

] Grounded in Love [

Ephesians 3:14 - 21

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~ Our last two reports from our Spiritual Safari have dealt with the dispensational mystery of the church; and have been doctrinally loaded lessons. Paul wrote out one difficult to understand verse after another and, here, in these final few remaining verses of chapter three, he will bow his knees and pray that the people he is writing to would understand what he has written. Paul had a deep interest in the church at Ephesus; and he wanted them to enter into the profound heights of truth in God's new economy you and I still exist in today; that is, the age of grace — the economy of Grace — and of the church. If we desire to dwell in all of the riches that are in Christ Jesus, we're going to have to understand these sagacious tenets of Scripture. To many who have been saved for any length of time, this may seem like simple knowledge but, irrespective of how long you have been saved, or how much you study the Bible, I doubt any of us truly grasp the depths of what Paul has actually written here. In this report, we're going to conclude the *doctrinal* section of the epistle to the Ephesians and, in our next report, we'll begin examining the *practical* side of this letter from Paul....

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

15 Of 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 by his Spirit in the inner man;

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

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

~ We had a prayer of Paul in chapter one, and, at that time, we called attention to the great man of prayer he really was. We know Paul as an apostle, a preacher, and a teacher – but he is not generally regarded as an outstanding figure of prayer in the Bible; and I attempted to outline the characteristics that, actually, make Paul second in prayer only to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in our previous report. In this prayer, we have another characteristic of the proper posture for prayer. Paul got down on his knees right there in the cell of his dungeon in the Roman prison as he prayed. The floor was stone cold, filthy, very hard, and probably wet most of the time.

I am certainly not insisting that a church bow down on their knees in every public prayer meeting they have; because some people likely might not be able to get back up. However, it wouldn't be a bad idea. I was baptized in a huge Pentecostal church – Faith Assembly of God in Orlando, Florida; and when the pastor said, “.... *let's pray*,” you would hear the place rumble and you would think the congregation had walked out and left the building — because hundreds of people knelt down in the pews to where you couldn't even see them — it looked like the sanctuary had emptied out — and those pews were quite narrow, by the way. Then, when the pastor was finished praying, it was like watching a time lapse video of corn growing as people sprang back up like stalks! That is, literally, no exaggeration, friends. Now, I certainly do not agree with all of the form in a Pentecostal church meeting; but those were definitely some very powerful times of prayer. I wouldn't even go as far as to say they were great prayer times due to kneeling – but – I do think it helped, very much!

We have such a cold formality of ritual in prayer today. Something is missing in regards to our prayer relationship with the Lord, friends. I, personally, believe there should be more of an easy familiarity in our worship; but *MUCH* more reverence for God in prayer. Now, I am just as guilty as the next person at violating the standard it seems I'm trying to set; but, since I am very good at telling people what to do, and how to do it — there it is. I must confess that, in private, I prefer to kneel down at my bedside; but I also confess I don't always do it that way. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus went forward and fell down on His Face. Frankly, it would do many of us good to fall down on our faces on the floor and begin with a sincere confession of our sins. It's amazing how it helps one to pray,

that's for sure. I'm also sure it's a practice that is acutely healthy to our well-being.

Further, verse fourteen reveals Paul prayed to the Father in the Name of Christ Jesus. Now, I'm not trying to split theological hairs, but that's another good formula to follow. With the exception of confession of our sins, which should be made to Jesus directly as our Holy High Priest, all other prayer should be addressed to God our Father. That's the reason I insist on confession as the starting place of prayer – because we can't communicate with God the Father if we have unconfessed sins in our lives. We're told Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven – so, their thrones are right there together. Try to envision that the next time you pray; again, these exercises will help our relationship with Christ tremendously.

John 16: 23 *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you ~*

The apostles had been with Jesus three years when Jesus made this statement to them. As far as I can tell, the apostles were like a group of little children in many ways, and I find their main concern was usually “gimme, gimme!” Well, Jesus is saying that He is leaving them, and that they aren't going to be asking anything from Him anymore. I think when you and I pray directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, we rob ourselves of our Intercessor. That's what it all means to pray in His Name. We can go directly to God our Father with a prayer that Christ will clarify and temper for us. I am sure many of us are absolutely reckless and careless in our prayer life in these two regards, friends. I am the type to over-analyze what's happening around me; and I just happen to notice those things.

We also need to be careful about vain repetition the Lord Jesus Christ warned the disciples of when He taught them to pray. If you were going to give a speech to a group of people, you would certainly be well-prepared to do so. When I teach a Sunday school class, I have the entire study text printed out. If I were to ever give a sermon, I would have every word written out. I know some may disagree with that – but that's the way I do things. Even these reports I write contain much preparation — which usually starts with notes, and then evolves into a formal report. Well, I like

to even have my prayers written out when the pastor calls upon me to pray. See, I hear people called upon to pray, and they seem to stumble and fumble for the right words; and, frankly, everyone's prayers generally sound exactly the same. Well, I like some dynamics; and I think the Lord appreciates the effort.

The first prayer of Paul in Ephesians was brief; and this prayer is, likewise, brief and to the point. The long-winded prayers that continue on for what seems like hours and days don't pass ever-soon, friends. The heathen make monotonous prayers of much speaking. Moses' entire prayer for Israel in Exodus only took three verses. When Elijah was on top of Mount Carmel, standing alone as he faced all the false prophets of Baalim, only required one verse. In Elijah's situation, I think I might have stretched that one out a bit. I'm sure the prophets of Baal, when they prayed that same day, probably took hours on end.

Nehemiah has a great prayer crowded into seven verses. Even the prayer of the Lord Jesus Himself in John chapter seventeen can be read in less than three minutes. Then, we all know the shortest prayer in the entire Bible is when Peter was walking on the water, and he began to sink, he prayed, "*Lord, save me!*" If Peter had prayed like most people pray, he would have been twenty thousand leagues under the sea by the time he said, "*a-men!*" Simon Peter's short simple prayer was answered immediately, too, by the way.

When we refer to our wonderful family of God, we need to bear in mind we are speaking only of *believers*. In fact, as believers, the only family members we have are those who obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you have biological family members who are not saved — and if you are praying for *anything* other than they be chosen for saved — then you might want to understand you are totally and completely wasting your time in prayer. You might want to write that little unpleasant truth down, too; you know, so you don't get caught up in vain repetition — like the heathen do. I realize that's not nice; but, I didn't make this stuff up, friends; that's what the Lord Jesus Himself taught.

Matthew 12: 46 *While Jesus yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood outside, desiring to speak with him. 47 Then one said unto Jesus, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48 But Jesus answered and said unto him that told him, **Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?** 49 And Jesus stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, **Behold my mother and my brethren!** 50 **For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother** ~*

See, the Bible is just a little bit wider than our thinking sometimes is, friends. We all have little cliques and fractured groups in our church who sincerely believe they are the only ones the Lord is listening to. They very definitely believe they are the only saints in the church group. Well, I hate to tell you this, but I just happen to be part of God's family, too. I'm sure many of you doubt that very much – but – I am. When we all see Jesus and get to Heaven, I'll be right there with you; and if you aren't careful, you might be commanded to attend my one million year "Introductory to Heaven" Bible study class I intend on asking the Lord to make me the tenured professor of. If you don't like me now – you sure won't like me then. Of course, I say all of that somewhat facetiously, because I believe the most magnificent thing about Heaven is *NOT* going to be the fact that I am going to love everyone there; but that everyone there is going to love me! That will sure be different.

Now, if you have bothered to read this report this far, you can know I am praying as Paul prayed in verse sixteen for all of you dear readers. I pray that God will strengthen you with power in your inner man. Generally speaking, most people pray for the physical needs of the outer man – and that's a good thing to pray for, too, to be sure; and Paul prayed for that, too – he even prayed three times for himself about the thorn in his flesh. It's very comforting God does hear and answer our prayers for physical needs – and I understand that. However, it is at least equally as important that we pray for those inner needs; such as wisdom, judgment, knowledge, understanding and spiritual discernment. Those are equally as important things. If we don't ask for them – we won't get them – I can tell you that.

Also, notice that God gives to us “*according to*” His riches – not “*out of His riches*.” Here is a true story to illustrate that: I once performed a construction service for an extremely rich man. When the project was complete, the man said he wanted to give me a tip. He pulled out a wad of cash that had to have been *at least* five thousand dollars. Well, this man started thumbing through hundred dollar bills for about thirty seconds until he finally found a FIVE DOLLAR bill – and he tried to hand that to me. I told the man, “*I think you need it more than I do*” and walked away. I hope he was insulted; because that was my intent. See, that man was trying to give to me *out of* his riches – not *according to* his riches. There’s a huge difference. If that man had given to me *according to* his riches, I would have walked away with more money than the job cost. God supplies all of our needs by giving to us according to His infinite riches, my beloved. Say, this report does seem like theological hair splitting, doesn’t it?

I have noticed that modern preaching has almost exclusively migrated to addressing the physical aspect of our lives; while the spiritual side is being neglected, almost to the point of being non-existent. What a tragedy that really is. The outward man is passing away, even as I write this report and as you read it; and that’s exactly why I have named this so-called ministry the Spiritual Safari. We need Christ rooted and grounded in love in our hearts today more than ever. This world has become so cold and indifferent to the needs of others that I sometimes question the authenticity of many believers. I am praying Jesus will live in your hearts, dear readers. Only then can we ever begin to think the Lord’s thoughts after Him. That’s the only way we’ll ever become grounded in love, and stable in the family of God. I pray you will receive the love of Christ that passes all human understanding. Maybe then you can begin to think God’s thoughts that are higher than your own. Frankly, we have only touched the hem of His garments in this safari; I truly wish I could do a better job of revealing these truths to you all....

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

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,

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

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