

EPHESIANS

1:3-6 *Is this not clear proof that God has predetermined who will be saved as many in the church believe?*

No, although this scripture is used by some in the church to teach that. They claim that God is sovereign in the matter of salvation and no one can be saved without being predestined to salvation by God; they teach that nothing anyone does has any bearing on the matter; that God decided it arbitrarily, without any respect to human worth, before they are even born. This teaching is called Calvinism, which was formulated by John Calvin and introduced into the New Testament church during the reformation period of the church in the early 1500's. Proponents of Calvinism call this teaching the "doctrine of unconditional election". It holds that because man is totally depraved and incapable of initiating any move toward God that would gain or contribute to his own salvation, God must be free to save whom He will, and has already determined who should, and who should not be saved.

This is a fallacious teaching which contradicts all that God Himself teaches in His word. It denies that God's redemptive plan provides for all men, which makes a mockery of Christ's death on the cross, rendering it efficacious only for a select few. This implies that God plays games with the souls of men by calling them all to repent, but determining that only those He has predestined to salvation will be saved. (CP Isa 45:22; 55:1-3; Joel 2:32; Mt 11:28-30; Jn 3:16-17; 5:40; Ac 2:21; Ro 10:13; 1Ti 2:1-4; 2Pe 3:9; Rev 21:6; 22:17). Those scriptures teach that all men are called to be God's elect, and can be if they choose God (CP De 30:19; 2Chr 15:2; Isa 55:6-7; Eze 18:21-30; 33:13-20; Jn 1:6-7, 12; 3:14-15; 5:24; Ac 10:34-35; 16:31; Ro 1:16; 4:5-25; 1Co 1:21; 8:3; Ga 3:7-9; 1Th 1:1-10; He 5:9). God has not already determined for or against any man's salvation as is plainly evident in those passages. His plan is the same for all men – everyone is invited to avail themselves of His offer to save them on the sole basis of their individual choice and conformity to God's plan of redemption (CP Mt 22:1-14).

There are two great truths illustrated here in the parable of the marriage feast, and like the scriptures we have just looked at, they too refute the doctrine of unconditional election. The first truth is that as the king called all men to the marriage feast of his son, so God calls all men to partake of the kingdom benefits of His Son. God's invitation to salvation is a universal call, and as the parable teaches, no one is excluded from responding to it (CP Mt 11:28-30; Jn 3:16; Rev 22:17). The second truth the parable reveals is that sadly not everyone who responds to God's call are true believers. Many within the professing church are not surrendered to God. They are not wearing a wedding garment; they have not *put on* Christ (CP Ro 13:14; Ga 3:27). Wearing the wedding garment in the parable is symbolic of our having *put on* Christ as true believers. It means being completely yielded to Christ in continued obedience to His word. If we have not *put on* Christ then we cannot partake of His kingdom benefits. Just as the man without a wedding garment in the parable could not partake of the feast, and as he

was thrown into outer darkness, so we will be damned for eternity (CP Mt 7:13-14; Lu 13:23-30).

The call to salvation goes out to the many, however only those who unite and identify with Christ will inherit the kingdom of heaven. That is what Jesus means when He said "Many are called but few are chosen" in Mt 22:14. It has nothing to do with our eternal destiny being predetermined by God as Calvinism teaches. Those who conform to God's plan will become the elect and be saved, while those who do not will be lost (CP De 30:15-18; Isa 1:18-20; 8:13-15; Eze 18:20; 33:12; Mt 21:42-44; Mk 16:16; Lu 13:1-5; 20:17-18; Jn 3:18, 36; Ac 3:19; 17:30-31; Rev 21:8). It is the plan of redemption and the saviour through whom it will be accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ, that has been foreknown, elected and predestinated by God – not the individual conformity to the plan (CP Ge 3:15; Nu 24:17; Psa 118:22; Isa 9:6-7, 28:16; Mt 1:20-23; Lu 2:25-28; 24:25-27, 44-48; Jn 1:29; Ro 1:1-6; Eph 3:1-12; 2Ti 1:1, 8-10; 1Pe 1:18-20; 2:6-8; Rev 13:8).

Rev 13:8 does not teach that the names of those whom God has decreed to be saved have been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world as Calvinism teaches. Rev 13:8 teaches that it was the redemptive death of Christ for the salvation of humanity that God decreed from the foundation of the world. Every member of the human race has their name written in the Book of Life, but it is whether their name stays written in the Book that counts in eternity. Only the names of those who conform to God's plan of redemption remain in the Book. The rest are blotted out (CP Psa 139:15-16; Ex 32:31-34; Psa 69:28; 109:13; Dan 12:1; Php 4:3; Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27; 22:18-19). Here God confirmed that names can and will be blotted out of the Book of Life when men sin and incur the eternal death penalty. This should make every one of us want to examine ourselves every day to see that we are still in the faith (CP 2Co 13:5). If believers are unconditionally elected or predestinated unto salvation as Calvinism teaches, it is not necessary for Paul to warn us to examine ourselves to see that we are still in the faith.

Individuals choose for themselves if they want to be saved (CP Jn 3:36). The word *believeth* here is from the Greek word **pisteuo**, which means to place confidence in; to trust; to be persuaded of. It implies obedience to as a moral choice, not merely mental acceptance of a historical fact (CP Jas 2:19). Demons believe in Jesus too but they do not obey Him as a moral choice, and they are not going to heaven. He that believeth is he that chooses to believe, or who chooses to obey, whereas *believeth not* is from the Greek word **apeitheo**, which means refuse to be persuaded; refuse belief; refuse to obey. Thus *he that believeth not* is he that chooses not to believe, or who refuses to obey. This is clear evidence that salvation can be rejected; that it is the personal choice of the individual.

There is no reference in scripture to any election of God whereby one person is chosen for salvation and another is not, as the Calvinistic system of theology teaches. Election is God's choice of a people in Christ

for Himself. It refers to the church as a divinely ordained spiritual institution, and pertains to every person, Jew and Gentile alike who conforms to God's plan of redemption. Election is primarily corporate and embraces individuals only in association and identification with the body of Christ – the church (CP Ro 3:21-26; Eph 1:3-13; 2:4-10; 3:1-12; 2Th 2:13-14; Tit 1:1-3; 2:11-14; He 2:9-13; 1Pe 2:3-9). See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 13:10-11, 20:16, Jn 1:12-13, 3:14-15, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40; Ac 2:37-38, 3:22-23, 13:48, 28:23-29; Ro 1:16-17, 3:24-26 (A), 8:28-30, 9:1-3, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 10:14-17, 11:2, 11:4, 11:7-10; Eph 1:11-14, 2:8-10; 1Th 1:3; 2Ti 1:8-9 and 1Pe 1:2 and author's studies *Salvation – a Free Will Choice or Predestinated?* and *Chosen by God?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

1:9-12 *What is the mystery of God's will Paul refers to here?*

This mystery is that at the end of this age, in the millennium, God will unify the whole creation – every created being and thing – animate and inanimate, in heaven and earth, as one in Christ (CP Dan 7:13-14; Ac 3:20-21; Ro 8:18-23; Php 3:20-21; Col 1:20). This is not teaching *Universalism* as some believe – that everyone who ever lived will be saved. It only applies to those *in Christ*, as scriptures clearly teach (CP Jn 3:3, 5, 16-18, 36; 1Th 4:13-18 with 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Ti 4:10). See also comments on Ac 3:19-21 and Ro 8:19-21.

1:11-14 *What plain truth underlies what Paul says here?*

The plain truth is, as V13 clearly proves, that the Ephesians got saved as a result of hearing the gospel and believing it, which is the only way scriptures teach that anyone can be saved (CP Mt 24:14; 28:18-20; Mk 13:10; 16:15-16; Lu 24:46-48; Ac 1:8; 10:42-43 with Ro 10:14-17). Like our study on Eph 1:3-6 also proved, V11 is not teaching that believers are predestinated to salvation by God, but that it is the believer's inheritance in Christ which was predestinated. It is the plan of redemption, and the Saviour through whom it will be accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ, that was predestinated by God (CP Gen 3:15; Nu 24:17; Psa 118:22; Isa 9:6-7; 28:16; Mt 1:20-23; Lu 1:26-33; 2:25-28, 24:25-27, 44-48; Jn 1:29, Ro 1:1-6; Eph 3:1-12; 2Ti 1:1, 8-10; 1Pe 1:18-20; 2:6-8; Rev 13:8). Immediately upon hearing the gospel and believing it for their salvation, believers are set with God's seal - He gives them the Holy Spirit to assure them of their future resurrection and eternal inheritance in Christ (CP Eph 1:13-14 with Ro 8:23; 2Cor 1:20-22, 5:5; 1Pe 1:5). See also comments on Ro 10:14-17; 2Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; Eph 1:3-6, 2:8-10 and 1Jn 5:10-13.

1:15-23 *What is the significance of this prayer?*

This is a prayer we can all pray, not only for others, but for ourselves too, knowing that it conforms with God's will for every believer in Christ. God wants believers to receive more wisdom and revelation of His plan for them, and to experience greater

abundance of Holy Spirit power in their lives. The spirit of wisdom and revelation in V17 is not the Holy Spirit but our own spirit – the element of life within us. God wants our spirit to be full of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (CP Mt 7:7; Jas 1:5-8 with Eph 3:14-21). Eph 3:20 teaches us that God will do for us not only more than we desire and ask in prayer, but even more than our imagination can perceive, depending upon the degree of the Holy Spirit's presence, power and grace outworking in our lives. The word *power* here refers to our faith.

Faith is the power of God within us to enable us to reign in life and to receive answers to prayer. The word *worketh* refers to the exercising of our faith to believe God to do it. Faith makes prayer work (see also comments on Eph 3:20).

2:5 *What does "quicken" mean in this context?*

Quickened here means to cause to live, to make alive. It is used here in the sense of being raised from death to life with Christ (CP V1-7). In their unsaved state believers were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. But upon being converted, they were made alive by the Holy Spirit to a renewed life in Christ (CP Ro 6:3-13; Eph 5:14; Col 2:8-13). *Quickened* in this context means a type of spiritual resurrection; it expresses what being born again means (CP Jn 3:3-5). See also comments on Ro 6:1, 6:3-5, 6:6-14; 2Ti 2:11-13.

2:8-10 *What profound yet simple gospel truth does Paul proclaim here?*

The simple gospel truth Paul proclaims here is that salvation is by grace through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no convoluted meaning to it that only those whom God has predestinated to salvation can exercise this faith, as some would have us believe. God's invitation to salvation goes out to all, and all anyone has to do to be saved is to respond affirmatively to the call (CP De 30:15-20; Isa 1:18-20; 45:22; 55:1-7; Jer 3:12-13; 4:1-4; 6:16; 25:4-7; Eze 18:20-23; 33:10-12; Hos 10:12; Joel 2:12-14; Amos 5:4-9; Zeph 2:1-3; Zech 1:3-4; Mal 3:7; Mt 11:28-30; Mk 1:14-15; Jn 4:10-14; 6:27-29, 35-37; Ac 3:19-26; 16:30-31; Rev 21:6; 22:17). While salvation is the gift of God, God does not predetermine who He will or will not save. No one can get saved however on the basis of any good they have done in their pre-conversion life. Otherwise they could boast about themselves (CP Ro 4:1-5; 11:6). Once they are saved though, God expects believers to do good (CP Eph 2:10 with Mt 5:16; Jn 15:8; Php 2:12-13; 2Ti 3:17; Tit 2:14; Jas 2:14-26). See also comments on Ro 10:14-17, Eph 1:3-6 and 1:11-14 and author's study *The Doctrine of Grace* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:14 *What is the "middle wall of partition" Paul refers to here?*

(CP V13-22) Here Paul is reminding the Gentile Christians in Ephesus how, though they were once alienated from God and had no relationship with the Jews, through the blood Jesus shed on the cross, they

were now made one with the Jews to form the New Testament church (CP 3:6; 4:4-6; with Ro 1:16; 10:9-13; 1Cor 12:12-14 ; Ga 3:27-29; Col 3:10-11). The *middle wall of partition* refers to the old covenant law that brought enmity that separated Jews and Gentiles. This was symbolized by the veil in the temple that was torn in two when Jesus died. God thus signifying that all men, Jews and Gentiles alike were one in Christ from that time on (CP Mt 27:51 with He 10:19-20). The torn veil represented Jesus' broken body. (See also comments on Mt 27:51 and He 10:19-20 and author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

2:15-16 (A) *What does it mean that Jesus abolished in His flesh the law of commandments?*

This means that by Christ's death the old covenant law was abolished (CP Ro 10:4, 2Cor 3:6-15; Col 2:14-17; He 7:12, 18-25, 8:6-13, 9:11-15). We see from these scriptures that the entire old covenant law was abolished by Christ's death, not just the ceremonial law, as many believe. They do not understand that the old covenant law was for Israel only, whereas the new covenant is for all people (CP Ex 31:12-18 and Eze 20:9-13 with Hos 2:23; Ro 2:14: 9:22-26, 30-33). See also comments on Ro 10:4 and 2 Cor 3:12-16, and author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

(B) *What does it mean "to make in himself of twain one new man"?*

Paul is referring here to both Jews and Gentiles becoming one in Christ to form the New Testament church. This was the purpose of doing away with the old covenant law and the enmity it caused between Jews and Gentiles in the first place (CP Isa 11:10 with Ro 15:9-12; Hos 2:23 with Ro 9:25-26 and 1Pe 2:10; Ga 3:13-14; Eph 3:5-6). It is worth noting here that the church is referred to as a man in Eph 2:15, yet there are a great many in the church who refer to it as a woman – the Bride of Christ. Nowhere in scripture though is the church ever referred to as a woman, and the Bride of Christ is clearly identified in scripture as New Jerusalem (CP Rev 19:7-8 with 21:2, 9-10). See also comments on Ro 7:4, 2Cor 11:2, Eph 4:13, 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9 and 21:2, and author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

2:20 (A) *Are the offices of apostles and prophets still valid ministries in the church today?*

Yes. Although there are many who teach that these offices ceased with the first century church. But that is not correct, as scriptures clearly prove (CP Mt 24:14; Jn 17:18-20; Eph 3:1-11; 4:7-16). It is plainly evident here that Christ has ordained *all* the ministry gifts He gave to the church to remain there while ever the church exists. They are all essential to God's purpose for the church, ... *for the perfecting of the*

saints for the works of the ministry. "Perfecting" means "to make fully ready", which defines the completed process as outlined in Eph 4:13-16 (CP 4:13-16). This confirms that all the ministry gifts, including apostles and prophets, which Christ gave to the church will remain there until God's purpose for the church is accomplished, which can only ever be when it has fulfilled its mission on earth and is taken up to heaven by Jesus (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18).

In the primary sense Eph 2:20 applies to the original twelve apostles Christ called before pentecost, and in the secondary sense, to all those God has called since pentecost. This includes Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, etc. and all those down through the ages to the present time. The word *foundation* in Eph 2:20 is used metaphorically of the ministry of the gospel and the doctrines of faith upon which the church is built, which the apostles and the prophets taught (CP Ac 2:14, 41-42; 20:26-28; 1Ti 6:20-21; 2Pe 1:19-21, 3:1-2). See also comments on Ac 11:27; Ro 11:13; Eph 4:11-12, and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

(B) *What is meant by Jesus being the "chief corner stone"?*

The chief corner stone is the stone set in the corner of the foundations of a building by which the whole building is squared. It also gives strength to the two walls by which they are connected. In Eph 2:20 it is applied figuratively to Christ who not only sustains the whole structure of the church, but also unites Jews and Gentiles into one mystical building (CP V21-22; 1Cor 3:9-11; 1Pe 2:5-7 with Psa 118:22; Isa 28:16; Mt 21:42; Ac 4:10-12). See also author's study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:9-12 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

The mystery Paul refers to here is that the church will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and that Gentiles will be joint - partakers with Jews of all the gospel promises of God in Christ. This was not made known to the Old Testament prophets, but was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets in the New Testament (CP V1-6 with 1Cor 2:9-12; 1Pe 1:10-12). God's purpose in this was to demonstrate His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers - both good and bad angels - in heavenly places (CP 1Cor 4:9; Eph 6:12). See also comments on 1Cor 2:7-8.

Angels are constantly watching the church. They are spectators viewing God's redemptive plan from the sidelines. They are not participants in God's redemptive plan, but as we learned in 1Pe 1:12 they have a passionate desire to know all about it. They see in the church once depraved sinners now living lives that glorify God and they see that God has seated them with Christ in heavenly places. God's redemptive plan is the manifold wisdom of God which

the church is teaching the angels (CP also 1Cor 11:4-10; 1Ti 5:21).

3:14-21 See comments on Eph 1:15-23.

3:20 *What does it mean that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us?*

This teaches that there are no limitations on what God will do for us. *Exceeding abundantly* means super abundantly above and beyond the greatest abundance that we may ask or even think (CP Jn 14:12-14; 2Pe 1:4). *According to the power that worketh in us* refers to our yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. God is able to do for us and answer our prayers according to the richness of the outworking of the Holy Spirit in our lives, so it is we ourselves who determine what God is able to do for us. There is no limit to what God can do in and through us, but we limit Him by the degree of our yieldedness to the Holy Spirit (CP Jn 15:7; 1Cor 15:10; Eph 1:19, 3:16-19; Php 2:13; Col 1:29). See also comments on Mt 21:17-22; Mk 16:17-18; Jn 14:12-14, 15:7 and 2Cor 1:19-20 and author's studies *Prayer, Faith and Confessing God's Word* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith and Making the Impossible Possible** and *A Daily Confession for Christians* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

4:4-6 *What baptism is Paul referring to here?*

A great many Christians believe that Paul is referring to water baptism here, but that is not correct. This baptism is spiritual – the baptism of believers into Christ and into His body, the church. Paul is illustrating here the sevenfold spiritual unity of God and man: one body – the church; one Holy Spirit; one hope of our calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism, and one God (CP V1-3). Paul is exhorting believers in V1-3 to be unified in the Spirit, because, as he points out in V 4-6, there is only one body in Christ – the church – and we were all baptized into that one body (CP 1Cor 12:12-14). Here the church is called "Christ" and is compared to a human body with its many members. This shows how the church is constituted: the Holy Spirit unites believers with Jesus as members of His body when they are converted to Christ (CP also Ro 6:3-4; Ga 3:26-27 and Col 2:10-13). These scriptures all refer to the believer's baptism in Christ, not water, as so many Christians believe. (See comments on all Ro 6 questions, also Ro 3:9, 5:12-14, 7:4, 7:7-23, 8:1-2, 8:3-4; Ga 5:17; Jas 4:5 and 1 Jn 3:6-9 and author's studies *Romans 6 – a Study on God's Empowering of Believers through Jesus Christ to Overcome Sin* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Power of God in Christians to Overcome the Devil, The Doctrine of Grace and Regeneration and Sanctification Defined* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, and *What being Born Again Means* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**).

4:8 (A) *What ascension is Paul referring to here?*

Opinions are divided among bible commentators when the ascension to which Paul refers here took place. Some believe it was when Christ ascended to heaven from Mt Olivet after His forty day post-resurrection ministry recorded in Mk 16, Lu 24 and Ac 1 (CP Mk 16:19; Lu 24:50-51; Ac 1:1-9). Others believe it is the ascension Jesus referred to in Jn 20 on resurrection day. They believe that Jesus ascended to the Father that very day and returned the same evening to appear before the disciples in the locked room (CP Jn 20:1-20). It is irrelevant which teaching is correct – neither is fundamental to salvation, so whichever we disagree with, let us do so in love.

(B) *What does Paul mean here that Christ "led captivity captive" when He ascended on high?*

Again there are divided opinions among bible scholars as to the exact meaning of what Paul says here (CP also Psa 68:18). Some believe Eph 4:8 refers to Christ when He descended into hell, releasing all the righteous dead who had been held captive by Satan, and taking them up to heaven with Him when He ascended on high (CP V8-10 and Mt 12:38-40 with Col 2:13-15 and He 2:14-15). Others believe that it refers to Christ's triumphant victory procession to heaven leading vanquished demons behind Him. Once again it is not relevant which teaching is correct – they too are not fundamental to salvation, so whichever one we disagree with, let us do so in love also.

4:9 *What are the lower parts of the earth referred to here and why did Christ go there?*

The lower parts of the earth referred to here is hell. Christ went there to fulfil prophecy as the New Testament antitype of Jonah, the Old Testament antitype of Christ's death burial and resurrection. And He also "preached" to the *spirits in prison* (CP Mt 12:38-40 with 1Pe 3:18-20). Many in the church believe that the spirits in prison are the spirits of humans being given another chance of eternal life, but that is not correct. Scriptures clearly refute any suggestion that there is further opportunity for salvation after death (CP He 9:27; Rev 22:11-12). Furthermore, human spirits are always qualified as such in scripture; they are never just called *spirits* (CP Nu 16:22; 27:16; 1Cor 14:32; He 12:23).

The spirits in prison are fallen angels - the angels God cast down to hell and bound in chains. They rebelled against God and sinned in the days of Noah precipitating the flood that destroyed everyone on earth except Noah and his family (CP Gen 6:1-8, 11-13, 17 with 1 Pe 3:18-20; 2Pe 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7). *Hell* in 2 Pe 2:4-5 is translated from the Greek word **tartarus**, which means a prison for fallen angels. Mt 12:38-40 also teaches this. *Heart* in V40 means a vault or cell, by implication a prison. The angels' *first estate* in Jude 6 is their original status in God's order – the exalted position they held in heaven above earthly humans (CP Psa 8:4-5; He 2:6-7). *Their own habitation*, which they left, was their heavenly abode; he *strange flesh* they went after were earthly women,

and the sin they committed was fornication (CP Gen 6:1-4).

The word *preached* in 1Pe 3:19 should have been translated *herald* or *proclaim*. The Greek word used here is **kerusso**, which means to herald or proclaim, as a town crier, whereas the Greek word for *preach*, associated with the gospel for salvation, is **euaggelizo**. We learn from this that Jesus was not giving the spirits in prison a second chance at eternal life, but that He was making a proclamation to them. Scriptures do not teach what the proclamation was, but the general consensus among Bible Scholars is that Jesus proclaimed to the spirits in prison His victory over death and Satan on the cross, which is outlined for us in Col 2:14-15 and He 2:14-15 (CP Col 2:14-15; He 2:14-15). Christ descended into hell between His death and His resurrection as both Eph 4:9-10 and 1Pe 3:18-20 teach (CP Eph 4:9-10 and 1Pe 3:18-20 with Psa 16:10; and Ac 2:25-32). See also comments on Mt 12:38-40; He 9:27 and 1Pe 3:18-20, and author's study *Who are the Spirits in Prison?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

4:11-12 *How are these ministries defined in the New Testament church?*

These ministry gifts were all embodied in Christ Himself and He gave them to the church as an extension of His own earthly ministry to prepare and equip the church for God's service. We need to study these ministry gifts very carefully in order to understand them, because there is a great deal of confusion surrounding them in the contemporary church. Most Christians in the contemporary church believe that Eph 4:11 refers to five orders of ministers in the church appointed to discharge five different kinds of duties, generally known in the church as the "fivefold ministry". But that is not what scriptures teach, as we shall soon see. These gifts can overlap each other in one man. There are a number of men in the New Testament who functioned in them all, and the same applies in the contemporary church. Let us now study them.

APOSTLES: from the Greek word **apostoloi**, means ones sent, messengers. In the New Testament church it designates the office instituted by Christ to witness of Him before the world (Jn 17:18). Apostles are placed first in the divine order of ministry gifts Christ gave to the church to prepare and equip it for God's service (CP Eph 4:11; 1Cor 12:28). Yet there is much teaching in the contemporary church that apostles and prophets ceased with the first century church, but that is not what scriptures teach (CP Mt 24:14; Jn 17:18-21; Eph 3:1-12; 4:7-16; 5:25-27). It is plainly evident from these scriptures that Christ has ordained the ministry gifts He gave to the church to remain there while ever the church exists. They are all essential to God's purpose for the church - "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry" (CP Eph 4:11-12). *Perfecting* means "to make fully ready", which defines the completed process outlined in V13-16 (CP Eph 4:13-16). This confirms that all the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church will remain there until God's purpose for the church is accomplished, which can only ever be when it has fulfilled its mission on earth

and is taken up to heaven by Jesus (CP Eph 2:19-20). This further emphasises the continuing importance of apostles and prophets in God's purpose for the church and underlines the reason why they are placed first and second in the divine order of ministry gifts for the church. God includes them with Jesus as the foundation of the church. *Foundation* in this context is used metaphorically of the ministry of the gospel and the doctrines of faith - the church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets. It is their responsibility to bring clarification and illumination concerning God's word to those they are establishing in the faith.

In the primary sense Eph 2:20 applies to the original twelve apostles Christ called before Pentecost and in the secondary sense to all those God has called since Pentecost (CP Ac 2:42; Eph 3:1-12). Apostles have two main tasks to perform in the ministry: to bring into being properly ordered churches and to set, and maintain in order, and continue to build churches that already exist. Apostles not only pioneer new works, but continue building on foundations others have laid (CP Ac 8:14-17, 25; 1Cor 3:10). Apostles can function in either an itinerant ministry or be domiciled in a local church. There is nothing in scripture to indicate that the apostle James, the Lord's brother ever left the church at Jerusalem and the same thing happens in the contemporary church. There are many men who either pioneer a church or continue building on foundations others have laid and stay there. Sadly however, in the contemporary church these men are not designated apostles as they should be but "pastors", although nowhere in scripture is the term "pastor" ever used to define rank, authority or title of anyone - man or woman - in the New Testament church. There are men designated apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers in scripture but there is no man (or woman) designated a pastor. We will examine the scriptures proving that statement in our study on pastors. (Designated means described as, given a name or title, specified). There are at least 28 men named as apostles in scripture. Apart from the thirteen - including Matthias - before Pentecost, at least fifteen others have been designated apostles since then: Paul and Barnabas (CP Ac 13:1-5, 50 - 14:4, 14; 15:22-25, 35-39); Silas and Timothy (CP 1Th 1:1; 2:6); Apollos (CP 1Cor 4:6-9); Titus (CP 2Cor 8:23); James, Joses, Simon and Jude, the brothers of Jesus (CP Mt 13:55; 1Cor 9:5); Andronicus and Junias (CP Ro 16:7); Epaphroditus (CP Php 2:25), and there were at least two others with Titus (CP 2Cor 8:23). Scriptures do not tell us how all these men were commissioned, but in the case of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Apollos and Titus, we see how God promoted them after they proved their faithfulness in other areas of ministry first. This is the biblical pattern for promotion in the New Testament church (CP Mt 25:14-23).

Although Paul was a chosen vessel of God he was not sent out as an apostle until after he had proved his faithfulness in other areas of ministry first (CP Ac 9:1-30; 11:25-30; 13:1-5). Paul and Barnabas were already ministering in the local church at Antioch as prophets and teachers before being called of God and sent out as apostles. Barnabas first proved himself as a liberal giver in the fledgling church at Jerusalem and

then as the first missionary sent out from a church. In this capacity he also did the work of an evangelist leading many people to the Lord and building up the church at Antioch where he and Paul worked hard and long spreading the gospel (CP Ac 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:22-26; 12:25; 13:1-5, 50 - 14:4). Silas was also a prophet when chosen by Paul to take John Mark's place as his travelling companion on Paul's second apostolic mission journey. It was on this journey that Timothy also joined them, and he and Silas helped Paul establish the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica (CP Ac 15:22-25, 35-41; 16:1-5, 19-40; 17:1-15; 18:5; Php 2:19-23). Timothy was one of Paul's converts from his first mission journey. Paul became his mentor and taught and encouraged him through other areas of ministry until he became an apostle. He and Silas were first designated apostles in 1Th 2:6 (CP 1Th 1:1; 2:6; 1Ti 1:1-4; 4:1-16; 2Ti 1:1-6; 4:1-5). Apollos was very active in promoting the gospel at Ephesus, Achaia and Corinth, and was even more so after being properly instructed by Aquila and Priscilla. He laboured with Paul establishing the church at Corinth (CP Ac 18:24 - 19:1; 1Cor 1:11-12; 3:3-7; 4:17). Titus was also a long-time fellow-worker of Paul's in his apostolic mission journeys and God promoted him too (CP 2Cor 7:5-7, 13-15; 8:23; Ga 2:1-2; 2Ti 4:9-10; Tit 1:4-5). We get a good insight here into what is involved in preparing and equipping the saints for service, seeing them released into ministry, and how God promotes them from there. None of these men started out as apostles. They all proved themselves faithful in other areas of ministry first and then God promoted them just as Jesus teaches in Mt 25:14-23.

Most Christians believe that the ministry gift of apostle in the contemporary church has been fulfilled in the ministry of the missionary, and there are doubtless many missionaries who do function as apostles and should be recognised as such. The ministries of apostles and missionaries are similar - they both evangelise, plant churches, instruct, correct, and establish them in the faith, but whereas every apostle is a missionary, not every missionary is an apostle. Furthermore every apostle is a qualified elder in the New Testament church, but not every missionary is, and it is the elders, collectively and co-equally, to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church (CP 1Pe 5:1; 2Jn 1; 3Jn 1). There is a highly impactful teaching originating in these scriptures that the majority of Christians are completely unaware of but which leads us to a clearer understanding of church government. Elders are much more important to God's purpose for the church than most Christians realise. They are not simply rubber stamps for the decisions made by local church leaders - they are the local church leaders, yet are not recognised as such in the contemporary church. The elders constitute the presbytery, the ruling body in the New Testament church (CP Ac 20:17, 28). Paul's admonition to the elders here to collectively heed their responsibility to feed the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, clearly teaches that God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church to the plurality of elders co-equally. *Feed* is from the Greek word **poimaino**, which means to pastor or shepherd. It is the plurality

of elders' responsibility co-equally to pastor God's people who comprise the local church. *Overseers* is from the Greek word **episkopos**, which means bishop (CP Ac 1:15-20).

Here we learn that apostles are also bishops. Judas Iscariot forfeited his bishopric - the office, charge, or duty of an overseer in the New Testament church - when he betrayed Jesus. He also forfeited his apostleship and eldership at the same time. *Bishop* is simply another name for elder. **Episkopos** is equal to **presbuteros** the Greek word for elder or presbyter. The terms bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter and pastor/shepherd all refer to one and the same person. However, although they all refer to one and the same person, the terms are not synonymous - they do not all mean the same: *elder/presbyter* refers to the man, *bishop/overseer* refers to his office, and *pastor/shepherd* refers to the work he does (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9). These scriptures not only confirm that it is the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church, but they also teach that the elders are all men. The Greek words **episkopos** for bishop, and **presbuteros** for elder, both only refer to a male. Also, the fact that anyone aspiring to the office of a bishop or elder must be the husband of one wife if married, is further confirmation that elders can only ever be men, not women as well. Likewise deacons can only ever be men also, for they too must be the husband of one wife if married (CP 1Ti 3:12). Scripture does not teach that a bishop, elder or deacon can be the wife of one husband. We will examine this aspect of women's ministry in the church in more detail in our study on "pastors". There is just as much confusion concerning elders in the contemporary church as there is concerning apostles and prophets. Sadly, not many Christians know who the elders really are in the divine order for the church. They simply see them as having been a long-time member of the church, but that is only a part of what qualifies them as elders (CP Eph 4:7-16).

This clearly spells out for us that the men who function in the ministry gifts of V11 are the ones God has designated as the ruling elders in the New Testament church. All the scriptures we have examined so far in our study on apostles confirm this. Christ gave these men to the church and ordained them to remain there while ever the church exists and we do not have to look for any one else in scripture beyond them as the elders to whom God would commit the direction and government of His church. The ruling body of elders in the church consists of apostle/elders, prophet/elders, evangelist/elders and teacher/elders who collectively and co-equally pastor the church (CP 1Pe 5:1-4). Peter highlights the co-equality of the ruling body of elders in his statement here "...who am also an elder." This "elder" is not **presbuteros** but **sumpresbuteros**, which means literally "one on the same level with them" - a fellow elder or co-presbyter. This is further confirmation that the divine order of government in the local New Testament church involves a plurality of elders co-equally. Peter is addressing a plurality of elders from each of the local churches at Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in this letter (CP 1Pe 1:1). His admonition to them is similar to Paul's

admonition to the elders in the church at Ephesus in Ac 20:28 but with the added injunction that they are not to "...lord it over their congregations." This means that they are not to rule them in a high-handed, autocratic way. Some who are opposed to the concept of a plurality of elders co-equally ruling the New Testament church teach that in 1Pe 5:1 Peter is identifying with the elders as an apostle and with the people as an elder, but that begs the question, why? He had already identified himself as an apostle to the elders and people alike in 1:1, and in 5:1 he simply asserts to the elders among them that he and they are co-equals in the divine order of government in the church. We should accept that assertion at face value, not look for hidden agendas behind it (CP Ac 14:21-23).

Here for the first time in scripture we see elders being appointed in the local church. They were already presiding over the church at Judaea when Paul and Barnabas took the relief money there from Antioch (CP Ac 11:29-30). They were also already presiding with the apostles over the Jerusalem church when Paul and Barnabas went there to settle the question of Gentile circumcision at Antioch (CP Ac 15:1-6). In Ac 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they had previously pioneered on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 (CP 1Ti 1:1-4; Tit 1:4-5). We learn in 1Ti 1:1-4 that elders who had already been appointed in the local church at Ephesus were teaching error so Paul left Timothy there in the foundation ministry of apostle to straighten them out. Tit 1:4-5 teaches that Paul likewise left Titus in the foundation ministry of apostle in Crete to appoint elders in the local churches there. We see in all these scriptures a definite biblical pattern whereby elders are appointed after local churches have been established by apostles. The elders collectively then become the presbytery, responsible for the direction and government of the church. This is not teaching that elders are appointed by men, but that those functioning in the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 are acknowledged and ordained to ministry in the church by the apostle or the ruling body of elders in accordance with the divine will (CP 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; 4:5). The word "presbytery" in 1Ti 4:14 is referring to the ruling body of elders who prophesied over Timothy and laid hands on him to bring forth his ministry gift of apostle (CP 1Ti 3:1-7). The term "desire" in V1 means to stretch oneself out in order to grasp or touch something. It includes the idea of reaching after or seeking. However believers desiring the office of bishop/overseer/elder/presbyter must have the desire first confirmed by the word of God as outlined in V2-7, and also by the church as outlined in V10.

This means that nobody can be ordained an elder based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even Bible College training. The requirements for ordination are stipulated by God and stand as absolutes in God's order for church government. Moral issues are not all that is involved. Spiritual maturity and faithfulness in service are just as important. Men must first prove their faithfulness in lesser areas of ministry before seeking promotion to the highest office in the local

New Testament church. In all the scriptures we have studied pertaining to apostles so far we find a definite pattern to how God raises up men in leadership ministries. First they proved their faithfulness in the little things. Then God promoted them to the bigger things, just as Jesus teaches in Mt 25:14-23 (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). V13 here teaches that those who serve faithfully as deacons obtain for themselves a position of trust and influence in the church. This is a definite promise of promotion for those faithful in the lesser things first. There are still more scriptures proving the plurality of elders as the ruling body co-equally in the local church which we need to examine (CP Php 1:1). "Bishops" here are the ruling elders or presbyters (CP 1Ti 5:17). "The elders that rule well" are those who preside over the local church (CP He 13:7,17,24). "Them who are to be obeyed" again are the ruling elders. *Obey* here means to assent to; follow (CP Jas 5:14). James also teaches a plurality of elders ruling the church co-equally here. He does not refer to any one man but to the plurality of elders co-equally.

The number of elders in any church will depend entirely upon the size of the congregation. The apostle who pioneers the church may be the only one to start with, but others should be appointed as quickly as they are seen to be functioning in any of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, and can satisfy the requirements God has laid down for their ordination in 1Ti 3:1-7 and Tit 1:4-9. They then become co-leaders in the church with the apostle (CP Ac 15:1-27; 21:17-25). These scriptures clearly confirm all that the foregoing scriptures teach – that the direction and government of the local New Testament church is not vested in the ministry of one man alone as it is in the contemporary church, but in the plurality of elders co-equally. James alone did not decide on what action to take concerning the question of gentile circumcision in Ac 15 as some teach. The Greek construction of the phrase "wherefore my sentence is ..." in V19 according to Kenneth Wuest's "Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament" is "...wherefore as for myself, my judgement is ..." James is simply putting forward his opinion on the issue the same as Peter did in V7-11, only he was more explicit than Peter by also proposing what action they should take. The fact that they all agreed to the action proposed as Chapter 15 clearly emphasizes, proves the co-equality in the plurality of elders involved.

There were a number of apostles present with the elders in Ac 15 but only James was present when Paul returned to Jerusalem in Ac 21. On both occasions though the elders were co-equal with the apostles in receiving Paul and his companions and in the decision making process which ensued. There is nothing in any of these scriptures to indicate that James, who appears to be resident apostle in the Jerusalem church in Ac 21, outranked the elders who presided over the church with him. However, the mantle of spokesman for the apostles and elders falls upon the apostle as the one set first in the church in the foundation ministry. In the absence of the apostle the next in line is the prophet, and after him the teacher. This is the divine order (CP 1Cor 12:28). There is no need to look beyond what scriptures teach about government in the New Testament church (CP Rev 1:11-20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). The general consensus among

Christians as well as most Bible commentators is that the "angels" of the seven churches Jesus addresses here are "pastors" because of the common belief in the contemporary church that "pastors" are the local New Testament church leaders, yet the word "angel" is from the Greek word **angelos**, which means a messenger – one sent to announce or proclaim, which is also what apostles do. Angels and apostles have similar meanings but because it is generally believed that the office of apostle ceased with the first century church, the apostle is no longer recognized as the foundation ministry in the contemporary church, and he has been replaced by the "pastor", notwithstanding that nowhere in scripture is the term "pastor" ever used to define rank, authority or title of anyone - man or woman in the New Testament church. As noted earlier we will examine the scriptures proving that statement in our study on "pastors" (CP 3Jn 9-10). The wisdom of God is seen in the plurality of elders as leaders in the church because it safeguards the church from being ruled by despots like Diotrephes.

Now let us look at some of the characteristics of false apostles before moving on. Scriptures warn against them and we need to be able to correctly discern them. It is very easy to be deceived by them because they are so charismatic (CP 2Cor 11:4-15). False apostles are counterfeits of the devil the same as all other false teachers, and the only sure way to guard against being taken in by them is to test their teaching according to God's word (CP Ac 17:10-11; 2Pe 1:16-19). In 2Pe 1:16-19 Peter teaches us that scripture is the only proof text we have with which to measure any teaching in the church against, and even though we may also be eyewitness to a truly great spiritual experience as Peter himself was at the transfiguration of Jesus, if any teaching does not have its authority in scripture, then we must disregard it completely, the same as the church at Ephesus did (CP Rev 2:1-7). Christians are commanded to test every teaching that comes into the church (CP Ac 17:10-11; 1Th 5:21; 2Pe 1:16-19; 1Jn 4:1).

PROPHETS: from the Greek word **prophetes** means "a proclaimer of divine truth". Prophets are placed second in the order of ministry gifts Christ gave to the church to prepare and equip it for service (CP Eph 4:11-12; 1Cor 12:28). Yet there are many who teach that together with apostles the ministry gift of prophet no longer exists; that it ceased with the first century church. But as our study on apostles show, that is not correct (CP Mt 24:14; Jn 17:18-21; Eph 3:1-12; 4:7-16; 5:25-27). Scriptures clearly teach that Christ has given the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 to the church and ordained them all to remain there while ever the church exists. They are all vitally necessary – "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry" (CP Eph 4:11-12). *Perfecting* in V12 means "to make fully ready", which defines the completed process outlined in V13-16 (CP Eph 4:13-16). We learned all these truths in our study on apostles but they need to be re-stated here. All the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church will remain there until God's purpose for the church is accomplished, which can only ever be when it has fulfilled its mission on earth and is taken up to heaven to be with Jesus (CP Eph 2:19-20). This further emphasizes the continuing importance of apostles and prophets in God's purpose for the church

and underlines the reason why they are placed first and second in the order of ministry gifts Christ gave to the church. God includes them with Jesus as the foundation of the church. *Foundation* in this context is used metaphorically of the ministry of the gospel and the doctrines of faith – the church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets. It is their responsibility to bring clarification and illumination concerning God's word to the church and to those they are establishing in the faith. They are both teachers and preachers.

Those who teach that the ministry gift of prophet ceased with the first century church equate the prophet's function in the contemporary church to the "pastor's" sermons and preaching. Nowhere in scripture however is the term "pastor" ever used to define rank, authority or title of anyone in the New Testament church which we also learned in our study on apostles, yet there are many men designated prophets: Paul (or Saul as he was known then), Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen (CP Ac 13:1); Agabus (CP Ac 11:27-28; 21:10-11); Judas surnamed Barsabab, and Silas (CP Ac 15:22, 27, 32). Barnabas, whose name actually means prophet, was so named by the apostles (CP Ac 4:36-37). Remember that Paul, Barnabas and Silas were also apostles as well as prophets, and we will find that they were evangelists and teachers as well. They functioned in all the ministry gifts, as also did Timothy and others, as we shall see shortly. The function of prophet as one of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 in the New Testament church is not to be confused with the gift of prophecy, one of the nine gifts, or manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the church (CP 1Cor 12:7-11). These are not ministry gifts but manifestations of the Spirit which only operate at certain times when the need arises and according to the earnest desire of the believer (CP 1Cor 14:1-4). The gift of prophecy here is potentially available to every believer baptized in the Holy Spirit but it is only for specific occasions, whereas the ministry gift of prophet is a permanent ministry. Furthermore, every prophet has the gift of prophecy but not everyone with the gift of prophecy is a prophet (CP Ac 21:7-9). Philip's daughters prophesied, but they are not designated prophets in scripture as Agabus is who prophesied over Paul in their house (CP Ac 21:10-11). Also, as with all the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, every prophet is a qualified elder in the New Testament church, but not everyone with the gift of prophecy is.

There is more teaching on the gift of prophecy as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament than what there is on the ministry gift of prophet (CP 1Cor 12:1-11). These are all manifestations or gifts of the Spirit which includes the gift of prophecy in V10 (CP 1Cor 14:1-9, 15-19, 22-25, 29-33, 37). It is generally agreed that all these scriptures refer to the gift of prophecy not to a prophet, though V29-33 and 37 can refer to both. By their very definition prophets speak by inspiration and divine revelation but they are not infallible and their utterances must be subject to evaluation by other prophets, the church and the infallible word of God (CP Ac 17:10-11, 1Cor 14:29-33; 2Pe 1:16-19). Ac 17:10-11 and 2Pe 1:16-19 are used in our study on the teachings of false apostles

but they are applicable here also. They both teach that scriptures are the only proof text we have against which we must measure every teaching in the church.

Now let us look at some of the characteristics of false prophets in the New Testament church. Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all warn against them and we need to be able to discern them. Jesus said they come in sheep's clothing. That means their deception is subtle – they have the outward appearance of a true prophet but inwardly are ravaging wolves. But Jesus said we shall know them by their fruit. That is why it is so important to be thoroughly grounded in God's word, because the only way we can ever test any teaching in the church is by the word of God (CP Mt 7:15-23; Ac 20:29-32; 2Pe 2:1-3; 1Jn 4:1-6). All teaching must be tested against the revelation of God's truth in scripture. John's admonition to the church in 1Jn 4:1 to "try the spirits whether they are of God" makes it obligatory upon Christians to examine and prove every teaching in the church (CP Ac 17:10-11; 1Th 5:21; 2Pe 1:16-19). Scriptures are the only proof texts we have, and if any teaching cannot be proved by them then it must be disregarded, irrespective of who is teaching it.

EVANGELISTS: There is no confusion in the contemporary church over evangelists as there is with apostles and prophets. Evangelists, from the Greek word **euaggelistes**, are preachers of the gospel; ones who declare the good news of Christ (CP Ro 10:13-15). Evangelists preach to the unsaved, whereas apostles and prophets preach to both the saved and the unsaved. But evangelism is not only about preaching, it is also about the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and of power (CP Mk 16:16-20; Ro 15:18-21; 1Cor 2:4-5). Jesus not only preached; He also demonstrated the power of God over all the forces of evil that brought sickness, disease and death to the human race: He raised the dead; cast demons out of people, and healed them of their sicknesses and diseases. He made the lame to walk, the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He even exercised authority over the course of nature (CP Lu 8:22-56). These are but a few of the miracles Jesus wrought when He preached. He brought the good news of the gospel by word and deed and not by word only (CP 1Cor 4:20). The demonstration of the Holy Spirit and of power are signs that awaken others to a consciousness of the presence and the power of God and raise their faith in Jesus for salvation (CP Ac 6:1-10; 8:4-8). Over five thousand people were saved as a result of one miracle – the healing of a crippled beggar - in the first century church (CP Ac 3:1-4:4).

It is incumbent upon all Christians to preach the gospel (CP Mt 28:18-20). But they are not evangelists as such (CP Ac 8:1-17, 26-40). Here we get a clear picture of the work of an evangelist according to the New Testament pattern. Philip preached the gospel, many people got saved and were then baptized in water. God confirmed the word Philip preached with signs following: there were miracles performed, demons cast out and people were healed. There was great joy in that city (CP Mk 16:16-20). It is pointless to speculate why the new converts were not baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues until the apostles came from Jerusalem and laid hands on them and prayed for them. That still

happens today - not everyone is baptized in the Spirit immediately they are converted to Christ, and it is reasonable to assume that is what happened then too. The "Philip" we are reading about here is not the apostle Philip, one of the original twelve disciples Jesus called, but one of the seven men appointed to minister to the Greek widows in the church at Jerusalem (CP Ac 6:1-6 with 21:8-9). Although Philip was the only man designated an evangelist in scripture every apostle was also an evangelist (as well as a prophet and teacher). They had to evangelize first to lead people to Christ in order to plant churches and establish them in the faith (CP Ac 8:25; 13:1-5; 2Ti 4:5). The other six men chosen with Philip to minister to the Greek widows in the church of Jerusalem also became evangelists, although Philip is the only one among them named an evangelist in scripture. Stephen was the most prominent before he was killed (CP Ac 6:1-10).

Those scriptures all confirm that Eph 4:11 does not teach that there are five orders of ministers in the church appointed to discharge five different kinds of duties as most Christians in the contemporary church believe. In 2Ti 4:5 Timothy, who was already functioning in the ministry gifts of apostle and teacher, was reminded by Paul to do the work of an evangelist as well as his other duties. While evangelists may not establish churches like apostles, or bring forth new revelation like prophets, or a deeper understanding of God's word like teachers, they are as essential to God's purpose for the New Testament church as any of the other ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, and thus are also qualified elders in the church and just as committed to preparing and equipping God's people for service as are apostles, prophets and teachers. To teach as some do that evangelists are not essentially concerned with the feeding, tending, caring for and overseeing the church is to ignore the plain fact of scripture. Let us look at those scriptures again (CP Mt 24:14; Jn 17:18-21; Eph 3:1-12; 4:7-16; 5:25-27). Those who teach that evangelists are not essentially concerned with overseeing the New Testament church need to be reminded that every one of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 have been given to the church "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry", and that this defines the completed process for which all who function in the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 are responsible. God has committed the direction and government of the New Testament church to all who qualify as elders, not just some (CP Eph 4:11-12).

In closing this part of our study it is interesting to note that nowhere in scripture are we warned to beware of false evangelists in the church as we are warned to beware of false apostles, prophets and teachers. By definition evangelists cannot be false - they only proclaim the good news of Christ and preach the message of salvation to the lost.

PASTORS: The term "pastor" is derived from the Greek word **poimen**, which means a "shepherd". **Poimen** is used 18 times in the New Testament but it is only translated "pastor" once (CP Eph 4:11). The other 17 times it is translated "shepherd". It is used 11 times either directly or indirectly in reference to Jesus (CP Mt 25:32; 26:31; Mk 14:27; Jn 10:2, 11-12, 14, 16;

He 13:20; 1Pe 2:25); Jesus uses it twice in reference to others (CP Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34), and it is used 4 times of the shepherds who visited the baby Jesus (CP Lu 2:8,15,18,20). These scriptures prove the statement made earlier in our study on apostles that nowhere in scripture is the term "pastor" ever used as it is in the contemporary church to define rank, authority or title of anyone - man or woman - in the New Testament church. Rather, scriptures clearly teach that it defines the nature or character of the work for which the elders in the New Testament church, collectively and co-equally, are responsible. It is the elders constituting the presbytery to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church. Let us once again examine the scriptures that teach us this (CP Eph 4:11-16; Ac 20:17-28; 1Pe 5:1-4; 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9). These scriptures not only confirm that it is the plurality of elders co-equally to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church, but they also teach that the elders are men only. Contrary to what a great many Christians in the contemporary church believe there is no provision in scripture for the ordination of women to public ministry in the New Testament church.

As we learned previously in our study on apostles, both **episkopos**, the Greek word for bishop/overseer, and **presbuteros**, the Greek word for elder/presbyter only refer to a male in the New Testament, thus signifying that men only are ordained of God to pastor the New Testament church. Also, the fact that anyone aspiring to be an elder must be the husband of one wife if married is further confirmation that elders can only ever be men (CP 1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6). There is no provision at all here for the inclusion of women as elders in the New Testament church. Likewise deacons also can only ever be men. Like bishops, they too must only be the husband of one wife, if married (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). The term deacon primarily denotes a servant - one who ministers to the needs of others - without reference to the character of the work. In the New Testament, **diakonos**, the Greek word for deacon is used to refer to domestic servants (CP Jn 2:5,9); civil rulers (CP Ro 13:4); Christ (CP Ro 15:8; Ga 2:17); the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord (CP Jn 12:26; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7); the followers of Christ in relation to one another (CP Mt 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43); the servants of Christ in relation to preaching and teaching (CP 1Cor 3:5; 2Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25; 1Th 3:2; 1Ti 4:6); a servant of the church (CP Ro 16:1); servants in the church (CP Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:8,12), and false apostles - servants of Satan (CP 2Cor 11:15).

We can see from those scriptures that the term deacon has a much broader application than most Christians in the contemporary church realise. The general conception of deacons among Christians in the contemporary church is that they do most of the menial tasks in the church - they open the hall up for meetings, switch on the lights, arrange the seating, distribute the emblems for communion, and take up the collection, etc, but as is seen here scriptures do not teach that. The confusion surrounding deacons in the contemporary church emanates from the teaching that the role of deacons in the New Testament church is defined in Ac 6:1-6, yet scriptures do not designate the

seven men in Ac 6:1-6 who were chosen to distribute the alms and minister to the material needs of the Greek widows in the church at Jerusalem as deacons (CP Ac 6:1-6 with 1Ti 3:1-13). It is obvious from 1Ti 3:1-13 that the office of deacon in the New Testament church is more than dealing with temporal things as distinct from spiritual things. Temporal things have to be dealt with, but to limit the office of a deacon to just dealing with temporal things is to limit the effectiveness of the church in God's eternal purpose. In the context of 1Ti 3:1-13 it is significant that the term deacons is used side by side with bishops, or elders. This indicates that deacons are assistant ministers or that they assist the ruling elders in the performance of their duties. They are the scriptural counterparts to the non-scriptural assistant pastors and elders in the contemporary church (CP Php 1:1). The qualifications for deacons, like bishops, and their role in the New Testament church, are defined in 1Ti 3:1-13 not in Ac 6:1-6 as so many Christians in the contemporary church have been taught.

It should be noted here also that although deacons assist the elders in the performance of their duties they have no ruling authority in the New Testament church. Their ministry office as 1Ti 3:13 clearly teaches is a proving ground leading to greater responsibilities, but it is not a leadership position to start with, and for any local New Testament church to be under the authority of a "board of deacons" is totally unscriptural. We cannot supplant God's order for the church and replace it with another. He has decreed the church to be under the authority of ruling elders, not deacons.

This leads us now to the question of women being ordained to public ministry in the contemporary church when there is no provision for it in the New Testament. Scriptures clearly teach that women are precluded from any leadership position in the New Testament church. There are numerous references to women in the New Testament but nowhere do scriptures teach that they were ordained to public ministry in the church. In searching the scriptures we can only find male leadership in the New Testament church as the model for relationship between the sexes, and we should accept that as God's order for the church without any additions, subtractions or alterations whatever (CP 1Ti 2:8-14). Opinions differ among Christians as to whom this scripture refers - whether women generally or wives specifically. The Greek word **gune** means either, and whether a woman generally or a wife specifically is meant depends upon the context in which it is used. Here it refers to women generally because all women who profess godliness, regardless of their marital status are to dress modestly and not draw attention to themselves in the assembly by any form of immoderate conduct. Paul is dealing with the general conduct of all women in the church here. It has to do with church order and the position of men and women in church worship and work, not with the relationship between a husband and wife as in 1Cor 14 (CP 1Cor 14:34-35). In 1Ti 2:8 Paul wants *men*, as opposed to *women*, to conduct public worship in the church. In V12 he prohibits women from holding any position of authority over men in the church. Women cannot be teachers to instil doctrine and instruct men, which confirms what other scriptures in this study also teach, that men only

are ordained of God to pastor His church. Women are precluded from this office.

Paul is not forbidding women to educate, proclaim the truth, exhort, pray or prophesy. That is their God-given right as scriptures clearly attest (CP Ac 2:17-18; 18:24-26; 21:8-9; 1Cor 11:5; 14:13; Php 4:3; 2Ti 1:5; 3:14-15; Tit 2:3-5). Women can teach other women, girls, and children (boys and girls), and they can assist their husbands in their ministerial duties, but they are prohibited from holding public office in the church and exercising authority over men. This has nothing to do with the culture surrounding women in Paul's time either, as many in the contemporary church teach to justify the ordination of women today. There is no allowance in scripture whatever for God's word to be altered to suit the cultural changes in women that would justify their ordination to public ministry in the contemporary church (CP Psa 119:89; Lu 21:33; 1Pe 1:23-25). God's word never changes - it is exalted even above His name (CP Psa 89:34; 138:2). What Paul forbade in 1Timothy is still forbidden. In 1Ti 2:13-14 Paul explains that his opposition to women in public ministry is found in the original order of creation, and in the circumstances of the fall of man (CP V13-14): man (Adam) was formed first, then woman (Eve). Adam was not deceived but Eve was, and as a result women are prohibited from ever being teachers or exercising authority over men in the New Testament church. This confirms what other scriptures teach against women in any leadership position in the church. The Greek word **gune** is also used in 1Ti 3:11. Here though it is clearly used in the context of a husband and wife relationship. It is not describing women deacons but the wives of men deacons if they are married, the same as the preceding passage refers to male elders and their wives, if married (CP 1Ti 3:1-13).

Scriptures do not teach that Phebe was a "deaconess" in the church at Cenchrea. They simply teach that she was a servant of the church there, and as we have already seen the Greek word **diakonos** can refer to anyone in a serving capacity, from domestic servants, to civil rulers, to Christ (CP Ro 16:1-2). We get a better insight into Phebe's ministry in the church at Cenchrea from a study of the word "succorer" in V2 which defines her as caring for the affairs of others - who helps and aids them from her resources. *Succorer* is from the Greek word **prostatis**, which is the feminine form of "patron" or "protector". It was used by the Greeks to describe those who care for and entertain strangers in their home. Phebe was evidently a woman of means who ministered to the needs of others in the church at Cenchrea and looked after Paul and his companions on his apostolic mission journeys there. There are many women named in scripture who served with distinction in the first century church, but none in a leadership capacity.

There is another issue pertinent to this part of our study that needs to be raised here. It concerns titles men and women in the contemporary church use to signify their rank and authority in the church. The most common title used is "pastor" which is a complete misnomer considering the word is never used in scripture to define the rank or authority of anyone in the New Testament church. But even more

important is the fact that titles are totally opposed in scripture. Jesus himself condemned them (CP Job 32:21-22; Mt 23:2-12). We cannot mistake what these scriptures mean. God is totally opposed to titles and Jesus forbids Christians seeking after, or receiving them. Titles may count for something in hierarchical or denominational religions where they are used to distinguish between the so-called clergy and the laity, but they are totally unscriptural. Mt 23:8 teaches that there is always to be a brotherly relationship between Christians regardless of their ministry gifts (CP V8 with Mk 10:35-45 and Lu 22:24-27). Jesus was the embodiment of every ministry gift in the church yet He was the servant of all. He teaches us in these scriptures that every ministry gift in the church is to be one of service - not with titular power, but servant power (CP 1Cor 4:14-15).

Here we see that Paul was a father in the Lord to the Corinthian church, but he was never called "Father" Paul. Paul only ever referred to himself by his first name and to everyone else by theirs. We only have to read the first verse of every one of his epistles, and the last chapter in Romans (Ch 16), to see that, and Peter, John and James were the same. No elder in the first century church had a title conferred upon them, and if Jesus condemns them how can contemporary church leaders justify them. If Jesus forbids Christians using titles such as "rabbi", "father", "master" and "teacher" in Mt 23:2-12, that also means "pastor", "doctor", "reverend", etc. It is argued by contemporary church leaders that they need to use their title to obtain respect and recognition in the world order. Be that as it may, there is no need for it in the church itself, yet that is where it is used the most and it should not be so. It is the titles which distinguishes ministry that created the *clergy system* in the church in the first place.

TEACHERS: Teachers are placed third in the divine order of ministry gifts for the church (CP 1Cor 12:28). They are the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament scribes, viewed as in a special sense acquainted with and interpreters of God's word. The scribe's duty in the Old Testament was to give progressive instruction of God's redeeming purpose, which is also the teacher's function in the New Testament (CP Mt 13:52). This is how **Kenneth Wuest's "Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament"** renders that verse,

"...and He (Jesus) said to them, because of this, every man learned in the sacred scriptures who has accepted the precepts and instructions with reference to the Kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a master of a house, who is of such a character that he dispenses with hearty enjoyment out of his treasure-house, things new as to the quality and also things mellowed with age by reason of use."

Teachers in the New Testament church do not teach the mere letter of the word or doctrine as such, but being blessed with revelation in the word they teach prophetically, presenting deep truth in such a way as to build up faith in the church, helping to prepare and equip it for God's service. The teacher's function is to

teach, to instruct, to educate, to train, to discipline, to nurture, to influence the understanding of those being taught. The special task of teachers is to zealously guard the gospel entrusted to them. They are to vigorously contend for the truth of scripture in the face of any teaching in the church that does not conform to scripture, and faithfully point the church to the original message of Christ and the apostles (CP 2Ti 1:8-14; 2:2; 3:16). Teachers must never forget that the letter (of the law) kills, but it is the Spirit that gives life (CP Jn 6:63; 2Cor 3:6). The supreme goal of all instruction in God's word is not Bible knowledge in itself but an inward moral transformation that expresses itself in love, purity of heart, a clear conscience and faith without hypocrisy (CP 1Ti 1:4-5). The biblical concept of teaching and learning is not primarily to impart knowledge or to prepare oneself academically. It is to produce holiness and a righteous lifestyle conforming to the ways of God (CP He 12:14). A teacher's own life must illustrate perseverance in truth, faith and holiness. Teachers should be able to speak with authority; they must be a voice and not just an echo like the Old Testament scribes and Pharisees. They must be sound theologians able to teach wholesome doctrine (CP 1Ti 6:3-4; 2Ti 1:13; 1Pe 4:10-11). A teacher's life is one of study and personal preparation but they must always remain teachable themselves (CP Ro 2:21; 1Cor 2:9-13). If teachers are not able to be taught themselves, they will not be able to teach others. They must always beware of pride of intellect, for knowledge "puffs up" (CP 1Cor 8:1-2; Jas 3:13-18).

Many Christians believe that religious education teachers and Sunday school teachers exercise the ministry gift of a teacher in the New Testament church but that is not correct. Those with the ministry gift of teacher are also qualified elders in the church, but religious education teachers and Sunday school teachers are not necessarily so. Also, there are many women who teach Sunday school and religious education, but as noted in our study on apostles and pastors they are prohibited from ever being teachers or any other public ministry in the New Testament church. There is a grim warning in scripture to Christians aspiring to be teachers in the New Testament church (CP Jas 3:1-2). *Masters* (KJV) means "teachers", but it also includes every leader in the church because they are all instructors in God's word - they all give instruction to a congregation - and no one has a more solemn responsibility in the church than those who teach the sacred scriptures. James warns Christians here not to aspire too hastily to be a teacher because they increase their liability for judgement if they do. The warning about unbridled tongues in Jas 3 teaches that true faith is evidenced by the words we speak. Primarily it is directed to teachers and includes all church leaders, and secondarily to all Christians. It is very easy for teachers to sin with their tongue. Teachers have a tremendous influence over the people they teach and they must give very careful consideration to not only what they say, but how they say it (CP Jas 3:3-12). The ministry gift of teaching is one of great responsibility and must therefore be entered into with extreme caution.

There are false teachers in the New Testament church just as there are false apostles and prophets and there are many scriptures warning against them, and like false apostles and prophets they may outwardly appear to be genuine spiritual leaders and true ministers of the word, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, full of dead men's bones, given over to extortion and excess, and full of hypocrisy and iniquity (CP Mt 7:15-23; 13:25-30; Ac 20:29-30; 2Cor 11:12-15; Tit 1:10-14; 2Pe 2:1-3; Jude 4; Rev 2:20). False teachers, again like false apostles and prophets, may not always be immediately recognisable but their doctrine will betray them to Christians who test their teachings against the pure word of God, as we are commanded in scripture to do (CP 1Th 5:21; 1Jn 4:1-6; 2Jn 7-11). Christians must never just accept any teachings at face value, even those handed down in the church, unless they have been tested against the revelation of God's truth in scripture (CP Ac 17:10-12). The Bereans only believed because scripture confirmed that what Paul and Silas taught was correct (CP 2Pe 1:16-19). Here Peter stresses the importance of scripture as the only sure proof of anything that has to do with God. If it cannot be confirmed in scripture we must disregard it completely (CP Rev 2:1-2).

There is one more thing that should be noted here: while there are many false teachers in the church, there are also many false Christians willing to receive them (CP 2Ti 3:1-7; 4:1-4). However, the judgement that will be passed upon false teachers will be much more severe than that upon other sinners (CP Lu 12:41-48; He 10:26-31). These scriptures teach that just as there are degrees of glory in heaven according to our earthly works, so there are degrees of punishment in hell and the worst will come upon false teachers. True teachers and all other spiritual leaders in the church must guard and defend the gospel committed to them even when others depart from the faith. They must defend it against attack and challenge the church if it is tempted to lay aside the truth. This is essential to ensure their own salvation and the salvation of those who hear them (CP 1Ti 4:16; 2Ti 3:12-17). That concludes this part of our study.

The effectiveness of the church depends upon whether or not it acknowledges and receives all the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11. They are all essential to God's purpose for the church and it cannot function as God intended unless they are all acknowledged and received. Many Christians believe that the contemporary church is generally ineffective in its witness in the world and devoid of power over the works of darkness because it esteems the ministry gift of one man over all the others, and while ever it does God's purpose for the church cannot be accomplished. The church needs to recognise, as scriptures clearly teach, that one-man rule is not God's order for the church. That is why Christ gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some teachers to collectively and co-equally pastor the church: to govern, to guide, to gather, to guard, and to ground the church in the ways of God; to prepare and equip it for God's service (CP Eph 4:11-16). No one ministry gift is more important than another. Each has its own special value which adds a dimension and supplies an emphasis that is not present in any one of the others.

As noted earlier in this study, all these ministry gifts were embodied in Christ and He gave them all to the church as an extension of His own earthly ministry to bring Christians to maturity, so that they will each acknowledge their individual responsibility to be an effective witness for God, and minister His word in the world.

It is not expected that everyone who reads this study will agree with its findings completely. Sincere Christians disagree on many important issues in the church and it is quite likely that some of the issues raised here will also be the subject of some disagreement. In that case let us agree to disagree in love. (See also comments on Ac 6:1-6, 11:27, 13:1-4, 20:17; Ro 11:13, 16:1-2; 1Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20(A); Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:1-7, 3:8-13; and 1Pe 5:1-3) and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

4:13 *To what does the phrase "unto a perfect man" refer here?*

Paul uses the phrase here metaphorically of the church being brought to maturity – a *man* of mature understanding - in Christ (CP V11-16). *Man* in this context is from the Greek word **aner**, which refers specifically to a male. This begs the question, why, if God Himself refers to the church specifically as a man, a great many Christians refer to it as a woman – the *bride* of Christ. Nowhere in scripture is the church called a woman or referred to by a feminine pronoun, yet a teaching persists in the church that it is the *bride* of Christ. This is also despite the fact that the true bride of Christ is clearly identified in scripture as New Jerusalem, which is also called "the mother of us all" in scripture (CP Ga 4:25-26 with Rev 19:7-9; 21:2, 9-10). For more detailed studies on this subject see comments on Ro 7:4, 2Cor 11:2, Eph 2:15-16(B), 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9, 21:2 and author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

4:25 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

In Eph 4 Paul is admonishing the Ephesian Christians – and by extension every Christian throughout the church age – to give up their old way of life which was corrupted by deceitful lusts – the *old man*, and demonstrate their new life in Christ – the *new man* (CP V1-3, 17-32 and Col 3:1-14). *Lying* includes in its meaning every form of dishonesty, cheating and deceit; any false and fictitious statement; exaggeration, broken promises, betrayal of confidences; flattery, or understating income for tax benefits. Christians must speak only in accordance with the truth that is in Christ (CP Zech 8:16). Truth is a debt Christians owe to all men, particularly fellow Christians. Their word should be their bond (CP Mt 5:33-37; Jas 5:12).

Be ye angry and sin not in Eph 4:26 means that while Christians are permitted to be angry with righteous indignation in certain circumstances, they are not to let that anger lead them into sin. They cannot remain angry into the night, lest they give a foothold to the devil (CP V26-27). Jesus Himself was angry with

righteous indignation against the moneychangers and merchants in the temple three times in His earthly ministry (CP Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:12-16; Jn 2:13-17 (see also comments on Jn 2:13-17)). Christians also must not engage in any immoral, impure, frivolous, empty, idle or profitless talk. They must be careful to speak only that which ministers grace to the hearers and builds them up for their spiritual profit (CP Eph 4:29 and 5:1-4 with Col 3:16 and 1Th 5:11). See also comments on Eph 5:3-4.

This clearly refutes the teaching by some in the church of sinless perfection – that Christians cannot sin. Christians can, and do sin (CP 1Jn 1:8, 10). Conversion to Christ does not mean the eradication of the sin nature – it can still assert itself over the new nature of God in Christians, if they let it. Scriptures throughout teach that it cannot assert itself in Christians under grace, walking in the spirit (CP Ro 6:1-14, 19; 8:1-13; 2Cor 10:3-5; Ga 5:16-18, 24-25; Eph 6:11-18; Jas 4:5-10; 1Jn 5:4, 18). See also comments on Ro 6:1, 6:3-5, 6:6-11, 6:12-14, 6:15, 6:16, 6:17-20, 6:21-23, 2Cor 10:3-5, Ga 5:17, Eph 6:11-12, Jas 4:5, 4:7-10, 1Jn 1:9 and 1:10.

4:28 *What is the underlying teaching here?*

We learn from this that the primary purpose for Christians having a job is that they can help others in need. God equates our treatment of others in need with our treatment of Himself (CP Pr 19:17; 21:13; 22:9). Our Christian walk is not only a spiritual walk, it must also serve the needs of others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (CP Ga 6:10; Jas 2:13-17; 1Jn 3:16-18). See also comments on Lu 16:19-31, Ac 20:35, Jas 2:13-17 and 1Jn 3:16-18, and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

4:30 *What does it mean that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption?*

Immediately upon their conversion to Christ believers are set with God's seal – the Holy Spirit – which is given to believers to assure them of their future resurrection and eternal inheritance in Christ (CP 1:9-14; Ro 8:23; 2Cor 1:20-22; 5:5). *Earnest* in both 2Cor 5:5 and Eph 1:14 (KJV) means guarantee, pledge, deposit. (See also comments on 2Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; Eph 1:11-14 and 1Jn 5:10-13).

5:1-2 *See comments on 1Th 3:12*

5:3-4 *What does "foolish talking" and "jesting" mean here?*

Foolish talking is stupid talk, idle talk, or talking foolishly. It is foolish in the sense of the lack of forethought and wisdom - the talk of fools which is foolishness and sin together: Godless, sinful talk. Whoever indulges in it neglects and despises what relates to salvation. *Jesting* here refers to coarse

jesting, ribaldry – suggestive and immoral wit, obscene and offensive talk. All such talk is destructive of holy living and must be stopped and repented of if one wants to inherit the kingdom of God (CP 4:22-23, 29; Col 3:8-10). See also comments on Eph 4:25 Col 4:5-6 and Tit 2:7-8.

5:5-13 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

Here Paul stresses the impossibility of anyone – including professing Christians – given to immorality, indecency, or the greed which makes an idol of gain, inheriting the kingdom of God and Christ. (Note the Deity of Christ confirmed by Paul here, declaring him equal ruler of the kingdom with God).

Christians must not allow themselves to be deceived by shallow excuses or arguments for sinning, because God's wrath will be poured out upon those who do them, whether they are professing Christians or not (CP 1Cor 6:18-20; Ga 5:19-21; Eph 4:17-19; Col 3:1-10; 1Th 4:1-7; He 12:14-15). Christians used to be children of the darkness but now are children of the light and produce fruit of the spirit consisting of all forms of goodness, righteousness and truth. They do everything they can to please God and have nothing to do with the worthless things of the darkness. Instead, they expose or reprove the works of darkness for what they are by the light in which they walk (CP Eph 5:13). This does not teach that everyone exposed to the light will become a Christians, rather it teaches that a holy Christian life reveals by contrast, the sinfulness of unregenerate lives (CP Jn 3:20-21 with Eph 5:14). See also comments on Eph 5:14.

5:14 *Where was this spoken in scripture and what does it mean?*

Paul is not quoting verbatim from scripture here. What he says appears to be a paraphrase of Isa 60:1-2 (CP Isa 60:1-2). Eph 5:14 is an invitation for salvation to the unsaved, in order that they may be converted from children of darkness to children of light (CP Eph 5:13 with Pr 4:18).

5:16 *What does "redeeming the time" mean?*

Time here is not **chronos**, "time as such"; it is **kairos**, which refers to season, opportune time, opportunity. Thus *redeeming the time* means taking advantage of every opportunity that presents itself for doing God's work; not allowing a suitable moment to pass by unheeded (CP Ga 6:9-10; Col 4:5; 2Ti 4:2; Tit 3:8). Christians must do the work of God while there is still time; soon it will be too late (CP Jn 4:34-36; 9:4). See also author's studies *The Christian Calling – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Redeeming the Time – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:18-20 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

Paul is admonishing Christians here not to be caught up in drunkenness, which results in a dissipated lifestyle, not salvation. Scriptures condemn all drunkenness (CP Pr 23:20-21, 29-35; 3:4-5; Isa 5:11-12; 28:7-8; Ro 13:12-14; 1Cor 5:11, 6:9-10; Ga 5:19, 21). Paul's injunction to be *filled with the spirit* in the Greek construction of Eph 5:18, means to be in a continuous process or state of being filled with the spirit, which finds expression in Christians communing with each other in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (CP Ac 16:25; Jas 5:13 with Php 4:4). Psalms are scriptural songs, hymns can be divinely or humanly inspired songs, and spiritual songs are impromptu songs sung under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The extent to which we are continuously being filled by the Holy Spirit is determined solely by our yieldedness to Him.

Another way in which the spirit-filled life is manifested is in the giving of thanks unto God for all things. This does not mean that we are to thank Him for evil things as well as good things. Sufferings are not in view here, only blessings. Therefore it means that the spirit-filled life is also manifested in giving thanks always unto God for His blessings, in Jesus' name (CP Col 3:16-17). It is only through Christ that we receive God's blessings (CP Eph 1:3).

5:21 *What does "submitting yourselves one to another" mean?*

This is yet another way in which the spirit-filled life should express itself. Christians are to give way to each other – not assert themselves – out of reverence for Christ (CP Ro 12:3, 10; Ga 5:13, 26; Php 2:1-8; Jas 3:13-14; 1Pe 5:5-6). No believer is inherently superior to another. We are all equal before God although we have varying functions and responsibilities. However, if we accept certain functions under a fellow-human, we must subject ourselves to that individual to accomplish a common goal. (See also comments on Jn 13:34-35; Ro 12:3, 13:8, 13:17; Ga 5:13; Php 2:5-8 and 1Pe 5:5-6 and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

5:22-24 *What does it mean here that wives have to be submitted to their husbands in everything?*

This means exactly what it says, providing that whatever it is conforms to God's word. God must come first (CP Mt 10:37; 22:36-38). It does not mean, as some teach, that a wife only needs to be submitted to her husband on the basis that he loves her as Christ loves the church (CP 1Pe 2:21 with 3:1-6). These scriptures teach that even though a woman may be the wronged party in a marriage, she should suffer the wrong without complaint as Christ also suffered for our example. Eph 5:22 teaches that everything a wife does to, or for her husband, she does to, or for Christ.

The words *submit*, *subjection* and *obedience* are all derived from the same Greek word **hupatasso**, which

comes from a military term that meant ranking or order. It carries with it the idea of voluntarily giving up or relinquishing rights. Thus when a wife is submitted to her husband she has voluntarily subordinated herself to him. The same principle applied in our previous study on Eph 5:21 ([CP Eph 5:21](#)). When Christians give way to each other they voluntarily relinquish their right to assert themselves. Being submitted to her husband does not mean that a wife is lower in quality to her husband – she is only lower in rank ([CP Gen 3:16; 1Cor 11:3-12; 14:34-35; Eph 5:33; 1Ti 2:11-13; Tit 2:3-5; 1Pe 3:1-7 with Ga 3:28](#)). *Power on her head* in 1 Cor 11:10 refers to a woman's long hair as the sign of her subjection to her husband ([CP 1Cor 11:10](#)). And *reverence* in Eph 5:33 means to honour ([CP Eph 5:33](#)).

Sadly, many women in the church find it hard to agree with this teaching. They have been taught that the words *submit* and *submission* simply mean "being agreeable, flowing together", or "seeing as the other sees". But as is clear from the above scriptures that is not what God means at all. Consequently wives who are not submitted to their husbands are out of divine order. Women have also been taught that *head* simply means "source", but again that is not correct. *Head* in this context means "ruler, authority over" ([CP Eph 5:23 with Col 1:18](#)). To replace *head* with *source* here undermines Christ's authority in the church. It has even been taught by some in the church that acknowledging the husband's headship is idolatry. These teachings all contradict the clear teaching of scripture.

We also learn from this that if scriptures teach that wives are to be subordinate to their husbands, then it is totally unscriptural for wives to hold any office in the church that places them in a leadership role over their husbands ([CP 1Ti 3:1-13](#)). See also comments on Ro 16:1-2; 1Cor 14:34-35; Eph 5:21, 5:25-32; 1Ti 2:8-15, 3:1-7, 3:8-13; 1Pe 3:1-6 and 3:7 and author's studies *The Church and Women and God's Order for the New Testament Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Husbands, Wives, Children – their Duties and Obligations to Each Other* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:25-32 *What exactly does Paul mean here?*

Paul is simply illustrating here Christ's infinite love for the church by comparing the relationship of Christ and the church to that of a man and his wife. The supreme responsibility of husbands in regard to their wives is to love them with the same unreserved, selfless and sacrificial love that Christ has for His church. Christ gave everything He had, including His own life for the church, and that is the standard of sacrificial love a husband must have for his wife ([CP V33; Col 3:19; 1Pe 3:7 with Ac 20:28](#)). Paul is not teaching in Eph 5:25-32 that the wife symbolizes the church or that the husband symbolizes Christ. He is simply teaching that Christ's relationship to the church is more easily understood through the dynamics of a marriage relationship between a husband and wife ([CP Eph 5:22-23](#)). The *great mystery* Paul refers to in V32 is that marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between

Christ and the church, which was completely unknown until revealed in the New Testament. Many in the church use Eph 5:25-32 as a proof text that the church is the Bride of Christ, despite the fact that the true Bride of Christ is clearly identified in scripture as the Holy city, New Jerusalem ([CP Rev 19:7-9, 21:2, 9-10](#)). For a more detailed study on the bride of Christ see comments on Ro 7:4, 2Cor 11:2; Eph 2:15-16(B), Rev 19:7-9, 21:2, and author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

5:26 *See comments on Jn 3:5*

6:1-3 *Is this directive applicable to all children?*

No, this is directed only to the families of believers, because the children addressed here are to be influenced by religious duty as well as natural affection. This would be most unlikely to influence the children of unbelievers, because these children have to obey their parents as if obeying the Lord Himself ([CP Col 3:20 with Pr 1:8, 4:1-4, 7:1-3](#)). This directive is also one of the Ten Commandments, and is the first commandment with a promise attached ... *that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth* ([CP Ex 20:12 with Lev 19:3](#)). To honour means to revere, respect, esteem, and obey. See also comments on Eph 6:4 and author's study *Husbands, Wives, Children – their Duties and Obligations to Each Other* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:4 *What does it mean that fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath?*

Paul is admonishing fathers here to avoid doing anything that would make their children angry or resentful so as to make them indisposed toward parental obedience. This is the same teaching as Col 3:21 ([CP Col 3:21](#)). Fathers should never display favoritism toward one child over another. They should encourage as well as correct their children, and punish only intentional wrongdoing. They should instruct them with patience, and dedicate their lives in love to them, with a heart of compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness ([CP Col 3:12-14](#)). To bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord means that fathers have to systematically discipline, instruct and encourage their children to respect God's commands as the foundation of all of life, Godliness and blessing ([CP De 6:6-7; 11:18-21; Psa 78:1-7; Pr 13:24; 22:6](#)). The word *chasteneth* in Pr 13:24 means to instruct, to educate, to direct. It refers to the activity directed toward the moral and spiritual nurture and training of a child to influence conscious will and action ([CP De 8:5; Psa 94:12-13; Pr 3:11-12; 19:18; He 12:5-11; Rev 3:19](#)). See also comments on Eph 6:1-3 and author's study *Husbands, Wives, Children – their Duties and Obligations to Each Other* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:5-9 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that all employed Christians are to render service to their employers (or masters), the same as they would serve Jesus – faithfully, diligently and conscientiously. Not only when the employer is watching, and not only to promote their own welfare. They must do so to honour their employer and the Lord, whose servants we really are (CP Col 3:22-24; 1Ti 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10; 1Pe 2:18-21). Even if an employer does not deserve respect in his own right, he should be respected nevertheless as if one was serving Christ Himself. The only exception to this is if the employer's demands contravene God's word (CP Ac 4:18-20; 5:28-29).

6:11-12 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that the devil is constantly waging war against Christians and that Christians can only overcome him in the power of God's might (CP V10 with Mk 16:17; Ro 6:1-8; 2Cor 10:3-5; Jas 4:7; 1Pe 5:8-9). The word *wiles* in Eph 6:11 means "methods" – the different plans and schemes the devil uses to deceive, entrap, enslave and ruin the souls of men. However, as Jas 4:7 teaches, if we are submitted to God, we can resist the devil and he will flee from us, for God is greater than the devil (CP 1Jn 4:4). When Paul says to *put on* the whole armour of God in Eph 6:11, he does not mean that it is to be a daily ritual or routine, as many Christians believe, but simply that Christians are to be in a constant state of readiness, clothed with all that God provides us with for offence or defence against the forces of Satan in our daily walk.

The term *put on* is from the same Greek word translated *endued* in Lu 24:49 (CP Lu 24:49). This is referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Once we are baptized in the Spirit we do not have to be re-baptized every day, and it is the same with the whole armour of God. We are to take it to ourselves **at once, and once for all**. It is not meant to be a repeat performance every day. The nature of the Christian's battle with the devil is clearly presented in 2 Cor 10:3-5 (CP 2Cor 10:3-5). The battle is not fought on the human level. Christians cannot withstand the devil in their own power. They can only do so by using the divine weapons God has provided for them (CP Eph 6:13-17). The phrase *having done all, to stand* in V13 is a military term meaning "having conquered all, stand, ready to do battle again". This teaches, like Jas

4:7, that Christians conforming to God's word need never fear the forces of darkness. The devil can only overcome those not conformed to God's word (CP 1Pe 5:8-9). See also comments on 2Cor 10:3-5 (A) and (B).

Truth in Eph 6:14 is not merely ethical truth, but truth in all its fullness and scope – in both word and conduct. It means sincerity and integrity of character; openness, candour, truthfulness (CP Eph 5:9). The idea of Christians girding their loins with truth in the context of Eph 6:14 is a sincere commitment to fight and win without hypocrisy (CP Isa 11:5; Lu 12:35; Ro 13:12-14; 1Pe 1:13). *The breastplate of righteousness* in Eph 6:14 is not justifying righteousness given to believers upon their conversion to Christ, but sanctifying righteousness, the product of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers. As believers are yielded to the Holy Spirit the righteousness of Christ produces in them the practical, daily righteousness that becomes their spiritual breastplate (CP Isa 59:17; 2Cor 6:7; 7:1; 1Th 5:8). *Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace* means that the preparedness with which believers are inspired by the gospel with its message of peace with God is to be to them the protection and equipment which the boots that covered their feet were to the Roman soldiers (CP Isa 52:7; Ro 10:15-17).

Above all in Eph 6:16 means "in addition to". In addition to having our loins girt about with truth, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, we are also to take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (CP V16-17). *The shield of faith* is a present faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for victory over sin and the forces of darkness (CP Ro 8:37; 2Cor 2:14; 1Jn 4:4, 5:4). *The helmet of salvation* is speaking of the believer's assurance of salvation, which Satan seeks to destroy with his weapons of doubt and discouragement - some of the fiery darts of the wicked. But believers have the assurance of their salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Jn 3:16; 6:37-39; 10:27-29; Ro 5:8-11; 8:31-39; Php 1:6; 1Pe 1:3-5). *The sword of the Spirit* is the word of God. As the sword was the only weapon of a Roman soldier so the word of God is the only weapon believers need to fend off Satan's attacks on them (CP 2Cor 10:3-5; He 4:12). See also comments on 2Cor 10:3-5(A) and (B) and He 4:11-12.