

Praying for Strength unto Experiencing God's Presence (Eph. 3:14-19)

14 I bow my knees to the Father...15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 THAT He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 THAT Christ may dwell (release His presence) in your hearts (mind, emotions, will) through faith (confidence); THAT you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know (experiential intimacy) the love (affection) of Christ which passes knowledge; THAT you may be filled with all the fullness of God (destiny for each stage of our lives). (Eph. 3:14-19)

I. THE MAIN THEME OF PRAYS PRAYER IN EPH. 3:14-19 WAS TO RECEIVE STRENGTH

A. In Eph. 3:17-19, Paul describes the greatest heights of glory that God makes available to the human heart in this life. There is no experience greater than what Paul sets forth in this passage.

1. Paul gives us a clear picture of where God wants to bring His people. To receive this as a realistic life vision, is to enter into a lifestyle that is most demanding, but leads to what is ultimately most rewarding.
2. The higher a mountain climber goes up the mountain the more difficult it is. Yet, it is more rewarding. We deeply want all that God will give the human heart.

B. This prayer is a significant theological statement of how to cultivate intimacy with God and experience the deep things of God. It presents the biblical pattern for pursuing God.

10 For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 12 We have received...the Spirit...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us... (1 Cor. 2:10-12)

C. Paul presents a 4-fold progression in our development and growth in the Spirit. This is seen in the 4 times he uses the word **'that'** designating the 4 different stages of growth. The connecting phrases give us understanding of the sequence of progression in holy passion. Stage #1 is focused on asking for divine strength whereas, stage 2-4 gives us vision by revealing God's promise of to release His presence and purpose in those who persevere love and obedience.

1. Stage #1: prayer with fasting for God's strength to persevere in our pursuit of 100-fold obedience (finances, time, speech, eyes) is in context to filling our minds with His Word. God determined to govern the universe by giving blessing related to how much His people ask Him.
Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (Jas 4:2)
2. Stage #2: breakthrough of Jesus' powerful presence in our inner man (mind, emotions, will). This is the same as being rooted and grounded in love (from God, for God and others). The Ephesians had not experienced this breakthrough at the time in which Paul wrote this epistle.

3. Stage #3: new ability to perceive and comprehend God at a new level and to be lost in the ocean of God's love. Only the pure in heart can see the deep things of God's heart. Wrong thinking and desires clouds the heart like smoke in our eyes. Purity is required to see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)

4. Stage #4: equip to fulfill God's full purpose without being distracted by blessing (power, honor and prosperity). We journey to fullness is difficult with circumstantial blessing. Lucifer fell in the midst of great beauty, honor and power (Ezek. 28:12-17; Isa. 14:12-14)

23 Jesus said..., "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mt. 19:23-24)

- D. Paul's main prayer is that the saints at Ephesus receive strength to embrace a life of obedience required before they experience deep encounters with God power and presence (Eph. 3:17).

- E. The unspoken premise in this passage is the previous teaching of Jesus revealing that God requires 100-fold obedience before the breakthrough of His presence in us.

21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn. 14:21-23)

- F. We desperately need strength to walk in God's requirement of 100-fold obedience. Jesus urged His disciples to pray for strength to overcome temptation. In other words, to receive strength to obey God.

He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."...45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. 46 Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation." (Lk. 22:40, 45-46)

- G. Paul meant for all Christians to understand and pursue what he set forth in this prayer.

II. THREE-FOLD LOVE OF GOD

- A. Scripture sets forth a 3-fold dimension of love: love from God, love back to God and then love overflowing to others. This is only released and sustained by the Presence of the Holy Spirit working in us to tenderize and exhilarate our spirits in love.

5 The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)

- B. First, to feel God's love (affection) even in our weakness. We do not go by feelings, but feelings empower and change us.

- C. Second, to feel God's love back to God. To love God passionately is different than being loved by God. To be loved by God is a great blessing but it is not the fullness of God's plan. Love for God flows from experiencing His love for us.

19 We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

- D. Third, to feel God's love for others (believers or unbelievers) in an overflow of the first two. The reality is experiencing the Holy Spirit's power in tenderizing our spirit. We love God as our spirit and emotions are tenderized. Then we overflow in tender love to others.
- E. We were created to love not just receive it. We were created to be passionate. In other words, to give ourselves away in love. We will never come to the full pleasure of our human experience without receiving the power to fully give ourselves to God and others in love.

III. STAGE 1: PRAY FOR STRENGTH TO CONTINUE IN 100-FOLD OBEDIENCE

16 I bow my knees to the Father...16 THAT He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened (renewed) with might through His Spirit in the inner man... (Eph. 3:16)

- A. Paul is praying for divine strengthening for their inner man (mind, emotions, will). The unspoken premise in this passage is Jesus' well known teaching that God requires 100-fold obedience before releasing the breakthrough of His presence in us.
 - 1. The strengthening of the mind grants us *introductory understanding* of God's affections.
 - 2. The strengthening of the heart releases *introductory feelings* of love from God, for God and others.
 - 3. The strengthening of the will is the *inspiration and resolve to continue* in diligent pursuit of righteousness and the deep things of God.
- B. Strength to equip our heart for required to the greater experiences of God's presence (Eph. 3:18-19). It is required that we walk in love and meekness in 100-fold obedience. This takes the power of God. Only as we pray and receive God's strength can we live in the spirit of love and 100-fold obedience that is necessary for God's abiding presence to rest on our hearts.

7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find...13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate...that leads to destruction...14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Mt. 7:7-14)

- C. We need God's strengthening to help us cooperate in the process. Paul defines this more precisely as strengthened with perseverance to follow through (Col. 1:11).

11 strengthened with all might...for all patience (perseverance)... (Col. 1:11)

IV. STAGE 2: EXPERIENCING GOD'S MANIFEST PRESENCE IN OUR HEART

17 THAT Christ may dwell in your hearts (mind, emotions, will) through faith (confidence); that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend...what is the width and length and depth and height...(of God's love) (Eph. 3:17-18)

- A. Paul is showing us the possibilities of where God will bring a committed Christian in this age. Most Christians never touch this reality.
- B. Paul's main idea in these verses centers around Jesus "dwelling in their hearts." This speaks of Jesus "living in them" or manifesting His presence. This speaks of more than being forgiven of sins at the new birth. There is a vast difference between being a born again believer and having Christ dwelling in our heart.
- C. The "heart" in this context speaks of our entire personality (mind, emotions and will).
- D. Paul had earlier in this epistle established the idea of believers being the "God's dwelling place in the Spirit." This had not yet happened to the Ephesian Christians.

22 You are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22)

21 He who has My commandments and keeps them...I will...manifest Myself to him...23 If anyone...keeps My word...We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn. 14:21-23)

- E. Paul reveals that Jesus will dwell in their heart. In other words, Jesus will release His Presence in our heart (mind, emotions and will). We must not minimize this passage. We were not made for mediocrity in the Spirit. We seek to excel in the Spirit.
- F. Paul restated the truth of Jesus dwelling in their hearts as being rooted (agricultural metaphor) and grounded (architectural metaphor) in God's 3-fold love. This speaks of the root system or foundation necessary for consistency.
- G. Paul prays they would powerfully understand God in their mind and feel God in their emotions. The Church has too quickly sold out to an emotionless Christianity. We must imitate Paul in contending to experience God's heart in the deepest way that God ordains.
- H. The most glorious capacity of the human spirit is to experience godly emotions. We need God's power to experience the fullness of our emotional potential and capacity.
- I. Christ will dwell in our hearts through faith. This faith speaks of pursuing the promises of divine encounter with **confidence**. With faith we hunger and thirst after the promise of Jesus manifesting His presence (dwelling) in us as if they are real and attainable.
- J. People are only too busy until we are persuaded that the high vision in God is real. Believers in college, the marketplace, serving children at home or in ministry are too busy to seek Christ in this way until they have confidence that is for them and is attainable. Then we find time.

K. Summary: Paul's request is to be strengthened in the inner man to equip the heart for love and meekness which prepares our heart for the greater experiences of God's manifest presence.

V. STAGE 3: CONSISTENCY IN LOVE LEADS TO WITH NEW CAPACITIES TO SEE GOD

17 THAT you...18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints (available to all) what is the width and length and depth and height (inexhaustible ocean) -- 19 to know (experiential intimacy) the love (affection) of Christ which passes knowledge (requires supernatural help)... (Eph. 3:17-19)

A. Paul called the saints to profoundly encounter God's affection. God has "volcanic desire" in His being for His people. He wants us to experience the ocean of His love (Eph. 3:18-19a). However, it takes God's power to feel God's love and to love God. In other words, it takes the supernatural anointing of the Spirit to walk in this.

B. The ability to see the obvious with clarity. In other words, that God is beautiful and worth our full obedience. In the day we see His majestic beauty, we will wonder why we ever looked away from Him for even five minutes.

C. God longs to prepare our spirit for more revelation of His beauty and affections. However, dark thoughts and desires defile our spirit and hinder our ability to see God's transcendent majesty.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)

D. Overwhelming compelling grateful love is the what God is awakening in His Church to empower our obedience through all eternity.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge...that One died for a... (2 Cor. 5:14)

E. Job spoke of the thunder of God's power seen in His redemptive love as compared to the edges of His power and the whisper of His personality that were seen in His mighty power at creation.

11 The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at His rebuke. 12 He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He breaks up the storm. 13 By His Spirit He adorned the heavens...14 Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:5-14)

F. Paul is echoing David's pray that the saints be exhilarated by God's affections. The river of God's pleasure is the river of God's affection which brings pleasure to the human spirit.

You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. (Ps. 36:8)

VI. STAGE 4: THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S BLESSING WITHOUT SIN AND PRIDE

19 THAT you may be filled with all the fullness of God (our earthly destiny). (Eph. 3:19)

A. We will be so lost in love from Stage #3, that we will feel no need to seek to add to our greatness in success by virtue of the great blessing and honor that we receive in God's full blessing. We will find our full success and identity in the ocean of God's love.

- B. Stage #4: equip to fulfill God's full purpose without being distracted by blessing (power, honor and prosperity). We journey to fullness is difficult with circumstantial blessing. Lucifer fell in the midst of great beauty, honor and power (Ezek. 28:; Isa. 14:12-14)

12 Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God...14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. 16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. 17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground. (Ezek. 28:12-17)

- C. The wealth so common to those in the west make it difficult to seek God's strength for our inner man. The time it takes to maintain our wealth and good reputation simply takes too much time. Thus, our strength diminishes in our spirit because of the distraction of our time because of our blessings.

23 Jesus said..., "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mt. 19:23-24)

- D. God's full destiny for one's life can **only** be released in context to those who seek and lay hold of the strength (v.16) to persevere through the process resulting in long term consistency (rooted and grounded) in godliness (3-fold love) and revelation of the deep things of God's heart (the love of Christ which passes knowledge). This is available and attainable to all believers who build their lives around it.

- E. Paul prayed that the saints would walk worthy in this life as a condition to enter into all that God planned for them.

11 We pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness...12 that the name of Jesus...may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thes. 1:9-12)