

The Book of Ephesians – Part Five

Sunday June 14th, 2009

Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Read by Ralph Alley

1). This week will be picking up in Chapter 3 of the Book of Ephesians—

Ephesians 3:14-21

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. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- Here at the conclusion of Ephesians Chapter 3 we see Paul bowing his knees 'to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'....
 - Firstly, in complete submission to the will of God with respect to His plans and purposes for the 7th Day. This would include God's appointment of Paul as an Apostle, who was sent with the 'good news' concerning the 7th Day to the Gentiles.
 - And secondly, Paul is bowing his knees in prayer for the church of Ephesus, especially those who would be 'faithful in Christ Jesus'.
- This is the second prayer that we find in the opening chapters of Ephesians (the first prayer comes at the conclusion of Chapter 1) and both of these prayers need to be seen against the content of that which has preceded them. So let's briefly review what we've read so far in this epistle to the Church at Ephesus.
- The first Chapter of the Book draws attention to the plans and purposes of God, dealing with the overall scope of God's purpose as it relates to the coming 7th Day in respect of His Son, rulership over the earth and an inheritance to be gained –

Ephesians 1:7-11

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- And the prayer that concludes this Chapter has as its focus a continuing and ever increasing revelation of what God has set in place for the 7th Day, with a view to the absolute certainty

of the fulfillment of His purpose, which of course will produce faithful obedience in those who are the recipients of the revelation –

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- This prayer has to do with the saints being guided into all truth, that they may clearly see all that the scriptures contain; which, in essence, is that the Christ had to suffer and then enter into His glory.
- Following on from this, the second Chapter again focuses on the plans and purposes of God, only this time with a more individual emphasis, showing what God has done for us personally –

Ephesians 2:11-13

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- And then the third Chapter continues with the same focus, giving detail of Paul's appointment as an Apostle to the Gentiles and an explanation with regards to the 'mystery' that was committed to him –

Ephesians 3:1-6

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles--2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the

Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel...

- And so in the light of the personal, individual content of Chapters 2 and 3, Paul then prays concerning a work of the Spirit within us individually with regards to our individual race of faith.
- Paul's overwhelming concern is that those in Ephesus should be found faithful in the midst of the 'savage wolves' who would come in 'not sparing the flock', in the midst of those from amongst themselves who would rise up 'speaking perverse things'; in the midst of the onslaught of the world, the flesh and the Devil.
- And we would realize that this is not just Paul's concern for those in Ephesus, but also God's concern for us all within the Church, and I would dare say especially those in the Laodicean state of Christendom at the end of this dispensation.
- Paul's request to God is that those who would be 'faithful in Christ Jesus' would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, for it is the 'inner man' (the man of the Spirit) who must be strengthened so that the old man will not gain the preeminence in our lives. Paul outlines the conflict between these two in his letter to the Church in Rome –

Romans 7:21-24

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

- This strength in the inner man, according to our scripture, will come through a mighty, wonderful work through God's Spirit.
- However, this mighty wonderful work of the Spirit is in no way a 'Charismatic' experience. But rather, as we see from comparing scripture with scripture, it has to do with renewal and transformation.

2Corinthians 4:16

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

AND-

Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...

- We see here in Colossians that the 'new man', the 'inner man,' is renewed in knowledge – in 'epignosis,' the meat and strong meat of the word, those things surrounding the coming glory of Christ.
- This would be the same thought found later in Ephesians –

Ephesians 5:18

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit...**

- It is through our proper engagement with the word of God and keeping ever before us the focus of the 7th Day that we will have renewal and strength in our inner man. Our inner man is a spiritual man and can only be nourished through the Spirit via the word – the ‘epignosis’ word.
- This is the process of transformation that we know as the ‘metamorphosis’, that we’ve studied about in Romans –
Romans 12:2
And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- And we see this transformation mentioned in Ephesians this way as well –
Ephesians 4:23
...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind...
- We can see that it is only by aligning our mind, *our thinking*, with that which God has planned for us in the future that we can escape the snares and pitfalls of this world. In fact, it is only by doing this that we can patiently endure the pain and the uncertainty of our present circumstances. This tension between the uncertain present and the absolutely certain future is shown to us in 2 Corinthians-
2Corinthians 4:17
For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and age lasting weight of glory,
- And as we have seen, Paul prays that God would grant this strengthening of the inner man through the Spirit... and we can’t miss the inference here *that God may not grant it.*
- God’s *not* granting it would need to be seen after the same fashion as that which we find in the Book of Hebrews—
Hebrews 6:1-6
1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.....3 And this we will do if God permits.4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.
- Paul’s prayer then continues by referencing the very greatest strength our inner man can possess – love – (as we read from our beginning Scriptures today)
Ephesians 3:17-19
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

- In another passage we read this –
 Colossians 2:6-7
 6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.
- We see that we are rooted in Christ, and being rooted in love and rooted in Christ would obviously be one and the same thing as ‘God is love’. So the prayer is that we would be able to comprehend ‘what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ’.
- This “love of Christ” is a love that we see detailed in Chapter 5 of Ephesians –
 Ephesians 5:25-27
 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
- Christ’s love is **sacrificial**, with a view to the fulfillment of God’s purpose for the 7th Day. Christ’s love for us is expressed in His absolute obedience to His Father’s will **because of the 7th Day**.
- Not only do we need to understand what it means that ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,’ but this same sacrificial love, expressed through our obedience to the commands of Christ, must of necessity be our practice. And such practice is so far removed from our soulical self that it can only come about through the strengthening of our inner man through the Spirit’s work of renewal –
 Philippians 2:5-8
 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
- We are clearly looking at things concerning dying to the flesh and walking according to the Spirit.

2). And so, as Paul’s prayer for us to be filled with all the fullness of God comes to a close, we have reached a point of transition within the Book of Ephesians.

- We have seen God’s focus on the 7th Day and Paul’s prayer with respect to our mature understanding of it.
- We have seen the enormity of what God has done for us individually and Paul’s prayer with respect to the work of the Spirit within us that we shouldn’t lose God’s purpose for us.

- So then what follows, beginning with Chapter 4, now moves away from what we might call 'doctrine,' to the way we are to live in response to the doctrine we receive – that which we might call 'practical application'.
- And we should note the importance of the inextricable link between these two – neither should be sacrificed at the expense of the other.

3). Let's pick up in the beginning of Chapter 4 –

[Ephesians 4:1-5](#)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 ¶ with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- Having focused on the 'big picture,' so to speak, and having focused on the individual.... we now move to issues of *relationship*. From the vertical (us and God) to the horizontal (us and each other). This is in no way surprising –

[1John 3:14](#)

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

- Our love for God and our faithful obedience to the commands of Christ do not exist in a vacuum. They are right here in this room in the way we relate to one another. They are in our homes and in our places of work...and in the quietness of our mind when no one else is around. It is in the small things, outside of the context of the corporate gathering, that our faithful obedience is demonstrated. It is easy for us to lie to one another here and create the semblance of spirituality, but it is behind closed doors that the true level of our spiritual maturity emerges. Let's be encouraged though because of the small things –

[Luke 19:17](#)

"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

4). Ephesians Chapter 4 begins with an admonishment to walk worthy of our calling – so let's be clear as to what our calling is.

- There is a great deal of confusion concerning the word 'calling', created of course by the hands of men, with the word 'calling' used to describe our function within the body which would be attended by a supernatural voice from heaven giving us our job description.
- Scripturally, that is not it. And even right here within the context of these first five verses of Chapter 4, our calling is clear – 'you were called in one hope of your calling'.

- So to what does our ‘hope’ refer? *The appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom with attendant positions as joint heirs with Him.* In other words –

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers [companions] of the heavenly calling...

- Ours is a heavenly calling, a calling to the heavenly realm of the Kingdom, a calling to rule with Christ from the heavenly realm over the earth.
- We have been called out of the world with a view to being *called out of the called* at the Judgment Seat. In this we all have exactly the same calling.
- And the realization of our calling is based on our faithful obedience in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.
- Let’s not be in any doubt about our calling – and because it is a high calling, connected with ‘so great a salvation’ we need to walk worthy of it, to conduct our lives in this present time in such a way as to be deserving of a position with Christ in that coming day.

5). And practically, what this looks like is given by Paul in what we just read –

Ephesians 4:2

...with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...

- Lowliness = Greek – ‘tapeinophrosune’ = from a compound of 5011 and the base of 5424; humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty:--humbleness of mind, humility (of mind, loneliness (of mind).
 - We can see this word used in the following verse—

Philippians 2:3

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
- And the word ‘gentleness’ from our Ephesians verse is the Greek word ‘praotes,’ from 4235; gentleness, by implication, humility:--meekness.
 - We can see this word in the following verse—

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.
- And the word ‘longsuffering’ is the Greek word ‘makrothumia’ = from the same as 3116; forbearance or fortitude: longsuffering, patience.
 - Seen in the following verse—

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;
- What we see here can be summed up for us in a passage from 1 Peter-

1Peter 5:6

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...

- The lowliness, gentleness and longsuffering that we are to walk in now are things that we choose to do for ourselves. We can note in our 1 Peter scripture that it says, 'humble yourselves' – this then is something that we choose to do *now* with a view to God exalting us *in due time*.
- And we do this 'under the mighty hand of God.' In other words, in faithful obedience to the word, in response to God, through Paul, beseeching us to walk worthy of our calling.
- And again of course, our lowliness, gentleness and longsuffering are relational – the final phrase of verse 2 drawing attention to this – 'bearing with one another in love'.
 - Bearing = Greek – 'anechomai' = middle voice from 303 and 2192; to hold oneself up against, i.e. (figuratively) put up with:--bear with, endure, forbear, suffer.
 - See in the following verse –
1Peter 4:8
And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."
- This is the love of 1 Corinthians 13, and it is not that love ignores or condones sin, but rather the love we have for each other will **not** cause us to look on the sin of another with judgment, *but with* compassion and mercy and forgiveness.
- Verse 3 then adds, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"
- The word 'endeavoring' is the Greek word 'spoudazo' = from 4710; to use speed, i.e. to make effort, be prompt or earnest:--do (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavour, labour, study.
- We must be quick to be diligent to hold fast the unity, the oneness, of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- There must be unity between us, but this unity is of the Spirit, and we all have the same Spirit to guide us into all truth. There is not a different truth for different people. We all need to walk in the Spirit, and this is the same for each of us –
John 6:63
"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."
- There is no place in the Church for divisions and factions. We are all headed in the same direction with the same end goal in view, and we need each other to be able to get there. Because of this, if we hurt each other we are hurting ourselves. No one on this journey gets left behind because they can't keep up. We don't shoot the wounded so they won't slow us down...**helping each other, healing each other, bearing each other's burdens is the journey.**

6). The next 3 verses in Ephesians Chapter 4 draw attention to the very reasons why we are to be in unity—

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- Christ' body is one body made up of all born again believers – the faithful and the unfaithful. There is not a different body for Baptists and a different body for Pentecostals and a different body for us. We shall all stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account. And in that Day it will not be the name over the door of the building that matters, but our faithfulness to our calling.
- There is only one Spirit--the Holy Spirit who has been sent to search out a Bride for God's Son, and He will only act within the boundaries that have been set. There are of course many deceiving spirits, which is why we need to know what the Holy Spirit is doing and will do, according to the scriptures.
- There is, as we saw earlier, one hope of our calling – it is the same calling for us all and the same hope for us all. It's not 'going to heaven', but being a joint heir with Christ, receiving our inheritance and the salvation of our soul. This is the direction to which all of scripture moves – there is not an alternative ending.
- There is only one Lord – the Lord Jesus Christ –
[John 14:6](#)
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- All things have been made by Him and all things have been made for Him – there is no other.
- There is one faith, **the faith**. "The faith" is the faith which leads to the saving of the soul – the faith that will be accounted as righteousness. Faith is not a nebulous concept; it is very specific. That's why it is shown to be singular – one faith.
- There is only one baptism in relation to our positioning in the Kingdom
[Romans 6:4](#)
Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

And-

[Colossians 3:3-5](#)

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 ¶ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:

- It is the baptism of dying to the flesh – keeping our old man in the place of death. This is the only baptism that will result in Kingdom life.
- There is One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all, and there is really nothing that can be said about that, for the preeminence of God in and over all is without question –

Psalms 14:1

A Psalm of David. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

7). And so in these first 6 verses of Chapter 4, the Holy Spirit, through the pen of Paul, has focused on the unity of our walk in worthiness to our calling.

- What follows does not contradict the unity and the oneness, but rather demonstrates the diversity and interdependence of each part of the body forming a whole.
- But this will have to wait for next time.

Let's Pray.