

Paul had just explained the mystery that had been kept hidden for ages. It was a mystery that he was given the privilege of declaring at that turning point in world history. <sup>6</sup> *This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* Ephesians 3:6 (ESV) The Good News of Jesus making us righteous through faith in Him and His work on the cross was the means by which we Gentiles joined the chosen people of God. That is not to say that we become Jews. Our DNA doesn't change. But we join with the people of faith throughout history that have trusted in God and are counted as righteous in God's sight. (Romans 2:29) We become the heirs of heaven. We are joined together as one body with those who are justified. We partake of the promise of Messiah Jesus through the Good News.

Suddenly the Scriptures had opened up to Paul and he saw the plan of God for the salvation of all who would respond to the Spirit of God. The prophecies all fit together like the pieces of a giant jigsaw, and the picture was the church, the bride of Christ, made up of every tribe and language group in the world. (Revelation 5:9) The eternal purpose of God started to become clear, <sup>10</sup> *so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* Ephesians 3:10 (ESV) The grace and mercy of God was now being seen as balanced with His justice and holiness. Love brought it all together in Jesus on the cross. What a plan! What a God!

And so, Paul's response is worship. That is what it means to bow the knees. It is a position of worship and prayer. <sup>14</sup> *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,* Paul was so overwhelmed by the wonder of God's plan that he dropped to his knees to worship God. It is also a position of submission and reverence. Sometimes as we sing our praises to God, some of us will drop to our knees. Don't ever be embarrassed. Our bodies should express our adoration and submission to our God when His presence is especially real to us. It doesn't matter what people think. Respond to God as if no one else were present. When a powerful truth of God hits us so that our spirit is in awe we should drop to our knees.

<sup>15</sup> *from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,* This is referring to our heavenly Father, God. It is a very literal translation, but the meaning of the phrase is that Paul is kneeling before the Creator of all. The Message translates it like this: <sup>15</sup> *this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth.* The New Living Translation says, <sup>15</sup> *the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.* Paul is saying that his

**Commented [notes1]: Romans 2:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**Commented [notes2]: Revelation 5:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

response to this awesome plan of God is to drop to his knees before such an incredibly great Designer of all that has been preordained.

Do you get the sense that Paul is seeing quite a bit more than we perceive? That is one reason I shared the sermon *To Obtain A Bride* with you. It was an attempt to help us all see the mystery in a more personal and powerful way. If you were away, please get a copy or go on-line and read it. If we aren't joining Paul on his knees before the glorious Father, we haven't allowed our hearts to realize the wonder of what He is calling us to and is presently doing in us.

If you are in Christ, then you are on your way to your wedding! It is a marriage with the King of the Universe. Most of us realize that is impossible considering our present condition. That is where "partakers of the promises" comes in and reminds us of all that is promised to those who accept the Messiah. (Joel 2:32) Those who touch the Most Holy are made holy. (Exodus 29:37) Those who fix their eyes on the beauty of our Savior are changed into His image by ever increasing glory. (2Corinthians 3:18) <sup>13</sup> *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,* Ephesians 4:13 (ESV) If we understood that last phrase we'd all be with Paul on our knees... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! Don't get used to these expressions. Let the wonder of them floor you again and again!

Then Paul breaks out in a prayer. He prays to God <sup>16</sup> *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* Paul has an idea of the riches of the glory of God because he saw Jesus in His glory on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:3-5) The glory of God is the expression of His nature. Paul is asking that God reach into His treasure chest of glory and express His abundant goodness, mercy and grace to us. That grace is expressed by granting that we be strengthened with power through His Spirit in our inner being. He's not praying that we become physically strong, but that our spirit be strengthened by His Spirit, so that we have **the power to choose to keep Christ first in all things.**

Paul has personally experienced this power at work within him again and again. It was at work in his salvation experience. It was working when God called him through Ananias. (Acts 9:17-18) It was at work sending Him out on his missionary journeys (Acts 13:2-3) and at work in the face of persecution. (Acts 14:19-20)

He was praying that we be strengthened with power through God's Spirit in our inner being <sup>17</sup> *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...* Paul is writing to believers. He is not praying for their salvation. They already have the covenant of salvation and believe in Jesus by faith. So why is Paul asking for them to have this

**Commented [notes3]: Joel 2:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

**Commented [notes4]: Exodus 29:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

**Commented [notes5]: 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

**Commented [notes6]: Acts 9:3-5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

**Commented [notes7]: Acts 9:17-18 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

**Commented [notes8]: Acts 13:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

<sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

**Commented [notes9]: Acts 14:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. <sup>20</sup> But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

power of the Spirit in their inner being? If it is not salvation, what does it mean for Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith?

The letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation presents Jesus at the door of their hearts knocking because He wants to come in and dine with them. (Revelation 3:20) That, too, was a letter to believers.

It is only by the power of God that we can be strengthened to allow Christ to be at home in our hearts in fellowship with us. Every one of us knows that there are times when we succumb to carnal thoughts or desires and Christ is not at home in our spirit. I'm not saying we have lost our salvation, but rather that in a moment of weakness we have given in to the flesh in action or in thought and our spirit is no longer a comfortable place for the presence of our holy Savior to live. Our sin has evicted Him. **We stop beholding Him and lukewarmness sets in.** (Revelation 3:16) He stands at our door and lovingly knocks, hoping we will come to our senses and run to the door and welcome Him back in. Paul was praying for us to be strengthened in our inner being to not evict Christ, but to let Him always be at home in us day in and day out.

Next Paul prays for the means to welcome that strengthening that comes from the riches of God's grace, which is a realization of the love that offers that power to us. When someone you don't know well offers to help you, how do you react? Most of us are hesitant because we think they may interfere in our life in a way in which we would not be comfortable. We wonder what they will want in return. On the other hand, if we know someone fairly well, and we know their offer to help has always been sincerely out of unselfish love, without expecting anything in return, we are much more likely to accept that help. In fact, the more we believe they love us, the sooner we will turn to them for their advice and help.

That is why Paul goes on to pray *—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,* Love is the first fruit of the Spirit because it is the main characteristic of God. (Galatians 5:22) John goes so far as to say God is love. (1John 4:8) So if we are to be empowered by the Spirit to invite Christ to dwell in our hearts continually, we will be rooted and grounded in love. That is because we are rooted and grounded in Him who is love. Selfless agape love will be the main characteristic of our life as Christ lives in us, and we in Him. (1John 4:16)

Paul continues the prayer on the basis of Christ dwelling in us and being rooted and grounded in Him, that we then are further strengthened to comprehend with all the saints the dimensions of the love of Christ. We need the strength from the Spirit to receive this as well.

**Commented [notes10]: Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

**Commented [notes11]: Revelation 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

**Commented [notes12]: Galatians 5:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Commented [notes13]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**Commented [notes14]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

We know that the love of God breaks our hearts and causes us to love Him more. (1John 4:19) That is why we hold back from receiving the fullness of it. We know it will result in our abandonment of self in love to Him. We want to hang on to a little selfishness and control. We don't want to be too weird. What would people say? This is why we need strength to go on to this next step of comprehending God's love as the saints before us have done. The implication here is that comprehending the love of Christ had something to do with them becoming saints.

Some people think saints become saints because they had a touch from God. That's important. Some think it is because they study God's word. That's important too. But **saints are saints because they abandoned themselves to the love of God.** That was the touch they received. That is why they love God's word.

Paul describes this love as broad, long, high and deep. How long is it? How high is it? There is a children's song with lyrics that say this love is "so high you can't get over it, so wide you can't get around it, so low you can't get under it, you've got to go in through the door." Paul is writing to those who have gone in through the door, Christ. Once we are in, we need to comprehend that the love of God is above us. It is all around us. It is underneath us. We are enveloped with the love of God. The psalmist wrote *<sup>5</sup> You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. <sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.* Psalm 139:5-10 (NIV)

It reminds us of Paul's quotation from the Greek poet that wrote "in Him we live and move and have our being". (Acts 17:28) We are enveloped with the love of God if we will only allow God to strengthen us to comprehend it.

The love of God surpasses knowledge. It is beyond natural comprehension. When we don't have that power to see the love of God, from our limited comprehension we ask why God could allow suffering and evil in the world. The Bible clearly tells us that the evil in the world comes from man's sin. That is why nature is violent, and why there are wars and famines. (Genesis 3:17) That is why people abuse one another. Seeing the love of God in the midst of all the devastation man has brought on himself takes the strength of the Spirit. To see God's love in the darkest of times takes the strength of the Spirit. We can't comprehend it naturally.

The greatest example of this is the cross. If there was ever an innocent man it was Jesus. Could anyone there on Golgotha that day see the love of God encompassing them all? Yet, that was the greatest display the world will ever see of the love of God

**Commented [notes15]: 1 John 4:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us.

**Commented [notes16]: Acts 17:28 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> for "in him we live and move and have our being" as even some of your own poets have said. "For we are indeed his offspring."

**Commented [notes17]: Genesis 3:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins, the justice that holiness demands. There we see the height and depth, and width and length of the love of God. (John 15:13)

Then Paul gives us the reason He wants us to comprehend that love... *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*. It is so that the very love of God might overflow from you! That is why he prays that we be strengthened in our inner being so that Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith and that we comprehend the dimensions of God's love... so *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God!* We should be on our knees.

How can God be so gracious? He is love! And this is His heart for each one of us, *that we may be filled with all the fullness of God*. (John 3:17)

Paul realizes that what he has just prayed is impossible, and yet it is the will of God. (1Thessalonians 4:3; 2Thessalonians 2:13) The benediction that follows is meant to give us hope that with God all things are possible. It is meant to cause your faith to soar! It is meant to encourage you to seek for this prayer to be answered in your life.

<sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us*, He is praying to a God that is unlimited in power. God can not only do more than we ask or think but *far more abundantly* than all we ask or think. He made everything from nothing. He used the Jewish nation to keep His word and bring the Messiah. He took a Christian killer to be the proclaimer of the mystery! He picked you and me to become the bride of Christ. Can we be filled with all the fullness of God? That is certainly far more than all that I could ask or think, but remember, it is His mighty power at work within us. (Ephesians 1:19) That gives us hope. Let that power that Paul prayed for us work in you!

<sup>21</sup> *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen*. The church is here for the glory of God that is working in us. We are to represent Him. If we are to do that, we need to be filled with His love, His fullness. The glory of God *should* be seen in the church! Earlier in this same chapter Paul said the wisdom of God was manifest in the church. (3:10) Now he is declaring the glory of God should be seen in the church too, as we display the nature of God in loving one another and all those with whom we come in contact. (John 13:35)

Certainly we see the glory of God in Jesus (John 17:26) and we will see it throughout all generations, world without end. So be it! Church, let us pray that we be strengthened with power in our inner being, so that Christ will dwell in our hearts, and to know His love, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God!

Questions

**Commented [notes18]: John 15:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

**Commented [notes19]: John 3:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**Commented [notes20]: 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

**Commented [notes21]: 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

**Commented [notes22]: Ephesians 1:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

**Commented [notes23]: Ephesians 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

**Commented [notes24]: John 13:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**Commented [notes25]: John 17:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

- 1 What brought Paul to his knees?
- 2 What does verse 15 mean?
- 3 What is Paul's first request?
- 4 Isn't Jesus already in our heart?
- 5 What is His next request?
- 6 Why do we need to comprehend it?
- 7 What is the result?
- 8 What does that look like?
- 9 Why is it possible?
- 10 All of this is to what end?