

Session 2 Paul's Prayers in Ephesians 3:14-19 and 6:18-20

I. FOUR STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN EPHESIANS 3:14-19

- A. Ephesians 3:14-19 is a prayer to experience more of God and also gives insight into Paul's approach to discipling young believers. Paul presented four stages in our growth in God as indicated by the four times he used the word "**that**," designating four distinct aspects of spiritual growth.

¹⁴...I bow my knees to the Father...¹⁵from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell [manifest His presence] in your hearts...that you...¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹to know the love of Christ...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

- B. **Stage #1** (3:16)—We pray that the Spirit **strengthens our inner man** (mind and emotions) to enable us to love and obey Jesus. It takes God's power to love God and to understand His heart.
- C. **Stage #2** (3:17)—Jesus **dwelling in our heart** or manifesting His presence on our hearts.
- D. **Stage #3** (3:18)—We receive a greater capacity **to comprehend** how He sees and feels about others.
- E. **Stage #4** (3:19)—We are equipped to walk in the **fullness of God's purposes** in each season of life.
- F. In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul used different terminology when presenting the same truths that Jesus taught in John 15:5 when He called believers to "**abide in Christ**" and promised to "**abide in them**" which empowers them to "**bear much fruit**" that is expressed in loving and ministering to people. Jesus is the vine, or the source of life, and we are the branches, the expression of His life.

⁵"I am the vine [source of life]; you are the branches. He who abides in Me [talks to Me], and I in him [I talk to him], bears much fruit... (Jn. 15:5)

- G. **Abiding in Christ:** This involves *talking with God, applying His promises, and obeying Him.*
1. **Talking with Jesus:** Talking with God is the core activity of abiding. It starts here but includes more. This corresponds with "praying for the Spirit to strengthen our inner man" (Eph. 3:16). Jesus allows us to set the pace of the conversation. If we start the conversation, He will continue it as long as we do. Abiding in Christ involves an ongoing conversation with a Person that consists of many 10-20 second exchanges, strengthened by longer prayer times.
 2. **Applying His Promises:** Applying the promises of His Word empowers us to bear fruit. Shame, fear, and rejection rise up to challenge what He says about loving, forgiving, healing, providing for us, etc. We apply the promise of the Word to our hearts by *confessing the truth* and *resisting lies* against it when we feel shame (Rom. 8:1; 10:10). Applying His promises is an expression of praying or "talking to God" by agreeing with what He says about us.
 3. **Obeying His leadership:** Obedience is an expression of our love for Him. We talk to Jesus with a "spirit of truth" by intending to obey what we talk to Him about—it is not empty talk.

²¹*"He who...keeps [My commands], it is he who loves Me..." (Jn. 14:21)*

II. STAGE 1: PRAYING FOR STRENGTH TO OBEY GOD—ABIDING IN CHRIST

- A. We pray that the Spirit *strengthens our inner man* (mind and emotions) by illuminating our thoughts with living understanding and inspiring our emotions so that we are energized by His divine might to sustain our commitment obey Jesus and to realign to His kingdom perspective.

¹⁶*...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man [mind and emotions] ... (Eph. 3:16)*

- B. This prayer for daily strength corresponds with "abiding in Christ," which is to pray or talk to Him.
- C. It takes God's power to love God and to understand His Word. He will strengthen us as we ask Him on a regular basis. Jesus taught us to ask for "daily bread"—daily inspiration, direction, provision, etc. (Mt. 6:11). Moses taught Israel to gather manna on a daily basis (Ex. 16:16-22; Jn 6:58).

⁶*"But He gives more grace...⁸Draw near [pray, etc.] to God and He will draw near to you..." (Jas. 4:6-8)*

III. STAGE 2: CHRIST DWELLING IN OUR HEART—CHRIST ABIDING IN US

- A. Jesus *dwelling in our heart* or manifesting His presence on our hearts enables us to feel God's love as our life progressively becomes more *deeply rooted and grounded* in experiencing God's love. Paul connects two ideas together in 3:17—they are two sides of one coin pointing to the same truth.

¹⁶*...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*
¹⁷*that Christ may dwell in your hearts [manifest His presence] through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*
¹⁸*may be able to comprehend ...¹⁹the love of Christ...*
(Eph. 3:17-19)

- B. *That Christ may dwell in our heart:* This speaks of an on-going or somewhat continual experience of His presence to convince us of His love in contrast to an occasional sense of it.
- C. *Christ abides in us:* The Spirit dwells in our spirit *instantly* at our new birth. Jesus *progressively* He "abides in us" or manifests His presence in us by inspiring our mind and emotions (Jn. 15:5).

⁵*"...He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit..." (Jn. 15:5)*

- D. One distinctive of the new covenant is that He puts or writes His word on our heart and mind by illuminating our mind and inspiring our emotions (Heb. 10:16).

¹⁶*"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them..." (Heb. 10:16)*

- E. Jesus' manifest presence dwelling in our heart speaks of the Spirit actively inspiring our mind and emotions. In other words, He reveals and convinces us that God loves us in a personal way.

²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them...I will love him and manifest Myself to him...

²³My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

(Jn. 14:21-23)

- F. There is a deep correlation between our obedience to Jesus (pure heart) and our ability to “see Him” which includes feeling His presence and understanding His heart. We do not *earn* God’s blessing by our purity. But we *position ourselves* to receive more grace by walking in obedient love.

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

- G. ***Rooted and grounded in love:*** Paul used architectural and agricultural terms to convey our lives being spiritually strong in the midst of storms—of fears, accusations, temptations, pressures, etc. Being “rooted” is related to agriculture and being “grounded” to the architecture of a building. A tree that is deeply rooted and a house that is built on solid ground doesn’t blow over in a storm.

1. This includes receiving insight into God’s love to such a degree that we define our life by it. We define our primary success and value in context to God’s love.

2. Our confession is, ***“I am loved by God and I am a lover of God; therefore I am successful.”***

- H. God’s primary method in changing His people is to reveal how much He loves and cherishes them. The enemy wears down many with accusations and condemnation. Being preoccupied with shame and fear takes energy to manage, and it hinders us from going deep in God and from loving others.

IV. STAGE 3: COMPREHENDING HOW GOD SEES AND FEELS FOR OTHERS—BEAR FRUIT

- A. ***Stage #3*** (3:18)—We receive a greater capacity ***to comprehend*** how He sees and feels about others.

¹⁷that Christ may dwell in your hearts...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—

¹⁹to know [experience and express] the love of Christ which passes knowledge... (Eph. 3:17-19)

- B. ***With all the saints:*** The Spirit allows us to see God’s heart for His people. We receive from God in three ways—directly, by expressing it to others, and by others expressing and imparting it to us.

- C. ***Passes knowledge:*** It requires the aid of the Spirit to understand and experience God’s love. The Spirit gives the ability to comprehend the value, destiny, and greatness of others and to see their weakness through the lens of God’s patient love. Thus, we can celebrate who others are in God.

- D. ***Bears much fruit:*** We bear fruit inwardly in our character (love) and outwardly in our ministry of love to others. This corresponds with stage #3 in Paul’s prayer here in Ephesians 3:18.

⁵“...He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...” (Jn. 15:5)

- E. ***God’s 4-dimensional love:*** Paul highlighted different aspect of the Father’s love

1. The ***width*** of God’s love embraces every person, personality type, and rank in society.

2. The **length** of God's love speaks of how far it reaches beyond our greatest sin and how long it lasts—forever through all ages. It is not short-lived but long enough to stretch to all eternity.
3. The **depth** of love speaks of the lowest depths to which Jesus stooped or descended to redeem us (Phil. 2:6-9) and the depths that God's heart opened to us (1 Cor. 2:10).
4. The **heights** of love include the exaltation that we receive in reigning with Him (Rev. 3:21).

V. STAGE 4: THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S BLESSING IN EACH SEASON OF LIFE

- A. **Stage #4** (3:19)—Being equipped to walk in the **fullness of God's purposes** in each season of life.

*¹⁹...that you may be filled with **all the fullness of God** [of our destiny]. (Eph. 3:19)*

- B. The full destiny for our life will **only** be released as we live in agreement with His leadership.

VI. EPHESIANS 6:18-20—PRAYING FOR BOLDNESS AND CLARITY

- A. Those strengthened with might by the Spirit are able to walk in boldness and to speak with clarity. Paul prayed for the saints and for himself to receive clear utterance and the grace of boldness. This is a very practical prayer to offer for yourself, your family, and friends

*¹⁶...taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to **quench all the fiery darts** of the wicked one...¹⁸praying always with all prayer...for all the saints—¹⁹and for me, that **utterance** may be given to me, that **I may open my mouth boldly** to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador **in chains**; that in it **I may speak boldly**, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:16-20)*

- B. **Boldness**: To speak boldly includes courage and clarity instead of hesitation and uncertainty.

1. Boldness is more than a personality trait but a supernatural grace of God that give us confidence in the moment that it is needed, instead of our natural tendency to feel intimidated.

2. The apostles prayed for the anointing of boldness to rest on them when facing persecutors.

*²⁹Now, Lord, look on their threats, and **grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word**, ³⁰by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30)*

3. Boldness is confidence that does not require a harsh tone change or a raised voice.

4. Paul needed boldness when attacked by the fiery darts of Satan while in prison (6:16).

- C. **Utterance**: Paul asked for the Spirit's inspiration to speak with clarity of emotions and thinking.

1. Paul prayed that utterance would be given to him, which means clarity when making the Word known.

2. Whether you are going to speak at a conference or to a friend, write a song or a blog—pray for the Spirit to give you utterance or clarity from the Lord regarding your focus of topic.

- D. ***In chains***: Paul prayed for boldness to speak clearly while in prison—most agree that this refers to being in prison in Rome (about AD 62).
1. Paul had the opportunity to talk to prisoners and guards and prayed for utterance.
 2. Paul was in chains for preaching. If he were too bold, he might have been beaten.