

EPHESIANS 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ephesians chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that in the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul gave us doctrine or the truths of God!

Paul did not water things down but just spoke forth these things so that they may grow in the faith.

Let me share a few Scriptures with you to show you what I mean.

We are told in Titus 2:1, **“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.”**

Paul tells Titus to speak forth healthy doctrine. Don't water it down, don't put your spin on it, give them the medicine that they need to stay healthy, give them the diet they need to grow strong, give them the Word of God!

And listen to what Paul says to Timothy, another young pastor in II Timothy 4:2-5, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

I believe we are living in this time when people don't want sound doctrine, they don't want healthy doctrine, they just want to be told that they are okay, and God loves them, they want their ears tickled and they are getting it as they find teachers that tell them what they want to hear! The problem with that is simple.

There is much more to it than just that. And the reality is, we are not okay, God is working in us so He can work through us for His glory!

And thus, they have moved away from the truths of God found in the Word of God, sound doctrine and are taking into their lives a candy coated message which many times is dangerous and in the end, the church that does that will look like the church of Laodicea or the lukewarm church where Jesus is outside knocking to get in!

Let me share this with you because it does show how far away from healthy doctrine we are. We are told,

I have been involved in leading churches for four decades, with an emphasis on church planting in the last few years. I've also visited and addressed hundreds of churches around the world and have had the privilege of meeting thousands of Christian leaders.

Through this time I've watched an unintentional doctrinal imprecision on the part of many pastors become intentional. In other words, I have witnessed a new "conventional wisdom" emerge.

Simply stated it is the "wisdom" of attempting to circle in more people for our churches by unashamedly minimizing, or perhaps nearly eradicating, the restricting influences of doctrine. What pastors used to do (because of being poorly taught perhaps), they now do by intent, all for church growth.

The problem is, it works.

For instance, I just visited with one friend concerning a large church in our area that has grown exceptionally well. The directional pastor of this church is a smart man who has some distinct beliefs he holds personally. I can talk with him about doctrine when alone. He reads and knows the Bible.

But in his leadership and preaching he fully intends not to go beyond the most elementary issues, and appears (appearances are about all we can go on) not to be that concerned that his people differ on major doctrines, some of which are most significant. Outside of an expression of the gospel and some “how to’s,” there isn’t much to get your teeth into in his preaching. He has created a birthing station but not much else.

Doctrine does narrow things. And we don’t like that word, “narrow.” Where you will find one person who is attracted to sound doctrine, you will find a hundred who want to allow all sorts of beliefs to be tolerated. I have been in such churches where great heresies were listened to as if it were perfectly permissible to hold such views as “your opinion.” And I’m not talking about the guest’s view, but the member’s view. . . .

In all of this acceptance of doctrinal sloppiness and miasma [fog] of beliefs, I find that many have totally disregarded a tenet that should be obvious to any Bible reader. I mean this: *The apostles began churches with the intent to grow them as solidly as possible by means of a steady and meticulous interest in doctrine.* The biblical data is overwhelmingly in line with this conclusion.

The apostles saw the church as “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim.3:15). And so, giving attention to doctrine was paramount to them.

I am sure that the entire future of the work was in mind as Paul and the other apostles emphasized a wide assortment of critical doctrines.

Whereas we would say, “At least we have a witness in the city of some sort, preaching Christ,” the apostles would say, “Because this church is a witness in the city, and other churches will come from this one or emulate their beliefs and practices, we must be all the more precise.”

There is a world of difference between the two schools of thought.

And these doctrines were to be “taught” and “preached.”

In other words, it was not the prerogative of those elders that were appointed by the apostles to minimize the importance of doctrinal precision.

Similarly, I don’t think we can be like Jesus or like the apostles in our leadership without emphasizing what they emphasized.

It is, in fact, ludicrous to think otherwise. I don’t think Paul would listen very sympathetically to our explanation of why we have minimized doctrine for the sake of church growth. . . .

What I am saying is that we do not have the luxury of avoiding these things because we want to grow a larger church. . . .

Paul makes my premise lucid when he says that we must “strive together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

He trains leaders with the words, “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), and “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

He worries, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3).

Jude showed us doctrine's import when he said that we must "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3).

Peter thought it necessary to stir us up "by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:1-2).

He warns us to "be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men . . . but grow in grace and knowledge . . ." (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

John rejoices to find "some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father," but warns, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God . . . If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him . . . for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (2 Jn. 4:9-11).

For us to even attempt to build churches by minimizing doctrine is a philosophy so far removed from the original purpose of Christ and His apostles that one would wonder if we were in the same movement.

How close is this to the prediction of Paul when he said that "they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It is too close for me.

Therefore I urge you to reconsider how you use your leadership. There is much to do. We must be loving and comforting, praying and available, transparent and visionary, but as leaders we cannot dismiss what God insists on.

If it were not so unambiguous, we might have room to debate the wisdom of this. Since this truth is repeated *ad infinitum* in the Word, what can anyone say against it?

Therefore, give yourself to sound doctrine and make much of it from now on. If you cannot do this, resign.

And if you are not a pastor, but a listener, go to those responsible for dispensing the truth with a sincere appeal for them to teach you doctrine without compromise. Tell them you cannot grow without it.

- <http://bit.ly/2Zb2rHB>

Right on. If you are not teaching from the Bible, if you are not teaching healthy doctrine, if you are diminishing the Scriptures, if you are negating what God's Word has to say, if you only teach verses that you want to teach, ***GET OUT OF THE MINISTRY – DON'T TEACH ANYONE!***

So doctrine is important.

And, interestingly enough, as Paul finishes up on doctrine or healthy teaching, he then wants us to apply these things to our lives or to have a walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called.

You see, you can't walk correctly if you don't have the right doctrine and we see so much of this today, people staggering to and fro because they don't know what they believe!

I bet you thought we would never get to our study this evening, but we will, and we are going to right now. But this is important for us to understand.

With that said, let's begin reading in Ephesians chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

EPHESIANS 3**VERSES 1-5**

Keep in mind that during Paul's Roman imprisonment Paul was under house arrest.

Yes, during the daytime he was free to move around the house with the supervision of soldiers, but every night he was chained to a soldier to make sure he did not escape before his trial before Caesar. And there were always soldiers guarding him, his freedom was limited!

What I want you to see here is that that Paul is not a prisoner of Rome, nor of Nero, nor of the Jews but of Christ.

Remember that Paul spent two years in prison in Caesarea before being sent to Rome as he appealed to Caesar to hear his case.

At this point Paul could have been in prison for some 5 years now, including his time in Caesarea.

And yet Paul was not bitter, he was not angry, he realized that God was in control and thus, as he said in Philippians 4:11-13, "**Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

This is so important for us to understand. You see we need to have the correct perspective in regard to the situations we find ourselves. It is vital.

Why is it so important? Because it will determine how we respond to those situations.

If we truly believe that God is in control, then no matter what may come our way, no matter how unfair or unjust the situation may seem, we will respond with a positive outlook, with joy in our hearts.

James put it this way as he tells us in James 1:2-4, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.”**

You see, these trials are working in us to produce faith, which produces endurance that leads to perfection or completion of our godly life, and it is a life-long process, but God is working in us!

A great example of this is seen when Paul and Silas were thrown into the Philippian jail for freeing a girl who was demon possessed.

And in Acts 16:25-34 we are told, **“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and**

your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”

Now think about that. If Paul and Silas were angry, bitter, complaining on how unfair this was, do you think the jailer and his household would have been saved?

Maybe, but not through Paul and Silas.

You see, if you don’t have the perspective that God is in control, then your actions will reflect that.

May we learn that lesson, God is for us and He is in control, He never sleeps nor slumbers!

And notice how Paul opens up this section. He does so by saying, **“For this reason . . .”**

What is Paul speaking of here?

The truths that Paul just spoke of in chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians. He is speaking of all those blessings that God has given to us and Paul was willing to suffer so that others could hear and partake of those blessings.

Paul is beginning a prayer for the Ephesians but before he gets into that prayer, he gets distracted and takes a side road before returning to the prayer in verse 14 and that prayer will continue on through verse 21, the end of the chapter.

Now, this word **“dispensation”** or **“stewardship”** in verse 2 is OIKONOMIA, (oy-kon-om-ee’-ah) in the Greek and it speaks of a slave who is responsible for taking care of that which belonged to someone else.

Kind of like Joseph overseeing the household of Potiphar even though he was Potiphar's slave.

But what was Paul overseeing or dispensing to the Gentiles?

Paul was dispensing a mystery that was revealed to him by God.

Paul uses the Greek word MUSTERION, (moss-tay'-ree'on) for "**mystery**" and it is different from our English word, which speaks of something that is secret, or puzzling, or dark, something that we can't know.

The word that Paul uses speaks of something that has been hidden from human knowledge but now has been disclosed by the direct revelation of God and here, to Paul.

What is that mystery?

Let's read on and see!

VERSE 6-7

First of all, let me say this. The idea that God would save gentiles is not a mystery because it was clearly spoken of in the Old Testament. Let me show you what I mean.

In Isaiah 11:10 we are told, "**And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.**"

Also, in Isaiah 42:6-7 we are told, "**I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.**"

And lastly, and there are many more, in Isaiah 60:3 we are told, **“The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.”**

So this was not a mystery to them. What was this mystery that Paul is talking about?

That mystery that Paul is talking about is that Jews and Gentiles would be united together into one body in Christ.

This idea of Gentiles being one with a Jew must have blown their minds, even though the Old Testament teaches us this truth, it was hidden until Paul revealed it to them.

Again, just a few verses to show you this.

In Genesis 12:3 we are told, **“I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

Genesis 22:18 tells us, **“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”**

Genesis 26:4, **“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”**

Genesis 28:14, **“Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

And in Amos 9:11-12, **“On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ Says the LORD who does this thing.”**

For the Jew, this was outrageous. It would be like saying a leper was no longer to be isolated but could mingle and associate with anyone and everyone.

And for the Gentile, they did not love the Jew either.

There was truly a separation between Jew and Gentile but now God has revealed this truth to Paul, and also to Peter, (Acts 11:1-18), a truth that once was hidden and now has been revealed even though the Old Testament Scriptures clearly teach of salvation coming to the Gentiles.

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 2:14-18, **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”**

The walls are down now, for in Christ we are one!

Paul’s ministry was primarily to the Gentiles, bringing to them the grace of God found in Jesus Christ. But Paul also had a heart for his people, the Jews.

He wanted to see them saved so badly that he tells us in Romans 9:1-5, **“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”**

Why did Paul have such a passion to see his people saved?

Because he knew their outcome in the Lake of Fire if they rejected the Lord and the love of Christ constrained Paul to go forward with the Gospel message, the Good News of Jesus Christ! May we have that same kind of passion!

VERSES 8-9

Have you ever sat in amazement just thinking of all that God has entrusted to you?

I have and Paul felt no different. Paul saw himself as **“the least of all the saints.”**

In I Timothy 1:15 he said, **“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”**

Paul knew that it was by the grace of God that he was in this ministry and not because he was so special or worthy.

I have said this before, but I think it bears repeating. You can never be too small for God to use you, but you can be too big!

May we learn by Paul’s example to live humble lives and let God exalt us, lift us up higher than we can ever lift ourselves, to heaven ultimately!

And, as we can see, Paul's ministry was to "**preach**" or EUAGGELIZO, (yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo) in the Geek, and it is a word that means, "to announce good news ('evangelize'), especially the Gospel."

Again, that was Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, to bring to them "**the unsearchable riches of Christ.**" The word "**unsearchable**" is the Greek word ANEXICHNIASTOS, (an-ex-ikh-nee'-as-tos) and it speaks of something that cannot be traced out or tracked down by human searching. It is past finding out by human wisdom or understanding.

Thus, it can only be taught and understood through the Holy Spirit speaking to us as Paul said in I Corinthians 2:14, "**But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**"

God's riches for our lives are far beyond anything we can imagine. But it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us as we read and dissect the Word of God. He opens these things to our hearts and lives. It is then we can learn of the blessings He has for our lives.

And I am not talking about physical blessings even though many times God does bless us in that way. I am talking about spiritual blessings; salvation, joy, peace, love, fellowship and-so-on. God is so good to us if we would only understand all that He has for us and apply those things to our lives!

Now the word "**fellowship**" in verse 9 is the same Greek word we read in verse 2 meaning "**dispensation**" or "**stewardship.**"

In other words, we are to live what we believe, we are the stewards of the mysteries of God and we are to make them available to those that don't see, have not received them into their lives, not just by what we say, but how we live, showing our faith to be real!

Jews and Gentiles brought together by Christ! Wow! We don't see this as a big thing, but it was huge. And to sum this all up, we are told, "This statement settles the question once for all concerning the existence of the church, the body of Christ, in and during the Old Testament dispensations. Yet it is one of the most widespread views that the church existed from the beginning of creation and the words of promise contained in the Old Testament prophetic Word are the promises of the church, and its glorious future on the earth, in reigning over the nations." (Gaebelein)

VERSES 10-12

Here Paul gives to us a very broad picture of our calling reaching far beyond our salvation and sanctification.

Paul tells us that God is using us as a lesson for the universe, for the angelic hosts to learn from, that the grace of God has united Jews and Gentiles together and will one day restore this world back to the way it was when God had created it, bringing glory to God by showing His multifaceted wisdom not only to men but to the angles also.

Of this Stott tells us, "It is as if a great drama is being enacted. History is the theater, the world is the stage, and the church members in every land are the actors. God himself has written the play, and he directs and produces it. Act by act, scene by scene, the story continues to unfold. But who are the audience? They are the cosmic *intelligences*, the *principalities* and powers in the heavenly places."

And Bruce tells us, "The church thus appears to be God's pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, they mystery of God's will to be administered in the fullness of the times when the things in heaven and the things on earth are brought together in Christ."

What are the angelic hosts seeing about God as they look at our lives?

VERSE 13

Isn't it east to get discouraged? You bet it is. And as Paul closes these verses out, he goes back to the idea of being a prisoner for Christ. His concern was for those who would lose heart by seeing this great Apostle locked up in prison.

Paul did not want them to become discouraged but to be encouraged.

As we go through life it is easy to become discouraged, but the Lord wants us to be encouraged. He is still on the throne; He is still in control no matter what comes our way.

Think of a weightlifter, before he puts on the muscle and strengthens his physical body, he must endure pain.

The same is true for our spiritual bodies, so don't be discouraged, as Paul admonishes us in I Corinthians 15:58, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**"

We don't always see the results of our labor for the Lord, and thus, we can get discouraged.

But Paul is saying that just because you don't see it now, it doesn't mean there won't be fruit from your labor because our labor in the Lord is not in vain, it is not empty, it is not for nothing. How encouraging that is for us!

And Paul uses his life as an example.

What do I mean by that?

Simply, just because Paul was in prison it didn't mean his service for the Lord ended.

In prison he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon! They played and are playing an important role in God's eternal plan!

In Philippians 1:12-14 Paul tells us, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

The Gospel still went out, the palace guards were getting saved, and the believers were encouraged while Paul was in chains in prison.

Our Bible studies go out to men who are in prison and I pray that this would encourage them, that God's Word is never chained, and you can be a witness of the Grace of God to those around you!

And in the end, the reality for all of us is what Paul said in Romans 8:18, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”** Amen to that!

Ray Stedman puts this in perspective for us as he wrote,

Composer George Fredric Handel was at the lowest point in his life. He was sick and so destitute he could not afford a doctor.

His creditors hounded him daily, threatening to send him to debtor's prison. Yet he believed in the music he was writing, so every morning he dragged himself out of his sickbed, ignored the threats of the bill collectors, and persevered, laboring over his musical score long into the night. Finally, the musical piece was finished. It was performed before a royal audience in London.

The music was so moving and majestic that the King of England rose to his feet in honor of the resounding chorus.

And ever since that first performance, audiences have stood for the singing of “The Hallelujah Chorus.” The musical masterpiece which contains that chorus – Handel’s famous oratorio The Messiah - not only enabled Handel to finally pay his bills, but it gave us one of the grandest, most inspiring works of music the world has ever known.

Handel didn’t lose heart in the midst of his adversity, and neither should we. God is creating a masterpiece of praise in our lives.

If we persevere to the end, the angels themselves shall rise to their feet in praise of the moving, majestic tribute to God that He is building out of our lives.

We are His handiwork, His masterpiece, and our lives will bring Him praise and honor if we do not lose heart.

- Ray Stedman

Now we come back to Paul’s prayer that he was going to start back in verse 1.

VERSES 14-15

Paul’s prayer was according to God’s will and folks, we can’t pray effectively if we don’t know God’s will, His purpose. Paul knew and thus, he prayed!

Yes, there are times we don’t know God’s will in a given situation and we pray, **“Lord, your will be done!”** There is nothing wrong with that, but also, the Scriptures show us God’s will in many situations, and we need to pray accordingly.

Now, in verse 15 Paul speaks of the “**family,**” PATRIA, (pat-ree-ah’) in the Greek and there are three possibilities on what Paul is saying here.

First of all, Paul can be speaking of *every family*. And the idea here is all created beings can call Him Father because He has created all things. Every living creature owes their existence to Him. I don’t think that is what Paul is speaking of even though John Kerry feels this way.

Also, he can be speaking of *fatherhood* or he is speaking of a pattern for all fathers. A sort of prototype for all fathers to look at and learn from. Again, we do look to God to pattern our lives after, but I don’t think that is what Paul is speaking of here.

And then there is the idea that Paul is speaking of the *redeemed family* or believers. In other words, all the redeemed from Heaven and Earth. Those alive here on earth and those already with the Lord make up one family. This idea continues to flow from the previous verses where Paul is saying that we as believers are united into one body in Christ. I feel this is what Paul is speaking of in this verse as his ideas are flowing from verses 2-13 of this chapter.

We have been adopted into the family of God through Jesus and our family is huge, all believers will gather before the marriage supper of the Lamb one day and what an occasion that will be!

VERSES 16-19

Notice what Paul is not praying for here.

He is not praying for health, for wealth, or for prosperity.

Now there is nothing wrong with praying for your health or someone else’s health, but some become obsessed with it.

Others, when they are not healed, some say it is because they lack the faith or have some sin in their life.

No, not all are healed physically but all who come to Jesus and ask Him into their lives will be healed spiritually.

You see, that is the bigger issue for one day we will all die unless the Rapture comes first.

Wealth and prosperity are not evil, you can use it to bring glory to God, to build up the kingdom of God, you can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead depending how you use it.

But Paul's prayer is for the inner man, that the spirit would grow and that is where strength comes from, our dependence upon God.

How is this seen in our lives?

By the decreasing frequency of sin in our lives.

Think of it like this, the more you exercise your spiritual muscles, yielding to the Spirit's control in your life, the less sin is present. I am not saying that we won't sin, but the frequency should decrease the more we are walking with the Lord!

Paul said in Galatians 5:16, "**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**" If you are walking with God, you are walking away from sin!

Paul also speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts; it is the Greek word KATOIKEO, (kat-oy-keh'-o) and it speaks of a permanent residence – Jesus doesn't want to be a stranger; He wants to be at home in you.

It is as Jesus said in John 14:23, "**Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'**"

Several years ago Robert Munger had a little booklet called, *My Heart Christ's Home*. And in this booklet, he pictured the Christian life as a house and Jesus would go through each room of that house.

For instance, the library was a picture of the mind and in there Jesus finds all kinds of trash, just worthless things and He removes them and replaces them with His Word!

The dining room was the appetite, and once again Jesus finds many sinful desires on this worldly menu that He wants to remove! Like materialism, lust and He replaces these things with humility, meekness, love and so on.

William MacDonald summed it up like this, “[Jesus Christ will never feel at home in our hearts until He has] full access to every room and closet; that He might not be grieved by sinful words, thoughts, motives, and deeds; that He might enjoy unbroken fellowship with the believer. . . . In effect, the apostle prays that the lordship of Christ might extend to the books we read, the work we do, the food we eat, the money we spend, the words we speak - in short, the minutest details of our lives.”

The problem with all too many Christians, when they invite Jesus into their hearts, is that they lock Him in a “back bedroom” somewhere and only bring Him out when they need His help.

They make most of their lives “off limits” to Him because they really don't want Him intruding into areas of their thought lives, their associations, how they spend their time and money etc.

Another problem with a lot of Christians is they have neglected their hearts so much and allowed them to grow so cold that Jesus feels unwelcome, unwanted and abandoned.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this, “In the first two churches I pastored, we were privileged to construct new buildings, and in both projects it seemed we would never get out of the ground. In my second building program, we had to spend several thousand dollars taking soil tests because we were building over an old lakebed. For weeks, the men were laying out and pouring the footings. One day I complained to the architect, and he replied, “Pastor, the most important part of this building is the foundation. If you don’t go deep, you can’t go high.” That sentence has been a sermon to me ever since.”

How true that is and that is why the Lord wants to build us up inwardly so He can take us to higher places in the work that He has for us!

Then Paul says or is praying that they would be “**rooted and grounded in love.**” What is he talking about? What is the love of Christ?

I believe this love is seen in the cross – His love for us pointed in four directions:

WIDTH: The width speaks of the world, that God’s love is wide enough to include every person if they would receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

In John 3:16-17 Jesus said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**”

His arms are outstretched for all!

LENGTH: God’s love is long enough to last through all of eternity, it will never end, it will last forever!

His love is so is unending, as Paul said in I Corinthians 13:4-8a, **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails . . .”**

DEPTH: God’s love is so deep that it can reach down to the worst sinner and rescue him, save him.

Remember the thief on the cross next to Jesus, a murderer. Many would look at that man today and say that he could never be saved and yet he cried out to Jesus to forgive him and Jesus said to this man, **“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”** Luke 23:43.

Folks, thank God that His love is so deep that it can save sinners; it can save you and me!

Paul said in Romans 5:8, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

HEIGHT: God’s love is high enough to take us to heaven, we won’t fall short for He will bring us to the very throne of God, not because we are so good, but because He is so good and loves us that much.

Again, as Jesus said in Luke 23:43, **“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

Make no mistake about it, we can never fully understand the richness of God’s love for us but every time we look to the cross, we do get a glimpse of it.

It is as Paul tells us in Romans 5:5, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

Don't put a cover over your life but allow His love to be poured out into it for then you can allow that love to flow from your life to touch the lives of others.

Clarke sums it up like this, "Among all the great sayings in this prayer, this is the greatest. To be *FILLED* with God is a great thing; to be filled with the *FULLNESS* of God is still greater; but to be filled with *ALL* the fullness of God utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding."

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Paul concludes this prayer with this doxology or short hymn of praise unto God.

Listen to what Paul is saying here.

God is able and He is more than able.

He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!

Don't limit God to what He wants to do in your life or in the life of this church.

God wants to do, and He is looking for people who are willing to walk.

And Paul concludes by saying "Amen" or "Let it be!" What else can you say?

Look at all that God has for us and how often we live as spiritual beggars. That should not be!

One writer put it like this, "When the Holy Spirit has empowered us, Christ has indwelt us, love has mastered us, and God has filled us with His own fullness, then He **is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**. Until those conditions are met, God's working in us is limited. When they are met, His working in us is unlimited." (Source Unknown)

And Pastor Ray Stedman sums this all up for us like this,

That is the secret, isn't it? You and I can do nothing - but God, living in us, filling us, working through us, is able to do abundantly more than we can even think to ask Him to do in our prayers!

What are your goals for this day, for this year, for this lifetime? God can exceed your wildest dreams - if you stop trying to manipulate, scheme, and bring it to pass in your own strength. Allow Him to live in you and through you, and the wildly unthinkable will become commonplace in your life, day after thrilling day, year after astonishing year.

We each have only one lifetime to live - so we dare not blow it. Instead of trying to run our own lives according to our own finite plans, let's turn our lives over to the One whose plan is infinite and eternal.

When we are secure within His loving heart, we can never lose heart. Who could think of turning back, of giving up, when He has shown us a glimpse of the glory that lies before us? So don't lose heart! The race is nearly won! Come on! Keep going! Don't look back - look ahead! His love carries us forward - and His glory is almost within our reach!

- Ray Stedman

As I conclude this evening, think of chapters 1-3 of Ephesians as Paul calling for us to start our engines because the race is about to start.

And now that our engines are started, we move into chapters 4 through 6 as we begin moving in our Christian walk now that we know what we possess in Christ.

I remember at the Indy 500 how they prepare by saying, “*Gentlemen, start your engines!*”

The green flag is about to go down as the race begins, and we will see that next time.

Let me leave you with this to think about, may we run to win!