

SPIRITUAL TREASURES FROM GOD'S STOREHOUSE

Ephesians 3:14-21

Introduction:

Quote – Charles Swindoll:

“It is in the church, week after week, where we learn faithfulness. It is in the church where discipleship is carried out. It is in the church where accountability is modeled. It is in the church of Jesus Christ where we find the doctrinal roots that establish us in our faith.”

The letter of Paul to the Ephesians is really all about the church – the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers. The passage before us today is the second prayer of Paul recorded in this letter.

His prayer begins with the expression, “For this reason ...” That reason is the purpose of God, which he has previously described in the first two and a half chapters of this epistle. The purposes of God are the basis for Paul’s prayers.

God had purposed to redeem fallen men, both Jews and Gentiles, for the praise of His glory and grace (see Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

God has purposed to save and to sanctify both Jews and Gentiles, and to reconcile them to Himself in one body. His intent was that the church, that one body he describes in 2:14-16 should demonstrate the glory of His wisdom and grace. Because God has purposed and provided for the salvation and sanctification of Gentiles, as well as Jews, and because God has called Him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul now prays for the Ephesian saints, to whom he writes. Paul’s prayer is consistent with God’s purpose.

v. 14 – “I kneel before the Father”; “I bow my knees before the Father” – an expression of great emotion and surrender. In vv. 14-15 he describes the one to whom we pray. Before he actually begins his prayer, it’s important that we understand something about the one to whom we pray.

In these verses the emphasis is on the fatherhood of God. It is from Him that is derived the whole concept of family, the existence and experience of fatherhood. He is the one in whom the nature of a father is

seen in perfection. And it is to such a father that we direct our prayers. And because of his father nature we can count on him to give what is best.

In vv. 16-19 we find 4 things that Paul prays for – things which can be ours when we pray, for ourselves and for others.

You May Experience Inner Strength by the Spirit

Verse 16 – There are a couple of important words here:

Strengthened - *krataiow krataioo krat-ah-yo'-o*

1. to strengthen, make strong
2. to be made strong, to increase in strength, to grow strong

Power - *dunamiv dunamis doo'-nam-is* (Dynamite, dynamo)

1. strength, power, ability – inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth

The source of this power and strength is the Holy Spirit, and the place where this strength is to be evident is inside – in your inner being. This is not about political power or corporate power. It is about inner spiritual strength – inner strength to withstand the outer pressures.

Rom. 12:2- Don’t be conformed to this world. Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold. Inner strength is what we need to stand up against the temptations and storms of life in this world. And that strength does not come from us but from the Holy Spirit. God has given believers his Spirit to strengthen us so we do not collapse when the pressure increases.

You May Experience the Indwelling Christ

Verse 17a – Again we need to look at a specific word:

Dwell - *katoikew katoikeo kat-oy-keh'-o*

1. to dwell, settle – used metaphorically of divine powers, influences, etc. which are said to dwell in one’s soul, to pervade, govern it

We are not talking about a sojourner or pilgrim, one who camps for a period of time, but a permanent resident.

[From Illy]... "HE LIVES HERE!"

When Queen Victoria reigned in England, she occasionally would visit some of the humble cottages of her subjects. One time she entered the home of a widow and stayed to enjoy a brief period of Christian fellowship. Later on, the poor woman was taunted by her worldly neighbors. "Granny," they said, "who's the most honored guest you've ever entertained in your home?" They expected her to say it was Jesus, for in spite of their constant ridicule of her Christian testimony, they recognized her deep spirituality. But to their surprise she answered, "The most honored guest I've entertained is Her Majesty the Queen." "Did you say the Queen? Ah, we caught you this time? How about this Jesus you're always talking about? Isn't He your most honored guest?" Her answer was definite and scriptural, "No, indeed! He's not a guest. HE LIVES HERE!"

That was Paul's prayer – the word not only suggests that he resides but it implies that he presides – he dwells in our hearts so that he may guide and control. He is there to govern our lives.

"...through faith" – there must be the willingness and the desire to have him there. He does not force himself on anyone.

You May Experience the Love of Christ

Verses 17b-19a – Here the apostle turns to the subject of love in his prayer. But not just love in general; not some kind of mushy, romanticism, but the love of Christ. Again, a couple of important words:

Rooted - *rizow rhizoo hrid-zo'-o*

1. to cause to strike root, to strengthen with roots, to render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded

...and established - *yemeliow themelioo them-el-ee-o'-o*

1. to lay the foundation, to found
2. to make stable, establish

The roots of Christian character need to go down deeply, and its foundation is to be firmly laid, and love (Christ's love) is the means of both of these processes. The writer prays that the believers may be rooted and grounded in love in order that they may grow in knowledge

and understanding. Read vv. 17b-18 again. As our roots go down deep in Christ, we become more and more understanding of the vastness of Christ's love. Mention the hymn:

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell;
REFRAIN:
O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure - The saints' and angels' song.

But Paul doesn't stop there. His desire is that his readers not only begin to grasp and understand the love of Christ, but to know it, feel it, experience it for themselves.

Note: know – speaks of intimacy, understanding, experience

"...to know this love that surpasses knowledge" – all of the head knowledge in the world cannot give us the experience of Christ's love.

➔ Illust. - Missing the Stars

There is a story about a teenage boy who was deeply interested in scientific subjects, especially astronomy. So his father bought him a very expensive telescope. Since the young fellow had studied the principles of optics, he found the instrument to be most intriguing. He took it apart, examined the lenses, and made detailed calculations on the distance of its point of focus. The youth became so absorbed in gaining a technical knowledge of the telescope itself that he never got around to looking at the stars. He knew a lot about that fine instrument, but he missed seeing the wonders of the heavens.

As Christians, to know all the facts and figures contained in the Bible is not the end for which God has given us this book. The purpose is that we might see God and know him.

The love of Christ goes far beyond mere facts or knowledge. Paul says, I pray that you may know His love.

You May Experience All the Fullness of God

Verse 19b – There is one more little phrase in v. 19 – read it. This is the ultimate goal of Paul's prayer.

Filled – fullness – same root word

It means to make full, to fill up, to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

→ Illust. – Filled with God

One writer described the thought this way: To be “filled with all the fullness of God” is like filling a thimble to its brim with water from the ocean. The thimble is filled with the ocean, but the ocean is not fully in the thimble since the thimbleful of water does not in any way diminish the ocean. Yet, the thimble has the “fullness” of the ocean in the sense that it contains every ingredient that makes up the ocean. All the essential characteristics of the ocean are in the thimble.

Now don't try to carry that analogy too far, but I think it gives a bit of a picture of what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God. As God's life permeates our life and being, we are filled to the brim with the character and nature of Christ.

Paul says, I want that to be your experience. I want you to know all the fullness that God has for each of you.

Conclusion

In vv. 20-21 Paul concludes this passage—indeed this doctrinal portion of his letter—with a glorious benediction. He has just prayed that we would experience:

1. Inner strength – being mighty in spirit.
2. The indwelling Christ
3. The love of Christ that surpasses knowledge
4. The fullness of God

Now he closes with a benediction that reassures us of the Father's power and ability to make these things a reality in our lives.

v. 20 – the one who is able...

v. 21 – the one to whom belongs all glory...

He is able to do far more than we can even imagine asking for. There is no limit to the spiritual treasures available from His storehouse, if we only come and pray and surrender ourselves to Him.