

view is that the letter was intended for circulation among all the churches of Asia. It may even have been “the epistle from Laodicea” which Paul wanted the Colossian Christians to read (Col. 4:16).²

The reference to Tychicus (6:21–22), probably the bearer of the letter, convinces me that Ephesians and Colossians were written from Caesarea rather than Rome, just as my *Thinking Through Philippians* has argued even more strongly that Philippians was written from Caesarea. See my brief note on Ephesians 6:21–22.

The greeting combines the salutations common among Greeks (grace) and Jews (peace). Paul wishes for his readers grace and peace, these words being filled with new meaning by the gospel, which comes from both “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2).

The Manifestation of God’s Glory in Christ Ephesians 1:3–14

God had created a new Israel in Christ Jesus. Unlike the old Israel, it was not a political entity, a physical nation, but was composed of all those in every nation who acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Christ. Nor was the new Israel a substitute for the old, brought in as an afterthought due to the failure of the old. Not Israel the physical nation, but this new, spiritual Israel was what God had planned before time began. Certain Jewish teachers had been teaching Gentile Christians that they would have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, in effect to become Jews, if they wanted to be saved (Acts 15:1–5). But Paul’s message is that God’s eternal purpose for the salvation of mankind was being fulfilled not in the old Israel, but in a new Israel, the church, in which Jews had no special advantage over Gentiles, but both stood on an equality before God, one body in which both were reconciled to God through the cross (Eph. 2:1–3:13).

With a mind enlightened by the Spirit to grasp “the breadth and length and height and depth” of the divine purpose of the ages, reflect-

1:4), who had not seen his face in the flesh (Col. 2:1). That statement seems strange if specially addressed to the church in a city where Paul had lived for three years (Acts 20:31).

² Perhaps Ephesus was written in the margin of the copy intended for Ephesus, and later placed in the text by a copyist. That would explain differences in the manuscripts.

ing upon the divine purpose, the fulfillment of that purpose in the Christ, even including its consummation in the future “day of redemption,” Paul is moved to give his fullest explanation of these concepts in a wonderful essay on the church in the divine purpose. He opens his epistle with an outburst of emotion, an exclamation of praise to God, the fountain of all spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 1:3–14 is one long, complex sentence summarizing the whole range of God's accomplishment in Christ.³ Paul had begun Second Corinthians with a similar emotional outburst (1:3), which is explained by recent news relieving his anxiety about the church in Corinth (7:5ff). What accounts for such an opening in Ephesians is the subject matter. The wondrous blessings that God had bestowed upon his people in Christ Jesus had so filled Paul's mind that the natural expression of what he was feeling was an emotional outburst of praise.

Exclamation of Praise (3)

Greek *eulogetos* means blessed or praised. It is only used of God in the New Testament, and predominately so in the Greek Old Testament. Consider how “the Blessed” is used in Mark 14:61 as a synonym for “God” in Matthew 26:63.

The object of Paul's praise is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Though some render with the margin: “God and the Father,” he is properly spoken of as the God (cf. 17; John 20:17) as well as the Father of the Lord Jesus. Both relationships have special reference to deity as incarnate in Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:35). Jesus was man as well as God, and God was his God as well as his Father.

Contrast the frequent benediction: “Blessed the God of Israel” (1 Kings 1:48; 2 Chron. 2:12; 6:4; Ps. 72:18; Luke 1:68). It is in another capacity or relation that God is praised here. It is as *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* that he has blessed us with the spiritual blessings referred to. All that he has done for us is *in Christ*. When Paul dwells upon all that God has done for us in Christ, he bursts forth with this exclamation of praise.

³ The ASV preserves the complexity of the Greek original. Modern versions usually try to simplify by breaking the passage up into short sentences. Such attempts achieve simplicity only at the cost of losing some connections of thought found in the original.

The blessings God had promised to Israel in the Old Testament largely involved material prosperity (e. g. Deut. 28:1–6). But the blessings in Christ are spiritual in nature. The thought will be elaborated and defined in detail all through our passage.

The heavenly places is literally *the heavens*, and is to be locally understood as elsewhere in the epistle (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).⁴ Hence: all the blessings of heaven.

These blessings have been bestowed upon us *in Christ*, union with Christ being their ground or basis, as stressed throughout the passage. The blessings have come to us in Christ. Out of Christ we were spiritually impoverished and lost; in him we have all the blessings of heaven.

The Eternal Decree (4–6a)

The blessings in Christ are now shown to be related to a choice and a decree made by God before the world began. The relation between the blessings in time and the divine decree before time began is defined by the Greek *kathos*, which indicates correspondence, accordance, harmony or agreement; hence: even as, just as, according as. The blessings that God has bestowed in Christ are in accord with the choice God made in Christ before time began. The Greek verb *eklego* means to pick out, choose or select. It is used with reference to the selection of the apostles in Luke 6:13, John 6:70, Acts 1:2 & 24; of seven servants of the church in Acts 6:5; of the Israelite fathers in Acts 13:17; and of “men out of their company” in Acts 15:22 & 25. The Middle Voice used here implies: he chose *for himself*.

A comparison of such passages as Acts 13:17, Exodus 19:5f, Deuteronomy 14:1f, Psalms 33:12, 135:4 & Isaiah 41:8f indicates that the church has become God’s new Israel (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9f). The language that had been used for Israel in time past is used for the church in the New Testament.

The choice took place *in Christ*, which makes Christ the basis or ground of the choice. A comparison illustrates the point. Abraham was God’s chosen (Neh. 9:7). God first chose Abraham. Then others were chosen (and blessed), not individually, but because of the connection with Abraham (Deut. 4:37; 7:6–8; 10:15). People descended

⁴ Yet the expression, which occurs only in Ephesians, is flexible from passage to passage.

from Abraham were being endowed with blessings more than 1000 years later, which had been predetermined by the choice of Abraham.

So also, Jesus Christ is God's chosen (Matt. 12:18; 1 Pet. 2:4). Others are chosen in Christ—i. e., not as individuals, but because of the connection with Christ.

The connection with Abraham was established by physical birth. The connection with Christ is established by baptism as an act of faith (Gal. 3:26f).

The phrase *before the foundation of the world* is used twice more in the New Testament (John 17:24 & 1 Pet. 1:20). Similar phrases will be found in Luke 11:50; Heb. 4:3; 9:26 (from); 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; Rom. 6:25.

We must start with creation. The creation was no experiment. God knew what he wanted and planned in advance. When he created man he knew in advance what he wanted. But it is clear that if man fell into sin, then he would have to be redeemed. In that event, the only way God could get what he wanted would be *in a Redeemer*. That explains God's choice of a people in Christ before the creation.

But the blessings in Christ are offered to all men (Mark 16:15; Eph. 3:8–9; Rev. 22:17). Anyone on God's earth can become one of those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. God's election is not an unconditional choosing, individually determined before the world was created. It depends upon a person's response to God's offer of salvation in Christ.

The purpose or aim of God's choice is defined by the purpose clause: *that we should be holy and without blemish before him*. The description refers to a person's standing in Christ (cf. 5:25–27).

The choice is determined by the sovereignty of God, but it "takes effect through means" (Moule) and is not arbitrary but conditional, as indicated by comparison with other references to this purpose:

Ephesians 1:4 defines the object of God's decree in eternity: "that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love."

But Ephesians 5:25f speaks of the execution of that decree in time and indicates that God achieves his object by means of a washing of water to which persons must submit in order to be holy and without blemish—the very washing of water to which Saul of Tarsus was ordered to submit (Acts 22:16).

Then Colossians 1:22f deals with the final consummation of the divine purpose, the presentation of the reconciled ones holy and without blemish, and again leaves no doubt of the conditional nature [if] of the divine purpose.

Therefore, God's determination to have a people that would be holy and without blemish is conditional on the part of the people all the way. Anyone who will submit to the divine cleansing and then continue in the faith can be one of those persons presented holy and without blemish before God. That people, holy and without blemish, consists of all those who submit to the divine cleansing and then continue in the faith—i. e., “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17).

Scholars differ over the connection of the phrase *in love*. Does “the rhythm of the sentence” (Lenski), “the cadence of the Greek” (Moule), link it to what precedes, so that love becomes “the climax of the Divine intention” (Robinson⁵) or perhaps means “in the embrace of that Divine Love which gave, and sustains, our position” (Moule, referring to First John 3:1)? Or is it connected with what follows (ASV margin; NASB), so that it defines the divine motive behind foreordination: *having in love foreordained us* etc. Either makes good sense, and I cannot decide.

Having foreordained us translates an aorist participial form based on the Greek verb *proorizo*, meaning “decide upon beforehand, predestine” (AG); “to predetermine, decide or appoint beforehand” (GT). “The aorist participle denotes action prior to the action denoted by the leading verb.”⁶ God “chose us ... having foreordained us ... according to the good pleasure of his will.” First one determines what he wants. Then he chooses.

The aim or object of this predetermination is *to adoption as sons*. Greek *huiiothesia* is a legal technical term, referring to the legal transaction of placing one not a son by birth into the position of a son.

Through Jesus Christ indicates the means by which this transaction takes place. Galatians 3:26–27 explains the way this adoption through Christ is accomplished. Paul addresses persons whose present

⁵ Robinson compares the five other occurrences of the phrase in Ephesians (3:17; 4:2, 15,16; 5:2).

⁶ J. G. Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, 116f).

position was that of sonship: "You are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus." The explanation of (or reason for, Grk *gar*) this present position is then explained as the consequence of an act in the past: "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (27)—thus sharing the standing of Christ, who is the Son of God. A further consequence is then indicated: "And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (29). Therefore, both adoption as sons (26f) and election (or choice) (29) are conditioned upon baptism into Christ as an act of faith.

This foreordination, which reaches its end in adoption as sons, is then said to be in accord with the benevolent intention (good pleasure)⁷ of God's will. The ultimate purpose or final goal of the divine decree is defined: *to the praise of the glory of his grace* (6a), the first of three expressions of this ultimate purpose (cf. 12 & 14). So the final object of the divine purpose is to bring praise upon the glory of God's grace. The glory of God's grace⁸ shines forth in the accomplishments prompted by grace (favor, lovingkindness, goodwill bestowed upon the undeserving), and so is applauded, commended or praised. Thus Paul himself in verse 3. Such praise for the glory of his grace is the ultimate purpose of God's gracious predetermination.

The description of God's grace as *freely bestowed on us in the Beloved* marks a return to the point of view of verse 3, namely, the blessings actually bestowed on us in Christ. After explaining the eter-

⁷ Grk *eudokia* derives from the verb *eudokeo*, which combines *eu* (well) with *dokeo* (to think); hence to think well; to seem good; "to think it good." The noun, therefore, refers to God's kind intention or benevolent purpose (GT, 258; cf. AG, 319). It is used here to characterize the divine will (Grk *thelema*), i. e. what God wishes or wills. The Greek *eudokia* is a synonym for the divine purpose or counsel which took place in eternity before time began. "But the aim of this cumulative description (in Eph. 1:5, lam) demands that *eudokia* should be seen as expressing a special side of this pretemporal resolve of the divine will. ... It is more than the determinate will and counsel as such. It is the content of this counsel as the free goodpleasure which, grounded in God alone and influenced by no one else, is His gracious resolution to save. ... In the general sketch of the goals of salvation in verses 4–12 the element of free and merciful grace stands at the centre. In all the descriptions of the divine will, the strongest expression is found in *eudokia*" (TDNT, II, 747).

⁸ Compare Paul's reference to the glory of the heavenly bodies (1 Cor. 15:40f).

nal decree with which these blessings accord, Paul is now ready to elaborate and define the blessings more particularly.

The Grace With Which He Graced Us (6b–10)

The verb in 6b is actually akin to the noun grace.⁹ Paul is speaking of *the grace with which he graced us*; or as AG translates: “his great favor, with which he has blessed us through (or in) his beloved Son.”¹⁰ Paul has indicated the conformity of the blessings now bestowed in Christ (3) with the divine decree before time began (4f), and now (in 6b) returns to the historical point of view—the blessings actually bestowed on those in Christ.

1. Redemption Through Blood (7).

Paul comes to specifics (7): “in whom we have our redemption through his blood.” The Greek for redemption¹¹ is “a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom; ... everywhere in the N. T. metaphorically, viz. deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin” (GT, 65b; AG similarly). It could be explained as a ransoming.

The ransom price¹² is actually named by Paul when he says the ransoming took place through his blood. The ransom price (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20 & 7:23) was the life of Christ given in place of the many (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).¹³ Leviticus 17:11 explains the reason God required blood in the atoning sacrifices: The life is in the blood, and the blood makes atonement by reason of the life that is in the blood. The cost of our redemption was the life of Christ Jesus, which he laid down in our stead.

But this ransoming was no political liberation from oppression, such as many Jews expected. Nor was it aimed at securing the release

⁹ The verb is *charitoo*; the noun is *charis*.

¹⁰ “Graciously granted us” (Lanski).

¹¹ Grk *apolutrosis*.

¹² Grk *lutron*.

¹³ Christ Jesus “gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). The ransom was “himself,” given on the cross.

of war captives or kidnap victims. It had in view a spiritual deliverance—liberation from sin. Paul explains our redemption through his blood as *the forgiveness of our trespasses*.

The spiritual liberation was *according to the riches of his grace*. The wealth of God's grace is a recurring thought in Ephesians (1:18; 2:4, 7; 3:8; cf. 3:19). God is rich when it comes to kindness, goodwill or favor toward the undeserving. Our deliverance from sin accords with this great wealth of grace which is in God.

2. *Grace Abounding in Wisdom and Understanding (8–10)*

Paul adds another aspect of the grace bestowed on God's chosen ones in Christ Jesus. *With grace he abounded or overflowed¹⁴ toward us in all wisdom and prudence¹⁵* (8). The construction is like Philippians 1:9 where Paul prays that the Philippians' "love may abound ... in knowledge and all discernment." The reference is to wisdom and prudence (insight, understanding) as communicated to man through the abundance of grace rather than (as RSV & NASB) qualities of God used when he made known the mystery (cf. Col. 1:9).

Verse 9 then follows with a modal participle indicating how God abounded with grace toward us in all wisdom and prudence. How was grace communicated toward the elect in this way? It was by "making known to us the mystery of his will,¹⁶ according to his good pleasure (or benevolent intention) which he purposed in him."

The word *mystery* is from the Greek *musterion*: "a hidden thing, secret, mystery" (GT). In the New Testament it refers to something hidden in the mind of God, which could not be known except by revelation, though not necessarily difficult to understand once it was revealed. Consult Romans 16:25, First Corinthians 2:6–13, Ephesians 3:3–5, 9, and Colossians 1:26f for the idea.

¹⁴ Grk *perisseuo* means to abound or overflow, to supply in abundance; it is sometimes used of an excess (Matt. 14:20; 15:37; Luke 9:17; John 6:12f).

¹⁵ Grk *pronesis* relates to the correct use of the *phren* ["the mind; the faculty of perceiving and judging" (GT)]: "understanding, insight, intelligence" (AG). Only elsewhere in NT at Luke 1:17.

¹⁶ But again (as in *having foreordained us*, 5) the participle is aorist, for which reason the KJV renders *having made known*. See at verse 5 for this significance of the aorist participle.

The hidden or secret thing under consideration concerned God's will. It was *the mystery of his will*. But by making known this secret God supplied grace to his chosen ones *in all wisdom and insight or understanding*.¹⁷ The worldly wise may not understand the meaning of history. But the lowliest disciples of Jesus have wisdom and insight because God has made known to them his secret purpose.

3. *According to Divine Purpose (9b–10)*.

The bestowal of grace in such a manner was according to divine purpose, or as Paul puts it: *according to his good pleasure (or benevolent intention)*¹⁸ *which he purposed in him* (9b), i. e., in Christ (cf. 3:11), or as it could be, *in himself* (KJV).

The word *purposed* translates the Greek verb *protithemi*, the literal meaning of which is *to put or place before*; it refers to the setting of a thing before oneself, a purpose or plan, something one intends to do.

The plan which God had set before himself is then further explained in verse 10. God's plan had in view *a dispensation of the fulness of the times*. The Greek for dispensation is *oikonomia*, which might as well, and perhaps better, be rendered administration (NASB). It combines two words: *oikos*, house or household, and *nomos*, law; hence refers to "the management of a household or of household affairs" (GT).¹⁹ It is used in Luke 16:2–4 for the office of manager of an estate. With regard to this word, consider the reference in Ephesians 2:19 to "the household of God."

God's purpose had in view a dispensation belonging to *the fulness of the times*. The Greek *pleroma* is "the state of being full, fulness" (AG)—hence, when the times or seasons have been filled

¹⁷ See 3:1–12 for more detail with regard to the process. The mystery was revealed to apostles and prophets (3, 5), who then communicated it to others (8f). Paul wrote about it (3), and when the recipients of this letter read what he wrote they could perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ (4).

¹⁸ Grk *eudokia* as in verse 5.

¹⁹ *Dispensation* has to do with dispensing or giving out. The American Heritage Dictionary contains one meaning which is pretty close to the idea here: "A specific arrangement or system by which something is dispensed or administered." Compare Jesus' parable about "the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season" (Luke 12:42).

full; when they are complete. God sent his Son in “the fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4).

The divine purpose with reference to this dispensation was *to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth*. The Greek verb²⁰ means “sum up, recapitulate,” the idea here being “to bring everything together in Christ” (AG). GT attempts to indicate the significance of each element of the verb: “to bring together again for himself (note the middle) all things and beings (hitherto disunited by sin) into one combined state of fellowship in Christ, the universal bond.” The only other New Testament occurrence of the word is Romans 13:9 where all the commandments are said to be “summed up” in the one command to love one’s neighbor as oneself. The idea here is that all things previously disconnected and disassociated by sin were to be summarized in the Christ. The article is important, and also the meaning of the word Christ. *The Christ* means the Messiah,²¹ the anointed king that was to come in accord with Old Testament prophecy. God’s plan was to sum up all things by putting everything under the government of the Messiah (cf. verses 20–23 & Matt. 28:18). Notice especially verse 22. “The summing up of the totality takes place in its subjection to the Head.”²²

The Ultimate Goal of the Divine Purpose (11–14)

Paul provides further analysis of the divine purpose to gather up all things in Christ. His breakdown directs attention to two distinct groups comprehended in the divine purpose. But whichever is considered, the ultimate end God had in view was *the praise of his glory*.

The emphasis seems to fall on the actual execution of the divine purpose. God not only plans, but he also works. He actually executes his purpose “after the counsel of his will” (11). So emphasis is placed on execution as opposed to planning. God actually does what he plans.

The two groups embraced in the divine purpose are identified as “we” (11f) and “you also” (13). The usual explanation is that the two groups are Jews and Gentiles, and that would seem to be borne out by

²⁰ *anakephalaioo*.

²¹ Cf. John 1:41.

²² Schlier in TDNT, III, 682.

the development of thought in the epistle. The “you” is later identified as Gentiles in contrast with Jews (2:11ff), just as “you also” stands here in contrast to “we.” Furthermore, “we” is explained in verse 12 as “we who had before hoped in the Christ.” The Greek *proelpizo* could mean to hope *before the event* (GT, 538). But standing as it does here in contrast to “you also,” the more likely view would seem to be to hope *before the other group*; hence, the Jews who hoped in the Christ before the Gentiles, who came to hope in the Christ at a later time (cf. AG, 705 for this view).

The execution of the divine purpose had initial reference to the Jews (11–12). But the standard translations have had difficulty deciding exactly what is said about them, whether they “have obtained an inheritance” (KJV) or “were made a heritage” (ASV).²³ Either translation teaches important truth found elsewhere in Scripture. But perhaps neither is exactly right. The Greek is *kleroo*, which means to choose, determine, appoint or assign by lot (*kleros*). The only certain occurrence of this verb in the Septuagint²⁴ is at First Samuel 14:41 where Jonathan and Saul are said to have been taken by lot. Ephesians 1:11 is the only New Testament occurrence. It would seem to say literally: “we were chosen or appointed (by lot)”²⁵—i. e., the lot fell on us. Paul is giving a breakdown of God’s purpose in an administration of the fulness of the times, which aimed at the summarizing of all things in Christ. First he says “we” were brought within this administration, chosen or appointed by lot. Thus we have a portion in the divine purpose.

Furthermore, our selection, says Paul, was not a matter of chance or accident. We were *foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will*.

The end God had before him in this selection was *that we should be to the praise of his glory* (12). Compare Isaiah’s references to the people God created for his glory (Is. 43:7), “the people,” says Jehovah, “which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise” (v. 21). God had brought Israel into close relation with himself, as he

²³ NASB returns to “obtained an inheritance.”

²⁴ Greek translation of the Old Testament.

²⁵ See discussion in TDNT, III, 764f.

says, “that they may be to me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear” (Jer. 13:11), and thus failed of the divine purpose. But now God’s purpose was to be realized in believing Israel.

This purpose parallels what was said in verse 6 about the ultimate aim of foreordination to adoption. But God’s purpose embraced not only those *who had before hoped in Christ*, but others who are distinguished from them: *you also* (13f), which refers to the original recipients of this letter as being non-Jewish people (see 2:11f).

But before Paul says anything about what was done for the Gentiles, he explains the preconditions: *in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel* [i. e., good news] *of your salvation,— in whom, having also believed.* Thus Paul explains how the Gentiles came to be embraced within the scope of the divine purpose. These conditions being present, what was done for them? *You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*

A seal may indicate ownership (as in Rev. 7:3 with 14:1). Or it may be for the purpose of authentication (as in John 6:27; cf. 3:33). Here it may be both, but perhaps with some emphasis on authentication. When the gospel was first carried to Gentiles in Caesarea God took away every objection to the acceptance of Gentiles²⁶ by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit (10:44–48). When objections were raised in Jerusalem, they were silenced by Peter’s account of what happened in Caesarea (11:1–18; 15:7–9). The Lord “bare witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their [i. e., Paul and Barnabas] hands” (Acts 14:3). When Judaizers troubled the minds of Gentiles by insisting they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved, Paul responded that one question would be enough to decide the issue: “Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2). Thus the coming of the Holy Spirit of promise upon the Gentiles became the authenticating seal proving that they were sharers in *the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel* (cf. 3:6).²⁷

²⁶ See Acts 10:27–29 & 11:1–3 for the barriers that had to be removed.

²⁷ For this significance of sealed see John 3:33, 6:27 & Rev. 7:3; and consult GT, 609 & AG, 796 on the Grk verb *sphragizo*.

But the gift of the Spirit is not only an authentication of acceptance. It is also *an earnest of our inheritance* (14).²⁸ An earnest²⁹ is “money which in purchases is given as a pledge that the full amount will subsequently be paid. ... The gift of the Holy Spirit, comprising as it does the ‘powers of the age to come’ (Heb. 6:5), is both a foretaste and a pledge of future blessedness” (GT, 75; see also AG, 109).

An earnest is not just a deposit that may subsequently be retrieved. It is money that is not refundable, a guarantee that the full price will be paid. Sharon and I made an offer on the house where we live and paid what we considered a reasonable earnest payment. The seller replied that if we would double the amount of the earnest the offer would be accepted. The earnest was money we would have lost had we not gone through with the deal. The sellers wanted the earnest payment to be large enough that they would feel confident we would not back out. The gift of the Holy Spirit was a guarantee that the full inheritance would be made good to the heirs, just as earnest money in the purchase of a house guarantees that the full amount will be paid.

The gift of the Spirit as an earnest of our inheritance has in view *the redemption of the purchased possession* as the ultimate goal. The Greek *peripoiesis* means acquisition, possession or property. It is used in First Peter 2:9 for “a people that has become (God’s own) possession” (AG, 650). Compare Malachi 3:17 where the people written in God’s book of remembrance become his own possession.³⁰

As in verse 7, the Greek *apolutrosis* means “a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom” (GT, 65). Thus Paul is referring to the liberation (by ransom) of the people who have become God’s own property. “In Christ we have our redemption through his blood” (7). But every believer understands that our liberation from sin is not complete. As long as we live in the flesh we continue to struggle with sin. Liberation will not be completed until “the day of redemption” (4:30). Compare also Romans 8:23, in which Christians are said to be “wait-

²⁸ Notice *our*, which now embraces Jews with Gentiles.

²⁹ Grk *arrabon*.

³⁰ See also First Cor. 6:19f & 7:23.

ing for adoption, the redemption of our body.” The gift of the Spirit as an earnest of our inheritance has in view the completion of redemption on the day of redemption.

The ultimate goal is then stated for the third time (for recall verses 6 & 12): *unto the praise of his glory*. Again compare Isaiah 43:20f, where Jehovah speaks of “the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise.” First Peter 2:9 alludes to the same passage. God’s glory shines forth in all that he has done for the redemption of mankind, and the ultimate end is recognition, commendation and praise of his glory.

Thus Paul has taken us from the purpose conceived in the mind of God before the beginning of time to the execution of that purpose in the sending of the Christ and the creation of a new Israel, and finally, to the ultimate consummation of that purpose on the day of redemption. Surely he has stirred our hearts to exclaim with him: “Blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...”

Practical Reflection

Paul’s purpose is to communicate understanding of our position in Christ Jesus. We desperately need such understanding, for we are wasting our lives away on trivialities. We manifest so little understanding of our position in God’s plan. Yet if we have been baptized into Christ Jesus through faith, then we belong to that people for which God planned before the foundation of the world. He executed that plan by sacrificing his own son, then uncovered the mystery of it by revelation of the Holy Spirit. We are the subject of a divine work. He has a wonderful purpose for us. We are a people of destiny. Shall we live like ignorant pagans who know nothing of God’s purpose? Or shall we show an understanding of the high purpose to which we are called?

Paul's Prayer for his Readers Ephesians 1:15–23

Paul's prayer for his readers is directly linked to the opening passage about the rich treasures of grace manifested in Christ Jesus, but especially as now including the readers and others of their class. *For this cause*³¹ *I also ... do not cease giving thanks for you.* But before getting into his prayer for them he explains the occasion of it: *having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which is directed toward all the saints.* Paul gained information about these matters the same way he learned about the faith and love of the Colossians (Col. 1:4), who seemed to be included among those who had not seen his face in the flesh (Col. 2:1). That seems a little strange if this letter were directly and exclusively addressed to the saints at Ephesus, where Paul had spent three years (Acts 20:31). I suppose he could be speaking of information about the manifestation of faith and love after his departure. But given that *at Ephesus* is omitted from some of the most important manuscripts in verse 2, perhaps it is more likely that this letter was intended for circulation among all the churches of Asia. It may even be “the epistle from Laodicea” which is mentioned in Colossians 4:16.

Two things about the readers had caught the apostle's attention and moved him to prayer on their behalf. One was their personal faith in the Redeemer. The other was their love for the saints. Faith had brought them into a community (cf. 2:19ff) and made them part of a great family. Christians are taught to love all humanity, of course, even to their enemies. But that does not rule out their having a special regard for the chosen of God, and such love for all the saints was characteristic of Christians addressed by Paul.

The previous passage had concluded with reference to hearing and believing of the gospel as preconditions of authentication as people brought within the scope of the divine purpose (13–14). When Paul heard about the readers' faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for the saints he evidently saw these characteristics as evidence that these too were among God's chosen people, and gave thanks for them. Such thanksgiving accords with the ultimate goal of the divine purpose.

³¹ Grk *dia touto*, on account of this or for this cause, the cause being found in what Paul has just written.

Three times Paul has said that God's purpose aimed at "the praise of his glory" (6, 12, 14). It is consistent with that aim that Paul, seeing evidence of the manifestation of God's grace in his readers, remembers them in his prayers and acknowledges the work of God with thanksgiving on their behalf.

The God Addressed in Prayer (17)

Effective prayer must focus on God, who and what he is. It must be more than mindless words addressed to no one in particular. But the infinite God can be thought of from different aspects, as for example when Paul calls him "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3), for reasons suggested by context (2 Cor. 1:3–7 with 7:5–7). Two aspects of God stand out in Paul's mind as he gives thanks for his readers and prays for them. He calls him first "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is not only the Father of the Lord Jesus, but also his God, since Jesus is human as well as divine. Jesus called him his God (Matt. 27:46; John 20:17). It was in this capacity as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the God revealed and known through our Lord" (Moule), that God had manifested himself in redemption (cf. v. 3).

Paul also thinks of him as "the Father of glory." "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1), of course; but Paul no doubt still has in his mind the manifestation of God's glory in Christ Jesus. All that God had done had been "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (6), or "to the praise of his glory" (12, 14). As the heavenly bodies shine forth with their glory (1 Cor. 15:40–41), so the divine splendor is manifested through the operations of his grace, as well as in the expression of all his attributes. Paul prayed for his readers that the Father characterized by such wondrous glory would act.

Paul's Prayer for the Church: A Special Manifestation of the Spirit (17)

What did Paul wish "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" to do for his readers? He prayed that this God "may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Paul's usage of this language will explain the meaning. For example, First Corinthians 2:6–13 explains the way the wisdom of God is communicated by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:3–5 also speaks of

the Holy Spirit as the agent of divine revelation. For “spirit” without the article, as it is here, consult First Corinthians 14 for help. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as “zealous of spirits” (v. 12, literal translation), referring to the spiritual gifts or special manifestations of the Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 is also helpful. The Spirit of Jehovah would rest upon the messianic king, but is then described as “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.” The Spirit of Jehovah would have all these characteristics and when this Spirit rested upon the Messiah it would equip him with these characteristics.

Paul’s prayer is that God would give his readers such a special manifestation of the Spirit, a spirit that would be characterized by wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. The last phrase indicates the sphere in which this manifestation was to take place. Paul wanted his readers to be equipped with wisdom and revelation, but not with regard to just any subject or just any body of knowledge. He wished for them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the sphere of the knowledge of God. He does not use the simple word for knowledge, but the compound word *epignosis* which refers to full, thorough or complete knowledge. The kindred verb *epiginosko* occurs at First Corinthians 13:12 for knowing fully in contrast to knowing (*ginosko*) in part. So what Paul wished for his readers was a deeper, fuller knowledge of God.

Threefold Object of Knowledge (18–21)

The result of receiving a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God is *having the eyes of your heart enlightened* in order to know three things. The Gentiles, says Paul, are “darkened in their understanding” (Eph. 4:18). Paul was sent to both Jews and Gentiles “to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light ...” (Acts 26:18). Jesus spoke in the words of Isaiah of those who close their eyes lest they see (Matt. 13:15; cf. Acts 28:27). But the purpose of Paul’s preaching of the gospel was “to make all men see” or “to bring to light”³² the dispensation of the mystery (Eph. 3:9). But even those who have faith in the Lord Jesus (1:15) can use more and more spiritual illumination; and the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowl-

³² Depending on the reading, whether *pantas* should be in the text as an object of the verb, which in either case is *photizo*, as here.

edge of God, which Paul sought for his readers, would provide light for their spiritual eyes, enabling them to know three things.³³

First, with spiritual eyes enlightened, they would be able to “know what is the hope of his calling.” As being “separate from Christ” the Gentiles were without hope (Eph. 2:12). But they had been called to inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9). The hope is again called the hope “of your calling” (in Eph. 4:4). God’s call comes “through the gospel” and it is a call “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). In the companion epistle to Ephesians Paul speaks of “the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (1:5) and calls “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). Christians need to know the hope kindled by the divine call.

Elsewhere Paul discusses the standpoint of a Christian’s salvation as a matter of hope (Rom. 8:24f), explaining that hope involves the unseen and the future as opposed to a possession already in one’s hand. But if we have hope in this unseen, but promised future possession, then by means of patience we “wait it out” until this future possession is actually in our grasp. That is the importance of hope.

Second, Paul defines the content of the hope that he wanted his readers to know: “what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” I doubt that *in the saints* is intended to identify the saints themselves as God’s inheritance, though the idea would not be unscriptural. *In the saints* probably means *among the saints*, just as Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders about “the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).³⁴ Christians are sons of God (Eph. 1:5) and therefore heirs of God (cf. Rom. 8:17 & Gal. 4:7). The hope Paul wanted his readers to know was the hope of an inheritance. And this inheritance is glorious. Paul speaks of “the glory of his inheritance among the saints.” As the sun, moon and stars shine forth in splendor (1 Cor. 15:41); as God’s glory shines forth in the

³³ Observe that both Acts 26:18 and Ephesians 3:9 indicate that illumination takes place through a messenger or through teaching. More on this point later.

³⁴ A parallel in Colossians has “the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

various manifestations of his attributes (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14); his inheritance among the saints has its brilliance or splendor. But Paul further speaks of “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” The glory of this inheritance is rich.

Perhaps we do not give enough attention to the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance among the saints. What a change in the emphasis of our lives would take place if we understood fully the wealth of the glory of the inheritance that is held out before us! Would we not spend our time in pursuit of this real wealth instead of what is tantamount to poverty by comparison?

Finally, Paul wanted his readers to know “what is the exceeding (or surpassing) greatness of his power toward us who believe.” The progression of thought is exactly as in First Peter 1:3–5. Peter moves from the “living hope” in our hearts to a description of the object of that hope (an inheritance), and finally to the divine power that is the guarantee of the inheritance. The inheritance is “reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” In like manner Paul speaks first of the hope, then the inheritance which is the object of that hope, and finally the divine power that is manifested toward believers. It is power; but not just power, it is great power; and not just great power, but power that is exceeding great. The Greek for exceeding (or surpassing) is from a participle derived from the verb *hyperballo*, which combines the preposition *hyper*, meaning over, with the verb *ballo*, meaning to throw or cast; hence to throw over or beyond. The greatness of the power of which Paul speaks extends beyond all measure; it is exceeding great. But Paul is not done with his description.

The Model (or Pattern) of That Power

Paul gives us an example of the working of the divine power, by which we may judge the greatness of the power that is at the disposal of Christians, that is exercised on their behalf. He says it is “according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,” and placed him in the seat of authority far above any other authority or name that could be named, whether in this world, or that which is to come.

Paul uses three Greek terms that refer to different aspects of strength or power.³⁵ Some would translate: “according to the working of the might or power of his strength,” and I doubt that we can be sure about which of these words best suits the Greek terms. But here is how I think the relationship between the words may possibly be explained: A man has *inherent strength* in his muscles. That strength is characterized by *power* or *might*, although it takes some particular manifestation to reveal that power. But in any particular *working* (such as chopping wood or striking a blow) we see this power exercised. *The working of the power of his strength* refers to any particular exercise of it; this power in action, doing something. Paul is referring to the power of God’s strength in action, working, doing something. Now what is the particular working of God’s power that Paul introduces as giving us a notion of the greatness of the power which he exercises on behalf of believers? It is that working (*energeia*) of the might of his strength which he worked (*energeo*) in the Christ when he raised him from the dead and exalted him to his own right hand above all other powers or authorities.

Do you think it does not take power to raise the dead? Then go down to the graveyard and try it. When Jill died I would have given anything for the power to speak a word and demand that she come back to life. Jesus could do that (cf. John 11:43f). We cannot. But what is impossible to man is not impossible to God. He raised the dead, and the power at work in the resurrection of Christ is put before us in order that we may understand the power that is at a Christian’s disposal; that is exercised on his behalf. And as in First Peter 1:3–5, this power is the guarantee that hope will be realized. It is the assurance that we will not place our hope in the promises of God only to be disappointed at last.

In times of discouragement, here is the place to which we can turn for renewal of our hope. This divine power assures the certainty of our inheritance and the guarantee of the success of everything God wills us to do, if only we will yield ourselves in his hands and let him use us.

But the manifestation of power was not exhausted at the resurrection. It was further manifested in the accession of Christ to the right hand of God. *He made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly*

³⁵ *energeia*, *kratos* and *ischus*.

places (20). *At his right hand* is the place of highest honor.³⁶ “Session at the right hand of God means joint rule” (Foerster in TDNT, III, 1089). It indicates “that he has *become a partner in God’s universal government*. That these expressions are to be understood in this figurative sense, and not of a fixed and definite place in the highest heavens, will be questioned by no one who carefully considers Rev. 3:21” (GT on *dexios*, 128), which verse indicates that Jesus “sat down with (his) Father in his throne.” Thus he shares the rule.³⁷ Henceforth the divine government was placed in the hands of the Son and the Father would exercise rule through his Son (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28).

The concept goes back to Psalm 110:1 where sitting at the right hand of God indicates lordship. Though the Christ, on the human side, was the son of David, yet David in this verse has called him his Lord (Matt. 22:41–45). Recall, then, Peter’s conclusion after the citation of Psalm 110:1 in Acts 2:34–36 “that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

The accession to the right hand of God placed him not just above, but “far above³⁸ all rule,³⁹ and authority,⁴⁰ and power,⁴¹ and dominion,⁴² and every name that is named, not only in this world (or age), but also in that which is to come” (21).

³⁶ Sitting on the right hand and on the left in the kingdom (Matt. 20:21, 23; Mark 10:37, 40) was “to occupy the places of honor nearest the king” (GT). When Bathsheba came to make a request of her son, King Solomon, he arranged for her to sit on his right hand (1 Kings 2:19; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 8, 7). According to Josephus (*Antiquities*, Book 6, 235), Jonathan was seated on the right hand of his father, King Saul. See also Psalm 45:9.

³⁷ The same point would seem to be proved by a comparison between First Cor. 15:25 and Hebrews 10:12f. “He must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet.” But “he sat down on the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet.” Thus the accession to the right hand of God marked the beginning of his reign.

³⁸ Not just *ano*, which itself means *above*, but *huperano*. The preposition *huper* adds its force, *over*, *above*, *beyond*. Thus more than just above, *huperano* is far above.

³⁹ Grk *arche*, which “always signifies ‘primacy,’ whether in time: ‘beginning,’ *principium*, or in rank: ‘power,’ ‘dominion,’ ‘office’” (Delling in TDNT, I, 479).

⁴⁰ Grk *exousia*.

⁴¹ Grk *dunamis*.

⁴² Grk *kuriotes* is “power or position as lord” (Foerster in TDNT, III, 1096). Grk for lord is *kurios*.

Other such listings of words for authority, rulers and the like will clarify Paul's thought:

Ephesians 3:10 speaks of "the principalities⁴³ and powers⁴⁴ in the heavenly *places*."

The exhortation: "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:11) is supported by the explanation: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood [i. e., mere human opponents], but against the principalities,⁴⁵ against the powers,⁴⁶ against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (6:12). Reference to powerful spiritual adversaries as opposed to merely human rulers.

Turn then to Paul's companion epistle. Colossians 1:16 explains the supremacy of Christ over all creation: "for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;⁴⁷ all things have been created through him, and unto him." Thus he is the creator of even powerful angelic or demonic rulers.

Colossians 2:10 calls Christ "the head of all principality and power."⁴⁸

Colossians 2:15 speaks of hostile principalities and powers⁴⁹ defeated by means of the cross.

Romans 8:38f mentions angels, followed by principalities and powers,⁵⁰ among created beings that cannot separate God's elect from the love of God manifested in Christ.

First Corinthians 15:24 explains that the reign of the Christ will culminate in the abolition of "all rule and authority and power"⁵¹ at the end of time when the dead are raised and death is finally destroyed.

⁴³ Grk *archais* is a plural form from *arche*.

⁴⁴ Grk *exousiais*, a plural from *exousia*.

⁴⁵ From Grk *arche*.

⁴⁶ From Grk *exousia*.

⁴⁷ "Dominions" is from Grk *kuriotes*; "principalities," from *arche*; "powers," from *exousia*.

⁴⁸ Grk *arches kai exousias*, from *arche* and *exousia*.

⁴⁹ Grk from *arche* and *exousia*.

⁵⁰ From Grk *arche* and *dunamis*.

⁵¹ Grk words *arche*, *exousia*, *dunamis*.

First Peter 3:22 is not from Paul, but parallels the idea of our text: Jesus Christ “is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers⁵² being made subject unto him.”

Now having gathered up the passages which illustrate and define the language of verse 21, we must again recall the context. Paul is providing a model of the working of divine power in order that we may understand that power which is at the disposal of believers. His model set forth to illustrate that power is the operation of God by which he raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to his right hand, far above all these powerful forces that we might fear. But I have omitted something. Paul adds that Christ has been placed far above “every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.” I challenge you: Name a name! You will not be able to name any name but that Jesus has been elevated far above that name. Nor will there be any name in time to come that will have anywhere near the exalted position that Jesus Christ now has. But Paul’s discussion of the spiritual power manifested toward Christians is not complete yet.

God’s Gift to the Church (22–23)

This exalted Christ has been given to the church. Consider the way this point is developed:

1. The Subordination of All Things to Christ (22a).

First Paul adds to what he has already said about the exalted position of the Christ: “And he put all things in subjection under his feet.” The Greek verb is *hupotasso*. It is a compound word composed of the preposition *hupo* (under) combined with the verb *tasso* (to place). The most literal meaning is therefore *to place under*, then *to subordinate*.⁵³ The idea is that God has placed everything under the feet of Christ; he has made everything subordinate to him.

The idea derives from Psalm 8. The statement (6b) refers to the lordship assigned to mankind at the creation (Gen. 1:26–28). The psalm is quoted and applied in Hebrews 2. The writer concludes that if “all things” are put under man, then nothing is left that is not subject to him

⁵² “Authorities and powers” are plural forms from the Grk *exousia* and *dunamis*.

⁵³ TDNT, VIII, 39.

(8ab). But man fell into sin, and so the writer continues by saying that as a matter of fact we do not yet see all things subjected to him (8c). What we do see, however, is Jesus, who was made a man, “a little lower than the angels,” and who has been “crowned with glory and honor”—language from Psalm 8 (9). Thus in Jesus the high and exalted position that was intended for man has now been realized. For the first time a man, the God-man Christ Jesus, occupies the position God intended for mankind. The writer continues by pointing out that through Jesus mankind generally can attain their destiny (10).

2. *God's Gift to the Church (22b)*. God “gave him to be head over all things to the church.” Better: “gave him, as head over all things, to the church.” Paul has already made the point that Christ is “head over all things” (20–22a). Now he adds that God has given him, head over all things, to the church. The one who is head over all things has been given to the church as its head. We shall see how much is implied when we consider what follows.

3. *The Church, His Body (23a)*.

The church, says Paul, “is his body.” The Christ, who is head over all things, has been given to the church, which is his body; and he therefore, this one who is head over all things in the entire universe, is head of the church, his body. Consider the implications of this head/body relationship:

(1) *Power at the Disposal of the Church*. The immediate context is Paul's discussion of “the exceeding greatness of (God's) power to us who believe” (19). Paul speaks of certain manifestations of God's mighty power as illustrating the greatness of his power to believers. The power of God which is at the disposal of believers is in accord with the operation of his power in raising Jesus from the dead, seating him at his right hand far above all other spiritual power, whether angelic or demonic, with the entire universe placed under his rule. With all the power and authority represented by the description of his position, he has been given to the church. This One who has such a position of rule and authority over the entire universe has been given to the church as its head. That is the power that is exercised toward believers and for their benefit.

(2) *Nourishment for Growth.* Paul makes the point in Ephesians 4:15f that the head is the source from which the body derives everything necessary for its growth. The same point is made in Ephesians 5:29f when Paul says Christ “nourishes and cherishes” the church, “because we are members of his body”; and again in the companion epistle: From the head, Paul writes, “all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, grows with the growth of God” (Col. 2:19). The head supplies both the nourishment and the unity that is necessary for its growth.

(3) *Subjection to Christ (Eph. 5:24).* “The church is subject to Christ.” It has been placed under him as its head. The head gives direction to the body; it is not the other way around. The church therefore must yield to the control and direction of its head, rather than taking matters into its own hands.

(4) *Function.* The Head/Body relationship, finally, indicates function. Ephesians 4:16 speaks of the working or operation of each particular part of the body. See also Romans 12:3–8 and First Corinthians, Chapter 12, for further illustration of this idea.

So the gift of Christ to the church communicates at least four benefits: (a) The power necessary to insure its success; (b) the nourishment and unity needful for growth; (c) direction and control, so that the church need not flounder about as a headless body; and (d) the ability to function as a body, each part empowered by the head to perform its function.

4. *The Fulness of Christ (23b).*

First the church is called the body of Christ and then the fulness of Christ, “the fulness of him that fills all in all.” What is meant by calling the church the fulness of Christ? But first, what is meant by *the fulness of him* (i. e., Christ) in itself?

The ending in the Greek noun *pleroma* suggests the passive notion, *the thing filled*; “*that which is (or has been) filled*” (GT, 518). It is applied, for example, to ships in Greek literature, sometimes to the contents of a ship, “those things with which ships are filled, freight and merchandise, sailors, oarsmen, soldiers,” but also sometimes to the ship itself “inasmuch as it is filled (i. e. manned) with sailors, rowers, and soldiers.”

The noun refers to completeness, the totality, the sum total of the contents of something, all that is in something. Consider the New Testament occurrences of this word in order:

Matthew 9:16 refers to the patch which should fill up a rent garment. Literally, *the fulness of it*. The parallel in Mark 2:21 is the same.

“Twelve basketfuls” in Mark 6:43 is literally *twelve fulnesses of baskets*. Reference to the entire contents of the baskets. The same in Mark 8:20.

John 1:16 is of particular interest since it refers to the fulness of Christ: “For of his fulness we all received, ...” The statement follows close on the heels of verse 14, where he is said to be “full of grace and truth.” Out of the fulness that is in him we have received grace.

Romans 11:12 refers to the “fulness” of the Jews in contrast to “their fall” and “their loss.” Reference is to the salvation of the full number, the totality, of the Jews.

The same is true of “the fulness of the Gentiles” in verse 25—the sum total of the Gentiles that are to enter the kingdom.

In Romans 13:10 love is called “the fulfillment (literally, the fulness) of the law.” Everything that is in the law, every commandment, “is summed up in this word,” the command to love one’s neighbor as himself.

Paul expected to come to the Roman Christians “in the fulness of the blessing of Christ” (Rom. 15:29). Reference to completeness, the totality of the blessing of Christ.

First Corinthians 11:26 makes reference to “the fulness” of the earth—i. e., everything that is in the earth.⁵⁴

Galatians 4:4 has “the fulness of the time”—the time being thought of as being filled up or complete. So also in Ephesians 1:10 where the plural occurs, “the fulness of the times.”

Next comes Ephesians 1:23 where the church is said to be the body of Christ, “the fulness of him that fills all in all.”

⁵⁴ The so called Received Text, on which the KJV is based, also has this expression in verse 28. Parallels are of fairly frequent occurrence in the Old Testament: Psalm 24:1; 50:12; Jer. 8:16, “all that is in (the land),” which also occurs in Ezek. 12:19, with the marginal note indicating the original is literally *the fulness thereof*; etc. First Chron. 16:32 and Psalm 96:11 refer to the fulness of the sea.

Ephesians has two other occurrences: “that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God” (3:19), meaning all that is in God; and: “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”—all that fills Christ.

Colossians, the companion epistle, has two occurrences: “... that in him should all the fulness dwell” (1:19), a reference that is clarified by the other occurrence: “... for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9).

In Greek literature outside the New Testament references are found to the fulness of cities and the fulness of ships. Sometimes “the fulness of ships” refers either to the cargo or the crew; i. e., a fully manned ship. Sometimes the ship is itself referred to as the fulness, a filled ship, as cited in GT above. Outside the Bible the meaning *what is filled* “is found for certain only of a fully manned ship” (TDNT, VI, 299).

The fulness of Christ, therefore, means the sum total of what fills Christ, all that is in him. When the church, the body of Christ, is said to be his fulness, the idea is that all that is in Christ has been communicated to the church. In this connection, we should recall what has been said in verses 3–14 about the wealth of grace which has been made available to God’s chosen in Christ Jesus.

But notice that the body of Christ is not said to be specifically the fulness of Christ as such, but *the fulness of him that fills all in all*. Then connect that thought with Ephesians 4:7–10. Christ was exalted “that he might fill all things.” In pursuance of that aim he fills the church with everything needful: “And he gave some as apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ: etc.” (vv. 11ff).

Two other references are also of particular help. After describing the incarnate Word as “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), John then says: “For of his fulness we all received, and grace upon grace” (literal translation of verse 16, referring to an inexhaustible supply of grace). Out of the fulness that is in Christ we have received an all sufficient supply of grace, so that we too are filled from his fulness.

The same thought is found in Colossians. First there is the statement “that in (Christ) should all the fulness dwell” (1:19), which is clarified by a second statement: “for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead (i. e., Godhood or deity) bodily” (2:9). All that is in God,

all the attributes of deity, all that makes God specifically God and not something else; all the fulness of deity is said to dwell in Christ.

That statement is then followed by another: "and in him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power" (2:10). Again we have the thought of John 1:16. Out of his fulness we have been made full. Is that not the thought when the body of Christ is identified with the fulness of Christ, all that fills Christ?

What is said elsewhere about the head/body relationship is consistent with this explanation, but especially Ephesians 4:16 and Colossians 2:19. In both these verses the body is said to derive from the head all that is necessary for its proper development.

One last thought. While in Ephesians 1:22f the body of Christ is identified with the fulness of Christ, in two later passages the fulness of God or of Christ is something that remains to be attained. Thus Ephesians 3:19, "... that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God." Thus also Ephesians 4:13, "... till we all attain ... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." One possible explanation of this distinction is that Ephesians 1:22f refers to an ideal, the divine intention, which still remains to be practically realized (3:19 & 4:13). Or perhaps the idea is that all the blessings that are in Christ Jesus have been made available to the church (1:22f), but remain to be practically applied (3:19 & 4:13). In any case, Paul certainly teaches that every need of the church is fully supplied in Christ Jesus.

What is meant by *all in all* in the description of Christ as *him that fills all in all*? The reference is certainly to Christ, as Ephesians 4:10 proves, and the neuter article used in that verse proves also that *panta* is neuter (all things). He fills *all things*. But the second all (Grk *pasi*) could be either masculine or neuter. What then is meant by *en pasi* (in all)? *He fills all things in all ... what?* I can only mention a few suggestions. Grimm-Thayer, 493, thinks the reference may be to *all places*: "to fill the universe of things in all places," while, however, taking note of others who understand the phrase modally or instrumentally. They mention the possibility of putting this verse with others (1 Tim. 3:11; 4:15 [Received Text]; 2 Tim. 2:7; 4:5; Tit. 2:9; Heb. 13:4, 18; 1 Pet. 4:11) where the phrase *en pasin* is defined *in all things, in all ways, altogether*. Arndt & Gingrich, 633, also define *en pasi* in these passages to mean *in all respects, in every way*, and consider this cat-

egory a likely possibility for Eph. 1:23. The things filled by Christ are different by nature, and he fills each with the content appropriate to its nature. But he who fills all things in all ways fills also the church with everything that is needful to it.

Ephesians, the Answer to Paul’s Prayer?

Paul’s prayer may be a key to the message of Ephesians. Paul was not a man merely to wish folk well, but then do nothing for them. Nor did he pray hypocritical prayers, asking God for things he did not care enough about to lift a finger to accomplish them. It stands to reason, that if he thought the great need of his readers was a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, so that their spiritual eyes would be enlightened in order to know the hope of their calling, the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints, and the great power exercised toward believers to preserve them and to provide for their needs, he would do what he could toward that end as well. And in fact, if we recall the opening passage, and then read on through Chapters 2 & 3, we will see that this prayer seeks the very things this epistle deals with. Perhaps God answered Paul’s prayer that his readers might have a spirit of wisdom and revelation for the purpose indicated by giving Paul this epistle. The readers would then be able to get what they needed from the wisdom and revelation that is communicated in this epistle. This reasoning also suggests the spiritual treasure we may be able to find for ourselves by reading Ephesians. Hallelujah!

The Riches of God’s Grace Ephesians 2:1–10

The heading is drawn from verse 7, where Paul speaks of “the exceeding riches of God’s grace.” Such language is characteristic of Ephesians. In the present passage Paul had already called God “rich in mercy” (4). Even before that he had spoken of “the riches of his grace” (1:7) and “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18). Afterwards he will speak of “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8) and “the riches of his glory” (3:16).

God is rich when it comes to these attributes. But he is more than rich in grace. He is exceedingly rich. Again as in 1:19⁵⁵ Paul uses a present participle formed from the verb *hyperballo*. Thus he speaks of a wealth that goes beyond, that is over or above (Grk *hyper*), that exceeds. We must not think of mere affluence or ordinary wealth. This is wealth that goes beyond. Do not think in terms of a few hundred thousand dollars. Do not let your mind be limited to millionaire status. God's wealth is more like that of a billionaire, or even a trillionaire. God is exceeding rich in grace. And the present passage indicates God's intent to "show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." God wants to show his great wealth upon us in Christ Jesus.

This passage continues the thought concerning the power of God toward believers, which was introduced in the last one. Paul's prayer was that the Ephesians might know "the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe." In order to help us understand the greatness of this power Paul says it accords with "that working of the power of his strength which he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" and placed him in his present position of supremacy. He now speaks of a further manifestation of that power as it works through the gospel to raise sinners from death in sin to a new life in Christ. Paul has pointed to God's power in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Now he adds: "And you, when you were dead in sin, were made alive with Christ, raised up with him, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places."

Three points are emphasized. Paul shows (1) the spiritual condition of the alien sinner out of Christ, (2) what God has done for the saved sinner, and (3) the ultimate purpose of what God has done. Blaikie⁵⁶ sees a parallel between this passage and Genesis 1. Both speak of a creation—one physical, the other spiritual (cf. v. 10). The story of the creation of the world begins with chaos ("the earth was waste and void"), or at least the initial unshaped and empty state, but then moves on to the acts of God to bring order to the world. So it is here. We begin with chaos (vv. 1–3), but then move on to the divine intervention (vv. 4–10). Our study begins with the condition of spiri-

⁵⁵ Which see for this participle.

⁵⁶ Pulpit Commentary.

tual chaos from which God rescued mankind. We cannot understand what it means to be saved by grace until we see what we are without it.

Past Condition as Sinners Before Being Saved by Grace (1–3)

You were dead, says Paul, *through your trespasses and sins*. The condition of alienation from God is described as a state of spiritual death, as it is in many other passages of the New Testament.⁵⁷ Only God has life in himself.⁵⁸ Others depend on him for life. Those who endeavor to live without God do not have life that is worthy of the name. The idea is perhaps best explained by Ephesians 4:17 where the Gentiles are described as being “alienated from the life of God.”

After spiritual death has been attributed to trespasses and sins, these are then described (v. 2) as the *sphere* of their former walk: “in which you once walked.” “Trespasses and sins were the domain in which they had their habitual course of life in their former heathen days” (Salmond in EGT). “Sins were more than occasional acts; they were the medium, the atmosphere, of their ordinary life” (Westcott). It is remarkable that Paul says they were dead, yet they walked. The idea resembles the thought of First Timothy 5:6 where the widow who “gives herself to pleasure” is described as “dead while she lives.” They walked in trespasses and sins, probably thinking this was real living; but they were dead. This walk in rebellion against God was not worthy of the name life.

Two phrases define *the standard or pattern* to which their former conduct conformed (v. 2). First, they walked *according to the age of this world*.⁵⁹ Recall that Paul has spoken of “this age” in contrast to “that which is to come” (1:21). Here he speaks of the age of this world as it now exists in rebellion against God and under the rule of Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Christians are warned to keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27); that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jas. 4:4). Peter speaks of “the corruption that is in the world by lust,” from which Christians have escaped (2 Pet. 1:4), and describes apostates as being again entangled in “the defilements of

⁵⁷ Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60; 15:24, 32; John 5:24, 25; Col. 2:13; First Tim. 5:6; Rev. 3:1.

⁵⁸ “Who only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16).

⁵⁹ Literal translation.