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Ephesians 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Ephesians 3.

Topics.

- The mystery of Christ.
- The unsearchable riches of Christ.
- The worst sinners of all.
- Rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
- We have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Christ.
- You may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.
- Christ in you.
- The Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
- Being filled with all the fullness of God.
- According to the power working in us.

The previous chapter: the previous spoke of the prince of the power of the air, the course of this world, a power which supersedes all powers and how God has seated us with Christ in heavenly places. Paul talked of people being dead in trespasses and sins of those in Christ having access in one Spirit to the Father, of Christ the Cornerstone and of a Temple being built for a dwelling place for God.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

EPHESIANS 3:1-6

The Mystery of Christ.

- **Ephesians 3:1-6:** For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The words, "For this reason" (v1) links back to the previous chapter in which Paul told the Ephesian brothers and sisters that, "Through Christ both Jews and Gentiles have access in one Spirit to the Father, and Gentiles are now fellow citizens with the faithful Jews and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:18-22).

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles: the words, "Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus" shows that Paul viewed his life as a prisoner locked in a prison cell who has no-way of escaping, meaning the entire focus of his mind was Christ and serving him. There was no thought of another path for his life, no joys or pleasures in this world would give him more reward than being as it were a prisoner for Christ and selling his life out to serve him.

NOTICE: the reason and Paul's motivation to serve Christ is not to gain benefits and blessings for himself, but to serve those outside of the Jewish nation (i.e., Gentiles) (v1) nevertheless when a brother or sister serves Christ to benefit others God stores up for them eternal rewards in heaven.

The mystery of Christ was made known to Paul by revelation: after Jesus appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus he did not immediately go and consult with the apostles or any other man, but instead went straight to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. After three years from his encounter with Christ Paul then went up to Jerusalem and stayed with Peter for fifteen days. The only other person Paul saw in Jerusalem was James the brother of Jesus. After telling the Galatians that, he received the Gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ and did not add to it from any man" he then travelled to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. He was still unknown to the churches in Judea at this time. It was fourteen years after Jesus had revealed himself to Paul in Damascus that he went up to Jerusalem to tell the influential Jews the Gospel he had been proclaiming to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-23) (Gal. 2:1-2).

The mystery of Christ was hidden to previous generations: this mystery of Christ was not made known to the Old Testament fathers, this no-doubt is one of the reasons the Jews being God's chosen nation viewed themselves as the holy race with God and Gentiles as the unclean race without God. This mystery that Christ has now revealed to Paul, the apostles and prophets of the New Testament by the Spirit of revelation has changed forever the entire religious and spiritual world of both the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because Gentiles are now fellow heirs with the Jews and partakers of all the promises God made to Abraham and Israel. Whoever is in Christ by faith will inherit all God's eternal promises made to Abraham and his seed because the seed of Abraham is the Lord Jesus Christ and it is in him that all the majestic promises dwell. For further information on God's promises to Abraham see the title:

- The Promises of Abraham (Galatians 3).
- In, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTE: some religions teach that the Jews are valued as more precious to God than the Gentiles even though Gentiles are in Christ, but Paul in these verses and many others like them is clearly showing that this theory is simply no longer true. In fact, a faithful Gentile brother or sister in Christ will receive all God's eternal promises made to Israel whereas a Jewish person who denies Christ will not. Peter after seeing a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven with all kinds of animals, and birds of the air which were unclean for Jews to eat and hearing a voice from heaven telling him to eat, told his listeners:

- Though it has been unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, God has now shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean for, truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in *every nation* anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (Acts 10: 9-29, 34).

Added to this Paul in his letter to the Galatians wrote:

- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal 3:1-29)

This clearly shows that whether Jew or Gentile it counts for nothing outside of Christ and in Christ all are brothers and sisters in the Lord whether Jew or Gentile all are precious to the heart of God and belong to the Kingdom of Christ.

EPHESIANS 3:7-13

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ.

- **Ephesians 3:7-13:** Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Throughout my years in the Christian faith I have encountered certain men and woman who were faithfully serving the Lord and others who desired to be in his service, but both those serving God and those desiring to do so felt a sense of overwhelming unworthiness. The following words of Paul:

- I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace (v7).

Should be of great encouragement to anyone who is serving the Lord or who desires to serve Christ in any manner since these words of Paul clearly show that it is not because Paul considered himself worthy that he is ministering, but because of God's grace. It is only in God's grace that anyone can serve the Lord while we are on this side of eternity for the following two reasons:

1. Not one of us can stand before the Lord and boast that we are without sin.
2. The closer we grow in intimacy toward God and in the knowledge and love of the Lord the more we perceive of our own fallen nature and the enormous depths that sin like an engrained virus has infected us (i.e., with selfishness, pride, ego, lustful thoughts, greed, jealousies, envy, anger and such like things).

Paul considered himself the least of all brothers and sisters in Christ: though most in the Christian faith consider Paul to be one of the great men of the Bible, the following words:

- Though I am the very least of all the saints (v8).

Show that Paul never viewed himself as such he made a similar statement in his letter to the Corinthians saying:

- I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9).

This clearly shows that though God had gifted Paul with miraculous gifts and revelations that have changed the religious world of both Jews and Gentiles forever Paul was a very humble man and very aware of his past life and God's grace.

Paul persecuted the church of God: Paul states prior to his conversion he was advancing in Judaism beyond many his own age among the Jews and because he was so extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers, he violently persecuted the church of God trying to destroy it (Gal 1:13-14). He pursued those who confessed Christ to death, binding and imprisoning both men and women (Acts 22:4) being convinced that he should do whatever he could to oppose the name of Jesus. After being given authority by the high priest he not only locked up many of the saints in prison at Jerusalem, but when they were put to death he cast his vote against them and punished them in all the synagogues trying to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them persecuted them even in foreign cities (Acts 26:10-11).

Paul's motivation: it was not that Paul was motivated by jealousy, pride and selfish ambition as many of the Jews were or from an evil heart. Rather Paul's motivation was from his zeal for God and what he believed was the right way to protect the religious laws and faith of the Nation of

Israel. Paul had been taught by Gamaliel (a Pharisee and eminent doctor of the law) in the strictest laws of Moses (Acts 22:3) and was therefore so legalistic that he believed those who were confessing Christ were blasphemers to the laws and customs God had given to Moses and to the Covenant the LORD had establish with Israel. This shines a spotlight on the power and horror of wrong belief especially when it is infused with a legalistic heart that lacks, mercy, grace and compassion which in Paul's case had been generated by attending a religious school that gave him a wrong understanding of God, His laws and what is important to God's heart.

The worst sinners of all: throughout the years I have heard people state that they are the worst sinner of all and therefore believe God could not save them, all they have to do is look at the life of Paul prior to his conversion and ask themselves, "Have I broken up Christian families and put innocent men and women into prison and agreed as Paul did, to them being put to death simply because they were devoted to Christ? And then look at what God was able to do with Paul's life. But there is another great lesson we can learn from Paul's life, it is obvious Paul was fully conscious of the hurt and harm he had done to brothers and sisters in Christ prior to his conversion, but he did not allow the horrors of it to rob his mind from the peace and love of Christ nor hinder him in any way from proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel. The following encouraging words of Paul show us all how he and by extension how we should all overcome the mental horrors of our past life, Paul writes:

- I do not consider that I am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own, the one thing I do is to forget what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philip. 3:12-14).

The rulers and authorities in the heavenly places: the wisdom in the following verse, "The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (v10) refers to the mystery that is now revealed which states that Jews and Gentiles are now united as one in the Lord Jesus Christ. The words heavenly places do not refer to angels in heaven but rather to those who hold high positions of religious authority and influence on earth. During Paul's era the expression in heavenly places referred to the Jewish rulers who through their command and dominance over the nation of Israel had great authority and power to influence the people in the Jewish faith. It is referred to as, heavenly places because to the faithful Jewish mind being a priest or minister of God was considered the highest calling and privilege in life.

It was because of this and because the authority and influence were spiritual and concerned God's Kingdom that those who held a priestly position of authority were by the Jews spoken of as being in, heavenly places meaning they held an honoured and privileged position in God's authority. Nevertheless, though the position is spoken of as being heavenly that does not automatically mean that all who hold that position are serving God, many of the Old Testament priests who were exalted with such glory and honour were not serving God, but rather their own selfish ambition and lust for power. The expression, heavenly places by extension can refer to any brother or sister in Christ who is given the privilege and honour to minister to others in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Christ: Paul's in his statement to the Ephesian brothers and sisters, "We have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Christ (v12) is telling them that they do not need to follow any religious Jewish rites, customs or traditions nor do they need a Jewish high priest or any religious ruler to have fellowship with God, since their union with the Father is solely dependent on their faith in Christ and not in keeping any Jewish laws of purification or religious traditions. By extension the same principle applies today to every brother and sister in Christ, no-one who

has faith in the Lord needs a priest or any other man to intercede for them since it is not our religious works or our own self-effort that opens the spiritual pathways and heavenly doors for our fellowship with the Father, but our faith in God's Son. If our fellowship with the Father was dependent on our works and self-effort there in no-way Paul could say:

- We have boldness and access with confidence.

Since who of us ever feels worthy when standing before God's Holy throne without the covering of our faith in Christ and God's grace. Our boldness comes from knowing that we are clothed in the royal robes of Christ's righteousness and crowned with the abundant grace of God's love, without these eternal, royal and majestic garments we will find ourselves standing spiritually naked before God.

What I am suffering is for your glory: Paul having a shepherd's heart is aware that many of the Ephesian brothers and sisters would be greatly concerned because of the persecutions he is suffering for proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ so he tells them:

- Not to lose heart over what he is suffering for them since it is for their glory (v13).

The word glory in this context refers to the Gospel of Christ, the forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It embraces the glorious and majestic promises God made to Abraham and eternal life and everlasting glory. This is what Paul means when he says, he is suffering for their glory (and by extension for ours), meaning so they can be saved to eternal life.

EPHESIANS 3:14-15

Every Family in Heaven and on Earth.

- **Ephesians 3:14:** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

The words, "From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (v15) refers to God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the angels, those who are sleeping in Christ plus everyone whose name is written in the Lambs Book of Life and those who are judged worthy at the Great White Throne Judgment all these groups will be gathered together in eternity. The whole family in heaven does not mean that there are conscious ghost like spirit families living in heaven waiting to be united with their immortal and eternal body at the resurrection (as some believe). The words:

- The whole family in heaven.

In this context refers to all those who are saved from the beginning of creation to the final judgment. Since the faithful who have died in faith are referred to as sleeping in Christ and their names are written in the Lambs Book of Life their resurrection to eternal life is certain since it is based on God's promise and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). It is because of these truths that they can be spoken of as being in heaven (i.e., in God's eternal mind, God's eternal care and God's eternal protection).

All the children of God from the Old Testament, the New Testament, the millennial age and those counted worthy at the Great White Throne judgment will be gathered together with their heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ their perfect elder brother in the Holy city, New Jerusalem. It is interesting to notice that eternity at the end of the book of Revelation is not pictured as being in heaven but descending down from heaven to earth when God will be ALL in ALL (1 Cor. 15:27-28). John a godly an elderly man in the book of Revelation was given an eternal glorious and majestic vision of which he wrote:

- I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the *first heaven* and the *first earth* had *passed away*, and the sea was no more and I saw the, *Holy City, New Jerusalem*, coming down out of *heaven* from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the *dwelling place* of God is with man. He will *dwell* with them, and they will be his people, and God *himself* will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and *death* shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the *former things* have *passed away* and he who was *seated* on the *throne* said, "Behold, I am making *all things new*" (Revelation 21:1-5).
- There will be no *temple* in the city, for its *temple* is the Lord God the *Almighty* and the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the *glory* of God gives it light, and its lamp is the *lamb* and by its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it (Revelation 21:22-24).

The glory, splendour and wonder of eternity: the book of Revelation states; those who belong to the family of Christ are resurrected and reign with Christ for a thousand years (a new age), but the rest of the dead do not come to life until this new age is ended. This is the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) whoever shares in the first resurrection is blessed and the second death has no power over them (Rev. 20:6). Those who attain to the first resurrection will reign with the Lord as a Kingdom with Christ and as priests to God on earth (Rev. 5:9-10) during his millennial Kingdom reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16). When this age has ended there will be a battle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of men then God Himself descends to earth on a Great White Throne and the sea, Hades and death give up the dead who were in them. The great and small stand before the throne of God and the Book of Life is opened whoever name is not found in the Book Of Life is immediately cast into the Lake of Fire (a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) this is called the Second Death (Rev. 20:4-15).

Those whose names are written in the Book of Life and are judged unworthy according to what is written in the other heavenly books and according to what they had done are also cast into the Lake of Fire. After this judgment eternity begins the Holy city, New Jerusalem descends to earth out of heaven and God dwells with those remaining on earth. They will be His people and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more neither will there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, because the former things have passed away and God who is seated on the throne makes all things new. There is no temple in the city because its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb so the city has no need of the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is Christ so there will be no night there. By its light the nations walk, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and the honour of the nations into the Holy City, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2-27).

This is the splendour, the glory the wonder and the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one). The Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in sharp clearness proclaims that the stunning splendour of this glory is not dependent on our abilities and talents or our lack of them since God in His wisdom has made salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory available to all, not by our own self-effort, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace can there be any better news than this, "I think not" thus the reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News.

NOTE: since it is certain that this is a very difficult concept for a mind that has been indoctrinated into the traditional idea that we all go to heaven and not that Heaven comes down to us it should be mentioned that having an exact understanding of eternity is not important to being saved to eternal life. The Lord will not reject or cast out those who have been faithful to him simply because they did not understand where they

will be in eternity. After Christ's resurrection most New Testament writers simply state; those in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life since the criteria to be saved is not dependent on understanding eternity but upon believing we will be resurrected to it.

It is interesting to notice: The New Testament (excluding the book of Revelation) has no Scriptures that contain teachings that people go to Heaven immediately upon death or even after death. For further information see the title:

- Heaven, in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- Resurrection (Second or White Throne Judgment).
- In Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- Sleeping in Christ (at the end of this document).

EPHESIANS 3:16-21

You May Know the Love of Christ that Surpasses Knowledge.

- **Ephesians 3:16-21:** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Here Paul is praying (v14-15) that those in Christ would be strengthened according to the riches of God's glory. The riches of God's glory in this context refer to the richness of:

- God's character and God's holiness.
- God's grace and God's mercy.
- God's justice and God's love.

God may strengthen your inner being so Christ may dwell in your heart: Paul prays:

- They would be strengthened through his Spirit in their inner being (v16).

Paul's desire for the Ephesian brothers and sisters was that God the Father would strengthen their inner being so that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith in contrast to keeping Jewish laws (v16-17). When Paul uses the word, riches it denotes abundance. Paul's greatest desire was that the Ephesians would comprehend that God's rich grace is not only inexhaustible and ample for all their needs for salvation but can never be exhausted. This is no-doubt why he is on bended knees earnestly and passionately praying such a beautiful prayer for those in the Ephesian church.

On behalf of the Ephesians he is praying that the Father by His Spirit would powerfully strengthen the Jewish brothers and sisters with the courage to forsake all their religious laws, customs and traditions and to give the Gentile brothers and sisters strength to completely forsake any remaining attachment they may still have to their pagan faiths and grant them the fortitude to endure the persecution and conflict that may result from these actions so that they would not only know that Christ dwells in their heart through faith but also be filled with his love that surpasses

knowledge (v17-19). Paul knowing the love of Christ as deeply as he did was fully aware that without total surrender to Christ and depending solely on him alone for eternal salvation the rich abundance and fullness of God's love is hindered and limited from flooding the heart to overflowing thus the earnestness of his prayer. Paul prays:

- That Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith (v17).

Christ dwelling in the heart means:

- The character of Christ is in the heart.
- The fruit of the Spirit is in the heart.
- The things that Christ loves, is in the heart.
- God's best interest is in the heart.
- The desire to please and obey God is in the heart.

Christ in you: Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends," (John 15:13). When a person's spiritual eyes are opened to perceiving their fallen condition before God and understand what it cost God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to save them their heart is filled with overwhelming love for the Lord, it is in this sense that Christ dwells in the human heart. The following is a true story and a good example of how a person dwells in the heart of another. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother was doing her first live school stage show. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with terminal cancer. A television reporter asked the young girl if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The small girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." Love for a person creates the reality or presence of that person in the human heart. This presence is in direct proportion to the love i.e., the greater the love the greater the presence.

That you are Rooted and Grounded in Christ's Love: Paul prays:

- That they would be rooted and grounded in love (v17).

The words, "That you being rooted" (v17) means that they would be firmly established. The words, "Being rooted" carry the idea that they would be as a tree whose roots strike deep and extend far and wide through the soil and as the roots of a tree penetrate deep into the earth so they would be rooted deep in love. This is the soil in which we are all to grow it is God's infinite love that Paul prays will strike the roots of the inner most being of every brother and sister in Christ and that from this love they would find all the spiritual nourishment needed for their full growth, until they have the mind in them that was in Jesus and are filled with all the fullness of God.

The outward man is strengthened by earthly food, while the inward man is strengthened by the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of God and by spiritual and heavenly influences (i.e., love, peace and righteousness). These are the divine food of the inward man (i.e., of Jesus Christ). The enormity of Christ's love that surpasses knowledge is comprehended when the inner man is fed and nourished by divine food as the body is by natural food (v18-19).

The breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love: Paul prays:

- They would comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth (v18).

The breadth: implies God's omniscient presence that encompasses the globe and Christ's world-wide love, embracing all men in all ages, places, and nations.

The length: implies the grace and love of God and the eternal purpose of Christ mission being extended through all ages and flowing from everlasting to everlasting.

The depth: carries the idea of God's goodness and love in Christ reaching down to the lowest fallen of the sons of Adam, extending to the deepest depravity of the human heart and searching for those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery and raising them up to glory from the lowest state of life.

The height: not only refers to the mind being raised up to a state of heavenly happiness, mental peace and filled with a spectacular and breathtaking hope, but also to the following majestic eternal words of Jesus as recorded in the book of Revelation:

- The one who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne (Rev 3:21).

This is a glorious picture of a father's love for his son and a son's love for his father. As in any family the father sits in his own chair while the son sits alongside him in his chair, so it is in these eternal words of Jesus. God the Almighty and heavenly Father sitting on his throne while the beloved Son sits alongside of him on his throne; but as any child loves to be nearer to their father and the father loves to hold their son, so likewise in these royal and stunning words of Jesus, Christ the Son is pictured as climbing from his throne to be nearer to his Father and his Father with open arms and a loving heart is seen making room for the Son to sit alongside him on his throne. This is how Christ says he will receive those who come to him. Can there be any more astoundingly awe-inspiring words of wonder. Christ himself tells us that every faithful brother and sister will be seated on his throne as he sat on the Father's throne. This is the majestic height of the love of Christ and the glorious height to which that love raises those who depend on the Lord and faithfully follow him.

Love that surpasses knowledge: Paul prays:

- They would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (v19).

Surpasses: (Passeth in KJV) in this context carries the idea of the love of Christ surpassing and excelling abundantly far above and beyond intellectual knowledge.

Paul's words, "That you many know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (v19) shows that Paul's heart was not only full to overflowing with Christ's love and that he had a deep sense of it, but also that he had a zealous passionate desire that the Ephesian brothers and sisters would also fully understand and experience its beauty. Paul had such an apprehension of it, he knew it had no limit and was unlike anything which had ever been revealed before his desire is that every brother and sister in Christ would attain to a full view of it. It was love which led the Son of God to be a man of sorrows, to be brutally persecuted and cruelly put to death in the most shameful manner – an innocent man on a cross as a criminal; and nailed there not for himself, but for others. Who could understand that? Where else has there been anything like that? What is there with which such love can be compared? And how could it be fully understood yet Paul knew 'something' of it can be known and felt in his inner most being. Paul desired that as far as possible the Ephesian brothers and sisters would not only understand, but also experience this great love which the Lord Jesus Christ had manifested for a dying world.

Being filled with all the fullness of God: Paul prays:

- That they would be filled with all the fullness of God (v19).

The words, "That you would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (v19) does not only refer to the love which Christ showed for the Gentiles in calling them into his Kingdom, but also the love which is shown for the lost world in giving himself to die. This love is often referred to in the New Testament

and is declared to surpass all other expressions of love which have ever been demonstrated. To know this; to feel this; to have a lively sense of it, is one of the highest privileges of the Christian faith. Nothing will so much excite gratitude in our hearts; nothing will prompt us so much to a life of self-denial; nothing will make us so kind or compassionate toward others and so dead to the world as being filled with the fullness of God's love in Christ. The expression of Paul's prayer: -

- That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God (v19).

Is so rich and glorious, who can comprehend all that it implies? That they would be, "Full of God" that is, God would dwell in them. This is the richest, best gift of God to man. It more clearly teaches us our true dignity than all the profound discoveries which people can make in their discoveries of science and evolution; for no matter what they discover none can fill with the fullness of God. It is only by the love of Christ that we can know the love of God: the love of God toward us induced Him to give Christ for our redemption; Christ's love to us induced him to give his life's blood for our salvation. The gift of Christ to us is the measure of God's love; the death of Christ for us is the measure of Christ's love. Jesus himself said:

- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)

This shows that it has pleased God that the fullness of His grace should dwell in Christ. Where Christ's Spirit dwells, there he dwells, if the Gospel of Christ is written in our hearts, and the love of Christ is shed abroad there then Christ dwells there and we can be assured that the love of God in Christ is upon us and dwelling within us in Christ. This surpasses all the capacity of man's intellect, to comprehend it fully in his mind. The fullness of God is the fullness which God imparts through the dwelling of Christ in the heart; Christ, in whom the Father was pleased that all the fullness should dwell (Col. 1:19) and in whom dwells all the fullness of the God (Col. 2:9). When this love touches the heart of those in Christ all the pleasures of the world that would compete for their happiness seem to be but a thousand trifles blowing in the wind.

EPHESIANS 3:22-21

According to the Power working in Us.

- **Ephesians 3:20-21:** Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The church was to be the instrument by which the glory of God would be shown; and it was by the church that his praise would be celebrated. The words, "Throughout all ages, world without end" (v21) express a richness and amplification of language here which shows that Paul's heart was full of the subject, and that it was difficult to find words to express his perceptions. It means, in the strongest sense, forever. It is the language of a heart full of the love of God, and desiring that he might be praised without ceasing forever and ever. It is Paul's heartfelt desire that all these blessings should be enjoyed by every faithful brother and sister in Christ and that Christ should inhabit their hearts that they would be filled with all the fullness of God.

FOOTNOTE

There is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building and some confusion between whether it's God's Spirit or Christ Spirit that fills the church and those who belong to it. The following notes may help bring some clarity to those who have been influenced by religious tradition.

In chapter one we read:

- And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephes. 1:22-23).

Christ is the Head of the church and has dominion, rule and authority over all things in the church. The words, "Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills ALL in ALL (v23) shows us two things:

1. All those who trust in Christ form the body of Christ (the church).
2. It is God's Spirit (also called the Holy Spirit) that fills Christ's body (the church).

NOTE: God's Spirit and Christ's Spirit are in perfect unity, perfect love and in perfect harmony of mind in will and purpose therefore the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ can be viewed as being identical since those in Christ have fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).

To attempt to dissect down to microscopic detail the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ as a spiritual surgeon with a scalpel is (I think) to do God and the Lord an injustice since there is nothing in prayer we can say to Christ that God does not hear neither is there anything we say to the Father that the Son is not also listening to and there is nothing we can hide in deed or action from either God or the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the reason, God's Spirit and Christ's Spirit can be seen as being identical especially in prayer since they are united together in perfect love, mind and purpose and both God and Christ dwell in the heart of every brother and sister in Christ by faith and God's grace.

A torch its light and God and Christ: if we were to attempt to explain the Spirit of God and of Christ in simple material terms (howbeit very limited) the Spirit of God and of Christ could be likened to a golden torch, its light and its batteries. The torch gives brilliant light that dispels darkness and allows all who walk in its light to clearly see, but without batteries the torch has no power since they are the source of its light, with this in mind, Christ could be likened to the torch and God to the batteries since God is the source of all life, but the batteries without the torch or the torch without the batteries cannot give light.

This is another reason we should not try to dissect in microscopic detail God's Spirit from Christ's Spirit or Christ Spirit from God's Spirit but always allow a certain amount of mystery since they are together united in perfect unity, perfect love and perfect mind will and purpose. Added to this there is nothing the Father wouldn't do for us that Christ wouldn't also gladly do, nor is there anything that Christ would do for us that the Father would not also be pleased to do. But there is another great insight we gain from the words, ALL in ALL. Paul wrote a similar statement in his letter to the Corinthians:

- God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him that God may be ALL in ALL (1 Corinthians 15:27-29).

These verses also clearly show that God has exalted Christ as the Head above all things, but they also tell us something more and that is; "When all things are subjected to Christ then he will also be subjected to God so that God will be, ALL in ALL. The phrase, God will be ALL in ALL in this context lifts the mind of the ardent Bible student at lightning speed and transcends it forward in time to the glorious and majestic vision of a godly man on the isle of Patmos who wrote:

- I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the *dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.* He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "*Behold, I am making all things new*" (Rev. 21:1-5).

This is the splendour, the glory the wonder and the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one). The Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in sharp clearness proclaims that the stunning splendour of this glory is not dependent on our abilities and talents or our lack of them since God in His wisdom has made salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory available to all, not by our own self-effort, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace. Can there be any better news than this, "I think not" thus the reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News.

The church, which is Christ's body, the fullness of Him who fills All in All: the word church in the following verse:

- The church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23-22).

Should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that.

Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt 7:21-23). When the Bible uses the term church it primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is summed up in Jesus words: -

- Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37-39) (Mark 12:29-31).

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law (James 2:8) and means do-good to others. Those (especially those who belong to Christ) who deliberately harm people physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and those who use others for their own selfish gain and greed are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity. The Bible teaches that some will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use God's grace, Jesus good name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. (Matt 8:12) (Matt 22:13) (Matt 25:30). Jesus said:

- I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

Building God's house is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather it is about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation etc.), but if it is built by cleverly twisting and distorting Scriptures to manipulate the congregation to give from guilt or built upon vast amounts of borrowed money so that the oversight and the congregation are put under extreme financial oppression then the building is not in the will of God. The book of Proverbs states:

- The borrower is the slave of the lender (Prov. 22:7).

Building God's House (Temple) is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life; thus the New Testament house of God is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ

THE GLOBAL FAMILY OF GOD.

Since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, levels of education, hurts and troubled pasts there is always going to be certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Paul in the book of Romans tells us to avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that he taught the brothers and sisters in Rome. In the context of the entire letter that he wrote to the Roman brothers and sisters the doctrines he had in mind when he said, "Avoid those who cause divisions" are the following three:

1. Doctrines that are contrary to the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to works of the law, self-effort and keeping religious customs and traditions etc.
2. Doctrines that are contrary to the truth that Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ become one nation in Christ, contrasted to them being two separate nations.
3. Doctrines which are contrary to godly behaviour and lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the three major topics Paul has focused on in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome and the doctrines he has in his mind when he says be careful of those who cause divisions and create obstacles. Naturally within the global House of God there are many varied understandings of many Scripture, but not all teachings are important to know to be saved to eternal life nor does one have to have perfect understanding of every teaching from Genesis to Revelation to know Christ and be in union with him, but of course we must all understand the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. No-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life, but should any teacher proclaim a message of works and self-effort to be saved or teach that Jews and Gentiles are two separate groups/nations in Christ, or teach doctrines that lead people away from godly behaviour and from Christ Paul says they should be avoided (Rom 16:17-19).

NOTE: though the visible global church in many regions has not presented a good reflection of Christ to the secular world, it should always be remembered that there are literally hundreds of thousands of humble Christian brothers and sisters in Christ spending their time helping the

poor and the less fortunate, but sadly this type of news does not attract the attention of global TV news media since there is no profit to be made in good news.

- The body is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore should be walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion and grace etc. that Christ walked in while on earth.

For further information see the title:

- Church (The Definitions of a Church).
- In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

SLEEPING IN CHRIST

When a person who belongs to Christ dies the Bible says they have no knowledge and know nothing they are totally unaware of it and are in a perfect state of peace, this state is called sleeping in Christ they have no consciousness, so there is no time. It is very similar to someone in a deep sleep there is no awareness of time, when the person wakes, they have no idea of whether 4, 7 or 12 hours have passed. Likewise, because there is no time in death the moment a Christian dies is the moment they are in the Kingdom of God and with the LORD, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed by in our world's time. David died thousands of years ago, but the moment he is resurrected will be like the moment he breathed his last breath, because for him there is no awareness of time, so it is for every Christian from death to Christ is instant.

Death to the Christian is similar to a person in a coma: a person in a coma has no consciousness of time, time does not exist to them, when they wake, they often think only a day or so has gone by, when in actual fact several years may have passed yet they think they are waking up, the same day, or next day after they went to sleep. The person in the coma or in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent in the coma or being dead. Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, the dead or those who are sleeping in Christ have absolutely no consciousness of time so for them, the moment they die, is the moment they are instantly with the Lord, even though many years may have passed during the time they have been dead (i.e., sleeping in Christ).

It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital for an operation: the patient is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them up and take bits out, over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it they wake up and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed, therefore when Paul says, absent from the body, present with the Lord it is a true statement, even though he may have spent years Sleeping in Christ.

NOTE: a second reason a Christians death is called Sleeping in Christ is because their death is only temporary. Being asleep in Christ means that everyone who dies in Christ is kept in the eternal mind and memory of God. Jesus said:

- Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the ground without the father knowing it and even the hairs of our head are all numbered therefore we should not fear death because we are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

The entire person (i.e., body, spirit, mind and consciousness) remains sleeping in Christ until the first resurrection (Rom 20:5) when all who are asleep in the Lord are woken up at the blast of the angels trumpet and raised from the dead to everlasting glory and clothed with an eternal and immortal body.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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