

## To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace

### Ephesians 3:12–19

*Ephesians 3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

**I***N* whom is in reference to the previous verse<sup>1</sup> and God's *eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*. The Lord's great hidden and spiritual intention in sending His Son into the world was that those called through His Son could be granted free and unlimited access to Himself. It is this spiritual access whereby we can approach God with *boldness and confidence* that the ministry of the Son of God produced. It was this great result that the Father purposed in Christ and that has been absolutely fulfilled through Him. The *boldness and access with confidence* has specific reference to the throne of grace,<sup>2</sup> whereby after being found in Christ, anything asked according to divine will will be both heard and answered.<sup>3</sup> It is an honor that previous sinners like ourselves not only have a means of approach to the Lord but also are provided a sense of spiritual assurance—that not only will we be accepted into God's presence but also His divine mercy and grace await us. This is what the Father eternally purposed in *Christ Jesus our Lord* and that which has been fully accomplished through Him. As a result, saints are given warranty that their prayers will be answered and their petitions granted. When

understood, all believers can maintain strong spiritual confidence that the Lord will hear their prayers, grant the appeals that are desired, and boldly approach the Father knowing their rights as sons. Through the Lord Jesus Christ and His spiritual ministry—freedom, confidence, and boldness to enter into God's holy and divine presence, without spiritual shame or inferiority, are now the possession of all saints.

(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Eph. 3:12) *in whom we have*] Here (see last note) is the realization. It was “purposed in Him” that we His saints should be unspeakably near to the Father; and so we now *are*, and angels see it.

*Ephesians 3:13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

Because Paul knew that his tribulations could affect the faith of those he was writing to, he reminded them that his personal suffering was redounding to their future glory. Ultimately the tribulation that the apostle was enduring would have the effect of, and contribute to, the glorification of those who believed his message. Paul deemed his own suffering far more than an adequate exchange if the final result would be the glorification of God's people. Because he held the Ephe-

1 Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

2 Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

3 I John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

sians' faith and spiritual well-being as his primary concerns, the apostle considered his own suffering as of little importance. Just as the Savior could see the glory set before Him at the cross,<sup>4</sup> so could Paul see that his suffering and imprisonment would redound toward the glory of those to whom he was sent to reveal Christ. Knowing that the revelation given to him by the Son of God<sup>5</sup> was far greater than his own life, he was willing to wholeheartedly suffer for its spiritual advancement. The Lord Jesus had instructed him about the cost of discipleship,<sup>6</sup> and the apostle's entire life of being persecuted proved this revelation to be true.<sup>7</sup> Yet regardless of his trials, still he remained determined to finish his course with joy, testifying boldly to the grace provided through faith in the Lord Jesus. *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God* (Acts 20:24).

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Acts 20:24) *But none of these things move me ...—Literally, But I take account of nothing, nor do I hold my life ...* We note the parallelism with Luther's famous declaration, when warned by his friends not to go to Worms, "I will go thither, though there should be devils on every house-top."

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(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Acts 20:24) *Neither count I my life* — I do not consider my life as so valuable as to be retained by turning away from bonds and persecutions. I am certain of bonds and afflictions; I am willing also, if it be necessary, to lay down my life in the prosecution of the same purpose.

*Dear unto myself* — So precious or valuable as to be retained at the sacrifice of duty. I am willing to sacrifice it if it be necessary. This was the spirit of the Saviour, and of all the early Christians. Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered.

***Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,***

What is revealed here is the beginning of Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians. The *cause* is that *cause* that is directly related to the previous verse, the *glory* that awaits those who have believed upon the Lord Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Grace has always preceded glory in Scripture, and the grace that is given to believers through Jesus Christ<sup>9</sup> understandably is that which lays the foundation for their glorification. Whenever God's grace has been provided to an individual or a nation,<sup>10</sup> you can be certain that heavenly glory is purposed to

4 Heb. 12:2 *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

5 Gal. 1:12 *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

6 Acts 9:16 *For I will shew him [Paul] how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

7 II Cor. 11:24–28 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. <sup>25</sup>Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup>In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. <sup>28</sup>Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

8 Eph. 3:13 *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

9 John 1:16 *And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

10 Isa. 60:19–21 *The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. <sup>20</sup>Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. <sup>21</sup>Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.*

follow. In God's eyes, those whom He has called He has justified, and His guarantee and promise to them is that they will be glorified with His Son. *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom. 8:30). Because the Lord sees the end from the beginning<sup>11</sup> and foretells the course of future events, long before their actual complete realization, He speaks of the future as if it were the past. It is also worth noting that the glorification of those saved through Christianity is its final end—so that in the fullness of time, all who have believed upon the Son of God, will have as their heavenly reward the sharing, partaking, and glo-

ry bestowed upon them, resembling the Lord's own celestial glory.<sup>12</sup> At the point of the Son of man's return, believers will miraculously be transformed to resemble their Savior.<sup>13</sup> It is at this moment, when those chosen by God through His Son will be fully revealed to the world, that the world will be brought to unquestionably comprehend, (most coming to this spiritual understanding through fear and dread<sup>14</sup>) that the Lord is God, and those to whom He has given His Spirit are now recognized as His newly birthed heavenly sons. This will be openly manifested and declared when those saved by the Son are transformed to resemble Him in both glory and body. This is the Christian's hope, though very few of even the most faithful

*Ezek. 37:12-14 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, <sup>14</sup>And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

*Mic. 2:12-13 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. <sup>13</sup>The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.*

*Ezek. 37:22-28 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. <sup>23</sup>Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>24</sup>And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. <sup>25</sup>And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. <sup>26</sup>Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. <sup>27</sup>My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>28</sup>And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.*

*11 Isa. 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

*12 Matt 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

*13 I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*14 Isa. 2:10-12 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. <sup>11</sup>The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. <sup>12</sup>For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:*

*Rev. 6:15-17 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; <sup>16</sup>And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: <sup>17</sup>For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

followers of the Lord Jesus truly believe it. Regardless, the facts remain, that being glorified with Him will be the final end of those chosen through the Son of God. Ultimately Christ's glory will be shared with and conferred upon His most loyal, faithful, and trustworthy followers. The promise of God has always been that He will provide grace and glory to those who walk uprightly before Him. To believe on the Son of God is just this. This final spiritual realization will be revealed when those who have been given grace through the Lord Jesus are then spiritually glorified both with and through Him. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly* (Ps. 84:11).

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Ps. 84:11) *The Lord will give grace and glory* — Grace, or favor, here; glory, or honor, in the world to come. He will bestow all needful favor on his people in this life; he will admit them to glory in the world to come. Grace and glory are connected. The bestowment of the one will be followed by the other. Romans 8:29–30.<sup>15</sup> He that partakes of the grace of God on earth will partake of glory in heaven. Grace comes before glory; glory always follows where grace is given.

It is the glory that awaits all Christians<sup>16</sup> that prompted the apostle to bow his knees to the Father of the Lord Jesus

Christ. It is this proletarian, plebeian, and humble approach that the apostle takes before addressing the heavenly Father, for Whom all glory, praise, and worship is rightly due. The apostle knew the great spiritual importance of kneeling in the Lord's presence, and to do anything less was unworthy of the mercy and grace provided by Him. It is also proper that we kneel before the Father before making even the smallest request of Him. Knowing that to get just one prayer answered is grace upon grace, but to get any prayer answered, especially when beseeching the Lord for others, is even more grace than this. It was this confidence that Paul possessed in approaching the Father, knowing that prayers offered on behalf of the Ephesians would be answered. To believe the Lord will answer our own prayers is a sign of great faith; to believe that He will answer us in the cause of others is even greater faith than this.

*Ephesians 3:15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*

The *whole family* referenced here contains not only those redeemed but also the entirety of God's heavenly family. This includes sharing union with an innumerable company of angels,<sup>17</sup> the spirits of just men made perfect,<sup>18</sup> and very likely a host of many other heavenly beings presently unknown to us. Every Christian pro-

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 8:29–30 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* <sup>30</sup>Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

<sup>16</sup> II Pet. 1:3 *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

Col. 1:27 *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

Rom. 8:18 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

<sup>17</sup> Heb. 12:22 *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*

<sup>18</sup> Heb. 12:23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

duced through heavenly adoption<sup>19</sup> and certified through spiritual regeneration<sup>20</sup> is by right a member of God's heavenly family. Just as earthly children carry the name of their fathers and are through physical birth reckoned as the children of those who have brought them into the world, so also is every born-again<sup>21</sup> man or woman by heavenly right properly regarded as a member of God's family. Because of their spiritual birth, believers have been given the spiritual right to be identified with God as their Father.<sup>22</sup> To be saved by the Lord is to be granted to share in a very intimate and paternal relationship with Him. Because He has made those called through His Son to be His own, they can proudly claim Him as their own. There is no greater honor on earth than to be given the power to become a son of God through Him to Whom God gave the ultimate and final authority to give others the power and heavenly right of spiritual sonship. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name* (John 1:12).

(Geneva Study Bible, John 1:12) The Son being shut out by the majority of his people, and acknowledged but by a few, regenerates those few by his own strength and power, and receives them into that honour which is common to all the children of God, that is, to be the sons of God.

***Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;***

In beginning his prayer, the apostle's spiritual request is that the saints residing at Ephesus and all those found to be faithful in Christ Jesus<sup>23</sup> might be *strengthened with might by his [God's] Spirit in the inner man*. The means by which the believer is both invigorated and strengthened with might is through the Christ Spirit in his heart.<sup>24</sup> Through this divine nature, God imparts the necessary strength and spiritual resolve to carry out the Christian calling and endure the worldly difficulties associated with it. Paul knew by personal experience the great power of the Spirit to strengthen, invigorate, and bolster the inner man. What he thus prayed for was that

19 Eph. 1:5 *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Gal. 4:6 *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Rom. 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

John 20:17 *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

20 Tit. 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

21 John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

John 1:13 *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

I John 5:1 *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

I John 5:4 *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

I John 3:9 *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

22 I Cor. 8:6 *But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

23 Eph. 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

24 Gal. 4:6 *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

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which God had effected in his own life<sup>25</sup> to be accomplished in the Ephesians as well. The power of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian is a supernatural source of comfort,<sup>26</sup> strength, and spiritual encouragement. For those who have believed upon the Son of God and been given a portion of His Spirit, His strong presence will do for the soul and heart that which nothing else in this world can do. This is why those who possess the Holy Spirit literally have the power of God living within them.<sup>27</sup> To be filled with God's Spirit is to be filled with Christ's power and life,

which results in our own earthly lives being strengthened through Him. There is no greater force in the Christian's life than the Holy Spirit living within him—since it is from this divine and holy nature that heavenly power enters his life<sup>28</sup> and spiritual wisdom is transmitted into the depths of his soul.<sup>29</sup>

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Eph. 3:16) To be strengthened with might — To be powerfully strengthened. That is, to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name.*

25 *II Cor. 11:25–28 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup>In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. <sup>28</sup>Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

26 *John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

27 *Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

28 *Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

*Acts 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

*Judg. 3:9–10 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.*

*Judg. 14:5–6 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. <sup>6</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.*

*Judg. 15:14–15 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. <sup>15</sup>And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.*

29 *Exod. 31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,*

*Eph. 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:*

*Isa. 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;*

*I Cor. 12:8 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

*John 14:26 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

*I Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

*I John 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

*In the inner man* — In the heart, the mind, the soul; see the notes on Romans 7:22.<sup>30</sup> The “body” needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith.

The *inner man* is that part of the heart of the believer that is separate from his natural flesh.<sup>31</sup> This hidden and invisible spiritual life in the saved remains unable to be detected by the human eye. It is also where the spiritual conscience is formed and the Holy Spirit is free to move in convicting the believer’s heart of sin.<sup>32</sup> It is here where believers delight in the law of God,<sup>33</sup> though their fleshly body remains bound by sin.<sup>34</sup> It is here where God’s Spirit dwells, Who produces the desire and determination to comply with divine will. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will*

*take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them* (Ezek. 36:26–27). It is because of this spiritual transformation within the sinner’s heart that old habits of the flesh can be put off<sup>35</sup> and new, holy, and pure thoughts to pursue the Lord’s righteousness can be put on.<sup>36</sup> This inner and/or inward man is also that part of the saved created in Christ Jesus that has been purposed by God to prompt the believer to love<sup>37</sup> and do good in His name.<sup>38</sup> This holy nature is also the practical fulfillment of the prophecy given to Ezekiel when he prophesied of the Lord creating new hearts, which would effectuate them to cease resisting divine will and abandon hardening themselves against heavenly sovereignty.<sup>39</sup> The result of the Lord giving the penitent a portion of His own holy, spiritual nature enables him to walk in God’s statutes and keep

30 Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

31 II Cor. 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

32 John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.

33 Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

34 Rom. 7:23 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.

35 Eph. 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

36 Eph. 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

37 Rom. 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

38 Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

39 Ezek. 14:4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; Dan. 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

Heb. 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Mark 6:52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Matt. 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

Mark 16:14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

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God's judgments.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately through divine intervention and the ministry of the Son of God, a new race of holy, devout, and peculiar people have been created.<sup>41</sup> Jesus referred to this momentous event—when God spiritually and miraculously transforms the hearts of the unrighteous and unholy—as being born from above.<sup>42</sup> It is also through receiving God's holy nature into their hearts that sinners are transformed into saints.

*Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

It is here we observe the great, grand, and ultimate purpose of the Spirit strengthening with might the inner man. It is so that Christ may *dwell in the heart* and love may deepen itself in the believer's soul.

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Eph. 3:17) The indwelling of Christ (as here the construction of the original plainly shows) is not a consequence of the gift of the Spirit; it is identical with it, for the office of the Holy Spirit is to implant and work out in us the likeness of Christ. So in John 14:16-20,<sup>43</sup> in immediate connection with the promise of the Comforter, we read: "I will not leave you orphaned; I will come to you."<sup>44</sup> Ye shall know that ... ye are in me

and I in you." Hence the life in the Spirit is described as "To me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21);<sup>44</sup> "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).<sup>45</sup> Faith is simply the condition of that indwelling of Christ (comp. Ephesians 2:8),<sup>46</sup> the opening of the door to Him that He may enter in.

A person's belief upon the Son of God and exercise of faith in Him allows Christ to enter his heart.<sup>47</sup> It is this faith in Himself that the Lord Jesus patiently waits for in order that His eternal presence in those now dead in sin<sup>48</sup> can save them. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me* (Rev. 3:20).

(*Benson Commentary*, Rev. 3:20) *Behold, I stand* — Or, *I have stood*, as εστηκα literally signifies, namely, for a long time and I still stand, even at this instant; *at the door* — Of men's hearts; *and knock* — Waiting for admittance: *if any man hear my voice* — With a due regard, namely, the voice of my providence, word, and Spirit; *and open the door* — Willingly receive me, or welcome me with the affection due to such a friend and Saviour; *I will come in to him* — And *dwell in his heart by faith*, (Ephesians 3:17,) how mean soever his circumstances in life may be, and how faulty soever his character

<sup>40</sup> Ezek. 36:25-27 *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* <sup>26</sup>A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Pet. 2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;*

<sup>42</sup> John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

<sup>43</sup> John 14:16-20 *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; <sup>17</sup>Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. <sup>18</sup>I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. <sup>20</sup>At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

<sup>44</sup> Phil. 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

<sup>45</sup> Gal. 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

<sup>46</sup> Eph. 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

<sup>47</sup> Rev. 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

<sup>48</sup> Eph. 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

may have been formerly; *and will sup with him* — Refreshing him with the gifts and graces of my Spirit, and delighting myself in what I have given; *and he with me* — As I will sup with him here, he shall sup with me in life everlasting hereafter.

It is the Lord Jesus, in His present heavenly position, Who humbly knocks and waits patiently at the doors of men's hearts. His eternal hope is that they might repent, and turn to Him. The *I* is emphatic: *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*. To serve as a servant because you were born one is vastly different than serving as a servant when you are not one and have actually been given preeminence above all mankind.<sup>49</sup> Yet it is this disposition of being lowly and humble, manifested by pursuing the salvation of those lower than Himself, that reveals Christ's unique, heavenly, holy, and divine nature. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls* (Matt. 11:29).

(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Matt. 11:29) *I am meek and lowly in heart*] The character of Jesus described by Himself; cp. 2 Corinthians 10:1, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."<sup>50</sup> It is this character that brings rest to the soul, and therefore

gives us a reason why men should become His disciples.

In the Son of man we have the complete contrast to fallen man. Whereas Christ is lowly and meek, sinners are prideful and haughty. Whereas Christ is solely interested in the needs and concerns of others, sinners selfishly remain nothing more than lovers of themselves, as well as lovers of pleasures more than God.<sup>51</sup> From this undeniable contrast it is easy to see how vastly different is a holy, humble, and caring Savior from the selfish, stubborn, and resistant sinners He both humbly and patiently desires to save.

*Being rooted and grounded in love*. To truly develop in Christ and certify that Christ lives within you, God's love must not only be possessed but actually be grown, like a tree's roots deepening and expanding themselves in the soil from which it has sprung. It is only as God's love begins, develops, and expands itself in the Christian's heart that true Christian growth can occur. Love is the grand subject of Jesus' first two commandments,<sup>52</sup> and His presence in the heart will result in prompting His followers to pursue His love as their greatest reason and object for living. Ultimately when Christ truly enters a man

49 Phil. 2:9-10 *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

Matt. 28:18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Rev. 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

I Tim. 6:13-15 *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebekable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;*

50 II Cor. 10:1 *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:*

51 II Tim. 3:2-4 *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 52 Matt. 22:37-40 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38This is the first and great commandment. 39And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

and begins to live within his heart, God's love will very soon abundantly flow from his life.<sup>53</sup> It is also the spiritual fruit<sup>54</sup> of God's love that unquestionably proves that Christ lives within His people. Where love is, sin will not be; where sin is, love cannot be. Thus, he who grows in love has no desire to sin, and he who sins has no true and genuine desire or inclination to be ruled by love. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (John 13:35). It is by love, and only through love, that Christ's true disciples can be known. There is no other accurate barometer than this, which proves true religious piety, nor any other power or spiritual ability that properly identifies being born of God. All other powers and actions may be imitated and very covertly copied,<sup>55</sup> but true love in the heart never can be. In a world where counterfeit, hypocritical, and fake love is commonplace, only sincere and genuine love for God and the children of God reveals true salvation.<sup>56</sup> Hence, even if a man possesses an abundance of other gifts and presumed-to-be spiritual abilities, if love does not rule his life, then he is not of God, nor does God count him as His own.<sup>57</sup> Because love is the centerpiece of God's holy nature, then those who are truly the sons of God will without question manifest Christ's divine love both in their hearts and in their lives. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him* (I John 4:16).

53 I Thess. 4:9 *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*

54 Gal. 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

55 II Thess. 2:9 *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

56 I John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

57 I Cor. 13:1–2 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

***Ephesians 3:18*** *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

Here we have the *breadth, and length, and depth, and height* of Christ's love, compared to the construction of a mighty building, or perhaps, as some have inferred, a more accurate comparison—the expansiveness of the universe itself.

(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Eph. 3:18) The imagery is perhaps suggested by a vastly spacious building, with its high towers and deep foundations. But may it not rather be suggested by the visible Universe itself, as if a spectator gazed from horizon to horizon, and at the boundless air above, and thought of the depths beneath his feet?

***Ephesians 3:19*** *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

In the apostle's description of Christ's love, we observe that it is beyond both natural and human comprehension. In fact so much so that the Scriptures state that it *passeth understanding*.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Eph. 3:19) *Which passeth knowledge* — There "seems" to be a slight contradiction here in expressing a wish to know what cannot be known, or in a desire that they should understand that which cannot be understood. But it is the language of a man whose heart was full to overflowing. He had a deep sense of the love of Christ, and he expressed a wish that they

should understand it. Suddenly he has such an apprehension of it, that he says it is indeed infinite. No one can attain to a full view of it. It had no limit. It was unlike anything which had ever been evinced before.

The depth, length, breadth, and height of Christ's love is practically unfathomable to the human mind. It is as unestimable to be fully grasped or understood as Christ Himself. And it is for this very spiritual reason that the apostle prays to God, that His Spirit may enlighten and spiritually illuminate the Ephesians to the grand and great extent of God's and Christ's love for them, so that they may come to know the *love of Christ* and as a result be *filled with all the fulness of God*. It is only when believers come to know, are filled with, and walk in God's love that the godhead is evidenced to fully dwell with-

in them. It is this possessing the *fulness of the Godhead bodily* that characterizes their Savior,<sup>58</sup> and the apostle's prayer is that a similar fullness of God may also be experienced and evidenced in those who come to believe upon His name.

(*Pulpit Commentary*, Eph. 3:19) In the human nature of Christ ... "In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" in the soul of the believer there may be a progressive movement towards this fullness. No higher view can be conceived of the dignity of man's nature, and the glorious privileges conferred on him by the gospel, than that he is susceptible of such conformity to God. Who can conceive that man should have attained to such a capacity by a mere process of evolution? "So God made man in his own image;"<sup>59</sup> and in Christ man is "renewed in righteousness and holiness after the image of him who created him."<sup>60</sup>

58 Col. 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

59 Gen. 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

60 Eph. 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

