

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

### THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW AND MAKE IT KNOWN!

Read Ephesians 3:10-19

#### **Introduction**

Last week, we learnt about the mystery, is that secret, hidden purpose of salvation through Christ. This was not so fully and clearly shown in the ages before Christ, as unto the prophets and apostles of the New Testament. This was the great truth made known to Apostle Paul, that God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ. An effectual working of Divine power attends the gifts of Divine grace. As God appointed Paul to the office, so he qualified him for it.

Paul also spoke of the unsearchable riches found in Christ. Paul tried to figure out the greatness of God's grace and started tracking it out as one might track out the shore of a lake. He soon discovered that it wasn't a lake at all, but an ocean, an immeasurable sea. God's riches are unsearchable; we will never know them completely.

#### **The Church Is to Make It Known**

*"...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." (vv10-13)*

God is a being of infinite wisdom and glory, and He wants His creatures to know His great and manifold wisdom. One purpose in His great plan of the ages is to reveal this wisdom. Understanding the character of God, we can say that this is not for a selfish or self-glorifying motive, in the way we think of the proud man showing his brains and accomplishments to everyone. God does this for the glory of His creatures because the glory of the creature is directly connected to the glory of the Creator. This wisdom is manifold. The word "manifold" (properly, many-coloured, or wrought in many details) is used here (and nowhere else) for the wisdom of God, as "fulfilling itself in many ways" (the "sundry times and divers' manners" of Hebrews 1:1). It is manifested, therefore, in the infinite variety both of the teaching and the life of the Church—manifold, yet one, as embodying but one life, the life of Jesus Christ.

What is this manifold wisdom? What does this wisdom contain?

#### **God, the Church, and the Angels**

Paul passes on to consider the manifestation of God in Christ as brought home not only to the race of man but to the angels— "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places"—who are described (1 Peter 1:12) as "desiring to look into" the consummation of the gospel mystery. In the same sense the Apostles, in their ministration of the gospel, are said to be a spectacle to angels and to men (1 Corinthians 4:9); and in a magnificent passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 12:22), Christians are encouraged in their warfare by knowing it to go on before "the city of the living God" and "an innumerable company of angels." The angels are, therefore, represented to us as not only ministering in the Church of Christ, but learning from its existence and fortunes to know more and more of the wisdom of God.

This means that angelic beings are interested and instructed by the lives of Christians. This is why the conduct of the church is so important: because angelic beings are looking on, and God's intent is to teach them through us. Peter refers to this as stated earlier:

*“They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.” (1 Peter 1:12 NLT)*

What are angels learning from us and the gospel? What wisdom is revealed in us and the gospel that intrigues the angels of God?

### **The Eternal Purpose**

The mystery reveals and furthers God’s eternal purpose in Jesus, previously described in Ephesians 1:10 – that in the fullness of the times, God will gather together (essentially, to sum up or resolve) all things in Jesus. The mystery of the unified body of Christ is according to that purpose. It is a preview of what Jesus will ultimately do in the fulfillment of summing up all things in Himself.

### **Approaching God through Faith**

The fact of this unity is shown by the truth that we (Jew and Gentile collectively) have the identical boldness, access, and confidence before God – because it has nothing to do with national or ethnic identity, only with faith in Him (Jesus). The word for boldness has the idea of “freedom of speech.” We have the freedom to express ourselves before God, without fear or shame. The Greek word ‘parresia’ translated by ‘boldness’ means really ‘free speech’ – that is, the speaking of all. It is the blessed privilege of prayer.

### **Revelation in the midst of Tribulation**

Though under arrest for the sake of the gospel, Paul asked his readers to not lose heart. Paul didn’t want them to be discouraged for his sake, because Paul was still being used in the service of God’s eternal plan.

Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians from prison, and it is useful to remember why Paul was in prison. He lived his whole life with the passion to bring salvation to his own people, the Jews (Romans 9:1-3). On a strategic visit to Jerusalem, he had the opportunity to preach to a vast crowd on or near the temple mount (Acts 21:39-22:22), but the opportunity ended in disaster because the Jewish crowd could not stand the idea of the good news of the Messiah being extended to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22). The ensuing riot put Paul in a legal dilemma, from which he used his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar. Now Paul was imprisoned in Rome, waiting for his trial before Caesar – and there because he knew God wanted Gentiles to share in the good news of the Messiah, and he wasn’t afraid to preach that truth.

### **Paul's Prayer for the Church**

*“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, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (vv14-19)*

Sometimes our prayers to God are so mundane. Bless mom and Aunt Emma. Help me with my health. Bless our pastor. Amen. But prayer can be so much richer when we include our imagination that visualizes what we're praying. Let's learn how to pray from Paul's wonderful prayer in this Ephesians 3:14-19. Before we delve into the details of Paul’s prayer, it may help to see the bare bones of Paul's prayer.

## **Outline of the Prayer**

The prayer seems to ask God for these outcomes:

1. For inner strengthening by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16)
  - **that is**, Christ dwells in your hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17a)
  - **that is**, you have been rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17b)

so that

2. You might comprehend fully the extent of God's mind-blowing love

and that

3. You might be filled with the fullness of God.

### **Introduction to the details of Paul's prayer.**

The basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose. This means he confidently prayed according to God's will. We can't pray effectively if we do not have insight into God's purpose and will.

Do you know God's purpose and will? Do you pray accordingly?

### **Kneeling to Pray**

Paul prayed in the posture of bowing his knees. This position of utmost humility was in contrast to the more normal posture of prayer in that culture, to pray standing with hands raised up. The humility came when he considered God's great eternal plan, his place in that plan, and how God's work is unstoppable even when Paul was imprisoned.

Solomon prayed on his knees (1 Kings 8:54). Ezra prayed on his knees (Ezra 9:5). The Psalmist called us to kneel (Psalm 95:6). Daniel prayed on his knees (Daniel 6:10). People came to Jesus' kneeling (Matthew 17:14, Matthew 20:20, and Mark 1:40). Stephen prayed on his knees (Acts 7:60). Peter prayed on his knees (Acts 9:40). Paul prayed on his knees (Acts 20:36), and other early Christians prayed on their knees (Acts 21:5). Most importantly, Jesus prayed on His knees (Luke 22:41).

Do we only have to pray on our knees?

The Bible has enough prayer not on the knees to show us that it isn't required, but it also has enough prayer on the knees to show us that it is good.

### **Direction of Prayer**

Paul directed his prayer to the Father. In the Bible, prayer is usually directed to the Father, through the Son, by the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit.

WE CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE REVELATION OF PAUL'S PRAYER NEXT WEEK

