17
9. Why did Paul want the Ephesians to “know how he was”? 6:21. How would this build the Ephesian church?
10. Why write about undying love to the Ephesians? 6:24. (Cf. Rev. 2:4; 3:19). What makes love die? (Matt. 24:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Rom. 1:18-32).

According to the American Bible Society, at present rates of Scripture distribution, and computing no increase in population, it will require the following number of years to reach each person with some portion of God’s Word: North America, 13 yrs; Latin America, 16 yrs; Australasia, 30 yrs; Africa, 75 yrs; Europe, 90 yrs; East Asia, 97 yrs; and West Asia, 370 yrs.