

*Paul's Statement of Faith
and Practice in
Ephesians*

The history of theology, Christianity, and denominations illustrates the discovery of a verse or verses of Scripture which surprises some new group, which when isolated out of the context of the book from which it came and the whole Bible, creates additional divisions and distinction. You recall the example of the person who read in one place in the Bible "Judas went out and hanged himself", then put that together with "go thou and do likewise". It has led many to conclude that you can prove anything from the Bible. Well, not if you keep a verse in the chapter context, the chapter in the book context, the book in the New Testament or Old Testament context, and the Testament in the total context. In other words, the larger the amount of the Bible that is included in your "Statement of Faith and Practice", the higher degree of probability do you have of high fidelity with what God through the Holy Spirit, through Jesus, the Apostles, and Prophets had put in there in the first place. This is implied in the statement by the Apostle Peter that "no scripture is of any private interpretation". The interpretation of Jesus is to be found in the writings of the Apostles; the interpretation of the Apostles is to be found by the inherent agreements through the Spirit between the writing of one Apostle with another; and the Apostles, especially Paul, Matthew, and Jesus specialized in the interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets, quoting often in their writings from the Prophets and then

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through what Jesus taught them and how the Holy Spirit guided them, explained what the Prophets meant.

All this has been written to come to the necessity of putting as much Scripture as possible into any significant Bible-based "Statement of Faith and Practice"; and the recognition of the fact that we can do no better than to use the book of Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul from the human side and by the Holy Spirit on the supernatural side, as a minimal "Statement of Faith and Practice".

Let me illustrate how this was the intention of the Apostle Paul in the first place, and consequently also the intention of God as the Source of Scripture. Remember that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." One of the greatest works of God in history, second perhaps only to the Crucifixion of Christ on the cross for the salvation provision to the whole world, is God's creation through Apostles and Prophets and Jesus of the "Oracles of God", the Word of God, the book of 66 books that we have in our possession. Study carefully the content of the first ten books that the Apostle Paul wrote, then study carefully Ephesians and the twin of Colossians carefully, and you will find that Ephesians is a condensed summary of those first ten books such as Romans, I and II Corinthians, Hebrews, Galatians, and so on. **{See the LEARN CHRIST commentary, volume 4, "Christ, Paul, and the Falling Away" for more on this and how Paul was chosen by Christ to have the ministry of being the chief editor of the New Testament. You will find good material on this also in volume 1, "The Old Testament According to the New Testament".}** Also this makes Ephesians therefore the prime candidate to summarize all of the Bible, and to be the prime candidate to be the most Bible-comprehensive "Statement of Faith and Practice". How angry such an approach must make Satan and the disciples of Satan, who like Satan, would take Scripture out of context to prove some pet theory, to make disciples after themselves, and to win from Satan the status in the world he promised to Jesus by quoting Scripture out of context.

Of course, Jesus set the pattern for Paul and the other Apostles to quote extensively from the Old Testament in their teachings and writings; but Paul was the chief practitioner of that pattern. You will notice that books like Romans, Hebrews, and I and II Corinthians are full of Old Testament quotes with an explanation of the correct meaning accompanying the quote. This is what is meant by "no scripture is of any private interpretation". Jesus and the Apostles quote and explain the proper interpretation of the

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Old Testament Prophets; the proper interpretation comes by letting Paul explain John on the same subject, and vice versa, and letting Peter explain Paul and John, and Jesus through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John explain all of them, and vice versa. Never, Never will you find a contradiction between any of the Apostles and Jesus or of the Prophets and Apostles. If you think you have found one, it is a personal problem; and you must enlarge the total context of your Bible study.

Anyway back to the main point: you will see in the first 10 books of Paul a large number of quotes, then suddenly with the writing of Ephesians, almost no quotes. Why? It is time to summarize all the great truths of God that Paul has written about in the first ten books. And never forget, how qualified Paul was on the Old Testament. Paul before conversion was a "lawyer"; and in Israel that meant an authority of the law of the nation which was also the Old Testament. Granted Paul needed "conversion" on the road of Damascus in order to remove the "veil" which blinded in the proper understanding of the Old Testament, which he wrote about as still in the way of most Jews for seeing the proper interpretation of the Old Testament; true also Paul needed immediately after conversion and some instruction from Ananias, private time in Arabia with the Ascended Christ to get straightened out his own interpretations and understandings of Scripture, even a little time with Peter and James recording their testimonies of personal experience with Jesus {later to be the manuscripts that Paul left for John Mark and Dr. Luke to write the Gospels that Paul sponsored as chief editor of the New Testament}; and then lastly before writing the majority of the New Testament books, 14 of 27, Paul needed to study again through the Old Testament in the light of his recent experiences and teachings from Jesus and with guidance from the Holy Spirit, about whom no doubt Jesus has taught him. What did Paul do during this study again through the Bible during those so-called seven silent years at Tarsus? He must have made a record on parchments and books of all those quotes that he would later use so extensively in books like Romans, Hebrews, and Corinthians, even in the little epistle of Galatians.

Well, you see the point: the first ten books from Paul are a summary of the Old Testament with proper interpretations, also a summary of his own conversion experience and the teachings of Jesus in Arabia; and Ephesians is a summary of those first ten books, hence a summary of the Bible itself; and therefore is a prime candidate from the Word of God for a comprehensive "Statement of Faith and Practice".

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16-1: Ephesians Chapter One: Statements of Faith and Understandings, the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places". {If you desire you can correlate these enumerated spiritual blessings even with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.}

1. Some Supporting Bible understandings for Major Statements of Faith.

(1). (Ephesians 1:1a): Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, called personally by the Ascended Christ on the road to Damascus and specially trained by Jesus in Arabia. **{Later in Ephesians we will learn that it is the Ascended Christ that calls Apostles as well as evangelists and pastors, and gave special gifts to those men for the benefit of the total body of Christ, the church.}** Based on those verses as a starting point, we go on to the total context of the Bible to find that only Apostles and Prophets can get and give revelations, or Scripture.

(2). (Ephesians 1:1b) It was the will of God for Paul to be an Apostle. Jesus when He called Paul, like always in every thing He did, was only doing the will of God; and was expressing fully the will of God.

(3). (Ephesians 1:2). True Christians or believers are called "saints" in the Bible in order among other things to distinguish between "the faithful in Christ Jesus" and the unfaithful, between the tares and the wheat, between the sheep and the goats. Always from Jesus and all the Apostles in the Bible is the recognition that all who chose to name the name of Christ do not belong to Christ. In that final Day of the LORD and Lord, many will say to Christ "Lord, Lord"; and Christ will say, "depart from me you that work iniquity, for I never knew you."

2. Major Statements of Faith and Practice in Ephesians 1.

(1). (Ephesians 1:3a) The only God of the Universe, the same God of the Bible, is the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and God is only our Father because first He was the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have accepted them for What and Who they are. **{Also God has adopted us through the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit causes us to cry "Abba" for Father.}**

(2). (Ephesians 1:3b). The false and itching ears teachers going about to teach and preach the Gospel of Wealth, the corollary of success, and the Gospel of Prosperity need to be re-focused again on the primary place of "spiritual blessings" as in heavenly places. The prosperous and wealthy just can not get their lusts and eyes off material possessions here on earth, and

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off their desires to justify themselves for lives dedicated to seeking first these other things instead of the kingdom of God and God's righteousness.

(3). God chose us to be believers from before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 1:4a). This is predestination, sometimes in Theology called Calvinism, and contrasted to Arminianism or free-will. Both are true in the Bible, but beyond our complete understanding even as we can not fully understand the nature of light itself: how it can be both wave-like in nature and sometimes act like a particle. We can not even comprehend the molecule of water. A best example of how both are true in the Bible is the shipwreck of Paul on the way to Rome. God predestined and told Paul, Paul telling also the sailors, that no one would be lost in the shipwreck; but yet later Paul invoked the freedom of choice of the sailors in that he told them if they left the ship for the life raft they could not be saved. You see freedom of choice and predestination were both there.

(4). God chose us to be sanctified, "holy and blameless before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4b).

(5). God predestined us to adoption as Sons through Jesus Christ and the adoption being by God Himself (Ephesians 1:5). The Apostle John in John 1 expressed it in a lovely manner as he wrote, "But as many as received Him {Christ}, to them gave He {God} the power to become Sons of God." Adoption is to become a son of the very God of this Universe, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to have His inward Spirit naturally call out to God as Father. Why did the great God do this? It was "the pleasure of His will". Like Paul writes in Romans, can the clay say to the potter why did you chose me or why did you make me this way? Be grateful that you are among the chosen; work to be worthy {"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"}; and accept it as it is by grace. Ephesians 1:6 continues of God's Pleasure, the famous commentary by W.O. Carver expressing that in the title for Ephesians of "The Glory of God in the Christian Calling".

(6). We are adopted and justified, the justification expressed as "accepted by God" (Ephesians 1:6b). How grand it is, Paul is saying, to be accepted by the "Beloved Father", He that runs and controls all and is the only Eternal God.

(7). Wow, we just can grasp the rapid advance of statements of faith about salvation, what Paul likes to call the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as we go from predestination to adoption to justification, and now in Ephesians 1:7 to redemption and forgiveness.

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a. Redemption, or the buying back of us to God, is by the blood of Christ, a pungent phrase to describe how Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

b. We have forgiveness of sins by God through the Lord Jesus Christ and by the grace of God. **{Is that not a good statement of faith about salvation! Did I not hear an Amen or two coming out of Norway?}**

(8). The Mystery of the Will of God, which only He could reveal through Jesus and the Apostles, is that He might get together all things that are in heaven and in earth under the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9,10). This mystery of the will of God was manifested by God through Christ at one certain time in history, when Jesus lived and died, which the Bible calls "in the dispensation of the Fullness of the times", In other words at the time and place in human history chosen by God.

(9). Here we go again on more spiritual blessings in heavenly places and more on predestination by God (Ephesians 1:11-14). This spiritual blessing is our inheritance, our future and security if you would! This inheritance or future heritage is part of the predestined purpose of God. Even as James quoted from the Prophets at the Great Jerusalem conference in Acts of how "known unto God are all His works from the beginning", even so Paul echoes this same doctrine in the "Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will". You just know that Paul is summarizing here from Romans where he has previously written, "and we know that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and the called according to His purpose." Here as Paul goes on, we see our common inheritance with those who first believed in Christ, us being among those who later have "trusted after hearing the word of truth, which is the gospel of our salvation! Wow, as we preacher boys use to say at Bible college, "that will preach!"

(10). Although the "believe and be baptized" of Ephesians 1:13 continues on our inheritance started above, I set it out as a separate doctrinal statement of faith. The prime baptism of the 14 letters of Paul and of the Bible is the one baptism of salvation. Believe is our part, and the one baptism that comes with real faith is the part done by God. This one baptism of salvation is called "the seal of God". Paul is again summarizing what he wrote in II Timothy books about "nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal that God knows His own, and let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The Holy Spirit is the "guarantee",

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the surety if you would, of our to-be-completed salvation; the security and guarantee of our inheritance in salvation. The inheritance is not complete until the full redemption of body and soul at the Second Coming of Christ {**Thessalonians**}, when the purchased possession {**us**} becomes completed!

NOTE: Sorry this simple statement of Faith and practice is so long; but the praise to God and Bible just flows on, comparing Scripture with Scripture!

(11). {Ephesians 1:17}: The Holy Spirit given to all believers is also the Spirit of "wisdom and revelation". Do not misread this verse. Revelation is not given to all believers, but rather the Spirit of Revelation. What this is another way of saying, as Paul does in the first 10 letters, is that the same Holy Spirit who wrote the Bible, giving the revelations through Apostles and Prophets and Jesus, is the same Holy Spirit that lives and teaches inside the believer. What you will find in the context of Ephesians 1:17-18 is a clear distinction between revelation and illumination. What happened in the completed writing of the Word of God through Apostles and Prophets, the 66 books we called Bible. That Bible only is "revelation"; and what happens to us as believers when gain understanding from the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit is "illumination".

"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power..." (Ephesians 1:18,19)

NOTE: Please stay away from the current and popular heresy of "God told me", or "God gave me a word", or even worse the "God gave me a revelation"--all of which sound like God is revealing new Word of God through you or your Bible teachers; and which tends to confuse illumination and revelation. Please read carefully first and second Corinthians where Paul and the Word of God, once and for all, dealt with this problem in a church body where members thought either "the Word of God came to them only" or that "the Word of God came out of them only". This conceited and self-serving attitude breeds all sorts of false practices such as: (a) Gnosticism where certain church members claim to have special revelations and wisdom that others do not have; (b) self-gratification and disturbances in worship where everybody has a song, a word, and a prophecy and a prayer at the same time; and (c) so-called

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praise songs without any real meaning, and done contrary to the worship traits of Corinthians with "understanding".

(12). The same power of God and of the Holy Spirit at work as God brought forth Jesus from the dead in the Resurrection on the third day after Crucifixion is the same power at work in us for completed salvation: first the 9 month new birth, not that instantaneous new birth of the fundamentalists for their own glory; then the process of sanctification as we become more like Christ, and then full salvation or redemption at the Second Coming of Christ as "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is".

(a). God used this same power when after He resurrected Christ from the dead, He caused Christ to Ascend back to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. {We should often pray for more awareness of God seated there on the great white throne with His feet in the clouds, and of the Lord Jesus Christ seated in a place of honor and rule at His right hand where he does two things: ever lives to make intercession for our sins, and is preparing to come again to get us!}

(b). This power of God has ordained that Christ rule at His right hand, "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come." {This total earth age and the age of eternity beyond this life!}

NOTE: You need some perspective of the fullness of what Paul is writing here, based on what is one of the most important doctrinal statements on the relationship between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to be found anywhere in the Bible. In I Corinthians 15:24-28: "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet...Now when all things {that includes death in the resurrection of the bodies at the second coming of Christ} are made subject to Him who puts all things under Him, that God may be all in all." I have never failed to read this in a worship service without seeing grimaces of expression from some. Although it is simply the reading of one of the most important Scriptures, albeit also one of the most neglected as it seems to counter some isometical conclusions on last things {eschatology} of the Bible, perhaps of the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible, sometimes accepted like Scriptures themselves, there is a reaction as if the Christ

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is all concepts of many believers can not allow for the time when God is all in all as the kingdom of God is delivered by Jesus to God the Father. Where I think much of the problem is among fundamentalists, especially those dedicated to the fallacious notes of the Scofield Reference Bible on eschatology, is on the Bible words "Then comes the end"--a clear statement that it is all over without all the complications of Scofield notes like a literal 1000 years, a kingdom on earth where the rich and prosperous can continue to enjoy all their possessions, and a delay in the beginning of eternity with the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the dead. Recently a friend of mine with the Christian Life Commission of the SBC, quoted from II Thessalonians 15-17 how in the Second Coming of Christ the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will descend from heaven with a shout and the final trumpet of God, the dead in Christ rising first to meet Christ and then those alive caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air, and this friend placed the emphasis on "And thus shall we always be with the Lord." Then he asked, "what is so hard about this to understand". The Second Coming and it is all over; and trying to add all these seven years and thousands of years are figments of a good imagination. I will tell you right now what will keep you from the follies of the Scofield Reference Bible with its weird and out of context approach to the book of Revelation, and that is this Bible understanding: what bound Satan for a figurative 1000 years, however real in that it represents a long period of history chosen by God not to be given as a precise number, was the Coming of the Holy Spirit in great power and all over the earth at one time on the first Day of Pentecost after the Resurrection and Ascension. It is the Holy Spirit that binds Satan to a limited effectivity by convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (Read about that in Acts.) What looses Satan is when the Holy Spirit during the Falling Away is withdrawn from earth according to II Thessalonians. Now, what this does for our eschatology is to make the beginning of the one thousand years at the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension, and the end of the one thousand years with the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit during the Falling Away. And of how certain pentecostals and fundamentalists strain at a gnat and swallow a camel as they try to claim that this withdrawal of the Holy Spirit is only to the extent of the Holy Spirit in the Christians that are taken up in the rapture. It is a good example of bad exegesis or hermeneutics and a good example of itching ears Bible teachers. How unfortunate it is that young and inexperienced Bible teachers and preachers when pressed to deliver their first mes-

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sages on Revelation and eschatology, take the easy way out of preaching the Scofield Reference Bible notes. It is a desperate beginning to a life-long commitment for them and their hearers that they never get away from. Derby was a Irishman, unfortunately formerly an eloquent lawyer, who instigated "dispensationalism"; Scofield, a formerly divorced and also somewhat dubious lawyer, took Darby and while pastor of a Congregationalist church in Dallas, wrote the NOTES as a correspondence course. THE NOTES ARE NOT PART OF THE BIBLE; THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE WORD OF GOD TO BE TAKEN WITH THE SAME RESPECT AND REGARD AS THE BIBLE. And before you give those kinds of beliefs and notes a respect of authority, I would suggest that you read about the beliefs of Congregationalists as well as about the life of Scofield and Darby.

(c). This power and authority of God has made Christ the head of the church, then and now. That means, bottom line, that Christ is the head of your local church as well as the head of the total church body, the Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven. What you will find in the first chapters of Revelation in Christ's messages through John to the 7 churches of Asia Minor is that when Christ is not indeed head of a local church like at Ephesus or Thyatira bad things happen in doctrine and practice; and often Christ removes the pastors that he has called and placed there, often it seems like it is the freedom of choice of the church members who will no longer endure sound doctrine, the sure sign that they have already gotten away from the Lordship of Christ as head of their lives and churches.

(13). The Bible here in Ephesians 1:23 teaches one church and yet many churches; and those members of the many churches not among the tares or the goats in the kingdom are automatically members, with a profession of faith and the one baptism of salvation, in the one body of Christ, the church, the Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven.

16-2: Paul's Statements of Faith in Ephesians 2, the BEFORE and AFTER of the IN CHRIST life.

1. The AIC or AFTER IN CHRIST of Ephesians 2. "Christian" is not a preferred word of the Bible for believers, being found only three times in the New Testament. Today, it has lost a lot of meaning. Like former prime minister Begin said years ago, "You Americans are born Christians just we like we Israelis are born Jews." Well, according to the Bible, neither is true, although it is admitted that it is a popular belief. Unfortunately, many think they are Christians because they are Americans, and many Jews think

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they are children of God because they are born of the nation of Israel, contrary to the whole context of the teachings of the Bible in the book of Romans. A preferred word of the 14 letters of Paul is "in Christ", or even those "who name the name of Christ".

(1). We are "made alive" in Christ as we experience the new birth, the beginning of the one baptism of salvation. (Ephesians 2:1)

(2). By the grace of God, an unmerited and unearned favor, we are saved, Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8,9. Even while we were dead in trespasses and sins, God rich in mercy and love made us alive together with Christ.

(3). God has raised us up together with Christ and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places. (Ephesians 2:6)

(4). God wants to show in the ages to come of eternity and heaven and on the new earth, and after this world age, the full extent of those spiritual blessings. Once again a short summary of Paul in Romans about "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard", nor has it even entered into the mind of man, "the things God has prepared for those who love Him."

(5). After in Christ, we are "God's workmanship", the outworking in our lives of the indwelling spirit of God and the one baptism, "created in Christ Jesus for good works" by new birth and the continuing process of sanctification or Christlikeness. And God has also predestined our good works (Ephesians 2:10).

(6). After in Christ, you are brought back to hope, to the real Israel of the children of God, and back to God and heaven. (Ephesians 2:13)

2. The BIC of BEFORE IN CHRIST of Ephesians 2.

(1). Before in Christ, you were dead in trespasses and sins (2:1); before you were walking according to the customs and traditions of this world (2:2), which is the same as walking or living according to Satan, the prince and power of this world and this world system (2:2); and you before in Christ lived according to that evil spirit that now controls all in the world not believers, disobedience of unbelief being the ultimate of all evils (2:2); before in Christ you conducted yourselves like them in the "lusts of the flesh"--John in the little epistle of I John identifies all it is to "love the world" as the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; and before in Christ you lived in order to fulfill lusts of the flesh and lusts of the mind--Pastor James writes not to be deceived about our natural and human spirit sometimes even allowed to control us in our church behavior where "we lust to

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envy"; and before in Christ we were by nature also the children of wrath. **{The Bible never, ever teaches of an inherent good nature of man! "The heart is desperately wicked above all things, and who can know it." And "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." By the way, some of these verses of Ephesians 2, perhaps in a more positive manner, are summaries of the sinners of Romans 3.}**

(2). Before in Christ, you Gentiles were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel {and do not forget how Paul has already extensively taught in Romans of the true children of God, the true Jews, and the true Israel--such as "all Israel is not of Israel"}, strangers from the covenant promises of God, without hope and without God. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

3. What God did for you to make possible through Christ your transition from the BIC to the AIC! (Ephesians 2:14-22 and 2:13)

(1). Before you were far off, but now you are brought near to God through the blood of Christ, again a favorite biblical phrase for the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. (Ephesians 2:13)

(2). Jesus has made Jew and Gentile believers One by breaking down the "middle wall of partition" (2:14), thus Jesus Himself becoming Peace and our Peace. **{Peacemaking in the strict Bible sense of the word is to extend the influence of Christ, between God and man and between man and man!}**

(3). Jesus nailed to the cross the enmity between Jews and Gentiles and the commandments in ordinances thus creating in Himself one new humanity of Jewish and Gentile believers. That is peace! (Ephesians 2:15)

(4). Jesus made in the cross reconciliation between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, another great and biblical word of the cross and more of peacemaking, at the same time creating of Jews and Gentiles one believing body, the church. (Ephesians 2:16)

NOTE: Now, do you really think that you can say all these in one simple statement of faith and practice with an enumerated listed of sentences for each great Bible doctrine. However, we will try to do so at the end of this Statement of Faith and Practice from Paul in Ephesians at the end of this chapter, after we have the proper exegetical Bible background.

(5). Through the One Christ all members of the one church have equal access to the One God the Father by way of the One Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18)

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sians 2:18) {You can almost smell that Paul is warming up for the seven great Ones, the major doctrines of the Bible, to be stated later in Ephesians 4:4-6 which even as Ephesians is a summary statement of faith of the whole Bible, are a more condensed summary of the Bible and of Ephesians itself. How can we go wrong if we have enough respect for the Bible as the Word of God, for the teachings of Jesus and the love of Jesus, and we meet the Bible's own guidelines for understanding with such thoroughness and conciseness in the Bible--guidelines or rules for understanding as laid out in the Bible are often called hermeneutics, sometimes called the science of biblical interpretation.}

NOTE: We could almost dispense with all these preliminary statements of faith if we could fully understand from the full context of the Bible, what is meant by "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6) Unfortunately, we have a theological and religious history behind us where Bible readers and so-called scholars have ignored the Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation of the Bible--that is that "no scripture is of any private interpretation"; that the natural man can not understand the Bible things of the Spirit of God; and that have failed to practice the required rules of understanding laid down in the Bible. Particularly must be discuss why "one salvation" is not in the list of major Bible doctrines, and how the "one baptism" is the all-inclusive phrase of faith for salvation. And once again may I recommend the LEARN CHRIST commentary on the 14 letters of the Apostle Paul with the conclusion chapter on "Ephesians and Colossians", and entitled "Believe and Be Baptized". In fact, if you wished you could take these 7 ONES of Ephesians 4:4-6 as the major 7 points of a statement of faith, then go back to list all the pertinent truths of Ephesians 1 and 2 under these seven. Yes, Paul was a lawyer, a religious lawyer of the Bible, a supreme logician, and above all an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find that Muslims like to talk about Jesus, and say they accept all about Him, and accept all the Prophets of the Old Testament; but when you bring up the Apostle Paul they grow silent! Of course, I might also add that without the rest of Ephesians 4 we would never see the relationship of this unity in the ONES to the church, and above all without Ephesians 5 and 6 we would never see the PRACTICES of faith as in a "Statement of Faith and Practice".

16-3: Statements of Faith in Ephesians 3, Explanation of the Mystery of God, the One Body.

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You know how "mystery" is repeated in the Bible, such as in the mystery of godliness, to describe a revealed truth from God that otherwise we would not know about! It is something that God has not always made known, but chooses in certain periods of history to make known through Jesus, the Apostles and Prophets. Although Paul elaborates here on the One Body or one church in a whole summarizing chapter of Ephesians, we still have not learned the lesson restated by the fundamentalists John R. Rice of "One Church but Many Churches", that while there are many local churches in the world and in the Bible, there is one Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven, many trying to make their denomination synonymous with the one church and ignoring the fact that they, contrary to the teachings of Jesus forbidding before the End separation of the tares and the wheat, have the arrogance to think that they, and they alone of all Christians, in their own local church have already made that distinction! **{Would it not be grand if any group of humans could put a sign out in front of their local church which says The Church, and automatically they would be assured that only wheat and sheep, without any tares or goats, are in their fellowship. Dream on, folks! You have the wrong time and the wrong Person for that! This separation in spite of such arrogance and self-deceiving convictions will be done at the time of the Second Coming of Christ, and by the Person of Christ Himself with the angels dispatched to the four corners of the earth! Did I hear an Amen!}**

1. This Mystery was made known by Revelation to the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:3a); this Mystery is what Paul has written about in the previous two chapters of Ephesians (Ephesians 3:3b); this mystery was received by the Apostle Paul as a dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2); this mystery is of the knowledge of Christ (3:4); this mystery was not made known by God to men in the history before Paul (3:5a), at least not in the form and completeness as it has now been revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit, and to the "apostles and prophets" (3:5b).

2. This Mystery in Christ fully stated: "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel..." (Ephesians 3:6)

3. Paul became a "minister" with this Mystery of Christ and the one body. (Ephesians 3:7)

a. It is a mystery in fellowship (3:9) which was from the beginning of creation by God through Christ has been hidden to the world, but the inten-

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tion of God was that now the mystery might be known by the "manifold wisdom of God". Known "by the church". This mystery of the one body is according to the eternal purpose that from the beginning God purposed in Christ.

b. It is by this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we have access and confidence with God and with the one church. (3:11,12)

4. A Prayer by the Apostle Paul for all believers to grant believers, Ephesians 3:14-21, the following blessings. **{I don't know about you but next to Jesus being at the right hand of God the Father to pray for our sins, I appreciate the Apostle Paul expressing this prayer for us!}**

a. That you and we may be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." (3:16). **{Later in the two closing chapters of Ephesians, in the practice section of the statement of faith, Paul will give some specifics for strengthening as we put on the whole armor of God.}**

b. That God may dwell in your hearts through faith (3:17). Even as Paul starts the ball rolling with how to learn Christ, not as the others around us in the world have learned Christ, and then Jesus with the 3 questions and answers of John 14 describes the "how" of learning Christ, even so you see an echo of such sound Bible doctrine here in 3:17 where Christ and God dwell in the human heart through faith.

c. That you may be "rooted and grounded in faith" (3:17b). Always remember according to the parable of the seed and the sower, that the seed planted on hard ground is those that stumble in a local church and that never develop any root in the faith.

d. That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints of all the ages in the great and real history of Christianity, the four dimensions of the love of Christ. Try as hard as you may, you can not visualize anything beyond the three dimensions we know except by adding the dimension of time, that is love that continues with time. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

16-4: Paul's Statement of Faith in Ephesians 4, the unity of the faith, the 7 ONEs, and of the one church with Christ.

1. Here "faith and practice" blend as Paul, having blessed all believers and prayed for them, now throws out the challenge "to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called". Certainly, you must see in the "walk worthy" of the Christian calling, a practice of the faith; and in Ephesians 4 you will see a beginning of the practices added to faith, then later in Ephesians 5 and 6 the

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pure practices of "faith and practice". How are some preliminary and general ways in which you can practice Christian faith?

(1). Walk or live with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). Certainly a most violated Scripture of church members is the admonition "not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to. And lest we lose perspective of what is happening in churches today during this time of the Falling Away, let us remember the bad church behavior of II Timothy 3:1-9 where these church members have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Yes, these bad behaviors and bad attitudes do happen to church members, and today! Once again, this is part of keeping an admonition that guards against pride and advocates humility in the total Bible realities and context where church members do and can go bad!

(2). Church or fellowship members are to keep an inherent unity given by the Holy Spirit of God, which either exists in the fellowship because God put it there or does not exist, that can not be promoted through human means, PR, or the peace efforts of men as advocated by Rich Warren in his "Purpose Driven" books. (Ephesians 4:3) If you want real unity in your church body, it is recommended that you read closely this fourth chapter of Ephesians on exactly how unity does come in a church body. I think you will find it quite different from the forced and coerced efforts of Warren and disciples to "protect the church".

2. The famous ONEs of Ephesians 4:4-6 as a summary of the basis for unity and for all the major doctrines of the Bible.

(1). One Body, the church, alias the Assembly of the Firstborn--the Lord Jesus Christ being the Firstborn--and the church or assembly written in heaven in the Lamb's Book of Life, a record of which with your name in is the only assurance of salvation you need. That record in heaven is the only criterion that separates you from the tares and the goats when Christ Comes Again.

(2). One Spirit, the third member of the Trinity and God Himself, the Holy Spirit sent by God and Jesus on the first day of Pentecost after the Resurrection and to be withdrawn from earth during the Falling Away, sent by Jesus to take His place and to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, a person called the Comforter or the Other Jesus, one who reminds Christians of Scripture, providing wisdom and guidance; and the one present at Creation as the effecting cause, also throughout history as the

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giver to Apostles and Prophets of Revelations. Yes, He also gives illuminations; but we must recognize the difference.

(3). One Hope of Your Calling, even as Elton Trueblood, the Quaker and Philosopher of Religion wrote "Your Other Vocation" as a reminder that the Christian calling is a vocation for which we must give priority, so Paul reminds us that for all Christians the hope is the same and the goal and goals if the calling are the same. **{Once again in total context, it must be added that while all believers receive common gifts like some wisdom from the Holy Spirit, each believer is given some unique gift by God through the Holy Spirit; and further more according to the doctrinal teachings of Corinthians, the total church is only complete as long as those diverse gifts cooperate with each other.}** Of course, we know the "hope" for this life of a better person and with a better purpose for God and Christ; and eternally as Paul wrote "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable", so that beyond this life is eternal hope, called hope not because we simply wish it to be so, but because it is an assured hope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

(4). One Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the means of salvation on the cross through His blood, the Spirit of Christ who worked with the Prophets in the Old Testament, the teacher and Savior who came to earth, died on the cross and was resurrected and ascended by God, and who now sits on the right hand of honor and rule to God the Father to make intercession for our sins and to prepare for His Second Coming when He will come again to get us. Surely Christ is doing more than this at the right hand of God, also the Bible tells us that the whole universe consists through Him so that surely He is holding this complex universe together until it disintegrates at the end of this world age and until He and the Father create a new heaven and a new earth with a new Jerusalem.

(5). One Faith, this is both the one faith held in their hearts by all believers and the "faith delivered once for all", in other words the Bible and the doctrines of the Bible, as expressed in the book of Jude.

(6). One Baptism, this is the equivalent of the one salvation, and you will find as the subject of many Bible passages, especially from Paul, where baptism is discussed as for example in Romans where "we are baptized with Christ". Paul knew and wrote of several other baptisms such as the baptism by water; but there was only one real baptism that of salvation and by the Holy Spirit of God. Since there is so much confusion created by the theology

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and divisions of denominations and the history of Christianity which confuses what is done in the baptistry with the One Baptism, please read the LEARN CHRIST commentary with exegesis of the prevalent "baptism" passages, and on the 14 letters of Paul since it is right here that above all we need the total context of Scripture. It is called "Believe and Be Baptized", the being baptized referring not to the baptistry but to the One Baptism of salvation, the water baptism by immersion to only come later as an act of obedience and of identification with Christ and Christians.

(7). One God and Father of all, this is the only God of the Universe, identified to us as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, also the Creator of the world and the Universe, and the God of the Bible. He, and He only, "is above all, and through all, and in you all".

NOTE: Wow, what a high point in a statement of faith! Where can you go from here. Well, we in the light of recent itching ears teachers about how to achieve unity and peace in local churches, need the Bible given practices on how to achieve peace and unity in the church!

3. Peace and Unity in the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16).

(1). There can be no real peace and unity in any church, local or larger, unless Christ is allowed in a practical way to run it. (4:7-12) Jesus is head of your church, and the chain of command in your assembly must come through Jesus to the pastor or any evangelist. The chain of authority between Jesus and the pastor includes the Apostles of the New Testament and the Prophets of the Old Testament, who exercise their authority today as writers of revelations in the Word of God. You will find a lot of the problems today in theology, doctrine, and false and itching ears teachers have come when the authority of the Apostles and Prophets in the Word of God is ignored or minimized. It is the Ascended Christ who chose these Apostles and Prophets, appointed them and called them, also who called your pastors and evangelists and teachers if indeed you heeded the Headship of Christ and sought the wisdom of the Spirit. {Please do not make the mistake of thinking that if the majority of your church votes against the pastor, that they are right. Remember how God told Moses to get out of the way so He could destroy all of Israel in the wilderness, then God would make of Moses and Aaron a nation; how God destroyed over 23,000 in one day and how only approximately 4 Hebrews of the vast congregation in the wilderness were allowed to enter eternal rest; and ask yourselves if Ephesus or Thyatira are all the seven churches of Asia Minor had voted in favor

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of the unsound doctrines for which Christ condemned them, as a majority vote would that have made it right. Hardly, we confuse all too easily the American Democratic Faith of American history and studies, where the majority is right with the Faith of the Bible where the minority is right. Sometimes that minority as in the wilderness, can only be 2 or 4 people!

(2). All of the church leaders such as Apostles, Prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists have the same job for the benefit of the total church body: "for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry" **{yes, as a seminary professor wrote, "the work of the ministry is the work of the church", not just of those called professionally}**, for the edifying {building up} of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

(3). Peace and unity in a local church body comes only as members (a) have a common unity in the faith, alias personal faith and sound teachings and doctrines, (b) as members have and share a common knowledge, personal and factual, of the Lord Jesus Christ--"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God", (c) as members mature into the Christian faith often called in the Bible "completeness" or "perfection" **{at this point is where Warren is so foolhardy on Bible and church growth, to think that you can achieve a unity and peace with sudden church growth and new believers, a peace more by a forced church covenant and strong leadership and public relations: no, it takes a lot of teaching and knowledge which is what discipleship is all about and it takes some, many mature church members which Saddleback is very unlikely to have for many years}**, and (d) many members that have reached the full stature of Christ.

(4). This peace and unity is not the norm, the norm being "children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Ephesians 4:14). Is this discouraging? If so, keep tuned to the rest of Ephesians where Paul encourages the individual church member, even as Christ and the Apostle John did in the messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, giving a private and personal and individually encouraging message to certain members of the church who had not been carried away with unsound doctrine. You may see this more and more as we go deeper into the approximately 40 years of the Falling Away before the end of time.

(5). Perhaps you should not give up on your local church unless in keeping with "with such know not to keep company", your church becomes completely riddled and dominated by the bad church behavior and attitudes of II Timo-

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thy 3:1-9. And the pattern for practices to follow in the rest of Ephesians 4 as well as 5 and 6 is established in 4:15: "but speaking the truth in love {love is important and so is speaking the truth}, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head--Christ.". Never forget Who **{the correct answer is Christ}** must run your local church and the total body of Christ! Make sure you and your leaders are seeking and finding the wisdom of Christ on any decision!

(6). A church of peace and unity is first of all built on many New Men, men and women who through the 9 month new birth have become new creations in 'Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24).

(a). This kind of church member can not be like other *Gentiles* around them. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

(b). To really and properly learn Christ as a matter of faith and practice is to be different or separated from the other *Gentiles* in your world. **{Not to isolate yourself from them, but to live differently. Much of the Bible is summarized with "in the world, but not of the world."}** (Ephesians 4:20). Shocking huh, Christ can be learned in the wrong way when there is a bent of commitment to the world and to others around you that exceeds or matches your commitment to Christ. Are we to understand that Paul is questioning the salvation of some church members? Yes, and he makes that clear as he writes: "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him"! (Ephesians 4:21)

(c). Part of the practice of the faith of the New Man is to put off many of the conducts or habits of the old man and to practice the putting on of the new man in righteousness. The rest of Ephesians will help on these practices of faith.

16-5: A Statement of Practices to Go With a Statement of Faith. (You can and should read these Scriptures for yourself, using the references listed from the book of Ephesians.)

1. Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:25-32).
2. Practice the Walk in Love (5:1-7).
3. Practice the habit of walking in Light (5:8-14).
4. Practice walking in wisdom, circumspectly (5:15-21).
5. Practice the marriage of the Bible, at home and in the church (5:22-33; 6:1-4).

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6. Practice with Bible attitudes on the job (6:5-9)

16-6: All this sounds impossible.

No, not if you daily put on the whole armor which God has provided in a practical and prayerful manner, realizing that there will be ups and downs, some stumblings; realizing that "no temptation has taken you but such as is common to man", and that God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; and remembering to be "careful for nothing but with everything by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God"; and remember to "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him because He cares for you."

And like "imitating God" as advised in Ephesians, or strive to be like Christ, the high standards for a church are idealistic in that we will never get all the way there. Nonetheless the admonitions of the Bible are to be like Christ, to imitate God, and to grow into the perfected church body. Once again we come much closer to these Christian goals when we have them as goals and we work to achieve them, knowing that the full realization of all three will only have, by the grace and power of God, when Christ comes again and "we shall see Him as He is."