

IN THE HEAVENLIES

By: William B. Hallman

INTRODUCTORY:

It must have been Satan's greatest surprise when the Apostle Paul revealed the "Dispensation of the Secret." In it he revealed a Secret that had been hid in God from the beginning of the world, from all the ages of the past. This Pharisaic Jew had been a "blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious" (1 Tim. 1:13); but on the road to Damascus, on his last mission of persecution, God changed his whole life. God subsequently revealed to him this Secret, the Church which is the Body of Christ.

GOD'S PLAN VARIES

God's purpose and plan in Redemption is as varied as His purpose in Creation. As there are kinds and varieties in nature, so there are different economies or dispensations down through the ages for the outworking of God's salvation for mankind.

God's redemptive purpose is related to two spheres --- The Heavens and The Earth. The first has to do with The Body of Christ, the Church of the Secret; while the second deals with the nation of Israel. With Israel everything is earthly. Her promises, privileges, and program are all connected with a land, the Land of Palestine. She has heavenly blessings, but they are here upon earth. With the Church, the Body of Christ, everything is heavenly. Her promises, privileges and program are set "in the heavenlies." Without clearly distinguishing between these two spheres and their programs, the Bible becomes unintelligible. The confusion in present day Christianity is brought about because of the failure to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

WHEN DID THE SECRET BODY BEGIN?

Here there is very little unanimity. The answers are many and varied. Some say it began with Abraham because it says: "ye are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29); Others say it began with John the Baptist, for he came "Saying, repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), thus making the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church, the Body of Christ synonymous; again, others say it began when Jesus called His twelve disciples (Matt. 10:1-6). These suggested answers are mainly from the non-dispensational Bible teachers. Among the dispensational teachers the answers are just as varied. The majority hold that it began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21); others that it began with the conversion of Paul (Acts Ch. 9); and others with Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts Ch. 13); or before Paul wrote his first epistle; and finally those who hold that it could not be manifested until Israel was completely set aside at Acts chapter 28.

We would counter all these suggestions by making two observations. First, it says distinctly that we were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Here then is the actual birth of the Church; its experiential revelation could not come as long as God was dealing with Israel as a nation. The two programs must be absolutely kept separate.

EARLIEST RECOVERY OF TRUTH

From the days of Paul, the revelator of this Sacred Secret, until the Nineteenth Century this truth seems to have been entirely lost. The earliest indication of any understanding of it comes from England in the writings of two men.

In 1850 A.D. Charles Henry Mackintosh (1820-1896) wrote a book entitled: "Practical Reflections On The Life And Times of Elijah The Tishbite." The closing chapter is entitled: "Concluding Remarks." From this chapter we quote the following: "The thought of a church composed of Jew and Gentile, 'seated together in the heavenlies' lay far beyond the range of prophetic testimony. Isaiah, no doubt, speaks in very elevated strains of Jerusalem's glory in the latter day, he speaks of Gentiles coming to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; but he never rises higher than the kingdom, and as a consequence, never brings out anything beyond the covenant with Abraham, which secures everlasting blessedness to his seed, and through them to the Gentiles. We may range through the inspired pages of the Law and the Prophets, from one end to the other, and find no solution of "the great mystery of the church" ... Peter received the keys of the kingdom, and he used those keys, first to open the kingdom to the Jew, and then to the Gentile. But Peter never received a commission to unfold the mystery of the church. Even in his Epistles we find nothing of the mystery. We infer, therefore, that the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles by the mouth of Peter was not the development of the great mystery of the church, but simply the opening of the kingdom, agreeably to the words of the prophets, and also to Peter's commission in Matthew 16. It was reserved for the great Apostle of the Gentiles to bring out, in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost, the mystery of which we now speak."

Mackintosh then follows Paul in his last visit to Jerusalem, his voyage to Rome and his meeting with the elders at Rome. Then he continues, ... "There was now no more hope. Every effort that love could make had been made, but to no purpose; and our apostle, with a reluctant heart, shuts them up under the power of that judicial blindness which was the natural result of their rejection of the salvation of God. Thus every obstacle to the clear and full development of Paul's gospel was removed. He found himself in the midst of the wide Gentile world. A prisoner at Rome and rejected of Israel. He had done his utmost to tarry amongst them; his affectionate heart led him to delay as long as possible ere he would reiterate the prophet's verdict; but now all was over – every expectation was blasted – all human institutions and associations present to his view, nothing but ruin and disappointment, he must therefore set himself to bring out that holy and heavenly mystery which had been hid in God, from ages and generations – the mystery of the church as the body of Christ, united to its living Head, by the Holy Ghost."

In 1870 A.D. Richard Holden wrote a book entitled: "The Mystery, The Special Mission Of The Apostle Paul. The Key To The Present Dispensation." He writes: "To make all see what is the dispensation, or in other words, to be divinely appointed instructor in the character and order of the present time, as Moses was in the dispensation of law, is that special feature in the commission of Paul, in which it was distinct from that of the other apostles. If then it shall appear, that, far from seeing what is 'the dispensation of the mystery' the mass of Christians have entirely missed it, and, as the natural consequences have almost completely misunderstood Christianity, importing into it the things proper to another dispensation, and so confounding Judaism and Christianity in an inexpressible jumble, surely it is a matter for deep humiliation before God, and for earnest, prayerful effort to retrieve with God's help, this important and neglected teaching.

The present dispensation is, then, an interregnum or parenthetical period, contemplated indeed in the counsels of God, but not revealed til ‘given’ to Paul. Once this truth is seen it becomes the key to the dispensation of Scripture and to the ‘rightly dividing the word of truth’ in the sundering of things Jewish from things Christian. Until it is seen, neither Testament can be understood aright; and Christianity, instead of having its proper and distinctive character, is degraded into a sort of bastard Judaism. As those whose lot is cast in ‘the dispensation of the mystery’ it clearly behooves us, not only to inform our minds as to its true character and objects, but also to fashion our conduct in accordance with its order and aims.” Mr. Holden then goes on and shows that Paul revealed this Secret in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.

Following these Bible teachers there were two other scholars in England who have written extensively on the subject of the Secret, namely, Ethelbert William Bullinger (1837-1913) and Charles Henry Welch (1880-1967). Pioneers of the truth in this country were such Bible teachers as Robert Acheson Hadden, Howard Nathanael Bunce, and Harold Patrick Morgan. Others both in England and here have followed in the steps of these pioneers. But others have found it convenient to water-down the truth and have in the words of Mr. Holden brought about “an inexpressible jumble”.

The key to this book of Ephesians is the phrase which occurs five times, namely, “In the Heavenlies” (*en tois epouraniois*). It is found in verses 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12. It is the dative plural and in this grammatical construction always means a locality. It is correctly rendered in 1:20: “In the heavenly places” or “in the heavenlies” and should so have been translated in all five occurrences. This phrase is found no where else in the Scriptures.

These five occurrences can be summarized into four definite situations; and in all four it denotes a place, an ideal locality, a sphere of action, experience, discovery, a stage or platform or arena on which different movements are taking place and different scenes of interest are enacted.

It is our purpose to study these four aspects under the titles:

1. A Home of Edification (1:3)
2. A Throne of Exaltation (1:20; 2:6)
3. A Drama of Exhibition (3:10)
4. An Arena of Exploitation (6:12)

Before beginning our study of Ephesians, let us take a quick, but careful look at Colossians 1:26 and note particularly one word in the verse. The verse reads: “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but NOW is made manifest to his saints”. It is the word underscored, namely, “NOW” that we wish to analyze. It has a commanding position in the last clause of the verse as it stands first. It is an adverb which means “present time”. The basic Greek word is “nun”; but in the oldest manuscripts it is “nuni”. The addition of the letter iota strengthens the word. It is called an “iota demonstrative”. According to Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon it should be translated “now at this very moment (precisely now, neither before nor after)”. The Latin is *nunc ipsum*. This word should settle once and for all the question of when Paul revealed the Secret. It was at the time of his writing the Prison Epistles.

1. A HOME OF EDIFICATION

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

In our introductory passage we said that “the key to this Book of Ephesians is the phrase: “in the heavenlies” (en tois epouranios) which occurs five times in the book (1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). It is our purpose in this article to deal with the first occurrence of the phrase as found in our text above.

Ephesians 1:3 is set in the context of one of the most marvelous Scriptures in the Bible for us believers in this dispensation. It is a part of a sentence beginning with verse three and ending with verse fourteen. We marvel at the wealth of the language employed by the Apostle, and at the same time we are arrested by the poverty of all language to fully convey the riches here revealed.

The Apostle is swept along by the phrase of his theme, one thought pressing hard upon another and will not be refused: - “in Christ,” – “in Him,” – “before Him,” – he just cannot close the sentence – “in Christ,” – “in Him,” – “in Whom,” – “in Whom,” – “in Whom.” Before he finally sets down a period to close the sentence he has covered twelve verses of the first chapter of Ephesians.

Even a casual reading of these verses will reveal the salient truths upon which the Apostle through the Holy Spirit builds his revelation:

“The will” of God:	Vrs. 5, 9, 11
“To the praise of His Glory”:	Vrs. 6, 12, 14
“In Christ”:	Vrs. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Thus we can state his thesis as follows: The will of God is working in us and through us a gracious issue to the praise of His glory in Christ. A single phrase in verse nine seems to sum it all up when he says: it is “the mystery of His will”.

Before the Apostle begins to enumerate the seven blessings which we have “in the heavenlies” he emphasizes the fact that they are “All spiritual blessings”. We have in the heavenlies ALL that we need for the sustenance and satisfaction of our spiritual life. It is obvious that to enjoy “all” these heavenly blessings we must know experientially Ephesians 2:8 and II Cor. 5:17:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation); old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

“In Christ” means that we are a “new creation,” a spiritual creation, possessing a new nature, born from above. As such we are candidates for “all” spiritual blessings “in the heavenlies”.

The “heavenlies” is first of all a Home of Edification because it is the place of:

RECOGNITION

“According as he hath CHOSEN US in Him before the foundation of the world” – Vrs. 4.

The electing purpose of God stands on the very threshold to all the spiritual blessings of edification in the heavenly places. God in His sovereign will hath chosen us to be members of His body, the Church. We are an “ekklesia” a “called-out” people. Election must be seen in the light of the phrase, “in Him”.

It is on the basis of the covenant of redemption which God made with His Son before creation that we must view election, never apart from it. God’s eternal purpose in election is based upon His eternal purpose in Christ “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” Rev. 13:8. This truth is noted by Principal Salmond in The Expositor’s Greek Testament: “apart from Christ and without respect to his special relation to us, and his foreseen work, there would be no election of us” (Volume 3, P. 248). Meyer says “apart from the connection of divine election with Christ we should not be chosen; but in Christ lay for God the ‘causa meritoria’ of our election” (Volume on Ephesians P. 37).

But there is another sense in which we are chosen in Christ and that is the one revealed in Ephesians 3:11: “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”. This has reference to the special position and ministry of the Church which is His Body. We are chosen to be a distinct people from all other peoples, groups, or “called-out-ones”.

Our Home of Edification in the heavenlies is also a place of:

RELATIONSHIP

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” – Verse 5

By “adoption” we have been placed into the relationship of sons. When we through the new creation were made children of God, it does not mean that we become infant children; but that we entered immediately into the position of maturity. We became adult sons by virtue of our “adoption”. The moment of our creation is the moment of our full responsibility before God to worship Him, walk before Him, and to witness about Him. Thus by our “adoption” we are made legitimate children in this heavenly relationship as members of the Church which is His body.

We thus have become partakers of His nature (2 Pet. 1:4), because we have been conformed to the image of Christ (Col. 3:10). We have become partakers of all His glory because we are the “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ”. Romans 8:17

This heavenly home is also a place of:

RECEPTION

“Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” – Verse 6

We are not merely pitied, indulged, or condoned; but received into His favor, justified in His sight. This acceptance gives us a perfect standing in the heavenlies.

The “accepted” here in Ephesians 1:6 must not be confused with the same word in II Corinthians 5:9, which reads:

“Wherefore we labor that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.”

In Ephesians 1:6 the word has the idea of being “made acceptable”. One has to do with our position in Christ, the other with our condition before Him. One has to do with our standing, the other with our state.

We have been “accepted in the beloved” on the sole basis of the merits of Jesus Christ bestowed upon us by grace. This reception into His favor is because of our identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. As far as our position is concerned we can never be any more accepted than we are right now. It is perfect “in the Beloved”.

Again it is a place of:

REDEMPTION

“in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace.” – Verse 7

Our redemption was not thought out upon earth; it was decided in Heaven. The word “redemption” (apolutrosis) means “deliverance by ransom”. This deliverance was effected by means of blood. It was neither by power nor by truth, but by a sacrificial death … the death of Jesus Christ. It delivers those for whom it is offered and by whom it is accepted. Forgiveness is the immediate end of expiation. The glory of the “forgiveness of our trespasses” is seen in the fact that our sins are completely gone; they are forgotten. Note what Scripture says: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. 103:12). “But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou has cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isaiah 38:17). “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa. 43:25). “Thou hast cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). “And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

The majesty of this glorious truth is seen in the fact that it is “according to the riches of His grace”.

In the heavenlies we also have a place of:

REVELATION

“making known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.” – Verse 9

The word “mystery” (musterion) means a secret, something into which we must be initiated, something undiscoverable by us; made known only by revelation. This secret purpose was hid from the ages of the past, but now is made known to His saints.

The “mystery” is connected with the “dispensation of the fulness of time” and with “all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” – Verse 10

Much speculation about the “all” in this verse has gone forth. I think the context shows that it is a union in Christ of the redeemed. Paul gives thanks for the election of God’s people; for their actual redemption; and the parallel passage in Colossians 1:20 speaks of “having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

This reconciliation is by the blood of His cross. It is not a union of subjection, but one of salvation.

The heavenlies are also a Home of Edification because they are a place of:

RESOURCES

“In whom also we have been made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will.” – Verse 11

We are assured that “all things are yours whether things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s (1 Cor. 3:21-23). Paul also says: “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32). And again “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

The prayer of Christ that His own might share His glory (John 17:24) has assuredly been answered. As we share the riches of His grace here, we shall also share the riches of His glory there.

Our inheritance is based upon the sovereign will of God whose purpose and power on our behalf cannot fail.

Finally, it is a place of:

REALIZATION

“Ye are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” – Verse 13

The sealing of the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of the fulness of our inheritance and glory. A seal authenticates or confirms a thing as genuine. Our inheritance is real. It also puts a stamp upon us that we belong to Christ. We are His very own. What a precious thought that is. A seal also renders secure – a surety of our salvation and inheritance. It is the pledge of the full consummation of our redemption.

In the heavenlies we have a perfect Home of Edification as seen in the sevenfold blessing from the electing grace of God to the sealing with the Holy Spirit.

II. A THRONE OF EXALTATION

“Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” –Ephesians 1:20

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” – Ephesians 2:5-6

As we now follow the theme, “IN THE HEAVENLIES” as seen in this book of Ephesians, we come to two verses which suggest our present theme, “A Throne of Exaltation”.

The fact of our “Exaltation” “in the heavenlies” is vitally connected with the truth of identification. The phrase “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” has to do with:

PLACE
POSITION
PRIVILEGE
POSSESSION
PRACTICE

Where He is – there we are both as to PLACE and POSITION. What He is – that we are in all our PRIVILEGES. What He has – that we have in all our POSSESSION. What He does – that we do, or should do, in all our PRACTICE.

Dr. J.W. Alexander calls this doctrine of “Identification” “the central truth of all theology and all religion”. It is indeed the fundamental truth of all fundamentals for us as members of His body, The Church. It is by virtue of identification that we are released “in Christ” from the deepest depths and raised with Him to the highest heights.

Paul sets forth identification in Christ by means of quickening, raising, and seating with Christ “in the heavenlies”. By identification is meant the act whereby the believer becomes identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His Death, His Resurrection, and His Exaltation; forming a union not merely of association, sympathy, or moral likeness, but one of life whereby the believer is eternally and indissolubly united with Christ.

The believer’s identification with Christ to the exalted position of being seated with Him begins with Christ’s identification in the human race. The Second Person in the Divine Trinity became identified with the human race, not by resemblance merely, but by participation in which the two natures co-exist in the One Person, each in its completeness and integrity.

This doctrine, based upon Paul’s epistles, was formally accepted by the Church at the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.). It is therefore considered an article of faith, a mystery beyond comprehension, but clearly revealed in the Word of God.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” – Hebrews 2:14

Our identification with Christ is just as real and vital as His identification with the human race. It is therefore not a union with a system of doctrine, with a church organization, or with some external religious influence. It is not a natural union as held by some to exist between God and all human spirits. It is not merely a moral union of love and sympathy as exists between friends. It is not a union of essence which destroys the personality of the believer as held by some mystics. It is not a union mediated by participation in the sacraments as held by Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and certain Lutherans.

It is a union of the believer in which he is said to be “IN CHRIST” and thus identified with Him in all His work for us from the cross to the crown. It is an Integral Union (Eph. 4:15; 5:29-30). As the body is a part of the head and the head a part of the body, so are Christ and His Church. It is an Indissoluble Union (Rom. 8:35-39). Come what may; perplexities and problems, trials and tribulations, suffering and sorrow, disappointments and death, nothing can separate us from this vital, organic, spiritual union of identification with Christ. It is also an Inscrutable Union (Ephesians 5:32; Col. 1:27).

The Apostle Paul uses eight Greek compounds which cover the whole field of the truth of identification:

1. Sumpaschomen – sufferers together, Rom. 8:17
2. Sunestauromai – crucified together, Gal. 2:20
3. Apethanete – died together, Col. 2:20
4. Sunetaphemen – buried together, Rom. 6:4
5. Sunezoopoisen – quickened together, Eph. 2:5
6. Sunegirthete – raised together, Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1
7. Sunkathizo – sit down together, Eph. 2:6
8. Sundoxasthomen – glorified together, Rom. 8:17

Before we could ever know or experience the blessed fact of being seated with Christ “in the heavenlies” there must be the removal of sin and death. These awful facts in human life must be dealt with fully and finally and indeed they have been in the work of the Lord Jesus. Christ has dealt with the penalty of sin and death when He identified Himself with us in His suffering, His crucifixion, His death and burial. He dealt with the power of sin and death when He identified Himself with us in His quickening, or made alive, that we might live in newness of life and power. He dealt with the place of sin and death when He identified Himself with us in His resurrection from the bondage of the tomb. And, finally He dealt with the presence of sin and death when He identified Himself with us in His exalted position at the Father’s right hand, and has caused us to be seated with Him there.

Experientially, there are three stages or steps in our exaltation to the place of the highest glory. First, we are “quickened” or regenerated by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8); then we are “raised” or resurrected by grace through power (Eph. 1:19-20); and finally, we are “seated” or revealed by grace through His eternal purpose (Ephesians 2:7).

“In the heavenlies” we have a Throne of Exaltation because it is:

A THRONE OF PRE-EMINENCE

When God by His mighty power had raised Christ from the dead and seated Him “at his own right hand in the heavenly places” we read that that place was:

“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” – Ephesians 1:21

It seems plain from the context of this passage and also from other passages that the terms “principality and power and might and dominion” refer to the angelic world, perhaps both of the good as well as the evil angels. – (See Romans 8:38; Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16).

There may be several reasons why angels are called “principalities,” “power,” “might,” and “dominion”. It may be because of their exalted nature over other beings: or, because God exercises His power and dominion through them; or again, because of their relation to each other.

In any event, Christ is exalted “far above” (hyperano) every “principality, power,” potentate and prince. Christ is the victor over all human, angelic, and Satanic power in the universe.

Christ is also exalted to this place of pre-eminence over “every name that is named, ...in this world, ... in that which is to come”. How terrifying and fearful are many of the names given to men, beasts, and evil powers! We remember such names as Goliath, Behemoth, Leviathan, Satan, The Devil, The Great Dragon, and The Old Serpent.

Paul may be a bit polemic here as he is more fully in his Colossian Epistle by striking home at the emanation theory of Gnosticism which advocated different effluxes from a central being. Christ is no emanation. He is exalted “far above” all powers in the universe.

And now the grace and glory of it all is that we, sinners saved by grace, should by our identification with Christ in being seated with Him have the exalted position of pre-eminence that He has.

“Near, so very near to God
Nearer, I could not be;
For in the person of His Son,
I’m just as near as He.

Dear, so very dear to God
Dearer I could not be;
For in the person of His Son,
I’m just as dear as He.”

Not only is this Throne of Exaltation a Throne of Pre-eminence, it is also:

A THRONE OF POWER

This truth is suggested by the statement: “And hath put all things under His feet”. – (Eph. 1:22; see also 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:8) Paul goes back into the eighth Psalm and quotes from verse six: “Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under His feet”. We are also reminded of the words of the risen Christ to His earthly disciples: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, ...” (Matt. 28:18-19). However, to Israel Christ never promised a share in His power; there was no such truth as identification. He simply promised them to be guided and guarded by His almighty power in their task of world evangelization among the nations of the earth.

But to us, members of His church, there is the promise of power, inherent power, because of our exalted position “in the heavenlies” and because of our identification with Him.

The word translated “power” in Matthew 28:19-19 is not “dunamis” but “exousia”. This word combines the two ideas of right and might. It is the capacity for rule that resides in one by virtue of one’s rank, one’s office, one’s character and one’s position and place.

Beloved, we sit in the control room of the universe. We are in the place from whence all power, authority, jurisdiction, control, command and sway are exercised in God’s universe.

Christ is not only exalted, made pre-eminent above all His creation; He holds sway or exercises dominion over them all. They are “all under His feet.” The word “all” includes all creatures capable of subjection; all beings, save God alone, are made subject to Christ, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

We are thus seated with Christ on the throne of power “in the heavenlies”. We are not controlled by any force, human, angelic, or diabolical. We are in the place of control, sharing His dominion of the universe.

What an exalted position of power became ours when He “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. Jesus Christ by virtue of his position and power is both Conqueror and Controller.

Why are we so often fretful, fearful, and fruitless under the circumstances of life? Are we not seated in the heavenlies in Christ with our hand upon the control lever of the universe? To know this glorious truth is to live in it day by day.

This exalted place of power means that “in Christ” we are conquerors over all the rebel hosts of iniquity; commanders over all “principalities and powers” and controller over all in His universe. Can we think of anything greater? Could we wish anything more exalted? Can we do less than glory in His Name and give our all in prayer and preaching “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph. 3:9).

Finally, it is a Throne of Exaltation because it is:

A THRONE OF PURPOSE

This truth is found in a consideration of Ephesians 2:7: “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

The Throne of Exaltation has now become the place of our Revelation. It is the word “show” in the verse above that becomes so meaningful and purposeful. The Greek word translated “show” is *endeiknumi*, and is here in the middle voice which means: “to show forth one’s self or what is one’s own”. It is a self display or self exhibition. In the middle voice the subject is both the agent and object of action.

Why has God before the foundation of the world chosen us in Christ? Why, from all eternity has God ordained that members of His body, the Church, should be the objects of His love and recipients of His grace? Why has He made us accepted in the beloved? Why when we were “dead in trespasses and sins” hath He quickened us, raised us up and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ? The answer to all this is revealed in His purpose as seen in this word “show”. It is that He might exhibit Himself in “the exceeding riches of His grace by His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”.

It behooves us, therefore, to beware lest we cloud the matchless grace of God, or clash with the gratuitous nature of unmerited love by any system of works; and thereby forfeit our high and holy position “in the heavenlies”. If God has revealed to us His matchless purpose “in Christ” through the Church which is His body, let us stand by it, and make it known in spite of all temptations and tribulations to give it up, and return to “the beggarly” elements of religion.

We stand in utter awe and wonder before this surpassing revelation. It is too much for our finite minds here to fully comprehend. Can we fathom the depths of His grace, or ascend to the heights of His glory for us through Jesus Christ? While we cannot fully comprehend it, we can nevertheless believe it, for it is written for us in His Word. Knowing, therefore, our exalted position “in the heavenlies” let us live at all times as “more than conquerors” and begin to do here what we shall be doing throughout all eternity – praise Him for the “exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”.

It was Annie Johnson Flint who wrote, “Let Us Go On”:

“Some of us stay at the cross,
Some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and Raised together with Christ,
Yet lingering still in its gloom.

Let us go on with our Lord
To the fulness of God He has bought,
Unsearchable riches of glory and good
Exceeding our uttermost thought.”

III. A DRAMA OF EXHIBITION

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Ephesians 3:10

"The manifold wisdom of God" which the church is to display unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places as revealed here is closely connected with the Divine revelation in chapter 2 verse 7, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". This latter verse was given a brief consideration at the close of the last section in which we saw that God will display Himself in "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

The Apostle now proceeds to reveal that the church is a monument of the manifold wisdom of God; in which the church displays or exhibits to the principalities and powers in heavenly places God's variegated or multiform wisdom.

God's purpose whether in creation or in redemption, is to have inanimate and animate things which exhibit His glory. Of creation we read: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Israel shall some day glorify God on the earth among the nations, and show forth God's wisdom – "And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Malachi 3:12). So the church too, saved from the deepest guilt, and elevated to the highest glory will through the coming ages display the brightest exhibition of God's manifold wisdom. This gives to us the highest conception of the dignity of the church.

It is in the opening verses of this chapter three that Paul now speaks definitely about the "dispensation of the grace of God" which is also called "the mystery of Christ" (Vrs. 2,4). My readers will know that the word "mystery" as used by Paul does not mean something mysterious. It is not a riddle, but a revelation. It is something that was "hid in God" until the day when God gave it to the Apostle Paul by Divine revelation. It is for those who are "in Christ" to know the revelation of "the dispensation of the grace of God" and all its wonderful promises and privileges.

It is of interest here to note how "the mystery of godliness" as it relates to Christ personally is linked with "the mystery of Christ" as it relates to the Church professionally (1 Tim. 3:16). "God was manifest in the flesh." As Jesus Christ was manifest here on the earth in a human body of flesh; so the church, a heavenly body, is here on the earth manifested through its members. "Justified in the Spirit" continues Paul concerning Christ. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1) is the message to the church. "Seen of angels" is the next revelation concerning Christ which reminds us of our text: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God". Further it says concerning Christ that He was "preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world" and of the Church, "made known among the Gentiles" and "Made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Colossians 1:27; Rom. 16:26). Finally, it is said of Christ: "received up into glory" and of the Church.

"When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

To be members of this mystical body, this wondrous secret, is the highest blessing bestowed upon a guilty sinner during the age times. No purpose of God is greater, because it is God's original purpose, His "eternal purpose".

It is unto the “principalities” (archais) and “powers” (exousiais) that the church is now to display the “manifold wisdom of God”. These words may refer to good angelic powers as seen in Colossians 1:16; or to evil angelic powers as seen in Ephesians 6:12; or to both as seen in Romans 8:38. It is thought, however, that the reference in our text is to good angels, although this cannot be said dogmatically.

As far as creation is concerned the angelic world has been able to explore the design and the methods of the Creator, for they are the highest of God’s created intelligences. But God’s design and method in redemptive history as worked out in fallen man is another matter. This they have never been able to explore nor comprehend. But “now” (the word nun is emphatic) through the matchless grace of God in Christ as worked out in the Church they are given a display in “the heavenlies” of God’s variegated wisdom as seen in redemption. Creation can display the power, the majesty, the vastness, the beauty and the bountifulness of its Creator; but only redemption can display the higher attributes, yea, the very essence of His being, namely, His love, His grace, and His goodness. If God is “now” displaying to the highest intelligences His infinite love, grace, and goodness through the Church; then this Body of Christ must be the most glorious of all His works.

The words “manifold wisdom” (polupoikilos Sophia) is a most striking phrase. According to Vincent it means “variegated” and is also applied to pictures, flowers, and garments. It is used in the Septuagint of Joseph’s coat (Gen. 37:3). It is God’s infinite variegated wisdom that “now” is on display in “the heavenlies” through the Church. Eubulus uses it to refer to the various shades of color in a garland of flowers. Euripides employs the word to describe the variety of colors in a robe. Chrysostom observed that the meaning is not “varied” only but “much varied”.

We also wish to note here that this display or exhibition of the variegated wisdom of God was contemplated in the original conception of the plan and purpose of redemption as seen in the Church. For Ephesians 3:11 tells us that it was “according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”. If God’s purpose concerning the Church was His original purpose, then we can also say that to display His manifold wisdom to His highest created intelligences was also His eternal purpose.

Ephesians 3:1-12 is the very heart of this Epistle, in which the Apostle reveals the “mystery of Christ” which is the Church, the Body of Christ, the One New Man. Before He comes to the Conduct of the Church as seen in our text, He speaks of another matter which lies as a basis for the truth in verse 10, it is:

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH

“That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” – Ephesians 3:6

It is in this verse that we are now introduced to the “mystery” which “was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed”. No such truth as contained in this sixth verse had ever before been revealed or known among men. In the composition of the Church Paul sets forth three things:

First of all we are A JOINT-BODY (*susoma*). Both Jew and Gentile have now become One “in Christ”. No such revelation or realization had ever taken place before. In the O.T. since the days of Abraham, the Jew had the priority and the Gentile is only mentioned in times of Israel’s national declension, or as the Gentile came in contact with this one nation of Israel. Even in the years when Christ was here on earth it was to the Jew first. Paul gives us the purpose of Messiah’s ministry and manifestation when he says: “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the CIRCUMCISION for the truth of God, to confirm the PROMISES made unto the fathers” (Romans 15:8). A vivid illustration of this is seen in Matthew 15:21-28. When the Syro-Phoenician woman came to Jesus on behalf of her daughter and called upon Him as “the Son of David” she had no claim whatever. He had come to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” and she was not of this “House”. Jesus takes an attitude first of silence and then of severity. It is only when she says “Lord” that her prayer is answered because this title leaps over the wall with which the title “Son of David” surrounded Israel.

Here in the Book of Ephesians there is no such a thing. Both Jew and Gentile are blessedly united in a “joint-body” called “one new man” (Eph. 2:15). It is no longer “to the Jew first” nor does the Gentile take an inferior place. This is the “mystery” which came by revelation to Paul.

Not only is there a joint-body, there is also a JOINT-BOND (*summetoxa*). We are “partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel”. This word occurs only here and at chapter 5:7. The “Gospel” that Paul is here talking about has to do with “the dispensation of the grace of God”. It is the “gospel” of Eph. 2:8: “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God.” No greater blessing could ever come upon a lost sinner than to be united in Christ by grace through faith, and not of works. This is THE GOSPEL indeed. No such a bond of union was ever experienced in the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is unique in this dispensation.

Finally, there is a JOINT-BLESSING (*sungkleronoma*). We are fellow-heirs of all the heavenly blessings in Christ. This inheritance includes all the benefits of God’s grace. Paul prayed (1:17-18) that God would give the Ephesians the Spirit of revelation that they might know what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance to which they had been called.

Such is the composition of the church. Thus God has done something never heard of nor dreamt of in all the ages of the past. He has formed a church which by its very nature or composition is a wonder to all the intelligences in “the heavenlies”.

From the composition of the Church we come now to our text again to see:

THE CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH

“Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

This variegated, multiform wisdom is displayed through the church in heavenly places in three distinct ways as related to man’s redemption. For we believe it is upon the basis of redemption that God is displaying His highest and holiest wisdom before the greatest intelligence in His universe.

It is displayed first of all in THE ERADICATION OF MAN'S GUILT. The Bible is specific about sin. It says: "they are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:9-10). And again: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And again: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). The condemnation of guilt rested upon the whole human race because of Adam's sin. How did God deal with this gruesome fact of man's guilt? He dealt with it by becoming sin for us, thus taking our guilt and condemnation, and by His substitutionary death eradicating forever the guilt that lay against the human race. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This multifarious wisdom is further seen in THE EXERCISE OF GOD'S GRACE. Grace is love in action. It is unmerited favor to the meritless. It is the gratuitous bestowal of God's goodness upon transgressors and rebels against His holy law. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us ... For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:4,8). Who but God, in His infinite wisdom, could think out such a salvation and make it so fully effective!

Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

Finally, this variegated wisdom is displayed in THE ELEVATION TO GOD'S GLORY. We have already seen in these studies that He hath "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (2:6). "In Christ" we are already there, but there is a future display of this truth for: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). On this day of our glorious revelation it will be true, "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). On that day it will be fully displayed in multifarious, variegated wisdom how God took the sinner from GUILT, through GRACE, to GLORY.

May our conduct therefore conform to our composition in such a way that both in melody and message we shall exhibit His manifold wisdom to all the intelligences in the universe!

Sing of things your souls have felt,
Tell how He pardoned all your guilt;
Sing of His wondrous grace and power,
Tell of His mercies to this hour.

Sing of the change His love has wrought,
Tell of the truth His word has taught;
Sing of the freedom He has given,
Tell of the hope laid up in heav'n.

Sing of His glories in the skies,
Sing till you to that glory rise;
There shall you sing and there display,
Christ your salvation in every way.

IV. AN ARENA OF EXPLOITATION

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

In the three previous sections of this series we have followed the theme: “In the heavenlies” into the realms of A Home of Edification (1:3), A Throne of Exaltation (1:20; 2:6), A Drama of Exhibition (3:10) and now fourthly and finally, An Arena of Engagement. We come, therefore, now into an entirely new realm or metamorphosis which befalls “the heavenlies”. Instead of a spectacle, there is a strife; instead of an exhibition there is an engagement; instead of a blessing there is a battle; and, instead of demonstration there is destruction.

Before endeavoring to expound this passage, it might be well for us to take a look at God’s typical people, Israel; that we might see a little clearer our spiritual analogy in the light of their triumphs. In the Book of Numbers chapters 20 and 21 Israel in her march toward Canaan meets two types of enemies. First she is confronted with the Edomites and the Moabites. Both of these are related to Israel by blood. When Edom refused to give Israel passage through his land it says: “wherefore Israel turned away from him” (Num. 20:21). Further she was told: “Meddle not with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth” (Deut. 2:5). When she likewise is confronted with the Moabites God said: “Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle for I will not give thee of their land for a possession” (Deut. 2:9). Here we see the attitude toward the people related to Israel by blood. In our text in Ephesians it says: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood”. As members of His Body we are not citizens in this world; our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). There are all about us brothers in the flesh, but not in the Spirit. We are to take the same attitude as Israel did to her blood brothers, not in the line of promise. We are not to possess one foot of the inheritance given to those who are citizens of this present world; rather we are to “turn away from,” “meddle not,” and “distress not”. As heavenly citizens we have no rights in this present evil world.

But in Numbers chapter 21 Israel meets an entirely different enemy. Here is “King Arad, the Canaanite,” “Sihon the king of the Amorites” and Og the King of Bashan”. The record says: “they utterly destroyed them (Canaanites) and their cities” “And Israel smote him (Sihon) with the edge of the sword and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok”; “So they smote him (Og) and his sons and all his people until there was none left him alive, and they possessed his land.” These enemies were the direct seed of the Evil One and were to be completely routed and annihilated. So we, like Israel must fight against the evil forces that have taken possession of “the heavenlies” our rightful possession “in Christ”. As it was said of Israel: “the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits” (Dan. 11:32), so may we know the power of our Christ and the purpose of our God “and do exploits” in the heavenly places.

As the Lord encouraged Joshua: “Be strong and of courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land” (Josh. 1:6), so Paul gives the word of encouragement: “Finally, my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

The redemption purchased by Christ, as seen in this Epistle, is complete and free; yet between the commencement and consummation of God's work for us there is a protracted conflict. This is not a figure of speech; it is a real and arduous battle, a fight to the finish. Our enemies possessing "the heavenly places" must be completely routed before we can possess our inheritance.

The Apostle now reveals the particulars of the struggle, namely that we have Super-human Enemies "in heavenly places" who must be overcome by our Super-human Equipment.

Let us first of all then see:

THE SUPER-HUMAN ENEMIES

Paul now gives us the forces which have taken possession of our inheritance and who will defend it to the last being. They are designated as "principalities" (archas) or governments, princedoms, the organized spirit world; "powers" (exousias) or authorities, those who have delegated powers; "world-rulers of this darkness" (kosmokratoras). This world is filled with evil rulers, who rule the nations, and are heads of all the political, social, economic, and religious spheres. They are also called "spiritual wickedness in high places."

Let it be understood that we are battling an organized, mobilized, supernatural force of evil powers headed by the Prince of Evil, the Devil. This is no sham battle. We are not beating the air, not battling a dummy. This struggle is as real as Christ's conflict with evil powers in the Wilderness and the Garden of Gethsemane.

The first description we get of our arch-enemy is his Person. He is characterized by the graphic description: "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). With this craftiness, subtlety, slyness of the Evil One we get such other names as: Liar – Murderer – Accuser – Apollyon – Destroyer – Beelzebub – Prince of the demons. All these names are as suggestive as they are repulsive and repellent. Not only his names, but his nature is suggestive of his person. Paul speaks about the "devices" (2 Cor. 2:11), the "snares" (1 Tim. 3:7) and in our text the "wiles of the Devil". He beguiles, seduces, opposes, resists, deceives, sows tares, hinders, buffets, tempts, persecutes, blasphemers, and counterfeits. Both in his names and nature he lives up to "the wiles of the devil". This revelation of our arch-enemy is of utmost importance. Unless we clearly see his nature, we shall pay little respect to the armor provided to combat him. The Greek word here translated "wiles" is methodias, and has to do with motives, methods, and mastery in the art of deception and destruction.

We must also in the second place see the Position of our super-human enemy. He is a "prince in two localities – in the earth and in the air. Christ called him "the prince of this world". He is the ruling spirit over "the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). He has control over the nations and is the master mind behind the whole system of world government dominated by lust for power, greed, ambition, intrigue, hatred, lies, aggression, rivalry, and brutality. Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of this world, a bona fide offer. Christ did not dispute the claim. He says there is a kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26). Thus we wrestle "against the ruler of the darkness of this world". The Devil also has his host of evil Spirits in the aerial heavens. He is "the prince of

the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). There is a perfected mass organization of hellish forces working secretly and subtly above the earth. And according to our text he is also "in high places". He is seeking to contain and control our inheritance and is thus our sworn enemy. The text suggests that the evil powers enter into the believer's very realm in Christ to seek to remove him from that high and holy position which he has in Him. The battle is waged in the believer's place and position of grace through faith in Christ, which is "in the heavenlies".

Our super-human enemies are enemies of great Power. Paul describes their power in four graphic descriptions. It is "the power of darkness" (Col. 1:13). This is of course the opposite of light. We are called the "children of light" (Eph. 5:8). All the evils of darkness are at the command of our enemy. Satan is also known as "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). He controls natural forces which work havoc upon the earth – tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and pestilence. Satan's working is also in the realm of "lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). Satan is a "liar" (John 8:44). He has had plenty of time to perfect "wonders" in the realm of falsehood. Paul also says that he has "the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). Destruction is in his hand and what utter havoc he has brought into this world with "the power of death". These evil forces are well fortified and entrenched in their positions of power. Paul further speaks about the "strongholds" of Satan (2 Cor. 10:4) and Jesus speaks of "a strong man armed" (Luke 11:21) and of "spoils" (Luke 11:22). Who can underestimate the power of our enemy in the light of these revelations? It becomes fatal foolishness to ignore the power of our enemy.

Enemies of such character and conduct have also a definite purpose and plan in their diabolical deceptions and destructions. "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11) for the first time we meet our enemy he is described as being a "subtle serpent" (Gen. 3:1). Satan is a counterfeit, a camouflage. He has the ability to imitate Christianity. Satan has his "synagogue" (Rev. 2:9). He has his gospel which is "a different (heteros) gospel" (Gal. 1:6) from that of the gospel of God's grace and redemption by the blood of the cross. He has his "ministers" who can appear as the ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15). He has "his doctrines" the "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). He has "his sacrifices, communion table and cup" (1 Cor. 10:21). He loves the cross, but hates the blood. He knows nothing about salvation by grace through faith; only a system of human merit to appease an angry God. His whole program and purpose is one of fraud, sham, fake, imposture, cheat, humbug, deception and simulacrum. We battle against all the cunning craftiness of diabolical darkness, deception and destruction with its headquarters "in the heavenlies". He is behind all the confusion and chaos in world affairs; all the appalling apostasy in Christendom; and all the gilded veneer of man's colossal culture and civilization.

He said one day in his egotistical, defiant spirit: "I will be like the Most high" (Isa. 14:13). Pride, self-exaltation and rebellion against God have been his ways of wickedness; and with these weapons he has ever sought to bring man to foolishness, futility and failure. His plan and purpose is to inject doubt, disobedience, delusion, deflection and ultimately destruction into the souls of men, especially those who love Christ and live for Him. Do we know the subtlety, strategy, and strength of our enemies? Do we believe in the revelation of their position, power and purpose? If so, we shall recognize the nature and the necessity of our spiritual weapons, and their absolute power to overcome our enemy.

THE SPIRITUAL EQUIPMENT

"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to STAND" (stenai) Eph. 6:11.
"Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to WITHSTAND" (antistenai) Eph. 6:13.

We need equipment both for the defensive, so that we can “stand” and also for the offensive, so that we may be able to “withstand”. We need both inward stability and outward strategy. Nothing but “the whole armor of God” will do in this battle. Every piece is absolutely important.

We need to be reminded again that our strength in this battle lies in the fact stated in the first verse of our present passage, namely, “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”. It is “in the Lord” that we are to be strong for this battle. How true as Hodge says: “As a branch separated from the vine, or as a limb severed from the body, so is a Christian separated from Christ”. He, therefore, who rushes into this conflict without thinking of Christ, without putting his trust in Him and without continually looking to Him for strength and regarding himself as a member of His body, deriving all life and vigor from Him, is demented. He knows not what he is doing.

The Apostle calls this warfare a “wrestle”. This has reference to a hand-to-hand encounter. It is a spiritual conflict because it is not “against flesh and blood” but against the wiles and strategies of the Devil, whose maneuvers must be met in spiritual encounter.

THE ARMOR

There are seven pieces of armor, each of which is a source of strength and security in warfare. Our defensive weapons which are five in number give us inward stability so that we shall be able “to stand”. No soldier of the cross must be a coward, a doubter, or a deserter. Christian character in the battle against our super-human enemies is a must if we are to know ultimate victory and possess our possessions. We are to “put on” and “take unto” us “the whole armor of God”. No part of our life must be exposed to the enemy, for even one vulnerable place might mean defeat.

THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH

The first defensive weapon is THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” This is an oriental picture. The easterner must first gird about his loins his long flowing robe before he can undertake any task. The loins are a symbol of strength. But why “truth” first? Perhaps because the first time we meet Satan he comes as a liar and has ever since been “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). Christ on the other hand is the “truth”. He said: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The “truth” here in our text is not so much the truth objectively revealed, i.e. the Word of God; but rather the every realm of human thought, word, and action. If Satan is a liar, and he is, then nothing but the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ through our lives can gird our loins for strength in the hour of battle. It is incumbent upon us then that we “walk in truth” (3 John 4). If our inward character is founded upon the truth, then our outward conduct will display that truth in every department of our life. “The truth shall make you free” said Jesus in John 8:32. We shall then be free from all bondage and all encumbrance, so that we shall be able with alacrity and mobility to wage a winning battle against our foe. Freedom coupled with strength makes for invincibility. Only “truth” can gird our loins of strength and give freedom in combat with our enemy.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The next defensive weapon is “THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”. This is the “righteousness” of Philippians 3:9, “And being found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”. The breastplate covered the body from the neck down to the thighs. The “righteousness” which is through the faith in Christ satisfied all the demands of God’s holiness and justice. This is a sure defense against all assaults of the Evil One. This righteousness makes us right, and right is might against the foe. We are therefore to “put on the new man which is created in righteousness” (Eph. 4:24). Someone has said: “Wear integrity as your coat of mail”. Righteousness is not a Sunday garb that we put on for a one day profession; it is a seven days a week garment for Christian possession.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

The third part of our defensive weapons is “THE GOSPEL OF PEACE”. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.” Swiftness of foot was an important qualification for the Eastern soldier. Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14). We have already seen that Satan sows discord among men; he is the instigator of war with its program of hate. The American soldier in World War 1 wore what was known as “the Pershing Shoe”. It gave ease and alacrity to the soldier. Vincent tells us: “The Roman soldier substituted for the greaves of the Greek (metal plates covering the lower part of the leg) the caligae or sandals, bound by thongs over the instep and round the ankle and having the soles thickly studded with nails”. The word “preparation” (*hetoimasia*) means readiness; but in Hellenistic Greek also establishment or firm foundation. Thus the “Gospel of peace” brings a firm footing. “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15). This conflict will bring us losses, infirmities, and tragedies. It is only as we are shod with the gospel of peace that we can hope to overcome and be victorious. Jesus said to His disciples in the hour of His and their trouble: “My peace I give unto you ... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). As we meet trials, temptations, and all kinds of trouble, it is only “the peace of God that passeth all understanding” that “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”.

The sinner is pictured as: “footsore, lame and weary. Your garments stained with sin”. A.B. Simpson has written:

“Press on my heart the woe;
Put in my feet the go;
Let me be faithful to my trust
And use me for thy glory.”

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The next weapon in the defensive category is “THE SHIELD OF FAITH”. “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The oriental shield was large and shaped like a door, 41/2 feet long and 21/2 feet wide. Satan’s darts are fire tipped, hellish arrows of brimstone, produced for one purpose --- to produce distress of mind, depression of spirit, disappointment in all our relationships, and finally, destruction. Faith is the victory as the eleventh chapter of Hebrews so wonderfully sets forth. As the shield was very mobile and was intended to aid all the other parts of the armor, so faith is “above all” a

most important part of our defensive equipment. It is by faith that we are able to use all the other weapons against an unseen but real enemy: for, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Let us then put our faith in the faithfulness of God (Psa. 89:33) in the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 19:30) and in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The final defensive weapon is “THE HELMET OF SALVATION”. The helmet is a covering, a protection for the head. Satan makes a desperate bid for the mind of man. As he did to Eve so he ever does to all men; sows the seeds of doubt, delusion, deception, denial, and despair into the human mind. Salvation is therefore utterly important as a helmet for a most vulnerable part of our anatomy. Satan tries by a false philosophy (Col. 2:8); by foolish planning (Luke 12:20); and by filthy communication (Col. 3:8) to overcome the believer. Nothing but the redemption of our mind can overcome his sinister attacks upon our head. It is therefore incumbent upon us that we cap our heads with “the helmet of salvation”. We must let the redemption that is in Christ Jesus captivate our thought life and regulate our thinking at all times.

All parts of the defensive armor refer to Christ. He is our girdle of Truth, our Righteousness, our “Peace, our Shield, and our Salvation. Thus when we “put on Christ” we are putting on the whole armor of God for our defensive warfare.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

From the defensive weapons, we turn now to the offensive which are two in number. These are given in order “to withstand” for aggressive warfare. These are given for outward strategy. The first one is “THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT which is the Word of God”. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It combines both the wisdom and the power of God. The Word of God dissipates all doubt; drives away all fear; and delivers from satanic power. This “sword of the Spirit” was the only weapon that Jesus used in the wilderness against the Devil. He quoted three times from Deuteronomy chapters 6 and 8 when He said: “It is written”. Here He was The Representative Man, who won a victory not only for Himself but also for us. “I have slain them by the words of my mouth” says Hosea (6:5). And Isaiah says: “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth” (11:4). It behooves us to keep the sword in constant readiness and this can only be done by a constant, systematic study and use of God’s Word.

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

The other defensive weapon is “prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”. It is “all prayer” at all seasons with “all perseverance” for “all saints”. The warrior advances upon his knees in this warfare. Having “put on” the whole armor of defense and wielding the “sword of the Spirit” he is to make his attack with all prayer. A prayerless life is as an open citadel into which the enemy can come and take his spoils. When Luther was summoned to appear before the Diet at Worms and asked what he intended to do, he said: “Give me an hour of prayer”. And he won the victory at that

trial. When Jesus was about to meet the enemy, He spent the night in prayer in Gethsemane. The prayer warrior is a strange paradox: Christward, he is one of conscious weakness seeking strength; and, satanward, he is one of conscious strength expressed in seeming weakness. Satan fears nothing more than a saint prostrate before God in prayer. Our prayer is to be “in the Spirit”. In this book of Ephesians we see the working of the Spirit in four particulars, all of which are important.

- (1) Enlightened by the Spirit (1:17)
- (2) Strengthened by the Spirit (3:16)
- (3) Filled by the Spirit (5:18)
- (4) Praying in the Spirit (6:18)

We can only pray effectually “in the Spirit” when we are enlightened, strengthened and filled by the Spirit. In the fourth chapter of this Epistle to the Ephesians Paul tells us first: Give no place to the Devil (4:27), and then secondly, Grieve not the Holy Spirit (4:30). The antidote to the latter, and the attitude toward the former are found in the fifth chapter: “Be filled by the Spirit” (5:18). If we are to be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ” we must make prayer preeminent in our lives, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”. We must also make prayer a matter of perseverance “with all perseverance”. If we truly make prayer preeminent we shall persevere in it, and to persevere in it is to make it most prominent.

Therefore, knowing the power and purpose of our enemy and having at our disposal access to the weapons of victory, let us go forth to conquer. It is not enough that we rout the enemy and destroy him; we must also take possession of our inheritance.

“Christian, gird the armor on,
There’s a victory to be won
For the Lord, for the Lord;
Take the helmet, sword and shield,
Forth into the battlefield
At His Word, at His Word.”
