

**Ephesians 1**  
**Leon L. Combs, Ph.D.**  
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**“Salvation From God’s Perspective”**

**Introduction**

This book is about the church. It is ecclesiology. Some theologians think that the problem with the modern church is that it has become man-centered rather than God-centered. A study of this book helps us to turn the focus away from ourselves and back toward God. There is no doubt about who is the Head of the church and indeed that the church is actually His body (we will explore this later):

*Eph 1:22-23 “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.”*

It is important to note that the oldest manuscripts do not have Ephesus in the first verse. The book was written shortly after the middle of the first century. The earliest complete manuscripts of Paul’s epistles dates to about AD 200 and these manuscripts do not have “Ephesus” in the first verse:

*Eph 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and {who are} faithful in Christ Jesus:”*

The reason for the lack of a specific place in the first verse seems to be that it was a circular letter, intended to be read at many of the early churches. Thus an excellent exercise to do to help better understand the book and to apply it is to replace the word “Ephesus” with the name of your church so that it might read:

*Eph 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Midway Presbyterian Church, and {who are} faithful in Christ Jesus:”*

Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21) and on his next missionary journey stayed more than three years from AD 54 to 57 (Acts 20:3). Paul actually wrote the letter in prison (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). We are not sure exactly where Paul was in prison although traditionally the location has been in Rome. The date of the writing is mostly accepted to be around AD 60. It is difficult to categorize the literary form of the letter for sometimes it is like a sermon and at other times it is like a prayer. The letter does follow the general theme of Paul’s writings in that he begins with doctrine and then goes to the application of the doctrine. The letter seems to have been written during a reflective time of Paul’s life as he contemplated the actions of Christ in the church and the responsibilities of the church members. Unity was an almost obsessive subject of study for the philosophers of the first century and Paul seems to have addressed this topic by showing that supreme unity is only possible through Christ. The

canonicity of Ephesians has never been in doubt. It was included in every known list since AD 140.

Although the letter was probably a circular letter, it certainly did go to Ephesus and there are indications that Ephesus was the first city to which it was delivered. Ephesus was an extremely important city in that area and it was also very heathen. Read Acts 19 for some concept of the wickedness of the city. Paul found a city that worshiped Diana and had a large open-air theater that could seat 25,000 people. It boasted a massive temple to Diana and housed a statue of Diana, which the people said came down from heaven. The temple had huge amounts of treasure and was served by hundreds of temple prostitutes. Paul found a small group of twelve men who were disciples of John the Baptist, but who were uncertain about the truth. Into this pagan arena God used Paul and the Gospel brought rebirths to many people and later became a place where the apostle John worked. God certainly worked a miracle in this pagan city when he established the church at Ephesus. Below are three helpful outlines:

Carol Combs

1. Chosen in Christ
2. Created in Christ
3. Complete in Christ
4. Church of Christ
5. Conduct of Christians
  - a. in the world (5:1-18)
  - b. in the church (5:19-21)
  - c. in marriage (5:22-33)
  - d. in the family (6:1-4)
  - e. in work (6:5-9)
6. Conflict for Christ

Ungers Bible Dictionary

1. Our position in Christ
  - a. The believer as Christ's child (1:1-23)
  - b. as a member of Christ's body (2:1-18)
  - c. as God's building (2:19-3:21)
2. Our practice of Christ
  - a. A worthy walk (4:1-6:9)
  - b. A continual conflict (6:10-24)

The Expositors' Bible Commentary

- I. Salutation (1:1,2)
- II. Doctrine: The Implications of Christian Faith (1:2-3:21)
  - A. An Act of Praise (1:3-14.)
  - B. A Prayer of Intercession (1:15-21)
  - C. Life From Death (2:1-10)
  - D. Jews and Gentiles Reconciled (2:11-22)
  - E. Grace and Apostleship (3:1-13)
  - F. Knowledge and Fullness (3:14-21)
- III. Practice: The Application to Christian Life (4:1-6:20)
  - A. The Unity of the Church (4:1-16)
  - B. The Changed Life (4:17-24)
  - C. Christian Behavior Patterns (4:25-5:2)
  - D. Light in the Lord (5:3-20)
  - E. Christian Relationships: Marriage (5:21-33)
  - F. Christian Relationships: Parenthood (6:1-4)

- G. Christian Relationships: Employment (6:5-9)
- H. Into Battle (6:10-20)
- IV. Conclusion (6:21-24)

## Exposition

**Eph 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and {who are} faithful in Christ Jesus:”**

Paul starts immediately giving praise to God. We know from the Bible the implications of his stating that he is an apostle. An apostle is one anointed by God to reveal the Word to His people:

*1Cor 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,  
1Cor 2:13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.}”*

Thus Paul is saying that this letter is from God. Also Paul says that he became an apostle by the will of God. Left to himself, Paul would have kept on persecuting the Church. But God interfered and called Paul to be an apostle. God also calls us and without that call, none of us would choose God. None of us are good (Matt 19:16-17). God would be perfectly just to condemn us all to Hell. But by His will He chose Paul as an apostle and many others as His children.

Now let us look closely at the audience to whom Paul wrote. He wrote to the Christians at Ephesus and other cities, and from this sentence we see three characteristics of the Christians. As Lloyd Jones says, it is very important for us to understand what a Christian is. It seems that many people attending churches really do not know what a Christian is.

- 1.) Christians are saints. Biblically the word “saint” means someone who is set apart for holy work. This setting apart is something that God does apart from any human merit. God has set us apart from the world for His purpose. The setting apart occurs when God reaches out through the person and power of the Holy Spirit, regenerates the person, and then draws the person into the company of God’s church. Every person is thus a saint. We now belong to a new kingdom, but we have God’s purpose to do here in this world. We are called to also become increasingly more saintly in appearance. But always remember that we are saints.
- 2.) Christians are faithful and that word means exercising faith and it means continuing in the faith. Faith has three elements: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. We know the correct facts, we are moved by the facts (Christ’s death on the cross for us), and then we act on those facts. Continuing in the faith means that we will persevere to the end in our faith. Remember what Jesus said:

*Matt 10:33 “But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”*

Many of us face criticism at the workplace because we are Christians and we may be tempted to join the crowd, but Christians are faithful. There are still places in the world where people are being killed or terribly tortured because they are Christians. Most of us will probably never face such a choice of living or dying, but most of us will face the opportunity to accept criticism or deny Christ and, if we are Christians, we will be faithful.

- 3.) Christians are in Christ (John 15:1-11). This is a state that we are in forever. Being “in Christ” is used a lot in the Bible and although very difficult to understand we must accept it as true for it changes us the more we understand it. We see this concept in John 15:5

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

We are part of the body of Christ and thus we cannot deny that of which we are a part. We died with Him on the cross as stated in Romans 6:5-6

*“For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also {in the likeness} of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;”*

Our unity with Christ means that our sins have totally been paid for and that we are now totally righteous before the Father. It also means that the ability to live a life totally in obedience to the Father is feasible. Living a totally righteous life is thus a realistic goal, but one that we know we will never achieve while our old nature still battles with us. But one day we will be like Jesus totally so that our “in Christ” will indeed be total (1 John 3:2).

### **Eph 1:2 “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Paul further opens this great letter with a prayer for grace and peace to be with us and that grace and peace is from none other than God the Father and God the Son. It was common for Jews to greet each other with “Shalom”, but Paul goes way beyond that familiar greeting. He asks for grace and peace from both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to be with them.

God’s grace is sufficient for all of our needs as we see in 2Cor 12:9

*“And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”*

For peace, remember Phil 4:6-7

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

So what a great prayer-greeting Paul has for us! It is God’s grace that begins our faith and the result of our faith is peace. Grace and peace are then the cause and the effect of faith. Without the grace of God there is no peace and both of these are from both The Father and The Son. This sentence is also virtually a condensation of the entire epistle. He will expound upon our need for grace and peace as he goes along. It is only by grace that God gives us faith so that we can be at peace with Him as we read in the following:

*Rom 5:1 “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*

Then His grace continues so that we can have peace with others and ourselves, as he will clarify. Man is so constructed that he cannot have peace with himself until he has peace with God, and he cannot have peace with God unless God first acts by His grace.

**Eph 1:3 “Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ,”**

This verse is so awesome that it seems bottomless. We could meditate on this verse the rest of our lives. Certainly we should remember it whenever we begin to feel depressed or to become cynical. This is a remarkable section of this letter for it is all one sentence from verse 3 through verse 14! Paul just heaps praise and doctrine together in a magnificent crescendo. John Stott gives a temporal outline of these verses:

- The past blessing of election (vv. 4-6)
- The present blessing of adoption (vv. 5-8)
- The future blessing of unification (vv. 9-10)
- Then he says we have the scope of the blessings (vv. 11-14)

Others have given a Trinitarian breakdown of this section:

- God the Father: the source of the blessings (vv. 3-6)
- The Lord Jesus Christ: are imputed to us through Him (vv. 7-10)
- The Holy Spirit: He applies the blessings (vv. 11-14)

This first verse is very important. God blesses the world with what we call “general grace” (Matt 5:45). Only the children of God have been blessed with the blessings from “specific grace” (Acts 4:12, 1 Tim 2:5, Col 1:19, Col 2:3, Col 2:9). Paul makes it very clear here that these blessings in heaven are only for those who are “in Christ”. Thus he is talking only to the true children of God for it is only we who are “in Christ”. Paul starts this verse with praise and thanksgiving to God and that attitude should be present all the time in our lives. We also need to note that the Bible tells us to praise in a Trinitarian manner. We offer praises to God the Father through God the Son by God the Holy Spirit. An unbalanced attitude toward God by stressing one to the lack of the others

often leads to errors that damage our witness to the world and our worship of God. The Father planned, the Son put it in operation, and the Holy Spirit applies it. Just as we must always be Trinitarian, we must also never forget that Christ is the only gate.

Men by nature have no interest in **true** spiritual matters. Notice the following from an advertisement for a Spiritual Wellness program:

“This course offers a number of exercises and activities that address the spiritual dimension of wellness. Based on the National Wellness Institute's spiritual dimension of wellness, the activities will focus on seeking meaning and purpose, and peace in human existence. The NWI model encourages seeking answers to philosophical questions such as: "Why am I here?" and "What is life all about?" Although for some, organized religion provides answers, the exercises provided will focus on spirituality as opposed to religion. The course will be interactive, and participants will engage in application of the exercises. (Course part of the Holistic Wellness Certificate)”

These poor people do not know what true spirituality is, which is the reason that I “bolded” the word “true” above. The worldly person is interested in his job, his house, his car, his furniture, his dog, his cat, and even in the development of his “spiritual component”. But try to talk to this person about **true** spiritual matters and you see the eyes glaze over. The person cannot show an interest in true spiritual matters because he/she is spiritually dead and will remain in that state until the Holy Spirit regenerates him/her. After regeneration the person has a spiritual mind, eyes, and ears (1 Cor 2:14). Now he/she is a temple (1 Cor 6:14) and can really offer praises to God:

*Rom 12:1 “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship.”*

Only the child of God can offer true praises to God.

Now note that our blessings are in heavenly places. Note that Paul says “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and not “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. The covenant and representation are different and so the blessings are different. In the Old Testament times, blessings came mainly in a material and temporal sense. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the blessings are not so much here on earth but “in the heavenly places” beyond human sight.

The Christian faith is honestly and openly otherworldly. The same concept is in

*1 Peter 2:11 “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.”*

We are not **of** the world anymore, and we are at war with the world. We are aliens in a strange land and what the world esteems, we must generally hate. The Christian looks at the world from a very different perspective than the non-Christian. We must obey both

*Col 3:2 “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” and*

*Rom 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This “transformation” is a metamorphosis that is never totally achieved while we live here, but we are commanded to do it. We call this transformation the sanctification process. One day we will die and we can rest in the hope expressed by:

*2Cor 5:1 “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

We also know who prepared the place for us in this wonderful promise:

*John 14:2-3 “In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, {there} you may be also.”*

We also know that God Himself is saving our inheritance for us:

*1Peter 1:4 “to {obtain} an inheritance {which is} imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

The next word in this great sentence (Eph 1:3) that we should focus on is “all”, for Paul says “all spiritual blessings”. Peter also says in 2 Peter 1:3 that “*God has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*” I cannot truly comprehend this truth. I was an enemy of God and God reached out and regenerated me to become a child of His. He then adopted me as His child and now He has given me all spiritual blessings! Praise God!

Also note that Paul says in this great verse that God **has blessed** us”. This is not some future blessing. This blessing has already occurred. God has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Paul elaborates on some of these blessings in verses to come. So when are we to enjoy these blessings? We are to enjoy them now. God reveals them slowly to us so that we are able to comprehend them fully as we go through life. But the blessings will be progressively revealed to us until the time when we fully enjoy Him forever.

Now what does Paul mean about “in the heavenly places”? Paul uses this phrase five times in this letter. Paul used the same term in

*2Cor 12:2 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.”*

The “third heaven” is the same word as “heavenly places”. This concept was well known to the first-century readers. The “first heaven” is the atmosphere of our earth. The “second heaven” is the surrounding universe as we see it with its stars, planets, etc. The “third heaven” is the dwelling place of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is there and being “in Christ” joins us to him there. This concept is also mentioned in

*Eph 2:6 “and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places}, in Christ Jesus,”*

There is a sense in which we are thus already in the third heaven. After regeneration we are indeed in a war with ourselves:

*Gal 5:17 “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”*

We are in the world and we are in heaven. We are Christians yet we still have a desire to do evil. We find that we don’t want to sin and yet we do sin. The world doesn’t understand us and we have a hard time understanding us. In one sense we are more miserable now than we were before we were regenerated. But we also know that we are at peace with God and knowing that we can also become at peace with ourselves. As the sanctification process continues, our peace with ourselves increases. We must come to reckon the truth as stated in

*Col 1:13 “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

We are indeed now citizens of heaven with all the rights and privileges earned for us by Jesus Christ. So now we must spend time making sure that we understand that by being in Christ we have all of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly {places} in Christ. We are also in the world, and our goal is to glorify God in all that we do here so as to make known to others that God indeed has worked in our lives and that it is only God who can make a real difference in individuals and in the world.

**Eph 1:4 “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love”**

Awesome! Before He created the universe, He chose us in Him so that we should be holy and blameless before Him. What a plan! We are still in plan A also! Paul just finished telling us that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ, and now he tells us when and how He did this. He tells us that the only reason that some people receive these spiritual blessings is that God chose these people before He created the universe. Plan A involved choosing some people to eventually be holy and blameless before Himself, and then sending Jesus as the Messiah to live a perfectly righteous life on earth and then to take the punishment for the sins of

these chosen people. Such a plan is the only way that any humans can be holy and blameless before Holy God. The plan began before time, was executed flawlessly and His chosen people are still being brought into the family of God.

We now have to discuss some weighty issues; namely, the total depravity of man and the process of God choosing His children. The total depravity of man is addressed in

Rom 3:9-18 *“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps is under their lip; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood, Destruction and misery are in their paths, And the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

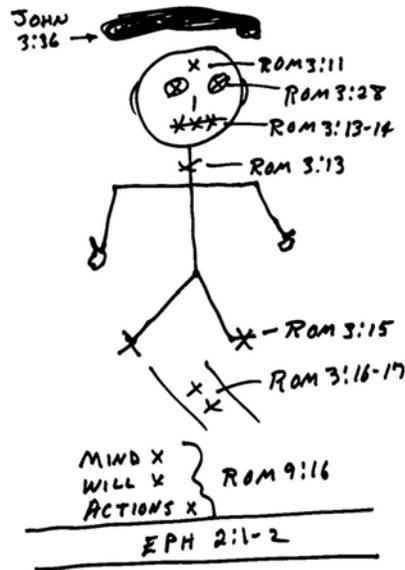
**And**

Isa 64:6 *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”*

**And**

Eph 2:1 *“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,”*

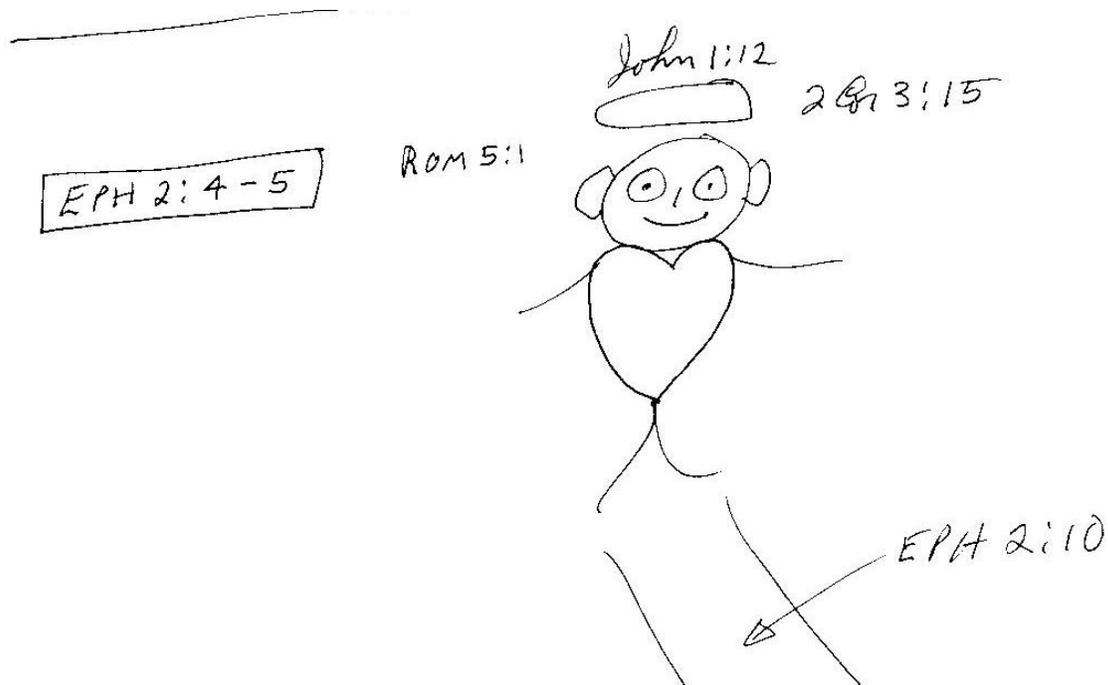
These verses of Scripture make it very plain. We are totally depraved. This concept of total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we could possibly be. It means that our depravity affects our total being. There is no aspect of us that is not depraved to some extent. Ephesians 2:1-2 and Romans 3 clearly inform us about the present condition of an unsaved person as indicated in the drawing below.



Is it possible that some people have enough deficiency of depravity that they can still choose to come to God? Read what Jesus said:

John 6:44 *“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

This word “draw” is a forceful word that would also be used in talking about drawing water from the well. We have to be dragged by the Father to the Son. None of us has any innate desire to choose God. Only God can cause a person to be born again with a new heart and with eyes to see, ears to hear, and a mind that can comprehend the things of God. The drawing below pictures the person after regeneration by God. This person is now capable of choosing God.



The Pelagians and the Armenians say that we are not totally depraved, but that enough good remains in us from The Fall that we can still choose to come to Jesus. However this approach is not what we see in the above Scriptures.

At this point we need to look at the four basic belief systems that originated many years ago and are still affecting the interpretation of Scripture today.

### **Pelagianism**

The monk Pelagius who lived from 354 AD until sometime in the year 400 instigated this system. People holding this view believe that the Fall did not affect Adam and Eve's descendants. Rather they believe that everyone is capable of being saved from the wrath of God by their own efforts. They believe that we don't need the grace of God to be saved, but grace can facilitate moral perfection. They believe that people are basically good and that sin does not change that basic moral nature. This belief system was condemned at the Church's Synod of Carthage in 418.

### **Semi-Pelagianism**

John Cassian (360 – 435 AD) who was an abbot of a monastery instigated this belief system. It is sometimes called "Cassianism". Believers of this system rejected Pelagianism by saying that the Fall did affect the descendants of Adam and Eve, but that there was enough good left in people so that by using the grace of God a person can achieve righteousness. They believe that grace is given so that he who has begun to believe may be assisted, but not that God has to first give people the power to believe. They believe that God desires to save all people and that predestination is based upon divine foreknowledge. They believe that God's grace is resistible. They believe that faith precedes regeneration, that salvation is synergistic from the beginning, that the entire process of salvation is synergistic, and that the sinner is not spiritually dead but merely wounded.

### **Arminianism**

At about 1600 in the Dutch Reformed Church there were several factions battling for dominance. One was the supralapsarians who believed that before God created the world He decreed who should be saved and who should be damned. There were the infralapsarians who believed that After the fall God decreed who should be saved and who should be damned. The Remonstrants were a group of people who protested against both of these beliefs. Jacob Arminius was a professor of theology at the University of Leiden and he set out to refute the Remonstrants but he became convinced by them, which led to the development of Arminianism. This belief system rejects limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of those who choose to believe. They hold that Christ died for every person who ever lived, that salvation is by faith alone, that those who believe are saved, that those who reject God's grace are lost, and that God does not elect people for either outcome. The Church's Synod at Dort condemned Arminianism in 1618/1619.

### **Augustinianism**

Augustine lived from 354 – 430 AD and after his conversion he taught that both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism were incorrect. He taught that the sinner indeed was spiritually dead and in need of Divine regeneration that is monergistic at the beginning of salvation. The Fall affects everyone; there is no good in people so they are in need of the grace of God to begin the salvation process. He taught that God's grace is irresistible, that faith follows regeneration as a gift of God, that the process of salvation is synergistic after the initial rebirth, that the person can and does choose Christ after the regeneration, and that the sinner saved by the grace of God will persevere forever.

Although a bit simplistic, the Calvinistic theology and modern reformed theology are essentially a "retooling" of Augustinianism.

Since the Bible uses the concept of God choosing His people throughout the Bible, we must accept this concept. However different denominations will interpret this concept of "God chose" differently. All of the above except the Augustinians and, by extrapolation, the people who have a reformed theology would say that God looked down through all of time and saw who would by his/her own volition accept Jesus as their Lord (sophism). God then chose these people based upon His foreknowledge of their actions. The question that should be asked about this view is "how could God see something good in someone who could not have any goodness unless God put it there?" The real problem with people who say that they cannot accept election is that they do not understand the total depravation of man. If we accept Romans 3:9-18, Isaiah 64:6, Eph 2:1, and John 6:44 we must reject a theology that says that there is any innate goodness in mankind and, that without the intervention of God, nobody would choose God. Also examine the following verses from Romans 9:

*Rom 9:9 "For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."*

*Rom 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived {twins} by one man, our father Isaac;*

*Rom 9:11 for though {the twins} were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to {His} choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,*

*Rom 9:12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."*

*Rom 9:13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

*Rom 9:14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

*Rom 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*

*Rom 9:16 So then it {does} not {depend} on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

*Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."*

*Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."*

Rom 9:16 is so clear that whomever God chooses, He does not do it on the basis of what the person thinks (wills) or does (runs). The choosing by God's mercy is entirely based upon God's desires. People are quick to say, "That is not fair". Whenever someone makes such a statement the "fairness" is always based upon the person's definition of fairness and is an obvious outgrowth of people's unrealistic view of their sinfulness. Our state must be compared to the standard of God's holiness and when we do that, the fair thing to do is to choose nobody!

So why did He choose some and not others? We have to say that we do not know why He chose some particular person, but we do know His reason for the choosing. The reason is clearly stated in Eph 1:5,6 and we will look in detail at those later. But the reason for His choosing some is for His glory. Whenever anyone asks, "why did God do this?" the safe answer is always "for His glory". Therefore God's choices are not arbitrary from His perspective. We will not completely understand this until later (Deut 29:29).

Boice<sup>11</sup> says that there are four blessings to us regarding election:

1. **Election eliminates our boasting.** Since we know that God did not choose us because we are better than others, we cannot boast in anything within ourselves regarding our being God's children. We must always remember the saying "there, but for the grace of God, go I" and that regards the most evil person we can imagine. Regarding our standing as holy and blameless before God, we can only praise God for His mercy in choosing us.
2. **Election gives assurance of salvation.** If salvation were dependent upon anything that we do, then we could be lost at any moment by our actions. Our salvation would be "on again, off again" depending upon what we do. But since God has chosen us to have our sins forgiven based upon the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ and to receive the purity of Jesus Christ then our salvation is assured by the actions of God.

3. **Election leads to holiness in our walk here.** Since we know that we are now saved from the wrath of God and that we are now disciples of Jesus Christ, our desire is to obey the commands of God and our life will now be spent in the process of sanctification (becoming more and more like Jesus):

*John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."*

*John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."*

*1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.*

*1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.*

*2 John 1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.*

4. **Election promotes evangelism.** Some accuse Calvinists of an attitude of “since God does the choosing, and since His will is going to be done, why should I bother to evangelize?” The fact that God elects people to salvation does not mean that He does not use His Children to bring the Good News to other elect people (*1 Cor 1:21 “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not {come to} know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”*).

Therefore we will interpret Eph 1:4 as saying that before the universe was begun to be created, God chose the people throughout all time that He would allow to exist as His children based upon nothing but His grace and for His glory. The plan included the living of a perfectly holy life by Jesus as the Messiah and the death and resurrection of Jesus as propitiation for the sins of God’s chosen children. Thus the holy life of Jesus Christ is imputed to us and our sins are imputed on Jesus Christ. By this great, merciful plan God has His children who can stand holy and blameless before Him. Amen!

**Eph 1:5 “(In love) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,”**

I parenthetically added “In love” for this is at the end of Eph 1:4 (remember that verses 3-14 were originally one sentence). So Paul tells us that what we call Eph 1:3 is not the end of the beginning of the story. Not only did God choose His children and make plans for them to be holy and blameless before Him, He also predestined His chosen children to be adopted as His sons! What a love!

We have another of “those words” again here: “predestined”. So we need to talk about that a little bit. The dictionary defines “predestine” as “to fix upon, decide, or decree in advance”. So God, in advance of the creation of the universe, decreed that we would be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ. And who is “us” in this action? It is the same “us” as in Eph 1.4, namely the people that God chose before the foundation of the world. So before the creation of the universe, God chose His people and then predestined those same people to adoption as His sons. I am one of those people. If you are a real Christian then you are one of these people. Such a thought just brings me to my knees in gratitude for the mercy of God. This concept is also sufficient motivation for me to present myself as a “living sacrifice to God” (Rom 12:1). How about you?

Hopefully the discussions above on election and choosing also sufficiently address the “problem” of predestination. The predestination of some people to receive this awesome blessing is by the mercy of God and for His glory.

Adoption by God was so awesome a concept to me that I wrote an essay on the topic of God adopting us, and it is located at <http://LivingTheology.com/Adoption.htm> for anyone to read. We are adopted children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17)! God could have just chosen us to have our sins forgiven and to receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ and then chosen us to be His slaves. But He went the incredible step further to chose us as His adopted children with all the additional blessings that come from being joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Praise God!

God did all of this for us not based upon anything that we have done or will do, but solely “according to the kind intention of His will.” As we have seen over and over again, God is moved to redeem His children based only upon His mercy, grace, and compassion and for His glory. In the next verse Paul gives us the reason or motive for God’s actions.

**Eph 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

All of God’s actions are for the glory of God! He is in the process of redeeming all of His children to the praise of the glory of His grace. His marvelous grace (God’s riches at Christ’s expense) is poured out on His children just because He chooses to have mercy. Glory includes all the meaning of greatness, might, beauty, splendor, eternity, and more.

*Psa 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.*

The glory of God was also revealed by the presence of Jesus Christ among us:

*John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

As stated in the Shorter Catechism “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

Every chance that we get we need to praise Him and give Him all the glory for His mercy, compassion, and grace. People should be able to look at me and say “what a great God that He would choose to work through Leon to manifest His glory.”

*Matt 5:16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

*2Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

I am weak, but He is strong. If I think that my belief had a part in my salvation then I am not giving all the glory to God. If I think that my walking down the aisle had a part in my salvation then I am not giving all the glory to God. If I think that my reasoning had a part in my salvation then I am not giving all the glory to God. Nothing that we reasoned or did contributes at all to God’s redemptive process toward us. If I could find one reason within myself as to why God would redeem me, then I would have to conclude that I am not redeemed. Give all the glory to God.

Now look at the rest of this verse: “which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” This tells us how He blessed us. Every blessing that we receive from God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes “in the Beloved” rather than in Jesus Christ because God is showing the special relationship that exists between the Father and the Son as was also stated in

*Matt 3:17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”*

It is the Beloved, the eternal Son, Who came down from heaven to live a perfect life for us and to die on the cross for us. It was also through Jesus that all that is was created as we read in the following Scripture.

*Heb 1:1,2 “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in {His} Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”*

Give praises and glory to God through Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son.

**Eph 1:7 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,”**

First we note that “in Him” refers back to Eph 1:6 and “the Beloved”, so Paul is referring to the work of Jesus Christ in redemption. The Greek word used here that is translated redemption is “apolutrosis” This word means to set free or deliver by the payment of a price. Here the image is of a person who was a slave to someone and the person is set free by the payment of a price. Jesus said

*John 8:32 “and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

The truth is about who Jesus is and what He did for us. We can't know that until we have been regenerated and given ears to hear, but then we shall know the truth and then we have our redemption. Redemption is the centrality of Christianity and the word that brings tenderness to the heart of every Christian because of all that is behind the word. The price is the precious blood of Jesus, who died a horrible death on the cross for our sins. He then amplifies about redemption in that it involves the forgiveness of our trespasses. Note that Jesus said

*John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”*

Since we were sinners, we were slaves to sin and redemption is the setting free of the slave to sin so that before Holy God we are sinless. Note that the account from which this payment is made is “according to the riches of His grace”. The subtraction of the payment for the sins of God's children does not strain the infinite bank account of God! Remember what we are told in Isaiah:

*Isa 55:1 “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.”*

Of course this verse is referring to all that God has given His children through Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the price and now we have grace freely given to us. There is no money or other cost required from us because Jesus has paid the price fully.

Also note that Paul says, “In Him we have our redemption”. Again we need to state that there is nothing that we can do to make ourselves a Christian. Being born into a Christian family does not make us a Christian. Frank and Jesse James were the sons of a Baptist preacher! Knowing when to sit and when to stand in a church service does not make us a Christian. Knowing the words to all the hymns and knowing all the Westminster Confession does not make us a Christian. Memorizing Bible passages, indeed memorizing the Bible, does not make us a Christian. Redemption is through the works of Jesus only. We will continue to make such statements as we continue our study of Ephesians because this message of redemption only through the works of Christ seems to be a message much needed in the churches of today.

### **Eph 1:8 “which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight”**

Remember that Eph 1 verses 3 through verse 14 were one sentence originally so we will take the “which He lavished upon us as a continuation of the previous discussion and use “In all wisdom and insight in Eph 1:9. So continuing the previous discussion we see that the thought is that

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.”

The dictionary says that “to lavish” means “characterized by or produced with extravagance and profusion” or “to pour forth unstintingly”. “Stint” means to restrict or limit. So God, by the infinite riches of His grace, has freed us from sin through the work of Jesus Christ and given us all the benefits of freedom with no limits. We are in the infinite peace of being with God forever because of the work of Jesus Christ. There is no way that we can truly understand this concept, but this knowledge should give us total peace and joy regardless of our circumstances. With this knowledge we can rest, praise God, and serve Him always giving the glory to God. What a peace! Glory to God!

*Phi 4:7 “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

**Eph 1:8b-9 “In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him”**

I am going to combine the verses as indicated above, again because of the original sentence structure. Eph 1:9 also does not end with a period in our translations, but this is a good stopping point. Even though we cannot know all the mind of God (Deut 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”), God does choose to reveal some of His mysteries to us. Here He is telling us that in His infinite wisdom and insight He does choose to reveal to us part of His plan from since before the foundation of the world. He tells us here that this mystery of His will was purposed in Jesus Christ.

The dictionary defines mystery as “anything that arouses curiosity because it is unexplained, inexplicable, or secret”. The world further continues to consider such mysteries as something that can be understood by the mind of man if the person has sufficient intelligence and desire to understand the mystery. However, the “mysteries” of God cannot be understood by an unregenerate mind and are not revealed at all except to His children who are His disciples. Jesus stated:

*Matt 13:11 “And He answered and said to them, To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”*

The “you” here are the disciples and the “them” here are all the others that were standing around listening to Jesus. So the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed to us and we can understand as much of it as God allows. However the non-Christians cannot understand these mysteries at all. As we talk to non-Christians we often see total bewilderment in their expressions, as they have no comprehension of our discussions.

Jesus, Paul, Moses and others have made remarks about how only those who are born again have eyes to see and ears to hear.

*Matt 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear."*

*Mark 4:9 "And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.""*

*Mark 4:23 "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*Mark 7:16 "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*Rom 11:7-8 "What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened, just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.""*  
*(Reference to Deut 29:4).*

Also note in the Rom 11:7 verse how only those who were chosen obtained it (the salvation from God through Jesus). So we continue to evangelize, but we should not be discouraged when many people turn a deaf ear to us, for only God can give people Godly senses through rebirth.

*1Cor 2:6-10 "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden {wisdom,} which God predestined before the ages to our glory; {the wisdom} which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And {which} have not entered the heart of man. All that God has prepared for those who love Him." For to us God revealed {them} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."*

The Holy Spirit is the One who reveals the truth to us, as He is able to even search the depths of God. Even the wisest of people cannot understand the mysteries of God because God has hidden the mysteries from them. One must be born again to even begin to understand the mysteries of God. Before He created the universe, God **predestined** all of this for us! Praise God! Plan A continues in full force!

**Eph 1:10 "with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, {that is}, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him"**

We will use the last two words when we discuss Eph 1:11. We are still continuing the same thought that was begun in Eph 1:3 and, in particular that was begun in Eph 1:8b-9. The wisdom that God gives to His children to allow them to understand the mysteries of God are directed toward an understanding of God's plan from before creation until the second coming of Jesus Christ. The word "administration" means the government of the universe. Before the creation of the heavens there was no such thing as time. Time began when God's creation began. Time will be totally full when God creates a new heaven and a new earth with Jesus ruling forever. When all things are summed up in Christ, then all knees will bow before Him and God's purpose throughout all the ages will be perfectly clear to everyone. However only God's chosen ones will be pleased to see the truth totally revealed.

Salvation history is generally regarded as occurring through a series of times or seasons or dispensations. The revealing became total when the fullness of time had come:

*Gal 4:4-5 "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*

The full authority of Jesus extends beyond just ourselves, and covers all the cosmos:

*Rom 8:18-23 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."*

I groan for my glorification just as all creation also groans. After the completion of the church age, we will see this glorification. When will that be? It is not for us to know:

*Acts 1:6 "And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"*

*Acts 1:7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;*

*Acts 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. "*

So while we wait, we do as Jesus Christ commanded and witness for Him wherever He puts us.

Now let us look at the rest of the "sentence":

**Eph 1:11 (In Him) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**

**Eph 1:12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**

**Eph 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,**

**Eph 1:14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.**

Note that I added (In Him) at the beginning of Eph 1:11, because it began the thought in Eph 1:10. The addition of “in Him” makes it clear that it is in Jesus Christ that we have obtained an inheritance. Remember on page 14 when we talked about “adoption”? That was such an awesome concept that I wrote a paper on the topic of God adopting us, and it is located at <http://LivingTheology.com/Adoption.htm> for anyone to read. We are adopted children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17)! Since we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, Paul then tells us that we have thus obtained an inheritance because of what Jesus did for us according to the predestination of God. This verse also tells us something about the functioning of the Trinity. Jesus the Son works all things according to the counsel of the Father.

The end result of the workings of Jesus is that the ones who first received the “hope” in Christ would also do so to the praise of the glory of God the Father. Paul then goes on to say that we (all believers of all time who listen to the message of truth) not only received the same inheritance as the first believers, but that we also are sealed in Jesus with the Holy Spirit. This seal represents the preservation of the believers for all time. We cannot lose our salvation because it had nothing to do with any of our thoughts or actions and because the Holy Spirit of promise seals us. The promise is for the total redemption and glorification of the saints.

A pledge of an inheritance was a gift of some sort from the belongings of the person giving the inheritance. This gift was something that the person could have to demonstrate that indeed he/she would receive the entire inheritance later. This pledge can be considered an analogy of the engagement ring. In this case the inheritance is from the infinite riches of God Himself. Also in this case the pledge is a symbol of the final redemption of God’s children, who are His possession. This pledge is a guarantee from God Almighty that a day will come when the entire treasures of the universe will be given to His children. This final redemption will also be to the magnificent praise of the glory of God.

**Eph 1:15 “ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints,**

**Eph 1:16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;**

**Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.”**

For what reason did Paul continually give thanks for these Christians? He continually thanked God for their existence because the Holy Spirit had sealed these saints. Paul had heard about their faith in Jesus Christ and their love for all the saints. One certain mark of being a Christian is a love for other Christians. We Christians love being with other Christians and we love them with a supernatural love. If someone does not want to go to have fellowship with Christians then that person should doubt his/her salvation. If our heart does not warm at the thought of going to be with other people that we are sure are also Christians then something is wrong with that heart. I look forward so very much to going to teach Sunday School because I get to be with some other Christian brothers and

sisters. I like to shake their hands, put my hand on their shoulder, and look into their eyes to see the developing likeness of Jesus Christ in their eyes. As Paul did, I praise God for His work in their lives to give them spiritual life and I pray for them. I like to look over the congregation during our church services to see other Christians eagerly listening to the Word of God and praising Him for His mercy and grace.

Paul also prayed that the Father would give these Christians a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. Paul is praying that the Christians in the churches that received this letter would be filled with the Holy Spirit who would bring to them wisdom and revelation in the knowing of God. An unregenerate person cannot know the things of God:

*1Cor 2:14 “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”*

The word “revelation” here refers to the revealed knowledge of the mysteries of God (those He chooses to reveal to us). The word “knowledge” refers to an understanding based upon an intimate acquaintance with the teacher. The meaning of this word contrasts knowledge that is obtained by reading a book and knowledge obtained by close contact with a mentor. If you have ever had a tutor in any discipline, you know the vast difference between reading about something and having the tutor explain it to you, particularly if the tutor is a friend or a loved one. The Socratic method of teaching/learning is still probably the best method of helping people really understand some topic. But spiritual learning has a prerequisite of a spiritual rebirth:

**Eph 1:18 – 19a “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. “**

Paul goes on to pray for enlightenment for these people of God that they might truly understand the magnificence of what God has done for them and given them. Here we should refer back to Eph 1:3 – 14 where Paul specifically mentioned so many of these blessings. We all need to meditate upon those verses and allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten us to the depth and meaning of all of these blessings. It is a good idea to put these verses in many places where we can read them many times during the day (on the refrigerator, over the TV screen (!), taped to the back of your car visor for reading when stopped in traffic, taped to the monitor at work, put a laminated copy in your wallet, etc.). If we can get a personal understanding of the greatness of His power toward His children our anxieties should fade away. It is hard for us to “reckon” this magnificent mercy that God has given us and to really know that His omnipotent and omniscient power is always directed toward His children. Every morning as we unfold ourselves from our bed we should train ourselves to think about all of these verses and know that they are directed toward us. It might not put a spring in our step as we head toward the bathroom, but it should fill our hearts with joy and peace for all of the day.

**Eph 1:19b – 21 “These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.”**

What are “these”? They are all that we have read about above! All of these magnificent events that God has worked out throughout all the ages and that will be worked out in the time to come have been done in harmony with all the unimaginable power of the strength of God Himself. God worked out the plan that is still unfolding before us by the working of Jesus Christ. To show the universe that the plan was indeed from God, He raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places. Jesus was thus put above all other existing rulings and authorities and powers and dominance, and His name was placed above all other names that ever have or will exist.

**Eph 1:22 “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,  
Eph 1:23 which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.”**

God the Father then put everything under the ruling of Jesus and put Him as head over everything that makes up the church. The church itself is the body of Christ, it is the completion of Jesus Himself who fills the church collectively and individually. He fills it and fulfills it by giving of the gifts to the children of God who make up the corporate body of the church. We see this same concept of Christ being in charge of everything in these verses:

*Col 1:17 “And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

*Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”*

Also in the second chapter of Colossians:

*Col 2:9 “For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,*

*Col 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;”*

Jesus is the only entity to have earned anything before the eyes of God and He is God. He earned His status **and** He always had it! Such concepts we cannot begin to understand, but we know that they are true. The Trinity worked out all that ever has been and ever will be in the creation and much of it has now unfolded before the eyes of those children of God who have eyes to see and ears to hear. We wait in anticipation of the further unfolding of God’s plan as we work under the direction and protection of Him who caused us to be born again and who has prepared good works for us to do while we wait. Praise God!!!!

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