

For This Reason

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 October 2019

Preacher: Rev George MacAskill

[0 : 00] And I've heard in our Bibles through the chapter of God's Word which we read in Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 3. As God would help us, I'd like to concentrate on that portion toward the end, verses 14 to 19.

Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14 to 19. For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth has gained, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul is praying here. And he's very, very serious indeed.

He is not praying these words in the normal way which he or any Jew would pray. The normal posture for the Jew, including Paul, for prayer, would be with his head up, facing toward heaven.

Do you remember, this is how our Saviour prayed. Looking up into heaven. Their eyes would be opened. And their hands would be facing upward.

[2 : 24] As if they were to push their prayers up to heaven, in one dimension and on the other, to receive a blessing from God.

That's the way the Jews and Paul would normally pray. Head up, eyes open, hands up to God. But here, what did you read?

He's prospering. Prosperate on the ground. Remember, he's in prison. Chained to a soldier.

Now when he's praying this, he would have no doubt had to say to his soul, look, I'm going to bow down. I'm going to bend my knees.

He tells us, verse 14, For this reason I bow my knees. And the soldier would probably have had to stoop. You know, likely he'd as well. He's very, very serious.

[3 : 27] What is he praying for? Is he praying he'd get out of prison and away from this soldier that's chained to him? Is that what he's praying for?

No. No. Is he praying that the Ephesians would be converted? No. They are converted. No problem with that.

Is he praying that Christ would enter their hearts? No. Christ has entered their hearts.

No. No. In fact, he's not even praying that Christ would dwell, remain in their hearts. What's he praying?

He's praying that Christ would dwell in their hearts in a certain way. In a certain way.

[4 : 26] Christ was already dwelling in their hearts. But Christ was not ruling in their hearts. Christ was not ruling their lives or indeed their thoughts.

He's just said in the previous verse 13, I ask you, don't lose heart at my tribulations, boy. Don't get upset at that. If you're a Christian, Christ is dwelling in your heart.

But he may not be controlling your life. We're all guilty of it. Paul is serious here.

He sees there's some people that have Christ in their hearts, but Christ isn't controlling their lives. And that's what he's praying for.

And that's what he's dead serious about. And I think it's something which this our age today really needs to be over. Is Christ ruling our lives, our hearts, and especially our thoughts, as they ought to be.

[5 : 42] As he ought to have control. Now, what's the background to all this? Well, verse 14, where we start, for this reason. What reason?

We go back to verse 1. Because that's how he started. For this reason, I call the prisoner of Jesus Christ. You see, the Ephesians were so upset.

They were so distressed at the adverse providence. Which God had done with him. He had put Paul in prison.

He was no longer able to go about and minister like they enjoyed before. And they were upset. And they were distressed. He said, Paul is cheering to a Roman soldier now because of us.

Because of his great love for us. He wouldn't stop preaching to us. So he's landed himself in the prison. And they were upset. They were distressed. And Paul's prayer really is that Christ would dwell in their hearts as the God who controls providence.

[6 : 56] In other words, that God would control their hearts to accept this adverse providence.

This difficult thing to grasp. And now you can understand, can't you? Paul was such a terrific man.

Such a fantastic evangelist. Such a tremendous minister of the church. The whole church, you would say, sacral random. And at this period in time, if anyone ever said, Christianity is finished.

It would have been at this time. And then God goes and puts Paul, their best man, in prison.

And they must be thinking, hey, listen, I thought God was on our side. I thought God wanted this Christian religion to go. Why has he put the best man in prison? Listen. Paul says, stop thinking like that.

[8 : 01] That's what's wrong. Christ isn't controlling your heart. He's in your heart. But you're not letting him have complete control of your life.

Now, what a lesson that is for you and me. God works. Does he not? God works. Through adverse providences.

God works through them. Hey. God ordains them. God ordains. That his kingdom will prosper through his church.

Having adverse providences. God has ordained. God has ordained. That through trials and temptations.

We Christians are made strong and holy. God has ordained. God has ordained. God has ordained. God has ordained. That you and I are satisfied.

[9 : 10] Made strong. Made holy. Through difficult trials and tribulations. He's ordained that.

And we take a long, long, long time to learn that. God. I certainly do. God. God. God. It's interesting, isn't it?

Christ became a human. So that he could be tempted. How could he identify with us. If he didn't know what we were going through.

He had to become a human to be tempted. And we Christians on the other hand are tempted. So that we can become Christ-like.

In order for Christ to become like us. He had to become human. And we humans are tempted.

[10 : 14] So that we can become Christ-like. That's what he's thinking about. Now. If God has revealed two things.

That will always be true. When we are going through adverse providences. There's two things. Always true.

Number one. What do you mean? I'm sure you do not. Romans 8.28 All things work together for good.

To those who love God. That's always true. You can't see it. You certainly can't understand it.

Isn't that right? They all work for good. That is the good of the church. And that is the definition of good. Now that's in Romans 8.28.

[11 : 16] Romans 8.28 Romans 8.28 It's followed by that well-known verse as well. 8.

It's going to see. 8. We know that all things work together for good. To those who love God. To those who are called according to his purpose.

For whom he foreknew. He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. So you say okay.

This is going to work out for good. Who defines what good is? Not you. Not me. God defines it. And he tells us in the following verse.

Romans 8.29 He tells us. The good is this. Being conformed to the image of Christ. There's no verse in the Bible.

[12 : 17] That says we're predestined to be in heaven. That of course is true. But the verse says we're predestined. To be made Christ-like.

The first step. The first stage. In that process of becoming like Christ. Is our conversion. Our salvation. Our entitlement to eternal life.

That's the first step. But the whole process is becoming like Christ. And God's are saying. That we become like Christ.

Because Christ is the man of sorrows. Three trials and temptations. We become like the man of sorrows. And the man acquainted with grief. How can you be Christ-like?

If you don't know what grief is like. If you don't know what sorrow is like. How can you be like Christ? But the second thing. The second thing is always true.

[13 : 14] When we're going through. To remember. It's helpful to remember. When we're going through adverse providences. It's that promise of God. My presence will go with you.

My presence will be with you. Whatever happens. Christ is with us. God is with us. The Holy Spirit is with us.

But you know. There's something. We must always remember. When we talk about God's presence. The first thing is this. We don't always feel.

God's presence with us. We don't always feel it. We're so depraved. We're so corrupt. We're so far gone. We can't tell if God's with us or not.

Many a time. Looking back in history. Surely you can see that. I'm sure you've all seen the poster. Or heard the story of the Christian looking at his life.

[14 : 16] Through his history. And it says footprints in the sand. Two footprints. Christ with him. As it were. All the way. Except in the most severe trials. The most severe temptations.

And the trial that says to Christ. Look at that. Why did I walk alone. In these most severe trials. And then of course.

Christ has to say. My son. These are the times. When I carried you. These single set of footsteps. Are when I carried.

They're my footsteps. Not yours. I lifted you up then. You see. They didn't know. They don't always sense.

God's presence. But he's with us. How do we know that? Because he said it. And let God be true. With every man alive.

[15 : 14] We can't go by feelings. Not always. Sometimes. Just to throw us as it were. Sometimes our feelings are right. But not always. Another thing to remember.

About God's presences. God's presence. May not feel. A pleasant thing. It can be awesome. It can be frightened.

How often do you read. In the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit coming down. And fear. Fear. And fear. Came upon them all. Fear came upon them all.

Not joy. Happiness. Sometimes yes. But fear. God's presence. Can be awesome at times. And not something pleasant.

But he's always. Always. With his people. And it's especially important to remember. When we're going through. And verse.

[16 : 12] Circumstances. Now. It's a very complicated. Passage of word. And I've rizzled for years and years. I don't know.

There's a lot of overlap. In the things he's asking. But I think we can say. The three things. He's basically praying for. In these words. 14 to 19.

Is inner strength. Inner energy. Secondly. Perceptive understanding. Be able to understand.

Comprehend with all space. Perceptive understanding. And thirdly. Spiritual prowess. Spiritual acumen.

Spiritual vitality. And you see how. Father. Son. And Holy Spirit. Is it. Strengthened inwardly.

[17 : 10] By the Father. Being rooted. In Christ. And being filled. By the Holy Spirit.

I think we can reduce. These five. Six verses. Into these three things. So let's look at them. Very very briefly. Strengthened.

With all might. Through his spirit. In the inner man. Verse 16. Strength.

Does not lie. In talents. It doesn't lie. In. Our. Self. Sufficiency. Or our.

Capability. I. I often. Here. Listen. To preachers. I say. Man. I wish I had his intellect. I wish I had the capability.

[18 : 06] Of going into this study. In half an hour. Having a sermon. Man. It would be great. It's a falsehood. That's not where. Inner. Strength. Lies. It doesn't lie.

In our. Capabilities. It doesn't lie. In our. Talents. Our. Self. Sufficiency. It lies. In Christ. Controlling.

Our. Thoughts. Christ. Controlling. Our. Lives. And we say. Okay. How does. Christ. Control. Our.

Lives. How does. Christ. Control. Our. Thoughts. What's the. Key. Well I think. That's the. The. Emphasis. Here. Verse. 19. To know.

The. Love. Of. Christ. If we. Get a. Full. Grasp. Of. That. What a. Difference. It would. Make. Now.

[19 : 00] You might. Say. How. How. If we. Can't. See. How. It's. Good. For us. If we. Can't. Sense. The. The. Presence. Of. God. How.

If a thought is horrific to you, if a thought comes suddenly and you know it's wrong, dismiss it instantly and get on with something else. with regard to the sinful nature, quietly working up something wrong.

That means constant daily, yes, hourly mortification. we get up in the morning and say, now, what's happening today?

[24 : 40] Ah, I'm meeting a friend today. And I notice every time I have to do business with Fred, we end up in that sinful way.

Beware of it, mortify, pray about it before you enter into it. But I'll be back again tomorrow. It's a constant thing. mortification of sin is like weeding your garden.

You weed the garden and say, that's it. No, next week the weeder have a constant work mortifying this sinful nature.

Satanic suggestions from the old quickly dismiss. Mark of a strong Christian accepts adverse providence by faith, resists evil temptation.

See, as far Christian, that's courage. Christian courage. Now, courage, courage is not being fearless.

[25 : 45] It's actually the opposite. It's doing what you know is right when you're afraid. Doing what is right when you're afraid.

That's courage. if you don't fear a thing more, what's the virtue of courage? It's because you're afraid. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Having a conviction and confidence in God's appointed means of grace. I'm sorry about this, my client.

being rooted and grounded in love. Verse 19. To know the love of verse 17.

That you being rooted and grounded in love. That is, being rooted and grounded in Christ's love for us.

[26 : 46] focusing on Christ's love for sinners is mind stretching. The mind cannot be focused on anything better for itself.

It stretches the mind. It's fantastic what's it. It's good for us intellectually. It's tremendous to dwell on these things for our intellect.

God made us and he knows how to stretch our imagination, how to stretch our Christian sanctification, our Christian imagination.

But we're to dwell. Christian meditation is not emptying your mind of things. It's filling your mind.

meditation. Eastern mysticism meditation. Empty your mind. What a crazy thing to do. The Bible tells us when an evil spirit goes out of a man.

[27 : 57] Well, he comes back and sit with seven other devils from you. Think of these things. Think of the good things. What's better? What's better?

The love of Christ. What is the width, the length, and depth of life? By faith, believing in the breadth, the width of Christ's love for all types and all kinds of sinners.

What love. No exceptions. No exceptions. However evil, however bad. Was it? Was it? However, even however simple.

Is it one of your professors? Duncan. Rabbi Duncan. He was prone to be professional apparently. And he said in one of his role points, at one point, he said, my only hope is my sins.

My only hope is my sins. Christ died for sinners. Therefore, there's hope for me. wonderful. The width, the length, the depth of God's Christ's love.

- [29 : 19] The length. How long does Christ love his people? It's everlasting love. Nothing can change it.
- Unchangeable love. It has no beginning. It has no end. It's a love love. You cannot stop. There's nothing you can do to stop.
- Everlasting love. Christ said, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
- love Christ. I can't stop it. Can't end it.
- Mind me, boggling. You see, it's hard to believe, yes, it's hard to be, what's my act? Think of these things strength in your mind and make you a strong Christian.
- [30 : 23] The depth, the depth of Christ's love for us, it's a love. Agape love is a love that can love the unlovely.
- A love that can love the unlovely. You and I love nice people. You and I nice, like, good, good people. Agape love.
- The love of Christ can love what's ugly. It's not pleasant. It's unlovely. You say, I can't get my head around that.
- Excellent. You're beginning to understand. You will find out the love of Christ is infinite. You can't get your day around it. But it's good to think in it.
- It's good to dwell in it. It's the height up to heaven's standard. Way beyond earth. Way beyond the cosmos, the universe.
- [31 : 26] Reaches heaven's height, the standard of heaven. The third thing was filled with all the fullness of God. Now that just simply means that as God is full of all these things, so Christians should be full of these things like him, as full as God is.
- Actually, it simply means as far as I can make it. It's simply a definition of the dimensions of Christ's love that's just been spoken of.
- The height, the length, the depth, the width. Basically. Well, one last word. To know the love of Christ is to know all you need to know.
- But not to know the love of Christ is to miss the only thing you need to know.
- to know the love of Christ is to know all you need to know.
- [32 : 45] Not to know the love of Christ is to miss the only thing you need to know.
- May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word effectual to everyone else. Let's pray. Amen.