

## **The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians**

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### **CHAPTER FIFTEEN -**

#### **PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS THAT THEY MAY EXPERIENCE THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT AND KNOWLEDGE**

Ephesians 3, verses 13-21

**"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 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, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."**

In Ephesians 1:15-18, Paul prayed that GOD would give to the Ephesians the spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowledge, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that they might know the hope of His calling and the riches of His glory; but here in chapter three, Paul is praying that the believers at Ephesus will be strengthened in the inner man, and that they will know the love of GOD, that they will be rooted and grounded in the love of GOD.

It makes no difference how much knowledge or wisdom we may have concerning the things of GOD, if we do not demonstrate love we are worthless to the cause of CHRIST. To the Corinthians, Paul expressed it in these words:

**"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Corinthians 13:1-3).**

Regardless of what we are and what we do, if we do not possess the love of GOD, and if what we do is not permeated by the love of GOD, then spiritually speaking we are just one big nothing!

There is an interesting truth set forth in verse 14, about which we hear very little today. Most of us overlook it. Paul said, **"I BOW MY KNEES."** I am not judging, nor am I being sarcastic; but not many Christians bend their knees when they pray. Some do, but today most praying is done in standing or sitting position. There was a time when GOD's minister bowed upon his knees in the pulpit . . . thank GOD, many still do; but there was a time when ALL preachers bowed upon their knees to talk to the Heavenly Father.

I realize there is no glory in the position of the body while praying . . . it is the condition of the heart that counts; but to me, bowing upon one's knees denotes humility . . . and we do know that GOD gives grace to the humble while He resists the proud.

Notice the order of prayer: Paul bowed to the Heavenly Father. He prayed in the name of CHRIST the SON (verse 17). He prayed that the Christians might be strengthened through - or by - The HOLY SPIRIT in the inner man.

To the believers at Rome Paul said, **"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God"** (Romans 8:26-27).

If we hope for GOD to hear our prayers, we must pray in the Spirit, because GOD honors no prayer that is not in the Spirit. The SPIRIT searches the hearts of believers, and the Spirit knows the will of GOD. GOD honors the prayer prayed in the Spirit because that prayer is prayed according to the will of GOD.

In this day of grace, we bow in reverence to the Heavenly Father, we make our requests in the name of JESUS the Son, and we depend upon the HOLY SPIRIT to bring results in prayer - because He (the Spirit) makes intercession to GOD through our one Mediator, the Lord JESUS CHRIST (I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1-2).

JESUS said, **"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever"** (John 14:16). Again, **"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"** (John 14:23). Again, **"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done. . ."** (John 15:7). That promise is to believers who are fully consecrated, spiritually minded, and through the knowledge of the Word they pray in the Spirit. Such a prayer is answered because it is prayed according to the will of GOD.

Notice in verse 15, the whole family in Heaven and in earth bears the namesake of CHRIST. Of course, the name "Christian" is "CHRIST" softened by adding "-ian."

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch:

**" . . . And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch"** (Acts 11:26).

(The preceding verses in Acts 11 show us that Paul was one of the first to be called Christian.)

Please notice - the family of GOD is now separated. By that, I mean some believers are in Paradise, resting, while others are on earth, walking and laboring. But the family in Heaven and on earth is ONE FAMILY, and bears the namesake of our Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

In verse 16, Paul is not praying that the believers at Ephesus might receive the Spirit - they already possess the Spirit. He is praying that GOD, through CHRIST and the riches of His glory, will strengthen the believers by the Spirit, "**in the inner man.**"

All born again believers possess the HOLY SPIRIT (Galatians 4:6; I Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9, 14, 16; Ephesians 4:32; John 3:5). There is no such thing as salvation apart from the possession of the HOLY SPIRIT.

I say this in love and tenderness - but there is much ignorance among believers concerning the ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT in this Dispensation of Grace. The HOLY GHOST came on the day of Pentecost. The church was awakened. One hundred and twenty members were baptized into that body; and since that day the HOLY GHOST takes up His abode in the heart of every believer the split second that believer exercises faith in the finished work of JESUS. We will learn later in this Epistle that not all believers are filled with the HOLY SPIRIT. One can possess the HOLY SPIRIT and yet not be filled with or by the Spirit. We will study this more fully when we reach that particular chapter.

Notice - Paul prays for strength in THE INNER MAN. There are those who close their eyes to the Bible truth of the two natures. For further study concerning the two natures of a believer, order my book "*The Two Natures.*" Order from The Gospel Hour, Inc., Box 2024, Greenville, S. C.

Paul was not praying that they would be strengthened in the flesh. I know GOD does strengthen believers in the flesh, - and we need to be strengthened in our body; but we need strength in the inner man. Nicodemus was a sincere seeker of truth. He came to JESUS in the right spirit, and JESUS told him, "**Except a man be born of... the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**" He further enlightened Nicodemus by explaining, "**That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit**" (John 3:6).

When a sinner is saved, the flesh is not born again. The inner man, the spirit, is born of the Spirit. Believers walk differently, talk differently, live differently, because there is a new creation in the heart from which proceed the issues of life. And my dear reader, until you know the truth concerning the two natures - the flesh and the spirit - you will never enjoy your spiritual birthright, which is "**life abundantly.**"

Paul prayed that the blessing would be granted "**according to His riches in glory.**" In Philippians, Paul uses that term to assure the believers at Philippi (and to assure us) that out of GOD's inexhaustible supply, He is very capable and willing to supply all our need.

In verse 17 Paul is not praying that CHRIST may come into the hearts of the Ephesians, but that

by faith CHRIST may dwell in their hearts . . . that is, that He will abide in or completely control and permeate the heart. This truth is drastically needed by some believers today. John said, "**And now . . . abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming**" (I John 2:28).

Some believers will be ashamed when they stand before GOD. This is clearly taught in the Word of GOD. Salvation is of the Lord . . . totally and entirely of the Lord; but rewards are earned according to our faithful stewardship - not how much we do, but faithfulness is what counts in rewards. Paul wanted the believers at Ephesus to be wholeheartedly surrendered. He wanted CHRIST to abide every second of every moment, and control every minute detail of the heart. He said, "**Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.**" One must be an abiding, believing, trusting, fully-committed believer to practice such spiritual living moment by moment.

Notice that CHRIST may dwell in your hearts "**BY FAITH.**" There are many who depend upon their feelings . . . and if they do not feel like they think a Christian should feel, they think they are not saved, or that they are backslidden, or that they are not what they should be for JESUS. But it is not by feelings . . . it is "**by faith.**"

Faith rests upon GOD's Word because the Word is from GOD and GOD cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

The only way for a believer to abide in CHRIST, the only way to be continually conscious of the abiding presence of JESUS - not just in church or in a prayer meeting, but every second of every day, is by faith. "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God**" (Romans 10:17). Therefore we must be a student of the Word. We must be a lover of the Word, we must "eat" the Word (John 6) if we hope to be what we ought to be, spiritually, and if we hope to enjoy our spiritual birthright.

Faith is the key that unlocks a wonderful, transforming experience in the life of believers when they will commit themselves to devoted Bible study . . . hear the Word and believe what the Word promises. You need not ever put a question mark around anything GOD has said in His precious Word.

In verses 18 and 19, Paul continues in prayer, requesting that the believers at Ephesus, along with "**all saints** (that takes in you and me), **...may be able to comprehend... the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye** (believers) **might be filled with ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD.**"

Just here, I would like to point out some things about the love of GOD that will enrich your life if you will study carefully the references I will give. It is impossible for me to give you the text here, but I will give you the references, and you study them in your Bible:

- The origin of love is divine (I John 4:8).
- Love has been from everlasting (Genesis 1:1, Psalm 90:1-2).
- The source of pure love is GOD (II Corinthians 13:11).
- We love GOD because He first loved us (I John 4:19).

- Love is the evidence of saving faith in JESUS (I John 4:16).
- Love is the royal badge of true discipleship (John 13:35).
- Love is the assurance that we have passed from death unto life (I John 3:14).
- The love of GOD in our heart is unmerited (Colossians 1:12-14).
- The love of GOD is the most costly thing known to Heaven or earth (Ephesians 1:7).
- The love of GOD is free to all who will receive it (Romans 3:24-25).
- The love of GOD is universal in its offer (John 3:16).
- The love of GOD is unbounded in its work (Ephesians 2:4).
- The love of GOD is unbroken in its ministry (Romans 8:39).
- The love of GOD is great (Ephesians 2:4).
- The love of GOD is inconceivable (Ephesians 3:19).
- The love of GOD is unselfish (I John 4:10).
- The love of GOD is forever unchanging (John 13:1).
- The love of GOD is inseparable (Romans 8:35-39).
- The love of GOD is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3).
- The love of GOD is perfect (I John 4:18).

Do not forget that all spiritual blessings are "**in Christ**," and to the believer CHRIST is better than the best, He is richer than the richest. The HOLY SPIRIT describes Him thus:

- The love of CHRIST is unknowable (Ephesians 3:19).
- The riches of CHRIST are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8).
- The joy He gives is unspeakable (I Peter 1:8).
- The ways of CHRIST are untrackable (Romans 11:33).
- The grace of the Lord JESUS is inexhaustible (II Corinthians 9:8).
- The peace of CHRIST is unfathomable (Philippians 4:7).
- JESUS CHRIST Himself is unsurpassable (Exodus 15:11).

The Lord JESUS CHRIST is the mightiest among the holy. The Lord JESUS CHRIST is the holiest among the mighty. With His pierced hands He is able to lift empires out of the mire and the muck of lust and sin. He governs all ages, from the eternity behind us through the eternity that lies ahead.

I have already made the statement that if the ocean were a giant inkwell filled with ink, and if every stalk on earth were a quill, and every person on earth were a scribe as the beautiful song declares, it would still be impossible to write the love of GOD even though the sky were parchment and we had the vastness of the blue upon which to write! We could never describe the love of GOD. The love of GOD "**passeth knowledge**."

It is humanly impossible for the finite mind to comprehend the love of GOD.

*Its breadth* - "**God so loved the world**." Can you conceive of such love? Do you dare ask yourself what it would mean to love the whole wide world? How many folks do you love? Think it over. The breadth of GOD's love covers the whole wide world.

*Its length* - "**God... gave His only begotten Son**." GOD's love reached from the portals of glory to a stable in Bethlehem. GOD's love placed His only SON in the womb of the virgin Mary. He

was born . . . He lived . . . GOD gave Him. GOD surrendered His SON into the hands of wicked sinners, and they nailed Him to a Cross. That, in some small way, points out the length of the love of GOD. Do you have a son? Do you have an only child? Would you surrender your child to die for wicked men?

*Its depth* - "**Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.**" Oh, I know we say we love everybody . . . but do we? Do we really love everybody? It is easy to love the lovely. It is easy to love those who are always doing kind things for you and saying kind things about you - but GOD so loved that He gave His only Son, that whosoever . . . the lovely, the unlovely . . . might not perish. CHRIST died for the ungodly. GOD surrendered up JESUS when we were yet sinners.

*Its height* - "**Everlasting life.**" The love of GOD reaches to the depth of sin and places that sinner in the heavenlies in CHRIST JESUS. From the lowest depths to the highest height . . . only the love of GOD could work such a miracle!

**"BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD."** It is possible for a person to possess GOD and not be completely filled with (possess the fulness of) the spiritual blessings provided in CHRIST by the love of GOD.

GOD proposes to flood our life with His fulness, that, filled with Himself, there shall not be found room for the fretful, shameful things of self. GOD wants us to have a fulness of life that will displace self with Himself, a life that will keep the heart of His child centered on HIM.

Let me clearly state that you do not receive redemption in parts. Salvation is a Person . . . JESUS CHRIST . . . and we are totally born when we are saved. But it is possible to possess salvation and not be possessed by The HOLY SPIRIT in the fullest sense. We are commanded to yield our bodies, the members of our bodies, into the hands of The HOLY SPIRIT.

Verse 20 describes the limitless One who is able. Paul uses the term "**able**" many times when referring to JESUS in his letters to the believers.

- CHRIST is able to do all that we ask or even think.
- CHRIST is able to do above all that we ask or think.
- CHRIST is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think.

But that is not all!

- CHRIST is able to do EXCEEDING abundantly above all we ask or think!

Do you agree that here is displayed the limitless One? You name the need . . . GOD is able to supply that need in CHRIST, but only in CHRIST. We must pray in the Spirit, and when we pray in the Spirit we will not pray foolish prayers. Let me assure you that whatsoever you need as a believer in CHRIST, that need is already met; claim it! It is yours. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, - and the miracle happens according to the power "**that worketh in us**" . . . not around us, not on the outside - but WITHIN.

Thank GOD, Christianity abides within. Man-made religion demands outward works and demonstrations. Poor religionists many times must make long journeys to worship; but thank GOD the One whom we worship is nearer than even our breath; He abides in our heart.

The last verse in our present chapter gives to GOD the glory by CHRIST the Son, in the church. Paul was jealous for JESUS. Paul wanted all honor and glory to be directed to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He did not crave nor accept praise from men for himself. To GOD be the glory . . . He is worthy; and Paul said, **"I count all things but loss... that I may win Christ!"**

He wanted JESUS to have preeminence in everything . . . in the life of the individual, in the church, in every minute detail of daily living . . . eating, drinking, whatsoever we do - Paul declares we should **"do all to the glory of God."** Today I wonder how JESUS feels, I wonder how the heart of GOD feels, when men are praised to high Heaven, while JESUS seemingly takes a back seat?

**"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying . . . the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house"** (II Chronicles 7:1-2).

When the tabernacle was finished and everything was put in its proper place - **"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"** (Exodus 40:34).

**"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen"** (Psalm 106:48).

My fellow believer, do you not agree that our "able-abundantly-above-all" GOD is worthy of all honor, glory, praise, adoration and worship?

Some of the promises and some of the deep spiritual teachings of chapter three may cause you to wonder. You may stagger at the depth of such statements. You may ask, "How CAN these things be true? How can these things come about in my individual experience?" Let me answer by saying, "THE ABILITY OF GOD." If GOD is GOD, then do not stagger at His promises. His ability will handle any and all need brought to Him by any and all believers.

- He is able to deliver in the hour of a peril that seems impossible to be delivered from - as in the case of Daniel (Daniel 3:17).
- He is able to deliver from any and all temptation (I Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:9).
- He has the power and He is able to heal when all else fails (Matthew 9:28).
- He is able to save the vilest, the most despicable.
- His love reaches down to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25).
- He is able to quicken and make alive that which is dead (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 4:21).
- After saving the soul, He is able to keep that soul from stumbling, staggering, or falling (Jude 24).
- His grace is unknown - He is able to make ALL grace abound in the hour of the need for grace (II Corinthians 9:8).
- He is able to carry out, perform, supply every promise made anywhere in the Holy Bible,

including the amazing promises in Ephesians (Ephesians 3:20).

The only condition to be met to lay claim on the promises of GOD is to totally and entirely submit soul, spirit and body to GOD:

**"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).**

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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