

New Testament Bible Study Series

Leader's Notes

Ephesians 3:14-21

June 9, 2017

Recall in Ephesians 2, those who were once dead in their trespasses and sins have now been made alive by God's grace. Those who were far off from God have now been brought near and given hope. The wall of hostility has been removed for all, Jew and Gentile alike. Together they are united in Christ and submit under his headship as the church, his body.

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

1. What is the mystery of Christ? (Hint: there are 3 components in v6).

- i. Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews
- ii. They are (and we are) members of the same body
- iii. Partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus
- iv. What are one or two implications for all believers that come to mind?
 - This is all because of the gospel, the good news that Christ came and bore our sin in our place and was raised
 - Recall the blessings (the promises) of our union with Christ – Eph 1:3-14
 - Heirs indicates we have a share, an inheritance awaiting us
 - We are equal, there is no superiority, no upper class status
 - We are united into one body, called to work with one another for the glory of God

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

Paul now picks up where he left off in 3:1 completing his initial thoughts before his digression in 3:2-13. *For this reason, in light of the new temple (his people) in which God dwells by his Spirit... Paul prays that the church of Christ be united in three things; power, love and knowledge that leads to maturity.*

- Highlight the introduction (v1) indicating the break in thought to the groups to show the continuation

Eph 3:14-17a - For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

2. How do the "riches of his glory" strengthen the believers (cf. Phil 4:19; Rom 6:4; Col 1:11)?

- What are the "riches of his glory"?
 - It is the power of God
 - God's act of enacting our salvation and the giving of the subsequent blessings (Eph 1:3-14)
 - Eph 2 – power of salvation, making us alive when we were dead
 - The Spirit at work in us is the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead
- Phil 4:19 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (ESV)
 - We are strengthened knowing that God supplies our every need, not our every desire or want
 - What is "our every need"?
 - Needs are in the context of our live of service that God has commissioned us to serve him in
 - Remember that the apostles were martyred proclaiming the gospel, yet God met their needs
 - Recall the emphasis on being united into one body

- We have a duty meet the needs (spiritual and physical) of our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - We should look for opportunities to serve one another, to give materially and generously
- Rom 6:4 - We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (ESV)
 - We are strengthened recalling that the power that raised Christ to life has raised us also to life.
- Col 1:11 - being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; (ESV)
 - Context – Calling the church to be walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord
 - We are strengthened by God's power and might to endure in Christ
 - To endure and be patient in our sufferings, trials and tribulations in JOY!

3. The Spirit strengthens the heart, our inner being. What does this mean (cf. 2 Cor 4:16; Rom 7:22)?

- Heart is synonymous with soul, the core of our inner being, the spirit
- 2 Cor 4:16 - So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (ESV)
 - Renewing our soul, our spirit by being no longer conformed to the world and transforming our minds as we study and meditation on scripture -> transformation is the work of the Spirit as he continuing renews us and points us to Christ
 - We do not grow weary or light hearted
- Rom 7:22 - For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, (ESV)
 - God's law – the mosaic law
 - For Christians, we understand this today in light of Christ
 - They are God's principals against sin and his commands to live by
 - The mosaic law is an expression of God's moral principles (his sovereign immutable character)
 - The psalmist meditates on God's precepts, commands (Ps 119:4, 15, 40, 56)
 - They are at the very core of his being and integrated into his life, they transform how he sees and does life

To be empowered by the Spirit in the inner person (or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) means that Christ himself dwells in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6).

Note the significance of “according to the riches of his glory”. We are not given a small by-product or a portion of God’s riches. Paul is stating that God would fully meet our every need by his inexhaustible and immeasurable power. The act of the Father naming every family (the defining of their identity/existence) is further affirmation of his sovereignty and power that he works in every believer.

Eph 3:17-19 - so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

4. Put the above verses in your own words.

- The indwelling of the Spirit establishes us in God's love enabling us to understand corporately (with other believers) to a limited degree, the unfathomable love that Christ has for us.
- a. Rooted and grounded in love: ESTABLISHED (b h l s t e d a e i s) in God's love with the saints, all striving together to comprehend
- b. Comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth: GRASPING (i g a r p n g s) the limitless dimensions of God's love
- c. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge: love that is UNIMAGINABLE (n a y i g m u b n a l i) greater than anyone can know or imagine (cf. Rom 8:35-39)

5. Paul desires us to be filled with all the fullness of God. What does this mean (cf. Col 1:9-10; Eph 4:13, 5:18-20)?

- Paul is praying that the believers may be all that God wants them to be (i.e. Christlike) as we grow in our understanding his love:
 - **Filled**; the indwelling Spirit enables us to know and comprehend God; in particular the love of God in order that we obtain the...
 - After knowing the incomprehensible love of God, having this love implanted into inner being, the goal is to obtain to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" – Eph 4:13
 - Which is to be spiritually mature, to be holy and imitators of God
 - **Fullness of God**; to be filled with the very fullest of himself, not just a part
 - After knowing the incomprehensible love of God, having this love implanted into inner being, the goal is to obtain to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" – Eph 4:13
 - Which is to be spiritually mature, to be holy and imitators of God
 - True knowledge of God's love means you live it out, it is a part of who we are; it dominates your being
- Col 1:9-10 - And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (ESV)
 - Filling is linked with knowing God in this verse, in particular, knowing God's will
 - You cannot separate the love of God from his will
 - Being filled with the knowledge of God, whether it is his love or will or both, it will lead us to walk in a manner that is pleasing to him and a life that bears good fruit
 - Our growing in knowledge of God -> transforms us -> maturing us
- Eph 4:13- 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, (ESV)
 - The knowledge of Christ (both knowing Christ personally and understanding all that he did and taught in love) drives us to spiritual maturity
 - The knowledge of the Son of God is edifying and brings about "mature manhood" when set forth in love
 - We are to manifest the qualities of God's son, who is himself the standard for our spiritual maturity and perfection
 - How can we be like Christ if we don't know or experience his love for us?
 - You can't be something you don't know
 - Christ is the standard of the maturity to which the church must aspire
- Eph 5:18-20 - And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (ESV)
 - Practical application to our knowledge turns to living a spirit filled life in the corporate church body

- Our knowledge of God translates to action

Eph 3:20-21 - 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, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

6. What are the two ways God is to be glorified now and for all of eternity (cf. Eph 3:8-12)?

- Ephesians 3:8-12 - To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (ESV)
 1. Glory in the church, this is where the manifold wisdom of God has been made known to all
 - The church is the sphere of the outworking of God's purpose on earth
 2. In Christ Jesus, the riches and blessings we now have and will have for all of eternity because of his great love for us

The doxology at the end of Paul's prayer concludes the first half of the letter of Ephesians (Eph 1-3). Throughout the first 3 chapters, Paul has been laying down a foundation of theology; "understand that all of this is God's work for you, the believer in Christ Jesus!" We now have a proper theological understanding of God's mighty saving purposes and a taste of the richness of his glory. With the mystery of Christ now revealed, he prays that the church might be empowered by Christ through his Spirit, so that they will walk in love and continue to grow into Christlikeness. As we move into chapters 4-6, we will see that Paul builds upon this foundation, shifting to the practical implications of what it means to be the church. We shall see how we are called to live in light of the knowledge and revelation we've received in Christ Jesus.