

Ephesians

Lesson Eleven Glory to God in the Church

3:13-21

Introduction:

1. With the revelation of God's mystery of the ages, man was able to learn the importance and necessity of the church.
2. To understand the church, one must comprehend its relationship to God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. Thus, Paul focuses on that relationship and shows how God is glorified in the church.

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

- A. This verse ties back to verse 1.
 1. Paul began with this thought, but interrupted it with the teaching about his role as the apostle to the Gentiles and his responsibility to reveal the mystery of God.
 2. Having done that, he now follows the thought of verse 1.
- B. Paul – the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles – did not want them to faint because he was suffering tribulations and persecutions.
 1. The word 'faint' means, "To fail in heart, to be weak; to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted."
 2. In other words, Paul did not want them to become disheartened or discouraged because he was suffering for preaching the Gospel to them.
 3. Luke 18:1; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 16; Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13
- C. Instead, they should view this persecution as an honor.
 1. Paul was like a fellow soldier who had been captured by the enemy.
 2. Instead of becoming discouraged and giving up, they should continue to fight with honor on his behalf.

3:14-15 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

- A. Now, Paul completes the message of verse 1 – "For this cause," Paul the prisoner bowed his knees unto the Father.
 1. In persecution and suffering, Paul did not give up due to discouragement.
 2. Instead, he bowed to the Father and prayed for his brethren – the very ones on whose behalf he was imprisoned.
- B. "This cause" refers to what had been revealed in chapters 1 and 2 – the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in the building of the spiritual Temple of God.
- C. Paul's prayer is for the church to be strengthened, grounded and knowledgeable in Truth.
- D. To emphasize further the unity they enjoyed in Christ, Paul declared that the whole family was named of God.
 1. This is not a reference to a specific name (i.e. "Christian"); rather, it means that all are part of the family of God.

2. The Jews had long been seen as the children of God.
 3. Now, the Gentiles were a part of the same family – they, too, were children of God.
 4. Thus, they both were part of the same spiritual family that included the righteous angels and the faithful dead.
- E. It is appropriate to pray to the Father, for He is the head of the family!

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

- A. Paul's prayer was that they would be strengthened inwardly.
- B. The source of this strengthening was God.
 1. It was something that would be granted by the Father.
 2. It would be given according to the "riches of His glory."
 3. God's glory is His high and excellent nature from which His blessing flows.
 4. God is overflowing with glory (cf. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8).
 5. The One who demonstrated His love for man by establishing the church will continue to bless those who honor and follow Him.
- C. The "inner man" refers to the spirit or mind of man – distinct from the outward man (cf. Romans 2:29; 7:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Peter 3:4).
- D. The strengthening of the soul would be accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
 1. There are two things to bear in mind here.
 2. First, the inner man is strengthened by the Word of God (cf. Jer. 31:33).
 - a. The Holy Spirit works through the Word.
 - b. There is no miraculous strengthening apart from God's truth.
 3. Second, this idea gives insight to the purpose of miraculous gifts.
 - a. This strengthening included might or power given by the Spirit.
 - b. This is likely a reference to spiritual gifts (cf. 4:8-16).
 - c. Their goal was the strengthening of men's souls through the revelation and confirmation of truth.
 4. Neither verse 16 or 17 teach a literal indwelling.

3:17-19 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 fullness of God

- A. Paul also desired that Christ would dwell in their hearts.
 1. This was accomplished by faith, which comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
 2. Previously, Paul showed that they were built together to be a habitation – or, dwelling place – of God.
 3. Now, he declares that Christ will dwell in them.
 4. Neither of these are literal, but demonstrate the fellowship between God and man in the church.
- B. Furthermore, he desired that they would be rooted and grounded in love.
 1. 'Rooted' means, "To be strengthened with roots; to fix, to render firm; to cause to be firmly grounded." (Cf. Psalm 1; Matthew 13:6)
 2. 'Grounded' means, "To be stable or established; to be settled (on a foundation)." (Cf. Matthew 7:24-25; Luke 6:48)
 3. The stabilizing force in the church is love (cf. 1 Corinthians 13).

- C. Then, he desired that they be able to comprehend the love of Christ.
 - 1. The word “able” means, “To have full strength.”
 - 2. Their strengthening in the inner man would help them to be able to grasp these truths.
 - 3. ‘Comprehend’ means, “To lay hold of; to obtain or attain; to take possession of; to take eagerly.” (Cf. John 1:5; 8:3-4; Acts 10:34; 25:25; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12-13)
 - 4. It takes great spiritual strength – a strong faith – to understand fully the love of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9).
 - 5. Yet, by reading Paul’s words and studying the Scriptures, one is prepared and ready to comprehend God’s great love.
 - 6. In fact, this is something that all saints are to understand.
- D. Continuing the architectural language, Paul writes of the breadth, length, depth and height of the love of God.
 - 1. Again, God’s love has been revealed in His plan of the ages.
 - 2. **Breadth** – *wide enough to encompass all humanity*
 - 3. **Length** – *as long as the history of the world*
 - 4. **Depth** – *as deep as sin and death*
 - 5. **Height** – *as high as Heaven*
- E. Also, Paul wanted them to know the love of Christ.
 - 1. To comprehend it is to grasp and understand it.
 - 2. To know it is to appropriate, experience, obey and benefit from it.
- F. Yet, this knowledge was beyond human knowledge!
 - 1. This is a literal paradox (cf. 1 Timothy 5:6).
 - 2. The meaning is that man cannot have or obtain this knowledge without revelation from God.
 - 3. Keep in mind, this is not just the emotion of love, but the manifestation of God’s love through His plan of salvation – including the cross and the church.
- G. Finally, Paul desired that they would be filled with the fullness of God.
 - 1. As the spiritual temple of God, they were filled with His presence – as He dwelt in the church.
 - 2. His fullness includes the miraculous abilities (to be discussed in chapter 4).

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

- A. The preceding passage serves as a summary of the things Paul has discussed in this epistle.
- B. At the conclusion of this discussion, Paul issues a call of praise and glory to God.
- C. God is worthy of honor and praise because of His great power and wisdom.
 - 1. He is able to do greater things than man could ever imagine.
 - 2. He has proved this in His scheme of redemption.
 - 3. The revelation of the mystery – the establishment of the church – declares both the wisdom and power of Jehovah!
- D. That same power was now working in the Ephesians to ground and grow the church.
 - 1. This is a reference to their miraculous abilities.
 - 2. The source of power was the same.
- E. Even today, God is still wise, powerful and benevolent toward man – especially toward His temple, the church.

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

- A. Thus, the church is to glorify God throughout all time and into eternity.
- B. This reveals the ultimate purpose of the church – to glorify God.
- C. It also reveals the nature of the church – by its mere existence, God is glorified.
- D. Furthermore, it reveals the essentiality of the church – without it, man is not saved and God cannot be glorified.
- E. All of this is “by Christ Jesus;” for, without Him, none of these things would be possible.