“In order to understand the Bible, you must read it.” This is an axiom that we both firmly believe. A secondary principle to which we both hold is, “If you didn’t understand it the first time, read it again.” More than anything else, the understanding of the Bible requires reading it, and then reading it some more. For many generations, committed believers held to the principle of the clarity of Scripture. Among other things, this simply means that if followers of Jesus the Messiah read the Bible, they can understand it. Nevertheless, there are some qualifications for this general principle:

1. Understanding the Bible requires effort—we need to work at studying the Scriptures.
2. Understanding the Bible will take time—we won’t get it all immediately.
3. Understanding the Bible requires that the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds to the Scriptures.
4. Understanding the Bible will happen only if we are willing to obey it.
5. Understanding the Bible will never be complete—we can always learn more.

Having said this, we all need some help from time to time to understand the Scriptures. A person may be reading the Bible for his or her own personal time in the Word and run across a phrase or a word, and wonder, “What does that mean?” Or a Sunday school teacher or small group leader might be preparing a Bible Study and wonder, “How does this passage fit with the paragraph that went before it?” Or pastors or teachers might encounter people confused by a particular verse and might need some help clarifying its meaning. It is for these reasons, and many more, that all of the contributors for this resource have worked so hard to produce The Moody Bible Commentary.

We want to help that reader, Sunday school teacher, home group leader or pastor have a better understanding of the Bible. Of course, there are many good commentaries to which the Bible student could turn. What makes this commentary distinctive?

**The Moody Bible Commentary is trustworthy.** For generations Moody Publishers has had the slogan, “The Name You Can Trust.” That derives from being the publishing house of the Moody Bible Institute, an institution that has maintained its commitment to the truth of the Word of God since 1886. Since the founding of Moody Bible Institute, there have been countless attacks on the veracity of Scripture, innumerable attempts to undermine its teaching, and significant challenges to its authority. Nevertheless, in all that time, the administrators and professors at Moody Bible Institute have maintained a commitment to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible as the very Word of God. This high view of Scripture, along with a determination to practice first-rate biblical scholarship, has made Moody the name you can trust. Thirty faculty members of the Moody Bible Institute have worked together to produce The Moody Bible Commentary with explanations that are reliable.

**The Moody Bible Commentary is understandable.** The authors and editors have striven to explain the Scriptures in a simple and clear way. They defined theological terms, clarified the meaning of difficult biblical words, identified ancient sources with which readers might be unfamiliar, and gave the geographical locations of ancient biblical cities and towns. Although the writers engaged in excellent scholarly research, they made sure that readers would not need a commentary to help them understand this commentary.

**The Moody Bible Commentary shows the logic of biblical books.** Too often people read the Bible without regard for its literary context or structure. But the writers of Scripture, under the superintending work of the Holy Spirit, wrote inspired text with great literary artistry. Therefore, all biblical books have literary structure and strategies. One distinctive feature of this commentary
is that it follows the structures that are inherent in the biblical books themselves. The commentary on each biblical book has an outline in its introduction. The body of the commentary follows that same outline so a reader can follow the structure throughout that specific book. Moreover, the commentary itself traces the flow of thought, showing how each individual section fits in the overall argument of the biblical book. In essence, The Moody Bible Commentary will provide a road map through each book of the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary deals with difficult verses. Sometimes the most frustrating aspect of using a commentary is that it complicates the explanation of difficult or disputed verses and fails to offer help precisely where it is most needed. The authors and editors worked hard to be alert to the possible difficulties in a text and its interpretation, and to address those issues clearly. Of course, every reader finds different questions and sees different difficulties. Nevertheless, this commentary hopes to answer the more perplexing questions. For example, does a particular Bible passage seem to contradict another? Not if it is the inspired Word of God. Also, readers of Scripture are often perplexed by biblical prophecies, wondering when and how these were or will be fulfilled. When these apparent contradictions or perplexing difficulties present themselves, this commentary will address those issues. After all, if a commentary does not address the hard or unclear verses, then it really is not much help at all.

The Moody Bible Commentary uses a literal interpretive method and applies it consistently. By “literal” we mean that the method that governs this commentary understands the words of the text in a normal way. Unless there is a good reason to think otherwise, the phrases and expressions of Scripture are interpreted according to what appears to be their plain sense. If there is a figure of speech or symbol, then it is interpreted with sensitivity to that figurative expression. However, even in the case of figurative language, there is always some spiritual or physical reality the biblical author is conveying through the figure of speech. For example, Jesus is not a literal door (see Jn 10:9), but this metaphor describes Him literally, as the only way for a person to enter a forgiven relationship with God.

Virtually all biblical interpreters agree with this “literal” approach. However, all do not apply it consistently, particularly in prophetic passages. A distinctive feature of this commentary is that it understands much of prophecy in its literal sense and even prophetic symbols are recognized as referring to a genuine reality. As a result, this approach to interpretation will affect how the commentary understands Israel, the Church, and the end of days. In our view, this method of interpretation is the least subjective and easiest way to understand the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary sees the Old Testament as a messianic text. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples about “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk 24:44). In commenting on this passage, A. T. Robertson once remarked, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem to be able to do” (Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 2 [Nashville: Broadman, 1930], 294). Even though much of contemporary scholarship does not believe in direct predictive Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, this commentary does. It presumes that God could and did reveal the messianic hope to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, it consistently shows how these prophecies make sense in their literary context, pointing to the coming of the future Redeemer. Additionally, this commentary shows how the New Testament refers to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these predictions, identifying Him as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Moody Bible Commentary is based on the original languages of Scripture. The commentary uses the New American Standard Bible as its English language Bible text. When you see quotations from the biblical text in the commentary, they are in bold and taken from the NASB. We chose this translation for the commentary because it is, at the same time, among the more literal and readable translations of the Bible available. However, the commentary authors did not rely on the translation of the NASB. Rather, in their research and study, they used the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. As a result, there are places where a commentary might point out a more favorable translation of a word or phrase. The authors explain why this particular translation is preferred and often show how a different English version may understand it in the same way or, if necessary, include their own translations of that phrase or word. As a result, this commentary provides a fresh exposition of the biblical text based on the original languages of Scripture.
The Moody Bible Commentary is user-friendly. A variety of elements make this commentary easy to use. Besides using understandable language, it is a one-volume commentary. By limiting it to just one volume, the commentary can be the one book on your shelf to which you can turn when you need help understanding the Bible. Of course there are times when readers will want to study a particular passage in greater detail. Therefore, the contributors included in-text citations, directing readers to works they can use for deeper study. Also, for those who would like greater depth in their study, there is a list of recommended works at the end of each individual commentary. Other helpful elements include an introduction to each book of the Bible, dealing with key features, such as author, date, recipients, historical setting, theological issues, place in the canon, and an outline. There are also maps of the Bible lands as they relate to the Scriptures and helpful charts that clarify the biblical text.

Other aids are included to help with your own personal study and deeper application. Of course, there are subject and Scripture indexes to help readers locate or return to key themes and issues as needed. At various points throughout, there are cross references to key Bible passages that discuss related issues (typically shown with cf. and the Bible verses). Also included are notes directing the reader to other parts of the commentary for further discussion of the same issue if it is discussed elsewhere. In addition, each chapter in the commentary includes some points of application for today’s reader, reflecting the Scripture’s teaching that it remains a light to guide our paths (Ps 119:105) and is useful in daily life “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2Tm 3:16). Overall, this commentary wants to give you an accessible resource that will readily open the Bible for you, making simple what some might think is overly complex.

Most of all, we want to encourage you never to substitute reading this commentary for actually reading the Bible. All of us, editors and contributors alike, want to support your reading of the Bible by helping you understand it. But it is the actual reading of the Bible that will transform our lives. We concur with the wisdom of Proverbs: “He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord” (Pr 16:20).

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ish (-a being the typical feminine noun suffix in Hb.), This is also implied by the statement in which the two words are used: she shall be called Woman [ishsha], because she was taken out of Man [ish], italics added. This underscores the woman’s intrinsic equality with the man: all that he is in essence, “beneath” his masculine packaging as a man (ish), too is she “beneath” her feminine packaging as a woman (ishsha). The spelling of the word ishsha, however, shows that the feminine ending (-a) has not been added to the Hebrew word for man (ish), but in fact to the Hebrew root meaning “soft” or “delicate” ( -n-sh, from which is derived the name “Enosh” in Gn 4:26). Therefore Adam was affirming both the woman’s equal value to man (by the sound of the word) as well as her distinctiveness (by the spelling of the word) as “a delicate vessel” (1 Pt 3:7, in which the term typically translated “weaker” [asthenestero] can—and should—in view of the present passage—be translated “delicate” or even “tender”).

2:24-25. Marriage is described as consisting of three essential actions (reflecting the three clauses in the Hebrew text), all of which, if not always perfectly realized in a marriage, are nonetheless intended as life-long ideals for which a married couple is to strive unceasingly. The first action, represented by the statement a man shall leave his father and his mother, is that of clearly shifting one’s primary human loyalty to his spouse. The man is the subject of the verb (the “doer” of the action), suggesting not that the leaving is to be done only by the man, but that the degree of relational “severance” will typically be greater for him than he should expect it to be for his wife.

The second essential action is noted in the clause and he shall be joined to his wife (or “cleave to” KJV), in which “be joined to” (daveq) refers not to the sexual union of the couple, but rather to an intentional and unbreakable commitment, with the best interest of the other party being both the motivation and the goal of the one making that commitment. This verb is often used to describe the ideal of Israel’s (or an individual’s) covenant relationship with God, as in Jos 23:8: “But you are to cling (tidbaq) to the L ORD your God, as you have done to this day” (cf. Dt 30:20; 2Kg 18:6; Ps 63:8; Jr 13:11). The word is also used to describe Ruth’s commitment to Naomi, “Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung [daveqa] to her” (Ru 1:14). Ruth clarified this commitment in her following statement: “Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (v. 16). These sentiments expressed by Ruth are intended to characterize the “cleaving” within marriage. Genesis 2:24 presents the man as the subject (i.e., the one “doing” the cleaving) perhaps because men frequently have greater difficulty with marital commitment.

The third action is expressed by the statement, and they shall become one flesh. This refers not merely to the sexual union within marriage, but in fact to the uniting of two people into one. It refers to two people sharing of all of life in common so as to be like one person. Sexual union is a way to express this exclusive unity and a reason the Bible limits sexual relations to married couples.

On entering into the marriage union both the man and the woman are obligated to meet the physical needs of the other, just as they would hope for those same needs to be met in themselves. Paul made this point in Eph 5:28-30: “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.” As a result of the first couple experiencing marriage in this perfect setting, they are described as being naked and were not ashamed, indicating the lovely innocence and intimacy available in marriage.

B. Fallen Humanity: The Advent of Sin (3:1-21)

In this second part of His “prosecution” of depraved humanity God built His case by showing that the “fall” from the ideal of perfection and unbroken “rest” (i.e., relationship) with God was because of man’s choice, via Adam, to disobey the divine prohibition and to seek to determine for themselves what is “good.” In addition to bringing man’s culpability into focus, these 21 verses also introduce, in masterful fashion, the foundational concepts of temptation, guilt, mercy, grace, death, curse, chastisement, forgiveness, and substitutionary atonement.

1. The Lead-up to Sin (3:1-6)

This detailed account of the temptation that confronted the first couple gives a detailed blueprint of how temptation “works” in people’s lives today as well. And by comparing Adam’s failure with the parallel temptation experience of Christ, believers are given a blueprint for
success over the same temptations that confront them.


3:1-3. That the serpent was described as more crafty than any beast of the field indicates that it was a real animal and not a mere symbol. Nevertheless, that the serpent here is under Satan's control is beyond question, inasmuch as serpents cannot talk. Moreover, the apostle John clearly identified him as “the serpent of old” (Rv 12:9; 20:2) and also the clear intention of Christ's statement in Jn 8:44: “He was a murderer from the beginning”—referring to Satan's deceptive role in inciting the first couple to sin and thus experience death. The text never states why Satan chose to use a serpent in his temptation of humanity. In seeking to incite the couple to sin Satan focused his efforts on the woman, since her basis for obedience was potentially less stable, being dependent on Adam's communication of the command as well as for his guidance in resolving any questions or doubt about it. Since the couple at this point was inseparable (Adam was “with her;” v. 6), Satan did not overtly “corner” or isolate the woman, which would undoubtedly have raised Adam's ire and more quickly prompted him to defend his wife. Rather, Satan spoke to them both—as underscored by the fact that all of the “you” pronouns in this exchange are plural, yet he addressed the woman (v. 1, he said to the woman), and in doing so he subtly marginalizes her husband. Nor did Satan state an outright lie; rather, he recalled (or, better, rephrased) God's precise words in 2:16-17 in such a way that he distorted both the focus of the command and the character of the God who gave it. God had presented the command by emphasizing that much more comprehensive part of it that reflects His parental love and grace, that is, they were to eat from every tree (v. 16) and then He added the single and comparatively minor restriction (v. 17). Satan rephrased the command in such a way that the whole of it was focused on and colored by the single restriction. To her credit, however, Eve responded by reiterating the command as properly intended, beginning with emphasis on the greater and easier part reflective of God's grace and generosity.

Some interpreters, however, have criticized Eve's (or Adam's) adding to the command the words or touch it. They claim that this is an example of the unfortunate human tendency to unnecessarily encumber God's Word. However, such criticism here is unjustified, because before eating from the tree they were not depraved and therefore were not sinners. Their sin is identified with eating from the tree, not with a supposedly wrongful addition to God's command. And even where such “additions” are later condemned, this is only where such additions are either contrary to God's Law or intended in a truly legalistic sense.

**b. Step Two: Wrongly Assessing God's Purpose (3:4-5)**

3:4-5. Since Eve clearly was not caught by Satan's rephrasing of God's command, Satan adopted an alternate plan: calling into question God's purpose or motive for giving them the command. God intended the restriction for the benefit of man—to serve as a privileged opportunity for their obedience as well as to ensure their dependence on God as the only source of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan suggested that God's intention was petty, for He was unwilling to share His divine position with man who, by eating from the tree, would be equally as qualified to be called God (hence, like God, or “as gods,” as the phrase may also be translated). Ultimately therefore God's character as a loving and gracious Father, with the best interest of His children at heart, was being called into question.

**c. Step Three: Wrongly Approving What Seems “Good” (3:6)**

3:6. Significantly the initial “formula” used here to describe Eve's assessment—she saw that the tree was good—is identical to the “formula” that up to this point has been used exclusively in connection with God's assessment of what is good for man, from the initial creation of light (1:4) to the final act of creating the woman, whose absence from Adam's life was “not good” (2:18). The point inevitably emerges that people, on their own, are not able to assess accurately what is truly good—or, more specifically, that man's assessment of what is good must be guided by the parameters established by God's Word.

Eve assessed the “good,” or appeal, of eating the fruit in three distinct ways: it was practical, being useful for food, it was aesthetically beautiful, and it had the possibility for wisdom. These three areas preyed upon the woman's physical, emotional, and spiritual desires. Some have seen these same three “categories” of temptation reflected in “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” (1Jn 2:16).
The strongest appeal to the woman was that of wisdom, which in Scripture is both “mental and spiritual acumen” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988], 136). As a result, the temptation is not presented as flagrant rebellion but rather “a quest for wisdom and ‘the good’ apart from God’s provision” (Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 104). Therefore, the woman took the fruit and ate and gave also to her husband with her.

Since both the man and the woman ate, why is the man deemed more culpable than the woman? Perhaps because he had heard the prohibition against eating directly from God but also he had experienced firsthand, in a way that Eve had not, the paternal love and grace of God in receiving from His hand, especially in God providing Eve herself. Tragically, however, Adam kept silent during the temptation, and in so doing he gave a certain degree of “tacit approval” to the validity of Satan’s alternative and improper characterization of God’s motive. For this reason, the text emphasizes that the woman was deceived (3:13, cf. 1Tm 2:14, “the woman being deceived”). Although Eve should have known better, she sinned without fully realizing that her sin was inconsistent with the true character of God. Adam, on the other hand, fully understood, and is therefore ascribed a far greater culpability, as is evident from God prefacing Adam’s chastisement (but not Eve’s) with explicit reference to his intentional disobedience (3:17). In Nm 30:6-12, a husband is held responsible for his wife’s vows. In fact, if he hears his wife make a vow but does not speak up, he is responsible for her vow (Nm 30:9-11). Similarly, Adam was responsible to speak his disapproval during the temptation and since he failed, is considered more culpable. Not only did the man fail to speak and stop the woman, but joining her folly, he also took the fruit, and he ate.

2. Humanity’s Response to Sin (3:7-8)

These two verses show that the death about which God had warned Adam in 2:17 would take place “in the day” that he ate was not an empty threat, as Satan had deceived Eve into thinking. The death that they experienced, however, was not that of immediate physical cessation, nor was it that of becoming “subject” to death (i.e., mortal), since this was already the case before they ate (see 2:9). Rather death here was separation. Just as death is a separation of the spirit from the body (Jms 2:26), spiritual death is a separation of the person from God. Here it was a spiritual and *experiential* separation, a separation or “break” in the ideal experience of their relationship with God and with each other. In this respect the narrative presents a vivid paradigm for understanding (and hence avoiding) the consequences of sin in life.

a. Conviction (3:7a)

3:7a. The reference to the eyes of the couple being opened is an idiom that expresses their acquisition not of new visual information but of new knowledge, that is full wisdom, the developed understanding of what is good and what is evil. Such knowledge or wisdom is of course a good thing, and its attainment was just as much an intended goal for Adam and Eve as it is for people today. Yet God had intended for them to attain this understanding of good and evil by dependence on Him, through the process of taking continual recourse to Him and instruction from Him. Because they did not, ironically their immediate acquisition of this full knowledge (i.e., their “open eyes”) also enabled them to realize that since the manner in which they acquired this knowledge (by breaking God’s command) was “evil,” they were guilty and deserving of punishment from God. Thus, in the following phrase and they knew that they were naked, the word “naked” (*erummim*) does not signify merely the state of being unclothed (this is denoted by a different Hebrew word, *‘arummin*, translated “naked” in 2:25), but also their state of shameful and guilty nakedness resulting from sin, specifically in connection with God’s punishment for sin (cf. Dt 28:48; Ezk 16:22, 39; 23:29). The sense of this statement therefore is that their newly acquired knowledge of what constitutes good and evil “opened their eyes” to see that what they had done was evil and had justly left them “naked,” that is, exposed, to God’s impending punishment.

b. Division from Each Other (3:7b)

3:7b. The *loin coverings* the couple made from *fig leaves* should be understood not only as an attempt to cover their physical nakedness, but also, in light of the previous comment, as an attempt to assure their sense of “exposure” to the impending punishment that they know their sin justly deserved. In addition the “dressing” of these loincloths highlights the typical impact of sin on our human relationships (especially when that sin is jointly committed), namely, division and disruption. This is consistent with the fundamental concept of “death” as noted in
2:17, as separation rather than cessation. In this case the “death” or “disjunction” was not in the fact of their relationship (the couple was still “married”), but in the ideally intended experience of that relationship, outwardly reflected in the barriers they set up between those parts of themselves that are most representative of physical intimacy.

c. Division from God (3:8)

3:8. The impact of the couple’s sin on their relationship with God—the “death” that He warned would occur “in the day” that they ate (2:17)—is here borne out by a “break” or “separation” in the experience of that relationship. This consequence is presented with especially tragic emphasis by the depiction of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Since the verb “walking” logically implies the use of feet, it must be concluded that God had at this point taken human form—and if so, as in 2:7 and based on the theological consideration that only God the Son can be seen walking about (Jn 1:18), it was the Son specifically who is in view here. The verb here translated walking is a relatively infrequent form of the verb that indicates not a walking from point A to point B, with a specific endpoint in view, but rather a “strolling,” “meandering,” or a circular type of walking. In other words though the Son knew what the couple had done, He wanted them to know that His ideal intention was to enjoy fellowship with His human children to the fullest capacity of their created nature, which is physical as well as spiritual. There is perhaps no more universally poignant picture of such holistic relationship than that of God seeking to stroll with man in the garden toward the evening time of day. The tragedy in this passage is that God’s first children were pushing away this privileged experience of fellowship by using those very things that their divine Father gave them for experience of fellowship by using those very things that their divine Father gave them for the way in which people today are to anticipate and assess God’s response to the sins of His children.

a. Gentle Confrontation (3:9-13)

3:9-13. Unexpectedly to Adam and Eve, since they were anticipating God’s immediate (and just) response to their sin, the Son (see comments at 3:8) did not call out to them in wrath, but in a tone of gentle and patient questioning. These questions are not, as some interpreters claim, reflections of an “immature” early Israelite theology in which the concept of God’s omniscience is not yet fully developed. Instead these questions are not being asked to give Him information He did not have, but for the benefit of the ones being questioned. Rather than overwhelming them with judgment because His honor was offended, God responded in a way reflective of concern for their welfare and betterment. He wanted them to understand why what they did was so bad, so that it would serve as a deterrent to future sin. Thus the first question Where are you? was intended to have the couple leave behind the barriers (the trees) and distance they placed between themselves and God because of their shame. And by the second question—Who told you that you were naked?—God’s intention for them was to understand how they ended up at this less-than-ideal distance from God.

God’s paternal and even gentle mercy (i.e., not giving them the punishment they deserved) is further evident in the second question God asked, supplying the content of their confession (Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?). In response the man need only say, “Yes” or “I ate” to acknowledge his sin. And Adam did say this, but only after seeking to mitigate his guilt by shifting much of the blame to the woman and in a sense to God Himself (whom You gave to be with me). Nonetheless, God played along and His similar question to Eve “What is this you have done?” showed that His personal interest in the woman’s welfare was just as keen. She gave essentially the same response, with much of the blame being shifted to the Serpent. That these questions were indeed intended to draw the couple to confession is underscored by God asking no question of the Tempter—the questions had no application to him, for Satan is not God’s child.

Another significant observation with respect to God’s questions here is that once the man and the woman say I ate (vv. 12-13) God ceased His questioning and moved on. If the purpose of these questions was to draw each of them to confess, one may reasonably conclude that God’s
purpose had been satisfied. This conclusion is established as a certainty by v. 21, where God expresses toward the couple one of the most vivid and visual examples of forgiveness to be found anywhere in the OT. Therefore the implication emerges that God is satisfied with less than perfect confession. In His paternal mercy and perfect love, God fervently desired to express forgiveness toward His children (and what good parent would not?). The theological-thematic emphasis of this episode therefore is on God’s mercy rather than on the couple’s merit. The challenge in all this is clear: since the goal of any child of God is to strive to be like his heavenly Father (Mt 5:48), believers should follow God’s lead and strive to forgive those who have sinned against them, even when their apology or confession is less than what one would like.

b. Merciful Chastisement (3:14-20)

Though one may describe God as “punishing” all three (Adam, Eve, and Satan), God’s words to Satan are characteristic of judgment (which always proceeds from condemnation), whereas His words to Adam and Eve are characteristic of chastisement (which always proceeds from love, never condemnation which, according to Rm 8:1, is never the experience of God’s children).

3:14-15. God’s words are first addressed to the serpent (v.14), the literal animal used by Satan. The judgment of crawling on his belly is not to be taken as meaning the serpent at one time had legs and now would lose them. Just as there were rainbows before the flood and circumcision existed before the Abrahamic covenant, so crawling on the belly and eating dust are conditions previously descriptive of the serpent but now given symbolic significance. These actions will now represent complete defeat (dust you will eat in Mc 7:17) and absolute diminution of life. Moreover, the serpent is more cursed (v. 14) than the rest of the animal kingdom. This is so in that the whole creation was cursed because of the fall, however that curse will be lifted from the rest of the animal kingdom in the Messianic kingdom but will not be lifted from the serpent (see Is 65:25).

In v. 15 God addressed the power behind the serpent, Satan, further underscoring the difference between His treatment of Satan and that of the couple by indicating that Satan’s final defeat will be brought about by one of the couple’s own descendants—yet one who is at the same time more than a mere descendant. This pronouncement in fact represents the first direct specific prediction concerning the work of the Messiah, and has appropriately been regarded from the earliest period of Christian interpretation as the Protevangelium (lit., “the first gospel”). Even before the NT was written, the messianic import of this verse was recognized by Jewish interpreters (as evident in the translation of the LXX), and it continued to be affirmed within the Jewish community for several centuries after the birth of Christianity (in the early Aramaic paraphrastic translations, known as the targumim Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti, and Onqelos as well as the rabbinic commentary Genesis Rabbah 23:5). This shows how entrenched this view was, and clearly this is the most “natural” and logical understanding of the passage. This passage bears out not only a reference to the final victory of Messiah, but also to His death in that He will be bruised on the heel. His divine nature may be implied by the use of He, the “seed” of the woman, who is portrayed as issuing the final “death blow” to Satan (He shall bruise you on the head), which is something that only God can and will do. God the Son will do this, as stated in Ps 110:6b (lit., “He will crush [the] head”); Rm 16:20; 1Jn 3:8; Rv 20:10 (where Satan is thrown into the lake of fire under the authority—if not directly by—the enthroned Christ).

3:16. God’s chastisement of the woman consists of two parts: the first is that He would greatly multiply her pain (lit., “hard labor”) in childbirth (v. 16a). The second part of the woman’s chastisement is that her desire will be for her husband—the “desire” here being not the emotional desire that was unquestionably present in their prefall relationship, but rather the psychological desire to dominate and control her husband. This is clear from the contrast with the following clause (v. 16b being an antithetic parallelism), and he will rule over you. The man will seek to exercise mastery and control over the woman; the ideal, however, was they were to rule together, with final authority and responsibility resting with the man. Also the word for “desire” (teshúqa) is used again in chap. 4 (the only other occurrence of this word in the Pentateuch) where it is again followed by a contrastive clause and paralleled by the same verbal root for “rule” (mashal) as in 3:16. God warned Cain, “[Sin’s] desire [teshúqa] is for you, but you must master [yimshol] it” (4:7). The man’s leadership of the woman is not a result of the fall. It was in place before it, as evident in man’s authority to name (2:20) and his explicit...
naming of the woman (2:23). Rather, the fall brought with it the woman’s tendency to dominate her husband, and male leadership became vexing for the woman for the first time.

3:17-19. God spoke to Adam, suggesting that He held Adam most culpable for the sin. This point is also underscored by the order in which God responded to the sinning parties, moving back up the true “chain of blame” (from Adam to Eve to Satan) though the sinning parties were Satan, then Eve, followed by Adam. Yet Adam’s chastisement was essentially identical to that of Eve, consisting of both a psychological component (the specific desire to “master” the other, v. 16) and a physical component (the specific experience of toil, the same word used in v. 16 to describe the increased “pain” of the woman’s childbirth).

The physical death to which God referred in the last line of v. 19—and to dust you shall return—does not represent an additional chastisement that Adam was made mortal. Since “immortality” was not part of Adam and Eve’s created nature, God was simply indicating the end point of man’s life of hard toil, that is, physical death, the inevitable consequence of being restricted from the tree of life.

3:20. Prior to this point the woman had been referred to as “Eve,” but in v. 20 Adam actually gives her name to her. This does not contradict 2:23 in which Adam called her “woman,” since this latter is a noun intended to designate her sex, whereas the name Eve is her individual designation (as is “Adam” for the man). This represents her unique role as the mother of all the living, that is, the first mother from whom the rest of human life would descend. Nor is this verse “misplaced,” interrupting the flow of God’s continuing punishment from v. 19 to the couple’s exile in vv. 22-24. To the contrary, God’s chastisement of the couple is completed by the end of v. 19, with v. 20 representing the immediate realization of one aspect of that chastisement, namely, the man’s assertion of “rule” or “mastery” over the woman (v. 16), represented by the act of naming Eve.

c. Gracious Forgiveness (3:21)

3:21. Having responded to their sin with paternal gentleness and merciful chastisement, God sealed His response with a vivid act of forgiveness, and in so doing He established the pattern by which sin is thereby properly atoned for (i.e., divinely forgiven). This picture of atonement/divine forgiveness in v. 21, and not that of the exile from the garden in vv. 22-24, is the proper “conclusion” to the episode of the couple’s sin. The exile is more consistent with the events of the next chapter in reflecting the inevitable aftermath of human sin. Also in Jewish liturgy v. 22 marks the beginning of the next Sabbath reading section, with v. 21 serving as the conclusion to the previous section that began in 2:4.

In 3:21 three indispensable elements of true atonement/divine forgiveness may be discerned. First, it requires a blood sacrifice (cf. Heb 9:22, “Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”), as implied by the guilty parties being clothed with garments made from animal skin, logically requiring the death of an animal. Second, the work of providing the sacrifice is, ultimately, God’s work, for He alone is the subject of the two verbs made and clothed (underscoring, by contrast, the complete passivity in this process of Adam and Eve). Third, God’s work of atonement, once achieved, is durable, that is, permanent, as borne out by the contrast between the fig leaves with which the couple attempted to cover their shame and the skin (leather) garments that God provided.

C. Dire Consequences: The Aftermath of Sin (3:22–4:26)

In view of God’s expression of forgiveness in v. 21, one may be tempted to conclude that the consequences of the first couple’s sin extended no further than their own lifelong experience of God’s chastisement. However, in this section God further built his case (that humanity is completely depraved and in dire need of divine redemption) by making clear that the consequences of that first sin did indeed extend beyond the first parents.


While the experience of exile throughout human history is almost always the direct result of human depravity (i.e., the desire by some to master others and take what belongs to them), such was not the case here. The first couple’s exile from the garden, though a consequence of their sin, is in this instance enforced directly by God—not as an extra element of punishment but as a necessary step in ensuring that they ultimately receive what is best (of which the good—in this case, staying in the garden—is often the enemy).

a. The Problem (3:22)

3:22. Though God had forgiven the couple, a fundamental problem still remained, as expressed by God Himself: they had become like
one of Us, knowing good and evil. The point of this is not simply that they, like God, were fully able to distinguish evil from good, which is hardly a problem as such. Instead, the problem was that, unlike God, they were unable (because of depravity) to live according to that knowledge. God alone in his omniscience knows how to effect that which is good and to avoid that which is evil (see 2:9). Humanity's moral discernment though now present was limited and could not bring about that which is good. Were they therefore to eat at that point from the tree of life, they would live forever in a less than ideal state. They would be forgiven by God, but would nevertheless possess a fallen nature and fallen bodies as a consequence of the fall. Knowing God's righteous requirements, because of depravity they would be incapable of observing those requirements, and would thus lack the kind of intimacy with God for which He created them. God, therefore, in His mercy, keeps them from eating from the tree of life and excludes them from Eden.

The ironic outcome of this episode is that humanity began like God, having been created in His image. However, now, having pursued their desire to become like God, and somewhat inadequately attained that status, the man and woman will be expelled from God's presence. Hence, they are “like God” but not with God.

Humanity's expulsion from the garden would serve as a foreshadowing and warning to Israel. As the nation was about to enter the land of milk and honey, it would be warned that obedience to God's commands would bring blessing in the land (Dt 28:1-14) and disobedience would bring discipline (Dt 29:15-68), specifically expulsion from the land (Dt 28:64-68).

b. God's Gracious Solution (3:23)
3:23. God’s solution of expelling man from the garden, though certainly a “bad” thing in the short run, is ultimately a “very good” (i.e., the best) thing in the long run, and from this perspective it was an act of divine grace. Once restricted from the tree of life, every child of God must die, yet in so doing he must undergo the renewal of being made as man was meant to be—physically immortal, but also spiritually incorruptible and pure (1Co 15:50). In this state the child of God will one day eat from the tree of life, in the garden of the new Jerusalem and in the presence of the Lord (Rv 22:1-2).

c. The “Eastward” Paradigm (3:24)
3:24. Here begins another significant paradigm: that of man moving east, corresponding to an increasing “distance” from God. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve, though forgiven, were no longer able to experience that ideal of intended intimacy with God in the garden, from which they were sent out toward the east; so too was Cain sent eastward as a consequence of his sin (4:16); and so too did mankind move farther east before building the tower of Babel (11:2). Abram's father, Terah, was the first one in Scripture to reverse this eastward direction when he set out toward Canaan (11:31), indicating a desire on his part to draw closer to God. And Christ Himself, at His second advent, will finally reverse this eastward direction, when “the glory of God” will return to the temple “from the way of the east” (Ezk 43:2). There, God (the Son) will establish His throne and “dwell” for all eternity (43:7). This is all the more significant when one bears in mind that the temple itself was intended as a symbolic “recasting” of the prefall Eden-garden arrangement. The point of Ezekiel's prophecy therefore is that the Son at His second advent will vanquish not only His human enemies, but also sin’s very dominion over man.

The tragic presence and outworking of depravity is emphatically driven home in this section by the vivid description of humanity's first murderer. Today this would be legally classified as first-degree murder, and in most societies it would justify the harshest of penalties. The focus of the chapter is not on the criminal act as such, described in v. 8, but on the pivotal factors involved in both the lead-up as well as the follow-up to that act. Careful attention to the latter, in fact, is crucial for a proper appreciation of the value of this episode and its challenge to believers.

a. The Priority of Heart Attitude (4:1-8)
4:1. By commencing this episode with reference to the births of Cain and Abel, the dark cloud attending the overall theme of this section (i.e., the “attachment” of sin) is briefly dispersed first, by the simple fact of the births themselves (showing that God's fundamental blessing expressed in 1:28 has not been dramatically affected by the advent of sin and depravity), and second, by Eve's statement about her firstborn son Cain, which hearkens back to the messianic hope of God’s promise in 3:15. Eve's statement is to be translated, “I have acquired a male, the LORD.” Eve's expectation about Cain is that he
addresses the relationship between believing slaves and masters as part of his household instructions.

(1) Slaves (6:5–8)

Regarding slavery, it should be said, first, that the practice in Paul's day was much like indentured servanthood: it was temporary and not based on race (Hoechner, Ephesians, 801). Second, Paul's commands do not mandate slavery but only regulate it.

With these caveats in mind, Paul put things negatively and positively. Negatively, slaves should avoid wrong motivations such as insincerity or pleasing only people (v. 6). Positively, they should show respect (v. 5), good will (v. 7a), and see their service as directed to God (vv. 5c, 6b, 7b). These commands are based on God's impartial reward and judgment (v. 8).

(2) Masters (6:9)

Just as slaves had obligations toward masters, so also did masters toward slaves. The same things refers to the kinds of Christian attitudes seen in vv. 5–8. Masters must not indulge in abusive, tyrannical, or manipulative treatment (v. 9b).

C. Accomplishing God's Purposes in Spiritual Conflict (6:10–20)

The Christian’s behavior has cosmic significance. For we interact, not only with people, but also with an unseen spiritual world. Although other passages in the NT mention spiritual conflict (e.g., 2Co 10:3-5; Jms 4:7; 1Pt 5:8), this section is unique in its length and detail.

1. Be Strong (6:10–13)

Living a life worthy of our calling (4:1) means living in God's strength (cf. 1Sm 30:6; Zch 10:12), not ours. Paul mentioned strength/power in his two prayers (1:19; 3:16). Now believers are commanded to live by God’s strength, using the armor that God supplies (full armor is only in this paragraph and Lk 11:22).

Regarding the armor, first, God's armor is needed because we struggle (v. 12; only here in the NT, pale refers to battle or hand-to-hand combat) against evil spiritual forces. The NT informs us that their schemes (v. 11; cf. 4:14) can include at least the following: tempting to immorality (1Co 7:5), attempting to deceive (2Co 2:11; 11:13-14), taking advantage of bitterness (Eph 4:27), hindering ministry (1Th 2:18).

Second, steadfast allegiance to the gospel is the goal of having the armor. With it we stand firm (vv. 11, 13) and resist (v. 13). Both verbs imply attack from the enemy and imply what Paul explicitly stated earlier: believers have already been given victory and every blessing (see 1:3-13 and 2:4-10).

2. Stand Firm (6:14–17)

Paul was probably under house arrest when writing this letter (see 3:1 and the comments on Ac 28:16), and so he used the Roman soldier’s equipment to illustrate God’s gracious provision for believers. The OT basis for God's armor, however, is drawn from Is 11:4-5 and 59:17.

In the ancient world girding oneself (v. 14) is done in preparation for strenuous activity (Pr 31:17; 1Pt 1:13). Thus, in an errant world, it is foundational to be girded with God’s truth—that Word which he has proclaimed (cf. 1:13; 4:21). Second, righteousness here is probably positional. Righteousness based on our works is worthless (cf. Php 3:8–9). God offers us the righteousness of Christ (cf. 1Co 1:30; 2Co 5:21). Third, relying on Is 52:7, Paul commanded that we live ready to proclaim a gospel that brings peace (v. 15). Fourth, faith itself is our shield (thurion, v. 16, refers to a large shield that covered the whole person). When the enemy attacks, our trust in God protects us. Fifth, our helmet is salvation (v. 17). Confidence in daily battles comes from knowing that rescue from future judgment has already been given to us freely from God (Rm 6:23). Lastly, God’s word is our offensive weapon, supplied by the spirit (cf. Heb 4:12). Thus Scripture rightly understood and correctly proclaimed turns back evil, destroys strongholds (2Co 10:4), and rescues people from darkness (Ac 6:7).

Although prayer is important for the process described above (vv. 10–17), believers do not “pray” the armor onto themselves. Putting on the armor has to do with our moral choices—our lifestyle—that provide protection against the temptations of the world and the devil.

3. Pray (6:18–20)

In spiritual conflict prayer is vital. First, we must pray with perseverance (cf. Lk 18:1; Rm 12:12; Ac 2:42). Second, praying in the spirit entails praying by his guidance and according to God’s will (cf. Rm 8:26–27), and is probably not a reference to praying in tongues. Third, it is easy to lose focus. We must remain alert. Fourth, we should pray not only for ourselves but also for all God’s people (saints). Fifth, heaven rejoices at the repentance of sinners. Thus, we must pray that the gospel be proclaimed with boldness and clarity (vv. 19-20).
revealed the mystery of the Church to Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, made him a steward of that message, and authorized him to proclaim it to the Gentiles (3:1-13).

**A. Regeneration—From Death to Life (2:1-10)**

2:1-3. The first of God’s purposes is to transform those who are spiritually dead to become alive in Christ. At the outset, Paul gives the bad news. Life without Christ is separation from God (death) caused by sins. This sinful life is called a way of walking and is in keeping with the influence of three things. First, the world (v. 2) has to do with society’s ungodly attitudes and practices. Second, the prince (v. 2) is Satan, the evil one (6:16) who works in those who disobey God (v. 2). The air is another way of talking about “heavenly places”—the unseen spiritual world (see 1:3; 20; 3:10; 6:12). Third, the flesh (v. 3) refers to self-centered human nature that craves (lusts for) wrong things (cf. 1:16, and the comments on Rm 7:5-6). Each person dead in sin (v. 5) is heading for God’s holy anger against and punishment of sin.

2:4-7. In contrast to the above, here is the good news. God has both holy anger against sin and also merciful love for sinners (v. 4). Sinners’ conversion, described here, contrasts massively with vv. 1-3. Salvation is transfer from death in sin to life in Christ. Note that, first, new life happens purely by God’s grace (v. 5) and entails rescue from wrath. Second, all happens because of Christ’s prior work and exaltation and because God unites believers to Christ (v. 6). Thus, vv. 4-7 look back to 1:20-23. As Christ was raised and seated, so the believer gains a wholly new position of approval and security. Third, as there was a future to sin (wrath), so there is a future to saving grace—yet more grace in the ages to come (v. 7).

2:8-10. This section harks back to v. 5, reiterating and expanding on salvation by grace (cf. Rm 3:24). The phrase and that not of yourselves (v. 8) refers to the whole preceding statement: a grace-by-faith salvation does not originate with people; it is God’s gift. Since it is by faith, it is not by human effort (works, v. 9; cf. Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). God’s goal is to eliminate human boasting (cf. Rm 3:27).

In contrast, while works do not produce salvation, salvation does produce good works (v. 10; cf. Php 1:11). Believers are God’s creation (workmanship, poiema, means “something that is made” and appears elsewhere in Rm 1:20), being created for this purpose: that we do (lit., walk in) good works. Without Christ we walked in sin (v. 1); with Him we walk in good works that God predestined (prepared beforehand; cf. Rm 9:23).

**B. Reconciliation—Jews and Gentiles as One (2:11-22)**

In presenting God’s purposes for Jews and Gentiles, Paul moves from describing Gentile alienation from both God and the Jewish people (2:11-12), to their reconciliation to the Lord and the Jewish people (2:13-18). Ultimately, he reveals the unification of believing Jews and Gentiles in a new body, namely the Church.

2:11-12. Before Christ’s incarnation, Gentiles suffered a terrible plight. First, since they were pagans without any covenant standing before God, Jewish people disparaged them as the Uncircumcision (circumcision being the outward sign of the God’s covenant with Abraham and all the Jewish people [Gn 17:1-27]). Second, they were alienated in various ways: from Christ (for they had no hope of a Messiah); from the people with whom God was working (Israel); from covenants that spoke of God’s future blessing. Third, any hopes or gods they had were false. Paul reminds Gentile believers of this past plight so they might better understand their present blessings.

2:13-18. As happened in 2:4, so here is great contrast. Gentile believers, formerly alienated (far off), have been brought near to God by Christ’s death (blood, v. 13; cf. 1:7), having now peace with God (Rm 5:1).

Furthermore, the law of Moses created a social and theological barrier (v. 14) and enmity (v. 15-16) between Jew and Gentile. Christ’s death, by being the one atoning sacrifice for the new covenant, rendered the old covenant (i.e. the law of Moses) inoperative (abolishing, v. 15). Christ’s goal was not to bring Gentiles into Israel but to create from the two ethnic groups one new humanity (man, v. 15), establishing peace between them. Thus Christ, as Peacemaker, is called our peace citing Mc 5:5.

Near and far (v. 17) derive from Is 57:19 and in Ephesians refer to Jew and Gentile respectively. Since Jesus’ earthly ministry targeted almost exclusively Jews, reference to His coming and preaching to you who were far away probably has to do with the apostles as His ambassadors continuing His ministry after Pentecost. As in Rm 5:1-2, peace with God entails also being welcomed into His presence (access). But
God's judgment (cf. Ex 7:5; 15:12; Is 5:25; Jr 51:25) against the wrath of my (David's, and by extension, Israel's) enemies. But in contrast, David concluded with the confident assertion, Your right hand will save me (cf. Pss 20:6; 60:5; 118:25) and that God would accomplish what concerns me (cf. 57:2). His affirmation that God not forsake him and His people, the works of Your hand (cf. 100:3), alludes to the promise of Dt 31:6.

Psalm 139: David's Praise for the Presence of the Lord

On the heading of this Psalm of David, see the introduction to Ps 138 above. The faith exhibited so clearly by David in Ps 138 is explored more fully here, as Ps 139 gives the specific characteristics of God that engendered faith in David (Sailhamer, NIV Compact Bible Commentary, 346).

A. God Is Present in Everyday Experiences (139:1-12)

139:1-6. David begins this intensely personal psalm by praising God's omniscience (that He knows everything) and omnipresence (that He is always present, at all times and in all places), O LORD, You have searched me and known me (an expression of personal involvement and knowledge). Therefore, David affirmed that God's involvement in his active life, when I sit down and when I rise up (cf. Dt 6:7, meaning every minute of his life) was personal not abstract. He said the Lord had enclosed me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me (v. 5), a gentle touch of blessing (cf. 48:14).

139:7-12. David is comforted by the assurance of God's presence even in times of chastisement, Where can I go from Your Spirit? or . . . flee from your presence? The phrase Sheol and the sea, are similar to Jonah's experience (cf. Jn 2:2-3; Ps 49:14-15).

B. God Is Sovereign in Planning Personal Existence (139:13-16)

139:13-16. One aspect of David's confidence in the Lord is related to his knowledge that he was created by the Lord from conception to birth: You formed my inward parts . . . wove me in my mother's womb. David notes that he is wonderfully (or “divinely”) made. Wonderfully is applied in the Bible to what God is and does (cf. comments on 119:121-128). The phrase in the depths of the earth (v. 15) is a poetic reference to the womb, not to geography. David confirms that not only did the Lord plan his life from the womb, but he knows the precise number of days that he would live, when as yet there was not one of them (v. 16). This verse strongly supports that there is actual human life in the womb, which should be protected.

C. God Is Active Guiding into the Everlasting Way (139:17-24)

139:17-18. When reviewing all the Lord knows about him, David exclaims How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! (cf. 36:7; 40:5). David finds comfort and encouragement in God's care for him: If I should count them [your thoughts toward me], they would outnumber the sand; they are innumerable. Asleep or awake, I am still with You.

139:19-22. David's deep love for the Lord motivates him to hate everything that is contrary to God. So he called an imprecation on all who stand opposed to the Lord: O that You would slay the wicked, O God . . . For Your enemies take Your name in vain (cf. Ex 20:7). David in this psalm, as he did when he fought Goliath, hates and loathe[s] those who rise up against You (v. 21; cf. 1Sm 17:26, 45-47). See comments on imprecatory psalms in the Introduction to Psalms.

139:23-24. The psalm ends as it began with an acknowledgement of God searching and knowing him. Although David was determined to hold to God's holy standard, at the same time, he knew his motives and obedience were imperfect. So, David concluded by asking that God see if there be any hurtful way in him (cf. 17:3-5) and, if so, lead him in the everlasting way—i.e., the “upright” way of God (cf. 27:11).

Psalm 140: A Prayer when Oppressed by the Wicked

On the inscription of this Psalm of David, see Ps 138 introduction above. This psalm continues David's character as a righteous man being persecuted by evil (cf. 139:19-22), violent men. The structure of the psalm is threefold: David's request for help from the Lord (v. 8); David's request for vengeance on the wicked (vv. 9-11); and David's confidence in the Lord's justice (vv. 12-13).

A. David's Request for the Lord's Help (140:1-8)

140:1-3. Almost as a follow-up to David's commitment to defend God's honor by slaying the wicked (cf. 139:19-22), here David implores the Lord to Rescue me . . . from evil men; preserve me from violent men. The term here translated violent (lit., “violence,” i.e., the plural form of the word hāmas) signifies violence characterized by wickedness (cf. comment on 11:5). These evil men devise evil . . . in their hearts . . . stir up war. They have tongues sharp as a serpent (speak
self-examination. Judgment does not refer to eternal condemnation, for it is unlikely that Paul would understand that a blood-bought believer who inappropriately participated in communion would face eternal condemnation. Paul appears to think that there is a happier outcome than that for these believers (vv. 31-32). The body is a synecdoche (a part that stands for the whole) for the two elements of communion that are symbolic of “the body and blood” of Jesus offered in His death. Body probably does not refer to the church as the body of Christ because the nearest antecedent use of body in v. 27 refers to communion. Coming to communion with the proper aim, however, does not preclude caring for the members of Christ’s body, the church. For this reason (v. 30), i.e., because some abused communion they drank judgment upon themselves, a judgment that included physical illness and death (for sleep as a euphemism for death, see 1Th 4:13-15). If one were careful to examine his motivation in gathering for communion and partook correctly, he would not be judged (v. 31; cf. also v. 28). But (v. 32) in the case of those who did not partake correctly and were judged, that judgment was different from that of the unbelieving world. God judges unbelievers for their sin even in this life (cf. the comments on Rm 1:24-32), and this leads to eternal condemnation as well. But when believers are “judged” by God in this life (evidenced by them becoming weak, sick, or dying, v. 30), His action is remedial and redemptive (we are disciplined), not purely punitive (condemned, as is the unbelievers’ present and eschatological end). There were other places for satisfying one’s hunger and seeking one’s social delight or enhancement, but to do this at communion was wrong (vv. 33-34).

C. The Third Exhortation: Employ Spiritual Gifts Carefully (12:1-14:40)

12:1-3. Paul continued addressing problems in their church gatherings. Spiritual gifts (lit., “spirituals,” pneumatikon, v. 1) means “that which pertains to, is caused by, or corresponds to the Spirit” (see BDAG, 837). The word is probably neuter (“spiritual things, activities”) because Paul discussed gifts and their respective ministries. Unbelievers might say Jesus is accursed (v. 3), but the test of genuine Christianity is the sincere confession. Jesus is Lord not necessarily speaking in tongues. The confession is as much a pneumatikon as the exercise of the most miraculous spiritual gift.

12:4-11. All true Christians confess Jesus’ lordship (v. 3), “but” (better than now) that does not mean that there are no distinctions between them. Varieties (vv. 5-6) means “that which is divided and distributed on the basis of certain implied distinctions or differences” (L&N, 1:567). Gifts (charismaton, v. 4) emphasizes God’s gracious role in the assigning of these gifts, a point that might curtail the arrogance of some Corinthians regarding their gifts. A “spiritual gift” is a special ability (not just a ministry or function) God gives to believers to strengthen the church so that it accomplishes His will in the world. Ministries (v. 5) describes the tangible acts of service rendered to others as believers used their gifts. Effects (v. 6) means “the accomplishment of an act with an emphasis on the power to do it.” All of the gifts, not just the miraculous ones, are graciously given, are intended to serve others, and are driven by divine power. Verses 4-6 reflect Paul’s belief in the Trinity who are the source of all the gifts and the fruit of those gifts (God . . . works all things, v. 6). The Corinthians could not boast in their own abilities or productivity. But (v. 7) establishes the single intent of the gifts, the common good (13:1-7; 14:4, 6, 12, 17, 19, 26). The gifts are not designed primarily for one’s own edification. Paul taught that each believer had a spiritual gift, called here the manifestation (“a detailed disclosure”) of the Spirit. One of the ways the Holy Spirit makes Himself known is through believers using their spiritual gifts. For (v. 8) confirms v. 7. The word of wisdom may be the Spirit-revealed insight into God’s redemptive program through Christ (cf. 1:30; 2:6-13). The word of knowledge may be a revelatory gift whereby one knew facts only through divine revelation, facts regarding the true nature of the world and spiritual truth (see the connections between knowledge and tongues, prophecy, and revelation in 13:2, 8-12; 14:6). Peter may have known of the deception of Ananias and Sapphira (Ac 5:1-11) by means of this gift. But not enough is known about these gifts to be certain of their characteristics (see Fee’s comment on the word of knowledge, 1 Corinthians, 593, as an illustration of the lack of certainty). Faith (v. 9) is an intense trust in Him to accomplish the impossible (cf. Mk 9:23; Mt 17:20; Ac 27:25; 1Co 13:2). The plural gifts of healing may indicate that there were different kinds of healings that different individuals could do at different times. The effecting of miracles (v. 10) probably...
over time according to their benefit to the church.

1 Corinthians 12–14, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008], 489).

were men who had some personal contact with Jesus, saw Him in His resurrection (1Co 9:1-2; Lk 24:48; Ac 1:8, 21-23), and were appointed by Him to their office. It was a group of undetermined size as indicated by the early church's struggle with false apostles (2Co 11:13), a struggle that would not have existed if one could say, "He is not one of the Twelve and therefore is not a true apostle." They carried enormous authority over the entire Church as opposed to having localized authority. Based on these qualifications, it is unlikely that they are present in the church today. Sometimes "apostle" is used in a non-technical sense for messengers or missionaries sent by churches (Php 2:25; 2Co 8:22-23), but this is not Paul's sense here. On prophets, cf. the comments on 14:1-3. Teachers grasp previously revealed truth (perhaps from the OT or from the apostles and prophets) and systematically impart knowledge of it to the church. Then indicates that Paul continued to rank the gifts, but the ranking becomes more generalized and shifts to functions rather than individuals. On miracles, see v. 10. On healings, see v. 9. Helps refers to different kinds of relief provided for those who suffer. Administrations means "the ability to lead," the capacity to accomplish scriptural goals through the assistance of others. On kinds of tongues, see the comments on 14:1-3. In vv. 29-30, Paul asked a series of rhetorical questions, each anticipating a negative response. All believers have been baptized by Jesus in the Spirit (v. 13), but not all speak with tongues (v. 30) so that tongues cannot be the sign of the baptism in the Spirit. Earnestly desire (v. 31a) is a command in light of 14:1, 12, but does not contradict vv. 11, 18. As a collective group they were to look for believers with high-ranking gifts (v. 28). If Paul were determining the individual value of love and gifts, love would win (v. 31b). Paul does, however, connect the two in chapter 13.

13:1-3. In vv. 1-3, Paul shows the necessity of love to make the employment of spiritual gifts constructive. Tongues of ... angels is sometimes cited in support of tongues being a "heavenly language," but whenever angels are recorded as speaking, they use an earthly foreign language. Love is "a spontaneous inward affection of one person for another that manifests itself in an outgoing concern for the other and impels one to self-giving" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AYB, vol. 32 [New Haven: Yale, 2008], 489).
humanity's vantage point under the sun, people can only observe that men and animals both die (Ec 3:19-21). The powerful reality of death should encourage people to enjoy in the here and now what they have been given by God as their lot in life (v. 22a; cf. Ps 90:10-12).

Seen in the larger context, death complicates the hope for future divine judgment against those who are evil. People might die before they can witness any temporal fulfillment of divine judgment against the wicked. Worse still, death conceals the reality of final divine judgment. These facts thus lead inexorably to the conclusion of the book (Ec 12:13-14), which calls people to a faith that rests on the One who is beyond life under the sun (Ps 49:12-15). Only then can people fear Him, enjoy what they have been given, and leave future judgment in His hands. Finally, the paragraph ends with the rhetorical question, who will bring him to see what will occur after him? The expected answer is that human beings cannot see beyond this life, but God alone does indeed see.

4:1-3. Only confidence in God can help people cope with the injustice and brutal realities of oppression under the sun. The oppressed find no joy in their lot in life, but only tears. Furthermore they have no one to comfort them or alleviate their suffering. And they cannot stop their oppressors, who have all the power over them (v. 1). In fact the horror of oppression is so great that from one perspective, it is better to die or even to have never existed than to experience such evil activity (vv. 2-3). If this is so, then why does God bring people into the world? Although the Scriptures teach that life is a gift from God (Gn 2:2-8; Jb 10:12; Ps 139:12-14), the point of these verses is to highlight the horror of oppression and the discouraging nature of living under it. This certainly is not the final biblical word on the subject, nor does Qohelet intend it to be. But he does intend the reader to feel the bite of this observation. Why God brings people into an oppressive world is one of those matters Qohelet considers inscrutable. This is Qohelet's graphic way of saying that living under intense oppression is simply no way to live.

C. Futility in Labor under the Sun (4:4-12)
4:4-6. In the normal style of Qohelet, an abrupt shift of topic follows. These three verses work closely together to give a helpful perspective on labor in this futile world. On the one hand, working hard to succeed is prompted by rivalry, the desire to have greater success than one's peers (v. 4). This desire is a striving after wind, if for no other reason than that success is fleeting and unsatisfying. On the other hand only a fool folds his hands (stops working hard) and starves as a result (v. 5). Verse 6 brings the two competing thoughts together. Qohelet contended that a person is better off settling with less (one handful) than seeking for more (two handfuls). The one who diligently labors but settles for something less than the workaholic still has something to enjoy (unlike the lazy fool) without the cares and time constraints of the one driven by rivalry to succeed at all costs (cf. 2:22-24; Pr 15:16-17). In the next several verses, (Ec 4:7-12) Qohelet gave a negative (vv. 7-8) and a positive (vv. 9-12) example of this principle.

4:7-8. The negative example is Qohelet's sketch of the lonely miser, whose insatiable lust for more leaves him all alone, bereft of the pleasures associated with one's family and companions. His only friend is money (Garrett, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, 307).

4:9-12. Qohelet's positive example is a stark contrast to the lonely miser. The one who is not an ambitious workaholic has room for life's blessings, such as companionship. Companions make labors easier while increasing reward (v. 9). They also help in times of need (v. 10), give comfort in the face of life's harshness (v. 11), and add to one's strength in dangerous times (v. 12).

D. Futility in Advancement (4:13-16)
4:13-16. Making another abrupt shift of topic, Qohelet used the story in these verses to illustrate that political advancement under the sun is also futile. Though not entirely clear, the plot line of this story seems to go as follows. There is an old king who is a fool because he does not listen to advice or warning (v. 13). He is replaced by a youth who is far wiser, even though he once was poor and even imprisoned (v. 14). But even this young king's wisdom is not enough, because he is replaced by another youth who is very popular (vv. 15-16a). The popularity of this third king, however, is only temporary (v. 16b). This loose narrative indicates that people can attain power through seniority, wisdom, or popularity (Longman, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 147). But in each case the result is the same. Political power is vanity (hebel) because it is fleeting.

E. Futility in Improper Worship (5:1-7)
Qohelet argued in this section that improper worship is both foolish and futile. So, he gave four pieces of advice regarding worship.
being with Christ (v. 23; cf. 1Th 4:17), which is very much better than this current human life (v. 23b). Verse 23 indicates that upon death the soul does not sleep until resurrection but rather goes directly into the presence of God.

Paul's statement, and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both (vv. 22b-23a), is difficult. Apparently, he was torn by a win-win situation: the divine commission to preach (1Co 9:16) and the desire to be at home with the Lord (2Co 5:8). By saying I do not know, he probably meant that he had no specific divine revelation from the Lord regarding these two options.

1:25-26. Nevertheless, exercising his own wise love (1:9), Paul became convinced that he would continue with the Philippians, and his goal was their growth in Christ. The verses are transitional, anticipating 1:27-30. Paul brought his affairs (1:12-26) and the Philippians' affairs (1:27-30) into the same story.

II. Instructional Matters: Paul's Main Teaching concerning the Believer's Life (1:27–2:30)

Here begins the heart of the letter (1:27–2:18). Contained in 1:27–2:18 are the themes of suffering (1:29; 2:8, 17), joy (2:8, 18), mind-set/thinking (1:27; 2:2, 5), and obedience/work (1:27–2:8, 12).

A. Called to a Worthy Life (1:27-30)

1:27-28. A worthy life is a major theme in Paul (Eph 4:1; 1Th 2:12; 2Th 1:11). His own worthy life was just glimpsed (1:12-26). In 1:27 he calls the Philippians to a similar life.

Even though Paul became convinced that he would "continue with" the Philippians, at times he might see them, at other times not (v. 27b; see Rm 1:13; 1Th 2:18). In either case, Paul gave an all-important exhortation: conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (v. 27a). This worthy manner is then described in three ways: First, worthy living is not abandoning faith but standing firm. Second, it is striving together for the faith of the gospel. Such striving must be marked by unity (one mind). Here faith means that which is believed as in the phrase "the Christian faith" (cf. Gl 1:23; 3:23). Third, a worthy life is seen in not being alarmed in any way by opponents of the gospel. Paul added that this stark difference of response to the gospel is a sign (or "evidence") of the opponents' destruction, but of the Philippians' deliverance—and all this is from God.

1:29-30. Mention of opponents to the gospel brings up the subject of suffering. The struggle the Philippians faced was not a sign of God's displeasure. Rather, just as by God's sovereign mercy the Philippians came to believe in Christ, so also God granted that they suffer for His sake (Ac 5:41; Rm 8:17). Paul could view suffering as a gift because, first, it yields proven character and hope (Rm 5:4); second, it yields future glory (Rm 8:17); and third, those who suffer for the gospel reflect Jesus' life since they are following the path that He took (the sufferings of Christ, Col 1:24; 2Co 1:8-11).

Further, Paul identified with them saying that he and they experienced the same conflict (v. 30). They saw him experience it before (Ac 16:19-40), and they now hear about it by his letter.

B. Called to Unity through Humility (2:1-11)

Paul's next instruction focuses on the need for the Philippians to complete his joy by becoming unified through the only means possible—with humility. Beginning with an exhortation to unity (2:1-4) Paul then gave the ultimate example of humility, the Lord Jesus Himself.

1. The Exhortation to Unity through Humility (2:1-4)

Following on from the call to a worthy life in 1:27-30, Paul called the congregation away from selfishness and empty conceit (v. 3) and to unity (same mind . . . same love . . . united in spirit . . . one purpose, v. 2). This call is obtainable only through humility (v. 3) and grounded in the encouragement, love, and fellowship they experienced in Christ (v. 1).

2:1-2a. Here a series of conditional clauses ("if" statements) appeal to standard Christian experience: encouragement, love, fellowship, and compassion. That is, those who have come to enjoy encouragement, love, and fellowship with Christ and with the Spirit should live in harmony with one another. This unity is described in vv. 2b-4. Paul said make my joy complete, since the one thing that would have kept him from perfect joy concerning them would be their disunity.

2:2b-4. Unity has positive and negative aspects. Positively, it is being of the same mind, having one purpose, in humility passing on the same love received. Negatively, it is not selfishness, nor conceit, nor looking out merely for one's personal interests.

2. The Example of Christ's Humility (2:5-11)

To aid the Philippians in obeying his teaching, Paul gave them examples of love and
humility (cf. 2:19-30). The greatest example is Christ himself. Even though these verses primarily set forth Jesus as a model, they also give rich teaching on the deity and humanity of Christ. In a sense, Paul’s illustration of Christ is far more exalted and overshadows the point he was illustrating.

2:5. Following Christ means adopting a certain attitude or mind-set. The English word attitude translates the Greek term phronéo, a theme-word in the book, appearing ten times (1:7; 2:2 [twice]; 3:15 [twice], 19; 4:2, 10 [twice]). Usually the word means “to employ one’s faculty for thoughtful planning, with emphasis upon the underlying disposition or attitude.”

2:6-8. The Son—the second person of the Trinity—existed from eternity in the form of God (v. 6a). Form sometimes means “the nature or character of something,” and does not imply mere appearance; rather, the use of this word later (v. 7) and the parallel with the phrase equality with God, show that being in God’s form means that Jesus is in very nature God (NIV).

Rather than considering this equality with God a thing to be grasped (v. 6b), He emptied Himself (v. 7a). The phrase a thing to be grasped poorly translates the Greek harpagmos (only here in the NT), for it implies one of two false things: (1) that Jesus had no equality with God but could have considered it something to grasp after (to gain it), or (2) that Jesus had equality with God but did not regard it as something to be grasped in order to keep it. Neither alternative is acceptable. Better is the HCSB, which translates harpagmos with “something to be used for His own advantage.” That is, Jesus does not exploit His equality with God for selfish ends.

When emptying Himself the Son did not cease to be God nor did He give up His deity. He did not temporarily surrender the independent exercise of His divine attributes (as if, with the Trinity, such a thing could happen). Indeed the verse does not say He gave up anything. Instead, One so glorious and powerful did the unexpected: He took on the form of a bond-servant (v. 7b). That is, emptying happens by taking on a new role. He was able to become a bond-servant because of His incarnation (in the likeness of men, v. 7c). He further humbled Himself to the point of a most horrible death—death on a cross (v. 8).

2:9-11. Those who humble themselves will be exalted (Mt 23:12; Jms 4:10). So Jesus, who humbled Himself to the point of execution, was highly exalted by His Father. The Son is granted the name which is above every name, which could be the title “Lord” (kurios) or more likely “Jesus” (v. 10a; Eph 1:20-22). Alluding to Is 45:23, Paul says that on the last day, either willingly or unwillingly, at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW and every tongue will confess His lordship.

C. Called to an Obedient Life (2:12-30)

Just as Christ obeyed, even to death (2:8), so the Philippians were to obey. This paragraph completes the instructional section that started in 1:27. Just as in the previous section, Paul moved from exhortation to example, so he does here. Paul addressed the uncertainty of his being present with them, and so exhorts them to obedience (2:12-18) and then gives living examples of people who live obediently.

1. The Exhortation to Continued Obedience (2:12-18)

2:12-13. Since the Philippians proved themselves—they always obeyed—Paul called them to work out their salvation. This is not working to gain salvation. Rather, as in the expression, “The farmer works the soil,” so they were to take what they freely received (salvation) and make it bear fruit (cf. 1:11). Though the Philippians are commanded to work, they can only do this work because God is at work in them (v. 13), bringing about both desire (will) and accomplishment (work). Thus Paul affirmed two theological truths. First, even though humans make their own choices for which they can be held responsible, God is sovereignly in control. The Bible regularly sets these side by side (e.g., Gn 50:20; Lv 20:7-8; Is 10:5-15; Ac 4:27-28). One does not cancel the other. Second, God works in us to change our affections (cf. 2Co 7:11, 8:16; Gl 5:22).

2:14-16. Obeying and pleasing God will mean that the Philippians avoid grumbling and disputing. Paul’s goal was for them to prove to be in practice what they already are by grace: blameless and innocent children. Such pure character will allow them to shine and hold out (better than NASB holding fast) the word of life. Compare Paul’s commands here to Israel’s failure in the wilderness where grumbling among the people was so common (e.g., Ex 15:24; 16:2; Dt 32:5).

Perseverance is necessary (Mt 24:13; Co 9:24-27; Heb 6:11-12; 10:36). Thus Paul set his command against the backdrop of Christ’s return (cf. 1:6; Co 1:8), a day (v. 16) when secrets will
be revealed (Rm 2:16). Philippian perseverance until that time will cause him joy (glory) and demonstrate that his work among them was not in vain.

2:17-18. Paul ended the heart of the letter as it began: with reference to his joyful suffering. As he had labored with them in the past (v. 16), so he rejoiced even if his death was considered a minor detail, like a drink offering which completes a sacrifice (see 2Tm 4:6). The phrase the sacrifice and service of your faith could be understood as Paul's service for the benefit of their faith. More probably in light of 2:30, it is the Philippians' service arising from their faith.

2. The Examples of Continued Obedience (2:19-30)

This paragraph cites Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of fulfilling Paul's exhortation to live obedient lives, worthy of being imitated. As earlier, Paul gave Jesus as an example (2:6-11) and later called the Philippians to imitate his example (3:17). So here appear two honorable servants of Christ (v. 29) whose examples should be followed. Additionally, this paragraph resumes Paul's report from 1:12-26.

a. Timothy (2:19-24)

Paul commended Timothy in three respects: First, he and Paul were of kindred spirit (v. 20a). They had the same mind-set: the advance of the gospel is what really mattered to both of them. Second, Timothy was genuinely...concerned for the Philippians (v. 20b; cf. 2:1-4). Third, Timothy's proven worth (or better "character" [dokime]; Rm 5:3-5) was seen in his humble service with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel (v. 22). Timothy was contrasted with others (see those in 1:17) who seek after their own interests (v. 21a).

b. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

Paul hoped to send Timothy to Philippi soon, but in the meantime sent Epaphroditus, whom the Philippians had sent to Paul as a messenger and minister to Paul's need (v. 25b; cf. 4:18). Paul commended Epaphroditus in three respects: First, he called him my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier. Paul considered him a full partner in the work of the gospel (see Php 4:3; Rm 16:3; 1Th 3:2). Second, Epaphroditus had attitudes and emotions appropriate to his work. He had a longing for all the Philippians, and had distress, not concerning his own illness, but because the Philippians heard that he was sick. Thus, he was an example of not seeking merely his own interests, but those of others.

Third, he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life. In this respect he was very much like Paul (2:17), willing to die in service to his Savior.

III. Exhortational Matters: Paul's Warning and Correction about Legalism (3:1-4:1)

Earlier Paul presented positive examples: Christ, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. But not all who claim to know Christ are worthy of imitation. Chapter 3 warns the Philippians against legalistic false teachers; those who claimed to know Christ but taught contrary doctrine, saying that Gentiles must be circumcised before they could be saved.

A. The Warning about False Teachers (3:1-3)

3:1. Since 3:1 is not the conclusion of the letter but its halfway point, finally is better translated as further (TNIV). Although the command to rejoice appears in 2:18 (see 1:4; 2:17, 28), this is the first time Paul added in the Lord (see 4:4). The same things probably refer to Paul's previous warnings to them concerning Judaizers (see 3:18).

3:2-3. Paul's three warnings are intense and ironic. First, contrary to common Jewish expression, it is not Gentiles who are dogs (contrast Mt 15:26) but these legalistic Jewish false teachers. Second, Paul's circumcision-free gospel did not make him an evil worker; the false teachers themselves were evil workers. That is because they turned circumcision—a matter of indifference for the new covenant (Ac 16:3; 1Co 7:19)—into a requirement for Gentiles (cf. Ac 15:1-5; Gl 5:2-6). Third, although false teachers promoted circumcision, Paul said they actually mutilate the flesh (HCSB; better than NASB, false circumcision). In contrast, believers are the true circumcision—that is, they experience the long-awaited promise of a circumcised heart (Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jr 4:4; 6:10; 9:26; 31:31-34).

Three more phrases define believers: First, since they live under the new covenant, they worship in the Spirit of God (see Jn 4:23; Ezk 36:27). Second, they do not take pride in religious works or heritage but glory in Christ Jesus. Third, in accordance with the very nature of saving faith, they put no confidence in the flesh—that is, in their physical circumcision or in any human ability to achieve salvation. This is in significant contrast to Pharisaic Judaism, which saw circumcision as a condition for salvation.
a believer, then it seems extremely unlikely that the believer might fail to be glorified as well.

8:31-39. The contents of Rm 8 indicate that God is for us (v. 31). Who is against us does not prove that the Christian has no enemies. Paul's point is that those enemies cannot successfully turn God against him or her. If God sacrificed His own Son (v. 32) to bring about salvation, then He can be counted on to provide everything else delineated in chap. 8, including eternal life. Charge (v. 33) is a judicial term used for asserting that one was guilty of a crime and liable to prosecution and punishment. God, however, has chosen believers (God's elect) in Christ, and no one can successfully cause Him to condemn them. For justifies, see the note on 3:24. Jesus . . . died (v. 34) for sins and took care of the sin problem, something no one could do for himself. He was raised from the dead, and having conquered sin and death, He provides eternal life for all who have faith in Him. He is at the right hand of God, indicating that He shares God's authority, and that no higher authority exists who can turn Him against His people. And Jesus intercedes for us so that Christians always remain in the Father's love. Verses 35-36 indicate that visible threats, including the prospect of death by persecution (sword), cannot separate the believer from God's love. On the contrary, in spite of these, the believer overwhelmingly conquers (“we are hyper-victors”). In vv. 38-39, invisible threats cannot tear the believer from God's love. Paul concludes the list with the phrase nor any other created thing, which includes both the devil and the believer. It is inconceivable that a true believer, who at times might not be able to keep his own shoe tied or balance his checkbook, could undo the eternal purposes of God that include His foreknowledge and their glorification. The believer is not nearly that powerful, nor the Spirit and the Savior so incompetent.

IV. Vindication: The Jewish People and the Problems with Being Right with God (9:1–11:36)

A. God Has Not Broken His Word to Israel (9:1-29)

God will never stop loving believers, and He will keep all His promises to them on the basis of their connection with Christ (Rm 8). But this is harder to assert in light of what might appear to be God's ceasing to love Israel and His reneging on OT promises to the Jewish people. In chaps. 9–11, Paul vindicates God's character, proving that God always keeps His promises, even to Israel, and could thus be counted on to keep His promises to believers.

9:1-5. Paul felt great anguish about the spiritual condition of his kinsmen. Accursed (anathema, v. 3) means "to be cursed," here referring to eschatological judgment. Many scholars argue that Rm 9 is about God's sovereign choice to utilize entire nations to fulfill His purposes in history. But this is unlikely in light of Paul's wish to trade places with his fellow Jews and suffer eternal cursing. The preferable understanding is that God's choices involve the election of individuals for eternal life or its opposite.

Some of the privileges in vv. 4-5 have future components as well as past ones. For example, Israel's adoption as sons is grounded in God's selection of Israel as the recipient of His covenant blessings (cf. Ex 4:22; Jr 31:9). But Israel's sonship also has a glorious future component for Jewish believers (see Is 43:6; 45:11; 63:16-17; 64:8-12; Hs 1:10; Mal 3:17, all in eschatological contexts). This suggests, among other things, that God is not finished with the Jewish people yet, the primary point of Rm 9, 10, and 11. The future implications of these blessings gave Paul hope that God had not broken off relations with Israel and would yet keep His promises—all of them—to the people. Verse 5 indicates that Christ shares the divine nature, was incarnate, is absolutely sovereign, but is also worthy of eternal acclamation (blessed forever). Paul's anguish stems from his awareness that the Jewish people were not (yet!) experiencing everything God promised them, including their own exalted Messiah. Each of the privileges in 9:4-5 belongs to Israel presently (note the present tense are in 9:4a), suggesting that these privileges have not been rescinded. Their experience of these blessings, however, is contingent upon faith in Christ.

9:6-13. Paul argued that God would keep His promises for "true" Israel. They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel (v. 6) is explained by vv. 7-13. The true Jewish people are Jews who are not mere descendants of Abraham but are rather his ethnic descendants who were chosen by God to be recipients of His covenant blessings including salvation. In v. 6, Paul does not have Gentile believers in view. He is concerned to demonstrate that what God was doing with Israel in Paul's day was what God had always done with the descendants of Abraham, and Gentile Christians are not in view. Paul's point
to bring Israel's salvation by His own strength (His own arm) (v. 16). God alone can initiate redemption for His people. The description of the body armor, helmet, and garments represents the girding up of God for battle against all that plagues Israel (v. 17). God will repay His adversaries and punish His enemies (v. 18). This punishment extends beyond the sin of Israel as the mention of coastlands suggests. As a result of the Lord's coming, even the Gentile nations, from the west and east, will fear the name of the Lord (v. 19). God will come with an unstoppable ferocity that cannot be stopped.

59:20-21. God declares that He will be the Redeemer who will come to Zion. Therefore, those who turn from transgression in Jacob will experience God's salvation (v. 20). Paul the apostle quotes this verse in Rm 11:26, depicting the day when Israel turns to the Lord Jesus for deliverance prior to the second coming of Christ. When the entire nation repents, then all Israel will be saved (see comments on Zch 12:10; Mt 23:37-39; and Rm 11:26-27). At that time, God will enact the new covenant (cf. Jr 31:31-34) with Israel that will guarantee God's presence with the nation throughout her generations (Is 59:21). The permanence of the Spirit and the Word among the people speaks to the promise of ongoing faithfulness and of the removal of sin.

(4) God Will Redeem Israel for His Glory (60:1-22)

When Israel recognizes her own sinfulness, the nation will turn to the Lord in repentance (59:9-15a). At that time, the Lord will initiate Israel's final redemption (59:15b-21). What follows is the glory that God will share with Israel when He brings about Israel's redemption.

60:1-3. When God redeems Israel, He will bring His light (a metaphor for Messiah, cf. 9:2) to the nation in darkness. Zion will be so illumined that the nations will come to your light (v. 3). Not only will Israel know the Lord in the messianic kingdom, but so will the Gentile nations.

60:4-14. When God redeems Israel, He will bring the Gentile nations to His people. Zion will find itself in a privileged position as the powers of the world will bring Israel's children back to Zion along with the wealth of the nations (60:4-7). The Lord will use the wealth that the nations bring to establish God's millennial temple (vv. 6-7, 13; see comments under “A New Temple” introducing the comments on Ezk 40–43). Surrounding nations will bring precious gifts to Zion, including gold and frankincense (v. 6; this is not likely a prediction of the visit of the magi in Mt 2:1-12) because God has glorified His people (v. 9). Jerusalem will be a restored city as the nations will work to restore it and bring their wealth to it (vv. 10-11). This is not Israel's doing but a result of the Lord having had compassion on His people. Those nations that opposed Zion will have been judged and destroyed—they will perish and be utterly ruined (vv. 11-12; see comments on the judgment of the nations, Mt 25:31-46). God promises Israel the ultimate reversal. The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you and recognize that it was the Lord who accomplished this. They will call Jerusalem the city of the Lord (v. 14).

60:15-22. When God redeems Israel, He will bring millennial blessings to the nation. The once forsaken and hated people and land of Israel will be a perpetual joy from generation to generation (v. 15). The hope of Zion does not come through the prerogative of the nations, but through the restoring presence of the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (v. 16). God will grant peace and prosperity to His people instead of warfare and suffering (vv. 17-20). He will give His people wealth (60:17), peace (60:18), God's light (vv. 19-20), and righteousness, even as He enlarges the nation (v. 21). The permanence of this peace and prosperity is secured through the continued righteousness of the people who are depicted as the special branch of God's hands planted to reveal God's splendor (vv. 20-21).

b. God's Messiah Delivers Israel (61:1–63:6)

The final unit of Isaiah, which is about God's deliverance in the end (chaps. 58–66), began by demonstrating that God's initiative will produce the end-of-days deliverance He will provide (58:1–60:22). Not only will He initiate but He will accomplish His purposes for Israel through His messianic King (61:1–63:6).

(1) The Messiah's Ministry to Israel (61:1-11)

61:1-3. As a whole, Is 61 describes the coming deliverance of God's people and the subsequent worship of God amongst the nations. This passage is the address of God's messianic Servant (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13–53:12) who proclaims His own role in God's redemption of Israel. Jesus began His ministry by quoting this passage to identify Himself as the Servant Messiah (cf. Lk 4:18-21, identifying Jesus of Nazareth...
as the passage's referent). This passage will be fulfilled by Jesus in His two advents. This is evident in that Jesus' quotations of these verses do not mention the day of vengeance (v. 2; Lk 4:18-21). Jesus inaugurated this messianic ministry but it will not be fulfilled in its entirety until His return. The passage addresses the release of Israel from captivity, not just from Babylon but from around the world (vv. 1-2). This will be possible because the Spirit of the Lord will anoint the Servant to make it happen. The word anointed is the same as the Hebrew word for “Messiah” and refers to the consecration of someone or something to a specialized task. Note that the triune God is hinted at in this verse (the Spirit, the Lord God, and the Servant [Me]). The Messianic Servant will comfort all the mourners of Zion (v. 3) by His restoration of Israel.

61:4-11. The Servant Messiah's ministry will also include the rebuilding of the ancient ruins of Israel, the elevation of Israel above the nations, and the renewal of Israel to her proper place as a nation of priests (cf. Ex 19:5) mediating the knowledge of God to the nations (Is 61:6; see Zch 8:23 and the comments there). Israel will receive a double portion of inheritance (v. 7) as the first born of the Lord (cf. Ex 4:22; Dt 21:17). This is fair and just since Israel has also received "double for all her sins" (Is 40:2). God will make an everlasting covenant (v. 8) with Israel, a reference to the new covenant (Jr 31:31-34). The reason for this turn of events rests in God's faithfulness to His covenant, which will bring blessing to God's people across their generations (vv. 8-9). The Lord's Servant will give praise to God for His luxurious garments of salvation and His robe of righteousness (v. 10). Endowed with these, the Servant will accomplish God's purposes for Israel and the world. Therefore, God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations (v. 11).

(2) The Messiah's Restoration of Israel (62:1-12)

62:1-9. The deliverance of Israel by the Messiah sent by God continues. Not only will the Messiah minister to Israel (61:1-11) but He will also provide full restoration of Israel (62:1-12), emphasizing God's commitment to the vindication of Jerusalem. When Messiah Jesus returns to Israel, He will transform Jerusalem. He will change her from darkness to light so that her salvation will be like a torch that is burning (v. 1). From sin and humiliation, the Messiah will

change Jerusalem to embody righteousness and glory (vv. 2-3). Other alterations will include changed names, from Forsaken and Desolate to My delight is in her and Married (v. 4). The Lord's delight in Jerusalem will be comparable to the love of a bridegroom for his bride (v. 5). Israel's depiction as the wife of the Lord does not imply that Israel and the Church (the Bride of Christ) are one and the same. This is merely a metaphor that depicts the covenantal relationship between God and Israel just as the metaphor applies to Christ and the Church. That is not to say that God is a bigamist, married to both Israel and the Church, just that the metaphor is used distinctively of both Israel and the Church. Ultimately, God will make all people, with all their distinct ethnicities, part of His family (note that God promises that one day even Egypt will be called His people, Is 19:25). At that time, God will not dissolve His special relationship with Israel, but will always keep Israel as a distinct and beloved people, in whom He delights (62:4-5). Though God's commitment to Jerusalem is sure, God's people must continue to pray for Him to fulfill these promises for Israel and make Jerusalem the praise in the earth (vv. 6-7). God's people today would do well to become the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, praying for the Lord to bring Israel to know their Messiah and fulfill all these good promises. God's promise to care for Jerusalem will be accomplished by God's might (His right hand and by His strong arm). He will provide for Israel and not give their produce to foreigners again (vv. 8-9).

62:10-12. The last section of this Song of Messiah's transformation of Israel is a call to respond. The faithful of the nations should first remove the obstacles to Israel's restoration (v. 10). This is a figurative depiction of the nations making it possible for Israel to return to their God. Some of these obstacles include the sad history of Christian anti-Semitism or the common Christian denial of Israel's distinctive place in the plan of God. Second, the faithful should proclaim the message of the Lord's salvation to Israel (v. 11). The reward noted could refer to a reward for Jerusalem's faithfulness, but more likely refers to the dispersed of Israel who will accompany the Lord back to Jerusalem—they are the Lord's reward. Third, the faithful are to remind Israel of their future destiny as The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, and a city not forsaken (v. 12).
magnifies His glory after more people respond to the gospel.

4:16. Paul wasn’t giving up on ministry. Instead he experienced that even though his outer man (that aspect of his current humanity that others saw) was being destroyed by suffering, his inner man (that aspect of his humanity that was planted at conversion and unseen by others) was constantly growing through the nourishment of the Holy Spirit.

4:17-18. This process of growth is further explained by contrasting the current suffering with the unimaginable production of glory that the suffering produces. The glory refers to the future blessings that culminate in the resurrection body but are experienced in part during this age. When a Christian understands this eternal and abundant glory, the present suffering is viewed as momentary and minimal in comparison. Paul can say this because he has a spiritual perspective on life: his focus is not on the temporal suffering and decay of the physical body (the things clearly seen with the physical senses); his focus is on the eternal glory (the things not seen with the physical senses).

5:1. The physical difficulties Paul faced in ministry and the ever-increasing possibility of his death did not lead to despair. He knew that in physical death—when the house is torn down—believers would have the certainty of a resurrection body (the future building) that comes from God and lasts forever. Paul reflected on three human states throughout this section: (1) the physical state of present existence illustrated as an earthly tent, (2) the intermediate state between death and the second coming when a believer is present with the Lord without a resurrection body (a state referred to as nakedness), and (3) the resurrection state that begins at the rapture of the Church when believers receive their resurrection body.

5:2-4. State 1 is characterized by the groaning that accompanies suffering. Paul was longing to be alive for the rapture, which ushers in state 3 without the experience of death (1Co 15:50-55). Believers at that time will be transformed from their mortal bodies to their resurrection bodies without the experience of death and state 2.

5:5. God gives the Spirit to believers at conversion. This Spirit is a guarantee that God works through suffering to prepare Christians for their resurrection body.

5:6-8. To be at home in the body (an idiom for being alive) is to be absent from the Lord. Paul was courageous in this state although at the time his relationship with the Lord was characterized by faith rather than sight (v. 7). But because he knew that to be absent from the body (an idiom for physical death) ushers one into the presence of the Lord in the intermediate state, he preferred to be with the Lord (v. 8). Paul was not suicidal or disparaging concerning the physical body; Paul remained hopeful in the face of death because it would inaugurate a new phase in his relationship with the Lord.

5:9-10. In anticipation of his future relationship with the Lord, Paul desired to please Christ in his present state. For Paul, this meant a continuation in ministry even through suffering. Paul was also motivated by the expectation that he and all Christians will appear before and be evaluated by Christ. This happens at the judgment seat (Gk. bema)—a word that referred to a raised platform where a judicial authority pronounced a verdict on the one standing before him (Jesus “stood before” Pilate while Pilate was “sitting on the judgment seat” [Mt 27:11-19], and Paul stood “before the judgment seat” of Gallio in Corinth [Ac 18:12-17]). The purpose of the evaluation is not to determine eternal destiny; the purpose is to identify the actions of the physical body and to evaluate them as good or bad. The reward for good works is praise (1Co 4:5); the reward for evil works is lack of praise (1Co 3:15).

4. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)

5:11. Paul’s motivation for his evangelistic ministry of persuading men, therefore, was his reverence for Christ and desire to have his works evaluated positively. This motivation was clear to God, and Paul hoped that the Corinthians would also share God’s perspective.

5:12. Rather than having an inflated view of himself, Paul wrote concerning his motives so that the Corinthians might defend him against his opponents who prided themselves on outward appearance (thus rejecting Paul because of his suffering) rather than inward reality. The internal motivations of the heart are more significant than outward appearances.

5:13. The Corinthians responded to Paul differently: some incorrectly thought he was beside [himself]—out of his mind to put up with such suffering; others thought that his mind was sound. Regardless, Paul ministered for the sake of God and the Corinthians, not for himself.

5:14-15. Paul found a second motivation for ministry in the love of Christ, i.e., Christ’s love
for him. This love was manifested when Christ died as a substitute for the sins of those who believe in Him, and it leads to two conclusions: (1) the death of Christ to sin was the death of all Christians to sin (see the comments on Rm 6:1-7) and (2) this should motivate Christians to live for Christ (see the comments on Rm 6:11-14). The death of Christ is more than a fact to be believed; it demands a lifestyle that needs to be lived.

5:16-17. Paul described two consequences concerning the death of Christ. (1) His conversion experience gave him a new perspective on Christians and Christ. Gone were the days when Paul appraised them according to the flesh, from a human perspective. The death of Christ means that Christians are regarded as spiritual brothers and sisters rather than as just members of certain ethnic, social, or economic groups; Jesus is regarded as the Messiah rather than a messianic pretender. (2) The old era of the law ended with the death of Christ, and a new era in salvation history has arrived. When people become Christians, they are in Christ and view everything from a new perspective.

5:18-19. In this new period of salvation history, God was active in the life of Christ to reconcile humanity to Himself. “Reconciliation” is a key Pauline term. It is the activity of God that exchanges a broken relationship with humanity with a restored relationship through the work of Christ on the cross. Adam’s sin broke humanity’s perfect relationship with God and made humanity enemies with God (Rm 5:10). For Paul, humanity was so sinful that human beings could not reconcile themselves to God. But God himself took the initiative in history to reconcile humanity through the death of Christ on the cross. This does not mean, however, that every human is automatically reconciled. The message must be proclaimed and received (Rm 5:11) by faith in Christ (Rm 5:1-2). Believers are free from the penalty of sin and their trespasses do not count against them. God gives reconciled believers the task of proclaiming the message of reconciliation.

5:20. As he was Christ’s ambassador, Paul’s appeal represented God’s appeal. Paul’s evangelistic plea was that unbelievers might be reconciled to God by embracing the gospel message (2Co 5:11). This plea was not directed toward the Corinthians, as the NASB we beg you implies (the pronoun you is not in the Gk. text); the audience is the unbelieving world.

5:21. The content of the appeal is clarified. Christ never committed sin, but He voluntarily became a sin offering (the likely sense of to be sin on our behalf) by bearing the penalty for sin as a substitute. He was punished for the sins of others. The purpose for his death was that those who believe might have a righteous standing before God. The sinless One died so that sinners might live.

6:1-2. The doctrinal section (5:11–6:2) concludes with a practical exhortation. Paul worked together with God to proclaim the message of reconciliation; the Corinthians embraced this message and benefited from a right relationship with God. As reconciled people, they must now reconcile with others—including Paul. Grace—specifically the new work that God has accomplished in Christ to bring about reconciliation and forgiveness of sins (5:18-19)—is received in vain, in a practical sense, when Christians do not live in harmony with their position in Christ. The reason for this action is grounded in the scriptural context of Is 49:8. Because God often breaks into history to help His people, the recipients should respond. Just as God had His Day when He delivered Israel from their bondage in Babylon, so there was a Day when the Corinthians were delivered from their bondage to sin. The stress on now refers to the new period of salvation history inaugurated by the death of Christ.

5. Paul’s Integrity and Appeal (6:3-10)

6:3-4a. Paul made this exhortation as a man of integrity. His driving purpose in life was that no one would find fault with his gospel ministry because of an offense he committed. His life reflected his message. As a servant of God, Paul proved his integrity by endurance during suffering. This virtue applies to all the trials in the following list and is a crucial quality for every minister. Those committed to the gospel will stand firm during persecution.

6:6-7. Paul commended himself through character qualities that manifest divine enablement: purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, and sincere love (which are fruit of the Holy Spirit), as well as truthful speech (which is an
(Bock, *Luke*, 1295). Another theme is the joy that comes when that which is lost is found.

1. Setting of the Parables (15:1-2)

15:1-2. The setting in which Jesus spoke these parables is important to the point of the parables. **The tax collectors and the sinners**, the ostracized, and the outcast, were coming to hear Jesus (15:1), and He received them. This provoked **the Pharisees and the scribes** who criticized Jesus for these associations. The parables explained why Jesus welcomed and fellowshipped with such people. The fourfold pattern—an item is lost, a search is made, the item is found, rejoicing follows—appears in each of the parables. This pattern is the pattern of salvation—siners are lost, they are sought by Christ (cf. 19:10), they are found by God, rejoicing follows. Only in the parable of the Prodigal Son is the human responsibility to repent presented.

2. Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:3-7)

15:3-4. The parable of the lost sheep is best known for the numbers involved. Jesus put the hypothetical situation before His listeners. He imagined a man with a hundred sheep—ninety-nine were with him safe and secure while one has become lost (15:4a). In real life, the risk of leaving the ninety-nine in open pasture (lit., “wilderness”) would probably have been too great to go after the one which is lost (15:4b). Yet the caring shepherd did just that. He searched for the lost sheep until he found it (15:4c).

15:5-7. The tender picture of a shepherd carrying the sheep across his shoulders (15:5) would have heightened the point: the shepherd is the one who pursued, found, and retrieved the sheep. The initiative (of seeking) and the accomplishment (of finding) belong to the shepherd. When the shepherd found the sheep there was great joy. The picture of rejoicing—calling the neighbors, rejoicing over one lost, but found, is to be understood as hyperbole. While an actual circumstance like this would surely be a cause for joy and relief (for the shepherd anyway), it is unlikely that the picture Jesus was describing would actually happen. The “over-the-top” reaction of the shepherd (15:6) is meant to contrast with the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes toward the tax collectors and sinners who have come to hear Jesus. They should at least have been supportive—if not ecstatic—when sinners showed an interest in the things of the Lord. They were however as unmoved as this shepherd was overjoyed. Jesus made the point: heaven (a metonymy for God) is much more like the overly ecstatic shepherd when sinners come to repentance (15:7) and unlike the critical Pharisees.

3. Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10)

15:8-10. The second parable is remarkably simple and reiterates the same basic point as the first: something lost (a coin) was diligently searched for and ultimately found, to the great joy of the finder. As with the parable of the lost sheep, the reaction of the woman who found her coin—calling neighbors and friends—is not true to life. It is an exaggeration. However, it is meant to make the point that there is extravagant joy **in the presence of the angels** (15:10 indicating God Himself) when sinners repent. Both of these parables teach that it is God who takes the initiative to seek the lost (cf. 19:10), as demonstrated by the controversial actions of Jesus who sought the social and spiritual rejects.

4. Parable of the Lost Son (15:11-32)

15:11. This parable appears only in Luke’s gospel and is acknowledged by many as a masterpiece of storytelling. While it is often known as the parable of the Prodigal Son, note that Jesus began the parable with the mention of two sons (15:11), with the older brother playing as vital a role in the parable as the younger.

a. The First Son (15:12-24)

15:12-20a. The younger of the man’s sons exhibited a foolish rebellion (15:12-13). He selfishly requested his inheritance, showing himself as disrespectful and uncharitable. In effect, when the young man asked for his inheritance he was betraying a materialistic, selfish impulse at best, and at worst was saying to his father, “I wish you were already dead.” When the young man received his inheritance (15:12) he imprudently departed, and then he sinfully squandered his money (15:13). The young man found himself in an inevitable destitution (15:14-16). He was struck by poverty (15:14), thrown into virtual slavery (15:15a), and experienced hunger and estrangement (15:16-17), probably for the first time in his life. From the nadir of this condition the young man took the steps necessary for his restoration (15:17-20a). He **came to his senses** (15:17), that is, he became aware that his own foolishness and sinfulness had brought him to this destitution. He realized he needed to make a full confession (15:18, 21), and he had to own up to the condition of his heart and the consequences of his actions. He exhibited genuine humility when he concluded that he was unworthy to be called a son and was willing to accept the status of hired man (15:19). Finally,
he took the necessary action to follow through in deed from the intentions of his heart—he got up and came to his father (15:20a).

b. The Gracious Father (15:20b-24)

15:20b-24. The note that his father saw him (15:20b) while the young man was still far off may indicate that the father was looking for the son, though the text does not say this and the point should not be pressed. The father’s reaction, like the response of the shepherd to finding the lost sheep and of the woman upon finding the lost coin, was “exaggerated” (15:20c). “There can be no doubt that in the father’s welcome of the younger son Jesus is teaching that the heavenly Father welcomes returning sinners” (Morris, Luke, 243). The father’s compassion for his returning son would not permit him to accept the terms offered by the Prodigal. The father did not even allow his son to get so far as to propose becoming like one of the hired men (15:19b)—nothing short of full restoration would do. The son was clothed (15:22) and his return was celebrated (15:23). The father’s justification for this celebration revealed the severity of the son’s condition before his repentance (was dead . . . was lost) and the complete restoration of his condition since his repentance (has come to life . . . has been found) (15:24). The father’s statement made the application of the parable clear: Sinners are dead and lost, but they can come to life and can be found if they return to the Father.

c. The Second Son (15:25-30)

In a sense the parable was complete, having made, for the third time, the point made in the first two parables of this chapter—God finds and receives lost sinners who repent and return to Him. But the attitude of the Pharisees (15:2) needed to be addressed directly. It is clear that the older brother represented the scribes and Pharisees. It is this half of the parable that is most pertinent to the context of 15:1, and in which the primary point of the parable is found.

15:25-30. When the older brother was made aware that his younger brother had returned and that a celebration was underway to welcome him back (15:25-27) he became angry and resentful (15:28a). His complaint I have never neglected a command of yours (arguably not true) (15:29) echoed the attitude of the legalistic Pharisees. His accusations against his brother were uncharitable (and untrue—there is no mention of prostitutes [15:30b] in the earlier narrative about the younger son). His unwillingness to be forgiving was in stark contrast to the attitude of the father. And his attitudes were not significantly different from those of his younger brother’s. The older brother would have liked a young goat so that he could be merry with his friends (v. 29), that is, to enjoy material goods from his father without his father’s company. The two were not so different after all!

d. The Gracious Father (15:31-32)

15:31-32. Again, the father was the picture of graciousness and forbearance. His pleas to the older son, reiterating his earlier words about the younger son’s pre- and post-repentant states were largely lost on the bitter and resentful older son. No conclusion to this exchange between the father and this older son is given. Jesus allowed the Pharisees to write their own conclusion: They could continue to resent that Jesus welcomed tax collectors and sinners (cf. 15:2), or they could drop their bitterness and join the celebration as repentant sinners themselves. Perhaps an application from these parables is that God’s people should weigh carefully their own attitudes toward those on the fringes of society—and consider more deliberate attempts to reach them as Jesus did, and for which He was criticized. We should also be slow to criticize or question the motives of those who are seeking to minister to social and spiritual outcasts (such as drug addicts, homosexuals, prostitutes, criminals). The last verse summarizes the point of all three parables—what was lost has been found.

M. Parables and Teaching for Disciples and Pharisees (16:1-31)

In this chapter Jesus challenged His disciples and the Pharisees about temporal values and worldly ways of thinking. The relation of the teaching here to the previous chapter is unclear. “The material in this chapter is for the most part unique to Luke” and it “deals with the common theme of possessions” (Stein, Luke, 411). Both the disciples and the Pharisees needed to understand that the values, principles, and standards of the world—the “ways of thinking” that enable one to get along in this life—are incommensurate for one who serves God, and God will judge those who do not serve Him.

1. Parable of the Dishonest Manager (16:1-9)

16:1-9. In an enigmatic parable Jesus taught the disciples that they needed to be wise in the use of temporal positions, possessions, and power. Jesus pictured a discredited manager who was about to be fired by his employer...
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