

THROUGH THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 3-4

Paul is in a Roman prison... chains dangle from his wrists as he writes of his freedom in Christ...

He's outfitted in prison stripes as he pens about the righteousness he wears... a string of Roman numerals are stitched across his shirt, while he records the innumerable blessings that are his in Christ Jesus...

Rather than see himself *in prison*, Paul chooses to see himself *in Christ*. And this is the choice we all make: *do we get lost in our physical surroundings or do we stay focused on our spiritual blessings?*

In your heart of hearts, where do you abide?

Are you *in pain* or *in Christ*? *In hock* or *in Christ*? *In somebody's hot seat* or *in Christ*? *In fear* or *in Christ*?

Chapter 3 begins, **"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus..."** Paul *belongs* to Jesus! He could've said he was *the prisoner of Rome, or Caesar, or the Jews...* but he's **"the prisoner of Christ Jesus..."**

Christians are never **"a victim of circumstance."** God is sovereign. Nothing gets to me, but that it doesn't first pass through Him! This is why you can't necessarily interpret disappointment as a derailment of God's plan.

Paul belonged to Jesus. He is a **"prisoner of Christ."**

And why was Paul in prison? He writes, “For you Gentiles.” Despite Jewish prejudice and legalism he stood up for pig-eating, and bacon-loving Gentiles.

Paul preached *grace for every race!* God isn't just for the well bred. Righteousness is apart from the Law.

Paul put God and all His blessings within the reach of the outcast. Today, every time I savor some pork barbecue, I realize I owe Paul a debt of gratitude.

Paul spent two years in Ephesus. It's funny that in verse 2, he asks if they've heard of his ministry.

“If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you...” Of course they've heard... Perhaps, Paul is asking them, *did you really understand the implications of grace?*

And if he were writing to us, he'd ask, “Do we?”

When you think of a “*dispensation of grace*” think of a “*distributorship*.” The Jews knew of God's grace, so God sent Paul to distribute salvation to the Gentiles.

God is an entrepreneur! He's not afraid of branching out and opening up new channels of distribution for His amazing grace. He wants us to move into all segments of the market - *every age, race, language, culture*.

I guess when it comes to marketing and distribution no business is better at it than McDonalds. Did you know that the busiest McDonalds restaurant in the world sits a few blocks from the Kremlin in Moscow?

At one time, a new McDonalds opened up somewhere in the world every four hours. Today, there are over 31,000 McDonalds stores in 119 countries.

As Christians we should be as effective distributing the Gospel as McDonalds is with Big Macs. *Perhaps your office has never had a strong witness for Jesus...*

The same could be said for your tennis team, or neighborhood, or hunting club. God has given you the distribution rights in that new market. Get busy. It's said, "There's enough Bread of Life to supply the whole world, but are there enough volunteers to distribute it?"

Paul continues talking about his "*dispensation of grace*" - "how that by revelation He (Christ) made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel..." Notice Paul refers to the Gospel of God's grace as "*a mystery.*"

Whenever we hear the word "*mystery*" we think of an Agatha Christie novel, or a Sherlock Holmes movie... a suspense-filled, smoking gun, who-done-it thriller.

But that's not what Paul means when he uses this term. A *biblical mystery* is simply a truth that's known only to God - **a sacred secret**. And the great mystery in the OT was **how would God save the Gentiles?**

There were OT prophecies that predicted their conversion, but it remained unclear to everyone but God as to exactly how it would happen. The privilege of explaining

the mystery was finally given to Paul.

God revealed to him *that through Christ* He would bring together both Jews and Gentiles as one new group, the Church. When Paul first preached the Gospel of Jesus it was answering age-old questions.

I'm afraid one of the reasons we often take the Gospel and God's grace for granted is we no longer see it as a mystery. When we first heard it and grasped its implications it was an unexpected discovery.

We were overwhelmed by the lavishness of God's generosity... surprised by a love we didn't deserve...

But lose the wonder, and amazement, and the serendipity of it all - and what was once an *unexpected discovery* soon becomes a *worn-out doctrine*.

If the Gospel has gotten boring to you its time to pick it up again - *for once a mystery always a mystery...*

Take a 15 year marriage for example. By now your relationship is familiar territory - and thus, to keep your love fresh you have to create some mystique.

Approach the relationship from a different angle. Check into a hotel - buy some new lingerie - dine at a new restaurant - *somewhere other than McDonalds*.

Realize your spouse is an ever-changing person. There are dimensions of their personality you've yet to discovered. New wrinkles you've yet explore (literally).

Here's my point, *the way to beat boredom is by reintroducing into the relationship some mystery!*

And the same is true in our relationship with God.

I've heard it said, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." That's so true, especially with the Bible! There's always more there than you've realized.

So forget the fact that you've read the Bible all your life. Pick it up a fresh and look for something new. It's there! Focus on reading the passage before you as if you'd never read it before. *And let God surprise you!*

Paul is speaking of the Gospel, verse 7, "of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given..." For Paul sharing the Gospel was not a duty. It was an honor he didn't deserve.

The Apostle Paul was Christianity's greatest minister, but he considered himself "less than the least of the saints..." Before he dispensed grace, he received grace. And now God called him to share the secrets!

For me there's only one thing more fun than keeping a secret, and that's sharing it with someone. In fact, I'm the person in my family most prone to blowing a secret.

Paul had the honor of traveling all over the world letting the cat out of the bag - telling Gentiles of God's grace. He was having a ball! And we can join the fun!

Notice, how he describes his ministry, "That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..." He refers to our spiritual blessings, the riches of Christ, as "unsearchable" - literally, "untraceable."

It's not mankind who finds God. It's God who reveals Himself to us. God initiates

the communication. Left to ourselves - without God's Word - we'd be in the dark.

Verse 9, it was Paul's privilege to preach “and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places...” Both us and the angels behold God's “*manifold wisdom*” (literally, His “*multi-faceted wisdom*”) by looking at His church.

The church is a prism through which the world can witness the wonders of God's grace and wisdom.

Even the angels - “*the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*” - learn what God is up to in the world by looking at us, the Church. How Jesus forgives, saves, blesses, and unites is a lesson to the angels. It blows their minds to see a healthy church!

Verse 11, “According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” Here's another incredible blessing in Christ we should never neglect. We have bold and confident access to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is a blessing the OT saints knew nothing about.

No one but the High Priest - and him only once a year - was allowed into God's presence. But in Christ we can live in God's throne room. Spiritually, we can spend all our time seated in heavenly places in Christ.

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Paul doesn't want his imprisonment to discourage the Ephesians.

That's why he's praying for them. Verse 14, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory...” Here's Paul's second prayer...

And his first request for them is “to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...” Here Paul doesn't pray for the outer man, but the inner man.

When we pray for a friend we usually focus on their external circumstances. But we need to direct our prayers toward their spiritual health - the inner man.

The outer man is destined to wither and die. There is no fountain of youth. But the inner person is like a rechargeable battery. It just needs to plug into God, and it can be re-strengthened. That's what Paul prays..

And he adds, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...” Paul wants us to allow Jesus to “dwell,” or literally to make Himself at home in our hearts!

Jesus is King! Thus, wherever He moves He starts redecorating, and removing old fixtures, and installing new stuff. Wherever He dwells He's King of the castle.

Paul prays that the Ephesians will give the Lord full control of their hearts - that they'll trust Him enough to make the changes He thinks are best for their lives.

And verse 17, “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to

know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Paul asks God to enlarge their spiritual capacity, and enable them to grasp His love on an experiential basis.

He wants them to know the full volume of His love!

Once, a boy who fell into a vat of sweet tasting molasses. He prayed, "Lord make my capacity equal to my opportunity." God's love is an ocean. You can take in all you want. The only limitation is the size of your bucket! May we be *“filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Paul closes His prayer with a praise! Verse 20, *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*

Imagine, God is not only able to meet every need we bring to him, He’s able to do *“above all that we ask or think?”* **His grace is always greater than our need!**

Never forget, God can do *“exceedingly abundantly.”*

Paul begins chapter 4, *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord...”* Again, Paul mentions his incarceration.

Paul was an example... followers of Jesus are promised *blessings in Christ and trouble in this world.*

I've been to the cave Paul occupied in the heart of Rome. The Mamertine Prison is a small, subterranean holding cell. And I envision him pacing back and forth...

He's worried, but not about his imprisonment. It's not where he walks that concerns him, it's how he walks...

Paul writes to the Ephesians, "(I) beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..."

Here's a good outline for the book of Ephesians...

Chapters 1-3 teach us *all that we are* and *all that we have* in Jesus! That we're now **seated** in Christ Jesus.

Chapters 4-5 teach us how to **walk** and live out our lives in light of the blessings we've received.

And **Chapter 6** teaches us how to **stand** against the wiles and schemes of the devil. How to do battle.

Here's Christianity in a nutshell: **sit - walk - stand.**

In Christ you've been blessed with all spiritual blessings. You and I have become somebody, but now we need to live like it - to walk worthy of our calling.

Membership in God's family not only has amazing privileges, but it also has important responsibilities.

As a pint-sized princess growing up in Buckingham Palace, little Victoria was sheltered from the fact she was next in line to be England's monarch. Her handlers

didn't want to spoil the future Queen. But one day Victoria saw the genealogical records of the royal family, and noticed she was next in line to the throne.

Initially, Victoria wept. But after gaining her composure a weightiness came over her. She looked up at her tutor, and said simply, "Then I must be good."

This is the reaction Paul hopes hits us. In Christ, we also have a high calling. *President, prime minister, premier* - pale in comparison to being a **Christian**.

In light of our calling, we too "must be good."

And the first observation Paul makes about our high calling is that it requires a lowly walk. In verse 2 Paul says we should walk "with all lowliness" or *humility*.

It's been said, "There are no limits to how much can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit."

The same is true in church. *Let's walk in humility.*

And also "gentleness." When you look around at the people in your life imagine them with stickers stuck all over their bodies that read, "fragile, handle with care."

We need to be sensitive, tender toward one another.

Let's also walk "with longsuffering..." or *patience*.

And here's another way to walk, "bearing with one another in love." I need to put up with the quirks and idiosyncrasies of other people. Not everyone is as normal as you. Its been said, "Christian discipleship is teaching the intolerant to tolerate the intolerable."

Since people get down, let's walk lowly and lift them up... Since their fragile, let's be

gentle... Since people take time, let's have patience... And since everyone is just a little bit weird, let's bear with each other in love...

Verse 3, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Realize “*the unity of the Spirit*” is a gift from God. It's a spiritual affinity. The same nature and DNA exists between all true believers.

But understand what *the unity of the Spirit* is not...

It's not *the unity of faith*. We're not all going to agree on every detail of doctrine... Neither is it *the unity of format*. We all enjoy different styles of worship and music... And it's not *the unity of friendship*. We can be united in the Spirit and not necessarily be close friends.

The Spirit's unity doesn't abolish our differences. It creates a commonality greater than our differences. We can't manufacture this unity. It's the Spirit's work. But once received it, we can “*endeavor to keep*” it.

The word “*endeavor*” means “to aggressively and actively do whatever it takes to preserve our unity.”

The Spirit creates a “*bond of peace*” between us, but it gets broken if it's not protected. Misunderstandings, hurt feelings, jealousies threaten the unity of the Spirit.

A visitor to an insane asylum was astonished to see only three guards in charge of hundreds of dangerous patients. The visitor asked one of the guards, “Aren't you afraid these people will overpower you and escape?” He replied, “No, lunatics never unite.”

God has created a wonderful family at CCSM.

When you enter through the doors you sense the unity of the Spirit. But it's up to us to walk in lowliness, gentleness, patience, and tolerance with one another.

And here's several other reasons we should be so concerned about unity... Verse 4, "There is one body..."

The Sixth Edition of the Handbook of American Denominations lists no less than a thousand Christian denominations. The list includes, "The Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists - The Triumph of the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ Church - and The Original Church of God, Inc." And to think the NT believers simply called themselves "*Christians.*"

There is only *one body* of Christ... "And one Spirit..." The same Spirit who dwells in you, dwells in me!

"Just as you were called in one hope of your calling..." In short, there's only one *heaven*. There's not a *Baptist* heaven, or *CC* heaven - there's just heaven.

And there's "one Lord..." We all say, "Yes, Sir" to the same person. Our goal is please and glorify Jesus!

And "one faith..." There's one true body of belief. Theology isn't arbitrary or ambiguous. Somebody is right and somebody is wrong. There's only "*one faith.*"

And there's "one baptism..." When a person comes to Christ they're baptized into the Body of Christ, not just a particular church. That's why Christian churches should accept each other's baptism. It's arrogance to require a believer to be re-baptized

with our baptism.

That's spiritual bigotry. There's only *“one baptism.”*

And finally, verse 6, *“one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

On the night before His crucifixion Jesus prayed not only for our *orthodoxy*, but for our *unity*. He *prayed for it* that night, then Jesus *paid for it* the next day.

Now let's endeavor to keep that unity!

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.” If we measure the grace we've received by Christ's gift, God has held nothing back. Jesus gave it all. He's flooded us with grace.

“Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”

Here's a quote from Psalm 68:18. The Psalm depicts the Messiah as a conquering general returning home from battle. Behind him walks his captives, and he's rewarded for his triumph with special gifts.

Yet here Paul makes a change - Jesus is the victorious general, but *rather than receiving gifts, He gives them*. He's triumphed over death, risen from the grave, ascended to heaven, now He gives gifts to men.

Verse 9, *(Now this, "He ascended" what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)* Here's Jesus'

itinerary between His death and resurrection - what He did during those 3 days...

He first "*descended into the lower parts of the earth.*"

While His body lay in the ground, His Spirit descended to Hades. Luke 16 describes this place...

Hades was a duplex. It was divided into two sides - a good side and bad side - separated by a huge gulf. Those who died believing God's promises went to Paradise. Unbelievers went to the place of torment.

In the OT, before the work of Christ on the cross the door into the presence of God was closed. The blood sacrifices covered man's sin, but didn't erase them.

Hades served as the *holding tank for heaven*, until Jesus, the Lamb of God, came and offered the sacrifice to end all sacrifices - sin's permanent solution.

As soon as Jesus conquered sin, He descended to Hades, and gathered up all the OT believers who had trusted in God's salvation. They became His captives.

General Jesus then led these happy captives into the halls of heaven to the praise of the cheering crowd. But instead of receiving gifts Jesus began to give gifts to those still on the Earth. And He still gives to each of us certain spiritual gifts that help build up His Body.

Today, when a believer in Jesus dies, he no longer go to the Hades - he goes straight into the presence of God. Paul said to the Corinthians, "*To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord.*" And Jesus is still giving gifts... various spiritual gifts to His people...

Spiritual gifts take different forms... [Romans 12 lists the motivations of the Spirit...](#) 1

Corinthians 12 lists the *manifestations of the Spirit*... But here in [verse 11](#) Paul lists the *ministries of the Spirit*. Jesus gives supernatural callings or offices to certain people.

“[And He Himself gave some to be apostles...](#)” The original twelve had a unique calling, but there were other apostles. The word means, “[sent out one.](#)”

A missionary who goes cross-culture with the Gospel could be called an apostle. An apostle will break new ground, and plant churches where there were none.

There are “[some prophets...](#)” These are God’s messengers to the church - men and women. Through prophets God gives special instruction at special times.

Paul also mentions, “[some evangelists...](#)” This is a person who effectively leads sinners to Jesus. They can do the cold call - or approach a stranger. We’re all called to be *witnesses*, but we’re not all *evangelists*.

“[And some pastors and teachers...](#)” The word “*pastor*” is Latin for “[shepherd...](#)” Which reminds me of the new pastor who was introduced at the church picnic by one of the elders “[as the new hog caller.](#)”

Everyone laughed until the pastor turned to the elder and said, “[I’m usually referred to as the Shepherd of the Sheep, but you know your people better than I do.](#)”

This pastor and church wasn’t off to a great start!

Yet a pastor is a spiritual shepherd. Both nurture their flock. Shepherds retrieve strays, mend bruises, protect from wild animals, find it suitable pasture.

A shepherd’s most important job is to feed the flock.

Which means a pastor must also be a gifted teacher. That's why "*pastors and teachers*" go hand in hand.

And the ultimate purpose of all these gifts, and the church in general, is "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...*" Most churches are divided into two groups - *laity and ministers*. Laymen just lay around, and ministers do all the ministry. But this isn't God's design.

God wants *ever member a minister*.

The pastor's job isn't to do all the witnessing, visiting, counseling... My job is to equip you to minister. I teach you God's Word, so you'll have the knowledge and insight to help others who are hurting and in need.

I grew up in a church where every week the pastor preached a sermon on salvation. The problem was that 95% of the congregation was already saved. He ended up speaking to the 5%, while ignoring the vast majority.

And as a result no one grew - no one became bolder, stronger, more equipped to impact people for Jesus.

But what if a pastor feeds His flock the meat of God's Word, and builds up their faith - then eventually, rather than one person preaching on Sundays at church, you end up with hundreds of people preaching the Gospel throughout the week, in hundreds of different places.

The most important thing I've learned from Pastor Chuck is the simple truth that healthy sheep reproduce.

If a pastor feeds the flock it'll grow naturally.

The Word of God changes lives - and changed lives become witnesses - and witnesses bring other people to Christ - and the chain reaction goes on and on...

So the pastor's job is to equip the saints, verse 13, **“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...”** Notice how Paul phrases this, **“till we all come to the unity of the faith.”**

Realize when it comes to the unity of the faith I'm not moving toward you - and you're not moving toward me.

We're all coming toward God. Evidently, none of us has arrived theologically. No one has flawless doctrine, or a monopoly on the truth - we're all growing, and learning, and moving toward **“the unity of the faith.”**

Into **“a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...”** Here's the goal of Christian growth - to be as fully like Jesus as we possibly can.

“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...” This describes today's church.

When people aren't well grounded you end up with a room full of live wires! Christians aren't consistent.

When believers aren't taught the Bible they don't know what to believe, so they end up vulnerable to every smooth-sounding doctrine that blows through.

This is why we teach the Bible verse by verse. When you can point to chapter and verse, then you've got truth you can really believe. It's backed up by the Book.

In contrast to teaching that's described as "*trickery... cunning craftiness... deceitful plotting...*" Paul tells us in verse 15, "*but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ...*"

When a person teaches the truth of God in the love of God believers grow, and become more like Jesus.

Paul mentions Christ who is the head of the church, "*from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*"

What is Jesus into today? He's a bodybuilder.

He's building up His body - one believer at a time. We all have a place and everyone's growth is crucial!

Verse 17 continues to tell us how to walk worthy, "*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.*"

Several years ago, I read where a coed from Skidmore College did some research to decipher the language of walking. Her experiments showed that how a person walks is a reflection of their personality.

A **waddle** means *independence*. A **drag** shows *frustration*. A **stride** indicates *confidence*. **Tiptoes** is a sign of *insecurity*. And a **shuffle** belongs to the *lazy*.

You can tell a lot by how a person walks. *And Paul would agree*. Both unbelievers and Christians have a distinctive way they walk and carry themselves.

And Paul begins by describing how the pagans walk.

In verse 17, “in the futility of their mind...” or “*empty-headed.*” They don't think through the consequences of their actions. Unbelievers fail to make wise choices.

And here's why, “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...” *Without Christ* it cuts you off from God's Light. You're in a spiritual black out. There's nothing but darkness.

And how do people get cut off from God... “Because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...” They don't have to become ignorant - they're born ignorant of God and His truth.

Only when we're born again does the light come on.

He continues to speak of the person separated from God, “who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” A person who constantly resists God ends up deadening their conscience. They grow numb to truth and morality. Anything goes to satisfy themselves.

I like how CS Lewis once described the world without Christ. He called it, “A land where its winter all year long, but never Christmas.” It's a dark and lonely place.

Verse 20 tells us *to dress for success*, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on

the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

In today's fashion conscience society before you take up an activity you first have to dress the part.

If you took up running you'd buy lightweight shoes and jacket, some spandex pants, a watch, an iPod...

And likewise if you're going to run the Christian race you'll dress appropriately. You'll strip off selfish attitudes - and stop rehearsing old thoughts - and ditch the sinful behaviors... You'll clean out the junk that characterized your life before you came to Jesus...

And you'll put on a new attitude!

You'll renew your thoughts, and harmonize them with God's Word. You'll learn to see yourself and all of life from God's perspective. *You'll put off and you'll put on!*

And here's what that looks like... The next verses list examples of the changes you'll want to make...

“Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.” Christians should become truth-tellers.

Verse 26, "Be angry, and do not sin..." It's not always wrong to be angry. There's a lot in this world that should rile your anger - just don't let anger lead to sin.

I read where the average person drives 20 mph faster when he or she is angry. Anger is a powerful force. Get control of it, before it takes control of you.

And “do not let the sun go down on your wrath...”

Keep short accounts. If you have a conflict with a friend or spouse deal with it as quickly as possible.

Verse 27, “nor give place to the devil.” In other words, don't give the devil an opportunity to tempt you.

Often I hear people say, "I've got a terrible problem with pornography. Every time I log onto the internet I stumble..." or "Every time I enter a bar I gett drunk."

Come on, man! If you're serious about walking with God, you'll stop walking headfirst into temptation.

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” Here's *putting off and putting on*. The thief shouldn't just stop stealing, but volunteer to give back to the community.

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” When I speak in another area of the country it doesn't take my audience long to identify me as a Southerner - *it's the Southern accent*.

And likewise a Christian should be immediately identified by what comes out of his or her mouth!

And not just the absence of a “*corrupt word*” - gossip or profanity - but the constructive tone of God's grace.

Do your words *build up* or *tear down*?

Verse 30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Quenching the Spirit avoids doing what the Holy Spirit prompts you to do. Whereas, *grieving the Spirit* is the opposite - you do what God has told not to do.

Let's not hinder or grieve the work of God's Spirit.

Verse 31, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” And notice the real kicker in this last verse!

There'd be no problem if the verse stopped at “*forgiving one another*” - but it adds, “*just as God in Christ forgave you.*” This ups the ante. We should forgive others as fully and freely as Jesus forgave us.

Two husbands were talking. One says to his buddy, “*when my wife is mad she gets historical.*” His friend corrects him, “*you mean hysterical*”. He answers, “No, I mean *historical. She starts dredging up the past.*”

Jesus forgive and forgets. He holds no grudges. Let's forgive each other just as Christ has forgiven us.