

HELPS TO THE STUDY OF EPHESIANS

W.
WILSON
CASH

Companion Volumes

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HELPS TO THE STUDY OF EPHESIANS

By

W. WILSON CASH

Lord Bishop of Worcester

(Formerly General Secretary, C.M.S.)

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INTRODUCTION

THIS little book is an attempt to provide material for study of one of the greatest of the New Testament epistles, in order to discover the thought which the writer intended his words to convey to us. This book is therefore in no sense a commentary, but notes which are designedly left quite incomplete with a view to stimulating study of the epistle itself by the reader.

It is common nowadays to find Christian workers who use aids to the Bible, books about the Scriptures, but who never make a first-hand study of the Bible for themselves. No reading or study brings such a rich reward as the concentration upon the text of Scripture itself. The method this volume seeks to illustrate is the careful study, book by book, of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture, weighing each verse in its context, and searching for the main theme of each book so that the teaching of the different chapters is seen in its right perspective. To do this the first essential is a preliminary analysis, and although any commentary will give you this it is more profitable to read the book right through several times first and then to make your own analysis. In these studies I have sought to give such an analysis, and then to show how the study of a whole section throws a flood of new light upon words and phrases, very familiar to us but found on closer thought to carry a wealth of meaning we had never previously seen.

Years ago when I began to study this epistle the words of chapter i. 3 gripped my attention: "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and for long I wrestled with them, finding many lessons, but it was not until I had soaked myself in the whole epistle that I came to see a little of the richness of their meaning. St. Paul had not

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only given us a theme in this verse, he was making it the prologue to the unfolding vision of God's purpose for mankind, a world redemption through Christ leading to the unification of the whole human race in Him, "to sum up," as St. Paul puts it, "all things in Christ." Spiritual blessings then, were not only a personal privilege for me as a Christian; they were blessings which were conditional upon my recognition of my place and responsibilities as a member of the Body of Christ.

The vision unfolded further, and I saw the far horizons of the purposes of God, with Christ as the centre of the universe, all things leading up to Him and all uniting in Him. Then as never before I understood the meaning of the words—Christ, the one hope of the world. As an individual the Church had a new place in my life, and the fellowship of the Body assumed a far more important place than hitherto. The recent discussions on reunion have driven me back to this epistle, and a re-study of it has once more brought a flood of new light.

I put forward these simple studies therefore in the hope that others may be led to a fresh study of the sacred page itself, and through this into a new vision of God's purpose for all the world.

W. WILSON CASH

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THE BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE

ST. PAUL was in Rome, not, as he had once hoped, free to evangelize the imperial city; but a prisoner bound, as he tells us, "by a chain." The inevitable clash between orthodox Judaism and Christianity had come. Paul, once the persecutor, had stood boldly as a witness to Christ and had for long been marked down as the leader of the new movement. He was eminently fitted for this task he had undertaken, for he was a Jew born in a Greek city, Tarsus, and yet possessed the Roman franchise. Thus three great civilizations met in him, and when the controversy arose as to whether Jews and Gentiles were on an equal footing in the Church it was Paul who championed the cause of Gentile liberty.

The struggle that might have split the Church at the outset issued in a complete victory for the unity of all believers in one Church. The new policy of the Church, however, had its repercussions upon the Jews who saw Christianity no longer as a Jewish sect but a rival faith, and this intensified the hatred against the Apostle to the Gentiles. When therefore he visited Jerusalem for the last time the controversy was practically dead within the Church, but those without the fold had been stirred by the accounts of his journeys, and in a riot in the precincts of the temple he was arrested and sent to Rome for trial. Thus it came about that this intrepid missionary found himself in bonds through the very cause which had liberated the Gentile Christians from the fetters of Judaism. A study of the Acts of the Apostles is a necessary introduction to the epistle because the whole theme of the epistle springs out of the controversy that had raged, and the richness of its teaching is an expression of the deep spiritual experience of the apostle during his imprisonment.

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The theme of the epistle is Christ and His Church : the eternal purpose of God revealed in Christ and realized through the Church. That purpose is not simply the calling out of a Church, nor the unity of the Church, but rather that through the Church all the world may be enriched in Christ. To accomplish this the apostle begins with the individual's need of salvation through Christ, of redemption through the Cross, and the forgiveness of sins "through His blood." From this we are led to the relationship between believer and believer. World unity begins when the first group of converts realize they are members of one Body. The apostle then shows how both Jews and Gentiles are one, for they are both in Christ. Had the epistle ended here the Church would have been in the perilous position of regarding itself as an end in the purposes of God. Paul, however, carries us on to see that the Church is not an end in itself, but an instrument through which God can work out still wider purposes of undreamed possibilities affecting all humanity, and so the theme develops until we see the unity of the Body as essential to world evangelization.

The epistle falls naturally into two parts. Chapters i to iii are doctrinal, and give us the opening of this theme which Paul calls the mystery. Chapters iv to vi are the practical application, the call to the Church to shoulder its task, to face the conflict equipped with the whole armour of God.

The following outline is taken from *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, by J. Armitage Robinson.

- i. 1, 2. Opening salutation.
- i. 3-14. A doxology, expanding into
 - (a) a description of the mystery of God's Will : election (v. 4), adoption (v. 5), redemption (v. 7), wisdom (v. 8), consummation (v. 10) ;
 - (b) a statement that Jew and Gentile alike are the portion of God (vv. 11-14).
- i. 15-ii. 10 A prayer for wisdom, expanding into a description of God's power as shown

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- (a) in raising and exalting Christ (i. 19-23) ;
- (b) in raising and exalting us in Christ, whether Gentiles or Jews (ii. 1-10).
- ii. 11-22. The Gentile was an alien (ii. 11, 12) but is now one man with the Jew (ii. 13-18), a fellow citizen (ii. 19), and part of God's house (ii. 20-22).
- iii. 1-13. Return to prayer for wisdom ; but first
 - (a) a fresh description of the mystery (iii. 2-6)
 - (b) and St. Paul's relation to its proclamation (iii. 7-13).
- iii. 14-21. The prayer in full (iii. 14-19) with a doxology (iii. 20-21).
- iv. 1-16. God's calling involves a unity of life (iv. 1-6) to which diversity of gifts is intended to lead (iv. 7-14), the unity in diversity of the Body (iv. 15, 16).
- iv. 17-24. The old life contrasted with the new.
- iv. 25-v. 5. Precepts of the new life.
- v. 6-21. The old darkness and folly : the new light and wisdom.
- v. 22-vi. 9. Duties interpreted by relation to Christ :
 - Wives and husbands (v. 22-33),
 - Children and parents (vi. 1-4),
 - Servants and masters (vi. 5-9).
- vi. 10-20. The spiritual warrior clad in God's armour.
- vi. 21-24. Closing words.

Section I : ch. i. 1, 2

STUDY I

PAUL AN APOSTLE

"The travelled ambassador of Christ, who snatched Christianity from the hands of a local faction, and turned it to a universal faith, whose powerful word shook all the gods from Cyprus to Gibraltar, who turned the tide of history and thought, giving us the organization of Christendom for the legions of Rome, and for Nero and Epicurus, Augustine, Eckhart and Luther."—J. Martineau in *Hours of Thought*, p. 88.

THE first time we meet St. Paul in the New Testament he is silently consenting to the death of Stephen. We next see him imprisoning Christians for their faith. With dramatic suddenness we are given the picture of the Damascus road and his conversion. The story of his subsequent life is one of ceaseless toil in the Gospel in the founding of churches and in evangelistic tours, until the scene closes as it opened with persecution, but this time it is "Paul the aged," an ambassador in bonds, who is the sufferer.

In these studies the personality of St. Paul must form an important factor because his theology is the outcome of a deep and abiding spiritual experience of Christ. This man of wide learning and acute intellect was the first Christian theologian on a large scale. In his teaching in this, as in other epistles, there is no distinction between theology and religion. His deepest thoughts are shot through with religious emotion. His controversies and arguments lead back to Christ as the centre of all. What comes to us as doctrine was but the reflection of his rich, spiritual experience. His knowledge of theology is entirely governed by his knowledge of Christ.

As we read this epistle the characteristics of St. Paul's theology will continually meet us. What are they ?

(1) The glorified Christ. The vision at his conversion profoundly influenced his thinking.

(2) Christ indwelling human lives. The vision had made Christ personal to him, to him "the chief of sinners."

(3) Faith. The vision had opened a new life to him : "The life . . . I now live . . . I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me."

(4) The death of Christ. The vision had led him to forgiveness of sins. The Cross was no longer the symbol of a shameful death but the place of pardon and peace.

(5) Justification and reconciliation. Forgiveness for Paul involved his whole attitude to God and God's attitude to him, hence one of his favourite words is reconciliation.

(6) The law and grace. He had lived under the law, conscious all the time that human nature was too weak to obey. With forgiveness came the experience of divine grace bringing inward joy and peace.

(7) God the Father. Paul's vision revealed in a new way what he had always believed, namely, that God was his Father, but having seen Christ he saw how He revealed the character of the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

(8) The Holy Spirit. Paul's conversion brought him at once to Pentecost and he speaks of the Christian as "sealed with the Holy Spirit."

(9) The Church. The vision sent Paul to Ananias and commenced for him the inter-relationship of one Christian to another in their common faith. He laboured not only to convert men but to unite them in the one Body through the unity of the Spirit.

These are a few of the characteristic notes which will meet us in our studies.

Now note how the epistle opens : "Paul, an apostle." It is important to compare this opening phrase with those in other epistles.

In the first epistles (1 and 2 Thess.) he does not describe himself as an apostle ; he is simply "Paul."

In Romans he is "a servant of Jesus Christ."

In 1 Corinthians he is "called to be an apostle."

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In 2 Cor. he is "apostle . . . by the will of God."

In Galatians he is apostle "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ."

In Ephesians he is "apostle . . . by the will of God."

In Philippians he reverts to the word "servant."

In Colossians, "apostle . . . by the will of God."

To Timothy (1) "apostle . . . by the commandment of God."

(2) "apostle . . . by the will of God."

To Titus, "a servant."

To Philemon, "a prisoner."

First of all then he is simply Paul.

Second group of epistles

Third group of epistles } he is servant and apostle.

Titus, he is servant.

Philemon, he is prisoner.

Why does he describe himself as servant to Romans, Philippians, and Titus? Why does he emphasize his apostleship as emphatically of divine origin?

Why to Philemon does he use the word prisoner?

One of the main purposes of these studies is to understand, through the teaching of the epistle, Paul's own spiritual experience. Here at the outset he reveals his sense of a divine call and of a knowledge of the will of God.

How did he know God's will for him? See Gal. i. 15-24. Think of what is involved in this.

St. Paul claims that he met Christ personally, that Christ, having come to him, never left him, that Christ revealed to him the will of God for his life in detail as well as in general, that his life was governed by the "will of God." This he gives as an experience which can be shared by all who yield to Christ.

STUDY II

"TO THE SAINTS AND FAITHFUL IN CHRIST JESUS"

"Holiness is the unmistakable characteristic of the true Church. The glory of God, inseparable from His essence, is His holiness: His eternally willing and doing only what is best. It is the task of the Church to exhibit in human life and character this holiness of God's. Those whom God calls into His Church, He calls to be above all else, holy."—Dr. Marcus Dods.

IN writing to the churches where does St. Paul begin to use the word saint? (Compare 1 and 2 Thess. i-ii; 2 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 1; and Rom. i. 1.)

(1) Saint was a common word for the Israelites as a chosen people. Saintsship involved holiness through consecration. (See Exodus xix. 6, Deut. vii. 6.)

St. Paul adopts this Jewish word and gives it a Christian connotation. What constituted a "saint" to St. Paul?

This word is only once used in the gospels, St. Matt. xxvii. 52. It is one of the richest words in the epistles.

The main idea is separation, one who belongs to God. The word runs through the epistle as expressing the fellowship of the Christian community. (Compare Eph. i. 15, 18; ii. 19; iii. 8, 18; iv. 12; v. 3; vi. 18.)

(2) "The faithful." Note the twin ideas in this word of faith which are belief, trust, and confidence in God; and the fidelity of the "saint" to God. St. Paul opens and closes the epistle with this word, see i. 1 and vi. 21. Otherwise he does not use it, but he carries the thought of it through the whole epistle. Study its varying meanings in ii. 8; iii. 12, 17; iv. 5, 13; vi. 16, 23.

Spiritual life begins here, prayer depends upon it, the spiritual life grows through it. The climax comes in iv. 13, "till we all come in the unity of the faith." Here is a pro-

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gressive revelation of Christ in human experience, vision upon vision with an ever-expanding horizon.

What are the demands of faith upon the Christian ?

Can I trust Christ fully for everything ?

Can Christ trust me with this commission ?

(3) "Grace to you and peace from God." The Greek salutation was taken from this word grace. The Jewish salutation was peace. These words are combined in all the epistles, except 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Peace had been a characteristic of the Old Testament.

Grace was the characteristic of the New Testament. Paul is a Hebrew apostle to a Gentile world. He is building up the one Church where all are one in Christ, and he therefore brings together the two words to express the unity of divided races in the one Christ. To understand the full meaning of grace as one of the great thoughts of the epistle compare i. 6, 7 ; ii. 5, 7, 8 ; iii. 2, 7, 8 ; iv. 7, 29 ; vi. 24.

Peace is the second strand, see ii. 14, 15, 17 ; iv. 3 ; vi. 15, 23. Write out these verses and then compare them, with the thought in mind of the one Church.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ."—*Eph.* i. 10. We have now seen how in i. 1-14 all the dominant ideas of the epistle are given in what is the apostle's preface to the book, and i. 10 brings us to the central aim in his mind, unity in Christ. This is referred to again in Study VIII, but here we must pause to consider what is involved in this world unity in Christ.

(a) *The unity of the Body of Christ.*—The first step towards "all things in Christ" is the unity of the Body through which Christ functions. See St. John xvii. Our Lord prays for unity "that the world may believe."

But the prayer followed the sacrament when He exemplified true unity in the communion of His body and blood. See St. John xiii. St. Paul writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xi. 24-28), follows the same order, for in 1 Cor. xii, he follows up his teaching on the sacrament by explaining the principle of true unity. Diversities of gifts and differing ministrations

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do not break the fellowship, for the New Testament nowhere seeks uniformity. But the differing gifts are unified through the one bond of love. 1 Cor. xiii.

Pentecost became possible because the apostles were of "one mind and in one accord," Acts ii. 1-3. The immediate fruits of Pentecost were seen in the binding together of individual converts into one Church where they were of "one heart and one soul." Acts iv. 32.

(b) *Unity of the Gospel*.—The apostles preached a Gospel not for a few but for the world, and church unity found expression in unity of purpose and aim. To them there was one Gospel, universal yet adequate, which they were prepared to submit to the test of human experience under every variety of circumstance. This Gospel was to them not only unique but absolute. In no later age could it be superseded. No other prophet could displace Christ. He was to be final and authoritative. See Gal. i. 1-9.

The picture St. Paul gives us is of individuals redeemed by Christ, united in one body in Christ, commissioned as a Church with the one task of applying the Gospel as a remedy for the needs of the world. This leads the apostle into the vision of resultant unities, and in Gal. iii. 28 he gives a summary of these.

(i) Race unity. "There is neither Jew nor Greek." "The doctrine of racialism is sowing in men's minds seeds which like the dragon's teeth will reappear as armed hosts. In the sixteenth century men fought about religion. In the nineteenth century nationality was the driving force in European politics. Wars of nationality took the place of wars of religion. The flame of the sentiment of nationality was fanned by the teaching of historians and the songs of poets, until in the end they broke out in the latest devastating conflagration. The human race can be saved from self-destruction only by regaining control over these turbulent and volcanic energies and directing them into safe and useful channels" (J. H. Oldham in *Christianity and the Race Problem*, p. 13). The problem of race conflict is the menace before the whole civilized world to-day. Yet St. Paul's vision of "all things in

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Christ " must comprehend this problem and offer an answer. What is the answer? With the thought of the unity of fellowship of the Church in mind consider these points, which are taken from Dr. Oldham's book quoted above.

(1) " Christianity is not primarily a command but a Gospel. It is good news about God."

(2) " The Christian's business is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

(3) " God's love for men gives to each human personality an inestimable worth."

(4) " Since God loves men and seeks their good Christians are dedicated to the service of their fellow men."

(5) " Christianity assures us that our ideals are not simply our ideals but the purposes of God."

(6) " There is enough laziness and cowardice in most of us to make us secretly welcome any plausible excuse for leaving things as they are."

In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul gives us teaching on all these points. Read the epistle through with this question in mind and you will see why St. Paul so emphasized the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In his day world unity was obtained by imperial power and the mailed fist, and Rome crumbled because it lacked the essential principles of unity based on brotherhood.

(ii) Social unity. " There is neither bond nor free " (Gal. iii. 28). " Redemptive love recognizes no destruction of sex or status, but makes men of all social ranks equally responsible for their attitude towards God; and thus society becomes an organism of free men, among whom the only authority that is strictly imperial or beyond questioning is that of Christ. The bond servant of Jesus Christ can be bound by no other master, as in their equal dependence upon Him disciples cease to be able to maintain artificial distinctions of grade or privilege " (*Dictionary of Christ of the Gospels*, vol. II, p. 642).

Read the letter to Philemon where St. Paul applies this principle to a particular case.

Section I : ch. i. 3-14

STUDY III

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

" Grace is more than a smile of good nature. It is not the shimmering face of an illumined lake ; it is the sunlit majesty of an advancing sea. It is a transcendent and ineffable force, the outgoing energies of the redeeming personality of God washing against the polluted shores of human need."—Dr. J. H. Jowett.

" **B**LESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ " (i. 3). This verse is the key verse of the epistle. It contains two of the strong phrases of the epistle : (a) heavenly places, (b) in Christ. This, says the apostle, is the *sphere* of all spiritual blessing from God. It is the text upon which the section to v. 14 is based, in fact the whole section is a development of the thought of v. 3.

Read vv. 3-14 slowly. At first these verses will baffle our analysis. They are like some great kaleidoscopic picture of the spiritual realm. St. Paul begins with God, the blessing which comes from God to men, the eternity of His purpose for good, the glory of its consummation. But he cannot order his conceptions, or close his sentences. One thought presses hard upon another, and will not be refused. And so this great doxology runs on and on : "in whom . . . in Christ . . . in him . . . in whom . . . in whom . . . in whom." Read again these verses, now underlining the words "in him" and "in whom," then note the pivotal words that recur again and again : "the will of God," vv. 5, 9, 11 ; "to the praise of his glory," vv. 6, 12, 14 ; "in Christ," vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

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These verses are the *Te Deum* of the spiritual life, and aim to show the work of the Blessed Trinity in the life of the believer. Spiritual blessing is the gift of the Father, mediated to us through the Son, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Read the verses again now to note the development of thought. We are chosen before the foundation of the world, adopted as His children for His glory, resulting in a new relationship, "accepted in the Beloved."

This thought of the Beloved leads us on to the work of Christ for us and in us. We have redemption in Him and forgiveness of sins through the riches of His grace. This personal relationship is not the isolated work of Christ to individuals but part of His will for the world. His purpose has been a mystery and it is now made known "that in the . . . fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ."

Standing on the mountain peak with the whole panorama of God's purposes for the universe stretching out before him, the apostle comes back to the place of the small group of people who make up the Body of Christ, those who first trusted in Him. This purpose is confirmed by the Holy Spirit Who seals the believers as members of this fellowship for the fulfilment of God's will for the world. Having studied this section as a whole we can now note the leading ideas.

(a) "*Heavenly places*" occurs five times in the epistle (i. 3, 20; ii. 6; iii. 10; vi. 12, marg.) and the phrase occurs nowhere else in the Bible. What was Paul's experience which he sought to describe as life in "heavenly places"? It has been translated "among heavenly things" and "in the heavenly sphere." In Christ we are translated into a new world, a world of the Spirit, as distinct from the material world. In this world or sphere Christ is supreme. The Old Testament used the phrase "at [God's] right hand" (Ps. cx. 1). Paul emphasizes Christ as seated above and beyond all rivals. He is unique, not a superior among His brethren, but altogether different from all prophets and teachers.

Think of this in relation to the claims of Mohammed, to the Hindu conception of life, and to Buddhism.

In ii. 6 we are told this position of Christ is ours in Him. Compare with this iii. 10. "There are powers in the heavenly sphere who are learning the purpose of God through the history of the Church."

Read now vi. 12. The heavenly sphere is the place of conflict for the Church as it will ultimately be the place of triumph. The opposing forces of evil are not the material things that seem such obstacles but spiritual wickedness. In this conflict Christ will triumph through His Church. Compare Col. i. 10 and i. 20, and 2 Cor. iv. 18. Reality is to be found in the things "unseen," in the spiritual realm. How far can we share Paul's experience of life lived on an entirely new plane? Does not this involve first of all our attitude to Christ Himself? The vision of a spiritual world under the leadership of a triumphant Lord sprang out of the place Paul gave Christ in his own life.

(b) "*In Christ.*"—Study St. Paul's use of the words Christ and Jesus. "Christ" is used as a title, "Jesus" as a proper name. Compare the use of the word Christ in this epistle with the word Jesus in 2 Cor. iv. 10, Phil. ii. 10, and note how St. Paul combines the two words "Christ Jesus." He never uses these words loosely as interchangeable but always with careful selection to emphasize an aspect of truth. To him Christ is eternal. His life does not begin at Bethlehem. His earthly life is a middle point between His eternal life of the past and of the future. Note now how through the combination of the two words St. Paul never separates the historical Jesus from the eternal Christ. They are one person.

Which of these names was it St. Paul first learned on the Damascus road (Acts ix. 5)? How, having seen Jesus, did he come to know Him as the Christ of God? Compare St. Matt. xvi. 16, St. Luke ix. 20.

So far we have been considering Christ; let us turn back to these verses and see our responsibilities.

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To be "in Christ" involves being holy, "without blame before him in love," i. 4. Follow this thought through to *v.* 6, then notice the method in *v.* 7, "redemption through his blood." Next comes the individual as part of the "all things in Christ," possessing now an inheritance, *v.* 11; again leading to *v.* 12, "the praise of his glory"; *vv.* 13, 14 bring it home to us. Ye trusted, heard, believed, and ye were sealed.

"In Christ" nothing matters but the glory of God. Think of this in connexion with *vv.* 6, 12, 14.

Section II : ch. i. 15 to ii. 10

STUDY IV

THANKSGIVING

"I leaned on a little table beside me and I hid my tear-stained face in my hands, and who could ever express even in the dimmest way the experience that came to me then? A secret influence drew my soul to the Cross where Jesus once expired. It was an inward leaning—I cannot give it any other name—an inward leaning like that which draws the heart to its beloved in its absence. As my soul drew near to Him Who became mine and died upon the Cross, in that moment I knew what faith meant, and in that moment my spirit received a wholly new power of uplifting."—Goethe in *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*.

READ through this section, noticing the absence of any break at the end of chap. i. Chapter i. 21-23 is a parenthesis. The thought of Christ raised from the dead and seated in the heavenly places is followed by "And you." For purposes of study we must sub-divide the section, taking i. 15-23 by itself.

i. 15. This is the first personal reference in the epistle, "I heard of your faith." St. Paul's method was to look for something in each church to which he wrote for which he could thank God, and to couple with it a prayer. This generally gives a keynote to his message in an epistle to a church. Compare the following:—

(a) Rom. i. 8: "I thank my God . . . that your *faith* is spoken of." (See also Rom. i. 17; iv. 17-22; v. 2.)

(b) 1 Cor. i. 1-4: "I thank my God . . . for the *grace* . . . which is given you." Then notice the need of grace in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. i. 10; iii. 1; v. 2; vi. 1; viii. 11.

(c) Phil. i. 1-5: "I thank my God . . . for your *fellowship*." Compare Phil. ii. 1-5; iii. 16.

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(d) Col. i. 1-4: "We give thanks to God . . . since we heard of your *faith* . . . and . . . *love*." Compare Col. ii. 1, 18-23.

(e) 1 Thess. i. 1-3: "We give thanks . . . for . . . your *work* of faith, and *labour* of love, and *patience* of hope." The fruits of the Gospel are Paul's theme here of thanksgiving. See 1 Thess. i. 5; ii. 2; iv. 8, 9, 13.

(f) 2 Thess. i. 3: "We are bound to thank God . . . because . . . your faith groweth exceedingly, and . . . charity." See 2 Thess. ii. 13-15.

Here then at the opening of these epistles St. Paul gives us some of the great words around which his experience swung, great words which stood for so much in Church building.

In Rome, the capital of a mighty empire, a small minority of the population are Christians. They are despised and unimportant. They are faced with all the strength of imperial Rome. They are represented as unpatriotic and bad citizens, and they are described as atheists because they refuse to acknowledge the gods of Rome. In spite of all that would crush them their characteristic is faith, faith in the God Who is holy, faith in Christ Who is Saviour and Lord, faith in the Holy Spirit Who witnesses through them of the love of God. Think of these Roman Christians in connexion with missionary work to-day. Faith in the first century moved mountains because it was the unshakable conviction that Christ in that small community of believers was mightier than all the armies of Rome, richer than all the wealth of empires, able to meet the deepest needs of the world.

The church in Corinth faced a different problem. It was the moral corruption of a dissolute age. This moral evil had invaded the Church. What believers needed was character, and St. Paul supplies the word "grace" to explain what Christ can do in regeneration.

The church in Philippi had developed a sense of corporate life, and St. Paul makes his key word fellowship to emphasize that unity is not a matter of organization but the unifying of members of Christ's Body in a living organism.

If you follow this thought through the epistles you will see that the quality St. Paul finds in a church worthy of praise

forms the subject of the epistle. There is a sequence of thought in these great words.

1. The pioneer or evangelistic stage is marked in the Epistle to the Thessalonians where St. Paul recognizes their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope.

2. The challenge of the non-Christian world to the Gospel comes out in the Epistle to the Romans (see i. 16).

3. The building of the Church is illustrated in Corinthians.

4. The fellowship of the Body follows as the teaching of Philippians.

5. The spiritual blessings bestowed on the Church in Christ form the subject of Ephesians (see i. 3).

These epistles exemplify the various stages of missionary development. The work grows from its early stages of proclaiming the Gospel where Christ is unknown to the shepherding of the flock surrounded by pagan influences, then to the welding together of believers into one body and one fellowship. At this stage there open out new vistas of spiritual resources available in Christ to enable the Church to bear its own witness.

These epistles give us the missionary's message, his hope in the face of insuperable difficulties, his policy for the future development of the Church, and his resources for every God-given task.

STUDY V

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF PRAYER

"Before the commission to preach and teach comes the vocation to prayer. It is at once the preliminary testing and the final triumph of the true apostle. It not only accompanies apostleship from beginning to end: it is itself an apostleship. The instinct of the Church was right when it recognized intercession as a distinct vocation, demanding all a strong man's powers, giving scope to his whole personality, sufficing as a life work for some of the noblest spirits and the brightest intellects."—E. Herman in *Creative Prayer*, p. 178

Read chapter i. 15-23, and chapter iii. 14-21

HERE are two prayers of St. Paul, and a close study of them will throw a flood of light on the things Paul sought in prayer for his converts. In each there is one central request: i. 17, for the spirit of wisdom; iii. 16, for strength by the Spirit.

In each case "that" follows to show the purpose of the petition. Write out the prayers comparing sentence with sentence, and notice in chapter i. he seeks knowledge of God and in chapter iii. knowledge of Christ. In chapter i. it is we in Christ, but in chapter iii. it is Christ in us.

What is the limit of these petitions? In each case he says "according to."

Paul's warrant for praying is found in i. 15, "faith and love." He seems to base his expectation of an answer upon the Christians' personal relationship to Christ and their love in action in daily life. Faith and love express a quality of spiritual life that was characteristic of the Ephesian church.

Think of this in relation to conversion, ii. 8, to prayer, iii. 12, to spiritual experience, iii. 17, to unity, iv. 5, 13, to conflict, vi. 16, and connect this thought with i. 1, "faithful in Christ Jesus." "It is a characteristic token of the difference between

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the two covenants that under the Law the 'fear of the Lord' holds very much the same place as 'faith in God' and 'faith in Christ' under the Gospel. Awe is the prominent idea of the earlier dispensation, trust in the later" (Lightfoot).

Now return to Eph. i. 15: "I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Faith looks up and draws the soul to God; love looks out and leads to fellowship.

Notice now how faith lies behind chapter ii. (see *vv.* 4, 12, 13). Read chapter iii. through to find the meaning of Paul's thanksgiving for their faith.

Read chapter iii. through again for the outward look (see *vv.* 6, 7, 8, 9).

Chapters i.—iii. are a complete section of the epistle, dealing doctrinally with the way to God and the fruits of life in Christ, and the key to them is i. 15.

Notice now the second key word of i. 15, love, and compare ii. 4, "His great love wherewith he loved us," and i. 4, iii. 17, 19, iv. 2, 15, 16, v. 2. Then compare again the closing reference to love in the epistle, vi. 23, "love with faith from God."

"There cannot be the faintest doubt that prayer is the heart and centre of all religion. Religion and prayer are not identical, but are related to one another as life and breathing, as thought and speech. Just as there can be no true religion without the idea of God and of the eternal, so there can be no genuine religious life without the life of prayer."

STUDY VI

ST. PAUL AT PRAYER

"Many in our day know what this congestion of occupation is: they are swept off their feet with their engagements and can scarcely find time to eat. We make this a reason for not praying; Jesus made it a reason for prayer. Is there any doubt which is the better course? When the dust of business so fills your room that it threatens to choke you, sprinkle it with the water of prayer and then you can cleanse it out with comfort and expedition."—Dr. Stalker in *Imago Christi*, p. 138

READ again Eph. i. 17-23. This prayer is: "That . . . God . . . may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation." In order that

(a) you may have "knowledge of him," that through this new conception of God;

(b) "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," or "illuminating the eyes of your heart so that you can understand the hope to which he calls us";

(c) that you may know "the wealth of his glorious heritage in the saints";

(d) that you may know "the surpassing greatness of his power over us believers—a power which operates with the strength of the might which he exerted in raising Christ from the dead."

Paul therefore prays for a new knowledge of God—a Christian conception of God, which is centred in Christ "raised . . . from the dead," "at his own right hand," "far above all . . . power . . . and dominion," Christ to Whom "all things [are] in subjection," and Christ, "the head over all things to the church, the church which is his Body, filled by him who fills the universe entirely."

"The spirit of wisdom." Paul is not praying for a teachable spirit, but "the teaching Spirit," the Holy Spirit, the

Teacher. (See St. John xiv. 26, and xvi. 13.) The Ephesian church had previously received the Holy Spirit (see Acts xix. 1-6).

Compare also the apostles' experience, Acts ii. 1-3, when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit," and Acts iv. 31, when the same men again received the Holy Spirit.

Having received the Holy Spirit should I continue to pray for the Holy Spirit? St. Paul shows that there are special gifts of the Holy Spirit for special purposes, and here he prays in that sense that these Christians may receive the Holy Spirit as *Teacher*. As Teacher the Spirit will be given as wisdom and revelation.

(a) The Holy Spirit as wisdom reveals "the mind of Christ," see Phil. ii. 1-8. "Let this mind be in you." The Holy Spirit alone can interpret the mind of Christ to a believer. In Philippians Paul shows us the mind of Christ through His humiliation of the Cross, and in 1 Cor. i. 18-24 he again links the thought of divine wisdom to the Cross. Read also 1 Cor. ii. 1-10.

From these references summarize what St. Paul prayed might be given to the Ephesians. Think of the background of the city life of Ephesus, the great goddess Diana, the philosophy that scorned a crucified Saviour. St. Paul was not seeking to approximate his message to the philosophy of the day, nor to preach what would attract people to him, but to show a new, divine revelation in sharp distinction from the religion of the times.

Think of this in connexion with the missionary task among non-Christian people. Paganism sought to absorb Christianity into its system, but Paul aimed at the overthrow of all that was pagan, a complete change of heart and mind, where life would henceforth be centred in Christ, unrivalled and alone as supreme Lord.

(b) The Holy Spirit came as "revelation," "as the One Who would lift the veil and show them the secrets of God." "Unveiling" speaks of something hidden and only revealed to human understanding by the Spirit of God.

The Christian life is a continuous revelation, an unveiling

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of the will and purposes of God. Let us meditate on this.

Can this be my prayer that God will so unveil Himself to me ?

Do I need a new refilling of the Holy Spirit to know the mind of Christ ?

What does God ask of me as a condition for the answer of this prayer in me ?

STUDY VII

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

"We reaffirm that God, as Jesus Christ has revealed Him, requires all His children, in all circumstances, at all times and in all human relationships, to live in love and righteousness for His glory. By the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit God offers His own power to men that they may be fellow-workers with Him, and urges them on to a life of adventure and self-sacrifice in preparation for the coming of His Kingdom in its fullness."—*The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems*, p. 481

ST. PAUL aims at a conception of God not through any mere intellectual process ; this he knows will not change character, but through the heart, the affections, and the will. God so conceived in the heart is experienced in daily life. Note now the three requisites of a true knowledge of God in Eph. i. 15-23.

(1) "The hope of his calling." St. Paul does not say the hope of His calling of you. He is thinking of this but especially of something greater, the calling out of the Body of Christ.

"Calling" is one of St. Paul's favourite words. See Eph. iv. 4 where again he links "hope" and "calling" together. He uses it of himself : "Called to be an apostle." See Rom. i. 1, viii. 28, 1 Cor. i. 1, 24.

How does an understanding of our call in Christ help our knowledge of God ?

What is the hope spoken of ? See 1 Tim. i. 1.

We are called to something God can accomplish in us if we let Him. The certainty of His power to make us "worthy of our calling" is the hope.

Our response to God's call depends upon how far we know Him as sufficient for the task He sets us, in spite of our limitations. This first section of the prayer throws us back in complete dependence upon God. Our hope is "He is able."

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(2) The second thought follows on from this: "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The significance of this is that it is not our inheritance in Him, not something we gain when we respond to God's call, but His inheritance in us, something He gains when we yield fully to Him. Let us pause and meditate. What is it in us God regards as His inheritance?

This can only be understood as Eph. i. 1-14 have been studied. See i. 11 for the converse: "In whom we have obtained an inheritance." God's place in our lives and His use of them depend upon our having found what is our position "in Him." See again i. 7: "In whom we have redemption . . . forgiveness of sins"; i. 8, "wisdom and prudence" leading to the practical application "in whom ye trusted."

In those who have found this in Christ God claims an inheritance. Now notice St. Paul's other references to this in i. 11, 14, 18 and v. 5. What is the bearing of this thought of God's inheritance upon our knowledge of God?

(3) The three clauses taken together give us the thought of knowing God through His calling, His inheritance, His power. The last clause is the measure of our Christian potentialities, that you may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power . . . according to the working of his mighty power." St. Paul can find no language strong enough to express the power of God in the life of a believer.

"Exceeding greatness." See ii. 7, "exceeding riches of his grace." iii. 19 uses the same word to express God's love. There is here something exceeding human possibilities, transcending human limitations, beyond human knowledge, and it is summed up in power, love, grace.

Think of the moral problems before which human brains and skill are helpless. St. Paul's method was to expose these evils to the light of Christ and to His purity. Every member of the Church faces the same moral issues in his own life. What is Paul's answer to moral weakness in human nature? The exceeding greatness of God's power in us, power not only to save from the guilt of sin but to keep us from falling.

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Compare Eph. iii. 7, 20, and 1 Peter i. 5, and couple with these Christ's own promise of power, Acts i. 8, vi. 8, Rom. i. 16.

Read Eph. i. 20-23. This power in us is the very power by which Christ was raised from the dead. Is St. Paul giving from his own experience an evidence for the resurrection? He argues that the resurrection was no greater miracle than the experience that I as an individual have of Christ's power in me.

This thought leads him to the climax, and he is swept along by the vision of his risen Lord, risen, ascended, at the right hand of God, incomparable, supreme, unique on earth and in heaven, head over all things.

"The spirit of wisdom and revelation" (i. 17) has lead Paul straight to Christ.

STUDY VIII

CHRIST IN HUMAN LIFE

"If the finest spirits of the human race should sit down and think out the kind of a God they would like to see in the universe, His moral and spiritual likeness would gradually form like unto the Son of Man. The greatest news that has ever been broken to the human race is the news that God is like Christ. And the greatest news that we can break to that non-Christian world is just that—that the God Whom you have dimly realized, but about Whose character you are uncertain, is like Christ."—E. Stanley Jones in *The Christ of the Indian Road*, p. 50

READ chapter i. through again with the one thought of Christ in mind. The whole chapter centres in Him.

Where does Christ touch human life in chapter i?

(a) Study this in connexion with the will of God and our wills. What difference did the will of God make to St. Paul? His personality in his Christian life is enriched by the will of God. Initiative is an outstanding characteristic in his life, yet he was governed by the will of God. His outlook on life is not fatalistic, yet the will of God lay behind it.

(b) Study this in connexion with character, i. 4. Think of the change Christ wrought in St. Paul. His theological change was the outcome of a changed character.

As a Pharisee he was fettered by a traditional orthodoxy.

As a Christian the world was his field.

As a Pharisee he was "as touching the law blameless."

As a Christian his aim was to be "without blame before him in love."

What is the difference? Think out other contrasts to see what Christ can do with a life wholly yielded to Him.

(c) Study this in connexion with the redemption of the human race, i. 7. St. Paul never lives far from the Cross.

Christ does not redeem by His example and ideal, nor as a pattern, but by a redemption "through His blood."

The contrast in St. Paul's experience is the law and the Gospel. The law could not redeem. It only showed the need of redemption. The law was to Paul the schoolmaster revealing his failure. Christ was his Redeemer, promising success.

Redemption made forgiveness of sins possible. Think of this in St. Paul's experience as the persecutor and opponent forgiven. The exultant note throughout the epistle is not only that his sins were forgiven, but that he *knew* they were forgiven.

Christ meant to him peace of conscience and a freedom from the "intolerable burden" of sin, and forgiveness that was complete, life embracing. St. Paul's life was one of love, service, and sacrifice, but nowhere does he speak of a merited forgiveness. It is always "according to the riches of his grace." Christ meets human nature at its weakest point, in its deepest need, in its most hopeless condition. He offers freely, without any bargain, redemption and forgiveness.

(d) Think of this in connexion with the world purposes of God, i. 10: "All things in Christ." This is not theory, but fact. It means the social order harmonized in Christ, national values merged into a world brotherhood, race antagonisms lost in the one family, sex inequalities forgotten in the equal status in Christ, class superiority swept away as all are "gathered together in Him."

St. Paul never separates world issues from personal allegiance to Christ. It is because he knows Christ personally that he knows Him as adequate to meet complex social problems. St. Paul's answer to the riddle of life is Christ. With this thought of Christ in experience before you, read again the prayer, i. 17-23, and note how it sums up exactly what we want to pray for after the study of this chapter.

STUDY IX

MORAL DISCORD AND THE WAY OUT

"The vision of God in Christ brings and deepens the sense of sin and guilt. We are not worthy of His love; we have by our own fault opposed His holy will. Yet that same vision which brings the sense of guilt brings also the assurance of pardon, if only we yield ourselves in faith to the spirit of Christ so that His redeeming love may avail to reconcile us to God."—*The Christian Life and Message*, p. 481

Read chapter ii. 1-10

WE have seen that there is no natural break between the close of chapter i. and the opening of chapter ii. The train of thought commenced in i. 15 runs right on to ii. 10. Read therefore the whole section from i. 15 and notice again the parenthesis of i. 20-23. The governing thought is to "know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. . . . And you" (ii. 1).

Not only was Christ raised, but we are raised unto newness of life in and through Christ, so that we share His present position and His power. The apostle, having shown us the miracle of our spiritual resurrection in Christ, begins at once to explain the place from which we have been raised. The aim is to show what we were, what we can become, and to make us realize that this is all because of Christ and not because of any human goodness or strength.

Read ii. 1-3 for a description of human life without Christ. Is this true to experience? It depends upon our idea of what sin is. When St. Paul saw Christ he had a vision of spotless purity, divine love, and world-wide possibilities of good through Him. That this was not immediately realized in human experience was entirely due to the fact of sin in the

world. The vision of Christ brought to Paul a self-revelation of a life utterly unlike Christ and he saw "the sinfulness of sin." He hated sin from that day because he had met Christ. His view of sin was governed by what he had learnt of Christ. It was impossible for him to find a solution either to the problems of his own life or the problems of the world unless he went to the root of the matter, and at the root lay this thing called sin. What is it? Note carefully the phrases used.

(a) "Dead in trespasses and sins," a condition when true life is inoperative, insensible to spiritual impulses, unconscious of divine demands, ignorant of even human potentialities.

(b) "Ye walked according to the course of this world." "Walking" is one of St. Paul's favourite metaphors. He refers to a self-guided life where God is not consciously in control, where the world's standard is accepted, where the way of the world is the ideal. Paul uses this metaphor seven times in this epistle. Compare ii. 2, 10; iv. 1, 17; v. 2, 8, 15. Christianity was to him "the way" along which Christians walked (see Acts ix. 2, xviii. 25, 26).

The contrast is therefore between the way of the world and the way of God. Note again ii. 2 and ii. 10, and the appeal of iv. 1. Paul emphasizes the difference Christ makes in a human life, literally all the difference between darkness and light. If Christ made this difference to the Ephesians what difference has He made in our lives?

(c) "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit . . . of disobedience." World forces of evil hold mankind in disobedience to God. Compare Rom. xii. 1, 2: "Be not conformed to this world." Read ii. 3-7. St. Paul in vv. 1 and 2 has described the Gentile world without Christ. From v. 3 he couples with it the Jewish world. Whether Jew or Gentile, he says that we lived a life hateful to God. If Gentiles are called "children of disobedience" Jews are "children of wrath."

Paul is piling up sentence on sentence to show the hideousness and hatefulness of sin. He aims at showing the riches of God's mercy, and to do it he exposes sin as something in

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opposition to God, the root of all evil and misery, fraught with terrible consequences to the soul of man.

This theme is expanded in the Epistle to the Romans. See Rom. i. 18, the Gentile world; Rom. ii. 1, the Jewish world; and Rom. iii. 23, the summing up of the situation, "all have sinned." Could Paul have established the Christian faith without facing this root problem of sin? Could Christianity have survived without this clear cut distinction between right and wrong?

This hatred of sin came through the revelation of Christ as pure and holy. Paul is not dealing with a theological dogma about sin, but with a fact in his own experience. For him to meet Christ was to see sin as the one barrier to life in God. Meeting Christ Paul saw himself, and in the picture he saw his desperate need and the need of the world for a Christ Who could save and redeem.

STUDY X

SAVING GRACE

"In the Cross the nature of God is revealed in His attitude toward the sinner. It is that of grace; not something sickly and sentimental, but the great necessity of loving; love in action—that is grace; or if you will, love itself, that which precedes action, the thoughts, the will, the purpose, and we see the heart and nature of God in this unveiling of His thought and purpose toward sinning man."—Dr. G. Campbell Morgan in *The Bible and the Cross*, p. 70

READ Eph. ii. 4-10 and mark words "quicken," "saved," "raised up," "his workmanship."

(1) "*Quicken*" is one of those old, expressive Anglo-Saxon words that carries with it the idea to revive, reinvigorate, to become alive. It is a favourite word in the Psalms. See the following: Ps. lxxx. 18, quickening connected with prayer; Ps. cxix, gives a whole study on this word: v. 25, quickened by the word; v. 40, according to righteousness; v. 88, through loving kindness; and Ps. cxliii. 11 is the prayer: "Quicken me . . . for thy name's sake."

Our Lord used the word of the work of the Spirit (see St. John vi. 63). But in Ephesians it is used only in ii. 5. There is a similar reference in Col. ii. 13, and both times it is in the sense of giving life. St. Paul says: "quicken *with* Christ." He is contrasting the resurrection of Christ with the new birth of the believer. Life is the subject dealt with, not the growth of a life already in man, but a divine life created anew by God in raising the sinner from a state of death in sin to life in Christ. It is not something inherent in human nature but something coming from outside, as definitely a divine act as the resurrection of Christ. Hence Paul says it is through Christ—by "redemption through his blood." It is *in* Christ that life is found, "created in Christ Jesus," and it is also *with* Christ, sharing His resurrection power and life.

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(2) *Saved*.—"By grace ye are saved." This is an explanatory clause to the main theme of life in and through Christ. St. Paul seeks to emphasize afresh that quickening is not a normal psychological process, but is due to the breaking forth of divine life into human nature, that it is not self expression but an act of God, that it is not a matter of self development and culture but of divine grace.

When St. Paul says "ye are saved" what does he mean? "It is not 'ye are being saved' (present), salvation regarded as a process; nor 'ye were saved' (aorist), salvation regarded as a single divine act; but 'ye are saved,' or 'ye have been saved' (perfect), salvation as a divine act completed indeed, but regarded as continuous and permanent in its issues" (Armitage Robinson).

Paul uses the word "saved" to describe the spiritual change from death to life, from darkness to light, and that change comes, he says, through Christ and in no other way.

Paul is not using the word in any mere negative sense simply to describe from what we have escaped. He clearly shows that sin involves danger and judgment, and that to be saved means escape from a state of death and a bondage to sin, but his aim is to show to what we are saved rather than from what we are saved, for he carries the thought right through to verse 10, "his workmanship." The glory of salvation is what Christ in His creative power makes out of human material. Compare St. Luke xv.—a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost boy; their value when found is the lesson Christ teaches. Compare also St. Luke vii. 48-50, xix. 9.

Salvation is the entrance to life, life with a new value to God. Salvation is not connected with Christ simply because He preached it, but it is bound up with Christ in His redemption through the Cross and His resurrection. It came to Zaccheus when Christ entered his home.

Faith is not faith in the potentialities of man to rise but in the power of Christ to quicken. "All salvation partakes, humanly speaking, of the nature of the impossible. It can be accomplished by God alone. All genuinely saving faith is as profoundly conscious of its utter dependence on God for

deliverance from sin and death as the recipients of our Lord's cures were convinced that God alone could heal their bodies from disease. Faith however is more than belief, more than a conviction regarding the necessity and sufficiency of divine power. It also involves trust, the entrance upon God's willingness and readiness to save." Compare Acts iii. 15, v. 30 ; Rom. i. 16, 17 ; 1 Cor. v. 5.

(3) "By *grace* ye are saved."—Grace is a common Greek word given a new richness and fulness of meaning in the New Testament. It was used by Greeks in the sense of "to give joy," and because nothing gave so much joy as beauty it was linked to the idea of all that is beautiful in life. It stood for beauty of act or thought or speech, hence the idea of favour was also connoted with it. From the idea of favour arises thankfulness called out by gracious act or speech. It thus came to bear the meaning of favour freely given "without claim or expectation of return."

St. Paul adopts this rich word and gives it a spiritual significance to express the absolute freeness of the favour and goodness of God. (See *Synonyms of the New Testament*, by Trench, p. 161.)

STUDY XI

GOD'S PURCHASED POSSESSION

"The incentive to Christian missionary enterprise is personal experience of Jesus Christ, and the conviction that a similar experience is possible for men of all races, and will result for them in essentially the same ethical and spiritual benefits."
—*The Christian Life and Message*, p. 78

READ now from i. 1 to ii. 10 in order to study the whole range of thought in the apostle's mind, and pause at ii. 10. The climax is "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus."

"There has been a new making of man in Christ. The new creation, in St. Paul's language, is that fresh beginning in the history of the human race, by which the old division is done away, and the unity of mankind is restored" (Armitage Robinson, p. 53).

Both the method and the purpose of redemption are revealed, saved not by works but unto works. Compare ii. 5 and ii. 10. Redemption only comes to fruition in "good works" but it does not begin in them. The source is grace. Trace back now the thought of this whole section.

Paul, called to be an apostle by the will of God, writes to the faithful in Christ (i. 1) who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (i. 3).

This position is due to the Father Who chose us, adopted us as His children to His glorious praise, i. 4-6.

It is due to the Son Who redeemed us that He might "gather together . . . all things in Christ" to His glorious praise, i. 7-12.

It is due to the Holy Ghost Who sealed us "until the redemption of [Christ's] purchased possession" to His glorious praise, i. 13-14.

Because of this and in order that those to whom he was writing should not only understand the purpose of God but enter into a personal experience of it, Paul prays that God would grant them the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know experimentally the mighty energy at work in the world through Christ. This energy seen in the resurrection cannot be separated from us because the Body cannot be separated from the Head, i. 15-23.

Through this energy we have been raised from the death of sin, quickened through God's free grace, ii. 1-7; and all this that God might give to the world a new creation, a new race that is to be literally His workmanship, a heavenly race of twice-born men (see St. John iii. 1-16) distinguished from the rest of mankind by "good works." Through all this wonderful vision of God's redemptive purpose we are brought back to ourselves, our Christian character.

How would you define "good works" from what Paul tells us in this section? The phrase implies a knowledge of the will of God, i. 1; holiness of life i.4 (compare St. Matt.v. 8); child likeness in our attitude to God, i. 5; unity with other members of the family, i. 10; life lived only for God's glory, i. 6, 12, 14; a new life that is literally a new creation, ii. 1; a knowledge of ourselves and of the sinfulness of sin, ii. 2-3. This, humanity is utterly inadequate to achieve, but we are His workmanship, ii. 10, created anew for this purpose.

This study will show how the Christian life is not an endless struggle against daily failures, but life in which God remakes us, energizes us, and by His power makes possible what otherwise would be hopeless. It is all of God. If we are saved by grace we live by grace. Let us meditate on this. What can my life be "in Christ"? The way out of our difficulties is to cease struggling, relax and fall back on Christ. He is sufficient, He is dependable, He will make the potentialities of life actual in Him.

Section III : ch. ii. 11-22

STUDY XII

GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

"Suppose the essence of Christianity is in utter devotion to Jesus, and truly following Him is the test of discipleship, will not such doctrine as the new birth take on new meaning? If I am to follow such as He, I must be born again and born different. A new birth is a necessary beginning for this new life."—E. Stanley Jones in *The Christ of the Indian Road*, p. 197

READ chapter ii. 11-22. Verses 1-10 give the personal aspect of salvation. The theme is God's workmanship in individual lives.

ii. 11, 12 give the racial aspect—Jews and Gentiles made one. "His workmanship" (v. 10) is therefore not only the climax of verses 1-10 but also the prelude to the wider vision of "the household of God" (v. 19).

The main thought of the chapter is unity in Christ, God's redemptive purpose for mankind. The chapter may be divided as follows:—

- (a) The Gentiles were "dead in trespasses and sins," ii. 1, 2.
- (b) The Jews shared this condemnation through sin, ii. 3.
- (c) Both Jews and Gentiles saved by grace, ii. 4-7.
- (d) Both His workmanship, ii. 8-10.
- (e) The Gentiles racially "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," ii. 11-13.
- (f) The Jews share in Christ every privilege of God, ii. 14, 15.
- (g) Both Jews and Gentiles reconciled by the Cross, ii. 16, 17.
- (h) Both citizens of the household of God, ii. 19-22.

The central thought to keep in mind is v. 21, "all the building

fitly framed together." Jewish and Gentile unity had been a burning question in the Church. Paul had for years been fighting for it, but this is only one aspect of the great principle of Church building enunciated in the epistle. Paul had largely solved the immediate problem and he sees that the solution must be no temporary expedient, but something that lies deep in the eternal purpose of God.

"Wherefore remember" what you were without Christ. Paul is not writing to savage pagan tribes, but to cultured Greeks with a long civilization behind them and a highly organized religious life; to him the difference between the best in Greek religion and Christ is as the difference between death and life, darkness and light. He does not place Christianity in a category along with other religions, one among many, but something entirely new, above and beyond all other faiths. But mark carefully his thought. Christianity only holds this position because of Christ and only so long as it is true to Christ.

Trace this thought through vv. 12-18. In Christ "made nigh," v. 13; "he is our peace," v. 14; "he . . . has . . . destroyed the barrier," v. 14. Christianity is creative because it centres in a person, and it differs from other faiths because it represents God's search for man whereas other faiths express man's search for God. Notice this thought in these verses. He came, He made peace, He reconciled us to God, He preached peace. The emphasis is entirely upon what Christ has done and is doing.

Read vv. 14-18 again to see the race problem and its solution in Christ. Jew and Gentile were separated by an impassable barrier. Note the contrasts:—

Without Christ	..	..	in Christ
Aliens	..	..	fellow citizens
Strangers	..	..	of the household of God
Without God	..	..	an habitation of God
Far off	..	..	made nigh
Separated by a barrier	the barrier broken down
At enmity	peace through Christ.

And compare Deut. iv. 7 and Acts xiv. 17.

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The intensely personal and individual note of *vv.* 1 and 10 is expanding into a corporate message of inter-racial fellowship, but it all centres in and begins with Christ. He Himself is our very peace. The racial hatred that began long years before ends in Christ. Compare Numbers x. 9, Josh. xi. 18. Then notice how the prophets looked for the day of reconciliation when Israel's racial wars would cease, Isa. ii. 4, Micah iv. 3.

Isaiah foreshadowed St. Paul's vision of peace in Christ, and St. Paul is quoting in verse 14, see Isa. lvii. 19: "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Israel cannot reveal to the nations God's glory as long as hatred and war exist (Isa. lxvi. 19).

And now Paul sees the fulfilment of prophecy in a world peace centred in Christ: "He . . . has . . . destroyed the barrier.

In St. Paul's day Herod's temple was standing. "It consisted of court within court, and innermost of all the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. There were varying degrees of sanctity in these sacred places. Into the Holy of Holies only the high priest could enter once a year. The Holy Place was entered daily, and incense was burned by a priest on the golden altar at the moment of the morning and the evening sacrifice of the lamb. Outside this again there were two further courts, the court of the sons of Israel immediately adjacent, and beyond this on the east the court of the women. The whole of the localities thus far mentioned formed a raised plateau, from it you descend by steps and through gates in a lofty wall to find yourself on a narrow platform overlooking another large court—the outer court of the Gentiles."

Gentiles were not allowed to go beyond this court on penalty of death. Stone slabs were placed to mark these limits and on them in Greek were carved the words: "No man of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure round the temple, and whosoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues." This is the barrier to which Paul refers. The metaphor carries us far beyond the local application.

GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

What are the barriers Christ broke down? Think of some of them: the race barrier, 1 Cor. xii. 13; the sex inequality barrier, Gal. iii. 28; the slave barrier, Philemon 16; the caste barrier, 1 Cor. i. 27; the religious barrier, 1 Cor. xii. 12.

Read back now from v. 10, "his workmanship." The thing God is creating in the world through Christ is a thing of sheer beauty, a beauty that is the design of God, given of His free favour, the outcome of His grace. The workmanship that began when we were individually saved by grace now grows into a temple, the Body of Christ.

STUDY XIII

RACIAL UNITY

"He makes upon us a unique impression, the impression that in Him, as in none other, God has come to us, to disclose to us His inmost heart, to condemn our sin, to call us to His service, and to create within us the life that is life indeed."—W. Morgan in *The Nature and the Right of Religion*

CHRIST'S method of world peace. Read again ii. 11-18. In i. 1-14 Paul speaks to those who have found peace in Christ and he explains how they came into the new covenant.

In i. 15-23 he prays for a deep knowledge of God that they may understand the wider implications of this new fellowship.

In ii. 1-10 he shows how this fellowship is composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

In ii. 12-22 he leads them into the heart of his main theme of the epistle, the building of God's temple on earth.

ii. 14 is Paul's declaration—"He is our peace," and he immediately follows on to explain how. He nowhere denies that God worked in the hearts of the Gentiles as Acts xiv. 17 shows. He was very conscious of the privilege of the Jewish race in being the medium of God's revelation to man, but he shows this is a privilege to be shared with all the world.

The channel of revelation through a single race was now done away, but there were not to be two channels in future still separated by racial limitations. The world is no longer divided into two parts—the privileged and the unprivileged, "but one whole, all privileged alike." The new temple being built was to be "a house of prayer for all nations."

The Jew had lost nothing. He had gained immensely. He had gained new brothers from the whole Gentile world. The

Gentiles had gained everything, brotherhood with the Jew, membership in the family, unity with God.

The method of it all :—

i. 7. "Redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

ii. 5. "Quickened . . . with Christ, (by grace are ye saved)."

ii. 13. "Made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Compare these verses with the account of the Last Supper, 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. See also Acts xx. 28 where St. Paul, in his charge to the elders at Ephesus, speaks of "the flock . . . which he hath purchased with his own blood." The same thought lies at the basis of his teaching in the Epistle to the Romans (see Rom. iii. 25 and v. 1-9). See also this same thought in Col. i. 20. St. Paul sees world unity possible in and through Christ, not simply through Christ's example or His ethical teaching, but very definitely through the Cross. The method of world peace is the pathway of the Cross.

This throws fresh light upon i. 10, to "gather together . . . all things in Christ." Compare this with iv. 13. A world, disordered by sin, misrepresents God and consequently is misgoverned; there follows therefore chaos instead of order. God's purpose is a new world order, the centre of which is the Cross. That world order begins in individual reconciliation to God through Christ. It extends as individuals are knit together in the fellowship of the Church. The ministry of reconciliation expands as differing races are drawn into unity in Christ and it moves toward "that one far-off divine event," when the whole world will be one in Him.

"If by that Cross all things in heaven and on earth are to be reconciled, and infinite peace is to follow, I dare trust it, notwithstanding all my sins and all my weakness. By the way of that Cross I am reconciled to God, and through it I find rest, infinite, eternal, undying. At last my rest shall be rest with the whole creation, for the cosmic order will be restored through the mystery of God's suffering as revealed in the Cross" (G. Campbell Morgan).

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The Cross made a treaty of peace not only between man and God (i. 7) but also between two opposing races, Jews and Gentiles (ii. 13, 16).

But peace is not centred in the Cross; it is mediated through the Cross and centred in Christ, "He himself is our peace."

ii. 15. "Abolished . . . the enmity." Paul is now speaking of Jewish-Gentile racial enmity; the barrier that shut out the Gentile world from the privileges of Israel. "The law of commandments . . . in ordinances." The breaking down of the temple barrier to Gentiles abolished the ritual law of commandments. "Abolished . . . in his flesh," that is in His humanity, a phrase used by St. Paul for the incarnation. All the commandments of a ritual law were lost in the new law of love. See St. Matt. v. 17. Compare this with Col. ii. 14-20.

Notice how Paul moves from the negative of abolishing, to the positive purpose of the Cross:—

ii. 5. Reconciled in one body by the Cross.

ii. 15. One new man—the new creation; not an alliance of conflicting elements but a new organism.

ii. 17. He came and preached peace to the "far off" and the "nigh."

Paul pictures Christ in His resurrection life and power bringing to the world a message of peace, something that had not only to be lived but preached and expounded. This is his message to the world, "peace through the Cross." It is the basis of the whole missionary enterprise.

As a would-be missionary facing a non-Christian people with its ancient religious systems, what has he to give them? Nothing of his own for he was in like position with them, "alien." He cannot boast of the privileges he enjoys because they are all of God. He is the medium of Christ's message inviting others to share what he has found in Christ.

ii. 18. "We both have access." The approach to God is no longer through a priestly sacrifice in the temple, but all share in the open door—the common access by the one Spirit to the Father.

STUDY XIV

THE CHURCH

"The full fellowship of the Spirit, which was the outstanding gift of Pentecost, is certainly not prominent among the marks of the Christian Church to-day. This transcending experience, which is the Spirit's highest gift, is a corporate gift; it cannot be appropriated in its fulness by units that desire to perpetuate their own exclusiveness."—G. H. Harris in *The Call for Christian Unity*, p. 12

Read chapter ii. 19-22

PAUL now reaches the climax of the theme he has been developing. Notice the phrases "no more . . . foreigners," "fellow citizens," "the household of God," "the building fitly framed together," "an holy temple," "an habitation of God."

Dr. Lightfoot says: "The Christian Church having taken the place of the Jewish race, has inherited all its titles and privileges; it is a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter ii. 9).

Paul's principles of Church building, ii. 19, "fellow citizens."

The first principle is absolute equality in Christ. All share common privileges, all have equal access to God, He is Father of all alike; privileges in this fellowship there are, but no favoured class. No distinctions of race, heritage, or sex can divide the Church. It is "one body" through which one life flows—the life of Christ. The Church is one family, one household.

The second principle is unity, i. 10. The ultimate goal of God's purpose for the world is to sum up all things in Christ. This unity is not an organization but an organism. This was enunciated by our Lord Himself, see St. John xvii. 21-23.

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This unity is not only the purpose of God but is based upon and due to the unity of the Godhead, see Eph. iv. 4-6. This thought carries us back into eternity, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," St. John xvii. 21. Compare this with St. Paul's words, "all things in Christ."

It is to be a visible unity. It is to be the means of winning the world. Our Lord said: "that the world may believe."

Unity is therefore of the essence of the Godhead. Every soul brought into unity with God in Christ must express this unity with other believers in a tangible and visible way.

What would St. Paul say to our divisions? In Ephesians he recognizes that the unity is imperfect for he says (ii. 21) "the building . . . groweth," and (iv. 13) "till we all come in the unity of the faith." This means that divisions in the Church are not to be accepted as inevitable but that they are a call to progressive action.

The third principle is holiness. We now see a wider significance to the title given in i. 1, 2, "saints and faithful." Individual holiness is the contribution of the units to the true character of the whole, see i. 4. The whole of chapter ii. expresses what is fundamental to the Church; individuals "saved by grace" are redeemed with a view to their place in the Body, see v. 26.

The fourth principle is catholicity. Our studies in Ephesians have shown the Christian faith to be unique, God's creation, possessing characteristics which make it capable of being the universal religion, meeting the needs of all types of men, in all parts of the world, throughout all ages. The Church in this sense is catholic and universal, with all the potentialities of full catholicism when all things are summed up in Christ. The Church loses its catholic ideal when it ceases to aim at universal extension.

Cyril of Jerusalem says: "The Church is called catholic because it extends throughout the whole world, because it teaches completely all doctrines which men ought to know, because it brings into subjection to godliness the whole race of men, and because it treats and heals every sort of sins and has

in it every form of virtue." Trace out this thought in Ephesians, noting chapter iv. 1-13.

The fifth principle of the Church is apostolicity (ii. 20): "Upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." St. Paul draws no distinction between the twelve disciples and the rest of the apostles.

St. Paul's teaching is that the Church is one Body with many members, and the acts of different members are the acts of the Body, each one affecting the whole; while members function differently the emphasis is on the unity of the whole. The Church had a three-fold task of teaching, worship, and discipline. This was committed to "apostles and prophets," and the Church is apostolic in so far as it is performing its apostolic task. This is its witness to the world: teaching, the administration of the sacraments given by Christ, and the right exercise of discipline that the members may be "holy."

Section IV : ch. iii

STUDY XV

PAUL—THE PRISONER

"I saw young fellows all around me fretting to be free, to be their own sole, full masters. They fretted against this and that thing ; against this and that person. They thought if only they could get away from these they would indeed be free. But I myself could not feel that to be nearly enough. I wanted, *I had to get rid of*, not those outside conditions, not those other people ; I had, somehow, to become free from self, from my poor, shabby, bad, all-spoiling self ! There lay freedom, there lay happiness."—Baron von Hügel in *Selected Letters*

Read chapter iii. 1-13

WE have noted how very impersonal St. Paul has been up to here, but the subject he is dealing with touches him deeply. His soul is stirred by the thought of so tremendous a task committed to him and he breaks off to explain his personal position. The reason he has spoken so little about himself is that he is not writing to one church but to several. Many to whom the epistle went probably had never seen him. His aim is to explain the divine purpose, and now he must relate his own experience out of which has come this revelation of God's plan for the universe.

iii. 1. "For this cause." Compare iii. 14. St. Paul begins in iii. 1 by saying "all this impels me to pray" ; then comes the parenthesis of personal explanation, and he picks up the thread again in iii. 14 and the prayer follows.

"Paul, the prisoner." Twice in this epistle Paul refers to himself as a prisoner, iii. 1 and iv. 1 ; and in vi. 20 he says : "I am an ambassador in bonds." Think of the tragic

situation of the apostle. An ambassador yet bound by a chain to a Roman guard. His environment was all against him, yet in its fettering conditions he so triumphed as to be able to write this epistle with all its depth of teaching, its width of vision, its message of freedom, love, and unity in Christ. Prison bars could not cramp the vision, annoying restrictions of a guard could not keep back the flow of spiritual life. Yet he felt his position keenly, for he refers to his bonds in Col. iv. 3, Phil. i. 7, 16.

This is a study of environment and what the grace of God can do when life seems impossible.

It was a time of deep prayer, Phil. i. 8, 9, yet a time when he sought for the prayers of others, Eph. vi. 18-20, Col. iv. 3, yet not for himself but that he might use the opportunity for preaching. He saw in his imprisonment the purpose of God, Phil. i. 12. The Jews thought to silence him in prison and God turned it to further openings for the Gospel. A new boldness came to many when they saw what God could do for a prisoner, Phil. i. 14.

While in prison he saw a slave's life redeemed, Philemon 10, 13. He had to prove the reality of his teaching under the most difficult and trying circumstances, yet because he accepted imprisonment he enriched the Church for all time, for when in bonds he wrote his deepest epistles. The messages well up from the deeps of his soul and live to-day because they were part of his experience. This spiritual experience did not mean an absence of human suffering or feeling. Reading between the lines of iii. 1-13 we can see how burdened he was with the sense of his divine call, how he longed to be free to preach again to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (iii. 8). A certain sensitiveness seems to creep in, for he begs Timothy not to be ashamed of the Lord's prisoner, 2 Tim. i. 8.

What reconciled Paul to imprisonment? See Eph. i. 1, he was an apostle "by the will of God." He accepted his environment as part of the divine plan. Throughout all the prison epistles there is not a single word of complaint, no questioning why, but a glad acceptance of bonds for Christ's

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sake. His argument all through is : " It is worth while being a prisoner for such a cause."

It is not freedom from a restricting environment that matters but the grace of God that can transcend it. Think out how this can be done. Paul has shown the way in the two chapters we have studied.

His imprisonments brought difficulties as well as blessings. 2 Tim. i. 15 tells us " they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Compare this with 2 Tim. i. 8. Was Paul afraid that Timothy would also forsake him? Timothy was one of the few who stood by Paul through a part of his imprisonment. He was with Paul in Rome when he wrote to Philemon (see Philemon 1), but when he wrote to Timothy in his final imprisonment there seemed to be a feeling of loneliness and possible anxiety for his son in the faith. Notice 2 Tim. iv. 11 : " Only Luke is with me."

Then note Paul's sense of Christ's presence even when things seemed to be at their worst, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.

" With one foot in the grave Paul is still reading books and writing parchments. ' At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.' ' Do thy diligence to come to me before winter.' You see Paul forsaken, lonely, cold, and without his cloak, chained to a soldier and waiting on one of Nero's mad fits for his martyrdom. Well may Paul say : ' If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable.' But Paul had such an anchor within the veil that amid all these sad calamities, old age and all, he is able to send out such epistles of faith and hope and love as the Ephesians and the Colossians and the Philippians, and the pastorals and Philemon " (Dr. Alexander Whyte's *The Apostle Paul*, p. 174)

STUDY XVI

ST. PAUL'S STEWARDSHIP OF THE GRACE OF GOD

"He comes to us as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words: 'Follow thou Me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."—A. Schweitzer in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*

READ chapter iii 1-13. iii. 2, "The dispensation of the grace of God." See also i. 10. The word dispensation was commonly used for the office of a steward of the household management, and may be translated "the stewardship of the grace of God."

This stewardship came by divine revelation. Paul explains this more fully in Galatians (see Gal. i. 16-24 and ii. 1, 2). To understand this we must see Paul in Arabia. After his baptism in Damascus he set out for Arabia to think things through. He chose the place of the giving of the law, Sinai, to study the bridge he had found from the law to the Gospel. "Paul went into Arabia with Moses and the prophets in his knapsack, and returned to Damascus with the Romans and the Ephesians in his mouth and in his heart."

There in the solitude Jesus Christ came between Paul and everything else. Henceforth it was Christ or nothing. He gave Christ all and there followed a revelation of God. "A revelation made by God of His Son most inward, most profound, most penetrating, most soul-possessing, most enlarging to his soul, most uplifting, most upholding, most assuring, most satisfying, most sanctifying, intellectual, spiritual, experimental, evangelical, all-renewing and all-transforming,

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full of truth, full of love, full of assurance, full of holiness, full of the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (A. Whyte's *The Apostle Paul*, p. 44). ■

iii. 3. "The mystery." This word is used six times in Ephesians. Look up the following: i. 9; iii. 3, 4, 9; v. 32; vi. 19, and three of these references come in the passage we are studying. Paul says that God revealed to him the mystery (i. 9) he therefore knows it (iii. 4), and his task is to make all see the stewardship of this mystery. What does he mean?

The verb from which the word is drawn was used in classical Greek, meaning to initiate into a secret. In the New Testament "mystery" has its origin in our Lord's words to the disciples, see St. Mark iv. 11: "the mystery of the kingdom." In 1 Cor. ii. 1 the same word is translated "testimony," and used for the whole redemptive purpose of God for the world. Paul has been explaining this in chapters i. and ii. and he is now showing his share in it.

1 Cor. ii. 1 shows his dependence on the Spirit in his witness. It makes clear that the Cross is central to the message, 1 Cor. ii. 2, and in 1 Cor. iv. 1 he says he is "a steward of the mysteries of God." A fuller explanation is given in Rom. xvi. 25. The mystery of God's plan for the whole world was hidden. The Jews only saw His purpose for them. The mystery is nothing less than the inclusion of the Gentiles—the non-Jewish world—in one household, one fellowship in Christ. This was God's secret revealed in Christ. See also Col. ii. 2, iv. 3.

iii. 4, 5. Let us not lose the lesson in the rather difficult expression used. Paul is rejoicing in the unification of humanity in the new hope for all men of every race and age. St. Paul is not speaking of any mysterious and secret rites of Christianity such as there were in the current pagan cults of his day, but of something once hidden but now revealed to all men, a secret God charges him to declare to all the world, iii. 6.

iii. 7-13. To me of all people, the meanest member of the body, is this grace given. The wonder of it! That I should be chosen to tell the Gentiles of the unsearchable (inexplorable) riches of Christ (iii. 8), that I should be allowed to publish

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the plan of God's redemption for the world (iii. 9), that I should share in a task which explains to an unseen world of "principalities and powers" the wisdom of God. If God could choose me and use me as his instrument, take courage, what can He not do with you?

Fear not, but remember although the vision is so vast and the calling so high yet grace so abounds that we actually have "boldness" because our confidence and faith in Him is so great, iii. 12. If you are losing heart because I am shut up in prison, remember I suffer in a great cause and my very sufferings are your glory, iii. 13.

Here then is the missionary task, here is the true missionary spirit, here is the right attitude to native Churches, and here is one of the biggest lessons of missionary life.

Think (a) of the privilege of sharing Christ's redemption with others, (b) of our utter unworthiness and inability for such a task, (c) of the all sufficient grace of God in every circumstance, (d) of the power of God available for the weakest and humblest.

If we yield all our faculties and gifts to God, the Holy Spirit uses to the fullest possible measure whatever we give. He is only limited by the things we do not surrender.

STUDY XVII

THE SECOND GREAT PRAYER

"Go out into the silence where Christ lives, Christ reigns, where God is and where God works perfectly. Relax yourself, turn away from your active mind, open your whole being to God, realizing Him, not merely as an intellectual fact, but as all around you and in you, the answer to every need of man."—*Acts of Devotion*, p. 41

Read chapter iii. 14-21

"**F**OR this cause." Having studied the personal parenthesis we pick up the thread from iii. 1, which is a sequence of the first two chapters. The two prayers, this one and the one in i. 16-23 are both the climax to two great lines of thought. In the first Paul had led up to the personal redemption in Christ, but in the second he has brought these Christians to see their corporate life as the Body of Christ, and a deep note of solemnity marks this second prayer.

Note the opening phrases of each: i. 16, "I . . . cease not to make mention of you in my prayers," iii. 14, "I bow my knees unto the Father." Kneeling is seldom mentioned in the Bible and then at times of special importance. The usual attitude was to stand for prayer, see St. Matt. vi. 5, St. Luke xviii. 11, 13. Our Lord knelt in the garden (St. Luke xxii. 41); Paul knelt at a farewell (Acts xxi. 5).

Kneeling was not simply on bended knee but was the eastern prostration, with the head touching the ground, a mark of deep reverence. See also Phil. ii. 10. Paul does not speak of kneeling in the first prayer. There he has reached the great summit of his teaching, upon its apprehension depends the future of the Church.

In i. 17, Paul spoke of "the Father of glory." Here he

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speaks of the "Father . . . of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." "The very idea of fatherhood exists primarily in the divine nature." St. Paul never understood the Fatherhood of God until he found Christ, then he knew the meaning of Christ's words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Notice his references to God as Father in Ephesians i. 2, 3, 17; iii. 14; iv. 6; v. 20, and vi. 23.

iii. 16. Both prayers ask for a gift of the Holy Spirit. Compare i. 17 and iii. 16, and then read our Lord's own promise, St. Luke xi. 13. The prayer addressed to the Father. The measure of the answer he might expect, "according to the riches of his glory." The petition, for strength or power. The method of receiving power, by His Spirit.

Now note that in i. 19 the prayer is that they might know the mighty power.

In iii. 16, the prayer changes that they might have this mighty power. The inference is that they cannot know the power until they have it.

iii. 17. It is through the power of the Spirit in the inner man that Christ dwells in the heart. Paul's theme has been "in Christ," see i. 3, *etc.* Now he is giving the converse, "Christ in you." See Col. i. 27, "The glory of this mystery . . . is Christ in you."

There are two things said here about the indwelling of Christ: (a) It is "through faith"; (b) it is "in love." The words "in love" belong to the preceding sentence, not the sentence following as given in the A.V. The text should read: "That Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts in love." Christ cannot dwell in us unless we trust Him, and the barrier to His dwelling in us in power is always our loveless lives. But Christ has provided for this. See Rom. v. 5.

This prayer finds its full explanation in Christ's own teaching in St. John xv. 1-12, where abiding in Christ involves Christ's abiding in us, and all through it is clear Christ can only abide where love is. Now note the connexion between this prayer and i. 15, "After I heard of your faith . . . and love."

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iii. 17. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend." St. Paul's illustrations are the tree firmly rooted and the building on solid foundations.

iii. 18. "Breadth, and length, and depth, and height." We measure buildings in three dimensions. Paul thinks in terms of four dimensions, not only height but depth. The depths of human need find their fulfilment in the deep of the eternal love of God. The length and breadth of love encompass the world, the height lifts man up to God, and the depth of His love brings God into human life, even to the lowest stratum of it.

iii. 19. Do not lose the thread of Paul's thought as we have studied it in chapter ii, the purpose of God being fulfilled through a Church of redeemed people. Paul says the basis of it, and its every operation, must be love. The distinguishing characteristic of the Christian is love. To know the love of Christ is to open the way to all the fulness of God for the individual, for the Church, and ultimately for the world.

Study this word "fulness" in Ephesians i. 23, iii. 19, iv. 13, and note also Col. i. 19 and ii. 9.

The prayer and this doctrinal section of the epistle, chapters i.—iii. culminate (iii. 20, 21) in a great doxology that sums up everything. "Unto him." Think of all we have learnt of Christ in these chapters. Paul could only express his feelings by breaking out in praise, "Unto him be glory."

Can the vision be realized? "Able to do exceeding abundantly." Not only up to the limit of our prayers but far beyond anything we can ask or even think.

How may I begin to turn this ideal into the actual? "According to the power that worketh in us." See i. 18, 19: "that ye may know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power."

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages"; glory in the Body—the Church; glory in the Head—Christ.

Section V : chs. iv-vi

STUDY XVIII

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CHAPTERS I TO III

" Church history from New Testament times to the present day is full of examples of good men passionately resisting, in what they conceived to be the interests of God's cause, movements and ideas which subsequently were seen to be the very things which God was trying to teach the world."—V. F. Storr in *The Call for Christian Unity*, p. 270

WE have already noticed the two main divisions of the epistle, chs. i. to iii. doctrinal ; iv. to vi. practical. It will be well now for us to read through chapters i. to iii. to see how Paul leads up to his application, the outline of which is the following :—

iv. 1–16, the unity of the Body involves a unity of life.

iv. 17–v. 5, unity involves a new character.

v. 22–vi. 9, unity involves a new home life.

vi. 10–20, such unity demands equipment.

vi. 21–24, closing words.

Read iv. 1–16.

The appeal from Paul the prisoner, " I . . . beseech you," see iv. 1 ; see also 2 Cor. vi. 1, " We then as workers together . . . beseech you," and Rom. xii. 1. The basis of the appeal might have been because he was an apostle, an ambassador, the servant of Jesus Christ, but no, he appeals to his bonds—why ?

The bonds were evidence of the value he placed on the cause for which he suffered. They were a proof of his sincerity, but most of all they were the hampering conditions that kept him from the churches. He asks them to make up for his absence from them by " walking worthy " : worthy of God's call to membership in Christ's Body ; worthy by humility,

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forbearance, love ; worthy by the strenuous endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit.

iv. 2, 3. St. Paul makes very clear that individual salvation and grace must not lead to individualism, for the Christian can never divest himself of responsibility to the Body corporate. In this, the biggest problem is the clash of personalities and wills, for unity never means uniformity. Hence Paul begins with humility (see St. John xiii. 4 ; Phil. ii. 3-10), and immediately passes to the stage of earnest striving. The word implies eagerness, urgency.

The Encyclical Letter of the Lambeth Conference of 1920 contains these words, and they are a striking comment on this passage :—

The unity which we seek exists. It is in God Who is the perfection of unity, the one Father, the one Lord, the one Spirit Who gives life to the one Body. Again the one Body exists. It needs not to be made, nor to be remade, but to become organic and visible. Once more the fellowship of the members of the one Body exists. It is the work of God, not of man, we have only to discover it, and to set free its activities.

iv. 4-6. Paul says there is one Body, not there *shall be*. These verses explain God's building. How do they apply to the Churches to-day ? In spite of St. Paul's appeal the Church broke up, and divided Christendom is the result. Long familiarity with different denominations has accustomed us to our failure to "keep the unity of the Spirit." The schisms of centuries have not altered God's purpose.

The unity of the Church and through it unity of the world still lies behind the whole Christian message. Union in the mission field is not a pious hope for the future but an urgent necessity, and the call to workers in Christ's Church is that in humility (iv. 3) they will strive to regain the unity of the Spirit. This is a necessity because only thus can the Christian forces present a united front to a non-Christian world, and only a united front will secure a victory. This was St. Paul's point too (see Eph. ii. 16, 17, iii. 7-9).

iv. 7-16. Unity can only be attained as every member of the body works for it. The first requisite is "grace," iv. 7.

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CHAPTERS I TO III

This is significant in view of all we have learned about grace in this epistle. The illustration arising out of this is of a conqueror mounting to the citadel, leading his captives and crowning his victory by gifts to his men. Christ ascended triumphant over powers of evil, and from His throne He gives gifts, iv. 11.

This thought leads Paul back to his theme : " Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto a perfect man."

In iv. 3 Paul begins with unity as something to be kept. He is looking into the future and he sees it as something to be attained ; iv. 13 and iv. 15 as a growth, and iv. 16 gives the summit of the mountain, the completed picture—the whole Body united, each member fitting into the other and making for edification.

STUDY XIX

UNITY INVOLVES A NEW CHARACTER

" The aim of the Christian life is simple. It is to reflect each day and in every relation the mind of God, and to reveal to men His goodness, His truth, and His love. When we see with our own eyes but one life guided by Christian values we know what is meant by the beauty and winsomeness of Jesus "

Read chapter iv. 17-24

PAUL said " Walk worthy " (iv. 1) and then explained that walking worthy involved using a road along which others travelled, and that the Christian walk carried with it implications of unity with others, unity in the Body.

He now begins this second half of the chapter, iv. 17, with the same illustration of walking to show that unity cannot be attained without true Christian character.

Elements that are essential to spiritual unity :—

(a) iv. 20, 21. The truth as it is in Jesus. " It is Christ whom ye have learned, Him ye have heard, in Him ye have been taught, even as the truth is in Jesus." Compare St. John xiv. 6. The point of the verse is that truth is to be found in the person of Jesus. He not only revealed the Father but He definitely attracted people to Himself (see St. Matt. xi. 28). He did not teach a way of truth, but that He was the embodiment of truth itself. Unity is centred in Christ because He is absolute truth (see St. John xv. 26, xvi. 13).

To " learn Christ " is a strange phrase, but Paul would have us learn Him as in other spheres we learn a book or a lesson. It implies entering the school of Christ (a) to hear Him, and (b) to be taught by Him. The implied meaning is that we cannot know Christ as Truth simply by reading about Him.

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He must teach us Himself, and to be taught we must listen to His voice.

(b) iv. 22, 23. Renewal of the mind. Bishop Handley Moule says that renewal of the mind comes "by using as an implement in the holy process, that divine light which has cleared your intelligence of the mists of self love and taught you to see as with new eyes the splendour of the will of God." Think over what you have studied in Ephesians that throws light on a "renewed intelligence." It is the intelligence that leads to transfiguration in a life of unworldly love. It is intelligence as changed by a regenerated heart.

In iv. 22 Paul stresses the Christian character which makes the body pure and free from stains of passion.

In iv. 23, he carries the thought to the mind or intellect. It is no longer to be the slave of the fleshy nature but renewed and purified by the Holy Spirit, see iv. 17.

Conversion implies the conversion of the whole man. The Holy Spirit comes into the heart to operate through every avenue of our being, and Paul knows that an unregenerate mind is the cause of much evil. See his other references to this: Rom. xii. 2, Col. ii. 18, 1 Tim. vi. 5, Titus i. 15, also Rom. viii. 7, 27.

(c) The complete "new man," God's creation in human nature, created "after God." God Himself is the type and man recreated in Christ is in His image.

The whole point of Christian character is that it is the work of God in human life, something which apart from Christ could not have existed, and which without the direct operation of the Holy Spirit cannot be produced. The changes made in character.

iv. 25, lying is exposed as something that breaks the fellowship of the Body.

iv. 26, anger follows. Resentment is to give place to reconciliation.

iv. 28, theft must give way to honest work.

iv. 29, bad language must be replaced by gracious words.

iv. 31, bitterness and malice are inconsistent in the Body.

St. Paul does not give these injunctions as so many laws but

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as habits wholly inconsistent with both the membership and the fellowship of the Body. They are not only wrong as sin against God, but wrong as breaches in a fellowship which involves the responsibility of each member for all other members.

iv. 30. The Holy Spirit is the bond of unity in the Body. Every breach in the fellowship grieves Him because it weakens the Body which, in consequence, functions, as God's instrument for world redemption, on a lower spiritual level of vitality and power than would be the case if each member were true to the Head. This thought runs through the whole Bible. Look at a few instances :—

Ps. li. 11, 12. David's penitence and petition : " Take not thy holy spirit from me."

Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 5, 14. The dry bones and the great army united in one nation ; see also Ezek. xxxvii. 22, 23.

Joel ii. 17. The reproach through sin and the promise (ii. 28) : " I will pour out my spirit." (See also Micah iii. 8 ; Zech. iv. 6, xii. 10.)

Now compare Eph. iv. 30 and 1 Thess. v. 19. " Quench not the Spirit." This is one of the most solemn warnings of the whole of Scripture. In Eph. i. 13 Paul dealt with the positive side, " sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," sealed as God's purchased possession through the blood of Christ. Now he shows how through sin in the believer the Spirit can be grieved, grieved because of the personal loss sin involves, and more so because of the evil caused to the Body. If instead of building up the Body of Christ we defile it through sin we wrong the Holy Spirit Who is the Spirit of the whole fellowship.

iv. 32 to v. 5. Meditate on the summing up St. Paul gives. He stresses things that seem ordinary yet are of immense importance to the Body, kindness, tenderheartedness, a forgiving spirit. Let us sit quietly and say : " Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

STUDY XX

UNITY INVOLVES A NEW SERVICE

"Above the upturned faces of the broken-hearted men and women rose the calm, set features of Garibaldi, lit up with that serene and simple regard of fortitude and faith which gave him power to lead the feeble multitudes of mortal men. . . . The sonorous, thrilling voice was heard almost to the outskirts of the vast crowd : 'I am going out from Rome . . . I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor provisions ; I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles, and death. Let him who loves his country in his heart and not with his lips only, follow me '."—G. M. Trevelyan in *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*

Read chapter v. 6-21

IN the previous section we studied the things that weaken the Body and hinder its upbuilding. Here we enter upon a study of the new character in the fellowship which strengthens the Body and enables it to witness to the world.

(1) Character depends upon what we are in the sight of God. v. 8, "Ye are light in the Lord." Why does St. Paul stress light at this stage? See v. 13. The light exposes and re-proves. Then notice v. 14 : "Awake . . . and Christ shall give thee light." Paul no longer speaks of unregenerate people but of those in Christ, and he finds some asleep, consequently unconscious of their privileges and unresponsive to the light. "Awake." Some had become dull, the spiritual glow had gone, the sensitiveness to the Spirit's leading was blunted. They were ordinary, conventional Christians. Paul calls them to let Christ turn His light upon their lives. In Christ they are light, but while asleep they were not conscious of the light. "Walk as children of light." The first step is not criticizing the lives of others but allowing Christ to show us our own lives.

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Notice the steps Paul gives in the Christian walk :—

iv. 1, "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

v. 2, "walk in love."

v. 8, "walk as children of light."

v. 15, "walk circumspectly."

(2) Character depends upon the Holy Spirit. v. 9, the fruits of the Spirit. The one great asset is the Holy Spirit. We are not left to work out our Christian character in human strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit creates in us "the new man."

The fruits of character are His fruits. Paul in Galatians gives the fruits (see Gal. v. 22-24), love, joy, peace, *etc.* These fruits are seen in three ways—goodness, righteousness, truth. These are the tests of the reality of the Spirit's work within us. These fruits are not spiritual phantoms but result in essential goodness, righteousness of character, and honest truth.

v. 10. Fruit is ever connected with life, and Paul shows next that to live as Christians we must have guided lives, "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." The significance of this lies in the foregoing verses. To know Christ is to know the absolute difference between right and wrong, the moral and the immoral (see v. 1-5). Specious arguments on moral questions are as old as St. Paul's day (see v. 6).

The way to know the right is through the Holy Spirit "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord," and we prove this as the light is turned on our lives. The light therefore not only improves but illuminates.

(3) Character demands time. v. 16, "Redeeming the time." One of the chief standards of value is the time we give to a thing. One of the best tests of character is the way we spend our time. Both these thoughts are included in redeeming the time. It means buying back the wasted years.

Picture the Ephesian Christian brought out of darkness, yet surrounded by it, not of the world but very much in it; redeemed from evil yet conscious of the power of evil. Can he ransom the time from past loss and misuse, release it from evil and use it for Christ?

(4) Character demands a spiritual centre to life. v. 18-21, "Be filled with the Spirit." Paul gives another vivid illustra-

tion through contrasts. "Drunk with wine," illustrating carnal desires, moral shipwreck is contrasted with the new life of joy where the old licentious songs give place to spiritual hymns. The spontaneous joy of song comes through the Holy Spirit springing up as a well of water, see St. John vii. 37-39.

St. Paul has frequently spoken of the Holy Spirit ; let us now review the teaching on this subject.

i. 13. The assurance of our acceptance in Christ came through the Holy Spirit Who sealed us as Christ's own.

i. 17, "the spirit of wisdom." We are now beginning to understand the significance of this prayer, see v. 17.

ii. 18. Access in prayer through the Spirit, see Rom. viii. 26.

ii. 22, "a habitation of God through the Spirit." The Body of Christ is God's dwelling place. He dwells in us through the Spirit.

iii. 16, "strengthened . . . by his Spirit." In these verses Paul shows how the Holy Spirit seals, teaches, makes intercession, and strengthens. Now notice the change from the beginning of chapter iv.

iv. 3, the unity of the Spirit.

iv. 4, "one body, one Spirit."

iv. 30, "grieve not the . . . Spirit."

v. 9, "the fruit of the Spirit."

Therefore says Paul : "Be filled with the Spirit."

Compare these verses with Acts i. and ii. when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit.

Acts i. 4, "but wait." They had to give God time to work.

Acts ii. 1, "one accord." The fulness of the Holy Spirit could not come till they were united in one spiritual fellowship. This was no act once for all. They received the Holy Ghost again, see Acts iv. 31.

Junior members of the Church received the Holy Ghost as the apostles did. See Acts vi. 3, 5.

To St. Paul the Holy Spirit was given at his baptism, Acts ix. 17. But to Cornelius the Holy Spirit was given before baptism (Acts x. 44, 47).

See also Acts xix. 2, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed ?"

STUDY XXI

UNITY INVOLVES A NEW HOME LIFE

"It was the conviction of Jesus, and it is a great part of the distinctive message of Christianity, that the highest of our human values are the values found and developed in the life of the family."—J. Baillie in *The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul*

Read chapter v. 22 to vi. 9

IN iii. 15 Paul says: "From whom every family . . . is named." Every family is named after the Father-God, emphasizing the sacredness of family ties. He now illustrates the ideal home life from the relation of Christ to His Body. He, in the intermingling of the analogy, illustrates too the glorious Church, with Christ the Head, from the relations of family ties.

The first striking impression from reading these verses is how St. Paul connects the most transcendent doctrines of the Christian faith with social morality. The humblest home has its origin in the Godhead, and the "family" is a divine institution for it is formed after a heavenly pattern.

(1) The key to this section is the closing verse of our last study (v. 21), "submitting yourselves one to another." "The glad life of the Christian community is a life of duly constituted order. The apostle of liberty is the apostle of order and subordination."

Submission is another favourite word of St. Paul. He uses it twenty-three times. He sees it as a mark of the Christian in his church fellowship (v. 21); in his national relations, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," Rom. xiii. 1; in family relations as an essential element, and he bases it upon what? Not the spirit of his age but upon the very example of Christ Himself: "Then shall the Son also himself

be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him," 1 Cor. xv. 28. The first requisite of leadership is a willingness to submit to the opinions of others.

(2) Family relationships. St. Paul visualizes the home as the place where Christ dwells, where He is the Head and the members of the family are His Body for that home. Every home has a place in His purposes. It has an influence throughout a whole neighbourhood. It has an atmosphere either of attraction or repulsion. It has a task to fulfil to every guest and visitor. Let us study therefore Christ in the home.

Notice (a) the difference Christ made when he entered homes: St. Matt. viii. 14 (Peter), St. Matt. ix. 18 (a Jewish ruler).

(b) Christ's teaching on home life: St. Matt. xviii. 1-6, xix. 13-15; St. Mark xii. 18-25.

(c) Christ's own home life: St. Matt. ii, St. Luke iii. 23-38.

Compare now Ephesians v. 23. The greatest of all precepts on married life is taken directly from Christ's own example. "The deepest and most sacred word ever uttered on the subject of marriage is this: 'Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.'"

(3) The ideal home is the home when the household is "the family of God—the Body of Christ." Notice how St. Paul develops this theme.

(a) Christ is the Head, the "saviour of the body," v. 23. The Head thinking, planning, and working for the Body. Each member bound to the other by allegiance to the Head.

(b) "The church is subject unto Christ," v. 24. Obedience to Him is the first condition, but it is the obedience of love voluntarily given through a glad surrender to His will.

(c) "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it," v. 25. He was Head because He was able to say: "I am among you as he that serveth." His Headship involved love—sacrifice and service.

(d) "That he might sanctify and cleanse it," v. 26. Think of the home again as His body and what it means for Christ to sanctify and cleanse it.

(e) Each family as the Body is in turn part of the whole

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Body of Christ, sharing in the glorious future when He shall present to Himself a glorious Church, v. 27.

(4) St. Paul emphasizes what Christ taught so clearly, the sanctity of marriage as a permanent bond, indissoluble in life, see St. Matt. v. 31, 32. St. Paul had to contend against the comparative laxity of the Mosaic regulation in regard to divorce, but much more against the general moral laxity of his age.

In establishing churches he centred Christianity primarily in the home. It was here the test of Christ's power to transform moral life began. St. Paul saw the danger of separating spiritual life from the moral standards and requirements of Christ, and he links on all his deepest teaching of life in Christ to the practical issue of a pure home life where Christ is the Head.

(5) "If you can think of Him as One Who came forth from God to reveal His nature and His will for men; if you can believe that, though He died, yet He is alive for evermore; if you can hear His call and His challenge to come after Him, if you can feel, however faintly, the impulse of His Spirit at work within you; if this is what Christ means to you, then you may count yourself, in spite of all your failings, among His servants and trust that, as He used the loaves and fishes of the lad for the glory of God and in the service of His children, so He will use your little offering of service in ways greater and more far reaching than you can understand" (C. S. Woodward in *Christ in the Common Ways of Life*).

STUDY XXII

THE FINALE

"The Christian is not necessarily an able man—he is an 'enabled man.' That with which he is entrusted is not merely a book, but a divine covenant of grace. Not that we are able of ourselves to regard anything as proceeding from ourselves, but our ability is of God Who also hath enabled us as ministers of a new covenant. Our superiority is not personal, but all of grace, and grace is given to help us to a higher work."

Read chapter vi. 10-24

ST. PAUL began by explaining the great purpose of God for the world, the gathering of all things together in Christ, i. 1-14.

He prayed that the Ephesians might have open eyes and hearts to see this purpose, i. 15-23.

He showed how Gentiles who had been outside the covenant are now made nigh by the blood of Christ, how Jew and Gentile are centred in one new man in Christ, ii. 11-22.

He explained how this unity of mankind in Christ was his great mission in life, iii. 1-13.

He prayed again for their realization of this great truth in their experience, iii. 14-21.

He besought them therefore to walk worthily as members of the one Body, iv. 1-13.

He explained the things that break the unity and spoil the fellowship, iv. 14-32.

He closed this by a personal application to the duties of social life and home life, and showed how Christianity in its grand purpose of world unity has its roots in family life, v. 1-vi. 9.

Now he draws his letter to a close, vi. 10-24, and he closes

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on the note of present conflict. The body may be united and in fellowship with itself, but without lies the world, a foe to meet and conquer. There looms out before the Apostle the world task of Christianity.

(1) The note of strength : " Be strong in the Lord," vi. 10. Paul prayed that they might know " the exceeding greatness of his power." He was a minister " according to . . . the effectual working of his power," iii. 7. God " is able to do exceeding abundantly . . . according to the power that worketh in us," iii. 20. This power he shows to be in conflict with other powers, ii. 2, vi. 12, and this means war relentlessly waged against every spiritual force for good in the world.

(2) The equipment : " The whole armour of God." The emphasis is on God. It is not only a complete armour but it is divine, it is of God. The contrast is " the whole armour of God " and " the wiles of the devil," vi. 11.

(3) The conflict is one of spiritual forces, vi. 12. The significance of this lies in the fact that the world forces of Paul's day seemed so mighty. The strength of organized Rome opposed the Gospel, the orthodox Jewish Church was ranged against them. There were persecutions, scorn, ridicule everywhere, yet he does not mention these because behind them lay forces, unseen powers of evil, more subtle than any human element. Paul lifts the Christian life into the realm of spiritual energy, and on that plane alone will he wage his warfare.

(4) The equipment described, vi. 13-17.

(a) " Truth and righteousness. These are familiar notes in Ephesians. Truth, see i. 13, iv. 21, iv. 25, v. 9. Righteousness, iv. 24, v. 9. Why do these come first ? Because the battle has been won by Christ Himself on the Cross, see Col. ii. 15. There He met the combined forces of evil and " put them to open shame." He is the Truth, and His triumph is now the experience of His Body. Christ through His Church goes forth " conquering and to conquer."

(b) The feet shod. An essential for active service. The Church blest with all spiritual blessings must not turn in upon itself in the day of storm, but, equipped and shod, it

must go out and meet the foe. This is Paul's call for world service, world evangelization. Compare this with Isa. lix. 14, 15, where we have a picture of the Church turning in upon itself and failing.

Righteousness standeth afar off
For truth is fallen in the streets.

Then note what follows—the Messianic prophecy of the divine Warrior: "Therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it upheld him. And he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head," Isa. lix. 16, 17. St. Paul is using Isaiah's illustration to show that the armour he wants the believer to wear is exactly the same armour as Christ wore in His conflict and triumph.

(c) Faith. See what St. Paul means here from his other references to faith. Eph. i. 15, ii. 8, iii. 12, 17, iv. 5, 13. Those whom he was addressing began with the initial asset of personal faith in Christ; faith had revealed God's free grace, faith had brought Him into reality in prayer because Christ dwelt in their hearts by faith, leading them into the unity of faith as a body. Tests of faith are proofs of the conflict and signals of victory. Christ's hour of seeming defeat on Calvary was the moment of His supreme triumph.

(d) The sword of the Spirit. The Word of God feeds, strengthens, and energizes faith, and as such it is a sword in the hands of the Spirit. Every soldier on active service in the great war was familiar with *King's Regulations*, and they were binding on all from the commander-in-chief to the private. The Bible is the divine King's regulations. The glory of them is that they are not a set of hard rules to be obeyed, but the spiritual experience of men of all ages who waged the same conflict. Thus this Epistle to the Ephesians as part of the Word of God is spiritual teaching proved and tested in St. Paul's own life.

(5) "Praying always," vi. 18. There are two words here for prayer, prayers, and supplications. The first is prayer in general, and the second definite petitions. But note how

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Paul carries his military metaphor into this verse, "watching thereunto." "God's warrior, fully armed must be wakeful and alert, or all his preparation will be in vain."

"And for me." Paul, as he draws his labour of love to a close, feels the weight of his chains in prison, the burden of his restricted life, the responsibility of so great a message for the world, but he does not ask for prayer selfishly or even for his own comfort. It is "That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery." Paul's sense of the need of prayer made him constantly ask people to pray for him, and to make their prayer definite and intelligent he kept them in touch with his life, vi. 21, "that ye also may know my affairs . . . Tychichus . . . shall make known to you."

(6) The closing salutation, peace, love, faith, grace. His four favourite words are brought together in his last prayer for the Ephesian Church.

Paul always closed his epistles on the word grace, and here we close our studies with our imaginations thrilled by this glorious gospel of grace, with our hearts humbled as we think of the insincerities of our lives, with deep penitence as we confess our failures to love Him worthily, and yet with joy unspeakable as we see anew our glorious Risen Lord.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

