

Ephesians Chapter 3 Continued

Ephesians 3:13 "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

Paul says, "I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory." Apparently, many believers grieved over Paul's extended years of imprisonment and over the almost continual suffering he endured because of his ministry. Paul's suffering turned out for the honor rather than the disgrace of those to whom he ministered (Phil. 1:12).

"Which is your glory": God will use Paul's "tribulations" and sufferings in the ministry to spiritually benefit his recipients. Such edification will then bring about glory on their part in that they praise and honor God.

We learned in the last lesson, that Paul was called of God to minister to the Gentiles particularly. Paul had suffered much tribulation to bring the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to these people. Paul does not mention that to get their sympathy, however.

He does not want them to suffer pain, because of the troubles and trials that he had faced to bring them the gospel. Paul was explaining to them that they might not be asked to suffer in the same way, and not to let this trouble them.

Paul counted it a pleasure to suffer for Christ. He received glory for this and felt that his glory blessed them, as well.

Ephesians 3:14 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

"For this cause": This expression resumes the apostle's prayer begun (in verse 1), but delayed by the discussion (of verses 2-13). Paul prays for the Ephesians to use the power that their great status in Christ provides.

In saying, "I bow my knees", Paul is not prescribing a required posture for prayer. He did not always pray while kneeling, and Scripture tells of God's faithful people praying in many different positions, as shown in passages such as (Gen. 18:22, standing; 1 Chron. 17:16, on His face).

Paul chooses of his own free will to bow to the Father. This is a humble bowing in reverence to God who has figured out such a glorious plan of salvation, whereby all mankind can be saved. God will not force salvation on them, but has provided a way, if they choose to be saved. This really is a prayer to the Father in the name of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:15 "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"

"Is named" means "is derived." "The whole" Christian "family," including those saints now departed and "in heaven," and those saints still living on "earth," all of them "derive" their

spiritual life from God. Christians are no more or less the children of God than were believing Israelites, as well as believing Gentiles, before the coming of Christ.

“Every family” of believers is a part of the one spiritual family of God, in which there are many members but only one “Father” and one brotherhood.

God has a name that no one knows but Him for each of us. We are His sons, so we bear His name to some extent. In this sense, we will be named by the Father. Adam named all the animals on the earth as to their character and the work they would do on the earth.

God gives all in heaven and in earth a new name. This is the name that will be written on the white stone. The names that we use for God on this earth are a revealing of whatever He is doing at the time the name is used. Christians are Christians, because we are followers of Christ. Whatever our name is, we will be given the name by God.

Verses 16-19: In these verses Paul makes three prayer requests for the addressees;

- (1) that they would “be strengthened with might by his Spirit” (verse 16), that is, that they be divinely enabled to successfully live the Christian life.
- (2) “That” the readers “be able to comprehend ... the love of Christ,” that is, to better understand the enormous love Christ has for them. And
- (3) that they “might be filled with all the fullness of God,” that is, that the life, character, and virtues of God Himself may be fully developed in them.

Ephesians 3:16 "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;"

Almost every prayer of Paul’s that is recorded in Scripture was for the spiritual welfare of others. Even when he was persecuted, imprisoned, and in need of many things for his own welfare, he prayed primarily for fellow believers that they might be spiritually protected and strengthened.

Our weakness is in ourselves and our strength is in Him. The weak are made strong by the Spirit within us.

2 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Our strength lies in the fact that the Spirit of the Risen Christ dwells within us. My flesh is weak, but my spirit (turned over to the Spirit of God), is mighty. God will give this strengthening

power in the inner man to whoever desires it. He will grant our wish to be filled with the Spirit of God, if we ask for it.

All of God's people are to be like Paul in having an overriding sensitivity to the spiritual needs of others, for the salvation of the unsaved and the spiritual protection and growth of the saved. We are to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of our wives, husbands, children, pastors, fellow church members, neighbors, fellow students, friends and co-workers.

To the spiritual believer, "the riches of His glory" are rich indeed. From the beginning of the letter Paul has been exulting over those divine riches:

God blessing us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (1:3). His choosing us for Himself before the foundation of the world (1:4). His redemption and forgiveness (1:7). His making known to us the mystery of His will (1:9). His giving us an inheritance with His Son, Jesus Christ (1:11). And so on throughout the first two and a half chapters.

The phrase "of His glory" testifies that these riches belong to God because of who He is. They belong innately to His Person, which is to say, His glory, (1:17), where Paul calls God, "the Father of glory". And (Exodus 33:18), where God reveals His personal attributes as glory.

The first step in living like God's children is to be "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." Yet most Christians never seem to get to this first step, not knowing what it is to see God's power fully at work in them.

They suffer, the church suffers, and the world suffers because "the inner man" of most believers is never "strengthened with power through His Spirit." The flaw is in the inner man," where man himself cannot perform a cure. Only God can reach and cure the inner man.

Although the outer, physical man becomes weaker and weaker with age, the "inner," spiritual man should continually grow stronger and stronger with power through His Spirit. Only God's Spirit can strengthen our spirits. He is the one who energizes, revitalizes and empowers us (Acts 1:8). Where the strength of God increases, sin necessarily decreases. The nearer we come to God, the further we go from sin.

When the Spirit empowers our lives and Christ is obeyed as the Lord of our hearts, our sins and weaknesses are dealt with and we find ourselves wanting to serve others, wanting to sacrifice for them and serve them. Because Christ's loving nature has truly become our own.

Ephesians 3:17 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"

This verse expresses the result of (3:16): "Christ" will "dwell" in the lives of those who are recipients of the Holy Spirit. Jesus already lives in them and in all Christians. The Greek word translated "dwell" means to settle down and be at home, to be at ease.

Jesus enters into our hearts the moment he saves us, but He cannot live there in comfort and satisfaction until it is cleansed of sin and filled with His will. He cannot be fully at home until He is allowed to dwell in our hearts through the continuing faith that trusts Him to exercise His lordship over every aspect of our lives.

When they are divinely strengthened (verse 16), they will then live the kind of lives God desires. When they thus please God, Christ will then “be at home” or “at ease” in their lives. As a permanent guest, He will enjoy living with them.

John 6:56 "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

In this verse, we see that to partake of Jesus is to partake of life everlasting. We, through simple faith, receive Jesus as our Savior. To be fully turned over in our inner heart to Jesus, we must not only accept Him as our Savior, but we must realize that He is the Resurrection and the Life.

We must allow the Spirit of the Risen Christ to come and dwell in our heart. We see that in the following verse.

John 14:17 "[Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

The greatest love that is known to man, is the fact that while we were yet sinners, God sent His Son to save us. The only way we can show Him that we truly love Him, is to keep His commandments.

John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

We no longer are under the control of the flesh and the lust thereof, if Christ has really come to live within us.

Romans 8:10 "And if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness."

The result of our yielding to the Spirit's power and submitting to Christ's lordship in our hearts is love. When Christ settles down in our lives He begins to display His own love in us and through us. When He freely indwells our hearts, we become rooted and grounded in love, that is, settled on a strong foundation of love.

Make Jesus Lord of your life as well as Savior, and you will be rooted, and grounded in the kind of love that only God can give. Allow Christ to love others through you.

Ephesians 3:18 "May be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;"

When we are rooted and grounded in love, we then become able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of love. We cannot comprehend the fullness of love unless we are totally immersed in love, unless it is the very root and ground of our being. To be rooted and grounded in love requires being rooted and grounded in God.

Love is available to every Christian because Christ is available to every Christian. Paul prays that we will become able to comprehend with all the saints. Love is not simply for the even tempered Christian or the naturally pleasant and agreeable Christian. Nor is it for some supposed special class of Christians who have an inside spiritual track. It is for, and commanded of, every Christian, all the saints.

To comprehend what is the breath and length and height and depth of love is to understand it in its fullness. Love goes in every direction and to the greatest distance. It goes wherever it is needed for as long as it is needed.

We all know that before we became a Christian or saint, we had no understanding of the greatness of God. The Spirit of Christ within us helps us to know the breadth, length, and height.

Ephesians 3:19 "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Paul says that to know the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. Knowing Christ's love takes us beyond human knowledge, because it is from an infinitely higher source. Paul is not speaking here of our knowing the love we are to have for Christ but the love of Christ, His very own love that He must place in our hearts before we can love Him or anyone else.

The love, mentioned in the verse above, is "agape". This is the God love. This love is an unconditional love. It is not a love because, but in spite of. This kind of love, loves the unlovable. This kind of love is what kept Jesus on the cross. He loved us so much, that He gave His body on the cross that we might live. He shed His blood in payment for our sin.

This kind of love cannot be explained to the carnal man. Man only loves because of something he hopes to gain from the love, but as I said, this is unconditional love. The fullness of God that He wanted us to be filled with is the grace of God. God offers all the gifts of the Spirit to the believer.

He wants us to be filled up completely with His fullness, so that there will be no room left for worldliness. The great commandment that Jesus gave to all believers is:

Mark 12:30 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment."

If we keep that commandment, then we are full of the Lord. Jesus was all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Colossians 2:9 "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God's fullness in us. To be filled up to all the fullness of God is indeed incomprehensible, even to God's own children. It is incredible and indescribable. There is no way, this side of heaven, we can fathom that truth. We can only believe it and praise God for it.

If we are filled with Jesus, then we are filled with God. By definition, to be filled with God is to be emptied of self. It is not to have much of God and little of self, but all of God and none of self. This is a recurring theme in Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:20 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"

When the Holy Spirit has empowered us, Christ has indwelt us, love has mastered us, and God has filled us with His own fullness, then He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. Until those conditions are met, God's working in us is limited. When they are met, His working in us is unlimited.

John 14:12-14 – "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it".

In making the three above petitions, verses 16-19, Paul has not asked for too much. For he prays "unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that" he can "ask or think."

Now we see the richness of the grace of God. All that we can ask, or think, is not enough. The Lord will do far above the greatest things we can think. Notice, what it is according to. The power that worketh in us is the Holy Spirit within us. This power is a gift of God to help us minister (witness), to others.

Romans 4:21 "And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

Hebrews 13:20 "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,"

Hebrews 13:21 "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen."

We cannot say enough about the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the Resurrection and the Life. In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

1 John 4:9 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

Ephesians 3:21 "Unto him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The glory in the church is speaking of the believers in Christ. He is the everlasting One. The praise for the great plan of eternal life goes to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The world that they have provided for the believers in Christ has no end, it is one eternal day.

When by our yieldedness God can do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. Only then are we truly effective and only then is He truly glorified. And He deserves glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, not only now, but to all generations forever and ever. The Amen confirms that worthy goal.

Ephesians Chapter 3 Continued Questions

1. In verse 13, who was Paul suffering tribulations for?
2. Who was Paul called to minister to particularly?
3. Paul counted it a _____ to suffer for Christ.
4. Who did Paul bow his knee to?
5. Describe the kind of bowing Paul did?
6. This is really a prayer to the _____ in the name of _____.
7. Why do we bear the name God chooses for us?
8. Who named all the animals on earth?
9. What did their names reveal?
10. What is the name written on the white stone?
11. What are the names we use for God on this earth?
12. Our weakness is in _____.
13. God strengthens in our _____.
14. My flesh is _____.
15. My spirit (turned over to the Spirit of God) is _____.
16. What must we do to receive the Spirit of God?

17. Christ dwells in your heart by _____.
18. To partake of Jesus is to partake of _____.
19. Besides accepting Jesus as our Savior, we must realize He is the _____ and the _____.
20. Why can the world not receive the Spirit of Truth?
21. How can we show Jesus that we truly love Him?
22. May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the _____, _____, and _____, _____, and _____.
23. Verse 19 says, what passes knowledge?
24. What is the love mentioned in verse 19?
25. Describe this type of love.
26. How does man's love differ from this love?
27. What does verse 20 tell us of the richness of the grace of God?
28. Who is the church?