

NOVEMBER 2012

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

In him you
too are being
built together
to become a
dwelling in
which God
lives by his
Spirit.

Ephesians 2:22



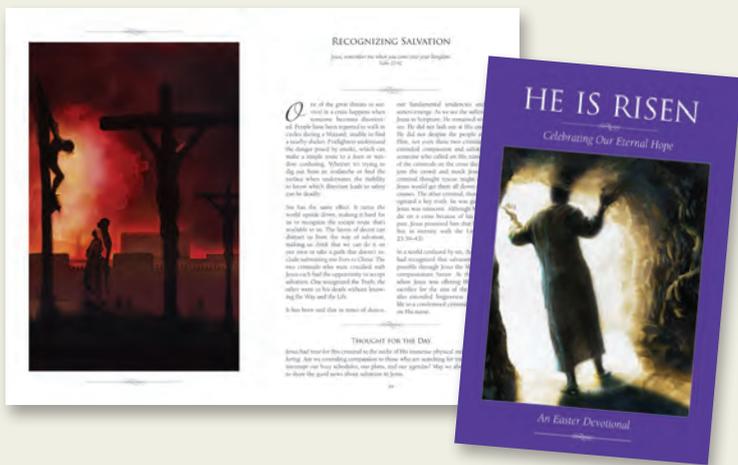
Book of Ephesians:
Jesus and His Church

HE IS RISEN



An Easter Devotional

Celebrate Christ's victory and the Resurrection with this 14-day devotional from your friends at *Today in the Word*. With original artwork and daily Scripture readings, *He Is Risen* will help you and your family grow closer to Christ as you walk through God's Word during the Easter season.



Give a gift of any size to *Today in the Word* using the reply card in this issue and request *He Is Born* and/or *He Is Risen*. Thank you for your ministry partnership!

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Because of His Great Love for Us



The first time Cheryl and I took our children to family camp, my son Carson was only five years old, and like many little boys, he was particularly drawn to the archery range. He

would grab a bow, nock the arrow, and then using all his strength, pull the bow back as far as he could before releasing the arrow. Though I couldn't have been more proud of his attempts, he was a child learning a new sport, and he would inevitably miss the mark, his arrow falling short of the target.

Friends, the same is true of us. You see, the word *sin* means "to miss the mark." God has a standard of righteousness, and we have all missed it. Romans 3:23 reads, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." As believers, we often forget who we were before God saved us. Just like the Pharisees, we may sometimes believe the lie that we are deserving of our salvation. But in Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul reminds us who we were without Christ: dead, enslaved, and condemned (Eph. 2:1-3).

Paul begins this passage by explaining, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Before we were united with Christ, we were spiritual corpses, completely dead and unable to respond to any outside spiritual influence.

Not only were we dead, but we were also enslaved. Paul goes on to tell us that we were

enslaved to three forces or powers: the world, Satan, and our flesh (Eph. 2:2). Before Christ freed us, we indulged the desires of the flesh and were held captive to worldly ideology—and Satan utilized both of these to his advantage.

Lastly, at the end of verse 3, Paul reminds us that we were condemned. He writes, "We were by nature deserving of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). Wrath refers to God's disposition against evil. It is a necessary consequence of His holiness. Wherever there is sin, God will respond with wrath. And none of us is without sin.

So how bad were we apart from God? We were as bad as we could be. We were dead, enslaved, and condemned. But following Paul's description of the utter hopelessness of our condition, he penned perhaps the most beautiful, merciful words in all of Scripture: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:4-5).

Don't these words just ring of hope? My prayer for us is that we will understand the depths of God's undeserved grace given to us, for none of us is good enough to deserve being rescued by Him. May we joyfully and confidently share the eternal hope we have received from Him—by grace—through His Son, Jesus Christ.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Submission of Christ

One theme in Paul's letter to the Ephesians is submission. All believers are called to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). Wives are told to "submit" to their husbands (Eph. 5:22). Children are commanded to "obey" their parents (Eph. 6:1). Perhaps most shocking of all, at least to modern readers, the Apostle commands that slaves should "obey" their masters "with respect" (Eph. 6:5).

Many contemporary readers regard these commands, specifically those addressed to wives and slaves, as a capitulation to the culture of Paul's day. Modern readers find the Bible's emphasis on submission disturbing because they consider submission to be inherently demeaning. Submission does not seem to be compatible with the Bible's theology of equality (Gal. 3:28). How do we affirm that the Scriptures uphold both the equality of all believers and the necessity of submission in certain contexts?

The submission of Christ can help us to keep this difficult topic in perspective. According to 1 Corinthians 15:28, after all Christ's enemies have been subdued, "the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." Jesus is equal with the Father in essence. He and the Father are "one" (John 10:30). Yet during His incarnation Jesus vol-

untarily submitted to the Father in His role as our representative. He obeyed God's law on our behalf and died as our substitute. During this period He "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

Voluntary submission did not diminish the Savior's status as God's Son. He was equal with the Father during His incarnation. In the consummation of all things, when Jesus will hand the kingdom to God the Father in His role as God's anointed, this equality will not be diminished (1 Cor. 15:24).

The submission of Christ reflects a difference in function, not in essence. This helps us to see the dignity of submission in our own context. The Bible's requirement to submit does not imply superiority or inferiority. It merely reflects a difference in function. Admittedly, those to whom submission must be rendered do not always act in a way that is worthy of respect or obedience. Husbands can be selfish (cf. 1 Peter 3:7). Any slave master has the capacity to be cruel and even abusive (1 Peter 2:18–20). However, when we obey in circumstances where submission is appropriately required, we render service to God. We can take comfort in the knowledge that God will one day call all those who exercise authority to account. They must answer to Him.

For Further Study

To learn more about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father, read *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* by Millard J. Erickson (Kregel).

FROM THE EDITORS

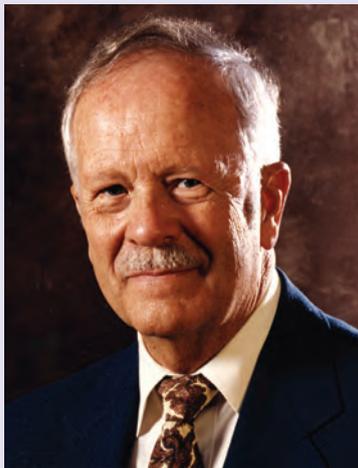
by Heather Moffitt

Pastor Don Cole: Faithfully Finishing the Race

As we were preparing this issue of *Today in the Word*, we learned that C. Donald Cole passed away on August 4 from complications of Parkinson's disease. Just two weeks later his wife, Naomi Cole, passed away on August 18. They were both 89 years old, and had been married for 65 years.

Long-time readers of *Today in the Word* will remember that Pastor Cole was a key part of the publication from the beginning. His column, "Q & A," appeared in the first issue, and he continued to write the column until stepping down in 2011. Today the column is continued by a team of professors from Moody Bible Institute and Moody Radio hosts, and it is the only column that has appeared in every issue of *Today in the Word* that we've published. Readers have often told us that they turn to "Q & A" first when they receive their copy of the devotional in the mail. The words of Pastor Cole exhorted, encouraged, and blessed thousands of readers through the years, and his influence on the column remains today.

Don and Naomi Cole met at a missions conference, and soon after they were married and went to Portugal for language study. They served the Lord in Angola from 1948 until they were forced to leave the country due to civil unrest in 1966. Their passion for the people and church in Angola never waned. When war finally ended, Don and their son Andrew traveled to Angola in 1997. Andrew Cole began the ministry RISE International to help meet the physical and spiritual needs there, and Don orga-



Don Cole—Moody Radio Pastor, member of the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame, and Today in the Word columnist for 25 years

nized numerous efforts (including joint partnerships with Moody Radio) to send supplies to the country as they recovered from decades of war and deprivation.

Don was perhaps best known as the Moody Radio Pastor, where he served from 1971 to 2008. In addition to other radio programs, he hosted the popular radio show *Open Line*, a national call-in program where he took questions about the Bible and the Christian life. Thousands of listeners heard his wisdom, humor, compassion, and knowledge as he interacted with a wide range of callers. Whether he talked with adults or children, confused or distressed,

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Book of Ephesians: Jesus and His Church

For many of us, the first word that comes to mind when we think about our relationship with the church is *complicated*. The critic in us looks around on Sunday morning and notices flawed people, the judge in us notes the lack of spiritual zeal in fellow-parishioners, the theologian in us suspects insufficient depth in the pastor's sermon. The list goes on and on, and too often we get mired in the mundane and the worldly losing touch of the heavenly perspective of the church. We may forget about God's eternal purpose for His body, the church of Christ.

Our study of the book of Ephesians this month will remind us to see the church through the eyes of Jesus, the truth of Scripture will silence the critic and the judge and the theologian, and help reveal the beauty of the bride of Christ in a new way. As we stand on Christ—the only true foundation—broken people saved through His grace, let us stop pointing fingers and focus on Christ alone.

In this season of Thanksgiving, we are especially grateful to study the Word of God together with the readers of *Today in the Word* across the country and around the world. We thank God for this opportunity to encourage each other in our journey of following Christ. To all our readers, thank you for showing the love and grace in the body of Christ by your prayers and support of this ministry.

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Paul and the Ephesians

Thirty years ago, few would have said that Dan would become a pastor. He never attended church, was foul-mouthed, and had no interest in spiritual things. Today, by the grace of God, he preaches weekly to a small congregation that once knew him as the town drunk.

There was a time when Paul (formerly known as Saul of Tarsus) would also have seemed to be the least likely person to preach to the Gentiles in Ephesus. He was a member of one of the strictest sects of the Jews, sharply opposed to Jesus Christ, and had no love for Gentiles or Christians. What happened to change the course of his life so radically?

He reveals the answer in the first two verses of this letter to the church in Ephesus. Paul, like those to whom this letter was addressed, experienced the grace and peace that comes from God

through Jesus Christ. God was the initiator in this relationship, interrupting Paul's life with the gospel and sending Paul as His commissioned messenger (Acts 9:1–6). As part of this mission, Paul traveled to Asia Minor where he preached the gospel to several cities including Ephesus.

You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.

Acts 20:18

God sent this unlikely messenger to proclaim the grace of Christ in what must have seemed like an intimidating spiritual environment. Ephesus was one of the largest trading centers in that region and a sort of spiritual melting pot.

It was a focal point for pagan and emperor worship as well as the occult. The gospel found a receptive audience—but not without opposition. Later Paul would write that he “fought wild beasts in Ephesus,” which many scholars think is an allusion to the opposition he faced during his ministry there (1 Cor. 15:32).

Apply the Word

Can you think of someone who seems unlikely to become a follower of Jesus Christ? Paul and the Ephesians must have seemed just as unlikely to those who knew them. Make a commitment to pray for the person you know each day this month, asking God to exercise His gracious will and open hearts to the Savior.

Pray with Us

The Commons staff—Lillie Hill, Louis Ballasch, and Nathaniel Goossen—provides meals to Moody's faculty and staff. May this team find great fulfillment in supporting Moody's ministries by offering nourishment to Moody's many employees and guests.

Every Spiritual Blessing

“Count your blessings, name them one by one,” an old gospel song urges, “count your blessings, see what God hath done.” As Paul takes stock in this letter of all that God has done for us through Christ, he begins by focusing on the nature of God rather than by itemizing each individual blessing. He begins by noting that God is worthy of being “praised.” This is the Greek word from which the term *eulogy* comes. His opening words are a form of Jewish prayer known as a *berakah* or “blessing.” An opening blessing was a common feature of letters in the ancient world.

God is worthy of being blessed or praised by those who are in Christ because He has blessed them with spiritual blessings. Chief among these is the privilege of being “chosen” and “predestined.” Since this choosing was done “before the creation of the world,” it must have taken place in the heavenly

realms (v. 4). God’s choice set in motion a series of events and influences that would result in our being “holy” and “blameless.” This holiness is a gift before it is a practice. It is first and foremost a state of blamelessness that is given to us by God as a result of Christ’s work.

Our citizenship is
in heaven.

Philippians 3:20

God’s choice also guaranteed the believer’s future status. Those who have been chosen are therefore predestined for “adoption to sonship” (v. 5). It is because God has chosen us that we can address Him as our heav-

enly Father. The gift of blamelessness brings with it all the rights and privileges that come with being a child of God. We not only receive forgiveness for sin and righteousness from God, but we also receive a spiritual inheritance and status as full-fledged members of God’s family. God did not make this choice based on anything we have done. He did all this to highlight the grace that comes to us through Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Paul’s remarks are actually a doxology, a short hymn of praise to God. Respond to today’s study by singing your favorite doxology from the hymnal or listen to a song of praise by your favorite artist. If you have a creative side, you might even try writing your own doxology and praying it aloud.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, Chief Financial Officer, would greatly appreciate your prayer support for Moody’s finances. We thank the Lord for the many ways He has faithfully and generously provided for Moody over the past 126 years.

In Christ Alone

Those who make a major purchase like a house are often required to make a down payment when they sign the contract. This money is evidence that they are “in earnest” about the deal and serves as a guarantee that they will pay the rest of the amount owed. God has given us a kind of “down payment” on all the blessings that He has promised to us in Christ. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This gift shows that God is in earnest about His promise to bless us through Jesus Christ. The indwelling ministry of God’s Spirit is tangible evidence of two foundational blessings we have received through Christ. One is our redemption through His blood, which results in the forgiveness of sins (v. 7). The other is our election in Christ, God’s gracious choice to include us in His plan of redemption and glorify God through our salvation (v. 11).

God . . . set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Corinthians 1:22

These two foundational blessings are mentioned in the opposite order that we experience them. It is clear from Paul’s description that although redemption is mentioned first, it comes as a consequence of God’s choosing, which is itself a result of our having been predestined “according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (v. 11). God makes us aware of this plan through the gospel. All those who respond in faith to its message are included in Christ and are marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation experience, but Paul’s description of it here is decidedly Christ-centered. Every blessing mentioned in these verses comes to us as a result of what Christ has done for us; the chief blessing is being “in Christ.”

Apply the Word

Some people are troubled by the Bible’s language of choice and predestination. Those who are anxious should take comfort from Christ’s open invitation: “All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37). If you come to Him in faith, He will not turn you away.

Pray with Us

Continuing in prayer for Moody’s finances, let’s express appreciation to the Lord for the faithful service of employees in Investment Accounting: Marilou Logan, Marya Preston, Daphne Hussey, Andrea Palmer-Reed, and Tonya Reed.

Open the Eyes of My Heart

Although taught the Bible at an early age, John Newton was a slave trader before his conversion to Christ. “I sinned with a high hand,” Newton said, “and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others.” It was God who eventually opened the spiritual eyes of this prodigal and turned him toward Christ.

Today’s passage includes Paul’s prayer that the Ephesians would have a similar experience. Only in this case he is not praying for those who need to be converted, but rather for those who already have faith in Christ. Unbelievers are not the only ones who need to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit! Those who have embraced the gospel also need ongoing illumination by God’s Spirit to understand all that has happened to them in Christ and to grasp the full extent of what God will do for them in the future.

For God . . . made
his light shine in
our hearts to give
us the light of the
knowledge of the
glory of God in
the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

This is not just knowledge of facts or an ability to restate the details of a doctrinal position. Paul characterizes it as an understanding of the heart that results in a confident hope. This hope is rooted in the recognition that the power at work in us is the same power that raised

Jesus Christ from the dead. Those who are in Christ are even now living in the reality of the resurrection. It is this transforming power that enables us to turn from those things which are displeasing to God.

Paul’s example is a good model for our own prayer life. We can pray for ourselves that God will continue to open the eyes of our heart so that we will understand all that He has done for us in Christ. We can also pray for others who do not have spiritual understanding and ask that God will remove their blindness.

Apply the Word

Respond to today’s study by using Paul’s words as a guide for your own prayer. Begin by praying these words for yourself. Pray them for someone you know who belongs to Christ. Then pray for someone who is spiritually blind but needs to see. As you pray, ask the Lord to help you grow in understanding of His grace through the study this month.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek serves as Vice President and Dean of Moody Theological Seminary. Ask God to use his leadership of MTS to increase students’ knowledge of the Bible, enhance their ministry skills, strengthen their character, and enrich their Christian lives.

Head of Everything

Two children were playing when one decided to take charge of the game. The other complained: “You’re not the boss of me!” On occasion members of the church also find it difficult to “play well together.” Congregational life may often be marked by disputes over leadership and power struggles.

There should be no doubt about who is in charge of the church. It is not the pastor or the board or an archbishop or a pope. According to Scripture it is Jesus alone who is “head over everything for the church” (v. 22). This superior role results from His resurrection and exaltation. Following the humiliation of His death, Jesus was raised to life by the power of God and seated at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly realms.

Paul’s description links Christ’s exalted position with the historical events of His incarnation. The effect of Christ’s minis-

try, death, and resurrection reached far beyond the New Testament world or even the church. The results were cosmic in proportion. The language in the verses that precede our reading echoes Psalm 8 and portrays Jesus’ authority as superior over every power presently and in the age to come.

He is the head of the body, the church . . . so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Colossians 1:18

Paul spells out the implications this has for church life when he characterizes the church as the body of Christ. This language underscores the church’s dependency upon Christ for life as well as leadership. Other members can be severed and the body will survive—but not the head. The body cannot exist apart from its head.

What does this mean for leadership in the church? Among other things, it means that all authority in the church is derived. It is God the Father who made Jesus “the boss of us” both now and forevermore.

Apply the Word

Paul’s understanding of Jesus’ exalted position reflected his understanding of Psalm 8. This psalm is often quoted in the New Testament. Take some time this week to read through Psalm 8 and see how many parallels to the arc of Jesus’ life and ministry you can identify in its verses. Then praise Jesus as the Head over His body, the church!

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Theological Seminary, will you please remember those serving in Administration: James Holesapple, Randall Dattoli, and Daniel Snoek? Ask the Lord to help this team serve MTS students and faculty with humility and excellence.

Before and After Picture

Ads for self-improvement products like diet or exercise programs often use before-and-after pictures to prove their effectiveness. Paul uses a similar approach in this chapter to help us grasp the blessings that have come to us through Jesus Christ. He begins by reminding us that before we had trusted in Christ, we were “dead in transgressions in sins” (v. 1). This frank assessment underscores our helpless condition. Those who are dead cannot do anything for themselves.

You used to walk
in these ways,
in the life you
once lived.

Colossians 3:7

exercised through the sinful nature. To be spiritually dead meant that all our efforts, even our religious efforts, were shaped by desires of our sinful nature. For some this took the form of immorality. For others it was a life of striving after morality that left us feeling either guilty or self-righteous.

The fact that our condition was “dead” proves that nothing would have changed if we had been left to our own devices. But Paul’s “after” picture makes it clear that a fundamental change has

Spiritually dead, however, did not mean spiritually inactive. Although we were dead in sin, we used to live for and walk in the ways of the one who is “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (v. 2). We did not have to be members of the occult or Satan-worshippers to be under Satan’s dominion. Satan’s control over us was

taken place in all who belong to Jesus Christ. This change did not come about from a program or spiritual regimen. The change happened before we could do anything for ourselves, while we were still dead in our transgressions. It was a work of God’s power. Neither was the change a reward given to us because we tried to turn over a new leaf. It was a merciful gift of grace.

Apply the Word

Can you paint a before-and-after picture of your own spiritual life? Even if you don’t think you have artistic ability, you can still draw two columns on a sheet of paper. In one write down the things that were true of you before you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior. In the other list everything that has changed. Spend time praising God for the difference!

Pray with Us

Dr. Thomas Shaw, Vice President of Student Services, oversees departments such as Admissions, Academic Records, Career Development, and Food Service. Request that God will guide him in managing these areas of Moody that help meet the needs of our students.

The Best Seat in the House

Two years ago an experiment involving an extremely thin sliver of metal that had been cooled to a thousandth of a degree above absolute zero seemed to verify one of the theories of quantum physics: it is possible for an object to be in two states at once. In this case the small metal paddle was vibrating and standing still at the same time.

Today's passage indicates that those who belong to Christ experience something similar in the spiritual realm. We might say that they are in two places at once. Because those who belong to Jesus are "in Christ," they died with Christ and have been raised up with Him. Since Christ has been exalted to the Father's right hand, there is also a sense that we too are seated there with Him. This is certainly true in terms of our position. We have been so identified with Christ that His suffering for sin has been credited to our account.

If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will . . . be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:5

His death is our death and His victory is our victory.

Paul, however, seems to be describing something that involves more than mere spiritual accounting. We are not divided into two parts, yet we do inhabit two realms at once. This helps us to understand the power that is available to us once we are in Christ. Our sinful nature does not suddenly disappear. It cannot be rehabilitated and made less sinful.

The secret to successful Christian living, then, does not lie in trying to reform the old "earthly" nature but in acting in accordance with the new "heavenly" nature that is ours as a result of what Jesus has done. In this way our earthly experience provides a point of access for heavenly power. We live out our lives on earth, but as those who are also citizens of heaven with all its resources at our disposal.

Apply the Word

Do you have a favorite location that gives you a sense of being "above it all?" Perhaps it is the view from a mountain peak or a tall building. Maybe it is when you stand on a bridge over a river watching the water below. The next time you are there, savor the reminder that while you are a citizen of earth, you have access to the resources of heaven.

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for Paul Wilson and Nicole Johnson who work in Student Services at the Michigan campus of Moody Theological Seminary. May the service they provide to our seminary students continually demonstrate the servant heart of Jesus Christ.

Grace and Works

Towards the end of the second century a Christian leader named Tertullian asked, “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” His question was intended to underscore the difference between Greek philosophy and the Christian faith. Today some Christians would draw a similar distinction between grace and works. They would be tempted to ask, “What does grace have to do with works?” These two principles seem to be incompatible.

In one sense they are incompatible. The New Testament repeatedly stresses that our salvation is not derived from our works. This point is clearly stated in today’s passage. We are saved by God’s grace and not by our works. We cannot attribute God’s choice to any merit of our own (cf. Titus 3:5). Yet those who have been saved by grace have also been “created in Christ Jesus to do good

works” (v. 10). How do we reconcile these two assertions?

We can do so only if we clearly understand all that the Apostle has previously said about us in this letter. Prior to the experience of God’s grace we were guilty in sin and unable to help ourselves. Our union with Christ came as a result of something God did on our behalf. When we believed the gospel, we were united with Christ in both His death and resurrection. Consequently, we have a new capacity to please God with our actions. These

“good works” are not the cause of our salvation but a result of it. They are not the means by which we are saved, but they are evidence of God’s saving power in our lives. In other words, the kind of works Paul speaks of in Ephesians 2:10 are not enemies of God’s grace but a reflection of it.

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs.

Titus 3:14

Apply the Word

When it comes to grace and works the order is essential. When works take precedence over grace they become toxic. When we understand works in the light of grace, we see that our works are an extension of God’s work in us. As we become more like Christ, our works will reflect more the grace and mercy found in God’s work of salvation.

Pray with Us

The Campus Post Office provides valuable support to our staff and students throughout the year. Ask the Lord to give Anthony Harper, Jenny Matthews, and Victor Perez continued safety and good health.

Remember Where You Come From

One mother says the same thing every time her children leave the house to go to a friend's house to play. "Remember who you belong to," she urges. Her boys often roll their eyes when she says this. But they understand what she means. She wants them to remember where they came from and what is expected of them.

Paul urges his readers to remember where they came from in our passage. But in this case he is not pointing to the valuable lessons they learned from their family background; rather, he is reminding them of their prospects prior to experiencing the grace of Christ. Before they came to know Christ they were spiritual outsiders, uncircumcised Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) who had no right to the promises of God.

Paul's words are a reminder that before God sent the gospel to the world at large, He revealed Himself in a special

way to the nation of Israel. He did this by entering into a covenant with Israel and promising to be their God. Some Gentiles found their way into God's family, but those who were not Jews generally had the status of outsiders. This was true even during Jesus' earthly ministry. In one famous encounter with a Canaanite woman who asked Him to deliver her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus replied: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 15:24).

We were all
baptized by one
Spirit into one
body—whether
Jews or Greeks,
slave or freed.

1 Corinthians 12:13

Yet the Bible contains numerous indications that God's ultimate plan was to include the Gentiles in His promises. Jesus came to fulfill the promises made to Israel and to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God. Paul's aim in today's passage is to remind his readers that they were once strangers to the grace they now enjoy. As spiritual outsiders, they were estranged from God, without any hope of eternal life.

Apply the Word

Do you take grace for granted? You do if you think that grace was something that was owed to you by God. You do if you think you deserve it more than your friend, neighbor, or family member who exasperates you. You do if you think that grace gives you an excuse to live as you please. God's grace was extended to us—outsiders!—at His good pleasure.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for the Campus Post Office, please pray for Samuel Ramos, Michael Lathrop, and Richard Tatina. May the joy of the Lord be ever present in their lives as they serve the students on Moody's Chicago campus.

Jesus the Peacemaker

In Paul's day the outermost court of the temple in Jerusalem was known as the court of the Gentiles. Although this court surrounded the temple, it was separated from the inner courts by a wall. A sign was posted on the wall which warned: "No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure round the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." Paul had this wall with its warning sign in mind when he penned today's passage.

The work of Christ fundamentally changed the spiritual dynamics between Jews and Gentiles. It did not nullify God's earlier promises made to the Jews. Many promises made to Israel have yet to be fulfilled. God continues to have a special interest in and purpose for the nation of Israel. But when it comes to salvation, He does not have a separate path for Jews and Gentiles. Both are saved by the

gospel of grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Consequently, the gospel has a leveling effect. Everyone can have direct access to God. In Christ the old distinctions between Jew and Gentile no longer have meaning: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). No group, class, or gender that has an advantage over another. All are welcome to respond to Christ's invitation to come to Him.

Since we have
been justified
through faith, we
have peace with
God through our
Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

The effective agent in making this change was not a social or political platform but a physical body. Jesus removed the wall of separation by offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. This one act not only opened the way for reconciliation between Jew and Gentile but created a way for both to be reconciled to God.

Apply the Word

Paul's ministry was specifically focused on non-Jews. But he himself was of Jewish heritage and his evangelistic strategy when planting a church in a new community often began with its Jewish population. Do you know someone with a Jewish heritage who does not know Christ as Savior? Pray today that they will be reconciled to God by faith in Jesus.

Pray with Us

Today, please uphold in prayer Dr. Junias Venugopal, Provost and Dean of Education. Join us in asking the Lord to clearly guide him and his staff as they educate our students, training and equipping them to serve Christ in full-time ministry.

The Church's One Foundation

A much-loved hymn begins, “The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.” In today’s passage Paul describes the architectural design of the church of Christ more precisely. The apostles and prophets are the church’s foundation and Jesus is its cornerstone.

Paul underscores the change that has taken place in the Ephesians’ spiritual status. They used to be “foreigners and strangers” when it came to God’s people (v. 19). The Law of Moses required Israel to care for the resident aliens in its midst (see Deut. 10:19), but certain distinctions continued to exist, even for those who chose to worship the God of Israel.

The degree of tension between Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s day was significant. The day of Pentecost signaled a major change: instead of expecting Gentiles to come and worship at a dis-

tance, God’s people were to invite both Jew and Gentile into fellowship with God. This spiritual household made up of Jews and Gentiles was also a new kind of commonwealth and a living temple.

The temple in Jerusalem was the place where God manifested His presence in a unique way in the innermost room known as the Most Holy Place. But no Gentiles and only a few Jews could approach this sacred area. Now both Jew and Gentile were “being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (v. 22).

Jesus Christ was the cornerstone of this new structure. Elsewhere Paul describes Him as the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Here He is the binding stone that holds the rest of the structure together. The foundation of the apostles and prophets indicates that the church is built upon the Word of God.

Salvation is found
in no one else,
for there is no
other name under
heaven given to
mankind by which
we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Apply the Word

Christians often have strong differences about their preferred worship style. The next time you think you “just can’t worship to that music,” remember that Christ has made you an “insider” by His sacrifice. You are a citizen in His kingdom and a member of His family, and collectively the church is the dwelling place of God by His Spirit.

Pray with Us

Today Moody’s student music ensembles will perform Handel’s *Messiah* at the Chicago campus. Thank God for the talented Music department faculty training our students: Xiangtang Hong, Jae Jang, Brian Lee, Un-Young Whang, and Ronald Denison.

A Stewardship of Grace

For those who love detective novels, a mystery means that there's a puzzle that needs to be solved. Those who figure out the clues can solve the mystery. But in today's passage, Paul uses the term mystery in a different sense. This mystery was a matter of revelation. The mystery that Paul wrote about was something "which was not made known to people of other generations" but was now revealed through God's Apostle.

Specifically, the mystery was the good news that the grace of Jesus Christ was offered to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Paul was called to be an "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8). He regarded this ministry as an "administration of God's grace" (v. 2). Through his preaching, Paul exercised a stewardship of the grace he had received. By offering the hope of forgiveness through faith in Christ, Paul operated as an agent of God's grace.

The biblical idea of stewardship also includes the notion of responsibility. Because he was a steward of God's grace, Paul was obligated to share this mystery with others. "For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" Paul exclaims in 1 Corinthians 9:16–17. "If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me."

I am the least
... and do not
even deserve
to be called an
apostle, because
I persecuted the
church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:9

Paul also experienced grace when he proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles. Elsewhere he explains his zeal for this mission as a reflection of the grace of God: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

Apply the Word

God makes us agents of His grace when we share the good news with others. We have also been recipients of the grace which we tell others about. To be the objects of God's forgiving grace is a gift. To be entrusted with that same grace is a responsibility. May we be grateful for the gift and worthy of the responsibility.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for the Music department faculty, let's ask the Lord to strengthen David Gauger, Christopher Wheeler, Jori Jennings, Betty-Ann Lynerd, Elizabeth Naegele as they teach students how to use the gift of music to serve Christ and His church.

A Servant of the Gospel

Many programs try to help believers share their faith. Often they involve memorizing an outline or learning a set of principles. Tools like these can be helpful, but they are no substitute for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The gospel is a message of grace, but the act of sharing this message also requires the gracious empowerment of God. More is involved in sharing the gospel than a method.

The Apostle saw himself as a “servant” of the gospel. Such language underscored the priority of the gospel in Paul’s ministry. His mission first and foremost was to declare the good news of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. This took precedence even over baptism in Paul’s ministry (see 1 Cor. 1:17).

Although Paul felt obligated by his calling, he did not view it as a work of drudgery. Instead he regarded this responsibility of sharing Christ—espe-

cially the revelation of the mystery that the Gentiles were included in the gospel—to be a gift given to him by God. Such a strategic ministry might have inflated Paul’s ego. But the recollection of his background as a persecutor of Christians kept his pride in check (see Acts 9:4–5; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; Phil. 3:6).

To this end I
strenuously
contend with all
the energy Christ
so powerfully
works in me.

Colossians 1:29

Paul could have been paralyzed by his sinful past, rendered ineffective by a sense of unworthiness. Instead, he viewed his past through the lens of God’s grace. Paul had experienced the forgiveness he preached.

He understood that any success he experienced was the working of God’s power. Jesus had promised to do this for His disciples on the day of Pentecost: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Apply the Word

Is there something in your past that makes you feel like you are “less than the least” of all believers? If you trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, accept the gift of service along with the gift of forgiveness. We cannot earn the grace given to serve Christ any more than we can earn the grace of forgiveness. It is part of the same blessing from God.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for faculty in the Music department, remember Lauren Quiles, Gary Rownd, H. E. Singley, Terry Strandt, and Cynthia Uitermarkt. May God give them continued passion and zeal for preparing students to serve in music ministry.

Why God Made the Church

Greg sat with his mother by the lake and explained why he didn't feel it was necessary to attend church. He pointed to the sun that had just started to dip below the horizon. "You won't see anything as beautiful as that in any church," he said. The two watched it set the sky aflame in hues of orange and yellow. "This is my church!" Greg concluded.

Many people agree with Greg's point of view. They wonder why church is such a big deal. Why not worship God alone in the woods or by the lake? Yet in today's passage it is clear that church

is important to God. He intends to put the church on display to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Paul uses similar language in Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16 in contexts that seem to refer to angelic powers. The church is doing more than meeting and worshipping. It functions as a cosmic trophy to the manifold wisdom and grace of God.

Oh, the depth
of the riches
of the wisdom
and knowledge
of God! How
unsearchable his
judgments!

Romans 11:33

How does this take place? This cosmic purpose of God is accomplished through Jesus Christ. The church's existence testifies to the power and wisdom of Christ. It is not the church's programs or its dynamic leaders that provoke the cosmic powers to marvel. It is rather the bold confidence with which any believer can approach God. Even the humblest believer enjoys the kind of direct access to God that might give the angels cause to envy. The angels are deeply interested in the Christ's redeeming work (1 Peter 1:12).

God's big plan for the church was a source of encouragement for Paul as he suffered for the sake of the gospel. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was often marked by suffering. This included imprisonment, hunger, and beatings (2 Cor. 11:23–30).

Apply the Word

Although the church is God's "big idea," it often comes with big challenges. Paul was able to endure these by keeping the bigger picture in view. If you are beginning to wonder why church is such a big deal, remember that there is more to the church than worship music and sermons. You are on display to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton serves as Senior Vice President of Media. Ask the Lord to use Greg's skilled leadership to help Moody's media ministries continue communicating God's truth in creative and powerful ways.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics



I've been wrestling with how much God should be involved in my pursuit of holiness and how much is up to me? I feel frustrated with the seeming contradiction people display when they at once say it's only by the grace of God that they were freed from sin yet so often emphasize striving to be good.



It is both. It is only by the grace of God that we can even begin to choose what is good, but God did not save us to be robots. I once heard a pastor say that at times we see ourselves as much too passive in our Christian walk. He added that when we respond to God and invite Him onto the throne of our lives, He doesn't ask us to step down but invites us to join Him to do our part under His authority.

While God's grace gives us the impetus to respond, we always have the choice to say yes or no. We couldn't even begin the process of holiness without God's pursuing grace, or maintain holiness in our lives without Him. However, we are responsible for using our will to choose what is right in that maintenance. Striving is really the wrong word; submission—which is a purposeful, decisive act of the will, not a flaccid surrender—is more accurate. The book of James presents well the tension that exists in a believer's life. One powerful statement reads, "As

the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (2:26).



Lately I've been seeing people in church texting during the service, even when Scripture is read and during prayer. Or, they leave to answer a call. I have never heard a preacher or speaker talk about this, but to me it seems wrong.



Such increasing disregard for sacred space and for a service devoted to honoring God should be troubling. Also troubling is the increasing inability for people to be attentive, a basic posture necessary to learning, not to mention for worshiping intelligently. Even some movie theaters, recognizing the importance of respect for others, demand that cell phones be turned off, declaring that the offender will be asked to leave if he or she violates that rule. Good symphony halls and opera houses would never tolerate such behavior. How ironic it is that so little prophetic voice is heard in the church, the place where we should regard not only others but also—and more crucially—God.

In an intelligent book, *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment*, Richard Winter argues that our culture is at war with and infected by "an epidemic of boredom" because of overstimulation from many sources. One pastor on a blog contends,

Continued on next page

It is imperative for us to live attentive lives in our relationship to church and the things that might cause our estrangement from it.

Continued from previous page

“The problem is sin. Sin is what insists that nothing is more important than what we are thinking, feeling, desiring, or doing at the moment. Not even God is cause enough for us to turn away from self and quiet our hearts and minds and lips so busy with stuff.” Each one of us must consider today’s cultural icons and make sure we have thought theologically and biblically about their use.



Why do Christians who have gone to church for years and been involved in ministry, just stop going?



There is no one answer to this question. I have seen people who were integral parts of a church stop going for any number of reasons including disillusionment (perhaps a church split or treatment by a pastor), because of burnout from over involvement, because of a life circumstance (divorce is an oft-cited example) or because of a crisis in their faith, to name a few. In a book, *Quitting Church*, author Julia Duin asks a similar question and among other things calls for better teaching, preaching, and pastors in touch with the lives of their worshippers—in short, for better churches,

where “community” is cultivated. I think this is an apt analysis, especially her emphasis on good teaching and a congregation and pastor who mutually care for each other.

Christians with a history of committed church attendance really don’t “just stop going” to church. Instead, over time, they sustain small, uncared-for spiritual bruises and fissures that become major injuries of the spirit. Doubtless, signs have been visible—an absence here or there, a gradual lessening of connection to others, a withdrawal from a key church activity. Sadly, such hints often go unnoticed or unremarked by the pastoral staff and fellow members. The disappointed, the hurt, and even the rebellious long to be seen and known, to feel that they are loved and that they matter. It is imperative for every one of us to live attentive lives, both in our own relationship to church and the things that might cause our estrangement from it and to what is going on in other peoples’ lives. As Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Paul's Prayer

The church that Janet grew up in had a tall steeple. At the base of the steeple was a lighted window. When Janet was a little girl she believed this was where the pastor went to pray. Although Janet was mistaken about the location, she was right to think that her pastor prayed daily for the church.

Today's passage includes one of Paul's prayers for the church (another is recorded in Eph. 1:15–23). One notable feature of Paul's prayer is its mention of kneeling (v. 14). This is a form of metonymy, a figure of speech in which something is not called by its own name but by something else which is closely associated with it. Apparently Paul often knelt when he prayed. Kneeling signified an attitude of submission and allegiance (see Rom. 11:4; 14:11; Phil. 2:10).

Paul's request in verse 17 that the Spirit might dwell in their hearts by faith was

For this reason,
since the day
we heard about
you, we have not
stopped praying
for you.

Colossians 1:9

not a prayer for their salvation but that Christ would make Himself "at home" in their hearts. This is a work of God by which His Spirit strengthens us in our inner being. This experience includes a sense that we are loved by God. One of the Holy Spirit's most practical ministries to the believer is to meditate a sense of God's love and acceptance (Rom. 5:5). It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to confidently address God as our Father (Rom. 8:15).

God's love is the primary theme of Paul's prayer. He earnestly desired that his readers would somehow be able to grasp the full scope of God's love for them, something he readily admits is humanly impossible. The most concrete way for this to begin to be a reality was for them to gain a clear understanding of Jesus Christ and His work. This would introduce them to a love that "surpasses knowledge" (v. 19).

Apply the Word

If you are having trouble focusing during prayer, you might try adopting the posture Paul mentions in today's passage. Kneeling does not make your prayer more acceptable to God, but it may put you in a frame of mind that makes it easier for you to contemplate the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Pray with Us

Let's lift up in prayer Moody Radio's Web Team—Courtney Gaines, Adam Grandy, and David Quigley—as they help make Moody Radio's programs available to listeners around the world at www.moodyradio.org.

What God Can Do

Skeptics sometimes ask whether it is possible for God to create a rock that cannot be moved and then move it. They are not usually interested in the answer. They are trying to demonstrate that it is unreasonable to believe in an omnipotent God.

In today's passage, which is really the closing doxology to the prayer we began to study yesterday, the Apostle praises God for His omnipotence. He highlights God's ability to do more for us than we can ask. This letter does more than affirm that God is able to answer our prayers, because all prayer is grounded in this foundational assumption. If we did not believe that God could grant our requests, why would we make them? But God is even greater than this because He is able to go beyond our requests. He can do far more than we ask. King Solomon is a good example of this. Given the opportunity to make any request, he asked for a discerning

“Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples.

Luke 8:25

heart to guide God's people. The Lord granted him this and much more (see 1 Kings 3:5–14).

God's capacity to answer our prayers is limited only by His nature and His good purpose. Since God will not do anything that is inconsistent with His righteous nature, He will grant only those requests that conform with His will (1 John 5:14–15). Any answer that God grants, even if the answer is “no,” reflects His commitment to work in all things for the good of those who love

Him and have been called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Even more amazing is the fact that this surpassing power of God is the same one that is at work “within us” (v. 20). The word Paul uses to describe this power is the one from which we get our English word “energy.” Through the Holy Spirit we are energized by the unlimited power of God.

Apply the Word

We know that God is able to do for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. But we are not always convinced that He is willing. Take confidence from what you have learned by studying Paul's prayer and ask God to answer beyond all that you can ask or imagine. Do not hesitate to pray for yourself. It is His matchless power that is at work in you.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Radio, please pray for Moody Radio Indiana. Join us in asking the Lord to bring salvation to the lost through the faithful service of Amber Cummings, Kelli Thompson, and Ray Hashley.

The Key to Unity

A survey of congregations by the Barna Group this past January indicated that young adults feel differently about their church experience than older adults. Church attenders in the 18-to-27 age group were 30 percent less likely to feel like they were part of a group that cares for each other.

With so many different kinds of people involved, is it realistic to expect the church to be united? Today's passage proves that unity is possible, but not without effort. The New Testament term that is translated "make every effort" in verse 3 means to "be eager" or "to do one's best."

It's important to remember that church unity is not a purely human effort. The effort described in this passage is aimed at preserving a spiritual unity that already exists. All those united to Jesus Christ by faith are also joined to one another by the Holy Spirit. But this spiri-

tual unity does not automatically guarantee that we will get along with one another. The key to congregational unity according to the apostle Paul is humility. Humility enables us to affirm the value of others and be patient with them.

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:14

The call for patience reminds us that the people we encounter in the church are still growing spiritually. They are forgiven by God and are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit but are not perfect. They will sometimes fall short of our expectation. In view of this, we should not be surprised to find that our

experience in the church is occasionally disappointing. We work at preserving the unity of the Spirit by dwelling on the things we have in common. We have had a common experience of salvation and are mutually dependent upon one another. The church has many members but is one body under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Humility takes the interests of others into account instead of focusing exclusively on its own interests. If you want to preserve the unity of the church in the bond of peace, then you must do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Instead, value others above yourself (cf. Phil. 2:1–4). This is the pattern of our Savior that we are to follow in our lives.

Pray with Us

In conclusion of our prayers for Moody Radio Indiana, let's ask that the Holy Spirit provide encouragement to Tom Winn, Joel Wright, and Linda Yeager as they make quality Christian radio available to their community.

Christ's Gifts to the Church

When someone gives us a gift that we don't really want or need we remind ourselves, "It's the thought that counts." But when it comes to Jesus Christ and the gifts He gives the church, the thought always matches the need. God only gives good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:11).

The gifts listed in today's chapter are manifestations of the grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Everyone who belongs to Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but not everyone has the same spiritual gifts (see Rom. 8:9). A wonderful diversity of gifts is given to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:11). The gifts included in this list, one of several in the New Testament, are given to individuals so that they can bless the church as a whole.

All spiritual gifts work toward the same basic objective. They have been given for "the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). But some gifts are more specialized than

others. The ministry of apostles and prophets, for example, was to lay the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 2:20). For this reason some scholars believe that the ministry of apostles and prophets was primarily confined to the New Testament era. Other gifts mentioned in this list are dedicated to the ongoing equipping of the church.

There are
different kinds
of gifts, but
the same Spirit
distributes them.

1 Corinthians 12:4

Spiritual gifts are not intended to elevate those who possess them above other believers. The cult of personality that can be so alluring has no legitimate place in the life of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:4–5). Instead, the gifted individuals described in this list have been given by God in order to equip God's people for works of service (v. 12). Those who have been equipped exercise their own particular ministries and as a result the body of Christ is built up. Ministry is not the province of an elite priestly class but is something in which all the church's members participate.

Apply the Word

According to the model outlined in today's passage, everybody is ministered to and everyone has a ministry. Whose ministry has helped you serve Christ more effectively? Write them a note of appreciation today and share how you have benefitted from their particular gift. Also thank the Lord for the spiritual gifts that have blessed your life.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Moody Radio Southeast: Leighton LeBoeuf, Paul Martin, David Morais, Andy Napier, and Juanell Rice. Ask the Father to use this team to help listeners throughout Southeast Tennessee take the next step in their relationship with Christ.

The New Life

A popular genre of television shows today involves makeovers, ranging from houses to people to motorcycles. The focus of today's Scripture passage has to do with the believer's makeover. As we saw in chapter 2, these verses paint a before-and-after picture. Paul reminds his readers that they "must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking" (v. 17). This pre-Christian worldview, marked by both ignorance and hard-heartedness, alienated them from God. The truths they learned when they turned to Christ revealed a radically different way of life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's role in enabling us to live the Christian life does not mean that our obedience is automatic. We must choose the way of life marked out for us by God's Word on a daily basis. This decision has both negative and positive

aspects. Negatively it means that we will intentionally lay aside those things that belong to our "old self" with its corrupted desires. Positively it means that we must put on the "new self" that reflects God's righteousness.

You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness.

1 Peter 4:3

This lifestyle requires more than mere choice, however. The decision to live for Christ would be meaningless without a capacity to follow through on our decision. Not only have we learned an alternative lifestyle from Christ, but also in Christ we have become a different kind of people.

The primary location for this transformation is the mind. We can put on the "new self" only after we have been "made new" in the attitude of our minds (v. 23). Elsewhere Paul uses the language of accounting to convey this idea. We are to "reckon" or "count" ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (see Rom. 6:11).

Apply the Word

How do you think about yourself now that you belong to Jesus Christ? Do you see yourself as someone who has been fundamentally changed by God's grace and who has been given the power of the Holy Spirit to put on the new self? If not, you need to change your "mental accounting" and take stock of what God's grace can do for you.

Pray with Us

Elizabeth Brown, Vice President and General Counsel, serves as the main legal resource for Moody's ministries. Thank God for Elizabeth's willingness to use her legal expertise to serve the Lord at Moody.

Life Together

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian and pastor who was imprisoned and eventually executed for his opposition to Adolph Hitler. For a time he led an underground seminary and during that period formulated the ideas for a book about the nature of the church entitled *Life Together*.

Paul continues to describe what new life in Christ is like by offering his guidelines for the church's life together. His directives follow the basic pattern of "putting off" and "putting on" outlined in the previous verses. He concentrates on three basic areas of congregational life: our speech, our attitude, and our treatment of one another.

Our speech toward one another should be marked by truth. In order to do this, we must "put off falsehood" (v. 25). Lying is not only deceitful, it is also self-destructive. When we deal falsely with

someone else we damage ourselves. We should speak the truth because we are "all members of one body." The self-destructive nature of lying is even clearer in the Greek text, which literally says that we are "members of one another" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–18).

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

Our speech should mirror our inner attitude, which is to be one of patience toward others. Paul admits that it is possible for anger to arise in our midst but it must be dealt with promptly.

Allowing anger to fester provides Satan with a foothold in the community. It is not necessary to deny or ignore our anger, but neither can we afford to cultivate it.

Finally, the church's life together should be marked by a spirit of generosity. Instead of taking advantage of one another, we must work to provide for our own needs and share with others.

Apply the Word

Congregational life is not perfect. The commands found in this passage all imply a potential for ongoing struggle. Which of the three areas mentioned in this passage do you need to concentrate on most today? Does it involve speech or unresolved anger? Or is there some way that you can demonstrate generosity to other believers?

Pray with Us

Please bring before the Lord Moody Publishers' Finance team: Think Pham, Edgar Santiago, and Harrison Gunter. May these employees experience the peace of Christ as they go about their work at Moody Publishers today.

Getting Along

According to an Associated Press poll taken a few years ago, most Americans believe that profanity has increased. Nearly 75 percent of those questioned said that they had heard profanity used in public frequently or occasionally. Two thirds were convinced that people swear more now than twenty years ago.

The Apostle's concern in today's Scripture reading includes but is not limited to the use of profanity. The new life we have experienced in Christ is powerful enough to transform the tongue. This is clearly a work of God's grace, since James 3:8 declares the tongue to be untamable. Thankfully, what is impossible with us is possible with God.

In the original Greek text the word that is translated "unwholesome" in verse 29 was used to refer to spoiled food or rotten vegetables. The alternative to such language is speech that "is help-

ful for building others up according to their needs" (v. 29). It is clear from this description that Paul is concerned with more than the kind of language we usually think of as swearing. Our words are to be measured by their overall effect upon those who hear them. Do they build them up? Are they suited to the needs of others?

You must also rid yourselves of . . . anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Colossians 3:8

Unwholesome speech reflects our disposition toward others. It is not enough simply to pay attention to the vocabulary we use. We must first root out the bitterness or malicious intent that led to our unedifying words.

We should expect those who have experienced God's grace to speak in a way that extends His grace to others. We will not have any trouble finding the right words to use if our motives for speaking are marked by compassion and forgiveness. The Christian's basic rule of speech and life is to treat others the way God has treated us.

Apply the Word

A few years ago it was common for many to wear a wristband with the letters WWJD on it. These stood for the question: "What would Jesus do?" In view of today's lesson, we can add another question: "What would Jesus say?" Before you speak, reflect prayerfully on whether what you are about to say ministers the grace and compassion of Christ.

Pray with Us

Continue praying for Moody Publishers' Finance team: Richard Peterson, Maryanna Pieleanu, and Jeffrey Reynolds. Thank God for their behind-the-scenes work and financial knowledge that helps Moody Publishers minister to readers around the world.

The Imitation of Christ

When a child looks or acts like a parent, people say, “The apple doesn’t fall too far from the tree.” It is reasonable to expect children to resemble their parents. The same is true in the spiritual realm.

But this family resemblance is not automatic. It is something that must be learned through imitation. We should not be surprised by this. We learned our former way of life by imitating those around us, especially our family and friends. Now that we have become children of God through the work of Christ, we should follow the example of our heavenly Father.

This command is grounded in the theology of grace outlined in the previous chapters. The imitation of God is not something we can accomplish by sheer human effort. We must first experience the transforming grace of Christ and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We follow God’s example by imitating Jesus Christ. He is the one who was incarnated to be fully human, and He “puts a face” on what it means to be like our heavenly Father. Imitating Christ is our response to the grace that we have received. We “walk in the way of love” because Jesus Christ loved us and sacrificed Himself on our behalf (v. 2). We have received His righteousness as a gift and now seek to practice it by following His example.

In verses 3 through 5, the letter outlines the broad contours of what this means in practical terms. Our moral life, finances, and speech are all affected by the grace we have received. Those who claim to be Christians but whose lifestyle is incompatible with their faith should examine themselves to see if they really have experienced the grace of God.

Anyone who
does what is
good is from God.
Anyone who does
what is evil has
not seen God.

3 John 1:11

Apply the Word

As you reflect on the example of Jesus Christ, take stock of your lifestyle. Is there a “family resemblance?” Would others who see your life conclude that you partner with those who are disobedient? Give thanks today for the transforming grace of God. If you see something that needs to change, what concrete first step can you take to follow God’s example?

Pray with Us

On this special day of thanks, let’s express gratitude to God for the many blessings we have received in Christ: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

Out of Darkness

Few of us live far from an artificial light source. Whether it is the table lamp, the streetlight, or the neon sign from a nearby building, we rarely experience absolute darkness. We might forget the contrast between pitch-black dark and the illuminating rays of light.

The lifestyle of one who belongs to Jesus Christ should have that kind of contrast with someone whose actions are marked by “the fruitless deeds of darkness” (v. 11). Such a lifestyle can be a message in itself, exposing the true nature of those who are “disobedient” (v. 12). A lifestyle of walking in the light does not substitute for the words of the gospel, but it is a powerful confirmation of the gospel. Paul’s language in verse 8, which affirms that those who are in Christ “are” light rather than merely being “in” the light, testifies to the profound change in us effected by the gospel.

You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:5

It is also clear, however, that this gospel transformation involves a learning curve. God’s forgiveness and the gift of righteousness are immediate. We receive them the moment we trust in Jesus Christ. Our practice of righteousness, on the other hand, is a process.

We must “find out what pleases the Lord” in order to practice it (v. 10).

This means that we can expect the light of God’s Word and the searching ministry of the Holy Spirit to expose aspects of our lives that need to be changed. We should not be discouraged when

this happens. This kind of conviction is evidence that our citizenship has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. In order to find out what pleases the Lord we must exercise care in the way that we live. Discerning the Lord’s will begins with a knowledge of His Word.

Apply the Word

Our concerns about discerning God’s will usually involve questions of direction. What job should we take? Which schools should we attend? Whom should we marry? It is a good thing to ask for God’s guidance in such matters. But the real question about God’s will is whether our actions are consistent with those who are “light in the Lord” (v. 8).

Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, Vice President of Stewardship, welcomes your prayer support. Ask the Lord to equip Jim and his team with all they need to communicate with Moody’s many ministry partners who generously give to our ministries.

Under the Influence

In June lawmakers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, approved six bills designed to curtail drunken driving. The problem of public intoxication is a national epidemic. Over one million people are arrested yearly for driving under the influence.

The abuse of alcohol can also be a problem for the church. As Paul concludes his series of directives on what our new life in Christ should look like, he addresses the problem of drunkenness. Instead of telling his readers to “just say no,” the Apostle offers an alternative. Believers should not get

drunk on wine, but are to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18). This command not only prohibits drunkenness, it sheds light on the way the Holy Spirit operates in the life of the believer.

Both wine and the Holy Spirit have the capacity to influence our behavior. Yet these two influences result in opposite

effects. Drunkenness leads to dissolution. The Greek word that is translated “debauchery” in verse 18 is one that speaks of wild or unrestrained behavior. In other words, the influence of alcohol can lead to a loss of control. The influence of the Holy Spirit means being “controlled” by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit.

Colossians 3:16

Singing could come to the Apostle’s mind because of the contrast between those who are drunk and those who are filled with the Spirit. Instead of drunken songs, the influence of the Spirit results in praise

and worship. Those who are under the influence of the Spirit are infused with a spirit of thanksgiving. They express their gratitude to God and encourage one another to do the same. Whether we proclaim our joy through psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs, it is clear that the influence of the Holy Spirit produces worship.

Apply the Word

Alcohol is not the only influence that can have a destructive impact on us. Even healthy things like work and food can control us to an unhealthy degree. If you are in bondage to anything like this you may be able to find help in a support group. Ask your pastor if he can recommend one. God’s indwelling Spirit can help you regain control of your life.

Pray with Us

Today, please pray for employees serving in the library on Moody’s Chicago campus: Amy Fields, Jillian Huff, Lorilee Johnson, Amy Koehler, and James Preston. May God use their expertise and the library’s resources to train our students for ministry.

Marriage & Humility

Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth-century English author, said that marriage was “the best state for man in general; and every man is worse in proportion as he is unfit for the married state.” Over 200 years later, many today believe that marriage is outdated or undesirable. And they think that marriage—at least as it is described in the Bible—is a raw deal for women.

One point of contention is the command in verse 23 of today’s reading. The expectation that wives should submit to their husbands seems like an archaic and even embarrassing stipulation in today’s egalitarian culture. The comparison between husbands and the Lord hardly helps matters. Is Paul saying that husbands are “lords” over their wives?

The language of headship makes it clear that the Apostle is talking about the structure of authority in the home. To

say that the husband functions as head does not mean that he is superior to his wife. Submission to his leadership is not a sign of inferiority. One who submits is not necessarily subordinate. It is possible to submit to someone and still be equal. The fact that Jesus, although equal with the Father, will one day “be made subject” to the one who put everything under His feet, is proof of this (1 Cor. 15:28).

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Colossians 3:18

If husbands are to relate to their wives in the way that Jesus Christ relates to the church, then the context of this submission is not domineering abuse but nurturing care. This kind of leadership desires the best interest of one’s spouse. Decisions will be made after considering the point of view of the other partner. This is the kind of leadership described by the apostle Peter, when he tells husbands to be “considerate” as they live with their wives and to “treat them with respect” (1 Peter 3:7).

Apply the Word

Submission is never easy, especially when the one to whom we must submit is a peer. Yet according to verse 21 of today’s passage, every believer is in some kind of relationship that requires submission. Look for some way to express your appreciation today to others, perhaps by offering a word of encouragement for something you have seen them do well.

Pray with Us

Express appreciation to the Lord for Steven Takushi, James Anderson, and Richard McNeill in Computer Support. Thank God today for equipping this team with the technical skills they need to offer computer support to staff at Moody’s Chicago campus.

The Aim of Love

In November 1930, Harry Havens went to bed wearing a blindfold and stayed there for the next seven years. He was angry because his wife had criticized the way he helped with chores around the house. He finally got out of bed because it started to feel uncomfortable.

Harry Havens would have risen from his bed sooner had he understood the significance of today's passage. The leadership role assigned to husbands in the home is not a license for self-indulgence. It is a responsibility. The mark of this leadership is sacrificial love. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Christ loved the church.

The key distinctive of this model of leadership is not a desire to "get my own way" but to "lay down my own life." The comparison with Christ also indicates that husbands have a spiritual responsibility toward their wives. Teaching

about marital roles in the home is often imbalanced, concentrating on the role of the wife in submission and giving little attention to the husband's obligation to sacrifice himself for his wife. In Paul's marriage paradigm the husband is as much a servant to the wife as the wife is

to the husband. Indeed, in view of the parallel with Christ's sacrifice for His church, it might even be said that the husband's responsibility to serve is greater. He is to be like the Savior, who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect.

1 Peter 3:7

Only Jesus' sacrifice can atone for our sins. But husbands can help their wives to grow in grace and holiness. If they are to be successful in this, they must seek the same thing for themselves. Husbands can lead their wives effectively only if they are followers of Christ first.

Apply the Word

Husband, do these verses describe your leadership style in the home? Why not ask your wife for some input about the things you do well? You may also want to ask for feedback about one or two things you could do better to lead more like Christ. The first step, of course, is to be devoted in your own walk with the Savior.

Pray with Us

For over 60 years, Moody Aviation, located in Spokane, Washington, has been a leader in mission aviation training. Ask God to protect Flight Instructors Jay Bigley, James Conrad, and Ian Kerrigan as they prepare the next generation of missionary pilots.

The Love Dividend

Self-mutilation is a disturbing trend among troubled youth. Instances of what is often called intentional self-harm appear to be on the rise. Sometimes a symptom of other forms of mental illness, intentional self-harm involves acts like stabbing, cutting, or burning. It is not merely a form of attention-getting behavior and should always be taken seriously.

The apostle Paul observes that “no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church” (v. 29). We might say that a husband who fails to love his wife the way Christ loved the church is engaging in a spiritual form of “self-harm.” Or to express it more positively, a husband who loves his wife sacrificially reaps a dividend in return.

The reason for this is because the husband and wife are really “one flesh.”

That is why a man
leaves his father
and mother and is
united to his wife,
and they become
one flesh.

Genesis 2:24

This language reflects the statement of Genesis 2:24, our verse for today. After Eve was created, Adam acknowledged that God had united the two of them in a way that was as mysterious as it was intimate. Alluding to the fact that Eve had been created out of his rib, Adam called Eve bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23).

What is even more amazing is that the relationship between the husband and wife is really intended to mirror the relationship between Christ and His church. This enables us to understand one of the reasons God has assigned different roles to the husband and wife. He has not done so arbitrarily; rather, these roles are intended to help the world see the gospel more clearly. A Christian marriage that follows the biblical pattern serves as a kind of living parable of Christ and the church.

Apply the Word

Husbands who love their wives as Christ does the church serve their own best interests. Wives who submit to their husbands with respect paint a beautiful picture of what it means to yield to Christ. Today’s culture may not see these as virtue—but Christ does. This kind of love and obedience will not go unrewarded.

Pray with Us

Would you join us in praying for Steven Mogck, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer? Let’s ask the Lord to continue to grant him discernment as he serves and leads Moody’s operations staff.

House Rules

Nearly every child who has pushed against the rules has heard a parent say something like this: “As long as you are living under my roof, you will follow my rules.” It is normal for a family to have “house rules” that guide behavior.

This section of Ephesians provides guidelines for Christian households, especially relationships that involve submission. Today’s passage focuses on the relationship between children and parents. It also includes a directive for Christian slaves. Paul’s words should not be taken as an endorsement of slavery. To the contrary, he urges slaves who are able to obtain their freedom to do so (see 1 Cor. 7:21).

A child’s obligation to submit to his or her parents is rooted in God’s law. Indeed, this is included in the Ten Commandments. The command to honor one’s father and mother is the first

commandment with a promise of blessing attached (see Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). But it is also clear from what Paul says about parents that submission is a two-way street. The Apostle’s warning that fathers not “exasperate” their children is proof that God is interested in more than bare obedience. He is deeply concerned about the environment in which submission takes place. The Greek term that is translated “exasperate” in verse 4 is rare. Its only other occurrence in Scripture is in Romans 10:19, where it connotes anger and jealousy.

Honor your father
and your mother,
so that you may
live long in the
land the LORD
your God is
giving you.

Exodus 20:12

Slaves were to submit to their master for a different reason. For the child it was a matter of divine order. Parents were owed obedience. Slaves were to submit for the sake of their testimony and are told to look beyond their earthly master to Christ. The respect they showed was a reflection of their reverence for Christ.

Apply the Word

Sometimes we must submit to those who do not warrant our respect. If you have done everything you can to change the dynamics of the relationship and have been unsuccessful, remember that God is aware of your service and values obedience that is rendered in His name. Those to whom you submit must also give an account to God.

Pray with Us

Would you join us in thanking God for those who serve on Moody’s Board of Trustees? These individuals generously give of their time and talents to lead Moody’s ministries. May God give them unity and wisdom as they serve the Lord together.

The Armor of God

Scan the titles of today's best-selling fiction and you will find vampires, zombies, and other supernatural terrors. Some readers seem to be obsessed with the powers of darkness.

In our reading today, the Apostle shows that the Christian faces spiritual forces far more terrible and powerful than any vampire or zombie. Scripture speaks of rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world. These are spiritual forces and not creatures of flesh and blood. What is more, they are directed by an even greater power, because all their efforts are intended to further Satan's schemes.

The fact that these cosmic forces are spiritual and not made of flesh and blood means that our natural defenses are useless in defending against them. With enemies like this, only spiritual defenses will do. Fortunately, God in His

grace has provided us with a complete suit of armor that can enable us to stand against these powers of evil. Truth, righteousness, faith, and the Word of God equip us to defend ourselves and will protect us against the onslaught of the enemy. Although we may seem to lose an occasional skirmish, the fact that God has already provided us with salvation guarantees that we will ultimately win the war. Satan can oppose us but he will never be able to defeat us.

Let us be sober,
putting on faith
and love as a
breastplate,
and the hope of
salvation as
a helmet.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

The strategy we use to engage the enemy is as singular as the weapons God has provided. In a sense, we might describe it as a war of words. This conflict is carried forward through prayer, as we pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (v. 18). We pray not only for ourselves but for others who are engaged in the struggle. This is a war that we wage on our knees.

Apply the Word

Spiritual warfare seems very mysterious and may even frighten us. We wonder how we can engage the enemy without going to unbiblical extremes. A good place to start may be *Victory Over the Darkness* by Neil T. Anderson (Multnomah), which focuses on our victory in Christ and uses a Scripture-oriented approach to spiritual warfare.

Pray with Us

Moody's annual Candlelight Carols production has celebrated the reason for the season, Jesus Christ. Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's President, requests your prayers for those who will hear the gospel message for the very first time at performances this weekend.

A Faithful Servant

The sponsors of a large Christian conference put up a “graffiti wall” for participants to write on. Someone penned this question: “Did Paul know he was writing the Scriptures?” Just below it someone else wrote: “Did Barnabas know he wasn’t?”

This humorous exchange underscores an important principle. Ministry is a team effort. The apostle Paul is the author of this epistle, but he was not the only one responsible for the success of his ministry. In the concluding verses of Ephesians he pays tribute to Tychicus, “the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord” (v. 21). Tychicus was probably already known to many of the readers of this epistle. He was from Asia and was a colleague of Trophimus who was from Ephesus (see Acts 20:4; 21:29).

Tychicus carried this letter from Paul to Ephesus, and he often served as a mes-

senger. He delivered the letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7–9), and was selected to be one of those who accompanied the collection gathered for the poor to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:19). When Paul sent the slave Onesimus back to his master Philemon, Tychicus accompanied him with Paul’s personal letter requesting his freedom. Tychicus was also one of those Paul regarded as competent enough to stand in for him in Crete.

Without the aid of servants like Tychicus, who were willing to stand in Paul’s place and act as his eyes and ears, the

Apostle’s ministry would have been severely curtailed. Paul wrote this letter from prison, serving as “an ambassador in chains” for Christ (v. 20). Faithful messengers like Tychicus not only extended Paul’s ministry across borders but across generations. We would not have the letter of Ephesians to study today if Tychicus had not been faithful to his task.

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

Colossians 4:7

Apply the Word

The work that God has given you to do for Him today may seem menial. There is no outward glory in it. Do you feel as if you are little more than an errand runner for the kingdom? Then be encouraged. You are in very good company. You will not know until eternity how far reaching the effects of all your small acts of obedience have been.

Pray with Us

Will you ask the Lord to give health and strength to our student music ensembles as they lead thousands of attendees in the worship of our Savior this evening at Candlelight Carols? May their ministry bless hearts and minds with the praise of our Savior.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

devout or skeptical, Pastor Cole handled questions with a combination of grace, sensitivity, and unshakeable commitment to the truth of God's Word.

All who worked with Don Cole can attest that these qualities were part of his character. He never took himself too seriously, and he was always gracious with others. He knew how to talk about Scripture and theology in language that people could understand, and he always remembered that these issues were not just abstractions. Real people with real questions and real problems needed real answers. His experience in Africa gave him a wide lens for viewing faith and life. He understood what it meant to serve an amazing God who is more than we can ask or imagine, and he never lost his enthusiasm for a life devoted to God. Though his presence on earth will be deeply missed, we rejoice that he and Naomi are praising the Lord before the throne of God. They have finished the race, and they were good and faithful servants.

Other Remembrances

A few years ago, Don and Naomi Cole were interviewed for the endorsement of a project in Angola. Moody Radio has edited the video and placed it on YouTube:

<http://youtu.be/2XdT2GTl66Y>

Moody Radio has posted a remembrance of Don and Naomi Cole, along with links to Pastor Cole's numerous Moody Radio programs:

www.moodyradio.org/pastorcole/

The *Chicago Tribune* published a wonderful obituary that described the life and ministry of Don and Naomi Cole. (To access the story, you will need to sign up for free online access.)

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/ct-met-donald-cole-obit-20120821,0,5184311.story>

If you have a special memory or story about Pastor Don Cole, we'd love to hear it! You can send it online at www.todayintheword/contact

Or you can mail it to us:

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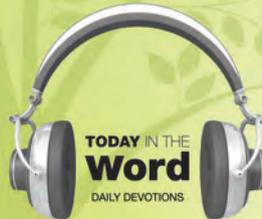
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