
Ephesians

Chapter 3

Ephesians 3:1

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Notice that this thought is interrupted by verses 2 to 13. That is, verse 14 is a continuation of verse 1, with verses 2 to 13 in parentheses.

Paul is saying that because of the previous statements, he has cause to bow his knees in prayer for the Gentiles. We will deal with those verses when we come to them, but it is good to notice again the actual substance of Paul's prayer for his Christian friends.

So he begins this section with the intention of praying, but he pauses to write about two other subjects: the "mystery", and the "ministry".

Paul always prays that Christians will grow in Christ. He seldom prays for the details of life. He understands, and certainly the Holy Spirit understands, that the most important feature of the Christian life is to be occupied with Christ and to absorb the doctrines of the Word of God, under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In this verse, Paul refers to his status as a prisoner - he wrote this epistle when he was incarcerated in Rome.

Ephesians 3:2

If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you:

"If you have heard" - this is one of the most important phrases in the Christian life. A believer must hear the Word of God in order to perform any function in the Christian life, including worship and service to Christ.

Worship is the ability to hear and think about God's Word while under the control of the Holy Spirit.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

When you stop concentrating on the Word, you stop worshipping. Worship demands concentration, learning, understanding. Your ability to worship depends on what you understand about God, about Christ, and about the Holy Spirit. It depends on how well you understand God's plan for your life and how you are to function as a believer.

Worship includes singing, giving, praising, teaching, and other activities. Worship can be accomplished privately, alone with oneself, or with a group of other Christians. But it all depends on the content!

"of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you."

God gave to Paul the knowledge of His grace so that Paul could communicate it to people. Paul is saying, "If you have heard and understood the basic features of the grace of God that I have communicated to you before, you will be able to understand which I am about to describe."

Topic: GRACE

Ephesians 3:3

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote before in a few words,

"by revelation he made known unto me" - the Lord communicated His thinking directly to Paul. The first instance was during his desert experience shortly after his conversion. The second was during his writing of the inspired epistles, during which the Holy Spirit was involved in communicating the "mind of Christ" so that Paul could communicate divine viewpoint accurately.

"the mystery"

Topic: DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTERY

The word "mystery" in the New Testament refers to the doctrine which is specific for the Church Age. It is called "the mystery"

because these things were never revealed in Old Testament scriptures.

Paul states in Rom 16:25-26, Col 1:25-26 and in this passage that this mystery is now revealed. Especially in this passage, he points out that there is no excuse for ignorance.

If the Ephesians appreciated the way that special knowledge of the plan of God had been given to him, and the particular work of communication that God had entrusted to him (see Eph. 3:7-12), they would agree that "by revelation" God had made known to Paul "the mystery".

"As I wrote afore in few words."

Or, "I have already written a brief account of this."

He refers to what he had already written earlier in the letter, namely that the Gentiles and the Jews were to be included in one Body and in the household of God.

Some expositors suggest that this phrase refers to another non-inspired epistle which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, a document which has been lost. I am inclined to the conclusion in the previous paragraph, however.

Ephesians 3:4

By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

"By which, when you read, you may understand"

Christians must have the ability to understand. And understanding comes from "reading", that is through edification, the building up of the Christian life "line upon line; precept upon precept". This is the only way a believer can become occupied with Christ, be spiritually self-sustaining, and can have the productivity associated with Christian maturity.

The Holy Spirit indwells a Christian for the purpose of teaching, among other things. "And I will send another Comforter, and He shall teach you all things", Christ said.

A newborn Christian, a "babe" in Christ, has minimum ability to understand principles of Bible doctrine. If the novice Christian does not receive a lot of Bible truth from some source, preferably face-to-face with a strong pastor-teacher, he will not grow in his understanding. He will be spiritual malnourished; and he will exhibit all of the symptoms of lack of feeding, though he have been a Christian for many years.

Nothing is more sad than to see a grownup with the mind of a child. Yet we understand that many people are challenged this way through no fault of their own. How much more distressing to see in an older Christian, one who has been saved many years, who does not have the "mind of Christ", but the mind of a babe.

A Christian can have a life of purpose, inner peace, a relaxed mental attitude, great inner happiness (joy), and can be very stable, but it only comes through the Word of God - "understanding".

Hebrews 5:12-14

"For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food.

"For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

"But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Topic: EDIFICATION

A brief synopsis of 2 Timothy 2:1,2:

"You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Paul speaks to Timothy as his spiritual "son". Timothy was in Paul's traveling seminary for several years, and he was now a pastor himself, but a man who still needs instruction.

The phrase "be strong" is in the passive voice in Greek, indicating that Timothy is to "receive strength". No Christian has inner strength to perform in the Christian life. Spiritual strength come only from God. We are weak in all the areas of doctrine and teaching, especially when it comes to Grace.

Note in 2:2 that Timothy is being given specific instructions as to how to disciple people in the congregation.

He is not advised to set up action groups, to create social situations, to promote sharing and fellowship.

He is told to TEACH. He is to teach the same doctrines that he has learned from Paul, from his mother and grandmother, from others. Whatever other activities might occur in his church, TEACHING has the top priority and cannot be interrupted.

Timothy is commanded to COMMIT Bible teaching to other men, to "deposit" the Word in the entire congregation. Some of the people in his congregation will take the bit in the teeth and move out into their own teaching ministries. Some of these faithful people will have wonderfully productive lives of their own, based on the good teaching that Timothy has provided.

And note that Timothy's teaching must be such that his students, in turn, will be able to teach themselves. This implies a much more intensive level of teaching that simply giving out the facts and hoping that people catch on. He must TRAIN people to be teachers.

"my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"

(See the discussion in Verse 3 regarding "mystery")

Ephesians 3:5

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

"in other ages"

This is another reference to the fact that many features of the Christian life, known as "mystery" doctrines, were not made

known to people prior to the beginning of the New Testament church.

But now, God is making additional revelation available through the communicators of the inspired Scriptures.

Topic: INSPIRATION

Topic: INERRANCY

Ephesians 3:6

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Topic: INHERITANCE, THE CHRISTIAN'S

Topic: THE GOSPEL

Ephesians 3:7

Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Of which I was made" - aorist passive indicative of (ginomai)

Paul became something that he was not before, namely, a "minister".

"a minister" - (diakonos), "minister; server; deacon"

The word (diakonos) is transliterated in the English into "deacon". However, the apostle Paul did not become a church deacon. He became one who "ministers", and the type and extent of his ministry is explained in the succeeding verses, in words such as "to make all men see". Paul lived and worked in the "service" of Christ.

The word "minister" is used several ways in Scripture.

- Those in authority in a national entity are ministers, such as judges. Romans 13:4.
- Every believer is a minister: 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; 6:4
- The pastor of a local church is a minister: Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:23; 4:7

The context of the word determines which of the above is intended.

How a Person Becomes a Pastor

1. A pastor receives a spiritual gift of pastor-teacher by which he is divinely enabled to perform the pastoral function (Eph. 4:11,12). No human merit is involved; Christians receive their spiritual gifts at salvation, in most cases long before they have even heard of spiritual gifts, let alone determined which they have.

This eliminates many other reasons people give for going into the ministry, such as: "I'm a preacher because my mother prayed"; "...because I was a missionary"; "...because I felt led..." Spiritual gifts of all kinds are strictly Grace provisions. No one earns or deserves the calling.

2. A pastor must himself be spiritually self-sustaining. This means that several years of Bible study are necessary, leading to the knowledge of the plan of God, the exercise of that plan, and personal spiritual productivity. At that point there will be a recognition of a gift, followed by a spiritual decision.

This period of preparation is common to all Christians. All Christians are in full time Christian service and are expected to use their spiritual gifts intelligently.

3. Once a man has decided to become a pastor, he must enter into a period of intense specialized preparation. This may take anywhere from four to ten years. He will study biblical languages, theology, exegesis and hermeneutics, history, biblical psychology, and many other subjects.
4. The individual then enters into his life's work of service to others, which is terminated only at death or at the 2nd Coming of Christ.

General passages which deal with the ministry are:

Col. 1:23-29; 1 Tim. 1:12-14; 2:24-26; 3:1-9; 2 Tim 2 (all); Titus 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4

In general, it is the responsibility of a minister to teach Bible truth so that Christians can become edified, stable, and self-sustaining, and spiritually productive.

In all of the above passages of the New Testament, and in many others, the teaching ministry is seen to be by far the most important activity in a local church, and the most important responsibility of those who teach. That is, whatever other activities the minister is involved in, his teaching must have utmost priority in his time and effort.

How much teaching is enough teaching in a local church? Well, there is almost no limit to what hungry sheep can consume! I am acquainted with pastors who spend 60 hours or more per week preparing and teaching, holding four to six, or more, classes per week for their congregations. In churches like this, the pastors are not a public relations men, politicians, back slappers, or promoters. They are "feeders" of the flock. They are "ministers" in the true sense of the word in this verse.

A pastor is a shepherd. A good shepherd puts the needs of the sheep first, and has an abiding sense of obligation toward them. One who does not know how to care for sheep, or who neglects sheep, is not a good shepherd.

A good shepherd leads sheep to good pasture and water. A person who does not provide food and water for sheep is not a good shepherd.

A good shepherd protects the sheep and sets up defenses against those who would harm the sheep. An individual who deliberately harms or frightens sheep is not a good shepherd.

I urge you to study carefully the following topic.

Topic: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK OF GOD

"according to the gift of grace"

There is no merit involved in Paul's becoming a minister. He has done nothing to earn or deserve any special treatment from the Lord. In fact, he knows that he is "chief of sinners".

If a minister is successful, it is because of who and what God is, not who and what he is.

"given unto me by the effectual working of His power."

The operating power for the ministry comes from the very omnipotence of God Himself!

This verse takes the ministry out of the scope of the pastor's personality. He may be scintillating and charismatic; or he may be an awful dullard. He may or may not be smooth, suave, a social butterfly, smiling, likeable. He is a shepherd-teacher in the hand of God.

Ephesians 3:8

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Verses 8 to 10 deal with the function of Paul's ministry.

Verse 8 involves teaching to the Gentiles, new believers who are not versed in either in Old Testament scriptures or the New Testament "mysteries".

Verse 9 teaches about the new era that is now opening up in Jesus Christ.

Verse 10 refers to the teaching of truth to angels.

"Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given"

Paul refers to his gift of teaching. He emphasizes that he is the product of God's grace, and he fully understands that, of all people, he is one of the least worthy to receive anything good from the Father.

1 Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

A believer's happiness, stability, function, and productivity all depend on grace. The Christian ministry does not require efficiency experts, public relations, super organizers, or some kind of super church machinery to operate effectively.

The word "given" shows that the ability to minister is not earned, it is not won - it is received!

"that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"

Paul regards this as the highest possible calling.

Only one life,

'Twill soon be past.

Only what's done

for Christ will last.

1 Tim. 1:11-16

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

"And I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

"And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

"Nevertheless, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Ephesians 3:9

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

There are some difficulties with the text in this verse. The word "fellowship" in some Greek manuscripts comes from the word (koinonia), "fellowship". However, the weight of textual evidence seems to show

that (oikonomia), "dispensation", is used here. And because the context of this verse is certainly referring to historical ideas, we have here the meaning of God's "plan" or "purpose". Therefore, Paul is expressing the fact that his work is to show God's purpose in Christ, including particularly an explanation of the "mystery", the doctrines which have been "hidden" until this time.

The Word of God counterbalances all interpretations of history. The Bible not only contains historical facts, but it also gives, by means of doctrine, the correct interpretation of history. That is, the divine plan moves through history unhindered, in spite of human activity, even in spite of Satan's efforts to upset the plan of God.

A person who does not understand the Bible categorically is a dupe for any political, philosophical, or historical stupidity that comes along. The novice Christian is a child, "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

The responsibility of the pastor (teacher) is to teach all points of doctrine and to use the Bible to interpret history, to show how mankind operates, and to provide insight into the realm of Satanic influence.

Ephesians 3:10

To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Compare this passage with Ephesians 4:11-16. Note that here the church (we believers) is expected to somehow make the wisdom of God known to heavenly "principalities and powers", which is a reference to demons and leadership among the fallen angels.

"principalities" is the Greek word (archon), referring to one of the highest rulers.

This word first shows up in the Attic Greek (Athens) in the days of the Athenian democracy. The Archon was the president or pre-eminent decision maker in Athens. The number two man was called (bassilius ar-

chon), or "king-ruler". The third man was called (polymark), a military ruler. The following six leaders in Athens were the (thesmoteitai) or "legislators". Even though there was democracy, there was no anarchy in Athens because these leaders kept things under control.

The Satanic organization has a number of supreme rulers; how many is not known.

"powers" ... from (eksousias), "commissioned officers"; therefore, a secondary group of demon rulers.

Satan has a special force of high ranking demons to make attacks against prominent officials and heads of nations.

In Daniel 10:13f, the term "prince of Persia" refers to a fallen angel, a demon, who was busy attacking the ruler of Persia. Gabriel was delayed in bringing a message to Daniel because he was in conflict with this kosmokrator demon. The archangel Michael came to help and released Gabriel to come to Daniel.

In Dan. 10:20, the "prince of Grecia" is mentioned, referring to the demon in charge of mounting attacks against the ruler of Greece who was Alexander the Great at that time.

The principle is that Satan will vigorously attack any nation which protects the divine institutions, allows personal freedom to its citizens, and protects the nation against immorality. In nations like that there is evangelism and missionary activity, so demon activity will be stepped up with respect to those countries.

In addition, all Christian believers are placed under direct attack in the world system, with particularly heavy attacks against those who are advancing in the Christian way of life.

And it is in this battle arena of spiritual conflict that a Christian is supposed to function and succeed! No wonder Paul is so careful to teach continually about the power of God and the grace of God being the key to a believer's function.

The Church, the Body of Christ, teaches God's wisdom, His plan, His perfection, by

being His exhibit to heavenly beings of the work of Jesus Christ in lowly humans.

And the "minister", the pastor, the teacher, the shepherd, has the all-important function of communicating the information to Christians.

Topic: BIBLE TEACHING, IMPORTANCE OF

Ephesians 3:11

According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In these verses is one of the Bible's great statements of the Plan of God for every person. We are part of an eternal, comprehensive program which God is accomplishing by means of Jesus Christ.

1. The Lord wants every individual to accept Christ as Savior.
2. The Lord's desire is that every Christian believer grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, by means of the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
3. God the Father intends to use growing Christians to demonstrate His Grace to the whole cosmos, including even angelic forces of darkness.

The body of Christ (the church) is a university. Christians are the professors (pun intended). Angels are the students. The curriculum is the "wisdom of God."

"According to the eternal purpose" - (prothesin ton aionon), "the purpose of all the ages."

This verse continues the statement of verses 9 and 10. It brings missionary activity into the perspective of the overall plan of God. This phrase is used to emphasize the long-term historical overview, the far-reaching plan of God that involves both men and angels. And it is very encouraging for Christians to realize that the Plan of God is so comprehensive. And God's program is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:13,14

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

READ Luke 15:3-10, Joy in heaven over one sinner that repents!

The elect angels rejoice with every convert. It is far more important to win the one lost sinner than to win a theological argument with 99 self-righteous people who are negative to the Word of God.

Elect angels are in constant battle with demon forces; so they rejoice with every battle won, on earth or in heaven.

READ Daniel 10:10-14. Compare "prince of Persia" with "Michael, one of the chief princes...".

This is God's historical perspective. We see in years, or at best, centuries. God the Father has an eternal outlook, an eternal plan. Passages like this give a sense of direction, a focus.

When Christians first begin learning Bible truth, they often have a very self-centered approach. "How does this doctrine affect ME?" The doctrines of union with Christ, inheritance (Oh, goody!), redemption, edification, are absorbed with the attention focused inwardly. This is not wrong; a person must be informed and stabilized before any ministry can begin.

However, edification causes the vision to widen considerably as a Christian grows. The purpose of Christian growth is to enlarge the vision so that it includes others, so that the larger picture is seen, so that the overall plan of God is recognized, as well as one's place in that plan.

Homework: read the book of Ephesians as though you were the missionary, as though you were the one responsible not only for evangelism and edification but also for being part of the church's witness to angels.

This passage gives us insight into affairs beyond our own noses. It is a passage of production, of outreach, of evangelism, of an eternal viewpoint.

"which he purposed" - (poiew), "which He made, constructed, created, prepared, executed"

In this context, (poiew) carries more meaning than the word "purposed". To "purpose" is to have a will to do something. This word refers to actually accomplishing something. God the Father has actually carried out, and He is now accomplishing, His plan.

"in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Jesus Christ is the seat and power of the whole Plan. He is the Victor in the spiritual warfare. And recall, we are seated with Him in heavenly places; that is, we have a position in Christ which is the position of ultimate victory. Eph. 2:5,6.

READ Rev. 5:9,10; 12:7-12

Ephesians 3:12

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

"In whom" - in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everything that happens in the Plan of God and in the Christian life occurs "in Christ". It is vital to understand the principles of Union with Christ thoroughly.

Topic: Union with Christ (File - Eph02d)

"we have" - present indicative of (echw), "we continually have", "we possess", "we have power over (something)".

This word was used in Greek as "to grip", as in a wrestler's hold.

"boldness" - (parreisia). In Greek this is (para) + (reisis). (reisis) is "speech". Hence, "freedom of speech".

Acts 4:13

"Now when they saw the boldness (parreisia) of Peter and John ..."

The boldness of Peter and John was in their speech.

READ John 7:10-13,26 referring to making open speech.

Acts 2:29, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak (parreisia) unto you of the patriarch David."

The knowledge of God's plan, plus the power of Christ, gives people the courage to speak out, "boldness".

It is one thing to have knowledge of doctrine, of theology. But it is major progress in a Christian's life when that edification produces the willingness and courage to witness for Christ.

"and access" - (prosagwgei), "admission into someone's presence"

This expression refers to someone who is an "insider", someone who knows the mysteries, someone who is a "member" or "initiate". We Christians are permanently in the Plan of God, therefore we have "access".

"with confidence" - (pepoitheisis).

This word comes from the perfect past participle of (peithw), "to persuade, to convince." It refers to the past process of being completely persuaded with the result that one has confidence, conviction, trust.

2 Cor 1:12-15

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

"For we write none other things unto you, that what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end;

"As also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

"And in this confidence (pepoitheisis) I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit;"

Note that here Paul views the Corinthians as in the permanent Plan of God, "ours in the day of the Lord Jesus," and has confidence based on knowledge of God's eternal plan and a vision of the invisible day of the Lord.

"by the faith of Him" - literally, "through faith in Him"

Faith is the means of access into Grace. Union with Christ depends upon a person's faith in Jesus Christ and His substitutionary atonement on the Cross.

It is this confidence which allows Paul to encourage the Ephesians (in verse 13) not to "faint" at the trials he is going through, because he is enduring them with supreme confidence.

Ephesians 3:13

Wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

There was no need for the Ephesians to be upset at what Paul was going through (his imprisonment). He had a powerful source of strength.

"wherefore" - "for this reason", "on this account"

Paul keeps us thinking about the source of courage and boldness and our nearness to God ("access"). He explains how he is strengthened, and he passes this confidence along to his readers.

Confidence breeds confidence. A leader can draw attention to the big picture and, especially when times are tough, give his subordinates confidence in the outcome.

"I desire" - present middle indicative of (aitew), "I request", "I ask", even "I demand"

Paul does not flail people with his authority, but he does expect volitional action!

"that ye faint not" - from (egkakew), "to lose spirit; to be faint-hearted or fearful; to be despondent".

There is always every reason to be encouraged in the Christian life.

- Σ We have eternal life.
- Σ We are in union with the Lord Jesus Christ
- Σ We share in Christ's victory over Satan and his forces.
- Σ We have "all blessings in heavenly places in Christ"

So this passage says, "Get your mind up out of your soul's center; stop being introspective; look up! See what God is doing! See how you fit in to His plan!"

READ Rev. 2:1-3

READ especially 2 Cor. 4:1-18

READ Gal. 6:7-10; Isa. 40:29-31; 41:10-13

Topic: DEPRESSION

"at my tribulations for you"

The Ephesians Christians may have had an extra burden because Paul had been arrested the second time in Ephesus, and he was transported from there to his second imprisonment.

"which is your glory"

Paul himself rejoiced in his trials, so he wanted to give the Ephesians a perspective on suffering. The better they understood this, the less they would give way to weakness and discouragement ... hence, the greater would be their reputation (testimony) as unto the Lord.

Topic: SUFFERING

Ephesians 3:11,12

According to the purpose of all ages which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In whom we possess the boldness to speak out and perfect confidence through faith in Him.

Ephesians 3:14

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse takes up where verse 1 left off in mid-paragraph. Verses 2 through 13 have been parenthetical. Notice that the phrase "for this cause" occurs both in verse 1 and here. Both phrases refer back to the conclusions of chapter 2.

- Σ The Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens and members of the household of God.
- Σ The whole building (all believers) is built on the foundation of the apostles, with Jesus Christ being the key stone.
- Σ The whole body grows into a holy temple, with the individual Christians who make up the body being built together for a habitation of God, through the Holy Spirit.

Paul's prayer of verses 14 to 19, therefore, is based on these facts and proceeds from these facts. In chapter 2 he lays out the position and condition of Christians, who by the grace of God, have been brought into a position as members of the Father's royal family. In chapter 3, Paul's prayer is that the logical and spiritual next step will be taken, namely that members of the royal family will take advantage of their new position and grow mightily in Christ.

"I bow my knees" - this is another of Paul's great, fervent prayers that believers learn, apply and prosper from the Word of God. Read again his prayer in Eph. 1:17-21. The Apostle wants the best for his beloved friends in Asia. He knows the value of concentrating on the strengthening of the "inner man."

The great need of any Christian is stability, and the wisdom that comes from knowing God's viewpoint on every issue.

When a Christian is "rooted and grounded", he will be stable, supported, and nourished as a believer.

When a Christian is able "to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" and knows "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge", he has the ability to make sound decisions and to solve the problems of everyday life, using the very wisdom of the Creator.

Why does the Apostle Paul pray?

Read all of Paul's prayers in his epistles. Note that he almost never prays for the details of life for his friends. In particular, in his prayers in Ephesians, he does not pray for the health of his friends, that they will get jobs, that their finances will be improved, that their relationships will be straightened out, that they will be safe from harm,

These things are details of life - those things which, by definition, are associated with our physical life on this earth - things like money, relationships, family, health, sex, jobs, social life and position, promotion.

Paul prays that Christians will be so grounded in the Word of God, regardless of the ups and downs of life, whether poor or rich, whether in good health or bad, whether in safety or in jeopardy, whether alone or surrounded by adoring friends, that they will know the will of God, that will be models of stable and courageous thinking, that they will be filled with the fullness of God, knowing the lord of God which passes knowledge.

Application

When we pray, we should give top priority to the known will of God. We are told in the Bible if we pray according to His will, He hears us.

But we usually don't know the will of God concerning details of life. When we pray for someone's health, we don't know if the Lord wants the person to be well, or whether He is providing a spiritual test to the individual. Likewise for any other type of personal suffering, such as job loss or family problem.

Personal suffering is a very real and necessary part of the Christian life and is always meant "to work together for good for those who love God." If we pray that the suffering be relieved, we are often praying at cross purposes with God's plan for the individual. We want our friends to be happy and free of pain, but, in fact, it is not the relief of suffering that brings joy and confidence to the Christian.

Topic: PRAYER

Topic: CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

When we are suffering, God's purpose for us is that we walk in the Spirit, stay occupied with Christ, live in His Word, grow in Christ, and live productive Christian lives with "eternity's values in view." So when we pray for others who are suffering or who have need, we should keep God's eternal program in mind. The most important issues are the spiritual ones; and we should give priority in our thinking, and in our actual prayer, to the issues the Scripture shows to be the most important.

If you are in charge of a prayer meeting, try conducting it from this perspective. Remind those who pray of Paul's focus in prayer, and of the overriding spiritual issues in people's lives that are so much more important than the details of life. Your prayer request time will change from mournful litany of people's hard times to an encouraging and joyous discussion of the eternal possibilities which accompany mastery of the details of life.

Ephesians 3:15

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

We are members of a family, the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is "King of kings, Lord of lords, the Bright Morning Star," His family is a royal family. In fact, we are "seated together with Him in the heavenly places" right now (Eph. 2:6), so that our union with Christ gives us a wonderful position as intimate members of Christ's family, the church, the Body of Christ.

Rev 19:16, "He has a royal title written on His robe, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'"

It is because a Christian has permanent position of solid authority as a member of the royal family of Jesus Christ that Paul can speak so confidently in these verses of the value and absolute necessity that believers be thoroughly rooted in the principles of the Christian life.

At His birth, our Lord was born Jewish royalty, in His humanity. The virgin birth introduced the humanity of Christ into the world, at which point Jesus Christ became Jewish royalty. He is descended from lines of two of the sons of David by Bathsheba.

While Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, he is the legal father in a human family; and the line of royal descent from Solomon ends with Joseph, as shown in Matthew. The line of royal descent from Nathan, given in Luke, comes down to Mary, our Lord's real mother.

Jesus' royal title is "Son of David," and His royal family is the dynasty of David. As Jewish royalty, our Lord will fulfill the Da-

vidic covenant at the time of His second coming.

The royal family of God, therefore, is made up of every believer, regardless of background, race, classification, etc. All distinctions are erased at the point of salvation and reconciliation.

This is a permanent family relationship that will last forever. Our position is eternal and secure since it is related to our regeneration. This means also all believers are in full time service for Christ as royal priests and royal ambassadors.

Our objectives as members of Christ's family are to glorify God. We do this by:

- Σ Advancing in spiritual maturity, according to the plan of God.
- Σ Receiving the blessings which have been laid up in escrow for us (Eph. 1:3)
- Σ To pass tests of faith as evidence of our growth and progress in the Christian life.
- Σ To receive the blessings which are waiting for us in heaven, in eternity.

All these are summed up in the phrase "to glorify God." All the other priorities in life are really not important.

These facts, too, influence where Paul places his emphasis in his prayers.

1 Pet 2:9, "But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

As an exercise, read Ephesians, Hebrews, Romans, and Colossians with the aim of extracting any comment which deals with your position as a member of the Lord's family.

Ephesians emphasizes the position of the royal family. Hebrews emphasizes the priesthood of the royal family. Romans emphasizes the objectives of the royal family. Colossians emphasizes the lifestyle of the royal family.

The Plan of God for Members of His Royal Family

The first objective for a Christian is to learn the Word of God on a consistent basis until he begins to have a personal love for God. This develops spiritual self-worth and focus.

Next, the believer must continue to grow spiritually by learning and applying Bible truth, until he is spiritually self-sustaining, and has developed impersonal love for other people.

Then, a Christian must pass through testing: people testing, thought testing, system testing, and disaster testing.

Finally a Christian must reach spiritual maturity, where through testing of the evidence of his faith he becomes a witness against Satan.

At maturity, we receive our blessings which were deposited in escrow in Christ in eternity past (Eph 1:3-14). These blessings glorify God to the maximum. Then God may test us concerning these blessings as evidence against Satan. This is the objective of the royal family while on earth.

Topic: CITIZENSHIP OF THE BELIEVER

Ephesians 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;

"That He would grant you" - aorist subjunctive active of (didomi), "to give; to grant; to permit; to present."

"Grant" is a New Testament Grace word. That for which Paul is praying is available on a grace basis. However, the subjunctive mood of the verb indicates that there is potential here. Whether a Christian receives the benefit of the "grant" depends on personal volition. Paul prays that Christians will take advantage of that which God has provided. Verses 17 to 19 list the provisions of this grace gift: inner strength, Christ dwelling within, grounding in love, comprehension of the whole realm of Bible truth, knowledge of the love of Christ, and being filled with the fulness of God.

The Lord never provides anything that is not equally available to all people. Salvation, inner strength and growth, great happiness and productivity are available to anyone, regardless of education or situation in life.

"according to the riches of His glory"

The unbeliever can only personally experience grace in salvation. He has little knowledge of God and no appreciation for the character and person of God or the Lord Jesus.

Paul the Apostle knows the source of true riches; and he directs us to that source. The believer learns to know God in His complete character (breadth, length, depth, height), His "glory".

Topic: GLORY

"to be strengthened" - from the Greek, the passive infinitive of (krataiow), "to have an inner ruling power."

The passive voices of the verb indicates that a Christian "receives strength". Since this is by grace, it is on a non-meritorious basis. The infinitive indicates that this is God's purpose for every believer.

"with might" - (dunamis), "inner power".

"by the Spirit" - "by means of the Holy Spirit"

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to teach us spiritual truth, to make spiritual things understandable. The filling and control of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for this to take place. The Spirit is the agent of perception and understanding.

"in the inner man" - in the human spirit, in the mentality, in the thinking apparatus of the soul.

READ 2 Peter 3:18:

We are commanded to "grow" in grace, and to keep on growing. There are roots to that which grows; then that which is above ground produces fruit. Christian edification is that which is above ground. We must make positive decisions to be filled with the Spirit (by confessing sin); to expose ourselves daily to Bible teaching; and to believe

the doctrine, by faith applying the teaching in our minds.

But the command to grow is accompanied by God's giving us the ability to perform the command. We grow in grace and in knowledge. Our part is receiving the academic instruction of Bible truth. God's part, through the Holy Spirit as our Teacher, is to establish the roots and bring about growth.

Topic: EDIFICATION

Ephesians 3:17

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Verses 17 to 19 continue to state Paul's purpose for his fervent prayer for his beloved friends in Ephesus. He agonizes over his great desire that believers steadfastly pursue that which builds them up in faith, the Word of God, taught by the Holy Spirit, and lodged in the hearts of believers.

Christ "dwelling in your hearts", or "Christ at home in your hearts" is a reference to edification, to the "roots" which are the foundation of a growing Christian's life. "Heart" is from the Greek word KARDIA which is always used in the Bible to refer to the inner life, the life of the soul.

Christ is the Word of God (John 1), so "Christ in the heart" is equivalent to "the Word in the life."

Your mentality is part of your soul. You do your thinking in your soul. You also do your deciding (volition) and your appreciating (emotion) in your soul. The Sin Nature is also part of your inner life, so there is always negative motivation present - you will be tempted to make the wrong decisions and to commit sin.

The most important weapon in combatting sin, in having victory over personal sin, is the Word of God locked (rooted) in the soul. By faith we understand the Word; by faith we believe it; by faith we accept it. Christian growth is the process of learning and applying the Word of God so that a system of divine standards is built up in the soul. God's "wisdom and prudence", with their continu-

ous influence in our decision making and our problem solving, are the tools with which we function in the Christian life.

Topic: EDIFICATION (File No: Eph06c)

Topic: MENTAL ATTITUDE

"by faith"

Belief in Christ is required. Belief in the Word of God is required. The process is as follows:

1. God the Father provided the written revelation of His thinking. "We have the mind of Christ."
2. Communicators (pastors, teachers) teach the Word for the purpose of bringing us to maturity (Ephesians 4:11 to 16). The local church is the principal environment for learning doctrine and growing in grace. In some manner, truth must be communicated from the Bible to the mind.
3. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. When we are filled with the Spirit (spiritual), the Spirit teaches us and brings us to understanding of those things which are "spiritually discerned." This understanding is GNOSIS, knowledge in the mind of the soul. However, further decisions are required for application.
4. Once a principle of Scripture is understood, a believer has a choice, whether to adopt the teaching, believe the teaching, obey the teaching - in short, "faith" is required. Faith, in effect, causes the transfer of truth from the mind to the "heart". Head knowledge becomes heart knowledge through the exercise of faith.

Once an unbeliever understands the gospel, he must make a choice. Faith in the gospel brings about regeneration and all that is associated with it.

When a Christian understands a Bible principle, a choice must be made. Faith in a promise brings about claiming the promise. Faith in

a command brings about obedience to the command.

It is absolutely vital that you always stay positive to Bible truth. But here is where the spiritual tragedies occur. Believers who have heard Bible teaching, and understand it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, fail to utilize the doctrine by appropriating it by faith.

5. The "roots" of doctrine in the "heart" become part of the foundation and building that is growing in the believer's soul (EPIGNOSIS). The "edifice" is in the process of construction. And a Biblical frame of reference is formed in which Bible truth becomes the basis for understanding deeper truth. Bible principles are stored in the heart to make a Christian ready for any contingency which requires godly decision making or problem solving.

"that ye being rooted and grounded"

"Rooted" is the perfect passive participle of RIZOW, "to take root."

"Grounded" is the perfect passive participle of THEMELIOW, "to lay a foundation."

The perfect tense points to that teaching which resides permanently in the soul.

The passive voice shows that the believer receives the action of the verb, that it is God that plants and roots the doctrine. This activity is a Grace gift; the believer receives these benefits from the Lord.

The participle indicates that this is a law of God.

"in love" - EN plus the instrumental of AGAPAW. "By means of love."

Read Romans 5:5, Galatians 5:22.

Ephesians 3:18

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"May be able" - aorist active subjunction of EKSISCHUW, "to be quite able", "to have an endowed strength."

This is the focus of Paul's prayer. The subjunctive mood of the verb indicates that the ability to comprehend is potential - the results depends on the believer's choices.

Here is the spiritually devastating part of non-volitional theology. The training of a believer's volition is neglected; but, since deliberate choices are required at every stage of growth, the believer's growth is short-circuited.

Topic: HAZARDS OF NEGATIVE VOLITION

The choices in the Christian must be made from valid objects, from doctrine in the inner man. Religion is insidious in that it holds out a selection of INVALID choices, none of which lead to edification.

"to comprehend" - aorist middle infinitive of KATALAMBANW, "to seize; to lay ahold of."

The middle voice is reflexive, showing that the benefit to be gained from "seizing" truth accrues to the subject ("you"). Thus it means "to seize for yourself!" This is a VOLITIONAL WORD. It carries far more meaning than mere "comprehension." There is a "seizing", a grasping and possessing of something.

Compare Mark 9:18, where the "speechless" spirit "seizes" the son with an unrelenting grip and "throws him," "convulses him," "tears at him."

This understanding of the force of KARALAMBANW leads to a new reading of any verse which contains it.

John 1:5, "...darkness did not seize for itself the truth"

John 8:3, "...seized in adultery"

John 12:25, If you do not "seize" the light, darkness will "seize" you.

Examples from the koine Greek in the papyri (Moulton and Milligan):

"I have impounded (KATALAMBANW) the property..."

Colonists "appropriated" (KATALAMBANW) the farm land.

To "detect (KATALAMBANW) in a crime"
READ I Tim. 5:4.

I Cor. 9:24, "one receives (LAMBANW) the prize. So run that you may obtain (KATALAMBANW)"

Phil. 3:12,13, the word "apprehend" is KATALAMBANW.

Application

A believer has every grace opportunity to benefit fully from divine provision and strength.

There is benefit from acquiring EPIGNOSIS, "full and applied knowledge" of Bible truth.

The believer must wholeheartedly and forcefully "seize" doctrine.

This is Paul's constant prayer.

"with all saints".

All believers have the same apparatus for understanding Scripture, the Holy Spirit - "He shall teach you all things."

All have "riches of glory", "strengthening of the inner man", "Christ dwelling within."

"what is the breadth (PLATOS), length (MEIKOS), depth (BATHOS), and height (HUPSOS)."

Shows that all Bible truth is available to all Christians. All of the revelation is intended for each of us.

Ephesians 3:19

And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"And to know the love of Christ"

The experience of knowing Christ and the love that comes from Him is the result of edification, and it is what Paul desires for the Ephesians. As you learn Bible truth and apply faith to it, you grow in grace and in your knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"which passes knowledge"

The verb "passes" is HUPERBALLW, "to surpass; to throw beyond". "Knowledge" is GNOSIS, "mental understanding in the human mind."

Knowledge of the love of Christ (EPIGNOSIS) is produced by edification and surpasses any purely human mental knowledge.

Application

1. When there is something that surpasses, be aware that there is still something you need; there is still a distance to go.
2. The word for knowledge (GNOSIS) refers to knowledge in the mind of the soul.
3. To know something which surpasses GNOSIS means to have wisdom in the "heart" (EPIGNOSIS).
4. This surpassing knowledge is the spiritual IQ of the believer, and it's based on the quantity and quality of the applied knowledge in the heart.
5. The greater the spiritual IQ, the greater the knowledge of the love of Christ.
6. There is a surpassing experience available to every person - to have a real, object, experiential wisdom that passes knowledge.

"that ye might be filled"

"Filled" is the aorist active subjunctive of PLEIROW, which has several related meanings in the Greek New Testament.

1. "To fill up a deficiency" - The deficiency is in the believer's soul, namely a lack of spiritual IQ. The "fullness of God" is not there, so it must be provided.
2. "To fully possess" - Bible truth in the spirit is knowledge that is fully possessed by the human spirit. This is a reference to "Christ at home in your hearts by faith."
3. "To fully influence" - Edification fully influences the life of a believer.
4. "To fill with a certain quality" - The believer's spiritual quality, his spiritual IQ

and level of edification, are available to be used to provide a quality life. A quality life is characterized by: Faith-Rest, Joy, Peace, a relaxed mental attitude, occupation with Christ, divine production of gold, silver, precious stones.

The verb "filled" is in the subjunctive mood. This means that edification is not a given, it is potential. The tragedy here is that there are those who fade out rapidly.

Example: the parable of the sower, in which:

1. The unbeliever by the wayside rejects the gospel.
2. The person on rock soil has knowledge pushed out by suffering.
3. Thorns refer to slavery to the details of life, resulting in no edification.
4. But knowledge (GNOSIS) plus good soil (FAITH) produce wisdom (EPIGNOSIS), and the production of divine good.

"with all the fulness of God" - the complete package - length, breadth, depth, height.

Ephesians 3:20,21

Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

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

"Now unto him that is able"

God the Father is the author of the plan for the Christian's growth. God knew all about human IQ, and He knew what IQ every person would have. He decided not to use any of it and designed a grace plan for spiritual perception that would depend on the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry rather than a person's ability to understand.

"to do exceedingly abundantly above" - a double adverb meaning "beyond all measure; infinitely more than". This is the highest form of comparison in New Testament Greek.

God is able to do what we cannot do, beyond anything that we can imagine.

"all that we ask or think" - prayer will not produce edification, and it's far beyond what the greatest genius could devise. You can ask God to edify you, but His answer will be "Everything has been provided for your edification, so get with the program."

"according to the power that works in us" - the power on the inside, the indwelling Holy Spirit working in the human spirit to produce the Christian life from the spiritual food of the Word of God.

Verse 21 - "unto this God be eternal worship and praise on the part of all believers through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ from now until eternal ages, even beyond the end of time itself."