

The Church *as a Corporate Warrior in Ephesians*

by Ron Kangas

The specific and particular characteristic of Ephesians is that it is written from the heavens, eternity, God's heart, and God's eternal purpose (1:3, 5, 9, 11; 3:11). Ephesians speaks not from the earth but from the heavens, not from time but from eternity, and not from the sinful condition of fallen human beings but from the mystery of God's will "according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself" and from the perspective of "the economy of the fullness of the times" (1:5, 9-10). Because the revelation in Ephesians brings us into the heavens (2:6), in our study of this Epistle we should not be distracted by earthly things or focus on our spiritual condition. Because Ephesians ushers us into eternity through the vision seen by the apostle Paul (Acts 26:19), we should not be inwardly constricted by time and space but brought into eternity by experiencing Christ as the ladder set up on earth and leading to heaven (John 1:51; Gen. 28:11-22), keeping heaven open to earth and joining earth to heaven. As we read and study Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, we need to be brought out of ourselves into the realm from which it was written—the heavens, eternity, and the heart and purpose of God.

If we intend to explore the deep, divine thoughts in Ephesians, it is crucial that we concentrate on the mystery of God's will (1:9), the heading up of all things in the heavens and on earth in Christ through the church (v. 10), the multifarious wisdom of God made known to the rulers and authorities through the church (3:10), and God's eternal purpose (v. 11). As we exercise the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God and the eyes of our heart are increasingly enlightened, we will have a genuine spiritual understanding of the profound concepts in Ephesians 1:9-10 and 3:10-11, and we will have a governing vision of the church not only as the Body of Christ and the new man but also as a corporate warrior engaged in spiritual warfare against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens" (6:12).

The Mystery of God's Will

In Ephesians 5:17 Paul speaks a direct word to the church in Ephesus: "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." God's will is what He wants and what He intends to accomplish. God's will is the source of His eternal purpose (3:11). Since God is eternal—self-existing, ever-existing, without beginning or ending—His will is also eternal. The will of God lies at the heart of the origin of the universe, and He created all things for His will so that He might accomplish His eternal purpose. God's will is concentrated in Christ and is for Christ to have the preeminence, the first place, in all things (Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:9, 15-18; 3:4, 10-11). The eternal will of God is to bring forth the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 5:32). The living God has blessed us, believers in Christ and children of God, by "making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself" (1:9). It was God's good pleasure, the desire and delight of His heart, to make the mystery of His will known to us. "In eternity God planned a will. This