



The
Book
of
Ephesians

John Scharlemann

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY



LWBS

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY



Welcome to Living Way Bible Study

Thank you for your order! It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* 2 Peter 3:18

WHO WE ARE

Living Way Bible Study, Inc. is an auxiliary of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). All studies are written and/or edited by LCMS pastors. We have been providing studies to churches throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1982.

YOUR ORDER

These studies are available by email (pdf-file) or snail-mail (hard copy). For a *suggested* donation of \$1-per-lesson within a study (e.g., 23-lesson study of John is \$23) you receive an original of the study, from which you are then free to make copies for your class. Please honor our copyright of these materials.

All studies have the same basic format, using an effective four-step approach for Bible study. Please see the following pages for additional information on these four steps, as well as helpful hints for facilitating these studies.

As a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that relies solely on freewill donations, *additional donations are much appreciated* and enable us to continue to produce and promote the study of God's Word.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions or comments on this study or any part of it, please contact us. We are always eager to hear from "our students" and appreciate your comments.

May God bless you as you walk in His Living Way!

Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

info4LWBS@aol.com

www.livingwaybiblestudy.org

 facebook.com/livingwaybiblestudy





LWBS Four-Step Method

Living Way Bible Study suggests this four-step method:

- 1. PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.



Ephesians

REV. JOHN P. SCHARLEMANN

13 Lessons

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Bibliography

Reverend John P. Scharlemann

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Personal Application – Ephesians 1:1-14

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

What is the Church? – Ephesians 1:1-14

Predestination

Hogwash!

Forgiven and Saved

Sealed

Every Spiritual Blessing

Personal Application – Ephesians 1:15-23

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Personal Application – Ephesians 2:1-10

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

What We Were

What We Have Become

Why Has God Done This?

Personal Application – Ephesians 2:11-22

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

What the Gentiles Were

What the Gentiles Became

Personal Application – Ephesians 3:1-21

EPHESIANS 3:1-21

Ephesians 3:1-13

The Prayer – Ephesians 3:14-21

Personal Application – Ephesians 4:1-16

I EPHESIANS 4:1-16

i Ephesians 4:1-8

ii Ephesians 4:9-10

Ephesians 4:11-16

Personal Application – Ephesians 4:17-32

LESSON 1

1

4

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

Personal Application – Ephesians 5:1-20

LESSON 8

40

LESSON 2

6

6

7

7

8

8

9

EPHESIANS 5:1-20

Personal Application – Ephesians 5:21-33

LESSON 9

46

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

Personal Application – Ephesians 6:1-9

LESSON 10

51

EPHESIANS 6:1-9

Personal Application – Ephesians 6:10-20

LESSON 11

57

LESSON 3

14

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

Personal Application – Ephesians 6:21-24

LESSON 12

62

LESSON 4

16

17

17

19

EPHESIANS 6:21-24

LESSON 13

LESSON 5

21

22

24

LESSON 6

26

28

29





Bibliography – Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians: The Body of Christ, John A. Allan, SCM Press, London, 1959

Commentary on Ephesians: The Anchor Bible, Markus Barth, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1974

The Interpreter's Bible, Volume X, Abingdon Press, (New York, 1953)

The New International Commentary on Ephesians, F.F. Bruce & E.K. Simpson, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957

St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, J. Armitage Robinson, James Clarke & Co., London

Ephesians, Curtis Vaughan, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977

New International Version of the Bible, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977

Concordia Self-Study Commentary, Walter R. Roehrs & Martin H. Franzmann, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1973





LWBS
LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY



Author Information – Rev. John P. Scharlemann

LWBS Courses: *The Book of Revelation*

Ephesians

Great Miracles of the Bible - Old Testament

Great Miracles of the Bible - New Testament

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Attended the University of Missouri where he received his B.A. in English Literature and Political Science

Received his M. Div. from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO in 1982

Graduate studies in pastoral counseling and creative homiletics

1983 - 1987 Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Long Beach, CA

1987 - 2000 Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Rialto, CA

A member of the Editorial Review Committee for Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

Adjunct professor at Concordia University, Irvine, CA (as of November 1994)

Author of several Bible Studies from Concordia Publishing House

Since April 2000, Pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Lees Summit, MO





PERSONAL APPLICATION – EPHESIANS 1:1-14

4

“As Paul tells us what the Church is and what membership involves, a number of very interesting issues arise, issues like “predestination,” gifts of the Spirit, the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters. Paul even discusses the manner and nature of spiritual strength.”

INTRODUCTION

Paul is in Rome. He resides in the city not as tourist or business man, but as prisoner, and Paul finds himself in prison for the strangest reason. He hasn't murdered anyone, not stolen anything. He hasn't cheated on his income tax. He hasn't even maligned the emperor. Paul is in prison merely for his devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. His active ministry is nearly over and within a number of years he will, according to tradition, be martyred for his faith.

What has led Paul to this Roman prison from which he wrote Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, as well as Ephesians? How has he come to this point in his life when he, a Jew among Jews, has found himself imprisoned in the capital of pagan thought and rule?

To understand why Paul is where he is, and why he writes as he does, we need to remind ourselves of the beginnings of the Christian story. Our Savior's earthly life and ministry centered primarily among a group of people who were the world's most hated. As yet, this group was stubbornly united by a long and rich history. Through centuries of oppression, the people of Israel had woven an unbreakable web of traditions and beliefs. To these people, the Messiah came, claiming to be sent to the “lost sheep of Israel” in order to bring peace and hope. Even though He occasionally alluded to “other sheep, not of this fold,” by and large, Jesus' ministry focused on the people chosen by God centuries earlier as His special nation.

And after Jesus' ascension, the disciples followed the model of their Master. The little group that carried on Jesus' message of salvation was composed entirely of Jews. For a time, perhaps for only five years, but nevertheless a sizeable number of months and years, the disciples enjoyed a spectacular

growth in numbers as well as the respect of the Jewish community in and around Jerusalem. Sure, many Sadducees and Pharisees condemned the “new belief,” but to be fair, many also heard and followed the disciples’ invitation to trust in Christ. We read in Acts 6:7 that a “large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” So, for a while, the possibility still existed of rapprochement between the traditional Jews and the new “reformers.”

Stephen, a disciple of the Lord, became the first martyr of the Christian Church, and the reason he aroused so much antagonism from the Jews is because he dared suggest that other people were included in the Gospel promise. Stephen is a Greek name, and because of his God-given ability to perform great wonders and miracles, he converted many Greek Jews. But opposition against him arose when he dared challenge the customs handed down to the Jews from Moses. No formal sentence was pronounced on Stephen. He was simply dragged from the synagogue and stoned to death while the young man Saul, who would one day be known as Paul, watched and encouraged the slaughter.

Following this sad chapter, a general persecution broke out against the Christians. After all, it had become evident to the Pharisees that this “reformation” would be deadly to traditional Judaism. The Lord’s disciples were forced to scatter from the region of Palestine. The scattered believers brought the excitement and joy of their faith wherever they went, and more and more Gentiles began to listen. Phillip preached to the Samaritans and later baptized an Ethiopian; Peter witnessed to a Roman centurion at Caesarea. At Antioch, a new Christian “congregation” blossomed, consisting mostly of Gentiles. And then, the final irony: the man Saul, who encouraged the death of Stephen, took on the mantle of Stephen’s ministry and became Paul, missionary to the Gentiles. Paul dedicated his life to the very same endeavor for which he had put Stephen to death. Isn’t it amazing how God works?

Paul was surely the most illogical choice to be the champion of the Gentile cause. After all, Paul had been a “Jew among Jews,” raised strictly in the Jewish tradition, educated as a Pharisee under the well respected Gamaliel. He was born of the tribe of Benjamin, of wealthy

parents. He was named after the great hero of their tribe, King Saul, but like most Jewish men, he also carried a Greek name, Paulus. When Saul finally understood his mission to the Gentiles, he preferred using the Greek name Paul.

Paul had much success in bringing the message of Christ to the Gentiles. For Paul, the many Gentile converts were evidence of God’s intent to share His salvation message with all the peoples of the world. They were pouring into the faith! Who could stop them? In a conference with the other Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem, Paul persuaded the burgeoning Church to allow, without reservations, the membership of Gentiles.

And yet, through the next few years, Paul confronted Jewish Christians who preached that even Christianity demanded the fulfillment of Jewish law and traditions. Paul disagreed and even though he had been endorsed by the Elders of the Church, he still had to confront individuals and groups who claimed only good Jews could believe in Christ.

Inevitably, Paul’s clash with the Jewish traditionalists brought him to jail. Against the advice of his friends, Paul went to Jerusalem and there the mobs had him arrested. Because Paul was a Roman citizen and had the right to appeal to Rome, his imprisonment brought him from Jerusalem to Caesarea and finally to Rome. As disastrous as his long imprisonment in Caesarea was, it seemed to help the cause of peace and unity within the church. By the time Paul reached Rome, and wrote Ephesians, the issue dividing Jewish Christians from Gentile Christians had nearly evaporated. So you see, Gentile liberty had cost Paul his freedom, but it had accomplished Paul’s desire for unity.

Now, the strange thing about Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is that it probably wasn’t addressed only to the church in Ephesus. The earliest Greek manuscripts do not mention the words “in Ephesus” in the salutation (1:1). So, some of your translations will omit those words. Furthermore, considering how long Paul had ministered to the people of Ephesus, isn’t it strange that there are no indications of any close ties in the church to which Paul is writing, no warm reminiscences, no recollection of past events?

.....

*Not all of this book is easy.
But then, Paul wasn't a
simple thinker. Paul was
complex to the same degree
that John was profound.*

.....

The explanation is that this letter was meant to be a “circular,” that is, it was written to be distributed to a number of churches in Asia Minor. The church at Ephesus was no doubt one of the churches to which this letter came, and probably the largest church in the region so you can see why it became known as “Ephesians.”

The letter is basically made up of two parts. The first part talks about what the church is. After all the years Paul has ministered to his people, established congregations, and nurtured those congregations, Paul, near the end of his life, contemplates what exactly constitutes God’s Church. It is a reminder to us that denominations, party spirit, and group thinking are artificial creations and that God’s Church was created to include all people who trust in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, as their one and only Savior from sin. The second half of Ephesians is an exhortation about what membership in Christ’s Church is all about. It encourages us to lead lives which reflect our Christian faith.

As Paul tells us what the Church is and what membership involves, a number of very interesting issues arise, issues like “predestination,” gifts of the Spirit, the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters. Paul even discusses the manner and nature of spiritual strength.

Not all of this book is easy. But then, Paul wasn't a simple thinker. Paul was complex to the same degree that John was profound. John's writings resemble the thought and pictures of a poet. Paul writes like a lawyer.

May God bless your study of Ephesians. May you gain a greater understanding of Christ’s Church and what it means to be a “member” of that Church.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Lord, guide us by Your Spirit to give thanks for Your eternal blessings. Share with us the mysteries of Your Word so that our faith may be strengthened and our lives enriched. Amen

Ephesians: 1:1-14

1. Look up the word “apostle” in the dictionary. In what sense was Paul an apostle?

In what sense are there “apostles” still present in the Church today?

According to what definition of “apostle” can there be no more apostles other than those in Paul’s day?

2. While you are studiously engrossed in your dictionary, look up the word “predestination.” What does it mean?

3. Does God want all people to be saved? (1 Timothy 2:3-4; John 3:16-17; 2 Peter 3:9)

4. How can you be sure you are someone God has chosen to live with Him forever in His Heaven? (John 3:16; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:9; 1 Peter 3:21)

5. I’m not perfect. Neither are you. So, how can we be “holy and blameless” in God’s sight (Ephesians 1:4)? (Colossians 1:21-22; Ephesians 5:25-27)

6. Describe some of the “spiritual blessings” (Ephesians 1:3) God has given you in Christ. (John 14:27; John 3:36; Colossians 2:13)

What would you feel like if you had none of them?

7. How do we know the Spirit of God lives in us? (1 John 4:12-13; John 14:15, 21; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Corinthians 12:3)

8. One can stay awake nights wondering, “Why did God save me!” What’s the answer? (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9)

9. Since we are God's elect, what are we elected for? (Ephesians 1:12; James 1:18; Ephesians 2:10)

10. What does it mean to be "sealed with the Holy Spirit?" (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Timothy 2:19)

How does it make you sure of your salvation?

11. Discuss the following options. The first time I read Ephesians 1:1-14 they were:

- Easy to understand
- So difficult I had to reread some of the verses
- A nuclear physicist couldn't understand this
- I never made it through

When we read difficult parts of Scripture, what prayer should we offer to God? (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6; Acts 16:14)

12. In what way does it change your perspective on God and your personal salvation when over and over again you read that you have been "elected" to salvation? (Exodus 6:7; Matthew 25:34; John 15:16; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:9)

13. In your own words tell how you feel about the following statements:

God has elected me.

As God's elect I have God's forgiveness.

As God's elect I have the seal of the Holy Spirit.

As God's elect I have received spiritual blessings.

14. Knowing you are God's elect what change would you like to make in your life?



HOGWASH!	7
FORGIVEN AND SAVED	7
SEALED	8
EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING	8
PERSONAL APPLICATION – EPHESIANS 1:15-23	9

*“God has elected us.
As God’s elect we have forgiveness.
Our election and forgiveness are guaranteed
by the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Who, by His presence gives us all spiritual blessings.”*

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? – EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Pastors are particularly concerned for those individuals within every congregation who seem to insist on being “members” without showing any interest in worship, Bible Study, or church activities. Do some people think that inclusion on the church roster guarantees membership in God’s church? Apparently so. That’s why Paul in Ephesians needs to remind us of what God’s church is really about. And it’s not about the four walls and steeple that stand on the corner two blocks away. Paul says that God’s Church is a community of individuals who have been “predestined” for salvation, who have been forgiven and saved by the blood of Christ, who have been given the guarantee of salvation by the “seal” of the Holy Spirit, and are now blessed with “every spiritual blessing.” In this second lesson, let’s look at these four ingredients that begin to answer the question: What is the church?

“PREDESTINATION”

What a way to start out a Bible Study — Predestination! In verses 4 and 5 Paul clearly writes that God “chose us in Him (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.” And in case it didn’t sink in the first time, Paul goes on to write: “In Him (Christ) we were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will...”

We can’t avoid it, can we? Images fill our minds of strict fire and brimstone preachers scaring us half out of our wits with the conviction that from eternity some individuals were preordained to go to heaven and other preordained

to descend into a fiery hell. And nothing can change the immutable will of a mighty and just God who planned this distinction before He created the world.

HOGWASH!

I, for one, would find it difficult to worship and praise a god who had foreordained souls to everlasting damnation. And clearly that's not what the Bible says. The Bible underscores God's intention that all men should be saved, not just a select few. In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 we read, "This is good and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Furthermore, the Bible tells us that when a soul is lost, it is the sole fault of the condemned individual. Jesus actually weeps over those people who have rejected Him. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Jesus cries, "you who will kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37). So, there's the Gospel answer to the fire and brimstone preachers. God wants all people to be saved, and He weeps over those who refuse His salvation.

For those of you wondering how God by grace for Christ's sake wants all people saved, but God by grace for Christ's sake elected only a few to be saved (after all, that doesn't equate logically), I have this answer for you:

I don't know.

And we, with our finite human knowledge simply can't harmonize the apparent contradiction. Rather, we take it on faith and wait for the Lord to answer all our questions when we meet Him face to face.

Perhaps we can get some glimmer of an answer, however, by remembering that God is all-knowing. He can see beyond time and space. And in His omniscience He is aware of who will receive His grace-given salvation and who will reject it. Because God is beyond space and time, it is His prerogative to already know, even before the foundation of the world, whose hearts and minds will be so hardened as to reject the promise of everlasting joy and peace through Jesus Christ. He has the foreknowledge of how His Son Jesus will be born in the world and die on the cross for all mankind. By the same token, God

foreknows those who are eager to believe in the promise of deliverance from sin and eternal death and who will receive God's paradise.

In other words, God did not decide beforehand who would be damned and who would be saved. Nor is there anything inside us that influences God to elect us and not another. Rather, before God even created the world, He knew that mankind would fall into sin, that His Son Jesus would sacrifice Himself to redeem all people from sin, and that some individuals would rejoice in that redemption while others would reject it.

Unfortunately, no one on earth has direct information about his or her own personal election. We are all aware that some individuals seem to have faith throughout part of their lives, then tragically deny the Lord and may even go to their deaths apart from their once shining faith. Obviously, such individuals, even though once holding true faith, were not part of God's elect.

So, how do we know whether we are part of God's elect? For those of us who have faith in Jesus as the one and only Savior from sin, the words of Paul to the Ephesians should bring words of comfort. After all, those who read and believe Paul's words are assumed to be the elect (v. 4). The faith we feel shows we are one of God's elect. And God promises that the covenant of His love and grace we now enjoy will always be with us. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). In other words, if an individual loses his faith and winds up not being one of God's elect, it's not because the Lord has abandoned the individual, but rather because that individual has abandoned the Lord.

FORGIVEN AND SAVED

Whew! We're done with that rather awesome topic! Thank heavens there's more to these introductory verses of Ephesians than just predestination. Paul not only describes the church as consisting of members who are predestined to salvation, but then underscores what that predestination means to them. For one thing it means that the members of God's Church (not necessarily

...if we want the blessings of forgiveness, peace, the promise of everlasting life, the promise of God's providence and love, then I have good news. It's ours. It's all ours.

man's church) are forgiven and saved. "In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" Paul declares (v. 7). And this forgiveness and salvation is given to us freely by God after we hear the "mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (v. 9-10). The mystery of God's will in Christ, of course, is the Gospel news that God's Son has died on the cross to put to death the eternal consequences of our sin and rose again to give us eternal life. So, the mystery Paul talks about isn't a mystery in the sense of something unknown. We know it. We've heard the Gospel. Rather, it's a mystery in the sense of understanding why God would do such a wonderful thing for "poor, miserable sinners" like us!

SEALED

The second thing the members of God's Church receive as elected children of God is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Paul says that the seal of the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our eternal inheritance until we die and are redeemed spiritually and physically from the grave. It's as if God has given us a down payment on our salvation just so we can be sure it's true and real. And what is this "seal"? Well, verse 13 says it's the seal of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God's Spirit resides in us is a guarantee that forgiveness and salvation are ours because we have been chosen as God's elect. And how do we know the Spirit is in us? That's easy! The Lord through Peter, promises that in our baptism we receive the Spirit. Remember what Peter said? "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And how do we know the Holy Spirit still dwells in our hearts? That's easy too! Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." If we confess Jesus as Lord, we have God's Spirit. So, you

see, our faith is a guarantee that the seal of the Spirit has brought us, the elect, forgiveness and salvation.

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

And as a result of the Spirit's indwelling, Paul promises we now receive every spiritual blessing in Christ (v. 3). Every one of them! Spiritual blessings, of course, are a lot different than physical blessings. If we're only after Cadillacs, stocks and bonds, real estate and mutual funds, then this promise isn't for us. But, if we want the blessings of forgiveness, peace, the promise of everlasting life, the promise of God's providence and love, then I have good news. It's ours. It's all ours. We have it right now. We have it because we are one of God's elect, and the guarantee of that election is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that brings faith which in turn knows the forgiveness and grace of God. And so, you see, all these verses in Ephesians are wound together in God's plan for us. Election—forgiveness—the seal of the Holy Spirit—spiritual blessings all tied together to describe what constitutes the true members of God's church.

Maybe this diagram will help:

God has elected us



As God's elect we have forgiveness



Our election and forgiveness are guaranteed by the gift of the Holy Spirit



Who, by His presence gives us all spiritual blessings.

Now is that like the logic of a lawyer, or what?

PERSONAL APPLICATION – EPHESIANS 1:15-23

*Heavenly Father, may our lives be inspired by Your Word so
that in all things we trust Your will. Amen.*

Ephesians 1:15-23

1. What are the two distinctive characteristics in the life of the Christian? (Ephesians 1:15)

How can we demonstrate our faith? (James 2:17-18; Luke 3:8-11)

Can we appropriately refuse to love a fellow Christian? (1 John 2:9-11)

2. Who are you remembering in your prayers these days, and why?

For whom are you giving God thanks ?

How does it make you feel knowing there are those who keep you in their prayers?

3. Webster defines “wisdom” as the faculty of making the best use of knowledge, experience, understanding, etc; good judgment; sagacity.” How would you define “Christian wisdom?”

Webster defines “revelation” as “revealing or disclosing, a striking disclosure, as of something not previously known, or realized.” How would you define “Christian revelation?”

What’s the difference between Christian “wisdom” and Christian “revelation?”

Why do you think Paul wants us to have both? (Ephesians 1:17)

4. How does Scripture depict the “enlightenment” Paul speaks about in verse 18? (Psalm 18:28, 119:130; Proverbs 29:13; Isaiah 29:18, 60:19)

How is Jesus described at various times in Scripture? (Isaiah 9:2; John 1:4, 8:12, 12:35; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 21:23)

So, who brings the “light” or “enlightenment?” (Ephesians 5:14)

And what happens to that “light” after it “enlightens” us? (Acts 13:47; Judges 5:31; Philippians 2:15)

Who have you enlightened with your life and how?

5. With which two acts in the life of Christ did God demonstrate His almighty power? (Ephesians 1:19-20)
-

What does the right hand of God signify? (Psalm 110:1)

List the two most powerful acts God has performed in your life.

6. What is the church called in verse 23?
-

How do each of the following verses expand our understanding of the Church being Christ’s body?
Ephesians 4:12

Ephesians 4:16

Ephesians 5:23

Romans 12:4-5

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

If you could describe yourself as a body part in Christ’s Church, which part would you be and why?

7. What is the relationship of Christ to His Church? (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22)
-

8. Did Jesus raise Himself from the dead? (Ephesians 1:20)
-

Why do you think it is important for Paul to stress that the Father raised the Son? (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14)



PERSONAL APPLICATION – EPHESIANS 2:1-10

14

“A careful balance is needed for the Church to fulfill its position as Christ’s body in the world, led and guided by Christ, the head, through His Holy Spirit.”

It’s an incomparable gift, you know. The gift of eternal life with our heavenly Father makes all our other blessings pale in comparison. The God of all creation chose to form you and me. In His infinite wisdom He has selected us to be His children and members of His Church. He promises our lives will go on forever into an eternal perfection. How can we be sufficiently thankful for a gift which infinitely surpasses all other blessings?

Unfortunately, the wonder of the Gospel message all too often grows stale. We listen to the formula of words, the promise of God’s mysterious love that sent His Son to die for our sins so we might live forever, and the words start sounding common and plain. We begin to take God’s promises for granted because we’ve enjoyed the soothing assurances of the Gospel for years and God’s love has become cheap.

Have you ever owned a fish? If you were to ask a fish to describe water, he wouldn’t know what you were talking about. After all, what’s water to a fish? A fish knows nothing else except that it’s surrounded by water. As Christians, sometimes we resemble fish because God’s grace has so surrounded us we know nothing else. God’s Gospel becomes commonplace and our gratitude is expressed less and less.

Paul appreciates how easily fallen man can take God’s love for granted. That explains why he’s so very excited with the faith and love demonstrated by the churches in and around Ephesus (v. 15). It is obvious to Paul that the churches retain a strong and unbendable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because their faith is reflected in love and compassion for their fellow Christians. The premier sign of a faithful congregation, after all, is the love it demonstrates to others. In the Epistle of James, the disciple reminds us that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17). In our world today, it’s easy to determine where faith in God grows unimpeded: where congregation and pastor work together, where members care and support each other, when prayer is fervently employed, and where a spirit of cooperation abounds. Such a congregation can be a rare find, indeed!

It's understandable why Paul should continually give thanks to God for their faith, and why he constantly remembers them in his prayers (v. 16). The Christians to which he, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has "given birth" are young Christians, "babes in Christ." Paul prays they will continue to grow "in the wisdom and revelation of the Lord" (v. 17). Now what's the difference between wisdom and revelation? Simply put, wisdom is of the heart while revelation is of the mind. The Christian faith has always walked the fine line between wisdom and revelation in the battle between scholastic theology and experiential theology. Scholastic theology is like the analysis of revelation gone amuck. Scholastic theology becomes a dead, intellectual study of words and ideas, a branch belonging to professional specialists and too complicated for any common intellect to understand. At the other extreme, theology can be based purely on one's experience with a higher power, a God who communicates through "celestial radar," speaking directly through visions, dreams, and an "inner voice." This is a theology where human wisdom has run amuck. Paul recognizes that closeness to God results from maturity in "wisdom and revelation," a theology of heart as well as mind. As Christians, we come to know our Lord not just as a textbook being, but as a personal Savior. We come to know God one-on-one as He directs and guides our lives. This is the Christian wisdom we gain throughout our lives. But, this personal knowledge of God has to be founded and balanced on the revelation of God's Word.

A Christian does need to learn something intellectually. Intellect is part of theology. After all, we don't really know someone until we see him in action. We can't have faith in God until we learn who God is, and how He's acted in the past. A little baby trusts his mother because the baby knows his mother will nurse him when he's hungry and care for him when he's sick. For the Christian, trust in God grows as we see God's actions in history. The Bible is a collection of stories demonstrating how our heavenly Father always delivers His people. So, trust Him! Grow in the revelation God has given us. After all, trust is based on a knowledge of the person trusted. Then enrich that revelation by the wisdom gained in experiencing a personal Savior guiding your life.

Now, the Bible doesn't belittle intellectual gifts. But, it wants to make us aware that our salvation isn't tied to

how cleverly we grasp all Scriptural doctrines. Some of us are smarter than others. If our salvation depended on academic achievement, most of us would be in danger of being lost. Our intellect is not the center of ourselves. That center is our soul. When Paul asks the Lord to enlighten our hearts (v. 18) he prays God will enlighten that part of us that initiates love and hope, loyalty and betrayal, trust and faithlessness. It's that "soul" part that God is after, that soul that encompasses both mind and emotions, logic and feeling, consciousness and unconsciousness. This is the part of man's being that needs new birth.

When God touches the soul with His message of Law and Gospel, enlightenment results. Life is seen in a new light, through the eyes of God rather than man, and we begin to sense how great His gift of eternal life really is. When man learns and believes he will live forever, he tends to feel less greed and covetousness. Who cares whether you drive a Porsche when you've already got Paradise? What real difference does a new house make when a heavenly mansion awaits you in a few short years? Paul understands that when one's hope in a "glorious inheritance" increases, one's whole perspective on the things of this world changes.

Paul reminds us of the "great power given to us who believe" (v. 19). It is clear in Scripture that when God's people were gathered together following Pentecost, God displayed His power in miraculous ways. He allowed the disciples to speak fluently in languages they had never learned. He used the disciples to heal the crippled and even to raise the dead. What a demonstration of power that was! The power of God is still displayed among His people through the community of the Church. As a pastor, I have seen souls healed by the care and compassion of fellow Christians in the community of the Church. Through the prayers of the Church, individuals have been restored to health. Family divisions have been mended. Children have returned from the brink of criminality. Feuding couples have found peace and happiness. Truly, such "healings" are as miraculous and spectacular as any miracles displayed by the Apostles. And in this way God continues to display His "incomparably great power for us who believe."

Of course, that power was most clearly demonstrated when

*God has created and maintained the universe so that His Church
could flourish and through it bring redemption to man.*

God raised His Son from the dead and exalted Him to the universe's highest place of authority: at the right hand of God (v. 20-22). Isn't it interesting how Paul describes Christ's resurrection? Jesus didn't raise Himself. Paul says God raised Christ from the dead. And that distinction is emphasized throughout Paul's writings. If you're motivated enough, look up Romans 4:24, 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Thessalonians 1:10. In all these verses Paul makes clear it is God who raised Christ from the dead. Jesus didn't raise Himself. Of course, to our logical turn-of-the-21st-century minds, it makes no sense to say God raised Jesus from the dead because Jesus is God, too. It's still like saying God raised Himself from the dead, isn't it? But Paul feels the distinction important because in most of these verses he uses the picture of the Father raising the Son as proof that God can and will raise us as well. The resurrection isn't Jesus' own personal, private miracle. Paul says God raised Jesus and He will raise us also. That's how powerful God is.

Because God's Son had been so faithful to His Father, God has now exalted Jesus above all things, "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in present age but also in the one to come" (v. 21). It's a breathtaking concept to consider that a lowly human being who was once a carpenter, who suffered with a crown of thorns, should now and into eternity rule the universe. But what's a real mind blower is this statement: "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church..." (v. 22, NIV). You see, that implies not that the church was made for the world, but that the world was made for the church. This may seem a bold statement, but Paul suggests that all of creation is at the disposal of God's Church for the purpose of redeeming souls. God has created and maintained the universe so that His Church could flourish and through it bring redemption to man.

Finally, Paul describes the Church as "the body of Christ." That's also a remarkable suggestion and full of implication.

Paul develops this idea much more comprehensively in 1 Corinthians 12 when he compares individual Christians in the church to individual body parts of a human being. It's a wonderfully appropriate understanding of the function and operation of the Church. Each member fulfills his or her role depending on the gifts God has given the individual. Ideally, all members of the congregation work together to form one organic being whose purpose is to reach and incorporate others into the body.

But there are some dangers with the description of the Church as a body, particularly when the Church claims to be all body and no spirit. This is the institutional Church at its worst. The Church dare not exalt itself to claim an equality with Christ. When a church declares its pronouncements to be of equal authority (or superior) to God's own declarations, that church has made itself a cult. The Church must remember that Christ's Spirit makes His home in her midst. The Church may be sinful, it may make grave mistakes, but it remains endowed with the Spirit, through which God works to redeem mankind. There is also a danger when the Church claims it's all spirit and no body. Such churches need to remember that, as in the story of creation, there has to be something bodily into which God can breathe His Spirit. God has chosen to use a structure known as His Church to work in the world. If the institutional Church is dismembered, God can't work. If the institutional Church is exalted, God can't work either. A careful balance is needed for the Church to fulfill its position as Christ's body in the world, led and guided by Christ, the head, through His Holy Spirit.

And so, Paul ends this chapter by defining the Church as Christ's body, performing the powerful function of proclamation to the world while remaining under the command of its Head, Jesus Christ. In order for that body to function at its best, it needs the constant enlightenment of wisdom and revelation. Who knows? Part of that enlightenment may even come through Living Way Bible Study!