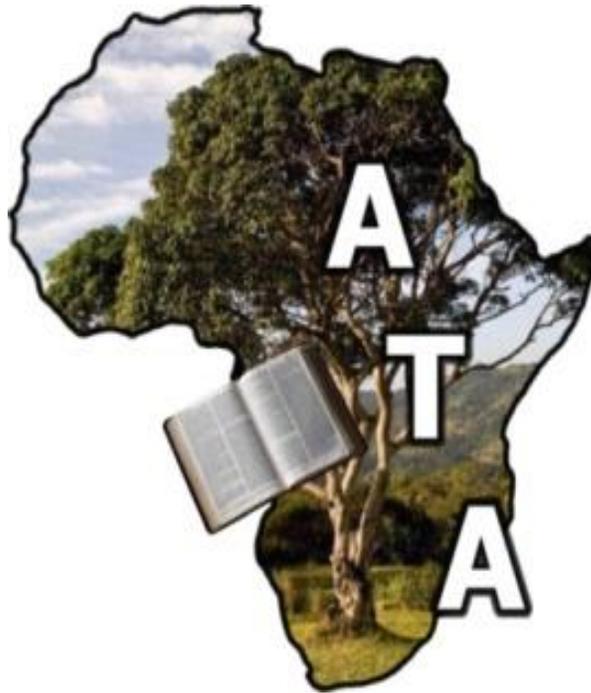


EPHESIANS

A study of Ephesians for ATA Advanced Certificate Students

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).



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OUTLINE

Lesson One: Introduction

Doxology – Ephesians 1:1-2

Lesson Two: Spiritual blessings and praise to Triune God – Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul's First Prayer – Ephesians 1:15-23

Lesson Three: Reconciliation to God – Ephesians 2:1-10

Reconciliation to Man – Ephesians 2:11-22

Lesson Four: Mystery of Christ – Ephesians 3:1-14

Paul's second Prayer – Ephesians 3:15-23

Lesson Five: Ecclesiology and Gifts – Ephesians 4:1-32

Marriage and Family life – Ephesians 5:1-33

Lesson Six: New Life in Love and Marriage Relationship – Ephesians 5:1-32

Lesson Seven: Relationships between Children and Parents, Slaves and Masters –
Ephesians 6:1-9

Lesson Eight: Spiritual warfare – Ephesians 6:10-20

Benediction – Ephesians 6:21-24

Bibliography

PREFACE

In this course it is my prayer that in reading and meditating on the Scripture ATA students will grow in the grace of God to maturity knowing that the battle is not ours but for the Lord despite all the challenges we encounter in our spiritual warfare. Furthermore, we will consider the historical background and the theology of Ephesians.

COURSE CONTENT

This course is divided into eight lessons. The first lesson begins with the historical background for us to understand Paul's Letter to Ephesians. The rest of the lessons deals with exposition of the entire book. Ephesians chapter 1-3 is about what God did for us while chapter 4-6 is about what God requires of us.

COURSE MATERIALS

In this course, the lecture notes are an exposition of the biblical text. You are required to read the notes thoroughly along with the bible.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To study the book of Ephesians with other students in class
2. To develop a deeper understanding of what God has done for us and what he requires of us as Christians.
3. To know much about the unity in the church
4. To develop mutual relationship in our families and in work place
5. To master the theology of Ephesians so that we can use it in preaching and teaching in Africa

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student must attend class for one month
2. Answer all the questions at the end of each lesson that the teacher gives you. You will be given 5 questions at the end of each lesson.
3. Prepare a sermon from one of the key themes in Ephesians
4. Complete the final exam

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Class attendance and students participation – 10%
2. Students Homework – 40%
3. Sermon – 25%
4. Final Exam – 25%

TOTAL – 100%

LESSON ONE: INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EPHEBUS CITY

Ephesus was the most important city of the Roman Province of Asia and was located on the Western shore of Asia Minor, which is known today as Turkey. It was also known as the guardian of the temple of Artemis or Diana (Acts 19:34)

Christianity was threatened by pagan temple and to the commerce it produced for the makers of idols almost cost the life of Apostle Paul (Acts 19:24, 30-31). According to Irenaeus, who was an early Christian writer, the apostle John after his exile on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9), returned to live in Ephesus until the time of Empire Trajan (AD 98-117).

Ephesus had been a city for about 1,000 years when Paul arrived there on his third missionary journey. The worship of Artemis in Ephesus was as ancient as the Hellenistic world and the first of enormous size ever to be constructed entirely of marble. The temple of Diana the mother of the gods was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

At the end of his second missionary journey, Paul visited Ephesus where he left Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-21). Returning to the city on his third missionary journey, Paul spent nearly three years there (Acts 18:23-19:41). His effective ministry began seriously to hurt the traffic in magic and images leading to an uproar in the huge Ephesians Theater. Paul then left for Macedonia, but afterwards he met the Ephesians elders while on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17-38).

As I wind up this brief history of Ephesus city, I want you to know that the richness of the theology in Ephesus is better attributed to Paul's own growth and meditation on nature of the church.

AUTHORSHIP

Ephesians is Paul's first prison epistles followed by Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. As far as its authorship is concerned, it is generally considered to have been written by Apostle Paul during his first Roman imprisonment in A.D 60-62. He refers to his imprisonment in chapters 3:1; 4:1 and 6:20.

The most fundamental indication for us to agree that Paul is the author of this epistle is its opening words "Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." This phrase reveals both his name and his status as an apostle.

This book have been called "the divinest composition of man, the distilled essence of the Christian religion, the most authoritative and most consummate compendium of the Christian

faith, full to the brim with thoughts and doctrines sublime and momentous.”¹ This is one of the books in the bible that we should read and grasp what God intends us to learn in our Christian life especially in this generation where we have a lot of challenges within the church set up, marriages and work place. Hendriksen is correct that the book of Ephesians has the divinest composition of man in the essence of the Christian religion.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The main purpose as to why Paul wrote this letter was to remind his readers of their glorious position in Christ and to encourage them to live in accordance with their high position. This is an inspired book. It is not the original audience only who were to live in a way that gives glory to God. This book was written to us as a word of encouragement despite all the challenges we face in our Christian life.

The Ephesians Christians were marginalized in a pluralistic culture tolerant of many things but not of the Christian gospel or the church which proclaimed it. Therefore, “they need to know that they were secure – Paul teaches them that they are anchored in the eternal purpose of God. They lived under the threat of dark and sinister powers – they needed to know that Christ had conquered all his and their enemies. They were surrounded by the influence of the world, the flesh and the devil – they needed to know that God had raised them out of that spiritual death. They were confronted on a daily basis with Gentile paganism – they needed to know that Christ had brought them into the family of God. They lived under the shadow of a false temple and false idol – they needed to know how the gospel would transform their lives. They saw life in marriage, family and business corrupted by self-interest – they needed to know how grace could transform all relationships. They were under attack from the forces of darkness – they needed to know how they could remain standing in the battle.”² All the aspects mentioned by Ferguson are an indication of why Paul wrote this letter as an encouragement to the Ephesians Christians and even us today.

Hendriksen states in his book, “Paul wrote this letter in order to express his inner satisfaction with the Christ-centered faith of the addressed and their love for all the saints.”³

SALUTATION/DOXOLOGY – EPHESIANS 1:1-2

Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Eph 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴

¹ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 32

² Ferguson, *Ephesians*, xv

³ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 61

⁴ *The ESV Classic Reference Bible: The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Pradis CD-ROM Wheaton: Good News Publishers, © 2001.

In the first verse of this book, Paul introduced himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Paul did not make himself an apostle as some so called “apostles” of today have been. An apostle in the real sense means “emissary representative”, that is one sent with the authority of the sender. An apostle is the one who truly witnessed Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:21-22; 10:41-42).

In most of Paul’s letters, he introduced himself as an apostle in the opening words of his epistles. In Romans 11:13, he states, “I am an apostle to the Gentiles.” Paul introduced himself as an apostle because he had seen Christ on his way to Damascus and been commissioned by him (Acts 26:16-18), he was truly a witness to his resurrection.

I strongly believed that we don’t have apostles today even though some believers fulfill ministries that are apostolic in style. The so-called apostles of today did not see or witness the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no any other new revelation apart from the Scripture today. All the apostolic teachings and its authority is firmly rooted in the bible. The Holy Spirit interprets and applies the Scriptures to us today as God’s people continually.

“The apostle has attained his office neither through nomination by other men but by divine preparation, having been set apart and qualified by the activity of God’s sovereign will.”⁵

Paul gave a clear indication in his opening verses that the book of Ephesians was written to the believers in Ephesus who were faithful in Christ Jesus. The phrase “faithful in Christ Jesus” is of great importance as we study this book. To be faithful means to exercise our faith. We need to exercise our faith in Jesus. Scott states that this faith has three elements:

1. “There is an intellectual element. Faith involves content.
2. There is an emotional element. Faith at this level warms the heart and draws forth a loving response to God who has revealed himself in Christ.
3. There is a volitional element. Having perceived and understood the gospel and having been affected by it, the true Christian now makes a personal commitment to Christ who died for him.”⁶

Actually, for us to be faithful, we should persevere in our Christian life and endure to the end (Mathew 10:22). We need to exercise our faith in believing in Christ because our calling is to faithfulness.

“Grace to you and peace from God....” There is a deep meaning as to why Paul used the term grace and peace in his wishes to the Ephesians church. During the apostolic times, ancient letters opened with salutations and Paul being one of them transforms the usual formula by elevating it to new heights by wishing his readers nothing less than grace and

⁵ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 70

⁶ Baker, *Ephesians*, 14

peace from both the Father and the Son (v2). This reminds of the sufficient grace of God and peace we have through Jesus Christ in our Christian life.

What is Grace?

Grace is God's favor and love, not only unmerited by us but also actually demerited. It is the spring or fountain of God's unmerited favor from which all of God's blessings flow. This doctrine of grace points to one central truth that "salvation is all of grace because it is all of God; and because it is all of God, it is all for his glory."⁷ The doctrine of grace (**Sola Gratia – Grace alone**) is one of the **Solas (Alones)** of Reformation. We are saved by grace alone. Our meritorious works do not save us.

The word 'grace' has a prominent place in the opening greetings and the closing benedictions of the epistles being added to the conventional Jewish greeting of 'peace'. Ephesians is full of grace as we see in 1:2, 6, 7; 2:4-5, 7-8; 3:2, 7-8; 4:7, 29; 6:24. Grace is mentioned twelve (12) times in the entire book of Ephesians.

What is Peace?

"Peace is the Old Testament's 'Shalom' – not just a feeling of quite, but the well-being of our whole lives."⁸

This peace brings reconciliation in Christ, which creates unity in diversity among the new community of the church (Eph. 4:1-16). It can also bring transformation in the way we live (Eph. 4:17-5:21) and strength to stand firm in our spiritual warfare (6:10-20).

Peace is the smile of God to us as it reflects itself in the hearts of redeemed, the assurance of reconciliation through the blood of the cross, true spiritual wholeness and success. It is a great blessing that Christ by his atoning sacrifice bestowed upon the church (John 14:27) and it surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

⁷ Boice M James and Ryken G Philip, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 32

⁸ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 5

LESSON TWO: OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND PRAISE TO TRIUNE GOD – Vs. 3-14

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
Eph 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love
Eph 1:5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,
Eph 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,
Eph 1:8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight
Eph 1:9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ
Eph 1:10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
Eph 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,
Eph 1:12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.
Eph 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
Eph 1:14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

It will be of great importance for us to know that verses 3-14 forms one long sentence of 202 words in Greek text because it is an expansion of the condensed praise of God's purpose in Romans 8:28-30. In this verses, Paul reflects on believer's election from eternity. As we read this, we will realize that the phrase "in Christ" or in Him is repeated throughout because it refers to the intimate union God has established between Christ and us.

Verse 3 talks of double blessings

1. Our blessing to him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
2. Blessing upon us in Christ with every Spiritual blessing

The main reason as to why God is to be blessed is because he has blessed us. Here in Africa, parents blessed their children in different ways. Some perform rituals as they bless their children by using milk and millet flour to spite on the face of the blessed child. This is done mostly during customary marriage as a form of blessing the couples so that they may get children and have a prosperous life. Also this act of blessing takes place when someone is in his/her old age whereby he/she speaks his/her last words of blessing to his/her children. Africans are very much keen on this because they believe that the words of a dying person are very strong enough to be taken care of. This kind of blessing is not like God's blessing which he has blessed us through Christ.

As Christians, our praise goes to:

- a. God the Father who elects – vs. 4-6
- b. God the Son who redeems – vs. 7-12
- c. God the Holy Spirit who seals – vs. 11-14

In our Christ-centered worship, we must praise God the Father for choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, God the Son for redeeming us and God the Holy Spirit for being the guarantee of our inheritance.

Election – Ephesians 1:4, Romans 9:11, 2Peter 1:10

“Election is the act of choice whereby God picks an individual or group out of large company for a purpose or destiny of his own appointment.”¹⁰

Verse 4 - He chose us..... Paul here says that God chose us to emphasize that salvation depends totally on God. He did not save us because we deserve it but because of his gracious free gift of salvation. This mystery of salvation originated in the timeless mind of God long before we existed. The main reason as to why God chose us is to be holy and blameless before him.

Verse 5 – In love he predestined us.... The basis of our foreordination into adoption is love. Predestination here refers to God’s decision made in eternity past, that is before the foundation of the world existed regarding the final destiny of individual persons (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11).

Boettner states, “This doctrine of predestination represents the purpose of God as absolute and unconditional, independent of the whole finite creation and as originating solely in the eternal counsel of his will. God is seen as the great and mighty king who has appointed the course of nature and who directs the course of history even down to its minutest details.”¹¹

Election and predestination belong to the doctrinal scope of salvation. The urge to accept Christ as Lord and savior comes from God who in love predestined us to adoption as his sons and daughters. God freely bestowed his grace upon us, which means that we had nothing to do with it.

If you are an elect, what then are the blessings of your election?

Let us consider briefly some of the blessings we get through election

1. Election eliminates boasting in our life as Christians

¹⁰ Marshall H.I, Millard R.A, Packer I.J and Wiseman J.D, *New Bible Dictionary*, 306

¹¹ Boittner Lorane, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 13

Election means that salvation is utterly of God because we cannot claim anything in the work of our salvation. There is nothing in which we can boast of ourselves because it is all of God. Everything pertaining our salvation is all of God's grace.

2. Election gives assurance of salvation

Our assurance depends on God not us. We absolutely depend on God's grace and his sovereign will.

3. Election leads to holiness

Election to salvation and election to holiness go together (Ephesians 1:4, 2:10). If we are not growing in holiness we are not elect but we are still in our sins. God desires that our characters should be more and more similar to that of the one who has poured out such blessings on us.

4. Election promotes evangelism

The fact that God elects to salvation does not eliminate the means by which he calls those elect persons to faith. One of those means is the proclamation of the gospel to sinners by those who already believe. We should spread the word of truth boldly as African church knowing that all whom God has previously determined to come to faith will come to him.

Adoption – Ephesians 1:5

Adoption means becoming God's children with all privileges implied. The relationship which we have to the great God is that of children to their father (John 1:12). If we do become children by adoption, then we also become heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Redemption – Ephesians 1:9-10

Redemption means being declared free from the slavery by the death of Christ.

Three ways in which a person become a slave

- a. Born a slave – Psalms 51:5
- b. By conquest – Psalms 19:13
- c. Through debt – A person who could not pay a debt could be enslaved as the last possible resource for payment – Romans 6:23.

In the New Testament, the redemption of man is redemption from the bondage and the power of sin, involving a resolution of the power of guilt. The means of redemption is the blood of Christ.

Jesus came to redeem his people as we read in Mathew 26:28; Mark 10:45; Romans 3:24 and Galatians 3:13.

Forgiveness – Ephesians 1:7b

Forgiveness means having God wipe the slate clean (Jeremiah 31:34; 1John 1:9). Jesus speaks of forgiveness in terms of paying a debt (Mathew 6:12; 18:21-35).

Enlightened – Ephesians 1:8-10

It is of great importance for us to understand that those whom God has reconciles to himself as children also enlightens with the understanding of his purpose.

In verse 9, the bible talks of a mystery. This term mystery means the revelation of a truth that was once known.

God the Holy Spirit seals our salvation – Ephesians 1:11-14

The Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's work of salvation to God's elect. This happens because of;

- a. The inheritance given to us – vs. 11-12
- b. The inheritance guaranteed – vs. 13-14

The Holy Spirit makes our Christian life secure in our new faith and relationship. He is more than a certification of God's promise. In Kenya, if you have a title deed for your land which have no seal is fake. For you to have a secured land you must have a government seal in your title deed. However, without the Holy Spirit guidance in our lives, our salvation will not be secured.

PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER – EPHESIANS 1:15-23

^{Eph 1:15} For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

^{Eph 1:16} I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

^{Eph 1:17} that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

^{Eph 1:18} having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

^{Eph 1:19} and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

^{Eph 1:20} that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

^{Eph 1:21} far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

^{Eph 1:22} And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

^{Eph 1:23} which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Prayer is very vital in our Christian way of living. Without prayer, we cannot succeed. The first church prayed, therefore we must also pray consistently as Christians of today. The church in Acts 2:42 also devoted themselves to prayer.

Forms of prayer

- a. Supplication
- b. Confession
- c. Thanksgiving

Paul was a minister who continually prayed much for his congregation. He urged his followers to imitate him (1Corinthians 11:1). Night and day he prayed exceedingly (1Thessalonians 3:10-13). He prayed without ceasing (Romans 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:16-19; 3:14-19; Philippians 1:4-11, 4:19; Colossians 1:9-11; 2:1-2.)

Unceasing prayer formed a large part of Paul's service in the gospel. There is a high spiritual aim, which he set before himself in his work on behalf of believers and the tender and self-sacrificial love with which he ever continued to think of the church and her needs.

As pastors or church elders in Africa, we should ask God to bring each one of us and all other ministers of his word to a life of which such prayer is the healthy and natural out flow of our local churches.

Derek Prime said, "Prayer is not simply a most important activity – it is the most important."¹² For sure, let us take our weekly prayer meetings seriously knowing that this is a serious activity of communicating with our God. If our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, who are we that we should not pray to our God?

It is clear that Paul's prayer life was motivated by news about his fellow Christians. Because of our weakness, "we fail to give thanks because we do not lift our eyes to the throne from which all blessings flow."¹³ Success in our respective ministries should motivate prayer life as we thank God for what he is doing.

Verse 15 – For this reason..... In this phrase, Paul's gratitude of heart alludes to the blessings enumerated and described in verses 3-14. He has been singing the praise of the Triune God of all grace. The grace of God makes true believers rich with the blessings of redemption, forgiveness, adoption and spiritual illumination.

"Paul was the kind of man who took pleasure in bestowing sincere praise upon those whom he loved and in doing so at once. At the particular place in the letter where, had the apostle been a heathen, he would have thanked this or that deity for having kept the writer and/or the readers in

¹² Derek, *Practical Prayer*, 11

¹³ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 22

good health, Paul expresses his humble gratitude to the only true God for having imparted to the addressed the quietness and confidence that is the portion of all those who lean on the everlasting arms of their savior, Jesus, and revere him as their Lord who bought them and to whom they render joyful obedience.”¹⁴

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love toward all the saints

Paul heard about the constant faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love that the congregation in Ephesus had. These two factors motivated Apostle Paul to pray for them. The lives of the Ephesians had been totally transformed by the sufficient grace of God. Faith and love are the two main features that Paul always takes as marks of genuine conversion (1Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 6:23; 1Thessalonians 1:3, 3:6; 1Timothy 1:14; 2Timothy 1:13, 3:10; Titus 2:2).

The news about his fellow Christians in Ephesus motivated Paul to pray. What motivates you to pray for your congregation as a pastor today? You should ask this question yourself. Beware that “Authentic Christianity always transforms both the God ward and the man ward dimensions of life.”¹⁵ Our profession of faith is meaningless if we are prayer less. Prayer should be the true evidence of love in our church life.

The term faith in broader sense has three aspects in it namely;

- a. Knowing
- b. Believing
- c. Trusting

As an individual, you come to know the word of God when someone preached to you then you believe it to be true and then you commit yourself to what you know and believe by putting your trust in Christ as your Lord and savior. Paul knew that Ephesians has been true Christians because of their faith.

They also had love for all the saints in addition to their faith in Christ. This love was an Agape love, which seeks the interests of others, and not self-gains. This is the same love that Christ loved us. It is a matter of working for the interests of others even if it means losing one’s life.

“Love for all the saints characterizes every person who has been truly converted. It is a brand mark which is clearly visible and impossible to remove.”¹⁶ You should love one another as believers in the church because your God is a loving God (1John 2:9-11).

¹⁴ Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, 96

¹⁵ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 22

¹⁶ Scott, *Ephesians*, 26

Verse 16 – I do not cease to give thanks for you

When Paul heard about the true conversion of the Ephesians, he keeps on praying for them as he gives thanks to God for what he has done. In this verse, there are two main factors to consider in prayer.

- a. Thanksgiving
- b. Pray without ceasing

In our prayers, we should always thank God for what he is doing in bringing new converts to his kingdom. We need to praise God in our prayers by giving thanks to him. This is a fundamental lesson we learn from this prayer (Ephesians 5:19-20).

We should also be constant in our prayers. We must pray without ceasing because our lives in this world have many challenges from the evil one. In Ephesians 6:18, Paul encourages us to pray all times in spirit. I like Scott's statement that "with ceaseless thanksgiving went ceaseless intercession."¹⁷ As we give thanks to the Lord always, we should also intercede always.

Verse 17 – that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory

In this verse, Paul gives us two reasons as to why he keeps on praying without ceasing to the Ephesians;

- i. That they may receive a spirit of wisdom
- ii. That they may get revelation in the knowledge of God

Paul here also used the phrase "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the Father of glory" interchangeably because God himself is the one who bestows glory upon all true believers in Christ.

The spirit of wisdom

Human beings in nature who doesn't have the Spirit lacks deeper understanding of the reality and relevance of the works of God testified by Scripture (1Corinthians 2:14). In this sense, only the Holy Spirit is the one who can bring understanding to minds and hearts darkened by sin (1Corinthians 2:10, Colossians 1:9). The Spirit of wisdom opens and unveils our minds and attunes our hearts so that we understand what God has revealed (Ephesians 1:17-18; 3:18)

As Paul blesses God for choosing us in Christ, he also prayed that we may grasp the fullness of God's riches through Jesus Christ. The gift of wisdom can be attained only from the Holy Spirit who makes us wise and reveals the truth (1Corinthians 2:12).

¹⁷ Baker, *Ephesians*, 26

What is wisdom?

Wisdom is the insight or perception into nature of things that leads one to action or use of knowledge gained. It is the ability to activate knowledge gained. It also the ability to activate knowledge in a sensible and competent manner.

Wisdom comes from God (Psalm 111:10). We get true wisdom when we look at everything from God's perspective. Authentic wisdom comes in when we understand that God is to be the object of our prayers and adoration.

Revelation in the knowledge of God

Paul prayed that Ephesians saints might know God because God is the one who first set his love upon them and elected them. Therefore, these saints should know God. "What they need above all was clear knowledge of God, including joyful recognition of God's way for their lives and a willingness to follow his direction."¹⁸

Verses 18-19

In these verses, Paul wanted the Ephesians to:

- i. Have their eyes enlightened for the hope they have been called to
- ii. The riches of God's glorious inheritance
- iii. The immeasurable greatness of God's power to those who believe

Apostle Paul wanted believing Christians to have this basic conviction in their hearts. Thus he prayed to Almighty God that he would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Paul prayed that the believers might be given the spirit of good common sense and true insight into the nature and power of God.

The prayer in verse 18 is a prayer of spiritual understanding. "The heart of a person needs is not merely more refined theological concepts but the work of the Spirit integrating these with their perception and so restricting their will and life. Paul prays that his readers might be able to know (understand) the hope that lies ahead of them in this fuller sense."¹⁹

Paul's prayer in verse 19 is that we should understand the nature and strength of God's power, which is at work in our lives as believers. It is true that a Christian should know that when he believes in Almighty God and puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God will raise him from the dead and he will sit him at his own right hand.

¹⁸ Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, 98

¹⁹ D.A Carson, R.T France, J.A Motyer and G.T Wenham, *New Bible Commentary*, 1227

We should know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one who can lead us into glory. By knowing and believing in him, we will be able to obey, to praise God and to serve him while here in this world.

Verses 20-23 – that he worked in Christ when he raised him.....

These verses help us to learn that it is the power of God, which raised Jesus from the dead. This is the same power, which is at work in believers (Ephesians 2:4-5; 3:16-17). After him being raised, he enjoys his position as the head over everything for the sake of the church as he sits at the right hand of God in the heavenly places.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only at the most exalted position in the heavenly places but he is there as our representative governing the universe for our sake (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:3).

Ferguson states “Paul spells out in detail the power-standard of which he is speaking. It has come to expression in (i) the resurrection of Christ (ii) the exaltation of Christ, and (iii) the victory of Christ over all the powers throughout the space-time and material-spiritual continuum.”²⁰

As Christians, we should know that God appointed Christ as supreme head and ruler of the new society of believers, the individual members of which constitute his body. You should know that the church has the authority and power to overcome all opposition because her leader is the head over all things.

As far as God’s power is concerned, “Paul’s point is that the power which raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the lowest place to highest, the very power which sustains the wonderful relationship that exists between the ascending Christ and his people – that power is the power which has worked in you as a Christian. The power that did all this for Christ is the very same power which works in a man, woman or child at conversion.”²¹

Pertaining Christ’s authority, Hendricksen states, “As to his divine essence, Christ is in no sense whatever dependent on or capable of being completed by the church. But as bridegroom he is incomplete without the bride; as shepherd he is not seen without his sheep; and so also as head he finds his full expression in his body, the church.”²²

CONCLUSION

As church leaders and pastors in Africa, let us pray for our members to understand that the power at work in the African church is the presence of that same power which will bring about the new creation, a new universe in total harmony united under Christ. If the church in Africa is truly united with Christ, then she has already received a foretaste of that end.

²⁰ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 31

²¹ Baker, *Ephesians*, 32

²² Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, 104

LESSON THREE: RECONCILIATION TO GOD AND MAN– EPHESIANS 2:1-22

RECONCILIATION TO GOD – EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

Eph 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

Eph 2:3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

Eph 2:5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—

Eph 2:6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Eph 2:7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Eph 2:9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

In this chapter, Paul talks about salvation from the perspective of the individual Christian. He is demonstrating the great truth both Jews and Gentiles alike have received now with the risen Christ. He reminds us of what we were before God's work in calling us to Christ, what God did for us in Christ and what we are now to become and do as the result of Christ's work.

Ephesians 2:1-10 is also one of the long sentences in the original Greek like Ephesians 1:3-14. As we deal with this chapter, you should expect grace to save you from sin's guilt and power.

Primarily, let us examine the three enemies of a believer;

- i. The world – Ephesians 2:2
- ii. The devil – Prince of the power of the air – Ephesians 2:2
- iii. The flesh – Ephesians 2:3

Based on the above three enemies of a believer, I like how the Reformation Study Bible explain this on its' footnotes that "the natural state of all human beings is a kind of spiritual death." For sure, without Christ in our lives we are dead in our trespasses.

Due to our natural state, we are;

- i. Dead
- ii. Slaves
- iii. Condemned

Dead in trespasses and sins – Ephesians 2:1-3

Trespass means to deviate from the right/proper path. In most cases, we deviate from the proper path of Christ. Romans 3:23 tells us that we have fallen short of God's glory. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We fall short of the glory of God because of our sins of commission and omission. Our wages absolutely is death (Romans 6:23). Like a spiritual corpse, a sinner is not in a position to make a single move toward God. It is just by God's grace that a sinner could come to him through Christ.

Verse 2 – Those who walked following the course of this world, prince of the power of the air are sons of disobedience.

"The expression sons of disobedience, although a strange expression to contemporary ears, is a semantic way of referring to disobedient."²³ Anyone who walked contrary to Christ's expectation is a son of disobedient. If we are not the sons of God then we are the sons of the evil one.

Verse 3 – among whom we all once lived in the passion of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

This verse makes Paul to be included in the acts of the flesh and body desires like other men when he said, "Among whom we all once lived." He includes himself and all his people as among the children of disobedience or wrath. By nature, all human beings are in slavery to their flesh. Flesh in the real sense is your fallen human nature.

How can you be a slave to your flesh – v3a

- i. Living in the passion of flesh
- ii. Carrying the desires of the body
- iii. Carrying the desires of your mind

These three aspects make us slaves to the flesh because of our own self-centeredness in the world of indulgence, ambition and pleasure.

From the Old Testament perspective, Jews were delivered from the external pattern of Satan because God had chosen them to be his people. Even though God had set them apart they were still slaves to the internal lust of the flesh. By nature, sin was still in their hearts.

How we were condemned – v3b

Due to our trespasses, we are by nature children of wrath. When Paul states that we were by nature children of wrath like the rest of humankind, he meant that both Jews and Gentiles are all under God's judgment (wrath) because of their sinfulness.

²³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 132

As we know that God is holy, his anger is also pure. He hates sin and he is angry to those who commit sin. If we are children of wrath, then we are the enemies of God. God will condemn us because he does not compromise evil or our lustful indulgences.

“By nature” – This phrase reminds us that we were born with the fallen character of man. We did not become sinners but we were born sinners. We have always been sinners and that is why we sin (Psalm 51:5).

Alive together with Christ – vs. 4-7

Paul paints this picture of the human situation to throw into relief God’s gracious and merciful response to depraved man.

God is so merciful and loving. His great love is sufficient to us. He loved us by his own will. O’Brien states, “The magnificent change which God has effected is jubilantly sounded forth. His gracious initiative and sovereign action stand in wonderful contrast with the hopeless condition of fallen humanity which has been described in vv 1-3.”²⁴ Actually, we were dead in our trespasses but due to God’s grace, he has made us alive with Christ.

As Christians, our experience of salvation was totally unmerited. In fact, we were dead in our trespasses and destined for divine judgment.

In this chapter, there is a correlation in the thought and vocabulary on the last part of chapter one. There is a kind of parallelism between 1:20-21 and 2:1-7, more so in 1:20 and 2:6.

Parallelism

Ephesians 1:20b	Ephesians 2:6
Raised him – A	and raised us – A
Seated him – B	seated us - B
Heavenly places – C	heavenly places – C

The pattern of these two verses are; (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6)

A

B

C

²⁴ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 164

A

B

C

In this parallelism, it is important for us to know that our relationship with Christ affects our destinies as believers because it involves our sharing in his destiny.

Verse 5b “by grace you have been saved.” This phrase is very important because it provides a summary of what God has already accomplished in making us alive together with Christ, raising us up with him and making us sit with him in the heavenly places.

Grace is a key theme in the book of Ephesians because according to Paul (Even me), it is the basis of the whole work of our salvation. “Paul’s receiving the gospel, his calling to minister to the Gentiles and his ability to fulfill his missionary task from beginning to end were due solely to the grace of God.”²⁵

In verse 6, God’s action is described more precisely in terms of us being raised up and seated with Christ. Colossians 2:13 states that “And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made a live together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” In this text, being made alive with Christ is closely associated with the forgiveness of our sins and deliverance from principalities and powers of the prince of the air.

Verse 7 – “the coming ages” – This phrase have an eschatological orientation, so that negatively they refer to a deliverance from God’s wrath at the final judgment and positively to the reinstatement in that glory of God which was lost through sin. “The marvels of God’s grace will be resounded not only until the perousia of Christ, but in the ages beyond. In a Jewish framework, time was normally divided into two ages, this age and the age to come (Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:1-2).”²⁶

Salvation by grace – vs. 8-10

Ephesians 2:8-10 is a key text that destroys legalism and antinomianism. As men created in the image of God and have inherited sinful nature from Adam, we should expect grace to save us from sin’s guilt and power.

The phrase “you have been saved” in verse 5 is also repeated and expanded here in verses 8-10. The grace of God is a gift to us. It is a gift because it is unmerited favor or undeserved benefit we received from God.

²⁵ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 168

²⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 138

In our African context, when someone gives you a gift, you don't ask him how much you owe him but you can just respond appropriately to that gift by just saying "thank you". The word thank you cannot be measured. Kalenjins measure this word by saying "Kongoi ne ten tany ak Muren" meaning thank you which is equal to a cow and man. They say so because they believed that a man's wealth is measured by the number of cows he has. However, the grace of God cannot be measured by merits.

In most cases, we tend to feel obligated to try to work our way to God yet we have been given the gift of salvation freely. We should respond with gratitude, praise and joy because our salvation and even our faith are gifts from God.

O'Brien put clearly that "Paul has just shown that what has happened to believers has been due to the amazingly rich grace of God, the demonstration of which will continue in the ages to come so that all who see it will marvel and praise God."²⁷ Actually, it is important for us to understand that grace and faith are the significant elements in our union with Christ.

Faith

Faith denotes human respond by which God's salvation is received. It is the means by which God's grace is appropriated as the ground of our salvation. Most people make a mistake of taking faith to be a meritorious work. However, faith is the response, which we receive what has already been done for us in Christ.

Westminster confession of faith chapter 11.2 states "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces and is no dead faith but worketh by love."²⁸

Verse 9 – Due to God's unmerited favor, we become Christians. This is not as the result of any effort, ability, intellectual choice or act of good service we rendered on our part. As a result of gratitude for the free gift of salvation from God you will just serve others with kindness, love and gentleness and not merely to please ourselves. As we do this, we should remember that no action or work could help us obtain salvation. It is the intention of God that our salvation will result in good acts of service.

"These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries and glorify God, whose workmanship they are created in Christ Jesus thereunto; that having their fruit into holiness, they may have the end, eternal

²⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 173

²⁸ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 58 (Westminster confession is a collection of the statements of faith that the Presbyterian Church subscribes to).

life.”²⁹ Based on this, we are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church for God’s glory as it is stipulated in Ephesians 4:12.

I like O’Brien statement that “The divine intention in providing salvation apart from any human effort or achievement is to exclude human boasting.”³⁰ Paul in his other letters discourages any attempt to affirm oneself before God by boasting in one’s own achievements (Romans 3:27, Galatians 6:13, Philippians 3:3).

Verse 10 – This verse stresses what we are as believers because of God’s workmanship. As the new creation in Christ Jesus for good works, God wants us to walk in them. Because we have experienced God’s gracious redemption, we should live a holy and godly live. We should do well under all circumstances (1Thessalonians 1:15, Galatians 6:10, 2Corinthians 9:8, 2Thessalonians 2:17. “It is God’s will that those who belong to the new creation should be characterized by a lifestyle which ultimately reflects his own character and action.”³¹ All true believers are God’s workmanship because salvation is something only God can do. It is his powerful creative work in the love of each believer. If God considers us to be his masterpiece, we should not treat others with disrespect or inferior work.

In this issue of new creation in Christ, “it is the re-creation of a man or woman who before was spiritually dead, utterly incapable of doing any good thing that could satisfy God, but now as the result of God’s working, is able to do truly good ‘good works’.”³²

RECONCILIATION TO MAN – EPHESIANS 2: 11-22

Eph 2:11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—

Eph 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Eph 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Eph 2:15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

Eph 2:16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Eph 2:17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Eph 2:18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

²⁹ Westminster Confession of Faith, 68

³⁰ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 177

³¹ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 180

³² Boice, *Ephesians*, 74

Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Eph 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Eph 2:21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Eph 2:22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Before we examine this text, I wish to narrate a brief story of what happened in Kenya in 2007-2008. This is the period which Kenya faced a terrible post-election violence. This came up as a result of disputed presidential elections. Former President Kibaki was declared the winner but our former Prime Minister Raila Odinga did not believe the electoral presidential results.

Due to disputed elections, the whole country went into violence in that riots were reported in each part of the country. The losers never believed that they lose the election. Properties were destroyed, and many people were displaced whereas others lose their lives.

In such a time, the former UN diplomat Kofi Annan came to reconcile the two parties rioting led by former President Kibaki and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga. This takes several weeks for both parties to reconcile. Kofi Annan acted as the mediator between the two parties. As soon as the two parties reconciled, peace prevails in the country up to date. Reconciliation in this matter is an act of bringing two hostile parties together. As we go on dealing with this text we will see how Christ reconciled both Jewish and Gentiles.

It is my main aim that you may understand how our Lord Jesus Christ broke down the barriers of separation and created us to be one new people for God. Sin separated us (Ephesians 2:1-10) but now we have been united with God through Christ as we see in Ephesians 2:11-22.

Verse 11 – Circumcision

Circumcision is one of the elements that the Kalenjin community in Kenya put more emphasis as a passage from child-hood to adult hood by boys. It is amazing to see even other Kalenjin sub-tribes circumcising girls. Those who are not circumcised are not recognized within the society.

In this community, male servants coming from other communities can undergo circumcision rites and should therefore be recognized as the members of the community because they have gone through the required system of identification. Such a person is given a Kalenjin name for recognition. He will not go back to his community but will be adopted as a Kalenjin who must enjoyed all the privileges and benefits within the community.

The Kalenjins are so biased to uncircumcised communities. In this regard, Jews also in the Old Covenant were biased in that they considered the Gentiles ceremonially unclean. They thought that they are pure and clean because of their national heritage and religious ceremonies.

Jews were very proud of their circumcision practices. This practice just affected their bodies but not their hearts. Gentiles in the real sense were regarded as outsiders. Paul clearly pointed out that both Jews and Gentiles alike were unclean before God and needed to be cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Verse 12

This verse is very important because it shows how we look like without Christ. Paul urges us to remember that we were;

- a. Separated from Christ
- b. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel
- c. Strangers to the covenant of promise
- d. Have no hope
- e. Without God in the World

a. Separated from Christ

Before we become Christians, we would probably not have known the term Christ. Some of us worshiped other gods because we knew nothing about Messiah and we did not even intend to learn much about him. During ancient times, the Kalenjins worshipped their god called Asis (Sun). They did so because they had little knowledge about the true God.

b. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel

In The Old Testament time the Gentiles in this context were alienated from the people of Israel because they were outside of the sphere of God's blessings that Israelites enjoyed. Arnold put it clearly that "They [Gentiles] did not benefit from the privileged position of Israel as the recipients of the promise and were simply not a part of the people on whom God showed his favor."³³ These Gentiles never wanted to be part of Israel because they willfully chose to live apart from the true God. Beware that God knows the heart of every individual because he is omniscient. In Colossians 1:21, Paul pointed out that the Gentiles were hostile to God in their thoughts that lead to their alienation.

c. Strangers to the covenant community

The word stranger in this sense means an outsider. I have seen in our community that whenever a stranger comes to the community, everyone is eager to know where such a person comes from and what he is intending to do.

In this context, the Gentiles were outsiders who will not benefit of the various covenant promises God gave to Israel. They were not citizens of the nation of Israel whom God was in covenant

³³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 154 (Word in bracket is mine)

relationship with. Although God's relationship with Israel included a promise to bless the nations, Gentiles did not have awareness of that precious hope.

d. Have hope

Gentiles had no objective hope because they lived away from knowledge of the only true living God. For sure, they did not have hope that come from the anointed Son of God. In the same way, they did not have hope of a bodily resurrection and a future live in the heavenly kingdom.

In African Traditional Religion (ATR), some people believed that there is life after death. They have hope that their ancestors are still alive spiritually in that they can even name their children after them. As the Africans believed in the life after death, Gentiles also "did have some semblance of hope in an afterlife."³⁴

e. Without God in the world

This phrase is a clear indication that God had revealed himself to all human beings through general revelation and in the conscience. Gentiles suppressed the truth they already know and turn to idolatry instead of worshipping the true God (Romans 1:18-32).

Whenever we are without God in our lives, we are without everything despite our appearance within the community at large. Those who are without God are pagans. Anyone who is outside of a covenant relationship with God is a pagan.

Verse 13 - But now....

This is a sharp contrast of how we were without Christ and how we are now in Christ. Before Christ coming, both Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered the Gentiles to be beyond God's redeeming quality and therefore without hope. Christ revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles and then offered his salvation to both. He is the one who breaks down the barriers and reconcile all who believe in him to God. Actually, Christ has united you and me into one body (church). In Christ, there is neither Gentile nor Jew because we have been made one through his atonement for our sins.

Verse 14 – Christ has destroyed the barriers, which people build for themselves. Because of his death, we are all one because;

- i. Our hostility against each other has been put to death by the death of Jesus on the cross (2:16)
- ii. We can now have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit (2:18)
- iii. We are no longer strangers or foreigners to God (2:19)
- iv. We are all built into a holy temple with Christ as our chief corner stone (2:20-22)

³⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 155

Based on the four points mentioned above, we all believe that Christ has destroyed all the barriers we had among ourselves. Some other things still blocked us from reaching others with the gospel. Here are some barriers that hinder people from reaching others;

- a. Age – I am not able to share the word with others because I am getting old
- b. Appearance – I am a public figure, therefore I can't be able to evangelize
- c. Intelligence – These people are very low in their academic status. I can't reach them because I am a PhD. Holder
- d. Political persuasion – What could my followers say if I do this or that?
- e. Economic status – Everyone knows that we have economic challenges, therefore missions and evangelism should stop first
- f. Race – I can't reach people of a different race than mine
- g. Theological perspective – Those people are liberals, so there is no need of reaching them with the gospel of truth. (Sometimes we say we agree to disagree).

Anyway, Christ has kicked down the barriers, has reconciled, and unites all of us into one family of believers despite our family backgrounds, tribes, race and cultural differences. His cross should be the focus of our unity. I strongly believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who will help us look beyond the barriers. We have been called to enjoy God's blessings together because our heavenly Father is a God of unity and not diversity. Jesus never came to divide us but to unite us with God. He is our true mediator.

LESSON FOUR: MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER – EPHESIANS 3:1-23

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST – EPHESIANS 3:1-13

Eph 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—
Eph 3:2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,
Eph 3:3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.
Eph 3:4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,
Eph 3:5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
Eph 3:6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.
Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.
Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
Eph 3:9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,
Eph 3:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
Eph 3:11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,
Eph 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.
Eph 3:13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

In the opening verses of this chapter, it seems that Paul is going to pray. His prayer in this text is that the Gentiles readers might be filled with the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is praying for them so that they may be able to understand the truth about God's love and power as stated in verses 14-21.

In Ephesians 3:1, there is a phrase *“For this reason.”* This phrase refers to the previous story or event that has been taking place in Ephesians 2:11-22. Paul here identifies himself as a prisoner because he was under house arrest in Rome as we read in Acts 28:16, 30.

Although Apostle Paul begins this chapter in a form of prayer, he eventually interrupts himself so that he could first explain the nature of his own ministry and the insights of the union of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ (vv2-13).

Paul was arrested because he preached the gospel to the Gentiles. It is amazing to see Paul identifying himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Caesar is the one who arrested him but Paul does not say that he is a prisoner of Caesar. “This is probably best interpreted as a simple

genitive of possession and thus indicates that Paul is ultimately belonging to Christ and not Caesar.”³⁵

Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you – v2

In this verse, Paul begins his remarks about God’s call for him to take care of the mystery. As a steward of God’s grace, Paul was more concern about the Spiritual health and well-being of the Gentiles.

Grace is used in its wider sense of the undeserved favor of God that brings to us what we need as we live a Christian life. In the entire book of Ephesians, Paul used it several times to express the privilege of being given a work to do for Christ and to bring into consideration the particular task allotted in God’s service (Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:3).

The mystery – v3-4

The mystery of Christ was made clearer to Paul through special revelation when Christ appeared to him on his way to Damascus. For him to understand this mystery is not by his own ability but by the gift of God through His Spirit.

The mystery that Paul speaks about is that Christ’s atoning work on the cross was not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. All of us regardless of our gender, race, nation and culture have been incorporated into Christ’s mystical body if we truly profess him as our Lord and savior. Whenever we do so, we participate in the legacy of the savior.

This mystery is well described on how Christ is in us and us in him. This is the same for both Jews and Gentiles who have been united with Christ. Because we are in Christ, this means that we are all the same. “The content of this mystery is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (see Ephesians 3:4), but as such, it also involved an understanding of Jesus role in God’s redemptive plan and a recognition that this plan extends to the Gentiles.”³⁶

In verse 4, Paul was eager to impart to the Gentile believers a full understanding of the outworking of God’s plan through the Messiah. God has already called Paul to illuminate their understanding of this mystery as stated in Ephesians 3:9.

“When you read this.....” This phrase refers to the public reading of the scripture when various communities of believers assembled on the Lord’s Day or when they have special occasion. One of the insights that people get as they read the scriptures is the mystery of Christ stipulated in the bible.

³⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 185

³⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 187

It is my desire as an African pastor that my fellow believers within the continent especially who are in churches understand fully the nature of God's new covenant plan. As Paul labors to help his believers, we should also make every effort to help our believers understand the mystery which is in Christ Jesus. We should pray God to impress this on our believer's hearts through the Spirit.

V5. Which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit

In this verse, Paul clearly shows that there was no generation among God's people who could have anticipated what God has to accomplish through Jesus Christ. Paul also shows us how revelation took place before the coming of Jesus Christ and the time after his incarnation, death and resurrection.

“The holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”

This phrase means that the holy apostles and prophets are those who have been chosen by God. These people have full significance of the life and work of Christ as stated in the scriptures.

In another sense, the reference to apostles and prophets as holy in the verse might be a continuation of the idea that the living temple God is creating is holy as stated in Ephesians 2:4.

O'Brien correctly says “the divine secret was revealed to the apostles and prophets for they were the ministers through whom the truth of God was communicated to their fellow believers. The apostles represent the authority of primary witness to the gospel facts, while prophets represent the living guidance of the Spirit by which the facts were apprehended in ever fuller meaning and scope.”³⁷

V6 .This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

This verse clearly indicates how God has incorporate Gentiles and Jews in the blessings of the new covenant life with God. Paul here reveals to us the heart of the mystery. The mystery is clearly stated in the fact that:

- a. The Gentiles are fellow heirs
- b. Members of the same body
- c. Partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus

As fellow heirs, the Gentiles shared equally with Jews the inheritance that God puts on his people now and in the future. When we say that Gentiles are members of the same body, we mean that they are part of the body of Christ that God has created.

³⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 234

In Ephesians, Apostle Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ several times in this letter as we see in chapter 1:23; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30. As partakers of the promise of Christ, Gentiles are also fellow participants in the promise of God. As we learn about their incorporation in God's kingdom, we should understand that the church is not only the new Israel but it is a distinct body of believers comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. Arnold put it clearly that "Gentiles come to participate in these blessings when they hear and respond to the gospel and enter into a dynamic union with living Christ."³⁸

By the time these Gentiles entered into the relationship with Jesus Christ, they become children of Abraham and become heirs of God's promised blessings made to him (Galatians 3:7,26-29). "Paul makes it clear that God's unveiled secret (mystery) has to do not merely with an alliance of Jew and Gentile or perhaps as friendly agreement to live together in peace or even an outward combination or partnership, but on the contrary, with a complete and permanent fusion, a perfect spiritual union of formerly clashing elements into one new organism even a new humanity."³⁹ For sure, there are no borders of race, culture and many other things because we are all children of one God if we have been united with Christ.

Verse 7 of this gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power

In this verse, Paul talks about his calling and ministry as a gift, which consists of God's grace. The grace given to him is a representation of a manifestation of God's gracious power. Paul did not make himself a minister the way some have done in our generation but his ministry was just by a divine gift. As a truly called servant of God whom Christ appeared to him on his way to Damascus, he diverts any attention away from himself and points to God who called him to be a servant and empowered him to carry out this ministry. I agree with Arnold that "the grace of God bestowed on Paul also represents a manifestation of God's power. God called Paul on the way to Damascus road in a manifestation of his power and he sustains Paul in his apostolic ministry by the effectual display of his power in his life."⁴⁰ For us to be in ministry it is not because of our own make but it is because of God's grace. Paul should serve as an inspirational role model and an instructive pattern to us African pastors.

In verses 8-10, Paul begins to explain his apostolic ministry of the proclamation of God's extraordinary good news to the Gentiles as we read in verse eight. Paul described himself as the least of all the saints because he wanted to display a sense of amazement at his great privilege of him being saved by the grace of God despite that he used to persecute the church. Paul does not describe himself as the least of all sinners but he always tends to fall on the result of the grace of God. He is a saint who has been converted and purified by God.

³⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 192

³⁹ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 155

⁴⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 193

Verse 9 described Paul’s role of illuminating God’s plan to his new believers because he usually depends on the power of God to carry out his own ministry. I believe that Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit to reveal the mysterious plan of redemption and truths on the minds and hearts of his readers. The mystery described in verse 9 is the full nature of God’s plan, which was unknown to all previous generations. This is why Paul said that it was hidden from the ages.

“The creator of all things”

This phrase is very important for us to understand because it highlights the sovereignty and omnipotence of our true God.

In verse 10, there is a reason indicator **“so that.”** This gives us a reason as to why God created all things. As a flow of thoughts, it means that the revelation of God’s wisdom to the powers is one of the consequent purposes of Paul’s evangelization of the Gentiles and helping them grow in the knowledge of God’s plan. “Ephesians 3:9-10 bears a significant relation to the consummation of the mystery, the bringing together of all things into unity in Christ (1:9, 10). The terms employed in 3:9 for the disclosure of the mystery namely, make known administration and mystery was all used in the earlier discussion of the mystery at 1:9, 10.”⁴¹

Verse 11-12 – This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

“Eternal purpose” – This phrase is a reminder to us that God’s redemptive work in Christ originated in eternity with the manifold wisdom of God as it is stated in verse 10. God’s plan of salvation has been realized in Christ Jesus. The effect of all this should be within our human history because it was accomplished through the incarnate Son of God. Baker states, “Behind all the events of this world’s history, there is an eternal purpose being worked out, God’s is no ad hoc plan, but one conceived from eternity and eternal in its scope. God’s purpose, like his decrees stands from eternity.”⁴² As Christians, we must know that Jesus Christ is at the center of the redemptive plan of our salvation and everything will happen through him.

“boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him”

The word boldness in this context means freedom of speech. This word reminds me of the boldness I had when I was preaching to my professors and students at Westminster Theological College chapel in Kampala – Uganda. At first, I was nervous but God gave me a spirit of boldness that I was able to share His Word well. Boldness is often used before other people (Ephesians 6:19-20) with the absence of fear or shame. It is also used to mean absence of fear or shame in approaching God as stated in Hebrews 4:16 and Hebrews 10:19.

⁴¹ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 247

⁴² Baker, *Ephesians*, 58

V13 – So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you which is your glory.

In this verse, Paul reminds us that there is glory even in the midst of our tribulation. I have heard many people in Africa who said that if a person is really in God's will, he will not experience many trials and tribulations because life will be peaceful and without conflict. Paul made an assurance to his readers and even to us today that difficulties and sufferings that he went through in his ministry was for our benefit. Suffering is part and parcel of our Christian way of living. If Christ suffered, we must also suffer as his followers. I really like how Paul encourages his readers that his time in prison was for their glory.

It is amazing to see how Paul suffered because he freely preached the gospel to the Gentiles. This reminds me of my fellow pastor and professor at Westminster Theological College (Happy Robert) who was once beaten by the youths in Bweya because he evangelize in their region made of Islamic and non –religious people. Robert suffered several strokes and physical injuries because of preaching the Word of God. Actually, we face many challenges as Christians especially when we are sharing the gospel in hostile regions.

Paul did not put more emphasis on what he went through in his imprisonment but he kept on focusing on the sovereignty of God and his glory.

How did Paul's suffering made the church feel honored?

I can answer this question in two elaborative points;

1. If Pastor Paul had not preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, he would not have been jailed but then the Ephesians would not have heard the Gospel and be converted. However, the Ephesians should now feel honored because they heard the Gospel through Paul who suffered.
2. Paul endured the pain of persecution in order to bring new converts to Christ. Several times, he was beaten and put in prison because of his preaching ministry to the Gentiles.

The church in Africa should also feel honored that other missionaries who came to this continent to share the gospel were persecuted. Serious diseases struck them while hostile African communities killed others. Despite all the challenges, they went through, many churches and Christian schools were planted. We are the ones reaping the fruits of those missionaries now.

It is my humble submission that pastors and church leaders in Africa should not be discouraged with the outworking of God's plan because it is inconsistent with a bold confession of God as sovereign and Christ as reigning Lord who he also intercedes for us.

PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER – EPHESIANS 3:14-21

Prayer for Spiritual Strength

Eph 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
Eph 3:15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
Eph 3:16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
Eph 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
Eph 3:18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
Eph 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul's second prayer is a prayer for strength and spiritual insight to the Ephesians church. In this prayer, Paul pray that his readers might be strong in their faith as we read in vv14-19 and at the end of this prayer, Paul mad a conclusion with the words of praise to God as it is in vv20-21.

In verses 14, Paul begins his prayer with the phrase **“for this reason.”** This phrase is an indication that Paul is taking up what he was going to write in verse 1 where the same phrase “for this reason” occurred. For us to find out what motivates Paul to pray, we should go through the teachings that flows from 3:1 onwards. On the verses that precede v1, Paul tells us that there are no longer Jews and Gentiles who believe in God from one nation and have been made a single spiritual temple. This fact made Paul pray for the Ephesians believers. As Paul sees the mysterious work of God bringing both Jews and Gentiles together, he went to his knees to ask God to give further favor to them.

“I bow my knees before the Father.”

Paul here bows his knees to show humility before the Father. Kneeling was a representation of submission, respect and humility before God as we see in Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10. Paul's way of praying was different from Jews practices because Jews often stood when they prayed facing up but Paul prayed kneeling.

Arnold puts it clearly that “Paul therefore bows his knees to the one true God, who is omnipotent over all of his creation-including all of the rebellious powers. There is no force in heaven or on earth that can sever this line of communication Paul has with God. Nor can any principality or

authority keep God from supernaturally strengthening his people through the indwelling Spirit and through their relationship to the exalted Christ.”⁴³

We need to be submissive, respectable and humble before God as we pray because he is all-powerful and sovereign. Prayer is one way of communicating with Him.

In Ephesians 1:15-23, Paul’s prayer was for the church and his readers that they will gain an expanded awareness of God’s power but in Ephesians 3:16-19, he prayed that God will actually strengthened them through the help of the Spirit.

“The riches of his glory”

This is a reminder to us that glory of God is a manifestation of who he is in his brilliance, majesty, holiness and power as Ephesians 1:12 states, **“So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”** The intensity of God’s power in this context is shown by the use of the term riches in connection with glory as we read in v16.

Paul had a conviction in his heart that his readers will be strengthened with power. The kind of power that he was asking on behalf of the believers was not physical strength for military warfare but he was praying that God might strengthen them in their inner being. In this context, the inner being is the functional equivalent of the heart.

“So that Christ may dwell in your hearts” – v17

This phrase “goes beyond a simple restatement of the request for divine power to include a prayer for a greater realization of one of the key features of the new covenant: the nearness of the Lord (c.f. 2:13).”⁴⁴

Here Paul pray that his readers experience more of the nearness of God through the indwelling of Christ in their hearts. We need to allow Christ to live in our hearts by dedicating our lives to him. The only means that Christ can dwell in us is through the exercise of faith. This can only happen if we have a growing experience of nearness to the Lord, his Lordship and reign over every area of our lives.

In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed that the hearts of his readers might become enlightened but in Ephesians 3:19, he prayed that Christ will dwell in their hearts in a fuller measure.

“Rooted and grounded in Love.”

In the last part of verse 17, Paul intercedes for his readers so that they may know and deeply experience the love of God. In this book of Ephesians, God’s love is manifested in various ways;

⁴³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 209

⁴⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 210

- I. Objective knowledge and experience that stem from God’s love for us because of his great love for us – Ephesians 2:4
- II. In making us alive with Christ, uniting us with Christ in such a way that we have participated in his resurrection and enthronement - Ephesians 2:15-16
- III. Experiencing forgiveness of sin based on Christ’s living sacrifice – Ephesians 5:2
- IV. Choosing us in love before the foundation of the world – Ephesians 1:4-5

Hendriksen said, “This love in turn, is necessary in order to comprehend Christ’s love for those who love him. And in the measure in which the believers’ vision of that love which proceeds from Christ expands, their love for him and their ability to grasp his love for them will also increase.”⁴⁵

In verse 18, Paul begins his prayer by asking God to strengthened the readers to understand the full extent if God’s power manifested to the believers in Ephesians church. Pastors in Africa should also pray for their believers to be strengthened by God, as they comprehend the magnitude of his power and his love.

Paul prayed that the church understand what is the breadth, length, height and depth as they comprehend with all the saints the power of God. When he talks about breadth, length, height and depth, he is saying that “the love of Christ is broad enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jews and Gentiles), long enough to last for eternity, deep enough to reach the most degraded sinner and high enough to exalt him to heaven.”⁴⁶

It is important for us to understand that God’s love is;

- a. **Wide** – because it covers the breadth of our own experience and it reaches out the whole world
- b. **Long** – because it continues the lengths of our lives
- c. **High** – because it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation
- d. **Deep** – because it reaches to the depths of our discouragements, despair and even death.

It was Paul’s prayer that God strengthened believers to grasp together the magnitude of his incomparably great majesty and power.

“That you may be filled with all the fullness of God”

This final phrase is a summary of Paul’s intercessory prayer to believers in Ephesians church. In Colossians 1:19 Paul declares that all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ. This is an analogy of how God filled the temple with his presence in the Old Testament as we read in Ephesians 1:23 that “which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

⁴⁵ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 172

⁴⁶ Boice, *Ephesians*, 111

“By praying for the readers to be filled with the fullness of God, Paul is asking that they experience a greater measure of the divine presence in the lives.”⁴⁷ The language of using the term ‘fullness’ is a reference with respect to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Paul also appealed to the believers to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. Therefore, as he speaks of ‘fullness’ he absolutely has in mind the presence and work of the Spirit as mediating the divine presence to the people of God.

It should be our prayer that Christ dwell in our lives and the lives of those whom we minister to in a greater degree. We should also pray for Holy Spirit to impart us a divine strength so that we may know and be rooted in the love of Christ.

Verses 20-21 make a conclusion of Paul’s prayer in a doxological way and in a beautiful ascription of praising God. In this doxology, Paul praised God for his omnipotence, which has been a key theme in this prayer. The emphasis on the power of God prepares us for the ethical admonition.

Jesus Christ is the one who has brought glory and honor to the Father in the past, present and future. As the church in Africa, it should also be our principal goal to bring glory to God for all that he is and all that he has done for us. The church is a medium of God’s glory through Christ.

Other doxologies in the New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ bringing glory to the Father as we read in Romans 16:27, Hebrews 13:4 and 1Peter 4:11, but this is the only doxology that the term ‘church’ and the phrase ‘in Christ’ is used. Peter O’Brien said “both are appropriate in the light of the immediate and wider contexts of chapters 1-3. As the community of the redeemed Jews and Gentiles, the church is the masterpiece of God’s grace.”⁴⁸ Because the church is the masterpiece of God’s grace, I believe that her existence brings glory to God.

The glory of God in the church should not be separated from his glory in Christ Jesus whatsoever. As believers, we have ability to ascribe glory to God because we are in Christ Jesus and we have been incorporated into him. As a mediator of God’s work in us, he is also the mediator of our response of praise to God the Father. Let us pray for God’s power, God’s love and Christ’s rule in our lives.

Conclusion

The prayer and doxology of this chapter marks the end of the first half of Ephesians in which Paul stressed the extraordinary spiritual blessings showered on us in Christ Jesus. This is an important way of preparing us for the subsequent admonitions to love in the second half of Ephesians as we deal with Chapters 4-6.

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 218

⁴⁸ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 268

LESSON FIVE: ECCLESIOLOGY AND GIFTS – EPHESIANS 4:1-32

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST – EPHESIANS 4:1-16

- Eph 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
- Eph 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- Eph 4:3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
- Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- Eph 4:6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- Eph 4:7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.
- Eph 4:8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”
- Eph 4:9 (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?
- Eph 4:10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)
- Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,
- Eph 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
- Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
- Eph 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,
- Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Unity in the church has been crucial in our generation here in Africa. By the look of things, it seems that the church in Africa has lost its unity. Leaders within the church setup have some critical differences. They have forgotten what God called them to do. To make the matter worst, some pastors have gone to an extent of fighting in the church because of such differences in terms of leadership. This bad spirit has destroyed the unity of African Inland Church in Kenya.

WHAT IS THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH?

I can define this by saying that the unity of the church is derived from being grounded in the one God as we read in Ephesians 4:1-6. All who truly belong to the church are one people and hence the true church will be distinguished by its unity.

This unity, however, should not imply total uniformity. In the New Testament church, there was a variety of ministries and viewpoints on matters of secondary importance (1Corinthians 12:4-6; Romans 14:1-15:13). Even though there was uniformity in basic theological conviction

(1Corinthians 15:11; Jude 3), the common faith was given different emphases according to the different needs the apostles addressed (Romans 3:20; James 2:24).

The unity of believers as we can see in our churches is often demonstrated quite effectively through voluntary cooperation and affiliation among Christian groups within our churches.

As we study well in the Scripture, we can realize that the church is one, holy and apostolic. However, even though it is fragmented by demonstrations the elect are united by one Lord, one faith and one baptism. The church is holy because it is sanctified by God and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and as a body, it displays unity and diversity of gifts.

When I read Romans 15:5-6 and Galatians 3:28, I learned that the church is one by virtue of its unity with Christ and all its members are baptized by one spirit into one body having one Head and one Lord.

The New Testament addressed its teaching on unity, to specific Christian groups with immediate implications for their visible relationships as we read in Ephesians 2:15; 4:4 and Colossians 3:15. In John 17:23, Jesus prayed for a unity which would help the world to come to faith. The parallel between this unity and that of himself and his Father (17:11, 22) confirms the essentially spiritual character of scriptural unity, it surely includes visible identity of life and purpose, as Jesus' whole mission expressed as a visible, demonstrable oneness with the Father's will. For sure there is need to search for a fuller visible unity than is at present experienced among those who confess the apostolic gospel. Setting the unity of life in Christ should express itself in genuine and tangible care for, and commitment to one another.

The unity of the church is not primarily of external, but of internal and spiritual character. "It is the unity of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, of which all believers are members."⁴⁹ There could be no doubt about the fact that the bible asserts the unity, not only of the visible but also of the invisible church.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE THREE PERSONS WITHIN THE GOD HEAD?

The unity of the three persons in the Trinity is the example for the unity of believers with one another through their union in Christ. There is a unity of purpose and essence in the invisible church, the body of Christ. This perfect unity, to be manifested in the day of Christ already forms and shapes God's people so "that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

In John 17:11 we learn that God is the one who keeps the church to be one as we see Jesus praying for the church in this text. In verse 17, we can see that God is the one who sanctifies the church in the truth of his Word. This prayer for unity is not merely for spiritual or invisible unity but for a unity that is visible to the world, that the world may believe (v21).

⁴⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic theology*, 572

The union of the church with Christ is representative. As Adam represented all humankind in him, so Christ represents all who are united to Him (Romans 5:15). The church is joined to Christ as branches to the Vine (John 20:22). We are joined to him in his death and resurrection. Jesus prayed for a unity, which would help the world come to faith (John 17:23). Jesus' whole mission expressed a visible demonstrable oneness with the Father's will.

Jesus is the head of the church and he is praying that God would unite all those who truly believe so that their witness to the world would be effective. Believers are united to testify that the Father sent the Son to be the savior to the world (1John 4:14); this is the message that brings salvation. The church is called upon to preserve and to show forth an outward and visible unity, one that already exists inwardly and spiritually (Ephesians 4:3-6).

The true unity in the Holy Spirit of all regenerate people is a fact, irrespective of outward denominational disunity that the church face at the moment. The call for unity in the New Testament is therefore summon to keep the fundamental oneness of life, which the one Spirit has imparted through regeneration.

The church as the "one new man" in Christ is not identical with Christ, but is through the Spirit, in vital union with Christ. The Spirit of Christ draws us to God the Father and binds us together as children of God.

Once a person is born again by the Holy Spirit he becomes a child of God and is joined to the Lord in one spirit (1Corinthians 6:17). This means that the believer is united to God in such a way that his whole being comes God-centered, leading to complete change in his behavior, values and views.

HOW DO WE MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH?

Christians today must labor to show and preserve unity with all those who believe the basic doctrines of salvation, that is the Trinity, the Gospel of God's grace through faith, the deity of Christ, the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible and the substitutionary sacrifices of Christ on the cross for our sins. These are matters that are essential to salvation and thus of primary and lasting importance. Those who have believed and preach them have a unity in the basic doctrines of salvation.

Our unity should be to demonstrate unity and persevere it in a visible and public manner because God has given us a basic and fundamental unity as his children. We should be one because we serve one God who is also the heavenly Father of one family (Ephesians 3:14). The church is to keep the unity of the Spirit for it is by the Spirit that the church is united to Christ and to the Father (Ephesians 4:4). We should also maintain our unity of the church, as we love one another (Philippians 2:1-11).

HOW IN PRACTICE SHOULD WE STRIVE FOR CHURCH UNITY?

The church should administer Lord's Supper and baptism as one practice that enhance church unity as we are all one in Christ. The Lord's Supper and baptism are practices that proclaim the unity of Christ's church. We are one body as we share in the one bread (1Corinthians 10:17). The sacrament is eloquent with the symbolism of our union with Christ in his death on the cross.

As the church in Africa, we should also use the diversity of our Spiritual gifts and learn from one another as we grow together to full maturity of Christ. Besides the gifts that we differ, there are those graces or fruits that make us like one another and maintain our unity in Christ. Repentance also is very important for us as believers. We must learn to repent of our sins so that we may get a renewal in faith and love. Our unity must be evident in our fellowship, have a spiritual involvement in the basic orientation, desires and will of those participating (1Corinthians 12:4-6).

PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO MAINTAIN UNITY IN THE CHURCH – EPHESIANS 4:1-6

1. The means in which the church should maintain unity – v1-3

a. Calling

In Ephesians 1:18, Paul instructed the Gentiles about the hope of their calling but in Ephesians 4:1, he shifts to how their behavior should reflect their calling. The main aim as to why I called this chapter the ecclesiology and gifts is because of the Greek meaning of the word *ecclesia* that means "call out." The church therefore is made up of believers who have been called out from darkness to become members of the body of Christ. Our Christian conduct should flow from our Christian doctrine based on our calling. Because God is the one who called us, we should therefore live lives that are worthy of our calling.

In verse 1 of chapter 4, Paul used the conjunction "therefore" in his appeal on everything that he has said in the previous chapters. Paul was appealing to the Ephesians to adopt a set of behavior which is consistent with their new identity in Jesus Christ. The conjunction "therefore" is also used by Paul in Romans 12:1 and 1Thessalonians 4:1. Paul exhorts in the will of the Lord and not by his own desire for them. This is why he states that, "I.....urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." We should respond to "God's calling by believing (1:3) and by living a life of obedience and service to God."⁵⁰

b. Humility and gentleness

Humility is one of the means in which the church maintains its unity. It is another way of taking the lowest place with a view of being a servant to all. It is the whole mark in Christian life. In

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 229

Philippians 2:7-8, we see how Christ lowered himself as a bondservant in order to submit himself unto death even death on the cross. What affects the church in our generation is that most of the church leaders lacks humility. Most of them are proud. This is why division has erupted within our African Inland Church set up in Kenya. I appeal to my fellow pastors in Africa to emulate our Lord Jesus Christ who humbled himself because humility fosters unity in the body of Christ (the church).

Based on our calling, we should also exercise gentleness. “Gentleness means being spiritually and morally strong without being self-assertive, pushy or heavy-handed.”⁵¹ Gentleness is another word for meekness. When a person is meek, it doesn’t mean that he is coward. Moses was meek yet we see how he led the children of Israel. For us to have unity in the church, humility and gentleness should be manifested as a worthy thing of our calling. Spirit of arrogance should not be mentioned in our midst.

I agree with Arnold that “few things are more destructive to community life than pride and arrogance.”⁵² 1Peter 5:5 tells us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, we need to be humble as believers who have been called by God.

c. Bearing with one another in love – v2b

Paul had a desire that his readers bear with one another in love toward the circumstances in which they find out in themselves. Baker states that “one dangerous thing within the body of Christ is that long-suffering may be confused with indifference. Churches which adopt a liberal theology tend to be very tolerant of just about any form of behavior or theology. But when you get into a conservative Christian community, where people hold the truths of scripture to be precious, you will often find people ready to fight over every minor point of dispute in theology.”⁵³

Bearing with one another flows out of patience because it is the practical outworking of longsuffering. This is relative to trials we have because of uncharitable behavior toward us by other Christians even from the same local church. We should bear with one another with love because God command us to love our neighbors the way we love ourselves. We should allow peace to permeate the body of Christ as we bear with one another in love. The Spirit that the church must manifest is the spirit of love whereby we love God and other people.

d. Unity of the spirit in the bond of peace – v3

Paul urged his leaders to preserve the unity of the spirit. As Christians we can’t maintain unity among ourselves. Our unity can only exist when the Holy Spirit give us based on the fact that we are in Christ. The differences that Gentiles and Jews had among themselves have been removed

⁵¹ Backer, *Ephesians*, 70

⁵² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 229

⁵³ Backer, *Ephesians*, 71

by the work of Jesus Christ. We are all bound together in peace by the Spirit and that is why the Spirit is called the bond of peace.

The Spirit is the one who incorporate us into the new body of Christ (1Corinthians 12:13), therefore we should experience the reality of a new community where there are no racial divisions or schisms of any kind. The kind of peace that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us is like a rope that ties us from our diverse cultural background together into a unified whole body of Christ which is the church.

2. The foundation for church unity – vv4-6

In verse 4-6, Paul made a series of statements which declares common conviction among Christians of his generation. This acted as the foundation for his appeal for unity and transition to his conversation on the diversity of the body of Christ.

Paul stresses unity when he expressed the sevenfold appearance of “one” in verse 4, 5, 6. Whenever a word is repeated several times shows that the writer is putting more emphasis on something. The repeated use of the term “one” is to drive home the central theme of unity that Paul talks about.

a. One body, one Spirit and one hope –v4

“**One body**” – This term reminds Paul to declare that there is one Spirit. The Spirit incorporates all of us into the body of Christ. It now fills the church as the new covenant temple.

The Holy Spirit marks Christians as God’s property as a deposit on their future eschatological inheritance.

“**One Hope**” – This is a concluding clause of verse 4 and it is closely linked to the topic sentence of v1 as we see its general exhortation to believers to live worthy of their calling. The emphasis here is upon the one hope that come from the call. “God’s calling find its origin in the choice of his people in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) and becomes effective in their lives through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 8:30). When God calls believers into a relationship with himself he calls them to a particular hope (Ephesians 1:18) which is sure and certain since it rests on his faithfulness.”⁵⁴

a. One Lord, one faith, one baptism – v5

“**One Lord**” is a reference to Jesus Christ. All true Christians believed in one Lord who is the head of the church. Paul shared with other Christians the conviction that Jesus is Lord on the basis of his resurrection and exaltation to the place of highest honor as we read in 1Corinthians 8:6, 12:3, Romans 10:9; 14:8-9 and Philippians 2:9-11. In Ephesians only, there are twenty

⁵⁴ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 282

references to Jesus as Lord. Apostle Paul spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one in whom every spiritual blessing comes, as the sphere in which faith is exercised and as the one in whom God's new creation, the holy temple is growing.

“One Faith” – Faith can be used objectively or subjectively. Subjectively, it means our experience of faith. In other words, there is no salvation apart from faith. Objectively, it means the content of faith or what we believe in the gospel.

If we have one faith as the church in Africa, then we ought to be able to stand shoulder to shoulder before the world and give united testimony to God's saving work in Jesus Christ. Hendriksen states that “it is true that subjective and objective [faith] cannot be separated; when a person surrenders himself to Christ as his Lord he at the same time also accepts the body of truth with reference to him.”⁵⁵

“One Baptism” – Despite all the differences that arises in infant baptism and the mode of baptism, the fact still remains that in baptism lies the evidence that all believers share in the grace of Christ without any discrimination (Galatians 3:28). By means of baptism our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ is sealed (Galatians 3:27). One baptism in this context is a sign of our unity with Christ and with one another. In this verse, it is better to take the whole sentence as an expression of a single fundamental fact i.e. one Lord in whom we all believe and in whose name we have been baptized. All of us have been baptized in the name of Jesus.

b. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all – v6

This verse is a declaration to us that we should believe in one God. God the Father is described here in a unique way that stresses his sovereignty, omnipotence and omnipresence in his creation. The term one God and Father reflects the central Jewish conviction of monotheism (Deuteronomy 6:4). God here is confessed as the Father over everything i.e. “Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” The word “all” is repeated four times in this single verse. This put more emphasis on the sovereignty of God.

“It is best to interpret the repeated use of ‘all’ in this passage as a neuter and to view it as a confession of God's sovereignty, his omnipotence and his presence in all of his creation.”⁵⁶

c. God's grace given to every member in the church – vv7-10

The main point here is that Christ is the one who distributes spiritual gifts according to his own will and all flows from his ascension.

In verse 7, Paul changes his tone as he moves away from unity to diversity of gifts. In verse 6, he used the term “all” but in verse 7 he used the word “each” to put emphasis on individual. Though

⁵⁵ Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 187 (word in bracket is mine)

⁵⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 236

the church is referred to as a community of believers, it doesn't mean that there is uniformity where everybody has to look alike, speak the same language and do the same things. The fact that believers are all one does not mean that they are all the same. There is diversity on the way we do things according to our diverse gifts given to each one of us. God gave us gifts according to Christ so that we serve the church.

In verse 8, Paul cites Psalm 68:18 to show that Christ gave gifts to his people from what he had taken from his enemies. Paul applies the picture of Christ's ascension in this verse "not because there was some vague analogy between the two events but because he saw Jesus' exaltation a further fulfillment of this triumph of God."⁵⁷ This verse underlines the supremacy of Christ in a fresh way and brought further comfort to the readers in their spiritual warfare with the hosts of darkness.

It could be of great importance if we could understand that as Christ ascends, he leads captives captive and receives gifts among men even those who are rebellious so that he might dwell among them as we read in Ephesians 4:18.

Verses 9-10 talks about Paul expounding its meaning with reference to Christ's ascension and giving of gifts to people

Verse 9 is rhetorical question. This verse is hard to interpret when it comes to Jesus descending into the lower regions of the earth. We know that through incarnation, Christ Spiritually descend. This verse correspond with 1Peter 3:19 where Peter states that Christ went and preached to the Spirit in prison following his death and resurrection.

Verse 10 is an affirmation that Christ did not remain on earth but he ascended victorious over hostile principalities and powers to a position of authority in the heavenly places where he will fulfill his plans for the universe. Arnold claims that "the exercise of his ruling sovereignty at the right hand of God, Christ is now unfolding a comprehensive plan for the universe."⁵⁸

d. Different gifts given to the church – Ephesians 4:11-16

In these verses we can learn how Christ gives gifts to the church workers for the advancement of God's work in the church.

In verse 11, Paul is not taking us back on the beginning of the church but he is speaking about its present and on-going structure. Christ is going on giving leaders to the church for the equipping of the individual members and facilitation their growth to maturity. The "apostle" referred to here are not those who had seen the Lord but those whom the Lord Jesus Christ called to go, establish churches and ground new believers in the common faith. In this generation, we are the

⁵⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 289

⁵⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 255

ones whom Jesus commission and empowers to go and proclaim the good news, establish churches and teach others to observe all that the Lord commands according to Mathew 28:19-20.

Prophets are also gifted people whom Christ provides to the church. This is not a reference to the Old Testament prophets. It is a reference to a new covenant people through whom God speaks by the scriptures (1Corinthians 14:3). Many so called “prophets” have come up in our day. We should be careful of such people because many of them are false prophets.

Even though Paul mentioned in 1Corinthians 14:22 that prophecy is primarily for the benefits of believers, he also explained how God can reveal the secrets of the heart of unbeliever to a prophet which resulted in the person turning his heart to God (1Corinthians 14:24-25). As believers, we should exercise discernment to see what is good and what is evil.

I believe that we are all prophets if we are preaching the gospel to non-believers. “Itinerant workers founded churches by evangelizing and built them up through prophetic utterances. There can be little question that this is the understanding of the term ‘apostle’ in Paul’s letters.”⁵⁹

Evangelists, and shepherds and teachers – v11

Evangelists are those who proclaim the gospel to unbelievers (Acts 21:8; 2Timothy 4:5). Shepherds and teachers are those who teach and guide those who become believers. There is uncertainty whether shepherds or pastors or teachers refer to two different ministry role or functions or they are single terms pastor-teacher ministry role. In this context, I strongly believe that Paul expressed himself as a pastor-teacher because he wanted to convey that pastors are to be gifted to teach. Our Kalenjin Bible gives a clear indication in its translation that the office of pastor/teacher is one. There is no way a pastor can disciple others for ministerial work apart from teaching them. Jesus himself was a good teacher who sat down and teaches his disciples.

In 1Timothy 2:12; 3:2; 5:17; 2Timothy 2:14 and Titus 1:9, we see that teaching was a responsibility of the pastors and was a qualification for someone who serves as an overseer or elder.

e. The work of gifted leaders in the church – v12-13

The gifted leaders in the church are responsible for the spiritual upkeep in the church. Their work is to equip believers for the work of service. Christ has given them ability not only to do ministry but also to invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry to the body of Christ.

⁵⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 259. For more information about additional thoughts on Apostles and Prophets, read exegetical commentary on the New Testament, Ephesians by Clinton E. Arnold, pages 257-259.

The anticipated outcome and goal of Christ's work of imparting gifts to his people for the edification of the corporate body is stated in verse 13. All of us hope to reach a high level of maturity. Arnold clearly indicates that "the first aspect of this goal is to achieve a unified understanding of faith."⁶⁰

Three things mentioned in verse 13 are;

1. Unity of the faith
2. Knowledge
3. Maturity

Faith here refers to the theological content of Christianity. Knowledge of the Son of God refers to experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ attained through day by day discipleship. Maturity therefore means that as Christians we are supposed to grow up to a mature manhood. The fullness of Christ stated here is the complete possession of the gifts and grace of Christ that seeks to impart to humankind.

f. Growth in maturity – vv14-16

The chief purpose in Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that the church might become fully grown and that each her members might contribute to that maturity by becoming spiritual adults and not children tossed to every corner.

As mature Christians, we should always be presented in Love. Jesus being our head, he leads us, directs us and guide us because we are his body. As Christ's body all of us have an important role in our church growth if we do all things in love.

g. Behavioral patterns expected in the church and in the lives of Christians – vv17-24

In this section, Paul urge believers to separate themselves from the lifestyle they once lived because they have a new identity and are part of the new community that has been created by the grace of one holy God. Paul implore to the Gentile believers that they should no longer walk like the other Gentiles walk in the meaninglessness of their thinking (v17). As Christians, our attitude and conduct must be sharply different from the non-Christians.

Paul used the term 'walk' a feature that could characterize the feature of our daily lifestyle. As a matter of fact, we should be aware that life apart from one God and his Son Jesus Christ is absolutely meaningless.

In verse 18, Paul gives us a distressing picture of the lives of Gentiles who are not part of the Christian community. These people live a lifestyle that is contrary to what God wants them to live. All of us used to live such kind of life before God's grace and mercy was bestowed in us.

⁶⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 264

Anyone who is not in God is not only excluded but he is also separated by the gracious life that comes from God. Two things made the Gentiles to be separated from God;

1. Ignorance
2. Hardness of their hearts

Anyone who ignores or hardens his heart is alienated from the presence of God. God has revealed himself to us through both general and special revelation yet man still ignores him because of the hardness of his heart. This is a reflection of how man is in Romans 1.

Characteristics of the mind-set of unbelievers

- a. Their minds are futile – v17b
- b. Their minds are darkened – v18a
- c. They are ignorant – v18c
- d. Their hearts are hard – v18d
- e. They are callous in their thinking – v19a
- f. They are driven by their sensuality – v19a
- g. They are greedy – v19b
- h. Their life is corrupt through deceitful desires – v22b

Characteristics of the mind-set of the believer

- a. Putt off the old self – v22a
- b. Putt on the new self – v24a
- c. Renewed in the spirit of his mind

As believers, our new identity is based on how we relate to Christ. The only way in which a person change his attitude is by entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ. 2Corinthians 5:17 inform us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Due to Christ's work in us we are entirely new creation at the core of our identity. Arnold states that, "change comes only as a result of bringing one's life into conformity with their new identity in Christ."⁶¹

In verse 22-24, Paul reminds his readers that they should take off the old-self and put on the new self as they were instructed from the beginning because at this moment they are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We need to put aside anything that hinders us on our Christian way of living. We should put to death our sinful nature by putting our trust in God. This will help us bring our lives into conformity with our new identity in Christ.

I believe that if the church in Africa change their thinking in connection with an understanding of Christ and his work, we will be able to take off the vices of the old self and put on the virtues of the new self.

⁶¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 292

h. Encouragement for a holy lifestyle in the church – v25-32

In verse 25-32, Paul gives us practical examples of how the church members should strengthened the body of Christ. He exhorts believers to get rid of the bad things that are detrimental to church life and to cultivate good things that can build the church. The most important virtue that makes a good summary is love. God is the one who created the church to be a community of believers growing to maturity, therefore we should develop good social virtues in our midst.

This section is also an appeal which explain what the new self-mentioned in v22-24. O'Brien is right by saying that "the consequences for those who have been created in God's likeness are now spelled out as Paul presents a series of specific exhortations aim at fostering behavior appropriate to the new person."⁶²

The exhortation to speak the truth to each other is a general Christian ethical teaching that we should emulate telling the truth in this context is undergirded by an appeal to the clear fact that we are all members of one another. The means by which we can build the body of Christ as it was earlier mentioned in Ephesians 4:15 is by speaking the truth of the gospel in love.

Verse 26-27 shows us that in God's new society believers are not to sin by indulging in unnecessary anger because it is a serious obstacle that can bring harm to the good relationships within the church. These two verses is citation of Ephesians 4:4. In order for us to prevent anger from degenerating into sin, we should put strict limit that sun must not set while we are still angry.

In verse 28, Paul illustrates to us a clear change from the old way of life to the new way of living by encouraging us to work hard rather than stealing so that we will have something to share with those in need. "The term for work found here denotes labor to the point of weariness. What may have been obtained previously with little effort is now to be achieved through diligent toil."⁶³

Verse 19 is very important because it exhorts us to keep our lips free from unwholesome language of any kind. This should be done to those who have put on the new self. As Christians we should be wise on what we say so that we may edify others and have a beneficial effect on those who hear us. Our conversation should be wholesome and beneficial so that it can be a way of edifying others rather than harming or destroying our hearers hence bring grace to those who hear.

Paul warns us not to distress the Holy Spirit of God by what we are doing. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we utter unwholesome speech against one another. This is also echo of a warning that is given in Isaiah 6:10-11. The presence of God in this Old Testament text is interpreted in terms of the Holy Spirit. This Old Testament verse gives us a typological correspondence

⁶² O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 331

⁶³ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 343

between the two events in the history of God's covenant people. Paul used the language of Isaiah 63:10 to warn the Gentile believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God as Israel did in the wilderness.

As Christians, we should put away anger, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander and malice. In fact such things should not be mentioned in our midst because we are redeemed people. Instead, we should be kind, tender hearted and forgiving. We should forgive and forget. I have heard of people who said "I have forgiven you but I will not forget." This is not biblical. We should forgive one another in the body of Christ because God has forgiven us through Christ.

LESSON SIX: NEW LIFE IN LOVE AND MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP – EPHESIANS 5:1-32

1. NEW LIFE IN LOVE – EPHESIANS 5:1-21

Eph 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Eph 5:3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

Eph 5:4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Eph 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Eph 5:7 Therefore do not associate with them;

Eph 5:8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Eph 5:9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),

Eph 5:10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Eph 5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Eph 5:12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

Eph 5:13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,

Eph 5:14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Eph 5:15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,

Eph 5:16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Eph 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

Eph 5:19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart,

Eph 5:20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Eph 5:21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-2 is a concluding sentence with a positive exhortation to be imitators of God and live a life of love. These two verses summarizes the preceding admonitions of Ephesians 4:25-32 on a positive note. Paul encouraged believers to walk in love. This explains specifically what is involved in becoming imitators of God.

Paul used the word “walk” seven times in the book of Ephesians;

- a. Ephesians 2:2 – sins in which you once walked
- b. Ephesians 2:10 – good works that we should walk in them
- c. Ephesians 4:1 – walk in the manner worthy of the calling

- d. Ephesians 4:17 – you must no longer walk as the Gentiles
- e. Ephesians 5:2 – walk in love
- f. Ephesians 5:8 – walk as children of light
- g. Ephesians 5:15 – look careful on how you walk

Paul used the word walk to refer to:

- a. How we live as Christians
- b. How we act as Christians
- c. How we pursue a particular goal in life as Christians
- d. How we conduct ourselves as Christians

As a Christian, what does your walk reveal and what story does your walk tell about you since you became a Christian? Will the way you walk reflect Christ? These are some of the question you should ask yourself. Ephesians 4:17-5:2 should be an encouragement for you to walk in the newness of life in Christ.

Living as the people of light – Ephesians 5:3-7

In this section, Christians are urged to live in accordance with their identity. Christians are not supposed to associate themselves with the work of darkness. As members of a new community, Christians should expose the deeds of their sinning brothers and sisters as part of a process of restoration that will result in their growth to maturity in Christ.

In verse 3 Paul urged his readers to eliminate sexual immorality from their lives. Sexual immorality has been predominant factor that affects the sanctity of the church. Several cases have arisen in Kenya whereby some pastors have indulge in sexual abuses. This is done outside of a committed marriage relationships. “This would include premarital sex, adultery, sex with a prostitute (1Corinthians 6:12-20; see also Hosea 1:2; Nahum 3:4), homosexuality liaisons (Romans 1:29) and incestuous relationships (1Corinthians 5:1).”⁶⁴

“Must not even be named among you.” In this phrase, Paul said something much more than that should not be talked about or discussed. He is saying that an outsider who observes the daily behavior of Christians should never have an opportunity ‘to name’ one of these vices as characterizing the lifestyle of any member of the community. Sexual immorality in the real sense is inconsistent with our new identity as God’s chosen people.

In verse 4, the warning of verse 3 about avoiding sexual sins is continued in the correction of the terms that refer to sinful speech i.e. filthiness, foolish talk and crude joking about sex are to be avoided among those who are saints.

⁶⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 319

Verse 5 is a warning to us that spell out the consequences for those who are immoral or sexually covetous. Such people will not inherit the kingdom of God and they will experience his wrath. O'Brien said "it is certain that persistent sinners like immoral, impure and greedy have no part or lot in God's heavenly kingdom."⁶⁵ Anyone who indulge himself in immorality, impurity and greed even though he might called himself a Christian is totally excluded from eternal life. Such a person is completely excluded if he gives up without shame or repentance to his way of immoral life.

In verse 6, we learned that God's judgment will make a final separation between the sons of disobedience and the beloved children of the living God. The context here with reference s to the sons of disobedience partakes with them (v7) and you were darkness (v8) may point to unbelieving Gentiles who tried to justify their vices as matters of indifference."

"Therefore do not associate with them" (v7)

This verse is a clear indication to us that we must consider the fearful destiny of non-believers and refuse to be yoked with them in their foolishness. Instead non-believers (Gentiles) should remember their status as partaking with the Jews in the promise of God in Christ (Ephesians 3:6).

Walking as children of light – vv8-14

In this section, Paul wants believers to do more in abstaining from the things that bring God's wrath. They should live as children of light (Colossians 1:13). If we are truly united with Christ as believers, we are the light of the world (Mathew 5:14) because the one whom we are united with is by himself the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). Before we were saved, we belonged to the rule of darkness but now because of our new relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we are identified with the realm of light.

It will be a great shame for us to be involved with the immorality of the past. If we are light, then let us behave as the children of light and this will mean living by values that are diametrically opposed to those of our surrounding society.

Walking as children of light as we see in v8 not only has the fruit of light being produced in our lives (v9) but it also excludes participation in the unfruitful works of darkness. Verse 11 clearly warns us not to take part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead, we should expose them.

Verse 12 gives us a reason for both the negative and positive aspects of the exhortation given to us in verse 11. We should have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but we are to expose them because it is shameful even to mention what people do in secret.

⁶⁵ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 363

I agree with O'Brien that, "Paul and his readers knew what they were, and he will not dignify them by naming them. Instead, he wants the light of the gospel to shine through the reader's lives and expose these deeds for what they are."⁶⁶

In verse 13 and 14, Paul came up with an assumption that certain sins are so shameful that bringing them to exposure of light will bring some non-believers into repentance. Our presence alone as Christians may expose sins through contrast as we openly denounced them. In the last part of verse 14, Paul quotes Isaiah 60:1. This might have been a Christian hymn calling upon the spiritual dead to rise up and receive light of Christ.

Look careful then how you walk.....v15-21

O'Brien states that "Ephesians 5:15-21 has been aptly called a 'summary climax' of the paraenesis in chapters 4-6. At the beginning of this paragraph the key verb 'live,' which Paul has used to define the Christian ethic appears once more. The passage further explains what it means to live a life worthy of the calling you have received (4:1), the opening admonition and 'topic sentence' of the lengthy exhortatory material that extends from 4:1 and 6:9."⁶⁷ This section has links with what precedes as well as what follows.

In verse 15, Paul uses the key verb 'walk' in order to draw out the implications of what it is to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. The way we walk as believers clearly explains how we are. This is expressed by the contrast stated in this verse as 'not as unwise but as wise.'

Verse 16 encourages us to use our time well. Paul's qualification here is that the days are evil because even though we have been delivered from the present evil age (Galatians 1:4), we tend to keep on living within its context and remain exposed to the influences of evil. For us to use our time well for the glory to God, we need to be self-discipline. It is amazing to see people who are idling instead of using their God-given time and opportunity to develop themselves and the community they come from.

As Christians, we should not be mindless but we need to understand the will of God (v17). A Christian should be a person whose thinking is implied positively in the idea of walking in wisdom. Ferguson was right when he said that "understanding God's will comes from applying God's word to our circumstances – always recognizing that the Lord may not yet have providentially unfolded all the circumstances that will enable us to move forward with confidence."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 372

⁶⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 379

⁶⁸ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 140

Drunk with wine.....filled with the Spirit (v18)

In this verse, one of the most obvious signs of being filled with wine is an ability to walk properly and in a straight line because of the loss of control and stability. A person who doesn't walk well due to excessive wine is drunk. Paul here described this act as debauchery. This is an act of giving way to uncontrolled passions, which the sober person keeps in place.

The phrase 'being filled with the spirit' is an ongoing reality in Christian life. As Christians, we do not fill ourselves with the Spirit's fullness by Christ. It is true that "the way in which we obey the command to be filled with the Spirit is by responding to the word of Christ making room for its influence, giving our minds to its truth, our hearts to its teaching, and our wills to its obedience."⁶⁹ For us to be under the influence of the word we should place ourselves under the Lordship of the Spirit.

In verse 19-21, we learned that worship is given to God alone. In our churches, we worship together corporately and address each other for our mutual benefit as Paul states in 1Corinthians 14 and Hebrews 10:24.

Verse 21 encourages us to submit to one another. This submission is the basis for the forms of authority in marriage, family and work relationships stated in Ephesians 5:22-6:9.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE – EPHESIANS 5:22-33

WIVES AND HUSBANDS RELATIONSHIPS

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Eph 5:24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Eph 5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Eph 5:27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

Eph 5:30 because we are members of his body.

Eph 5:31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Eph 5:32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Eph 5:33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

⁶⁹ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 145

Introduction

The husband and wife constitute the primary and most important relationship between people. R. C. Sproul (2011) says, “Marriages are our closest human relationships and should emulate most nearly our fellowship with God.” Husband and wife are family and the man is the head of that family. Note that God put a man and woman in the garden and not a mother and child. God did not put two men or two women in the garden. The husband-wife bond is to be the strongest bond, even stronger than a mother and child. It must be more unique than any other relationship that you have. The marriage relationship is permanent. Parent and child have a temporary relationship. You will never cease to be a mother or father of your child, but when that child marries the spouse becomes more important than the mother or father.

“The rise and fall of marriage in a society acts as a barometer by which to measure the godliness of that culture” (Sproul, 2011). One of the main reasons we have so many problems and divorces in our marriages is that we do not follow God’s plan, or “blueprint.” God’s blueprint is a pattern. When a person constructs a building, he usually hires an architect. This architect draws out a pattern for the builder to follow. If the builder does not follow this plan in all of its specifications, then there is a very good chance that the building will crumble over a short period of time. We are all aware of stories we have heard of contractors taking short cuts in Africa. If the cement and sand mixture is wrong, then the bridge will fall or the foundation of the house will crack. If inferior material is used then the building will come apart in a strong wind.

When it comes to our marriages, why does it come as a surprise when we find that God has set down some very clear rules? We think we can break them without consequences. From the very beginning, when God instituted marriage, there have been rules. When these rules are broken, there will be brokenness and severe hardships. The blueprint, or rules, which we must follow in marriage, is found in the following three words: leave, cleave, and one flesh. These concepts are first found in Genesis 2:24, which says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” The same concept is mentioned in Ephesians 5:31.

Husband, your wife, apart from Jesus, is the most important person in your life. Wife, your husband, apart from Jesus, is the most important person in your life. The relationship between husband and wife is more important than your relationship to your parents, your pastor, your friends, your children, or even those you work with. There are many divorces because this basic teaching is not understood or followed. Your marriage is your number one priority. It is not second place. The husband-wife relationship is the permanent one!

In the New Testament, Jesus gives life to a new community of love to the church, which is His body. His love for the church also defines the marriage relationship for his people. In Ephesians, Paul teaches that the husband and wife are complementary because they are equal before God but in marriage, the husband has leadership role. This leadership is not absolute but it is the initiative in marriage to which the wife responds. Our understanding of this is to be grounded in the creation order mentioned by Paul in 1Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1Timothy 2:13. It will be of

great importance for us to understand that our redemption in Christ restores the intimacy we were created to enjoy in marriage as men and women.

Wives' submission to the Husband – v22-24

Verses 22-24 urges wives to be submissive and subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. Verse 22 gives the initial encouragement grounded in the headship of the husband over his wife. The headship, which is expected by the husband, is like the headship of Christ over the church. This is well explained in verse 23.

I believe that all Christians are to submit to Christ 100% not 50-50%. Therefore, wives should submit to their husbands fully and in everything the way the church does to Christ. Therefore, wives should submit to their husbands fully and in everything the way the church does to Christ.

In this act of submission by the wives, I strongly believed that a truly saved wife must not submit to sinful acts and desires of her husband. The determining factor for her submission is to the Lord. In Africa, many women have looked for ways in which they can cool down the tempers and rule of their husbands. Some wives have gone to an extent of visiting witch doctors for more help and consultation of what they can do so that they take control over their husbands. This act is not what the bible teaches about submission. In fact, many families have broken down due to such evil acts done by the evil-minded wives who don't want to submit to their husbands.

Exhortation to the husbands to love their wives – vv25-23

In verse 22-27, husbands are admonished to love their wives as Christ loved the church. As I said earlier about wives that they are to submit to their husbands, husbands are also supposed to love their wives the way Christ loved and gave out his life for the church. Our love as husbands to our wives should emulate the love we love Christ and how Christ loves his church as the head.

John Piper clearly states that “husbands are compared to Christ, wives are compared to the church. Husbands are compared to the head; wives are compared to the body. Husbands are commanded to love as Christ loved; wives are commanded to submit as the church is to submit to Christ.”⁷⁰ This is a very clear contrast between husband and wife, Christ and the church.

In verse 28-32, husbands are exhorted to love their wives in the way that Christ loved the church. In verse 25, husbands had already been urged to love their wives but in verse 28, the guarantee of this admonition to love their wives is grounded on Christ's sacrificial love for the church. Christ love for the church is expressed in his action of giving his life for the church. Arnold said “this does not mean it will be necessary for every husband to die for his wife, but it most assuredly means that every husband must deny himself of time, resources and self-gratification

⁷⁰ Piper, *This momentary marriage*, 77

to express his love for his wife.”⁷¹ The main purpose as to why Christ sacrifice himself was to sanctify the church for himself. He sanctified his church by cleansing or purifying her as shown in verse 26

The reason as to why Christ sanctify the church was to present his bride to himself at the last time. Verse 27 says “so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that one might be holy and without blemish.”

Paul clearly outlined for us in verse 26-27 the entire process to which Christ has committed himself in his relationship with the church. Jesus Christ washed the church from sin and prepares her for a glorious destiny with himself. It is my sincere desire that husbands in Africa should adapt their lives to their wives’ needs as they provide for their growth and development.

In verse 28-32, we see how the union of the husband and wife is intimate and permanent in marriage as we read in Genesis 2:24. Our Lord Jesus Christ joined the church to himself through the bonds of covenant he fulfilled. The intimate union that Christ has with the church is an analogy for Christian marriage. Hendriksen said, “There is never a moment that Christ does not tenderly watch over his body, the church. We are under his constant surveillance.”⁷² In the same way, husbands must watch over their wives as they love and provide for them.

This mystery is profound and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church – v32

For us to understand what this verse means, it is important to know that the union between the husband and wife provides a glimpse for us to understand the nature of relationship that Christ has with the church. Paul here present “marriage as a typology of the relationship of Christ to the church or whether the union of Christ and the church serves as an analogy or model of the relationship between husbands and wives.”⁷³ The intimate union between Christ and the church and husband and wife is a mystery. The union between husband and wife is a mystery that has been divinely instituted to illustrate close and intimate union between Christ and the church.

In verse 33, Paul concludes his instructions to husbands and wives by urging husbands to love their wives in a vigilant and caring way. At the same time, he admonished the wives to be responsive to the leadership of their husbands.

It is my prayer that we develop strong family relationship for us to have strong churches. When there are strong families who exercise love and submission to each other as husbands and wives, we will also have strong church members. When the families have problem in their relationships,

⁷¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383. For more information about God’s covenant relationship with his people depicted in marriage, read the Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Ephesians by Clinton E. Arnold pages 384-386.

⁷² Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 253

⁷³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 394

the same problems will grip into the church. Let husbands love their wives as the wives be submissive to their husbands.

LESSON SEVEN: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND PARENTS, SLAVES AND MASTERS – EPHESIANS 6:1-9

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Eph 6:2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),

Eph 6:3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

Eph 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,

Eph 6:6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

Eph 6:7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,

Eph 6:8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

Eph 6:9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

a. Relationships between children and parents – Ephesians 6:1-3

In Ephesians 6:1, children are called to obey their parents. Obedience is their obligation before God. The children whom Paul talked about here are those who are still at home. These are old enough to understand the instructions given by their parents. They are the ones who are still brought up and have not left home or get married. The basis in which children should obey their parents is in the Lord.

“It is the God given duty of parents to set boundaries for their children and expect them to obey. Failure to do so results in the Lord’s displeasure and leads to children who rebel against the Lord.”⁷⁴

Children must be aware that obedience is further motivated by the fact that it is ‘right.’ According to Paul, obedience is right because it is what the Lord expects from children.

Verse 2 is parallel to the fifth commandment of the Decalogue that has a promise connected with it. Paul quotes Exodus 20:12 to reinforce his instruction to the children to obey their parents.

Ferguson states, “The fifth commandment is the first to spell our specific promise of life for those who obey it; that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. It is worth noting three further details here;

⁷⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415

1. The fifth commandment involves the broader idea of honor not only the narrower idea of obedience. At every stage of life childhood, teenage years, adulthood, even old age – we should honor our parents.
2. Paul speaks about the fifth commandments as the first commandment with a promise (6:2). In fact it is the only one of the commandment with a promise!
3. Paul refers to the commandment in a way that implies that this specific commandment is still applicable to the gospel lifestyle.”⁷⁵

In verse 3, we see the two fold promise that scripture associates with the obedience to parents. These are;

- a. Prosperity
- b. Long life

These two promises are much remarkable and highly motivating to every child.

In verse 4, Paul turn his attention to the fathers. He warns us as fathers not to treat our children in such a way that they will become angry and embittered. Being the head of the family, a family need to exercise a sensitivity and care in how he interact with his children and especially in how he discipline them. I urge all fathers in Africa to weigh carefully the potential impact of their words and actions before responding to their children.

I have seen some fathers who accused their children to the extent of calling them dogs or hyenas. They should not use such insults, harsh words, sarcasm and demeaning comments because children can perceive as provocative. Paul urged parents in Colossians 3:21 not to embitter their children because they will become discouraged.

Fathers are responsible of raising their children in a way that they will be trained in understanding the essence of the Christian faith and how to live.

b. Relationship between masters and slaves – vv5-9

In this section, slaves are urged to follow the example of Christ through obedient submission stipulated in Philippians 2:1-11. All true Christians are called to share Christ’s humiliation and suffering in order to be exalted with Christ and glorified with him in due time. As slaves serve the risen and exalted Christ and not merely an earthly master, they do so in the new reality inaugurated by Christ (2Corinthians 5:17).

In verse 5, Paul appeals to slaves to comply with orders of their masters. Arnold clearly states, “Paul addressed the slaves in the Christian communities of western Asia Minor as free moral agents capable of thinking for themselves and acting with moral responsibilities.”⁷⁶ He

⁷⁵ Ferguson, *Ephesians*, 160

⁷⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 422

admonished slaves to be obedience, respectful and sincere to their masters. In Colossians 3:22, Paul gives the same instructions to believing slaves in Colossians, but he adds that their obedience to their masters should be in everything.

Verse 6 also shows how slaves should provide their service as followers of Christ. They should serve their human masters not simply to make a good look but with pure motives. Whatever they do, they should do it according to the will of God. In this text, Christian slaves should know that any service done out of a motive of just being seen by men is not good. How they behave in the absence of their masters is just as important as the nature of the service they offer when they are present.

Actually, believing slaves must be motivated to serve their human masters well precisely because their ultimate indenturing is to Christ alone. They are slaves of Christ because they belong to someone who has far greater authority and far more honor than any human slave owner. It is very important for us to understand that the status and honor of slaves is ultimately derived from belonging to Christ and not earthly human masters.

Deuteronomy 10:12 admonishes us to serve the LORD with all our hearts and with all our souls. However, for believing slaves, their service should comply with the orders of their human masters with good attitude.

In verse 7, Paul summarized his appeal to Christian slaves by urging them to serve with a great attitude. Slaves should have an attitude of understanding their service to their human masters as a service done for the Lord himself. The more slaves think about their service in a positive way, the more they overcome the temptation of judging the motivation of their earthly masters, which might lead them to lose heart in their service.

In verse 8, we see that the motivating factor for serving with a good attitude and performing good works is the assurance of God's blessing and reward. Christian's slaves must know that the one Master who really cares and that they will be rewarded notices all their good works. All of us are slaves of Christ; therefore, we must know that our Master sees what we do. One day one time, all of us will be accountable of what we do in this earth. This verse gives a believing slave an eschatological perspective on his present condition. Even though slaves might undergo a lot of oppression in their work place, they should know that the Lord see all that they do and they can be assured of future reward.

In verse 9, Paul is addressing masters and exhorts them in their responsibilities to their slaves. Masters are motivated to treat their slaves in a similar manner because both slaves and masters are accountable to Christ who is the master of all.

In verse 5-8, we see that Christian slaves have already been urged to render service to their earthly masters as to the Lord Jesus Christ but in verse 9 Christians masters are reminded that they are also slaves of the same Lord as their own servants. O'Brien is true to say that "masters

too will render an account on the final day to this heavenly Lord for all that they have done, not least as to how they have treated their slaves.”⁷⁷ It is good for us to know that Christ’s Lordship over our lives whether slaves or masters has the effect of changing the dynamic of our relationship between us and lift our mutual attitude and behavior from one level to another new level.

⁷⁷ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 455

LESSON EIGHT: SPIRITUAL WARFARE – EPHESIANS 6:10-20

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Eph 6:15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Eph 6:16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Eph 6:17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Eph 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Eph 6:19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

Eph 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:10-20 brings to the climax the prominent themes of our union with Christ and the new identity we have with him because it is through our relationship with him that we are strengthened to resist the powerful attacks from the evil one and his emissaries.

In this section, Paul used military metaphors throughout this section to convey the idea of spiritual power such as the complete armor, breastplate, shield, helmet, sword, strapping a weapon around the waist and putting on shoes.

In verse 10, we are urged to depend on Lord for the divine empowerment we need in order to face our enemies and live the kind of lives God called us to live. The terms used in this verse is the same as the terms in Ephesians 1:19 when Paul described the power that raised Jesus from the dead. We are not encouraged to face the evil hosts of darkness in our own strength but in the mighty power that raised Jesus. As Christians, we have been raised with him (Ephesians 2:4-6; 3:16-19)

‘Put on the whole armor of God’ – V11

This verse tells us how we are to gain strength and Spiritual power from the Lord. In this context, the term ‘put on’ is the common word for putting on clothing but is used here in connection with armor. The nature of the armor that we should use as believers is truth, gospel faith, righteousness, salvation, the word of God and prayer.

O'Brien said "essentially then put on the new self is the same as donning the armor of God."⁷⁸ If my fellow African believers know the truth that they are in union with Christ, cultivate the virtues of their new identity and use their available resources, the meaning of putting on the full armor of God will make sense.

All of us need God's empowerment because whether we like it or not, we will face a variety of well-planned attacks by the devil. In fact, verse 11b gives us the reason as to why we need to put on the whole armor of God. It says; 'so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil'.

'Our struggle is not against blood and flesh' – v12

This phrase shows that the warfare we experience as believers is not an engagement with human enemies but spiritual forces of varying ranks, authorities and abilities.

'Therefore' – v13

The phrase 'therefore' in the beginning of verse 13 refers to the previous verses which talks about spiritual forces under the leadership of the devil. As believers, we should depend on the power of God because we live in the present evil age. We do face powerful and strategic spiritual attacks and therefore we must draw our resistance from God. The bible encourages us to resist the devil and he will flee away from us.

The reason as to why we take up the whole armor of God is to be able to withstand evil and stand firm.

'Evil day'

Many people have different interpretation of the term "evil day". Some people take the evil day to be one of the many evil days that are of typical present age while others say that it refers to extraordinary trials in the lives of believers when evil assault come with unusual demonic forces.

Arnold states, "An evil day experience comes at various intervals through the lives of God's people when the powers of darkness execute their strategies in an effort to cause believers to fall."⁷⁹ We should be ready to stand firm in the Lord despite such attacks knowing that if Christ suffered we should also suffer such attacks (1Peter 4:1).

THE SIX WEAPONS OF THE BELIEVER

Verse 14-17 gives us a list of the spiritual weapons that the believer must have.

- a. The belt of truth – v14

⁷⁸ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 462

⁷⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 473

- b. The breastplate of righteousness – v14
- c. The shoes for your feet – v15
- d. The shield of faith – v16
- e. The helmet of salvation – v17
- f. The sword of the Spirit – v17

THE BELT OF TRUTH

This act of fastening ourselves with the belt of truth refers to knowing the appropriate truth of our new identity with Christ as we develop the practice of speaking the truth in our lives.

Arnold suggests “the objective sense of the truth of the gospel on the elements of the faith (4:5) that is, the doctrinal truth of the common confession of the early church; or in the subjective sense of practicing honesty and living with moral integrity.”⁸⁰ As Christians in Africa, we must be fully convinced of the gospel and the truth of our new identity in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Breastplate in ancient times was a piece of weapon commonly used by soldiers. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness therefore refers to a deepening appreciation of God’s gracious conferral of the gift of righteousness and to acquisition of our moral integrity. Righteousness must be our breastplate as believers in Africa. We should be aware that Christ is our righteousness and therefore we need to be righteous (1Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9).

Actually, possessing God’s righteousness will lead us to a life of holiness but the neglect of God’s call and integrity will lead us to successful attacks of the evil one and his emissaries. Righteousness is the only weapon, which defend us against evil attacks (2Corinthians 6:7).

SHOES OF YOUR FEET

The gospel we share with non-believers contains the message of peace with God. We should be ready to share the gospel with others at all times. In this verse, “Paul does not refer directly to believers’ footwear here; instead he employs an unusual expression that speaks of having (their) feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace.”⁸¹

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

As believers, we should also put on faith as the shield of trusting in God’s power and his assurance about our new identity and unity in Christ. In our African context, the shield is used to stop flaming arrows hurled by the enemy during the time of war.

⁸⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 474

⁸¹ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 475

Believers should be firmly rooted in Christ. If we do, so the enemy will do nothing because our strong faith in God blocks his assault. We should always understand that our faith is built in the foundational truths of our salvation as stated in Romans 10:9-13.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

A good well-equipped soldier in each government puts on the helmet to protect his head. The motorcycle riders also put on helmets to protect their heads in case of any accident. The helmet of salvation in this context “means the forgiveness of our sins, reconciliation with God and the gift of grace and eternal life.”⁸²

The gift of salvation gives us protection and hope of our final redemption from our present body of sin and the wicked world.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

If you could make a visit to Maasai Land in Kenya, you will find out that every Moran has a sword tied on his waist. They do so because they believe that without a sword one cannot defeat his enemy. Maasai people believe that the sword has enough power to wound and defeat the enemy.

With us Christians, we believe that the sword of the Spirit is a weapon which has more than enough power to wound and defeat the prince of the air. The bible is our means of defense against every form of demonic attack because it is our sword.

In this section, O’Brien points out well when he say that putting on the sword of the Spirit refers to “the faithful speaking forth of the gospel in the realm of darkness, so that men and women held by Satan might hear this liberating and life-giving word and be freed from his grasp.”⁸³

CONSTANT PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE – V18-20

Verses 18-20 focuses on the need for constant prayer and watchfulness for all believers. Paul also urged the church in Ephesus to pray for him in prison so that he might fearlessly proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

In verse 18, prayer is given a very great prominence without the context of the battle with powers of darkness brought by the evil one than any of the weapons listed in verse 14-17. We are urged to pray at all times with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance and we are to make supplications for all the Saints.

⁸² Adeyemo, *African Bible Commentary, Ephesians*, 1464

⁸³ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 482

In verse 19, the spiritual prayer of verse 18 is extended further in that Apostle Paul requested an intercession for himself that he might effectively use the spiritual weapon of the sword of the spirit, that is, the gospel. Paul wanted us to understand that prayer is foundational for the deployment of all the other weapons and is crucial if we are to stand firm in our spiritual struggle. As the church in Africa, we must realize that a life of dependence on God in prayer is essential if we are to engage successfully in our warfare with the powers of darkness. We should pray continually because our struggle with the powers of darkness never ends so long as we are still in this world. As those who have been built into God's dwelling place in the Spirit and who are being filled by the Spirit, we should pray to the Father, prompted and guided by the Spirit.

In verse 20, Paul clearly states that he is an ambassador on behalf of God who has entrusted him with a commission to make known the mystery of the gospel to the Gentiles. The main work of Paul was to proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make plain to everyone the administration of that mystery.

PAUL'S CONCLUDING REMARKS TO EPHESIANS' CHURCH – V21-22

Eph 6:21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.

Eph 6:22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

In this section, Paul wrote a concise conclusion and asked Tychicus to be the bearer of the letter to inform the readers of the details of his situation and imprisonment in Rome. The believers in Ephesus were eager to hear about the status of Paul, his health and well-being. They were also keen about matters pertaining to the church and the advancement of the gospel in the imperial city. Tychicus is one of Paul's missionary colleagues with him in Rome as he writes the letter to the Ephesians. In Titus 3:12 we see that Tychicus assisted Paul after his release. Paul deliberated on whether to send him to the Island of Crete to help Titus. Also during Paul's second imprisonment and shortly before his death, he once again sent Tychicus on an assignment to Ephesus as we read in 2 Timothy 4:12.

Paul extols Tychicus in the most glowing terms describing him as Paul's beloved brother and as a faithful minister in the Lord. Paul's statement here is an indication to us that God used Tychicus to encourage Paul in his difficult circumstances. As ministers of God, we should also have people who are ready to encourage us in ministry. Challenges are there but it is good to have brothers and sisters who are willing to encourage us in ministry the way Paul was encouraged by Tychicus, Onesimus (Philemon's runaway slave, Col.4:9; Philemon 16) and Epaphras (the man who was responsible for planting the church at Colossae, Colossians 1:7).

As Paul was assisted throughout his years of ministry by many trusted colleagues, we should also have faithful men who are willing to assist and encourage us in ministry.

In verse 22, we see that the main purpose for Paul sending Tychicus was for the readers in Ephesus to gain a firsthand information or report of all that is happening to Paul and other believers in Rome. Paul also was very much concerned about the hearts of his readers, therefore he send Tychicus to encourage their hearts. Paul provided his readers with encouragement to grow in the knowledge of Christ and to appropriate the virtues of their life in Christ.

BENEDICTION – V23-24

Eph 6:23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 6:24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

In verses 23-24, Paul ends the letter of Ephesians with a blessing that wishes the Ephesian church peace, love, faith and grace. He prayed for peace because Christ is our peace and through his blood we have been brought near to God. He prayed for the blessing of God's love to be poured out in deeper measure on us because love is the primary virtue that we should demonstrate in our lives as believers. He also prayed for faith because we have entered into relationship with God through faith and we should grow in our relationship to Christ by faith.

Last but not least, Paul prayed for the blessing of God's grace on all who are in a loving and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ because we will not only live forever with Christ but we will receive God's grace in endless supply forever and ever.

CONCLUSION

It is my prayer that all the virtues that I have discussed throughout this letter, should characterize the life of a Christian community that the church in Africa should live. Let us be steadfast, immovable and abound always in the work of the Lord knowing that our labor in Africans Teaching Africans is not in vain. May God give us grace to live each day as if it is our last in Africa for his own glory.

FINAL EXAM

TIME: 2HRS

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer all the questions adequately. The teacher is also free to set the same questions in the language that the students understands.

1. Who wrote the book of Ephesians? Cite the text to support your answer.
2. State the main purpose of the letter to Ephesians.
3. In our Christ-centred worship, whom does our praise goes to?
4. Name the four blessings we get through election.
5. What factors motivated Paul to pray for the congregation in Ephesus?
6. What did Paul meant Ephesians 2:3 when he said “among whom we all once lived”?
7. Show how Ephesians 1:20b is parallel to Ephesians 2:6. What can you learn from this parallelism?
8. Explain the meaning of the phrase “the coming ages” mentioned in Ephesians 2:7.
9. How was the mystery of Christ made clearer to Paul?
10. What mystery do Paul speaks about in Ephesians 3:3-4?
11. Explain how God’s love is wide, long, high and deep.
12. How can we demonstrate the unity of believers in our churches?
13. What is the connection between the unity of the church and the three persons within the God-head?
14. In Ephesians 4:1-3, what are the means in which the church should maintain its unity?
15. How many times did Paul used the word “walk” in the book of Ephesians and what does it refer to?
16. Can you explain what Paul meant about the mystery in Ephesians 5:32.
17. What responsibility does the father have over his children?
18. Explain how slaves and masters ought to relate?
19. In Ephesians 6, are we encouraged to face the evil hosts of darkness in our own strength? Explain.
20. Why did Paul send Tychicus to Ephesus in person?

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