

To Know The Love Of Christ • Ephesians 3:14-19

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Count Your Blessings*

1. A man who owned a small estate wanted to sell it.
2. So he contacted a real estate agent, and asked him to write an advertisement describing the house and land.
3. When the ad was ready, the agent called the owner and read it to him.
4. The owner said, "Read that again."
5. The agent read the description of the estate once more.
6. The owner replied, "I don't think I'll sell after all. I've been looking for a place like that for years. I didn't realize that I already owned it!"
7. We're often told to "Count our blessings!"
8. That's excellent counsel, but to count them, we first have to recognize them!

B. *Your Blessings*

1. In this passage, we discover blessings that are ours in Christ
2. The Holy Spirit desires that we might count them, own them, and draw comfort and inspiration from them . . .

C. *Read Text*

- {14} For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
{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 in your hearts through faith; 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 the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 14-15*

1. These verses record Paul's prayer for the Ephesians
2. Earlier, in Chapter 1, we read of another of the prayers he was praying for them
 - a. there it was a prayer for *enlightenment*
 - b. here it's a prayer for *enablement*
 - c. in the first prayer he prayed that they may know their riches in Christ
 - d. here he prays they may use those riches

B. *Vs. 14-15*

{14} For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

{15} from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

1. The typical posture of prayer for the Jews was to *stand*, with eyes lifted to heaven and hands raised in the posture of making request
2. But Paul says he bows his knees—why this posture?
3. Bowing is the posture of *submission* and *worship*
4. Paul was a man who was completely surrendered and yielded to God
5. When he prayed, his body simply took on the posture of his heart
6. Is there a proper posture for prayer?
 - a. many of us learned how to pray in Sunday School
 - b. we were told to bow our head, close our eyes and fold our hands
 - c. where did this particular posture of praying come from?
 - d. probably from some early Sunday school teacher of 8 year old boys
 - 1) bowing their heads kept them from getting distracted
 - 2) closing their eyes kept them from seeing others and making faces at them
 - 3) and folding their hands kept them occupied so they weren't poking Johnny next to them or pulling Suzy's pig-tails
7. The posture of prayer isn't important - what is is the posture of our *hearts*
8. And since our faith is something that encompasses all of life, it's entirely appropriate that our body and posture be an accurate and outward reflection of the position of our hearts
9. We stand when we begin to worship as a way to express our united and corporate desire to worship God and enter into His presence
 - a. we then sit, as we sing songs that meditate on His goodness
 - b. it's like sitting before Him and just gazing on His glory
10. But then we stand again to show Him that we recognize and honor His presence - it's a sign of respect and honor
11. If you're new, it might seem that it's just a kind of slowmotion, Sunday morning aerobics
12. Listen - as we are praising and worshipping God, adopt whatever posture accurately reflects the inclination of what's going on inside
 - a. if you want to stand - stand
 - b. if you want to kneel, get on your knees
 - c. if you want to raise you hands to bless the Lord, get 'em up!
 - d. lift your voice in bold adoration; clap your hands - just do it in time!
13. Paul bowed his knees as he prayed and I think that kneeling is a wonderful posture for prayer
14. He said he bowed his knees **to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named**
 - a. each of us has a family name - our last name
 - 1) Mount, Trigg, Ronan, Molina, Davis
 - 2) Smyth, Contreras, Ramirez, Newland, DeLaHuerta
 - b. we gather here on Sunday's and Wednesdays and for the most part, our family sits together in little groups all over the place
 - c. but as we look at the *whole* group, the *entire* congregation, we comprise

one big family

- d. and we all have one family name - you know what it is?
- e. no - we are not Chapelians!
- f. our family name is CHRISTIAN!

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named

- 15. God has taken a bunch of surly, selfish, independent, and isolated people and made a family out of them
 - 16. One of the trends we see growing today is couples who get married and instead of the wife dropping her maiden name, both the man and woman hyphenate their last names
 - 17. We could do that as brothers and sisters in the family of God
 - a. Lance Ralston-Christian
 - b. Charley Trigg-Christian
 - c. Debbie DeLaHuerta-Christian
 - d. Richard and Myrienne Reese-Christian
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18. Now Paul tells them what he was praying for them . . .

C. V. 16

{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,

- 1. How much glory does God have?
- 2. There is simply no end to His glory - it is infinite because He is infinite
- 3. And Paul prays that God would bestow strength on them, *according* to that abundance, not merely *out of* it
- 4. Here's the difference . . .
 - a. let's say you have a very wealthy friend - a millionaire!
 - b. and you go to him and ask for help in starting a new business
 - c. if he writes you a check for say, \$3,000, he is only giving *out of* his wealth
 - d. but if he cuts you a check for a half millions dollars, he is giving *according* to his wealth
- 5. Paul prays that God would do a work in the Ephesians commensurate with who and what He is
- 6. And He is God, whose glory is without end
- 7. Paul is asking for an unending, inexhaustible supply of strength to be released to them
- 8. And strength is precisely what the Ephesians would need!
- 9. You see, there in Ephesus was the temple to Diana -
 - a. one of the Wonders of the Ancient World
 - b. it was a magnificent structure that sat on a rise above the city
 - c. it commanded the attention of all who lived in there
 - d. in fact, it was the reason why people came from all over the Roman world to Ephesus
 - e. Diana was considered an important deity and people would travel hundreds of miles to seek her favor
 - f. but the worship that went on in her temple was gross immorality

- g. ritual prostitutes sold themselves to men and women alike who would come to "worship" by engaging in immoral relationships
 - h. satan took advantage of all this by working through demonic power that deceived many
 - i. Ephesus was a center of the occult and witchcraft
 - j. many magicians and necromancers lived and worked there
10. When Paul had first come to Ephesus, the gospel had had a dramatic impact on the City and many came to Christ - so many in fact, that it changed the economics of the City when the traffic to Diana's temple was interrupted
 11. But after Paul left, satan counter-attacked and tried to re-establish a foothold in Ephesus
 12. So Paul prayed that the believers would be strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man -
 - a. meaning their spirit
 - b. that the Holy Spirit would empower them so that they could stand strong in the face of determined opposition
 13. If you go to the gym, you see men and women who are pumping iron
 - a. and most gyms have mirrors around the walls -
 - b. so that people can watch themselves work out
 - c. kind of funny to watch guys - they do a set, then they look at themselves in the mirror and flex and try to make themselves look all buff and muscular
 14. Well, really, what Paul is praying here, is that they may all be spiritual he-men and she-women
 15. He wants the Holy Spirit to "pump-them-up!"
 16. Life is really far more a *spiritual* contest, than a *physical* one
 17. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual hosts of evil
 18. Think about it; how much of the average person's life is spent in *physical* exertion where physical strength is needed? Not much really!
 19. Most of life is a *mental and emotional* struggle
 20. Yet people spend hours each week working out *only* to increase their *physical* strength
 21. They spend no time at all preparing themselves to be internally strong
 22. So, how can we gain this inner strength?
 23. After all, just like the Ephesians, we need strength
 - a. they had the temple of Diana to contend with
 - b. we have the temple of materialism to contend with - Mall
 - c. they battled occult and demonic power
 - d. is there any less today - not at all
 24. So how can we attain the strength we need to stand?
 25. We can pray, just as Paul did
 26. And here's what we can pray *for* - here's how we can find the strength we need
- ...

D. V. 17a

{17} that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

1. Strength comes when the Author and origin of strength lives in us
2. The word *dwell* means "to take up permanent residence"
3. Far from Jesus being a temporary *guest* - He comes to settle down *permanently*
4. We discover strength when the Spirit causes us to see that God is more than some person *out there*
5. Salvation puts Jesus *in here*
6. This word *dwell* is in a Greek tense called the aorist, which means a simple completed action in the past that results in a settled and permanent state in the present
7. Paul isn't asking for something *new* to happen to the Ephesians;
8. As genuine believers, Jesus *already* lived in them
9. But Paul desired that their faith would be of such content that they would know it and live it
10. They were vessels of the Lord; bearing His presence in the world as a vase bears a rose
11. Christian, Jesus lives in you - Do you know it?
12. You are a vessel that bears the very presence and beauty of Christ
13. And since He *is* the =Author and Origin of all power, then as He dwells in us, we have all the power we need
14. A mother and her 3 year old daughter were riding in a car when suddenly the little girl put her head on her mother's chest and began to listen.
 - a. the mother asked, "What are you doing?"
 - b. the little girl replied, "I'm listening for Jesus in your heart."
 - c. the mother waited, then asked, "Well what do you hear?"
 - d. the little girl pulled away, looked at her mother with a puzzled look on her face and said, "I'm not sure, but it sounds like he's making coffee!"
15. I hope we realize that Jesus lives in us to do far more than make coffee.
16. Indeed He does - as we read on . . .

E. V. 17b-19a

. . . 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 the love of Christ which passes knowledge;

1. Rooted & grounded = Paul uses both agricultural and architectural pictures here
 - a. "Rooted" speaks of an *organic* connection that bears fruit
 - b. "Grounded" means a *solid foundation* on which something is built
2. Just as roots need good soil and a foundation has to be laid in solid ground, we need to find our roots and our foundation for life in something *real*, something *solid*
3. The soil here in the Oxnard plain is some of the richest and best soil to be found anywhere
 - a. it grows wonderful crops
 - b. many of us have vegetable gardens in our yards that produce an abundance of food

4. But if you travel just about an hour from here toward the east, you find soil that is sandy and poor - it supports very little life
5. As we look around today, it seems that people have no roots
 - a. just a generation or two ago, people had roots in the American Dream
 - b. they drew hope from the promise of getting ahead
 - c. many had their roots in family; they had a sense of belonging
 - d. but now, those ties have all been severed
 - 1) for many, the American Dream has turned into a nightmare
 - 2) and all around us we see the idea of family unraveling at the seams
6. So they build their lives on nothing more sure than the next paycheck, nothing more secure than the next weekend
7. There seems no solid foundation on which to build because all of the promises have turned out to be untrustworthy
8. There is good soil and solid ground on which to live and build out lives - Love
9. Not romantic love, not the love that's summed up in a red heart on a bumper stick
10. But the love of Christ; the love that belongs to Him and was demonstrated at the Cross
11. This is something solid, something so real and life-giving that we can sink our roots into it deeply and lay the foundation for our lives on it
12. Paul wants the Ephesians to not just know *about* this love; he wants them to *comprehend* it
 - a. the word means to lay hold of something
 - b. to take a firm grasp of it
13. Christian, listen: God's love is not supposed to be a mere doctrine you keep in your head
 - a. it is to be a reality that fills your heart!
 - b. you are to lay hold of it and make it your own
 - c. it's the soil from which you draw strength
 - d. it's the ground on which you build your whole life
14. How can we know the love of Christ, if as it says here, it passes knowledge?
 - a. well, that is why he is *praying* for them
 - b. God's love cannot be grasped by man's unaided mind
 - c. it takes the revelation of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comprehend it
 - d. and that is precisely what he is praying for
15. But also, the word *know* here speaks of the kind of knowledge that comes from experience
16. We can know that God loves us because of the cross - if you need proof that God loves you, then consider the cross
17. But God wants you and I to *experience* His love
 - a. He wants us to know its width, its length, its depth and its height
 - b. so look now at the cross
 - c. see how one part points toward heaven
 - 1) it reminds us that because of love, God did for us what we could not do for ourselves
 - 2) it reminds us that our eternal destiny is heaven because God wants us by his side forever!

- d. see how one side of the cross points down
 - 1) it tells us that there is no place so low that the love of God cannot reach
 - 2) and that because of love, He laid aside His glory and wrapped Himself in human flesh, just so that He could endure the cross and save us
 - e. see how the cross piece points in each direction
 - 1) because the love of God enfolds all
 - 2) no one is exempt from the offer of forgiveness and love
18. Some years ago, my wife Lynn was going through a tough time of fear and insecurity
- a. as she sought the Lord for the cause of it all, she realized something
 - b. while she had been a Christian for several years, she had never really experienced the Love of God in the way she saw the Bible describing it
 - c. she knew He loved her intellectually
 - d. but her heart ached to know Him as a Father; the Father that He is
 - e. so one night, she sat in our living room with the light off and simply asked Him to let her experience what she knew to be true
 - f. really, she was praying for herself what we find Paul praying of the Ephesians here
 - g. she wanted the Holy Spirit to empower her, fill her, with the awareness of God's love
 - h. she prayed, and waited; waited and prayed
 - i. and then quietly and simply, she had the most incredible and intense awareness of God's presence
 - j. love flooded her heart as it seemed very much like He was giving her a hug, just like a Father would give his troubled little girl a comforting embrace
19. Your experience of God's love may be similar, or vastly different
20. The point is - it is something that the Apostle prayed would be the corporate testimony and experience of the Body of Christ
21. That all the saints together might grasp God's love
22. And here's why it's so important - once we know the love of Christ, it becomes the strength of our lives
23. This is what energizes us - this is the power of the Holy Spirit
24. This is the motivation that drives the engine of our lives -
- a. not guilt - not fear
 - b. but love
25. Finally, Paul says . . .

G. V. 19b

that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- 1. How could I ever hope to "explain" what this means?
- 2. How can you and I be filled with the fullness of God?
 - a. after all, the heavens themselves cannot contain Him
 - b. the universe is only as wide as the span of His hand
- 3. So how can this puny clay jar hold Him?
- 4. Yet that is what Paul prayed

5. And in essence that is the great message of the Christian faith—that God desires to indwell a man or woman that they may enjoy an intimate love relationship together

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Offer

1. Friend - God offers Himself *completely* to you
2. He holds nothing back - keeps nothing in reserve
3. All that He has and is He makes available to you
4. What He asks in return is *all* that you have and are
5. But when you consider what you get in return for what you give, it's well worth the trade!

B. All In Christ

1. A wealthy man lost his wife when their only child was very young.
2. A housekeeper was hired to take care of the boy, who only lived into his teens.
3. The father, heartbroken from this second loss, died a short time later.
4. No will could be found; and since there were no relatives, it looked as if the state would get his fortune.
5. The man's personal belongings, including his mansion, were put up for sale.
6. The old housekeeper had very little money, but there was one thing she wanted.
 - a. it was a picture that had hung on a wall in the house --
 - b. a photo of the boy she had loved and nurtured.
7. When the items were sold, nobody else wanted the picture, so she bought it for just a few pennies.
8. Taking it home, she began to clean it and polish the glass.
9. As she took it apart, a paper fell out.
10. It was the man's will, and in it he stated that all his wealth should go to the one who loved his son enough to buy that picture.
11. This is exactly the message of Paul's letter to Ephesus
12. All of God's love and grace are made over to us in His Son
13. YOU can know that love and receive that grace if you will put your faith in Christ today!