



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 3:14-21

“Prayer for Realization of God” -- TRANSCRIPT

We're turning to Paul's second prayer in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the prayer for the realization of the love of God in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through verse 21.

I say this is Paul's second prayer. In the first chapter was a prayer for divine illumination. Now, he used the term “revelation,” but it seems plain, since he's speaking to Christians and not asking for new truth from God, but an understanding of the truth that has been given, that we should call that first prayer a prayer for revelation in the sense of illumination.

This second petition in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through verse 21 is a prayer for the entrance into the experience of the Love of God in Christ Jesus, and an entrance, I think also, into the experience of the knowledge of the greatness of the church of Jesus Christ. Now, the connection between this section and preceding is rather clear, if we notice two things.

First of all, we notice that verse 14 begins with the phrase, “for this cause.” Now if we look back to chapter 3 verse 1, we notice that there the Apostle wrote: “for this cause.” So it appears that this chapter is divided into two parts, and “for this cause” is the place of the division.

Now when we think of chapter 3 verse 1, the Apostle has just said in verse 22, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” So he’s mentioned that the believers, having been by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, constructed into the church and through the presence of the Holy Spirit – God dwells within every believer in this age permanently. Today, we say the characteristic thing about the age in which we are living is the fact that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells all believers in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus says that was not true in old covenant times. The Apostle speaks of it also as something that is new.

Now you might expect the Lord, having given us this remarkable revelation of the fact that we are an habitation of God through the Spirit, would pray that we would come to the realization of what that means. And I suggest to you that the Apostle probably intended in verse 1 of chapter 3 to launch into the prayer that he gives us in verse 14 through verse 21. That expression, “for this cause, I Paul” would indicate that, but the fact that the Apostle added the “prisoner of Jesus Christ for your Gentiles” – the mention of the term Gentiles caused him to launch into something of a parenthesis in the progress of thought, and in this parentheses the thought that in this age, the age characterized by Gentile salvation, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, verse 6, of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel.

So the Apostle set forth in brief form what he sets forth in Romans 11 by the figure of the olive tree. Now, since we’ve just looked at that in our study of Romans, it’s easy for us to understand the parallel between the two. What the Apostle is saying is that a believer in Jesus Christ in this age is a fellow heir with the Jews, that is, believing Jews. He’s of the same body. He’s a partaker of the promise in Christ through the Gospel, so that it is true, in the present age, that the Gentiles enter into the blessings of the unconditional covenants of the Old Testament.

So, the mention of the term Gentile caused the Apostle to launch into something of a parenthesis, but with verse 14, he comes back to his intention to pray “for this cause.”

There’s one other thing, aside from the similarity of those expressions, in fact the identical nature of the expressions that begin verse 1 and verse 14 that leads me to believe the Apostle intended to pray at chapter 3 verse 1.

Notice the expression again in verse 22 “in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” And notice the word “habitation.” He says that we are a dwelling place of God through the Spirit. Now, let your eyes drop down to verse 17, where he says that “Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” Now that word translated “dwell” in verse 17 is from the same root that the word translated “habitation” is in verse 22. So again, we have a connection between the prayer and the conclusion of chapter 2. “For a habitation of God through the Spirit,” and now he prays in his petition that Christ may inhabit or dwell in your hearts by faith. So then, I suggest – I cannot prove this, of course – the Apostle there passed over his mind when he finished verse 22, “I need to give a petition that my readers will enter into the experience of the habitation of God in the Spirit,” but when he said “Gentile,” that launched him into a little side section in which he set forth his apostleship to the Gentiles and what it meant. That’s not uncommon for Paul, and I could say on that basis, for that third reason, that it’s likely that that’s what he had in mind, because it’s not uncommon for Paul to mention a term and launch into a little discussion of it and then come back to the major theme that he has been developing.

So, the Apostle, then, has outlined what we are. Now, he wants to urge us to walk worthy of that calling. That’s what he will say in chapter 4 verse 1, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” But we must know the truth in experience before we can exhibit the truth to the world. This is something, I think, that people fail to realize, and something a great many preachers fail to realize.

Preachers have a very common habit, they like to tell people what to do. If you notice that about them, they like to tell us what to do. They say, “we ought” to do this,

and we ought to do that. And you should be doing this, and you should be doing that. And you know, I'm a preacher myself but I get a little tired of that kind of preaching, because that's really a kind of preaching that in a sense lays the obligations of the law upon us without giving us any encouragement from the grace of God or any suggestion of how we may tap the ability of God for the carrying out of the commandments of God.

Now I learned, I think, from my own experience, that most of us need to know what God can do for us. Because most of us have intelligence enough to read the Bible and figure out very clearly and quickly what we ought to do. The thing that puzzles us is how are we going to be able to do it?

Now one thing that we need to realize in the doing of the truth of God is that we can never know truth in experience, or rather we can never exhibit the truth in our lives. We can never really do the truth until we have come to experience the truth in our inmost being. It's the man who has experienced the vital reality of the presence of God, in the experiences of life, through the Scriptures, who is able to exhibit the life of God, or to do the things set forth in Holy Scripture. An experience of what the Bible teaches is very important for the carrying out of its injunctions. So, the Apostle prays here, then, that we might realize in our experience the love of God.

Now he begins in verse 14 and in verse 15:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"

Now, the knees that the Apostle mentioned suggest humility and earnest entreaty. Of course, we can get down on our knees, and that doesn't mean that we are humble or that we are engaged in earnest entreaty. But it is certainly consonant with that. When we get down on our knees, well that is an outward attitude of humility. So, the Apostle here is thinking about the reality when he says "for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ. He suggests that the way we ought to approach God is with the spirit of humility.

Now notice that he calls him Father, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In a sense, this is Paul’s lesson from the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus said, after this manner therefore pray ye, our Father who art in heaven. As I’ve often said, and others, too, here in Believer’s Chapel, in 1981 we don’t really catch the full force of this, because the idea of having a heavenly father as God is very common to us. But in the days of the Apostle Paul, in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, it was not common at all. In the Old Testament, so far as I can tell, there is no instance in which an individual prayed to God as his Father individually. So that when the Lord Jesus said after this manner therefore pray ye, our Father which art in heaven, he was giving something that was astoundingly new. That is that we had the right to call upon God as our Father.

Well, Paul is still living in the newness and uniqueness of that. And we should never lose the force of that, either, that we can get down upon our knees and call God in heaven Father, is a most amazing thing.

“Thou art coming to a king, large petitions with thee bring,
For his grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much.”

If God is a Father, then that not only suggests power, possessions, but also concern and love. So, I bow my knees unto the Father, and notice, like we’ve said so many times, he’s the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s the only true God, the one who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No other God is God.

When people talk to you about God, ask them a question: what God are you talking about? Is your God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? And if they say no, then go ahead and say it, “Your God is not my God.” That’ll give you an opportunity to have a

little conversation, a little theological conversation. And it might do them some good, and I know it’ll do you some good.

Now he also says, “Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Now that’s an interesting thing: “of whom the whole family.” Now it is possible to render the Greek text as “whom every family on heaven and on earth is named.” And if he were talking about every family, we might have some justification for two earthly elections. The election of Israel and the election of the church, perhaps even the family of the angels, the elect angels.

But unfortunately, the Greek expression is ambiguous, and in the light of the fact that a similar expression occurred in verse 22 of chapter 2, and there we read “for an habitation”—oh I’m sorry, it’s verse 21: “In whom all the building” – and that surely is not every building; it’s not likely we are to render this not “every family in heaven and in earth” but “all the family in heaven and in earth.” So he’s talking about one family.

There is only one people of God. In the ultimate sense, one redeemed company, but there are distinctions within that company. There are Gentiles, and there is also the Nation Israel, an election from each. Two earthly elections are set forth in Scripture, but the Apostle is not speaking of them here. He’s really saying the whole family in heaven and on earth is named. Now they, that expression of a family is very appropriate because the Lord’s in heaven right now preparing a house for his family. That’s what John 14 and verse 1 through verse 3 says.

There is, I think, an implication, only an implication, only an inference from these verses I’m going to mention – I don’t want you to think this proves anything, because it doesn’t prove it – but if Paul were a soul sleeper, that is, if he believed that when a person died the body was placed in the grave with the soul, and the soul was unconscious for ages, then he might’ve written: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in the grave and on earth is named.” But he doesn’t say “in the grave and on earth,” he says, “in heaven and earth.”

And I’m just going to make the observation – we can prove it in other places – that when a Christian dies, he does go home to be with the Lord immediately. Of whom the whole family on heaven and earth is named.

Now another thing I want to say about this passage, notice that the Apostle says, “of whom the whole family.” He doesn’t say, “of whom all of our Christian families,” as if there are lots of different families on the earth. Many years ago, I had a friend who was giving some money to an organization that was not connected with a particular local church. And he asked one of the ministers of a particular denomination in this area if it was alright to give money to the Child Evangelism Fellowship. Incidentally, this was simply giving money to the Child Evangelism Fellowship for the evangelization of children.

Well, the minister of whom he asked the question, was a person who didn’t believe in the salvation of children to start with, and was not very sound with the faith in other respects as well. But he replied to the individual, “We must give our money to help our own family. These are things alright in themselves, they are doing a good work, but we must give to our own family” – in spite of the fact that his own family had wandered very far from the truth of God.

Now the Apostle doesn’t know of any such concept as a denomination as a special family of God. He only knows of one family of God. That’s why I’ve always felt – I’m not going to say that this is the greatest of all sins and that it should be connected with the seven deadly ones – but I, this is why for many years I have believed that a person just cannot be a member of a denomination and in that respect be in harmony with the word of God. The word of God teaches that the family is one, that the body is one. And when we divide up the family, and call one family the Baptist family, and another the Presbyterian family, and still another the Anglican family, I don’t know that, I don’t want to gauge the seriousness and severity of sin, but it appears to me that is plainly contrary

to the teaching of the Bible, and we should, if we possibly can, make every effort to observe the oneness of the body of Christ in all of our Christian activity.

Now I say that, and I’ve got a lot of close friends and very good friends who are very godly people, who also are connected with some denominations. That doesn’t mean that the fact that they are, that therefore they cannot serve the Lord – that they might not even be a better servant than I am – you don’t have to be much to be a better servant than I am, incidentally. But they can be.

But still, if we want to be in harmony with all the Bible teaches, then that’s something that we must bear in mind. Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named. I like it when we realize and recognize that the body is one, and we’re open to all the members of the body of Christ, and we serve and also are constructed in such a way that our borders are as wide as the body of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now then, we come to Paul’s petitions after his preparation, his mention of his posture for prayer. In verse 16 through 19 there are three important little words translated “that.” Verse 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;” [That’s verse 16]

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. “

Now there are three “thats” that are important in these words. The first one is in verse 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.”

Now I know you’re going to say, “Well, must be the that that begins verse 17 must be the second one.” No, in the English translation, that is used, but the little conjunction “that” which introduces a purpose clause or at least the substance of the petition, is not used there. So we’ll drop that one, and include it with verse 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 [to the end] that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

“That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend” – that’s the second one – “that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” And the third one, in verse 19 in the middle of it, “that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Each one of these conjunctions, they are *benas*, are expressive of the purposes of Paul’s prayer.

Now you’ll notice also that the whole Trinity is involved in this, too. He says, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” – first person, second person – “that he may grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.” So the whole of the Trinity is involved in this petition of the Apostle. He bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he prays, that through the Spirit, Christ, the second person of the Trinity, may dwell in their hearts by faith to the end that they might be filled with all the fullness of the triune God.

Let’s look at the first petition. It’s a petition for empowerment. Verse 16 and verse 17: that he would grant you, give you – notice, it’s giving, it’s something given, it’s not something we earn. It’s not something we work for. It’s something given by God. He prays that he would give you, grant you, according to his riches in glory, be strengthened by his might and his spirit in the inner man, that, or to the end, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. So what he’s praying for is empowerment, but this empowerment is going to come through an indwelling of Christ by faith. Let’s stop for just a moment, and say a word about “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

There are words in the New Testament that are translated “to dwell,” common words, and then there are uncommon words. This is an uncommon word. This is a word that means to dwell deep down. It’s an intensive word. It’s the word to dwell with an intensive preposition attached to it, or with a preposition that the verb has become an intensive in force. So what is stressed is a deep indwelling. It was the word that was used of permanent residents. If you spoke of dwellers in the city of Jerusalem, you would use this word *katoikeo*. If you spoke of someone who was not so permanent, an inhabitant of the place, you might use a simple word. But this word refers to a resident, a permanent resident.

So he prays that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. In other words, he prays that Christ may be a permanent resident there and the idea back of it is the idea of domination and control. So he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the inner man to the end that Christ may dwell in your hearts and there have dominion and have control. We sometimes sing,

“O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me, and all things else receive,
My heart be daily nearer Thee, from sin daily freed.”

Well, Paul’s prayer is that Christ may so dwell in us that we may come under the control of him.

Notice too that he says, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*.” By faith. Occasionally we get the idea that when Paul says “by faith” it’s not really so. If he were to say “by fact,” or “by vision,” “by sight” – well, that would be better. But by faith. Well, in spiritual things, the only way we can know is by faith. And of course, in the final analysis, if we had to defend this I think we could, that by faith is the only way that we know anything – the only way you know that I am

standing before you is by faith. You think your eyes are reliable, don’t you? I may not even be here [laughter]. You may just be seeing me and your eyes be faulty and your ears be faulty. You see, you have confidence in your eyes and you have confidence in your ears – that’s faith. You’ve never proved that, have you? No, you have faith. We live by faith. Everything we do is by faith.

So, when Paul says “by faith,” well, he’s talking about the only way in which we can know spiritual things. The most beautiful object may be in the apartment of a blind man, and he not be sensible of its presence. Or if by any means he is made aware of its nearness, he doesn’t appreciate its beauty. Christ dwells in us by faith, because it’s by faith that we perceive his presence. It’s by faith that we know him for who he is. It’s by faith that we understand what he does for us. It’s by faith we appropriate all of the blessings of the spiritual life and reciprocate the manifestations of his love. So, by faith.

How does faith come? By the word of God. It’s through the study of the holy Scriptures. The study of the holy Scriptures is like a blind man who is undergoing an operation, and he’s beginning to see more and more. We all have a friend who has had an operation on his eyes in Believer’s Chapel just recently for cataracts. When he came out from under the operation, he didn’t see too well. Now he’s gradually beginning to see better and better. Well, the way we come to understand things in the word of God is through the study of the holy Scriptures. And the more we study, well the more the cataracts are removed from our eyes and we see things as they really are.

That’s the first prayer. It’s a prayer for empowerment to the end that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Now, the second prayer, in verse 18 and the first part of verse 19 is a prayer for enablement. I like these prayers for enablement, because that’s what I need.

“That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.”

The Apostle’s language suggests that this is not an easy task. His verbs he uses suggest that. “That you may be able, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend.”

Now isn’t it interesting that he says “comprehend the breadth and length and height”? How many times have you read that? Don’t raise your hands. You’ve probably read it fifty times, probably a hundred. Some of you have read it more than that. So I’m just going to ask you a little question. Don’t look at your page of the Bible. He says the breadth, the length, the depth, the height of what? Of what? Well, he doesn’t tell us, does he?

“That you may know the breadth, the length, the depth, the height” – but he doesn’t tell us. Now a lot of different answers have been given to this, naturally. Whenever you find the Scriptures written in this way, you’ll find the commentators speculating. And of course, we all have to speculate a bit. But think of the context. What has he been talking about in Ephesians?

Well, he’s been talking about a building. He’s just said in chapter 2 and verse 21, “in whom all the building, fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,” and that building is the church. So could it be that when he says that you might know the breadth and length and height and depth, these are dimensions, they belong to a building, could it be that he is talking about the church, the holy temple of God? He wants us to know all of the dimensions of this building, all of the spiritual facts about it, that we might be able to comprehend.

Now, these statements of dimensions are rather interesting. The breadth of the building, well he’s already told us in Ephesians that it includes those who first hoped in Christ, the Jews, and the Gentiles. So from the nation to the nations, the inhabitants of that building are as broad as that.

The length? Well those are somewhat speculative, but he has spoken to us of being in chosen in him before the foundation of the world in chapter 1 verse 4, and then in chapter 2 verse 7 when you get to heaven, in the ages to come, he's going to show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward you through Christ Jesus. So from ages past to the ages to come, those inhabitants of that building belong to the Lord God.

The depth. I said length. The height? Well, looking at it individually, the Scriptures say that we are caught up and that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. The depth, well, we came from deadness in trespasses and sins. But anyway, he's talking about the church and dimensions of the church, and all those things are certainly included.

Notice that when he says that ye being rooted and grounded in love, he suggests that in order to understand truly the church, we must know what it is to experience the love of Christ. In other words, love is the root of knowledge. That's a rather striking thing if you think about it. You can only know this if you are rooted and grounded in love.

Now the Apostle is not talking about the sentimentality of love that we often talk about when we talk about love. But he wants them to grow in the knowledge of love that God has set forth in holy Scripture. Men cannot understand each other, except insofar as they have the radical elements of the same experience. I understand what I mean when I say "hot," and you understand what I mean when I say "hot," because you've had experience of that. But you say to a little child, "That's hot, don't touch it," and if he's my child, he'll touch it. He will touch it. And then we will have common knowledge. [laughter] That's hot. From then on, that's hot, back goes the hand. He's learned. A vulgar man cannot understand a man of high refinement. A practical man has difficulty understanding a poetic genius. And if we are going to understand the love of Christ we must be rooted and grounded in love. Now that love is set forth in the word of God. We, well I think that for the sake of time we better go on.

Now he says, about this love, to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Isn't that an interesting thing? He asks us to know the love of God but then says it's beyond us. It's unknowable. Now, how do we make sense out of that? It is something that I want you to know, but it's unknowable.

Well, there are many things that we know that are unknowable in the comprehensiveness. You know, when you study theology one of the doctrines is the incomprehensibility of God. Someone might say right at the beginning, since it comes early in a course on theology, "Well if there's a doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, well that's what I love, because therefore I no longer have any responsibility to know anything about spiritual things, I'll just live as I please relying on the incomprehensibility of God. Well, in the Bible, of course, in theology when we talk about the incomprehensibility of God we talk about understanding God in his fullness, just as you husbands, you understand your wives, don't you? Some of you are laughing. Of course you understand your wife. You understand your wife better than any other person. But she's incomprehensible. She's really incomprehensible. Every man in this room knows that I am speaking gospel truth when I say his wife is incomprehensible. There is an element of her that he cannot possibly ever touch, and yet he knows her.

And if you are convinced that your wife is incomprehensible, just magnify that geometrically when you talk to women; their husbands are absolutely incomprehensible, geometrically, beyond the wives. But yet they know them. So, in the incomprehensibility of God. We know God, but yet he's incomprehensible. You know me, but you don't know everything about me. You really know me, and I really know you, but there is an element of incomprehensibility. That is what I think Paul is saying when he says that he wants us to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. How can you measure the love of God?

This afternoon, I read a very nice quotation from Charles Hodge. I liked it so much I cut it out and I put it on one of my sheets of paper and put it in my Bible until I am thoroughly acquainted with it. He said, “That God should love the good, the righteous, the pure, the godly, is what we can understand. But that the infinitely holy should love the unholy, and give his son for their redemption, is the wonder of all wonders. Herein is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

If he loved us, because we loved him – Arminians love that – he would love us only as long as we loved him, and on that condition. And then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But as God loved us as sinners, and Christ died for us as ungodly, our salvation depends, as the Apostle argues, not on our loveliness, but on the constancy of the love of God. Isn’t that great? Our love does not depend on our love of him. He loves us sovereignly, and his own nature is the measure of the kind of love that we have, and he is utterly faithful in his constant love for us.

Now the prayer of enrichment concludes the three petitions in verse 19, “that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Now if you have a version other than the Authorized Version, you’ll notice the word with is probably “unto” or “for.” That’s the Greek expression. Because, how can you put an ocean in a teacup? That you might be filled *with* all the fullness of God? How foolish. We cannot be filled with all the fullness of God. Paul says that you might be filled unto all the fullness of God. That is the goal that lies before us forever. So he’s talking then about a prayer for enrichment or achievement with reference to a goal.

Now on one hand, of course, the Apostle also says in Colossians, that you have been filled full in him. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you have been filled full in him. That’s our position. That’s the way we stand before God. But in this present life, we are to be filled unto the fullness of God. And in our

experience, that ought to be something that we grow in. There should be more of the fullness of God manifested in the believer’s life.

Now, has there ever been a bigger request than this, this prayer for empowerment, this prayer for enablement, this prayer for enrichment to all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? What a prayer this is. Was it Mr. Jouett who said something like this, “What I have asked for is as nothing compared to the ability of my God to give. I’ve asked for a cupful, and the ocean remains. I’ve asked for a sunbeam, and the sun abides. My best asking falls immeasurably short of my Father’s giving. It’s beyond all that we can ask.”? Well, that’s what Paul says. He says, verse 20,

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”

You thought, when Paul prayed, that we might be empowered, that we might be enabled to know the unknowable love of Christ, that we might be empowered that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we might be filled unto the fullness of God, that that’s not for men and women such as we are, that’s for apostles. No. That’s for every believer. “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

I guess it was 25 years ago I read a statement by Arthur T. Pearson on this verse. He said there’s a sevenfold measure of the power of God here. First of all, God’s able to do first what we ask. Second, he’s able to do all that we ask. Third, he’s able to do what we think. Fourth, he’s able to do all that we think. Fifth, he’s able to do above all that we ask or think. Sixth, he’s able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think. And seventh, he’s able to do exceeding, abundant above all that we could ask or think. Now what do we need? Say hallelujah; that’s what we need, I guess.

That’s what God is able to do. That’s the measure of the power for the realization of this great series of petitions the Apostle has given us. In the Old Testament it says

King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba according to the hand of Solomon. So here is a God who gives according to the power that worketh within us.

What is the power that works within us? Well that word is used of a supernatural power in the New Testament. Worketh, what is it? It’s the mighty power of continuous sanctification at work in the believer’s heart, and he will accomplish his work!

My dear Christian friends, do you know that right at this moment, when you feel so lethargic, when you say when is Dr. Johnson going to finish, two minutes from now, when you say the word of God can sometimes be so boring, and when you berate yourself for not being as responsive as you ought to be, the Holy Spirit is working constantly in your heart. He works in every believer, and he works toward the sanctification of every one of us, and let me tell you this, he will accomplish his work. You’re going to be like Christ, some day. It may be a great earth-shaking transformation when it occurs for some of us [laughter], but it’s going to happen. We are going to be like him.

Now, Paul concludes with, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” Now the Authorized Version says “through Christ,” and of course that’s a truth, but really it’s glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. The Apostle gives proper thanksgiving for this great work.

There is a story I like about Paganini, the great violist. He was playing in a concert, and while he was playing on his violin, one of his strings broke. He kept on playing, another string broke. And he played on, and another string broke. He had one string, but he played nevertheless, and he played beautifully. And of course when he finished, the audience gave him a tremendous applause.

Well God doesn’t have much when he works with us – one string at best. But he’s better than Paganini. And he can produce the music of God in the life of every one of us. And Paul concludes, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus unto”—this is one of the most magnificent expressions that he wrote—“unto all (the generations of

the age of the) ages” – no ordinary expression is sufficient – “throughout all the ages (of the ages of the ages)” he’s going to lead his flock from pasture to pasture, from fountain to fountain, to the glory of our great God in heaven. You can see why Ephesians is called Paul’s Grandest Epistle. May God help us to respond to the encouragement that the Apostle gives us. Let’s close in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful the Thee for this magnificent petition. We give Thee thanks for it.

O God, continue to work in us, through the Spirit, to study and believe Thy word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.