

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS (Lektion 08) - Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

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Concerning the studying

I **recommend** you to read through the respective book in the bible at first. Our manual is the bible. And then to go through one or two pages of the material every day, which implies to also look up and read the given bible scriptures to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject. Another suggestion would be to use this material as one's regular devotion.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end of the seminary**, you need to answer the **test questions** at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address. And now I wish you lots of joy and spiritual profit during your bible study.

Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

IN GENERAL

Because of its topic "the Church of Jesus Christ", the Epistle to the Ephesians is an exceedingly important epistle. It establishes the "basic teaching" about the **essence of the Church**. It was also called „The crown of all epistles of Paul“ . This epistle contains the richest description about the blessings of the saints, applied personally and as the assembly (Church) while unfolding God's wise counsel concerning to the Glory of Christ.

The epistle to the Ephesians is one of the "epistles of captivity". All of Paul's epistles written in captivity are identified with this name. These are the Epistles to the Phillipians, Ephesians, the Colossians, the second Epistle to Timothy and the one to Philemon. Two external circumstances of the Epistle to the Ephesians are closely linked to the Epistles to the Colossians (a great similarity to Colossians - 66 verses are totally identical) and the Epistle to Philemon: All were written by Paul in the midst of his captivity (Eph. 3,1/ 4,1/ 6,20) and sent through the same messenger, **Tychicus** (Eph. 6,21-22; Col. 4,7-8). It is interesting to observe that Paul reveals in Colossians **what/who Christ is to the Church**, and in Ephesians he reveals **what/who the Church is for Christ**. In Ephesians Paul shows us the Church of the Lord and in Colossians the Lord of the Church.

But there is also a great difference between the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Epistles to the **Galatians**. In Galatians the apostle needs to settle at the lowest level of grace and repeat the essential truths because of their soul condition. To the Ephesians he writes upfront about highly exalted subjects - the will of God concerning Christ and the assembly.

The Galatians strayed away from the basics of faith to circumcision, unto earthly elements and the works of the law. Accordingly the apostle had to call them back and remind them of the true reason of God's justification: faith in the work of Christ. In Ephesians he has the chance to talk about the „Wisdom among the ones completed“ (1. Cor. 2,6).

It is interesting, yes even important, to recognize the difference between these epistles and the Epistles to the Colossians, whose teachings appear similar at first sight. In Colossians the apostle prioritizes the relation of the crucified and the risen Christ - but he doesn't take us to heavenly places. Our hearts and senses (minds) should be there, but we will still be visible here on earth. He takes more time to dwell on the personal Glory of the Master and the fullness inside, than on the privileges and blessings, which belong to us through the power of our union with Him.

The Colossians were attracted through the philosophies and the human traditions. They needed to be reminded that Christ is the head, in whom they are complete. In case of the Ephesians, there was obviously nothing particular to be rebuked or warned about. They were required to walk worthy of the calling (Chap. 4,1). Accordingly, the heart of the apostle was free and he could write openly and abundantly about the wonderful blessings and privileges that Christ provided for us. The difference between the epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians is even more remarkable if you consider that they were probably written at the same time and sent by the same messenger (comp. Eph. 6,21 with Col. 4,7).

None of the epistles of the apostle Paul speaks so clearly about the now revealed secret. This is what makes this letter so meaningful to the believers. Paul discusses much deeper subjects of faith than in any other Epistle. Here he is communicating secrets to believers of the nations. Those secrets which were hidden in God for ages, but now proclaimed to his apostles and prophets through the Holy Spirit.

The reason for this epistle is almost the same like in Colossians: This epistle shall show the danger of heretic foreign domination. Actually it seems like this domination grew during that time. Furthermore it seems that the church in Asia Minor was experiencing a crisis in the ancient times. There originally impetus was likely to degenerate, apparently due to cosmic speculations. This is what the epistle to the Ephesians tried to resist it.

In Ephesians as well as in Colossians the picture of the **universal ecclesia** (Church) was prevalent. Here for example any evidence to the "parousia" (second coming of Christ) is missing. Whereas in all the other epistles Paul never skips this matter. **In the epistles to the Ephesians** also the most important notes about the Paulinic teachings of justification **are missing**. Furthermore this epistle doesn't portray any charismatic structure of the church anymore. In Eph. 4,11ff., where it speaks about the gifts that Christ gave to the people - in the opposite of 1.Cor.12 and Rom. 12 it tells about the charisma of **instruction and leading**. Here it begins to show that already within the ancient church, a clear leadership structure began to develop. When the epistle to the Christians in the Roman metropole was written, the churches had already established a solid structure.

It is also noticeable that Israel was no longer subject. While Israel appears in the Epistle to the Romans as a relevant magnitude of the present it occurs in the Epistles to the Ephesians as a magnitude of the past. After this Epistle to the Ephesians the church took the place of Israel. In Ephesians there is no competitive situation anymore, like we could sense in the epistles to the Romans (comp.: Rom. 9-11 with Eph. 2,11ff.). In this coherence it is important to know that the Epistle to the Ephesians admits a number of traditions, in which a **dualistic terminology** is dominating. It is about light and darkness as we know from the Dead Sea scrolls. There can be found bonds of the logos - and anthropological doctrine, contemporary speculations of the Hellenistic synagogues.

Paul is using **totally different starting point** for this epistle. He stopped talking about the corrupt and defiled condition of the human being. Here he is starting from God's point of view, how He established His plan from eternity on and how we human beings participate in it (Eph. 1,1-14). He gives thanks unto God that we human beings (as His children) are now acquainted to the eternal plans (and heritage) through God Himself. In this He totally ignores the **moral condition of the Ephesians** (He is not going into it). He is not urging or blaming them of strife and division like the Corinthians. To the contrary: the apostle couldn't write them without praising and giving thanks unto God, because their condition was so exemplary.

Here Paul starts the epistle with a long **praise of the Godhead in twelve verses**. He speaks of what this Godhead has done with and inside of "us". The word "congregation" or "church" is not even found here. But in this whole hymn it is more about "us", so that I want to call this "praise" the **"Us-Hymn"**. This is a hymn about the works of God in the Church.

Ephesus had been a meaningful trade city in Asia Minor during the time of the New Testament – in the middle of today's Turkey. The city was blooming. There was a street - probably 11 meters wide - from the harbor to the city. Paul went there on his **third mission trip**. You can read about it in Acts 19 and 20.

In the world-famous capital of Asia Minor, that was minted by commerce, art and science and also by the idolry of Diana, there arose a church by the efforts of the apostle Paul. The apostle **remained there for almost three years** and this time of residence gave birth to an intimate and trustful relationship. This is beautifully evidenced by the affectionate farewell of the apostle Paul by the elders (Acts 20). But still the Epistle to the Ephesians addressing the Gentile Christians is one of the most **unpersonal letters**. It carries the character of **a newsletter** to different Anatolian churches. He cared for the unity of the church of Jesus, who belonged to the big picture of God's counsel (John 17).

Paul preached in the synagogue among the Jews for three months and then got in trouble. After that he was allowed to preach in a school. The school belongs to a tyrant.

Development of the church in Ephesus

The message and service of Paul was accompanied by powerful signs and wonders. It almost went that far, that people took the clothes of Paul to lay them on the sick and they got healed. Some kind of spiritual healers tried to imitate it then, but it didn't work. In Ephesus the god Artemis was worshiped. The temple of Artemis was counted to the seven world wonders. This was a great business for a silversmith. He made a living selling sculptures of Artemis. Since Paul called people into the discipleship of Jesus, the people who were living this cult got very angry. There was a great commotion in the city. After two years in Ephesus Paul moved on. Accordingly you can estimate that he was very familiar with them. But certainly there are no **personal** features in the Epistles to the Ephesians.

You don't recognize any of the **start-up problems** anymore which existed in the early phase of the Christian church. In the center of attention we find a church where the body of Christ compasses the whole world (cosmos) and where the head of the body appears now as Jesus - Lord of the world and head of the church (Eph. 1,22). So now the believers in this world can see themselves in unity, stick together and work toward perfection. (Eph. 4,15).

All the Christians of different nationalities are now able to live with each other, because Christ brought peace between Jews and Non-Jews to break down the the fence of enmity. (Eph. 2,14).

In behalf of the unity, all worldly domestic codes got »christianized«, rules of behavior for the family order (Eph. 5,21/ 6,9): The submission of women to their husbands, children to their parents and slaves to their lords survived. But the spirit of the love of Christ should rebuke the missuse of might and authority. Christians should put on the »new man« like a dress not to fall back into an unchristian lifestyle (4,22-24). The »spiritual armor of faith« (6,11-17) should enable them to fight against the evil forces.

AUTHOR

All the contained evidences leave no doubt about the authorship of the Epistles. The author is called Paul , an apostle of Jesus Christ (1,1), Paul the captive of Jesus Christ (3,1), prisoner in the Lord (4,1), messenger of the gospel in chains (6,20).

We are learning from this that the author can be no one else than the apostle Paul in captivity.

By the way, the authorship of Paul is confirmed by the typical content in this epistle:

- The salvation through grace by faith (2,5+8)
- The redemption through the blood (1,7),
- The sealing with the holy spirit (1,13/ 4,30),
- The body as a reflection of the church (1,23/ 4,16),
- The love that Christ had for us from the beginning .

We can find all these terms in the epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians and to the Corinthians. A range of the evidences in the early church also confirm that Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, is the author of the epistle to the Ephesians.

Paul is gifted by God in a special way to share his counsel and ways in Christ, while the apostle John received the talent to display how his character and his life are revealed in Jesus. You can find the result of Paul's special talent in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Recepients

The question who the recepients are, stirres up a great problem. In the introduction mostly reads: **“To the saints of Ephesus and the believers in Jesus Christ!”**

It is basically an **open letter (newsletter)** espacially to the churches built by Gentiles in Asia Minor. Churches that came up through the ministry of Paul in and around Ephesus. Here we see that not even one person is mentioned or even greeted. Especially the “Christians from among the Gentiles” were adressed here. We know that the Ephesian church originally consisted of Jews and Gentile-Christians (Apg. 19,1-10/20,21). Therefore it cannot only and particularly be addressed to them. But still Paul refers to the Ephesians as recepients because it mainly consisted of Gentile Christians.

Even though we know how intensive Paul has worked in the church of Ephesus, where he had urged the people „in tears“ for three years and felt really connected with them, he does not mention even one of those people. Thus we assume that this epistle as **the most unpersonal epistle of all epistles of Paul** was meant to be for a whole group of churches in Asia Minor.

They way the letter is composed is the way you would write a circular letter. This explains the lack of personal memories, exortations and the missing remark of the coworker Timothy. Perhaps Tychicus was supposed to end up in the seaport of Ephesus. Probably there the epistles were duplicated and several copies were produced. Somewhere in this copy the name „Ephesus“ was mentioned and that is how the name was adopted.

Tychicus, the messenger of this epistle declares (Eph. 6,21), why this epistle was addressed just to the church of **„the saints AT Ephesus“**. Because the epistle was written down by the churches and also read in the churches it sustained the addition fort he church **„ at Laodizia“** (comp. Col.4,6). The Readers, for whom the epistle was designed for, were Christians of the Asian Minor churches and those with a gentile background ,too (Eph. 2,1-4+11-12+19/ 4,17-19).

COMPOSITION

This letter must have been written at the same place and time as the Epistle to the Colossians because both letters were sent by the messenger Tychicus (comp. Eph. 6, 21-22 und Col. 4, 7-8). Out of the contained statements (Eph. 3, 1.13; 4, 1; 6, 20 etc.) we know that the author had been in captivity while he was writing. If we compare Eph.6,20 with Phil.4,22, we are inclined to see that Rome is the place of captivity because Paul was sending greetings by the believers „of the Emperor's house“

Certainly Paul was in captivity in other places too: in Caesarea and in Ephesus (comp. 1.Cor. 15,32), but out of the above reasons it is more likely that this epistle was written in Rome. Namely in the end of the year of 62 AD or at the beginning of the year 63 AD , at the same time like the Epistles to the Colossians (for details look at the introduction of Colossians).

Authenticity

Ignatius of Antiocha (beginning 2nd centure) relates to our epistle in his own letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 1,16/ 3,3/ 5 1); soon after that Polycarp writes to the Phillipians and qotes him many times (Eph. 2,8+9/ 4,26); Marcion (around year 140 AD) chronologically adopts it into his canon.The Syrian translation in the east and the old Latin version along with the Muratorian fragment in the west treat the the epsitle as a letter of the apostle Paul. Besides Ireneaus, Clemens and Terullian and also Origenes and Eusebius have exerted this epistle more often. And also the language and style suggest aim to the world of thought and the close relation to Colossians.

PURPOSE AND GOAL

We can find no **special reason** for our letter, but still it is surely not about any letter of facility . The condition of the apostle and the threatening of the church of Jesus (Eph. 6,10-20) certainly build the backround of the epistle. Especially during those external threats **the church should become aware of their postion in Christ**, her calling and perfection. Is this the solid food that Paul liked to give to the Corinthians and which they could not recieve because of their carnal disposition? **The epistle to the Ephesians is definitely the document that casts the most light on the church of Jesus.** It shows us the high meaning of the church, which is predestined from eternity by God. To be a testimony in the present and prospective world (Eph. 3,10+21). „With her roots in eternity, resting in God’s father-heart, she drives her crown back into eternity of God’s throne and branches her limbs in all generations and through all the centuries.“

CONTENT AND ARRANGEMENT

Introduction: salutation, regards and blessings (Chap. 1,1-2)

1. <u>Dogmatic part: The church of Jesus Christ</u>	Chap. 1, 3-3, 21
The blessings of the church.	Chap. 1, 3-10
The access into the church.	„ 1, 11-14
The intercession for the church.	„ 1, 15-23
The past and present of the church.	„ 2, 1-10
The unity of the church.	„ 2, 11-22
The secret of the church.	„ 3, 1-13
The wealth of the church.	„ 3, 14-21
2. <u>Exortation and practical part</u>	Chap. 4, 1-6, 20
The unity through the spirit.	Chap. 4, 1-16
The transformation of the new man.	„ 4, 17-24
The interaction with your neighbor.	„ 4, 25-32
The careful transformation of God’s children.	„ 5, 1-21
Husband and wife - Christ and the church.	„ 5, 22-33
Children and parents – Servants and Lords.	„ 6, 1-9
About the spiritual fight of faith.	„ 6, 10-20
3. <u>End</u>	Chap. 6, 21-24
The mission of Tychicus.	Chap. 6, 21-22
Blessings.	„ 6, 23-24

Keyword: **Church**

Keyverse: „**And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**“ (Eph. 1,22-23).

Miscellaneous

The essence of the church in three pictures

The church as a Divine building.	Chap. 2, 19-22
The church as the body of Christ.	1, 22-23; 4, 12-16; 5, 23-30
The church as the wife.	5, 25-33

The secrets of the life of a church

This secret is the „Life in Christ“, an expression that Paul used to describe the normal spiritual condition of the believer. He lives , is and acts not in and out of himself anymore, but in “Christ“. This expression is found 35 times in the original text. In the whole new testament it can be found 164 times.

The ministry of the holy spirit in the church

The person of the spirit (can be afflicted.)	Ch.	4, 30
The seal of the spirit.		1, 13
The pledge of the spirit.		1, 14
The revelation of the spirit.		1, 17; 3, 5
The access to the Father through the spirit.		2, 18
The unity in the spirit		2, 18-22, 4, 3-4
The power of the spirit.		3, 16
The fullness of the spirit.		5, 18
The sword of the spirit.		6, 17
The prayer in the spirit.		6, 18

The spiritual fight of the church

	Ch.	6, 10-20
The calling.		6, 10-11
The enemy.		6, 11-12
The battle field.		6, 12
The armor.		6, 11.13-17
The position.		6, 18-20

INTERPRETATION AND REFLECTION

Eph. 1,1-2 - Introduction: salutation, regards und blessings

Paul introduces himself as an apostle according to the will of God (Rom. 1,1/ 1.Cor. 1,1).

The career of the apostle is indicated in Gal. 2,1-10.

An **apostle** (Greek: apostolos) is an ambassador or messenger. Jesus himself chose men out of his twelve disciples, which he called apostles. (s. Marc 3,17+18/ Joh. 1,45/ Luk. 5,2/ Mat. 10,3/ Luk. 6,12-16). They were the closest mates and followers of Jesus.

From the beginning they were with him (baptism of John) and eye-witnesses of His resurrection, also the ascension to heaven (Acts 1,21). Certainly today there are no eye-witnesses of the ascension of Jesus anymore. Accordingly there is no apostleship in the sense and way of „the twelve” anymore. Today no one can come and introduce himself as a bearer of the apostleship (in this sense). Apart from those twelve there were and there are no other apostles (during the lifetime of the apostles no other apostle was called or chosen by casting of lots). Therefore this office was limited in time and ceased after John died at a very old age. Even the number of apostles was determined by the promise: „Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luk. 22,28-30). The Lord Jesus spoke those words unto the twelve disciples, ***those he also called apostles***. One of them became a betrayer. Matthew took his position then. Thus the number of the twelve apostles was retained.

In the „revelation of Jesus“ we find this issue confirmed, where it says about the new Jerusalem: „***And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.***” (Rev. 21,14)

With Paul appears and elapses a unique and special calling of the apostle. Paul was a “***apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God***”. He didn’t belong to the twelve, but is allowed to say in confidence: „*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Rom.1,1-7). With this prefacing sentences about the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle paraphrases concisely his heavenly calling:

- His gospel is: JESUS as the CRUCIFIED.
- His mission is to work out the obedience by faith among the Gentiles of the nations (Rom.16,25-27).

Therefore the apostleship of Paul distinguishes himself from the twelve:

- **Paul does not hold a particular office in the house of Israel.** In the opposite the twelve will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel during the new birth of Israel (Matt.19,28).
- **Paul was set apart in the womb of his mother for the proclamation of salvation among the Gentiles or nations** (Gal. 1,15f.). The twelve are only called for the mission to Israel (all twelve tribes! Gal. 2,6-10). So Jacob writes: „*the twelve tribes living in diversion*”. Peter writes to „*the chosen refugees (or foreigners) in the diversion*”, which is addressing the believers, born-again Jews, those who live beyond Palestine.

Paul was sent by God to focus on the Gentiles and Peter on the Jews. In between they also preached the gospel to others, but the foundational structure was clearly given by God.

On his way to Damascus **Paul himself was called to be a chosen vessel by the resurrected Jesus** (Acts. 9,15 and 1.Tim. 1,12-16).

The God of Israel had chosen the man Paul, to prove His great love upon the least of all saints – the same love that He will also bestow upon His chosen people.

The conversion and amnesty of Paul follows the model of Israel's former return to the Lord.

The Pharisee Paul was stubborn, otherwise he could not have been able to rebel in such a severe way against the Messiah Jesus. If the Lord Jesus wouldn't have appeared to him, Saul would have remained in all likelihood in the blind eagerness of the law until death. But so he could honorably say: **„I was shown mercy...“**.

Apostles and prophets had a special ministry of revelation. They had and have a special authority in teaching the church (Acts. 2, 42).

Moreover the word ambassador (apostle) is also used for the disciples of Jesus, who brought the testimony of His physical resurrection (even though they themselves are no eye-witnesses of this power of God) to the estranged and those who lived far away from God. Also the missionaries (Joh. 13,16) are apostles (ambassadors), in Rom.16,7 Paul greets „Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me“. In Acts. 14,14 Barnabas and Paul are mentioned as apostles, too. But Barnabas was a Levite from Cypres and neither belonged to the twelve nor was he a „unseasonable birth“ like Paul was. The scripture still calls him apostle, like in the reviewed style of an ambassador of Jesus' special mission. Today there are none of these kinds of apostles anymore. God still positions apostles today also in the church (Eph. 4,11). But they are a totally different category than “the twelve “.

In addition there is **the teachings of the apostles – Acts 2,42**. This is the spoken and written message of the apostles and of the prophets of God, who spoke inspired by the holy spirit. By the help of the holy ghost the ecclesia (= church) claimed 27 of all the numerous letters circulating during the 2./3. century to become part of the Canon, which means that they belong to the Divine guideline. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse (= Revelation) were the most controversial.

The epistles of Paul had been approved in their validity very early. Paul wrote to Timothy: “ Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. “ (2.Tim. 1,13)

In the epistle to the Ephesians it says: **„...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...“** (Eph. 2,20). The solid ground exists. Jesus Christ himself is the corner stone, whom the apostles conveyed unto us.

And **this ”teaching of the apostles” is partly delivered to the Ephesians:**

It includes repentance and faith, baptism and communion, doctrine about laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and the everlasting Judgement, the operations of the Holy Ghost, the precious blood of Christ, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, his movement into the deepest places of the earth, his corporal resurrection and glorification, His increase above all heavens next to the father, his royal priesthood, his second coming to the earth, his royal dominion, the perfection of the counsel of God till the anointed one delivers “the kingdom unto the God and FATHER “.

Eph. 1,3 till 3,21 – Docmatic part: The church of Jesus Christ

The first part of the first chapter reveals to us the relationship, where the saints of God and Christ are glorified standing in the highest heavens. (Eph. 1,1-14):

- The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our God and father;
- We as his children will be made known all of his plans
- In all of them Christ is the head above all things, and
- we receive knowledge about our heritage and our position as heirs,
- Through our sealing with the Holy Ghost,
- Who is the pledge of our inheritance until the day of release of this heritage.
- Then the apostle prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that the saints may receive understanding for the divine calling, the heritage and the power that works within them (Eph. 1,15-23).
- Here the apostle shows how the saints are made alive through the grace of God, raised up and positioned in heavenly places in Christ, to approve the abundant riches of His grace in the goodness of Christ unto us. (Eph. 2, 1-8).
- The Gentile who was far and the Jew who was near, got detached from their special position, to build a new man in Christ in union, to become the dwelling place of God on earth through the holy spirit (Eph. 2,11-22).
- Chapter 3 reveals to us the secret, that was hidden by God through all the ages and exists in the unity of the saints, both the Jews and Gentiles, in the glorified Christ.

- In chapter 4, which is relating to the last part of Chapter 2, the apostle exhorts us to a change worthy of our calling by which we were chosen
- This depiction of the standpoint and the calling of the church is followed by the practical part of the letter (Chap.4,17 till Cap. 6). Here the church is treated as **the Body of Christ** instead of the **local church**.

Paul had also been a **church-shepherd** once, working in Ephesus for about three years. For him it was about the unity of spirit and faith. He knew about the problems of a local church. His letter is about much more. It matters about love for the saints. The way God observes the church and wants to have it. Paul is pointing out again and again, that the love of God is for all saints. He speaks as the minister and shepherd „Paul“, who wants to lead the believers to the main roots of life.

Here the church is the main concern of the apostle Paul.

Images of the church.

- The new temple of God (Eph. 1,9-22).
- The body of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1,22-23).
- The bride (woman) of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 5,25-33).

The church of Jesus is „the body of the Lord“, universal, world wide, and consists of all born again believers of all times, races etc. (s. 1.Cor. 12,12-13/ 2.Cor. 11,2/ Eph. 5,23-32/ Rev. 19,7-8/ Eph. 1,22/ 4, 15/ Col. 1,18). She was born on Pentecost through the outpouring of the holy spirit (Act. 1,5/ 2,1-21+38-47) and **will only be fulfilled with the second coming of Jesus Christ and His rapture with those who belong to Him** (1.Cor. 15,51-52/ 1.Thess. 4,13-18). Until then she is a unique spiritual organism, who is made through Christ and is made of all born again believers of the present time (Eph. 2,11-3,6). Moreover the **the church of Israel is set apart** (1.Cor. 10,32) and is a secret, which was revealed in this age for the first time (this was after the Pentecost Eph. 3,1-6/ 5,32).

The local church is the visible and practical expression of the Body of Christ. The single parts of the Body of Jesus made known in their function (gifts and fruits of the spirit etc.).

The „**local church**“ is the place, where the saints grow in maturity and become equipped, a place where the Holy Ghost operates, speaks and fulfills the assignment in this world. Here in the primitive community of the saints all those came together who knew that they belonged to the “Body of Christ” (Eph. 5,30). They regarded and lifted up the church so high, that they didn’t only give all of their belongings but their whole life. Even in the midst of tribulations they let others take advantage of them and bore injustice for the sake of Divine justice (1.Cor. 6,1-7). To them the „fellowship of the Holy Spirit“ was the most important goal. For it was clear to them that their relationship with Jesus, the head, was depending on it. They took the doctrine of the sermon on the mount seriously (Mat. 5,23,24/ 18,17), also the part about correction and admonition. That’s how the church, not only the apostles, had the authority to bind and loose. Because of discipline it was a duty of the church to expel the evil ones. At the same time they were supposed to add souls to the church through the baptism (1.Cor. 5,13).

This „church discipline“ was exercised by God with Ananias and Saphira to set an example in order to avoid that „**anyone else dared to stick to them...**“ (Act. 5,13/ 1.Cor. 11,28+29). This rendered them a special divine position towards the unbelievers and the indifferent. Everything was supposed to be according to this kind of fellowship with each other (1.Joh. 1). Their gatherings were not a ritual act as opposed to the Jewish and Gentile meetings that were ruled by the priests. Here everyone who received a permission from God was permitted to serve. Overall the „general priesthood“ was applied (Jer. 31,34/ 1.Petr. 2,9) and the power of the ancient Christian church was „the faith, which was put into action through love“.

Everywhere in the New Testament local churches were build and further continued (Act. 14,23+27/ 20,17+28/ Gal. 1,2/ Philip. 1,1/ 1.Thess. 1,1/ 2.Thess. 1,1). Every single local church was different from the others. The city boundary also represented the boundary of a local church. The church in Jerusalem was totally different from the churches in Damascus, Antiochia, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus etc. Every church had different problems, like for example the seven churches in Minor Asia (letters in Rev. 2+3). Jesus had to say something totally different to every single church. And still Jesus and the Holy Ghost were the highest authority over all these churches (Eph. 1,22/ Col. 1,18). By their sovereignty the leadership, gifts, order and servively worship was set in order and led. The responsible people mentioned in the scripture were released into the ministry under the leadership of Christ, who is head of the church. They were always released by the Holy Ghost and confirmed by mature spiritual people, after they fulfilled the biblical qualifications and proved themselves in it (s. 1.Tim. 3,1-13/ Tit. 1,5-9/ 1.Petr. 5,1-5). Every local church had different divine missions and duties indeed, but the main universal purpose of the church always is and remains the same. To glorify God (Eph. 3,21), through equipping each other in faith (Eph. 4,13-16), teach the word of God (2.Tim. 2,2+15/ 3,16-17), caring for the fellowship in love and unity (Act. 2,47/ 1.Joh. 1,3), following the decrees (communion and baptism) (Luk. 22,19/ Act. 2,38-42), to convey and spread the gospel in the whole world. (Mat. 28,19/ Act. 1,8/ 2,42).

Eph. 1,3-10 – The blessings of the church

„**The believers are blessed with all kind of blessings of heavenly goods...**“ It is the same phrase like „in heavenly places“ (Eph. 2,6/ 6,12). Through Jesus we are already seated in heaven,

that means, the believers enter into a major connection with heaven, with the blessed ones, with the pure, with everything that is seen and heard from God by faith in Jesus. There with God the whole blessing (fullness) is deposited and voided, that which God gave to him (Mat. 6,20/ Col. 1,5/ 2.Tim. 1,12). Therefore the full reward will come when we are found **“faithful in the small things”** (Luk. 16,10,11).

How that can look like individually, is described by Paul in the next 7 verses:

- **„without punishment ...in love“** – He had already loved and chosen us. It was long before the foundation of the earth, before the humanity descended from God. Long before that (Rom. 3,24-26) God made the decision and laid the foundation of our salvation. The plan of healing of God was set a long time before, even before the world (the earth and human kind) got spoiled by satan. God didn't choose us because we were holy or he saw how holy we could be. He chose us so **„that we may become“**. The words **„holy and without blamish before him“** does not primarily refer to our sanctification (our works and effort), but to the divine justification (according to the self commitment and sacrifice of Jesus and his fulfilled atonement for our sake). God chose us in Christ, so that we might be holy and spotless in his Son (his sacrifice and atonement) before him and appear in his „Judgement“ where we are already „absolved, reprieved and rehabilitated“. Through this justification we got adopted by God to be His children and therefore we belong to him unto all eternity. We are officially **„decree to childship“**, that means that there is now a official and valid thing, which isn't able and allowed to be removed by anyone (s. Rom. 8,15+23/ Gal. 4,5).
- **„according to the delight of his will“** - In Rom. 8,29 Paul says: **„...For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son,....“** Through Jesus the fallen mankind receives the divine glance back, which sin had darkened and destroyed before (Col. 1,15/ Hebr. 1,3/ 2.Cor. 5,17). Through Jesus humanity receives a much more beautiful image and identity, than the first Adam ever had (Rom. 8,29). Step by step we are transformed into the image that Jesus, the Son of God had until now in the eyes of his father (2.Cor. 4,4/ 3,18) and will be clothed with this “heavenly image” at his final perfection (1.Cor. 15,49).
- **„For the praise of his glorious grace“** – Our whole salvation is only God's work (Phil. 1,11). Everything is operated by his power. The more we praise God's grace, the richer we will be gifted by God, so that we can also speak about the „abundance“, which doesn't know any limits or reservations anymore (1.Cor. 2,9-10).
- **The „secret of his divine will“ has a centre,**(Jesus the head), that is meant to coordinate all things. It should lead to the fullness according to the will of God: „That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; [even] in him:“ (Eph. 1,10). In this „plan“, means in this harmonic construction plan of being and existence Christ soars as the head of the body, who is the church (congregation) and at the same time the major axis for he himself unites all in all – „both, which are in heaven and which are on earth“. Every distraction and every boundary will be overcome and establishes the „fullness“ which is the true goal of the plan of salvation that God willingly prepared before the foundation of the world.
- **„redemption through the blood...“** – We are ransomed from sin, death and the claim of satan through the blood (Mat. 20,28/ 1.Cor. 6,20/ Gal. 3,13/ 1.Tim. 2,6). In the old testament they used an animal (sacrifice) as a ransom to reconcile the soul of the sinner to God (Lev. 17,11). All of that was a real crude evidence (and a weak shadow, Hebr.9,12) of the coming perfect sacrifice of the innocent Lamb of God (1.Petr. 1,18+19). **Jesus suffered for and with us vicariously.** Not because God would be thirsty for blood, but because God does not want to be better off than the world is today. To whomever the grace of God spared the hardest way of following Christ, let him praise the Lord and live in the light of his blessing with thanksgiving. Let him not twist or misunderstand what the Messiah has done. He died for us because He supported us. The poorest and despised of that ancient time: tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans – He considered all of them equally and therewith offended the ruling society. Kingdom of God from the viewpoint of Jesus meant salvation and honor for all. But this was not pleasant to the ones who felt like they were superior. Therefore they complained and argued much about it. Jesus estimated His message higher than His life and therefore laid down His life for it.

Only through the blood of Jesus we are able to bear spiritual fruit for God. It is the delivering message for many people who had a bad conscience or were insecure in reference to redemption and assurance of salvation.

Grace, the gift of the bleeding Jesus is opposing all other religions. They want to climb up to God and deserve their righteousness. Jesus Christ came down to us – freely – and receives us washed and made righteous through His blood. In this position of freedom we can lead a safe and pleasant life.

The blood of Christ in the New Testament: Mat. 26,27+28/ Mark. 14,24/ Luk. 22,20/ Joh. 6,53-56/ 19,33-34/ Act. 5,28/ 20,28/ Rom. 3,25/ 5,9/ 1.Cor. 10,1a/ 11,25-26/ Eph. 1,7/ 2,13/ Col. 1,19-20/ **Hebr. 9,12-14/ 9,19b+20/ 9,22/ 10,19/ 12,24/ 13,12/ 13,20-21/** 1.Petr. 1,2/ 1,18+19/ 1.Joh. 1,7/ 5,6-8/ Rev. 1,5/ 5,9+10a/ 7,13+14/ 12,11.

- **„pleasant in the Beloved“** - the beloved is Jesus Christ. He is the only beloved son of God in whom God turns to us with grace. He did that before the foundation of this world. And thus we also become beloved children of God through faith in Jesus, His son.
- **„forgiveness of sin according to the riches of grace“** - This is the the great act and foundation of our redemption: the forgiveness of sins. With the forgiveness of sins heaven and God Himself open up to us. This is the point when we can experience the transformation of our life and we have access to the fullness of God.
- **Grace „bestowed upon us in abundance...“** - Paul thinks of all the blessings that come from the forgiveness of sins. We receive sight, we understand and recognize the Kingdom of God (Joh. 3,3+5), we receive the holy spirit, etc.

The church of Jesus is „Ecclesia“.

The church of the NT is called the „body of Christ“ (1.Cor. 12,27/ Eph. 4,12/ Col. 2,17). This refers to the full number of all people who have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ. All together form the body of Christ (1.Cor. 12,12f./ Eph. 2,16/ 4,4).

Jesus uses the word **„church“** a word of the Greek culture. People who were chosen for special assignments were called the „the chosen“, this word was **„ecclesia.“** When Jesus builds his church it begins with a divine call. People face that call, receive Jesus as their Lord and start to follow Him. When the day of Pentecost had come, Jesus began to lay the corner stone of his ecclesia. People were filled with the holy spirit and no longer a temple, a priest or sacrifices were required. From that time on Jesus is the high priest for his chosen and his sacrifice on the cross is the eternal gift of forgiveness. This church is not locally limited. It is not any kind of special confession, it is worldwide and yet one family. .

As soon as this ecclesia was established anger arose. The religious people were shocked that people confessed Jesus and claimed that there is no salvation in any other name. They were called foolish, people who could not be considered serious, it was supposed to be the worst of all sects. When the number of believers still kept growing they tried to permit them to speak up. But they would not be intimidated or discouraged even though Timothy was beheaded and Peter was in prison. When even those things could not stop them they were radically persecuted. Many had to leave their home town, but they would continue to preach the gospel and every where new churches were planted.

This ecclesia was at no time an honorable or dominating church. It was always a minority that was despised and persecuted because it confessed Jesus. Jesus prepared his disciples for this condition: **„It is enough for the disciple to be as His Master and the servant as his lord. If they called the father of the house a devil, how much more will they call the members of His household“** (Mat. 10,25). There is no other name in this world that was so despised like the name of Jesus Christ.

In Joh. 2,18- 22 we read: The Jews started to talk to Him and said „What kind of sign will you show us to prove your authority?“ Jesus answered them saying „Destroy this temple and I will build him up in three days.“ The Jews said to themselves: „It took 46 years to establish this temple and he wants to build it up in three days“ But he was talking about the temple of his own body. When he rose from the dead the disciples remembered His saying and believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

After the resurrection of Jesus every believer became a part of the universal church – a part of the body of Christ - by the rebirth (repentance, etc.) and the baptism (Rom. 6,3+7/ 8,12). **In our rebirth** through the holy spirit we belong to the world wide church (1.Cor. 12,13). All those who belonged to Christ therefore belonged to the church because you cannot separate Jesus the head from his body, the church (1.Cor. 12,12). It is not that important to be a member of a local church (which is called ekklesia in the NT and *described* a gathering of the community), but it was more important to have the faith in Jesus Christ and therefore become a member of His body. It is in vain to become the member of a local church and to be spiritually dead because you were not born again or have not consciously experienced healing. But all who belong to Christ and His church will also display that on the outside by freely attending the meetings of fellow believers in a local church. He will follow a local church in order to have fellowship with other believers and exhort one another in the gifts and the faith in God. The acceptance into the death and resurrection of Jesus, the washing of the blood, is represented physically in the water baptism.

The **church of the NT** is not only called temple, as the place of God's presence, but also as **the body of Christ** because it is an organism that becomes alive through relationships. At first the body feeds on the relationship to its head Jesus Christ. Without this relationship and the daily submission under His guidance there is no life in the church, and it could be called an organization at its best, but surely not a living organism. Therefore Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1,22/ 4,15/ 5,23/ Col. 1,18/ 2,19) the first and most important carrying the most responsibility. From Him as the head flows the unity and spiritual maturity as a whole and the single members of the church (Eph. 4,15f./ Col. 2,19).

Thus the church as an organism needs the relationship with the other members in order to live. Everbody is depending on the others and everyone should be there for one another (1.Petr 4,10). Nobody can say that he does not need the church (1.Cor. 12,15ff.). In the church as body of Christ every member needs the other and we should all minister to one another with the gifts God gave us. In the center of Jesus ministry and His church is mutual encouragement, exhortation and completion.

Eph. 1,3-14 – Why does Paul praise the Lord?

The Verses 3 to 14 are one sentence in the Greek original. He is not blaming any body or preaching on morals. He is rather praising. To be precise the 3rd vers contains 3 times the word in, because first of all there is the gift itself: „in all spiritual blessing”, and then the cover „in heaven”, and eventually the whole as a part of a bigger package, which is „in Christ”. This is a strong indication of the three unity: God the father planned the church, God the son paid the price for the church and God holy spirit is protecting the church.

Paul is thanking God for all things that have happened in our life through Jesus:

God chose you in Christ. He chose us before the foundation of the world! A powerful and exciting statement of Paul. A statement that always caused a fuss over and over again. A fuss because smart people would ask themselves how this choice can be understood. Has God predetermined who is chosen and who is not? Is it about predestination and if I am not chosen, can I just do whatever I want because I will never be a part of this anyway? But when Paul speaks of a process of choice he surely does not speak about segregation. He is also not saying that some are chosen and others are not. Paul rather emphasises that God chose this world and mankind. Paul is addressing everybody who confesses Jesus and points out: even before I was able to do anything to deserve it, God had already determined his work, before the foundation of this world.

How can we imagine this? Before God created the world, before HE spoke „Let there be light!” and „Let us make man!”, He asked His son: „are you ready to redeem this world?” And when Jesus said “Yes“ God said His „Let there be light!”, and then HE created man according to His image.

God is not indifferent to us. and he has never been and never will be. We are not left to some kind of destiny, but rather embeded into a divine plan of salvation. God did not create us and placed us in this world to leave us all up to ourselves. God will not just let us run into our doom God wants every one of us to reach our destiny, and find a good ending. He wants us to be without blemish and holy before Him. In order for us to be all that he has not spared any cost. He was ready to pay ANY price and has already done it!

Eph. 1,4 – For in Him He chose us before the foundation of this world so that we could be holy and without blemish before Him, in His love.

This clearly shows that God only chose us in His love. It has nothing to do with us.

The next verses (Eph. 1,5) underlines the condition that he chose us to be holy and without blemish before Him. This explains the following sayings in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

- 1) The other five scriptures in Ephesians where we find the term in love (Eph. 3,17/ 4,2+15+16/ 5,2)
- 2) The term *In love* blends in smoothly to the holiness without blemishes. Whereas the love would be the balance. God himself is the love and the believers He chose in His love should connect their life with love and holiness. It could also read: ***In His love he had determined us to be His children through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will.***
... he had ... predetermined ... for the praise of His glorious grace that He has bestowed upon wu through his grace in the beloved (Vers 6).

In Vers 4 Paul explains when this predetermination took place. It says: before the foundation of the world. This reveals the imagination that the believers are blessed with divine predetermination based on this foundation.

- God the father blesses the saints because He chose them,
- the Son died for them and
- the holy spirit seals the choice.

This blessing is also the work of the three personalities of the Godhead, it is the work of the trinity.

The blessing starts when we are chosen: He chose us. In that choice God is the subject, and the people are the object. This choosing act is the sovereign work of God („predestined“ means chosen in advance). The emphasis is more on why than on who.) Also our salvation is the work of God alone and not of people (Eph. 2, 8 - 9).

Even though it was an act of grace (Rom. 11,5+6; 2.Tim. 1,9) and of the free will of God (Eph. 1,5+9 +11), people are still totally self-responsible for their faith (Vers 13).

In Ephesians we climb the mountain tops. **We look back to the past of eternity**, where God planned the church. And God did **three things for us human race, when he planned the church:**

- First of all He chose us!
- Secondly the Father has predetermined our position as sons and daughters.
- Thirdly the Father granted grace for His beloved one.

If people are still lost nowadays, it is not because they were not chosen. They are lost because they are sinners and are pleased with it. It is because they chose that way and do not want to leave it behind. Because the free will of a man will never be altered by God's choice. The lost ones have to make that decision themselves. God never calls someone to get lost. Therefore if they are lost, it is only because they have rejected God's help, salvation and healing. God has provided salvation for all of us.

He redeemed us, for the praise of His glorious grace that He bestowed upon us in the Beloved.

Our whole life and being is predestined for the praise of God. Therefore Paul sings this great praise, this wonderful psalm of praise. All is based on His grace and the goal is **the glory of God alone**.

God has redeemed you in Christ. God has created a plan of salvation, a plan that aims to redeem the separation between God and man, to adopt us into the fellowship of the living God. In Jesus we experience the fullness of God's grace. All has been provided in order for us to live in communion with God. Do we understand what this means for us? Can we understand what God has bestowed upon us?

That which was hidden in the counsel of God became historical truth in the coming of His son. God's work of salvation was made flesh in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. People could see, touch and hear Him. God has turned to us so that we can touch and feel Him. God revealed Himself and made Himself known to us because He wants to be one with all of us.

What started in a manger in Bethlehem was finished at the cross of Golgotha. God's grace is abundant or how the psalmist said: „You drench the plowed ground with rain." (Ps. 65,10). God has paid for our guilt and our sins are forgiven once and forever. But even though God has done everything for us, there is one thing that he will not do for us: we ourselves have to accept faith and trust personally. This is a challenge for all of us and no body can take on this duty on our behalf.

Eph. 1,7+8 - **In Him we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins** according to the riches of His grace **that He has bestowed upon us in all wisdom and knowledge. Here we are confronted with two important Christian terminologies.**

1. There is the **term of redemption or deliverance**, for redemption means deliverance from our positions of bondage (Col. 1,14). The New Testament term for redemption in Mk. 10,45 explains that it is about redemption of sin, just as in Hebr. 9,14+15. Thus it is the work of Christ that has delivered the believer from the bondage of sin.

2. And then there is the **term of forgiveness**.

Because of the Jews, their different way of life, their laws and the Old Testament the world knew about the sinfulness of man. 700 b.C. even Hesiod stated: „People find pleasure in things which are their road to perdition". Many Greek tragedies were based on the principle: the guilty ones, the one who acted is the one who must suffer. If someone did sth evil he would be persecuted by the god of revenge and he could never escape. All knew the old saying. The one who sins must die (Hes. 18,4). It was always clear that God of the gods of other religions did not tolerate sin, they requested sacrifice. The people of that time knew that he was sold to sin and bound to it. But Christ came to pay the price for the freedom of mankind. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said: „Whom the Son sets free is free indeed" (Joh. 8,36). This redemption was realised in the blood, for this was the price He paid (1.Petr. 1,18/ Hebr. 9,22). **Forgiveness is depending on the shed of blood**. The death of Christ and the shedding of His blood is the ultimate prerequisite of redemption for without payment there is no forgiveness.

Forgiveness according to the riches of His grace. Six times Paul speaks of this „riches of God" in Ephesians: Ch.1,7+18/ 2,4+7/ 3,8+16. Only the grace of God enables the believer to understand His will. This secret cannot be discovered by the help of human means. It is always a result of the revelation of God. God has to open our eyes for Him and His works.

In the New Testament alone there are 11 secrets mentioned to us:

1. the secrets of heaven (Mt. 13,3-50);
2. the secret of Israel's blindness at that time (Rom. 11,25)

3. the secret of the rapture of the Christians living in the last time (1.Cor. 15,51f./ 1.Thess. 4,13-17);
4. the secret of the New Testament churches as a body consisting of Jews and Gentiles alike (Eph. 3,1-12/ Rom. 16,25/ Eph. 6,19/ Kol. 4,3);
5. the secret of the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5,23-32);
6. the secret of Christ living in us (Gal. 2,20/ Col. 1,26f.);
7. the secret of God which is Christ, that means Christ came in the fullness of a living God in the shape of men in whom dwelt the wisdom of God for mankind (1.Cor. 2,7/ Col. 2,2+9);
- 11) the secret of the process where the image of God is restored to man (1.Tim. 3,16);
9. the secret of unrighteousness (2.Thess. 2,7/ Mt. 13,33);
10. the secret of the seven stars (Rev. 1,20) and
11. the secret of Babylon (Rev. 17,5+7).

There are **three wonderful things that Christ did for us:**

- He redeemed us through His blood;
- He revealed the secret of His will;
- And He rewards us with a heritage.

The next thing Paul is praising is relating to the work of the Holy Spirit. God sealed Christ with the Holy Spirit.

The holy spirit gives us assurance in our faith. Paul said: God has given you His spirit. HE is the pledge, the „down payment“ of that which was promised and is yet to come. God has made his promise a reality – to pour out His spirit on all flesh (Joel 3,1/ Act. 2,17ff.). And even though we know about this promise and Pentecost we keep wondering when we have received the spirit? The craziest theories were developed to explain this event and some are still a rumor today.

According to the bible everybody who was born again and can call the Lord “Lord” has received the holy spirit. No one can call Jesus “Lord” without the holy spirit (2.Cor. 3,17/1.Cor. 12,3). The holy spirit was poured out for the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles (Ac. 2/ 8,14-17/ 10). There will not be another outpouring of the holy spirit. Whenever it speaks of the coming of the holy spirit it is dealing with the **reception** of the holy spirit (Act.19,2).

„In Him you also were sealed with the holy spirit of promise the moment you received the faith.“ This means that they were sealed the moment they heard and believed: all of this happened at the same time. A more exact translation would be: “When you heard the word of truth: the good news of your salvation, in which you believed, you were sealed with the holy spirit of promise.” God the Father and the Son both sent out the holy spirit to do a certain work, but it is the spirit who accomplished that work. He provides a new birth to the sinner and seals him at the same time. I think that the holy spirit is that seal. This is the moment when the baptism of the holy spirit takes place. They were baptised the moment they trusted Christ. This is also the seal. At first the holy spirit opens the ears to hear, and then He produces faith. The next logical process is to seal the believer.

„But whoever receives it, confirms that God is real“ (Joh. 3,33). This seems to be the main thread. God has imparted sth into the believer. The second purpose is to mark the rightful owner. But God’s truth stand firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his. And all who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil” (2.Tim. 2,19).

Sealed with the holy spirit. This seal belongs to the full equipment of the saints for the present time. (Eph. 1,13+14/ 2.Cor. 1,21+22). *„After you have heard the truth, the gospel of your salvation you are in Him when you have believed and you were sealed with the spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our heritage until the redemption of the purchased possession at the price of His glory ... god has sealed us and has placed the pledge of the spirit in our hearts.“* This does not speak about anything **we have to do**, but what **God Himself has done**. We are used to stand on our own experiences and emotions instead of standing on the word of God.

Sealing is an official confirmation or assurance. an approval or accreditation. In addition it has the meaning of hiding and closing, keeping a secret and concealing. Through the holy spirit we receive a testimony that is valid. It is something like a receipt (a stamp) that is valid before God and He acknowledges it (Rom. 4,11/ 2.Tim. 2,19). A document without a stamp has no value.

A person truly moved by God may know and believe that he was purchased by Christ, redeemed through His blood and sealed by the holy spirit.

The seal of the holy spirit is a sign of assurance. It seals the value of a thing or a person.

We read for example, that God has sealed His son (Joh. 6,27). In relation to that (Vers 26-29) we see that the Lord opposes the perishing, earthly food with the eternal, heavenly food. Because He was sealed by the Father He is able to provide material things with Divine authority and produce eternal works. The Son whom the Father sealed with Divine authority can offer all kind of food that will remain for eternal live. He helps us to let God work through our faith in Him (Joh. 6,29). Due to the Divine seal He has authority in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28,18). He did not only have authority over the unclean spirits but also gave authority to His disciples (Mark. 6,7/ Luk. 9,1). He had the authority to forgive sin (Luk. 5,24). He has authority over all flesh to render eternal live to all (Joh. 17,2), yes, he even gave His disciples authority over all of the power of his enemy" (Luk. 10,19). All of this authority owns and releases the Son whom was Himself sealed by the Father. But not only the Son and the sons are sealed and therefore given authority by grace – also angelic forces bear the seal of God in order to enforce their terrible assignments of judgment at the assigned place and hour, which was determined by God's wisdom righteousness and holiness (Rev. 7,1-3 - „Do not destroy the earth nor the sea nor the trees until we have sealed the foreheads of the servants of God"). Therefore there must also be a seal of angelic power besides the seal that the church experiences through the holy spirit.

The sealed ones carry a sign of sanctity. Whoever opens a sealed letter or package receives a severe punishment (Dan. 6,18/ 2.Tim. 4,17/ Hebr. 11,33/ Mat. 27,66). How much more does this apply to the invisible world, Rev. 5,1-5: no being was able to read the sealed book of God, nobody was even able to look at it. When even God's sealed book is sanctified, how much more are the people bearing the seal of God (Rev. 9,3), which is the church sealed by the holy spirit, also called the body of Christ. Therefore we are hidden in Christ and sealed by His spirit. Untouchable for the enemy! As members of the body of Christ we have the same heritage as the head. This is something extraordinarily great and powerful. The indwelling holy spirit that was poured out into our hearts by His love (Rom. 5,5), is a downpayment or a promise of our heritage. This means that we already own and enjoy all things in the spirit. Things that we will truly have and be after the rapture with our Lord. Those riches of Christ is inexorable and immeasurable. In this world of pretense and vanity we are able to own things that are eternal, divine and real – all because we are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ.

In Eph. 1,14 we see that we have received the downpayment of the holy spirit „into redemption“ or for the sake of redemption or „until redemption“ until we will receive all of the fullness (Eph. 3,19 / 4,30). The sealing also means a retention until the great day when also our bodies will be filled and transfigured. Now we are still sealed. But then we will be open, revealed and our inner man will become visible, the way we truly are. If the church of the believers (as different as they may be in their forms and doctrines) would reach out for the high goals of salvation, like it is displayed in the fullness of Paul's good news (Eph. 4,11-16/ 1.Cor. 4,1/ Eph. 3,19/ Col. 1,9-20), it could be protected from temptation, commotion and tribulations.

The holy spirit as the pledge (Amount of money that is paid in advance to grant assurance.) It means that something is reserved for someone. It also means that you promise to let more money follow to complete the payment.

Eph. 1,11-14 – The access to the church.

To become a part of the universal church it requires repentance (faith and new birth) and baptism. The access to a church in the New Testament always happened in connection with baptism which was exercised immediately when someone received the faith (Act. 2,41). **Whoever received the faith was immediately baptised and added to the church.** In the New Testament there was no repentance without baptism. Baptism was the completion of repentance and the covenant of righteousness with God.

Therefore we could say that baptism is the access to the church in the New Testament. The bible only knows baptism that is exercised based on faith. According to the NT we could say that all who believed were baptised and belonged to a church.

Thoughts about baptism:

- „Baptism and to baptize“ – is mentioned many times in the NT „baptism“ 20 times and „to baptize“ 78 times
- The Greek word that is translated „to baptize“ originates from the word „baptizo“. It means to „dip in, immerse, dye.“ This word is a terminology of handicraft and was used to describe a process of dying / staining.

The meaning of baptism:

- It is the outward washing away of sins, represents the death of the old natural man and expresses the inner change and transformation, etc (Act. 2,38/ Act. 22,16/ 1.Petr. 3,2Rev./ Rom. 8,4-11/ Gal. 2,20/ Rom. 6,6-11). The baptism, the bath of reincarnation and the sign of the renewal in spirit (Tit. 3,5).
- An expression of faith (Act. 9,17/ 8,38/ 10,44-48/ 16,33/ 2,41).
- An identification with Jesus (buried and risen) (1.Petr. 3,18ff./ Rom. 6,1-4/ Col. 2,8-13).
- We become a part of Jesus' body (1.Cor. 12,13/ Act. 2,41).
- It is the visible confession to our Lord Jesus Christ (Act. 19,1-7/ Act. 22,16a).
- The biblical baptism according to Hosea 2,21+22 is some kind of proposal from God to us: I want to be engaged with you for eternity...“ Our relationship with Jesus Christ can be compared with a marriage (2.Cor. 11,2/ Eph. 5,25-32).
- Baptism is an act of obedience and a conscious taking off of the old man and putting on the new man (Gal. 3,26+27/ Col. 3,9+10). Jesus Himself advised us to baptize (Mark. 16,16).

In Eph. 4,4-6 Paul emphasizes that God only acknowledges one kind of baptism, the one that is exclusively connected to the resurrection of Christ which is symbolized by the immersion. Jesus said to Nicodemus: „If someone is not born of water and spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God“ (Joh. 3,5).

Therefore in Act. 19,1-7 we find another example of baptism of some disciples who only received the **baptism of John.** Even though there were already baptized with water (but the immersion with water alone does not count before God) and therefore they would also receive the baptism of the Lord Jesus “God the Saviour” because it is not only about the right form but also about the right content.

As a result of obedience the holy spirit came upon them and equipped them with gifts. Also Peter's call at the day of Pentecost was: **„Repent now and become baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, let His name be called over you and confess Him. Then God will forgive your sins and also give you His spirit.“** (Act. 2,38). It is very likely that those were already baptized by John (s. Mat. 3,5-7) or received the **„Proselyte-baptism“** (Act. 2,5-11). However, this baptism was not acknowledged by the holy spirit, they had to be baptized again Act. 2,14 – **But those who received this word were baptized.** They also had to confess Jesus in public, not only the Father and the holy spirit. Because **„God Father“** and **„God holy spirit“**, were already known and accepted in Judaism. The Jews (also the ones in Ephesus) still lacked the confession of **„God Son“** (Jesus) and His accomplished work of salvation.

Eph. 1,1-14 – Through Jesus the church was very „rich“. In Act. 19 and 20 we see the creation and development of the church in Ephesus. The message and the ministry of Paul were accompanied by mighty signs and wonders. It even went thus far that some people used the clothes and garments of Paul and layed it on the sick and they were healed. Some spiritual healers (sons of the highpriest saphiras) tried to do the same but it did not work.

Eph. 1,15-23 – Intercession for the church.

A remark of Eph. 1,15 caught our attention. Paul expresses how **he only heard of their faith.** And in Eph. 3,2 it seems as if the recipients might have heard about his ministry. Such expressions are impossible considering that he has worked in Ephesus quite a long time. Or the church has grown to such an extent, that there are so many newly converted that he cannot speak to them in a familiar way. Maybe the second part (Vers 15) explains the reason for his intercession, that God may help them to receive strength and power by His spirit.

Eph. 1,16 – Therefore I cannot stop to give thanks for you and consider you in my prayer...

Here we see Paul as an extraordinary intercessor. According to the report of Luke in the book of Acts Paul cried with the believers of Ephesus when he departed. He loved them and they loved him.

Eph. 1,17 - ...so that He may give you the spirit of wisdom and knowledge to know Him

Philosophers say: **Know yourself!** But Christianity says: **Know God through Christ!**

The purpose of wisdom and revelation is that Christians may know God. This knowledge is not an abstract knowledge of God or the knowledge of objective truths about Him, but rather the foundational, personal and intimate relationship with Him, the knowledge of His attributes and His will.

Eph. 2,1-10 – The past and the future of the church.

People who are not born again are dead by trespasses and sin (Col. 2,13). Their death is spiritual and not physical, because physically the ones who are not saved are very alive. The death they suffer is that they cannot have communion with the living. It says whoever is spiritually dead cannot have communion with God because he is separated from God (Rom. 5,12/ 7,10). Sin is the failure of man in all areas of life.

In Verses 1 to 7 Paul describes what God has already done for us, He made us alive (V. 5), rose us from the dead (V. 6) and seated us (V. 6). In the verses 1 – 3 it deals with the condition of the unbeliever before God transforms them. Paul says that the people are already dead in their sins because sin has a deadly power on earth.

„You were dead in your sins and trespasses, in which we lived earlier – the ways of this world / in the spirit of this world, the principles of this world, etc. The **„World”** does not refer to the physical universe. It is rather about the cosmos, society, culture, life pattern or life style of the present world. The devil is working with dead material, which also included us since we were dead in sins and trespasses he was the one providing for our energy.

Eph. 2,3 - „All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclination of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.“

The consequences of sin are disastrous and deadly:

- **Sin destroy the innocence of man.** As soon as someone sins, he is not the same as before. From psychology we know that man is literally not able to forget. Therefore it is subsequent that sin leaves a longlasting impression upon man. Sin has an effect on people: It kills their innocence. If innocence is lost it cannot be retained again.
- **Sin destroys our ideals.** In the life of many people we can notice a sad process. At first they observe the evil with disgust, then follows the level of temptation. But even at the point of surrendering to the temptation they are sad and ashamed, knowing that it is wrong.
- We reach the next level when we have done something evil so many times that our conscience does no longer rebuke us. The power of sin is that **every sin makes it easier to sin again**. Who gives in to sin is more likely to sin again and again. Every sin, every failure, every compromise leads us one step further on this path until we stop aiming at divine ideals. **Sin is some kind of suicide**, because it kills our divine destination which makes our life worth living.
- **Eventually sin kills the will of man.** In the beginning man chooses forbidden pleasure for fun. But in the end we become so addicted to those things that we cannot do without them. If we have developed a habit it becomes an addiction we cannot flee from. Our own will no longer has power over us.

Therefore the condition of a **person who is not born again** is analyzed like this:

1) **He is conformed to this world and follows after its ways.** Unbelievers live their lives according to the standards of other unbelievers and submit to the pressure of this world, an organized system from Satan that hates everything that fears God and resists him (Joh. 15,18+23).

2) **They follow the prince of the air**, which is Satan. The whole world is troubled (1.Joh. 5,19), because it is subject to the god of this world (2.Cor. 4,4). In the time of affliction he will be cast away and this will be the end of his reign, for he will no longer have access to God (Rev. 12,9). The ones who are not yet saved are in the claws of this ruler and they follow his rebellion against God.

3) Satan is tempting them to disobedience, pride, rebellion against God, etc. (1.Joh. 5,18). Satan is an impersonal power of the air who is trying to control people’s minds. In the terminology „children of disobedience“ a certain character trait is expressed. A son of disobedience is someone who consciously disobeys. The Greek term for disobedience (Rom. 11,30+32/ Eph. 2,2/ 5, 6/ Hebr. 4,6+11) is referring to conscious and active rebellion against God.

But the unbelievers are not only subject to the pressure of this world and the control of Satan, they also rejoice in this condition and enjoy their wrong doing and thinking (Rom. 1,21).

Eph. 2,19 - „You are no longer strangers or foreigners but citizens along with all of God’s holy people.“

We are all part of it, one household, one circle, one fellowship, partakers of God’s great house. This is what God wanted from the beginning: one mankind, one family, one church. The love of God creates a different level of living together. Just like the Christians owned all things together, they were one heart and one soul“ (Act. 2,42-47). All who received God also belonged to God.

Nobody can claim God for his own, He is father for all who are children. Communion with God leads us to brotherly fellowship with other people. In a house one rock supports the other because they are placed one on the other. The one supporting another is also supported by another. This way every one in the church of Jesus supports others and is supported by Him.

Eph. 3,1-13 – The secret of the church.

The first verse of this Chapter is an uncomplete sentence that is suddenly discontinued. It is concluded in vers 14. There the same word „therefore“ is used. It is relating to the former context. The eternal plan of salvation of God and the work of salvation of Jesus (Ch. 1). He describes how spiritually dead Gentiles and spiritually dead Jews are saved in Christ and put together in an community of equal rights so that they can be connected with an in Christ as a new people of God (Eph. 2). This seems to inspire Paul's prayer for those who have already come to faith to discover the whole miracle of the relationship with God and the church.

Paul calls Himself a „**prisoner of Christ Jesus**“ What does he mean by that? A prisoner of Christ. The cause of his imprisonment is Jesus, the ministry for Him and His message. He is a prisoner through Jesus Christ or for the sake of Jesus Christ. Not Jews or Romans but Christ and His assignment brought him to prison. He was obviously imprisoned for 2 years in Caesarea. Jews from the Province Asia to which Ephesus belonged, blamed him for preaching against Judaism (against the people and the law) on his mission journeys and even took a Gentile to the inner court of the temple (Act 21,28).

Information: The temple had an outer court where access was permitted to Non-Jews also. At the transitions from the outer to the inner court there were huge warning signs in Hebrew and Greek language. It threatened the Gentiles with the penalty of death if they would enter the inner court. This was the only exception that the Romans would allow the Jews to execute the death penalty. Paul was specifically blamed for taking the Greek Trophimus of Ephesus to the inner court. This would have had tragical consequences. The temple would have been defiled and the great feast of Pentecost would have to be cancelled. Instead celebrating they would have to fast. In the book of Acts it says that Paul just went to town with him (Act. 21,29). Trophimus was probably supposed to bring the offering of Ephesus (1. Cor. 16,2) to the church of Jerusalem.

The keyword „**to you, the nations**“ could be the expression that Paul was aware that not all of them might know about his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles. Therefore he began with a kind of explanation of this important background. He disrupts his original Introduction to his prayer to explain his field of mission first.

Eph. 3,2 – Assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me a special responsibility of extending His grace to you, the Gentiles. At this point he is speaking about the grace of God. It is the simple plan of salvation to bring back to fellowship with God, the fallen mankind that was separated from God after the Fall of Man.

The history of salvation as an advancing revelation! And Paul had a special assignment – especially regarding the Non-Jews. He was assigned by God Himself.

The Jews would not pronounce the name of God but would describe Him like Paul does hier. Paul knew this very well and considered it. The Gentiles, the Non-Jews, were originally excluded from the promises. The only access to the promises was to become a Jew. But for a Non-Jew this was a hard thing to do. Some rabbis claimed that you would have to submit your request in public three times before you would be accepted as a Jew. In the later developments there was a tendency not to allow any conversion to Judaism at all. When Peter hesitates to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10 we can tell that there was a severe separation between the Jews and the Gentiles/ Non-Jews. For us this is hard to understand nowadays.

Eph. 3,3 – As I wrote to you earlier God Himself revealed this mysterious plan to me. In a personal revelation Jesus crossed Paul's way and assigned him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. This was Evangelium zu bringen. Back then this was outrageous – almost impossible.

Eph. 3,4 – As you will read what I have written you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ... This is referring to the former Chapter. According to Eph. 1,10 it is all about everything is in Christ. This also includes the Jews and the Gentiles who both received faith by grace and are therefore a group where everyone has equal rights. Together they establish something completely new: the church!

Eph. 3,5 - God did not reveal it to previous generation, but now by His spirit He has revealed it to His apostles and prophetspheten durch den Geist geoffenbart worden ist. This secret hat just been hidden until that time. At that time it was revealed by Jesus to „His“ (i.e. Peter and Paul) and the ancient prophets, that the Gentiles would one day turn to the Messiah and follow after the people of God (Jes. 2,2ff.),

which was proclaimed by the old prophets. But that the church, a new people of God, would consist of all was a **sensation**, totally unimaginable. This **new chapter of salvation** was revealed to Paul by the holy spirit (Jesus) on his road to Damascus.

Eph. 3,6 – Both Gentiles and Jews who believe that Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children, both are a part of the same body and both enjoy the promise of blessing because they belong to Christ Jesus... three times „both“ explains the new thing. Along with the Jews the Gentiles will be **co-heirs, part of the body and part-takers** in the promise in Christ through the gospel (i.e. Mission assignment in Mt. 28,19 - „turn all the nations – all people into disciples). Using the word „both“ three times strongly opposes the mindset of the rabbis and the Talmud, that a Gentile would have to ask **three times** in order to become a Jew. Through Jesus he becomes a part of God's body.

Eph. 3,7 – By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving Him by spreading the good news. Well Paul has not always been a servant of the gospel. On the opposite, he was a radical persecutor of Christians, also ready to **kill** (Act. 9,1). But God encountered him in all of His love and grace. And after his experience on his road to Damascus he was no longer living according to his own strength but with a consciousness of his limits and the reviving strength of the holy spirit.

Eph. 3,8 – Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles of the endless treasures available in Christ... Since he had persecuted the Christians and carried this in his conscience for the rest of his life, he called himself the least of all the saints (1.Cor. 15,9 - „the least of the apostles, ... for I have persecuted the church of Jesus“) In vers 8 Paul calls himself the **„least of all God's people“**, or: „I thank our Lord Jesus Christ who strengthened me and considered me faithful enough entrust me with this ministry. I who was a blasphemer, persecutor and sinner, but I have found grace because I did not know what I was doing“ (1.Tim. 1,12f.). Paul always considered himself a person enjoying a **double privilege**: on one hand the privilege of knowledge that according to God's counsel all people were supposed to take part in the secret of His grace and love. On the other hand, to proclaim this secret to the church and be the tool to deliver this message of grace to the Gentiles. The awareness of this **double privilege** did not make him proud, on the contrary it filled him with deep humility. He was amazed that this privilege was granted to him, the least of the children of God. So after that powerful revolution of Paul's life, he was chosen to proclaim the inexorable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. In the history of salvation Paul started the era of missions and church planting.

Eph. 3,9 – to explain the mysterious plan that God had kept secret from the beginning,... Paul was given the overwhelming assignment to not only proclaim the message but also to minister according to this assignment.

Eph. 3,10 – God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display His wisdom to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places,... Interpreters are on one accord that this deals with unseen, evil, demonic powers. To assume that the terms rulers (or princes) and authorities describe a hierarchy of the demonic world is a bit over the top. But one thing is clear: There seems to be an essential mission for the church to oppose this evil, demonic world.

The church is the wisdom and the secret of God. Paul says in 1.Cor. 1,27: „God chose the things the world considers foolish to shame those who think they are wise“. He was supposed to make known **the wisdom of God**. According to 1.Cor. 1,27 this wisdom does not have much to do with human strength or intellectual abilities but with the grace of God and the openness to receive His gifts.

From the beginning God's plan and His counsel concerning all people was to save them and extend the gospel to all of them. Many Christians misunderstand that and display a wrong story of Christianity. They make it seem like the gospel was only carried to the Gentiles **because the Jews were not ready to receive it**. But Paul reminds us that the salvation of the Gentiles, our salvation, **was not a late idea of God**. It was **not a plan B**, only because the Jews did not follow His call and rejected the gospel, but it was always **His eternal plan from the beginning** to give His love to all.

Eph. 3,11 – this was His eternal plan which He carried out through His son Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus **the goal of Paul's ministry was** to make this divine purpose known to all the world. The manifold wisdom of God does not speak of redemption but of a **new relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers in one body**.

The mediator to spread this wisdom is **the church**. Her message is targeting the powers and authorities in heaven, too. These rulers and authorities also applies to good and evil angels according to Eph. 6,12. **The perspective of unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians** in one body forces them to acknowledge the wisdom of God. The secret that Jewish and Gentile Christians are one (Eph. 3,6) was revealed to the apostels and prophets (V. 5) and proclaimed by Paul (V. 7- 9). **The goal of this unity is also to prove the manifold wisdom of God to the angelic world.** This also applies to the eternal plan of God that He carried out through Jesus Christ, our Lord (V. 11). This means that either God is still excercising His eternal plan now or that He has already finished it 2000 years ago in Christ. The latter interpretation must be preferred because

(a) the tense **finished** in the Greek is imperfect and not present or perfect tense. And

(b) the unity of the Jewish and Gentile Christians was indeed **already accomplished** in the death of Jesus Christ.

Eph. 3,12 – In Him we obtain boldness and assurance in our faith in Him. This verse is relating to 2 aspects of our relationship:

•**boldness** is the freedom to speak openly about Jesus and God in public.

•**Assurance** and confidence by faith is related to God: this is about access and connection to God as our Father.

By faith in Christ all Christians have the right to turn to God with confidence, that means with boldness or even courage (Hebr. 3,6/ 4,16/ 10,19+35) and they are allowed to draw close to Him, they have access to HIM (Rom. 5,2)! Thus Paul dwells on **one of his favorite thoughts**. In Jesus we always have **free access to God**. It might occur that we have friends who are acquainted with a celebrity, but we could never approach them. Only our friend has the privilege and only in the presence of this friend we can have access to see that celebrity. The same thing Jesus does with us regarding God. When we are in His company the door to God is always open and nobody can close that door. This assurance still lasts today, after God has fulfilled his plan of salvation in Christ.

Eph. 3, 13 – So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored. „So“ is pointing to the content of Vers 12. Paul is well inspite of his captivity (keyword **boldness to evangelize** and undiluted fellowship with God). He emphasizes that inspite of personal difficulties he has not lost heart to continue this great assignment of God, and if necessary he is prepared to suffer on behalf of his ministry. Therefore he explains to the Ephesians that they should not be sad or discouraged, or think that the works of God are hindered by his captivity. He also takes away their fear that they could suffer the same thing. Paul reminds them that the tribulations he has to go through are an honor for them, because it is only for their best. They are supposed to know for sure that God is always in control, also when he is in prison. Then Paul prays that the unity between Jews and Gentile Christians that have found a new form in the body of Christ (Eph. 2,15) would become a reality here on earth. He wishes that the saints would truly understand the love of Christ, experience it themselves and also practice it among each other.

Eph. 3,14-21 – The riches of the church.

Paul wrote to the tired and exhausted believers. At first he reminds them what the church already is and has. The church has their God Father, who loves all people with all His heart. He is different then the moody gods of the Gentiles. He makes no difference in His care for His children. He does not look at our origin, etc.

Paul bows his knee before God the father, and this is what faith and the church still stand on: the bowed knees and the lifted hands“. The intercession and prayer are the **strong weapons of faith**.

Prayer is speaking with God. Paul is in prison and his hands are in chains. He cannot do anything for the Ephesians, **but to pray**. 'This is where Paul is relating to vers 1 again. He started a statement that he had not finished yet, but now he is coming back to it.

Therefore I bow - Why does he pray for them? This question leads us back to the core of this letter. **Paul lays down his thoughts about the church.**

The world is a chaotic place full of walls and seperation between the nations and the people, even within every single person. According to God's counsel they are supposed to fight against all the elements that are causing this disagreement. Jesus Christ is the tool of God that unites and holds all people in Him. But this can only be a reality when the church proclaims the message of Christ about the love of God to all people. **The church is and shall be the body through which the spirit of Christ acts and operates.** This is the reason why Paul prays. As we said before, the word „therefore“ is pointing back to (Eph. 2,11-22).

The topic is the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians who should become one on a whole new level. In addition to that it also refers to the first part of the letter where Paul spoke of the grace of God towards the Gentiles.

But if the church wants to practice this truth, the people in it must have certain attributes. That is why Paul asks them to act in such a way that the church can truly become the **body of Christ and the spirit could work and operate through them**. We also have to be aware of the expression that describe Paul during his prayer. It says: „I bow my knees before the Father.” It is not only speaking of kneeling down when Paul prays, but it also points out that he humbles himself before God on the inside. The **Jews usually prayed standing** with outstretched arms, their palms pointing above. But Paul is interceding with so much depth that he casts himself on the floor before God.

Paul is a great man of prayer. This is the second great prayer of Paul in this letter. When he saw the church as the work of God, the temple of the holy spirit, the secret of the ancient days – he prayed to God and asked Him to reveal this great truth to the saints in order for it to become a reality. But at this point he changes his position. He falls on his knees (his face). He takes on a very humbled position. He looks at the dust/the earth instead of to heaven.

I notice something else:

- Here Paul prays **in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God our Father**. In Eph. 1,17 he prayed to the **God of our Lord Jesus Christ** (Joh.16,23).
- **The prayers of Paul are always short and very precise.** Both prayers in Ephesians and Philippians are rather short. Yes, most of the prayers of scripture are short (Mat.6,7).
- **God is the Father of Jesus** (Eph. 1,3/ 1,17/ 6,23).
- **The letter of Ephesians makes different statements about God the Father**

There is the term of fatherhood in the biological sense.

The term fatherhood even plays a role if someone never saw his father, for example when a child is adopted right after the birth. Even if the father never gets to see the child, he is still the father of the child and responsible because he was involved in the process of creation. When it comes to the term **spiritual relationship** fatherhood means love, fellowship and care.

Before Christ came into this world people used the word Father more in the sense of God of creation to whom we owe our existence. They were referring to God, the origin, the creator of all life. The love and intimacy that Jesus brought to the term was not yet contained in it. In the center of Christian faith is the thought that **God is like Jesus**. God is just as kind, loving and merciful like Jesus was. Paul did not only observe God as the ultimate God but he also saw the God Father of Jesus Christ. Therefore he referred to God in the same manner like Jesus did.

God is the father to whom we have access (Eph. 2,18/ 3,12). On the opposite in the Old Testament He was always someone man had no access to. When Manoah, the father of Samson became aware who had come to their house he said: We must die, for we have seen God (Judges 13,22). According to Jewish statutes God lived in the holiest of holies in the temple where only the highpriest was allowed to enter. And even he could only enter once a year, the day of celebration. **The way to God was basically closed for human beings**. The fact that people **have free access to God** is the heart of the New Testament and the new faith. It is the essence of Christian faith, that we have unlimited access to God.

God is the father of all, the father of all glory (Eph. 3,14). This is the other side of God. We are not supposed to overlook Holiness and glory. The father whom we can access is not a benevolent phlegmatic and dreamy father. He is the God of glory. He welcomes the sinner, but not the sin and their former old ways of life. God will never tolerate sin. God is holy and if you want to be his friend you must also be holy. The right of free access to God does not entitle us to do or be however we like. We are advised to prove worthy of this privilege.

God is also the father of all (Eph. 4,6). God is never owns just one man, one church or one people. **The Jews had this fatal misconception**. But God is the father of all. Therefore it is wrong to claim exclusiveness. And from this fact that He is God Father of all people it is subsequent that we should **love and honor one another**.

God is the Father whom we should give thanks (Eph. 6,20). The people owe God gratitude as their Father. It is totally wrong if we only regard God as the helper in difficult situations of our life.

We should never forget that we owe to God not only the salvation of our souls but also our life and our daily bread and all other things. God is the „Father of fatherhood“ (every fatherhood originated from Him).

And God is also the role model of true father love. Paul said that God is the rightful father of all that is called children in heaven and on earth. All heavenly and earthly fatherhood is according His image. This means that true fatherhood is always connected with great responsibility. And we should not miss to teach our children to call God their father. We are the only ones to convey to them what it means to be a father. Our human image of a father should line up with God the father. All fathers on this earth are responsible to be a father like God is a father to all of us.

Eph. 4,1 bis 6,20 – Exhorting, practical part!

In Chapter 4 the practical side of church and their attributes is described. 'The church is displayed as the „new man“. 'She is supposed to present herself in such a way that the invisible parts of the body of Christ can be seen through her. She is supposed to spread the word of God reliably, visibly and expressly.

Paul is only speaking to those who are in Christ. The ones who have been saved and born again by the spirit of God. A dead man has to become alive to be a part of the body of Christ. Only the living can receive guidance from the spirit of God and receive assignments from Him. The dead are immovable and not able. Only the living are able to act.

This is the unity that God already established:

- 1) one body (with one head)
- 2) one spirit
- 3) one hope (Rom. 8,23-25/ 1.Thess. 4,13-17);
- 4) one Lord (who reigns over all);
- 5) one believe (that saves);
- 6) one baptism (sealing salvation);
- 7) one God and Father (over, through and in all!).

Three times it says „given“ (Eph. 4):

- To each grace was given (Vers 7).
- People were given gifts by Him (Vers 8).
- He „gave“ some to be apostles, some prophets, etc. (Vers 11).

The reason and purpose of those gifts.

The measure is the gift of Christ. In Christ God all gifted us equally. God gives the different gifts of ministry to the church to equip all for their specific work and for the right order (Gal. 6,11) and to establish the body of Christ. The goal of such an armor and establishment is to teach the believers the unity, maturity, faith and knowledge in Christ and to help them understand who they are in Christ.

The body of Christ is growing by mutual encouragement of all the members (believers) who have been brought together and are connected with each other in order to complement one another in love. As well as in the metabolism of our body, also the body of Christ will grow by exchange of living cells

Definition of the different ministries

a) Apostel: They are messengers = they were appointed by God (Gal. 1,1), the direct extension of the leadership of God and this is not only limited to the 12 (Act. 21,10-14).

b) Prophets: They are the bearers of divine speech concerning the church or in general, no leadership office (Agabus; Act. 11,27-30/ 21,10-14).

c) Evangelists: They spread the good news, not necessary an office bearing leadership or further responsibility (Philippus; Act. 8+21).

d) Shepherds and the local leadership of the church: this applies to the elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers (1.Tim.5,17/ Act. 20,17+28 - overseer/ Hebr. 13,7+17- leaders).

e) Teacher: They are the extension of the leadership and instruct believers on a local level (Hebr. 13,7+17/ 1.Tim. 5,17/ Tit. 1,5).

The different ministries sometimes blend in smoothly. Some have special assignments or an emphasis on a certain matter. Some ministries are limited in time or just a onetime occasion. It just happens according to the gifts of the holy spirit and depending on situations or necessities within the church. There is no firm scheme and no firm structure. Nobody can claim any of those offices. It is all by grace and depending on the work of the holy spirit. Only Jesus fulfilled all of those offices at the same time. If someone is truly in Christ he will also be able to minister according to time, need and occasion.

Eph. 4,1-16 – Unity through the spirit. Only people who are born again and renewed by the spirit can **„live worthy of their calling“**.

Paul encourages the Ephesians, based on Chapters 1 – 3, to lead a life **pleasing to God**. The word for „worthy“ means as much as „equal“ which means **the calling and the attitude of a believer should be in harmony**, whereas calling is not only referring to the salvation of the believer (Rom. 1, 56/ 1.Cor. 1,9), but at the same time **also their unity in the body**. **The attitude** of a Christian does not only influence his own personal life but he is also responsible towards his brethren of faith.

We should live worthy of our calling. It is a call to live on a level that applies to our position in Christ. *„Walk worthy of the gospel of Christ so that, no matter if I come to see you or am absent and only hear from you, you would be of one spirit – fighting with us the war of faith of the gospel“* (Phil. 1,27). In another part Paul wrote: *„that you may live worthy of the Lord and please him in all things, bearing fruits of every good work and grow in the knowledge of God“* (Col. 1,10). As an example for Christian life Paul is pointing to his own life: *„You and God are witnesses how devout, honest and faultless we were toward all of you believers“* (1.Thess. 2,10). Paul is asking us to live worthy of the gospel (1.Joh. 1,7). If we want to live in fellowship with God we have to live in **the light of God's word**.

Eph. 4.2-3 describes how we can practice humility, in submission, denial of ourself, devoted and in obedience. The things Paul preached to others he also practiced. In spite of his high education, family background and spiritual experiences, he always remained humble.

Five important attributes of Christian faith are mentioned and dealt with:

The first Christian virtue is HUMILITY

Christianity brought up the true meaning of this term. In the Greek language there was not even a word for humility before. In the Pre-Christian era humility was not even considered a virtue. It was rather an attribute of submission and humiliation. It was despised and rather no attribute that was considered desirable. It was humiliation in the sense of slavery, without honor and prestige – lowliness. An adjective was used that also referred to creepers. Therefore humility was an attribute of slaves before the Christian era began. Christianity made humility a great virtue because of many reasons: Christian **humility is based on self knowledge**. To face oneself can be very humiliating. Most of the people think of themselves higher than they should. They consider themselves the center of events. True humility can only be practised by someone who is critical of himself, acknowledges his weakness, ego and shortcomings. **Humility requires honesty**. Christian humility requires us to measure our life according to Jesus' life and see things in the light of God's expectation. God is perfect. To fulfill this perfection is not only difficult but also impossible for us. The reality of our human being is that we are facing a task that we cannot accomplish by ourselves. If we compare ourselves with the perfection of God we realize our infirmities and have to admit our failure. This makes us humble.

The second Christian virtue is KINDNESS

We could also call it goodness or gentleness. If you are able to temper your desire and passion, your thoughts, heart, soul and practice self-discipline is „kind“ according to the bible. This expresses that such a person is in perfect control of himself (discipline) and therefore is able to make room for God to move him. If you are led by God in such a way that you never get angry in the wrong moment, but you get angry in the appointed time of God – then you have died to yourself and your life is totally guided and controlled by God. This is life worthy of our calling. **Kindness is the exact opposite of ego, carelessness or harshness**. The word kindness carries a sense of discipline that has nothing to do with weakness. Kindness is the middleway between sensitivity and lethargy. A Christian who is controlled by God might still get angry at the right time. Moses, who was considered the most humble of all (Numb 12,3) still got very angry when the people of Israel sinned against God (Ex.32). And even Christ himself, the kindest and most humble man of all times (Mat.11, 29) got angry (Mat. 21,12+13) when He saw that the Jews were turning the temple into a marketplace.

The third Christian virtue is PATIENCE

This is a **spiritual attribute of people** who never give up, but always make it to the end and therefore harvest the reward and the promise. Christian patience grows from a spiritual attitude of courage that will not decrease in the face of misfortune or suffering, hindrances or disappointment. They endure until the end. As Christians we should grant our neighbors the same patience that God Himself grants us.

The believers should practise patience, a patience that never gives up and endures hard times till the end (Jam. 5,10). **This virtue is formed by discipline**, because it never seeks revenge for the unrighteousness it suffers (Gal. 5,22/ Col.1,11/ 3,12/ 2.Tim. 4,2).

Paul realized that attributes like humility, kindness, patience and love foster the unity among Christians and keep it up. Therefore their care for peace should move them to bear each other in love, even if there are some differences or difficulties here and there.

The fourth and most important attribute is LOVE.

The Christian love is something so new, that the authors of the Christian scripture found it necessary to add a new word, or rather introduce a word that was not usually used in the Greek language. It is the word agape. In the Greek there are four words for love. There is eros, which describes the amatory love between man and woman and also refers to the sexual attraction. Then there is the word philia, which deals with the affection of two people who are very close. Then there is the word storge, relating to the emotions between members of one family.

The New Testament uses the word agape, and describes the love of God, sometimes it is also used for loving your neighbor. Actually agape means merci that cannot be overthrown or also never ending good will. If you meet someone who is filled with agape, this would be someone who only wants the best for the other, no matter what he has done or will do. Also when the other person does you wrong, offends and hurts you you would still welcome that person with goodness and kindness. This clearly reveals that the Christian agape, the Christian love is not an emotion a temporary disposition.

The Christian love has nothing to do with being in love, and it also has nothing to do with the common love we feel for those who are close and love us back. The Christian agape is a matter of decision in your will and your emotions. It will not simply fall into our bosom, it wants to be purchased or gained. It is the ability of unshakeable good will, also towards unloveable people, yes even those who do not like us. **Agape is the strength** to love those we do not like. Agape is a result of a spiritual attitude which forces a Christian never to get bitter or seek revenge. Instead we should only wish the best for all people, no matter how they treat us.

The fifth virtue is PEACE. Paul gave this advice to his friends, yes he is almost urging them not to grow tired of holding on to the unity in the spirit, because this is the sign of a real church. This peace could be defined as the proper relationship between people. This unity, this peace, this proper relationship **can only be maintained in one way**. The precedent Christian virtues are all based on self-denial. As long as **Ego is in the center of attention**, as long as our personal emotions, our personal opinions are controlling us, this unity cannot be attained. **Ego kills peace**. In a community where **egoistic people are dominating**, there will be a group of single personalities who fight one another. But if the **ego man** dies and Christ is given permission to live inside of us, then we will be able to hold the peace, unity and loyalty will enter in – and those are attributes of a real church. Paul is encouraging us to **„bear one another.“** or in other words: **„Do all to maintain the unity in the spirit and the bond of peace.“** The Christians are not supposed to produce this peace, they are just supposed to maintain the „new man“ that God created (Eph. 2,15-16), through the bond of peace. The inner attitude of the believers is the most important thing and therefore Paul is naming those virtues that are significant for the turn around in the life of a Christian. Those virtues are the exact opposite of the virtues that were valued in the Greek culture (Phil. 2,6-8).

Eph. 4.17-24 – The transformation (lifestyle) of the new man.

When Jesus is the head of the whole body which is coming together and every member is depending on the others, all receive the impulses of life flowing from the head, the spiritual head quarter. This will provide the needed balance, because only this way all members can work in their function and position at the same time. All have to receive the spiritual provision from above. God made Christ the head of all, and we (Vers 12: „who have hoped in Christ“) are able to share in the main role of the head.

In **Eph. 4,17-19** Paul mentions the negative side of life. How it is if you are not depending on the head. It is important for us to see this. The believer lives according to new morals. The believer decides freely not sin anymore. Just like there is the **„power of positive thinking“** there is also the **„power of negative thinking“**. Paul gives some negative examples to the Ephesians to make them understand how they are not supposed to live. They were no longer supposed to **„live as the Gentiles“**.

He displays to them the life of Gentiles, how the Ephesians lived before their conversion (Eph. 2,11-12). They were far away from God, strangers with no hope and no God. They lived in their sin. And based on that he explains to them some characteristics of the Gentile lifestyle. Unbelievers spend their life with vain things and their mind is dark, because they do not know true life. Paul tells them why this is so: their hearts are hardened, as hard as stone. Therefore they were not able to receive the divine truth or even acknowledge God.

Their mind has blunted and the more they sin, the more they lose the feeling of doing sth wrong and give themselves to all kinds of self indulgences. They are not ashamed anymore and are not able to discipline themselves. All they care about is the satisfaction of their own desires and get whatever they want. Paul described this wicked way of life in such a terrible way, that people would finally lose their natural sense of shame and become greedy, unrighteous monsters. Eventually a demon takes possession of them so that they would sacrifice their neighbor without thinking twice – in order to get what they desire.

In the Gentile world, the world without Christ, Paul saw three major threats. First, the danger that the hearts of the people would become so hardened that they are no longer even aware of sin. Secondly, the danger that sin would have such power that they would lose even the natural sense of shame. Thirdly that people would even hurt others in their addiction and greed for the wicked things.

Eph. 4.20-27 – This is not how you know Christ.

There are not many parts in the bible where the ugliness of sin is described in such a way and people are urged to line up their lives according to divine statutes and not be conformed to this world.

Opposed to the „old man“ of the verses 17-19, the believers have not gotten to know Jesus this way. Their mind was no longer dark, their life no longer estranged from God, their hearts no longer hardened and unclean. They heard of Christ and were instructed in Him, just like it applies to the truth for Jesus is the truth (Joh. 14,6).

The content of this instruction was this:

1. A believer has taken off the old man with his former ways of life and the wicked desires (Eph. 4,17-19), because selfish desires are deceptive.

2. A believer has put on the new man who is created in the image of God, in true righteousness and holiness (V. 24). This truth builds a strong contrast to the treacherous behaviour of a man who lives his life according to his sinful desires (V. 14-15).

The believers are renewed in their spirit and mind; their thinking is no longer in vain, their mind no longer darkened and foolish (V. 18-19).

The believer is a new man in Christ and does no longer live like the Gentiles. This is where the opposite sides of Gentile and Christian life become clear. If someone won't listen to Jesus then Jesus cannot be the Saviour and helper of that person. Jesus said that He is the good shepherd and His sheep hear His voice.

The believer lives no longer like a Gentile. He will guard his thoughts, words, behaviour and relationships. He will not sin anymore. He will not tolerate unrighteousness and sin. He will no longer agree with evil things in his life. He will speak the truth and overcome evil with good. He is eager to have his life in order.

Eph. 5,1-21 – The careful transformation of the children of God. In this chapter Paul is suggesting that every Christians should follow after the same model of Jesus, because they are children of God. And just like a child is imitating its parents, the believer should imitate God (Mat. 5,48/ Luk. 6,36).

In this relation Paul also explains how this would look like:

• **The Christian will be like God, if he lives in the love** (s. 1.Joh. 3,16).

• Believers are not supposed to even talk about fornication, uncleanness, greed, idolatry of foolish things (Eph. 5,3-5)

Christianity is a religion of good virtues. The believer totally stands out from the unbelievers of their culture. What was natural to the Greek, was detestable to the Christians and they no longer conformed to it. If someone still willfully practises sin, this person is a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ. The ones who do not have a portion of the Kingdom and God are not yet washed, sanctified and made righteous according to 1.Cor. 6,9-11 which explains all of it. Eph. 5,7 says **„Therefore have nothing to do with them“.**

To Paul the Gentile life is a life in darkness, the Christian life is life in the light. In order for all to understand it he does not say that the Gentiles are children of darkness and the Christians children of light but he says the Gentiles are darkness and the Christians are light.

The believers are not supposed to become one with the Gentiles because they no longer belong to darkness like before (Joh. 1,5/ 3,19-20) but are now the light of the Lord (Mat. 5,14-16/ Joh. 3,21/ 8, 12/ Röm. 13,12/ 1.Thess. 5,4-5). They were delivered from darkness (Col.1,13). Since they now are in the Lord who is the light (Joh. 8,12), they have also become light. The result is to bear good fruits (Eph. 5,9).

Eph. 5,22-33 – Husband and wife – Christ and the church.

In Eph. 5,19-21 Paul named **four results** of the reception of the holy spirit.

- The first was relating to **the communication among the Christians**, which should be mutual encouragement with psalms and spirituals.
- The second is **the communication with the Lord** in songs and prayer.
- The third result of the holy spirit in us is **never ending thanksgiving to God the Father for all things**.
- And fourth the **spirit-filled believers are supposed to submit to each other**. That means they should be ready to minister to each other, obey one another and submit instead of attempting to gain leadership over others and exalt yourself.

We have to understand the time and its morals to know why Paul and the New Testament give such clear instructions concerning family and marriage which are totally different from the customs of the defiled Judaism and Paganism.

Eph. 5,22-24 – The things Paul tells the Ephesians about marriage was totally contrary to the culture of the Antique and also contrary to Judaism. The ancient world was totally wicked and without morals. Women were not highly esteemed. **At that time Jews also had a very low opinion of women in general**. In the Jewish morning prayer the men thanked God that he did not make them a Gentile, slave or woman.

Even the Jewish denied the women any rights in their laws. The doctrine of the rabbis was that women were not considered as an independent being according to Jewish right, but rather a subject/object. Women had no rights and were the possession of their husband. He could treat her however he wanted. Theoretically the Jews had a high opinion of marriage but they still did not respect the wives and children.

The rabbis made it very easy for a man to divorce his wife. The **rabbi Hillel** taught „the man has already reason to divorce his wife when the food is oversalted“, **Rabbi Akiba** taught: „...that a man has reason to divorce a wife when he is not pleased with her anymore, and meets a woman who is more appealing to him than the other. “. The wife had no right to ask for divorce at all. The right of divorce was only granted to the men.

According to Jewish right the woman was subject to the man, totally helpless and without protection. The emerging Christianity saved the woman and enhanced marriage. Back then many Jewish girls would not want to get married because of the position of a wife in her new household. The situation in the world was even worse. Prostitution was an established part of the Hellenistic culture. A common rule of their culture was: a hetaerae as girlfriend, a concubine to sleep with and wives to bear legitimate heirs and take care of the household. The women of the higher society of Greece lead a life away from the world and were excluded from cultural life. They did not participate in public life and never went out on the streets by themselves. They were also not allowed to eat with the men or participate in sociable events. They had their own room, where only their husband was allowed to enter. They were trying to keep the women from seeing and hearing and asking questions. The daughters of honorable households were trained for a marriage where there would be no friendship or mutual life. The man would do as he pleases and would be out of the house for most of the time. Companionship between man and woman was impossible according to Greek customs. The Greeks only expected their wives to lead the household and take care of the children.

The situation was even worse because there was no legal right for divorce. Divorce was solely depending on the mood of the husbands. The only protection a woman had was the condition that the man would have to restore the dowry to the woman in case he wanted to divorce her. The family life in Greece was very sad and a term for marital faithfulness did not exist.

In the days of Paul the family life was pretty shaken in Rome, the whole Empire, the Greek world and in Judaism. There was no faithfulness anymore. Marital covenants had become rare everywhere. And then Christianity emerged with a message of faithfulness and purity and honors/appreciates the covenant of marriage. It is a fact that children and especially women owe their current conditions to Christianity. The cleansing effect that Christianity had upon the family life of the ancient time, cannot be appreciated enough!

Here in the Epistle to the Ephesians Paul gives us insight into a marriage pleasing to God as a firm component of Christian life in the form of a lasting commitment.

The word „**submit**” must be understood the right way, when applied in this situation. Many have interpreted it the wrong way. It does not say: „**Wives obey YOUR husband.**” To submit is a very gentle word. It is a loving word. It means that the wife should react to her husband as unto the Lord. We welcome the Lord with love for He loved us first. And please notice that it says: „**your husband**”. The requirement for this submission is always a very personal and loving relationship. Paul is clearly speaking to the believers about how a Christian marriage was supposed to be. „**The husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the head of the church.**” Biblical submission is a relationship of love. But for the sake of order the man is supposed to be the head of his wife and his family (his house).

In this chapter there are so many different areas where it speaks about leadership for the sake of order.

- Wives are supposed to submit to their husbands
- The men are supposed to submit to Christ.
- The children should submit to their parents.
- Servants should submit to their lords.

It is supposed to be a healthy submission, a free submission of love. But this relates to a relationship, if there is no love the idea of submission would be in vain.

Many people read „**the wife is subject to the husband**“ or „the man is the head of the woman“ and then this is interpreted out of context. This part of scripture speaks about love (Eph. 5,25-32). The husbands are advised to: **Love their wife** (V. 33), just like Christ has loved the church. This means always to want the best for the other (Eph. 2,4). This true love is expressed in His sacrificial death on the cross, where He gave His life for the church (Joh.10,11+15+17+18/ Gal. 1,4/ Hebr. 9,14). This submission of the woman does not entitle the man to rule over her, because the relationship and submission in love should express a harmonious, Christian marriage.

God has never challenged a wife to submit to a man who does not love her and whom she does not love. This is Christian love on the highest level. Only a true Christian who is always submitted to Christ could know what love and marriage truly is. The role model of true love is the selfless devotion of Jesus for his church „Like Christ has loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

The men are not supposed to urge the women to submit but they are much more advised to „**be devoted**“ and at the same time women are not supposed to demand that devotion before they submit to their husband. But the initiative should come from the man. Paul says with great emphasis „**You owe that love to them**“.

The mutual submission of the spouses (Eph. 5,22ff.) is the role model of all other relations like for example the children who are supposed to obey their parents (Eph. 6,1) and the parents are not supposed to provoke their children (Eph. 6,4). If someone has understood the relationship between Christ and His church in all areas of life this **healthy submission** will become visible.

When Paul wrote those words to the slaves and servants (Eph. 6,1-9) he was probably addressing many of the church members. It is estimated that there were about **sixty million slaves** in the Roman Empire.

The Roman citizens thought it inadequate for them to work. Almost all practical tasks were executed by slaves. Even doctors and teachers were slaves. There were many good lords and it was possible that lords and slaves were deeply connected with a bond of loyalty and affection. However, according to his being a slave was merely regarded as a human being. The law referred to slaves **as subjects and not as persons.**

Paul gave Christian advice to the slaves that could still be applied to the current situation at a workplace.

1. Paul is requesting that slaves would not rebel against their lords. Instead he advises them to prove to be a Christian in this place.

2. Paul says about the slave, that they should not only **do their work with excellence** when someone is watching. They should not work to please people. They should rather be aware that God is watching them and that they should seek to please God in all they do. Every work must stand before God because Jesus Christ has lifted us up into a position where our work is done for Him and nobody else. Therefore it does not matter what your occupation is. Everyone who is a child of God can say : **I serve Christ, my Lord.** Our work is only approved if we can bring it before God's judgment.

There is a responsibility on both sides. The lords are not supposed to take advantage of their servants and misuse their power. **In the presence of Christ lord and servant are on the same level**, since they are brothers in Christ. We find a very practical example in the letter of Philemon. He was an employer who had a slave named Onesimus (Phlm. 1,15f).

Paul also speaks to **the lords** and what he told them is easy to understand. They shall be aware that even though they may be lord over servants, they still remain a servant of God. They also should be aware that all they do is done in the presence of God (Col. 4,1/ Jam. 5,4). Selflessness is always the center of those verses for it leads to the harmony with one another where the work of the holy spirit can become visible.

Eph. 6,10-19 – This is a speech about spiritual battle. What is that? The devil is focused on the church. He is working at the spiritual front. The devil is working in a territory where we expect him the least.

The spiritual battle takes place where the word of God is proclaimed, where the church is standing with God. This is the place the devil wants to destroy it. This is the arena of spiritual war. Sometimes church can be the most dangerous place to be. **For Jesus Jerusalem was the most dangerous place of all.** The Pharisees were His worst enemies. We must also realize where the spiritual battle takes place.

The Epistle to the Ephesians can be compared to the book of Joshua. The scriptures of Joshua of the Old Testament is the letter of Ephesians of the NT. Joshua took the children of Israel over the Jordan into the land of Canaan. There were the enemies, therefore there were battles to fight and victories to win.

The Jordan is not an image of our death and the promised land is not an image of heaven, how it is often wrongly understood. Because the Jordan represents the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what we have to go through to get to the other side... this is the death and resurrection of Christ. But this means for us **from the desert of this world we go to Canaan.** A child of God should live in Canaan.

But please do not forget that Canaan does not represent heaven! There are enemies in Canaan and there were fights to be fought. If we believe we are on the battlefield of our Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy was identified and now we have to fight. When Joshua entered the promised land, there were **three enemies** he had to face.

At first there was the city of **Jericho**, which was directly located on the way. **Jericho is an image of this world.** What Jericho was for Joshua, represents **„the world“ for the Christian.** Joshua was told to march around the city and not attack it. This means we can also not defend this world while we fight it. We make a big mistake if we try this. The only way to victory is faith and trust in God (1.Joh. 2,15).

The **second enemy** that Joshua had to face **was the small city of Ai.** Ai is an image of the flesh. Joshua thought this would not be a problem and that it would be easy to defeat Ai. Therefore he sent a small troop there and experienced a great defeat (Jos. 7,10).

Thirdly Joshua had to fight the **Gibeonites.** They were very clever. They lived right on the other side but they took old bread and shoes and appeared like they had traveled a long way. This way they walked into the camp and said to Joshua: „Brother we have heard of you. We have heard how God delivered you from Egypt and brought you the victory over Sihon and Og. We want to make a covenant with you. We want to be your friends“ (Jos. 9,4-11). This is how the devil approaches us.

It is a tactic of the enemy to offer compromises. Joshua made a covenant with them and they only brought vexation.

The call to spiritual warfare starts in (Eph. 6,10) with the word **„finally“**.

It means: „At last“, which means in the end you will be filled with the power of God's strength. Put on the armor of God, so that you can resist the traps of the devil. For we do not war against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities, the princes of this world who rule in darkness, **against the spiritual troops of evil among the heavenly places and things**“.

Eph. 6, 12 - „We are not fighting against flesh and blood...“Paul names four groups of enemies that we need to protect ourselves from with the armor of God in order to fight and win:

- 1) evil rulers
- 2) authorities of the unseen world
- 3) mighty powers
- 4) evil spirits in heavenly places.

Our enemies are not beings of flesh and blood. They are **angelic powers** that try to influence us but are not able to touch the foundation of our spirit and faith (Col. 3,3). They only try to shake our souls (Ps. 69,1).

Our enemies are the different spiritual doctrines like „lawlessness“ or „legalisms“ (doctrine of religious efforts) that try to influence us (Gal. 1,6-9/ Col. 2,16-18a like laws about food, adherence to Jewish celebrations, sabbath, etc. in addition also angel worship or idolatry is mentioned).

The one who rose from the dead and is seated in heavenly places is highly exalted „over any kingdom, any power, authority and any name not only for this time but also for the time to come“ (Eph. 1,21). This testimony should be sufficient for us to understand **that we do not have to fear the above mentioned powers at all** (Act. 17,27/ Col. 1,13/ Col. 2,15).

The present world system is only sth passing away. It will not stand forever (1.Joh. 2,17). The future earth (world / universe) will no longer be subject to angels (Hebr. 2,5), but the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus we are set apart from the cosmos and its powers and can walk through this world as winners already. In 1.Joh. 4,14 it says: „We have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as the **Saviour of the world**“ and this is a clear evidence that all powers are already subject to Christ. He is the head.

The remark of the **four angelic beings** that Paul mentions do not give a full list or a teaching of the hierarchy of the demonic world. He just chose those 4 common terms to explain how Christ is sovereign over all authorities, no matter what name and what time they belong to. The victory of Jesus is now and forever. God in His power has placed everything under His feet“. This conquest also refers to the angelic power that oppose God (Ps. 8,7/ 1.Cor. 15,25/ Col. 1,16+18/ Eph. 1,22/ Heb.10,12). The die is cast.

The next group of enemies that **Eph. 6,12** mentions are the evil spirits in heavenly places. This term we only find in this scripture. They are the tempting spirits, deceiving spirits that are not in God (1.Cor. 2,12/ 1.Joh. 4,1/ 2.Cor. 11,4/ 2.Thes. 2,1-6/ Rev.16,13+14). Paul is speaking of spiritual evil, all things that are satanic. But let us notice how he points out: **„Finally you will be strengthened in the Lord and the power of His strength.“** This also makes it clear that nobody can defeat the devil out of his own strength. Paul speaks of the **„whole armor of God“**, that is necessary and is provided for us to meet the methods of the devil. „Will be strengthened in the Lord“, because this is the only place where we can receive the equipment and strength.

In the book of Job we can see how God protects his own people: **„You have protected his house and all that he has“** (Job 1,10). God has provided weapons for our protection, and the shield covers the whole armor. The faith is not a leap into the dark. God is not challenging us to jump into the dark. In the opposite God is telling me, if it is a leap into the dark then do not jump. God wants us to jump into the light. God has a solid foundation that we can build upon.

All parts of the armor are for protection. All is purposed for the frontside of the fighter. And we can see that he has no protection for his back. There are no requirements met for a retreat. A Christian who converts is always an easy prey for his enemy. The enemy can beat him without hindrance. After the Roman soldier had put on the armor he took the sword, which was his only offensive weapon. It must obviously be a sword, that the holy spirit bestows to the believer. The **sword of the spirit** is further specified as the word of God. The word (rhema - Rom. 10,8+17/ 1.Petr. 1,25) is relating to the spoken word or a word of God that the holy spirit is revealing to the heart of the believer. The Christians need this sword to resist the attacks of the enemy (Hebr. 4,12).

Eph. 6,18 – Pray without ceasing, stay alert and persist in prayer for all the saints (Jud. 20). The phrase „without ceasing“ points to the persistence and tenacity of their prayer. Paul is referring to it as the **„weapon of prayer“**.

Paul emphasises:

1. **We should never stop praying.** Prayer should be our daily companion. The power for each day grows in the daily prayer of the Christian. .

2. **We should pray forcefully.** We should be watchful and persistent in our prayer. It requires focus, because prayer without power is in vain. When we pray we should focus on God with all power.

3. **We should pray selflessly.** Our prayer should be for all the saints of God. A Jewish saying says: the members of the church should agree in prayer. Many are praying for themselves too many times not remembering the needs of others. .

Paul is asking for prayer support so that he can preach the gospel freely. Two times he uses the word „boldly“, in case he would have to face the trial before the Emperor of Rome because the Jews pressed charges against him. But for the Romans they were just another sect among many, the Jews blamed him of blasphemy. Paul had to prove in the trial **that Christians are neither one nor the other.**

He had to explain to them that they are something **totally new**, the church, the body of Christ consisting of former Jewish and Gentile believers (Eph. 2,11-3,11/ Act. 28,16+ 20/ Phil. 1,7+13+14+16/ Col. 4,3+18/ Phlm. 1,9-10,13). For this reason Paul is asking for their prayers. He is not asking for a comfortable and peaceful life, but rather for permission to spread the secret of God, that the love of God applies to all people on all the earth.

Test

- 12)What is Paul referring to as „the revealed secret“?
- 13)What is his advice to the Ephesians?
- 14)What does Paul mean by „the riches of God“?
- 15)What are the blessings of the church?
- 16)What kind of baptism is acknowledged by God?
- 17)Why does Paul emphasise to the men to love their wives?
- 18)What do women owe to Christianity?
- 19)What is the most important form of love?
- 20)Which Christian virtues are mentioned in Ephesians?
- 21)When will the church be complete?
- 22)What is the big difference between the Epistle to the Colossians and to the Ephesians?

Please send the answers to pastor@matutis.de
•or to the church bible school, PO box. 65 06 65, D-13306 Berlin
•or turn them in at the book table at the church.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end** of the seminary, you need to answer the test questions at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address.

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