

Series: What's the church?

"Glory in the Church"

Ephesians 3:14 - 21

Big Idea – God wants His church to bring glory to Him not ourselves.

Intro: Paul starts his second prayer here in his letter to the believers at Ephesus. The first prayer (1:16) is for believers to know their power; the second is for them to use it.

Or, first we need to know the teaching of Scripture, know who you are in Christ. Second, need to know how to live like it. First is doctrine, then comes duty. First comes your position, then your practice.

The prayer is a plea to God, and to the church. Paul asks the church to respond to God's provision and asks God to also motivate His people to use the power He has given them.

Basically, Paul asks God for the following things for His church.

1. Spiritual power through the Holy Spirit

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; Ephesians 3:14-16

"for this reason" refers to our new identity as the dwelling place of God

"I bow my knees before the Father" - Father is Name Jesus always used in prayer, and the one He used in teaching His disciples to pray (Matt. 6:9). Because God is our heavenly Father, we do not come to Him in fear and trembling that He will rebuff us or be indifferent.

We do not come to God to appease Him as the pagans do to their deities. We come to a tender, loving, concerned, compassionate, accepting Father.

A loving human father always accepts the advances of his children, even when they have been disobedient or ungrateful. How much more does our heavenly Father accept His children, regardless of what they have done or not done?

Paul approaches the Father with boldness and confidence, knowing that God is more willing for His children to come to Him than they ever are of going to Him.

He also knows that God has been waiting all the while with a Father's heart of love and anticipation.

"I bow my knees," Paul is not dictating a required posture for prayer. He did not always pray while kneeling, and Scripture tells of people praying in many different positions,

As he prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah, "Abraham was still standing before the Lord" (Gen. 18:22).

When David prayed about the building of the Temple, he "went in and sat before the Lord" (1 Chron. 17:16).

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal, He "fell on His face and prayed" (Matt. 26:39).

In the Bible "bowing the knees" or kneeling signifies several things:

1. it represents an attitude of submission, of recognition that one is in the presence of someone who is of much higher rank, dignity, and authority. After proclaiming the Lord as "the rock of our salvation,... a great God, and a great King above all gods," and as the Creator of all the earth, the psalmist says, "Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Ps. 95:1-6).

2. references to bowing the knee before God in times of intense passion and emotion. When Daniel heard that King Darius had signed the decree devised by the jealous wise men/counsellors forbidding the worship of any god besides the king, "he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God" (Dan. 6:10)—knowing that his continued worship of the true God would result in his being thrown into a den of lions.

As Paul met for the last time with the elders from Ephesus, "he knelt down and prayed with them all" on the seashore at Miletus (Acts 20:36).

As he prayed for the Ephesians while writing this letter to them, the apostle felt led to bow [his] knees before the Father on their behalf, not because that position or any other is especially sacred, but because of his reverence for God's glory in the midst of his passionate prayer.

Paul's first and central request for this divine family is that God would grant [them], according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.

All Christians ought to be like Paul in having sensitivity to the spiritual needs of others, for the salvation of the unsaved and the spiritual protection and growth of the saved.

We are to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of our wives, husbands, children, pastors, fellow church members, neighbors, fellow students, friends, and co-workers. We are to pray for everyone with whom we have any contact at all, as well as for many others—such as government officials, Christian leaders, and missionaries—whom we may never have met or known.

Prayer should be a constant effort of our daily living.

Jesus said, "Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength" (Luke 21:36).

Paul often said that he prayed continually for others and repeatedly encouraged others to do the same. At least two of Jesus' parables focus on persistent prayer—the parable of the man who knocks on his neighbor's door at midnight asking for food to give an unexpected guest (Luke 11:5-10) and the parable of the persistent widow who eventually obtained help from a wicked judge because she refused to stop petitioning him (Luke 18:1-8).

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers was bold, confident, and inclusive. He asked God to give them every spiritual enablement they did not already use to apply their available resources.

Jacques Ellul, the contemporary Christian philosopher, is convinced that prayer for persons living in the technological age must be combative—and prayer, he says, is not just combat with the world, the flesh, and the devil but is combat with God.

We must struggle with the Lord just as Jacob did at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-30), as Abraham boldly interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:23-32), and as Moses interceded for his fellow Israelites (Ex. 32:11-13; Num. 14:13-19). What James means when he says "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous person accomplishes much."

In 1540 Luther's good friend and assistant, Friedrich Myconius, became sick and was expected to die within a short time. From his bed he wrote a tender farewell letter to Luther. When Luther received the message, he immediately sent back a reply: "I command thee in the name of God to live because I still have need of thee in the work of reforming the church.... The Lord will never let me hear that thou art dead, but will permit thee to survive me. For this I am praying, this is my will, and may my will be done, because I seek only to glorify the name of God."

Those words seem harsh and insensitive to modern ears, but God apparently honored the prayer. Although Myconius had already lost the ability to speak when Luther's reply came, he soon recovered. He lived six more years and died two months after Luther.

In our daily living and in our prayer, it is more difficult to appreciate spiritual riches than it is to appreciate material riches. Whether we have a lot of money or not, we have some comprehension of what material wealth is like. We have a taste of it in the things we do possess and we can vicariously enjoy the expensive homes, cars, boats, jewelry, clothes, and other such things that we see rich people enjoying. Spiritual riches, on the other hand, are not so obvious—and are not even attractive to the natural man or to disobedient Christians.

But to the spiritual believer, the riches of His glory are rich indeed.

From the beginning of the letter Paul has been exulting over those divine riches—every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (1:3), being chosen before the foundation of the world (1:4), His redemption and forgiveness (1:7), His making known to us the mystery of His will (1:9), His giving us an inheritance with His Son, Jesus Christ (1:11), and so on throughout the first two and a half chapters.

The phrase “of His glory” testifies that these riches belong to God because of who He is. They belong innately to His Person, which is to say, His glory (cf. 1:17, where Paul calls God, “the Father of glory” and Ex. 33:18ff., where God reveals His personal attributes as glory).

Those, and many others, are the riches that every believer has in Jesus Christ. Paul is not praying for God to give these riches to believers, but that He would grant believers to be strengthened by God according to the riches they already possess. He wants them to live lives that correspond to the spiritual wealth they have in Christ.

How sad to go around in the tattered rags of our own inadequacy when we could be living sumptuously in the superabundance of God's unspeakable riches.

The first step in living like God's children is to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. Yet most Christians never seem to get to this first step, not knowing what it is to see God's power fully at work in them. They suffer, the church suffers, and the world suffers because the inner man of most believers is never strengthened with power through His Spirit.

Paul was concerned for the physical health of believers and was used by God to bring healing to many. He was concerned for the poor saints in Jerusalem and worked tirelessly to raise money for them to buy food and other physical necessities. But he knew that the outer man was destined to perish. It is only a temporary housing for the real person, the inner man.

“Therefore we do not lose heart,” Paul could say, “but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

Paul told Timothy, “But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth” (2 Tim. 4:17).

In *The Psychological Society* Martin Gross questions the very foundations of psychology and psychiatry, suggesting that prestige and financial gain are the real driving forces behind them. Even more significantly, however, he asserts that psychology and psychiatry have no answers to the mental and emotional ills they are used to treat. His conclusion is that every person is incurably neurotic by nature and should be left alone with his neurosis. From the purely human standpoint from which he writes, Gross's pessimistic conclusion is perfectly sound, because man's basic nature is indeed universally and incurably flawed. But the flaw is sin, of which neuroses and all other problems are but symptoms. The flaw is in the inner man, where man himself cannot perform a cure.

Only God can reach and cure the inner man, and that is where He most wants to work. His work begins with salvation, and after that His main field of work is still the inner man, because that is where spiritual life exists and where it must

grow The "divine nature," imparted to the believer at salvation (1 Pet. 1:3), is at the core of the inner man and is the base from which the Holy Spirit changes the thinking of the believer.

Although the outer, physical man becomes weaker and weaker with age, the inner, spiritual man should continually grow stronger and stronger with power through His Spirit. Only God's Spirit can strengthen our spirits. He is the one who energizes, revitalizes, and empowers us (cf. Acts 1:8).

In Romans 7:22-23 Paul is expressing the strong desire of a regenerated man to do the will of God but being hampered by the sin that dwells in his fleshly body, whereas in chapter 8 we hear him express the truth that victory in this conflict is in the Holy Spirit.

"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6). "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God," he goes on to say. "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (vv. 8-9).

To the Galatians he wrote, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). The obedient, effective, and productive Christian must be Spirit conscious, Spirit filled, and Spirit controlled.

When the inner man is fed regularly on the Word of God and seeks the Spirit's will in all the decisions of life, the believer can be sure he will be strengthened with power through His Spirit.

Spiritual power is not the mark of a special class of Christian but is the mark of every Christian who submits to God's Word and Spirit. Like physical growth and strength, spiritual growth and strength do not come overnight.

As we discipline our minds and spirits to study God's Word, understand it, and live by it, we are nourished and strengthened. Every bit of spiritual food and every bit of spiritual exercise add to our strength and endurance.

Spiritual growth can be defined as the decreasing frequency of sin. The more we exercise our spiritual muscles, yielding to the Spirit's control of our lives, the less sin is present. Where the strength of God increases, sin necessarily decreases. The nearer we come to God, the further we go from sin.

As that occurs, what happens to the outer man matters less and less.

"We are handicapped on all sides but we are never frustrated: we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked Out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life.... This is the reason why we never collapse. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength."

(2 Cor. 4:8-12, 16) JB Phillips

2. Christ being at home in your hearts

"...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (3:17a)

The purpose of our being "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" is that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith.

Not talking about our salvation, but our sanctification.

In the context of this passage the connotation is not simply that of being inside the house of our hearts but of being at home there, settled down as a family member. Christ cannot be "at home" in our hearts until our inner person submits to the strengthening of His Spirit.

Until the Spirit controls our lives, Jesus Christ cannot be comfortable there, but only stays like a tolerated visitor. Paul's teaching here does not relate to the fact of Jesus' presence in the hearts of believers but to the quality of His presence.

When the Lord came with two angels to visit, Abraham and Sarah immediately made preparations to entertain their guests in the best possible way. From the rest of the passage (Gen. 18) it is evident that Abraham and Sarah knew they were hosting the Lord Himself. It is also evident that the Lord felt at home with Abraham and Sarah.

It's interesting that a short while later when the Lord warned Lot to take his family and flee for their lives, He did not go Himself but only sent the two angels (19:1). Lot was a believer, but the Lord did not feel at home in Lot's house as He did in Abraham's tent.

In his booklet *My Heart Christ's Home*, Robert Munger pictures the Christian life as a house, through which Jesus goes from room to room. In the library, which is the mind, Jesus finds trash and all sorts of worthless things, which He proceeds to throw out and replace with His Word. In the dining room of appetite He finds many sinful desires listed on a worldly menu. In the place of such things as prestige, materialism, and lust He puts humility, meekness, love, and all the other virtues for which believers are to hunger and thirst. He goes through the living room of fellowship, where He finds many worldly companions and activities, through the workshop, where only toys are being made, into the closet, where hidden sins are kept, and so on through the entire house. Only when He had cleaned every room, closet, and corner of sin and foolishness could He settle down and be at home.

Jesus enters the house of our hearts the moment He saves us, but He cannot live there in comfort and satisfaction until it is cleansed of sin and filled with His will. God is gracious beyond comprehension and infinitely patient. He continues to love those of His children who insist on spurning His will. But He cannot be happy or satisfied in such a heart. He cannot be fully at home until He is allowed to dwell in our hearts through the continuing faith that trusts Him to exercise His lordship over every aspect of our lives. We practice as well as receive His presence by faith.

How awesome and wonderful that the almighty and holy God wants to live in our hearts, be at home there, and rule there! Yet Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23).

3. Abundant love

Ephesians 3:17 I pray that...that your life will be strong in love and be built on love and that you and all God's people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love—how wide and long and high and deep that love is. Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love.

The result of our yielding to the Spirit's power and submitting to Christ's lordship in our hearts is love. When Christ settles down in our lives He begins to display His own love in us and through us. When He freely indwells our hearts, we become rooted and grounded in love, that is, settled on a strong foundation of love.

"A new commandment I give to you," Jesus said, "that you love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Peter wrote, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22).

It is God's supreme desire that His children sincerely and fully love each other, just as He loves us. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit, of which joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are essentially subcategories (Gal. 5:22-23).

Love is an attitude of selflessness. Biblical *agapē* love is a matter of the will and not a matter of feeling or emotion, though deep feelings and emotions almost always accompany love. God's loving the world was not a matter simply of feeling; it resulted in His sending His only Son to redeem the world (John 3:16).

Love is selfless giving, always selfless and always giving. Like many human mothers' love – why moms seem to “like burnt toast.”

It is the very nature and substance of love to deny self and to give to others. Jesus did not say, "Greater love has no one than to have warm feelings for his friends," but rather, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

We can only have such love when Christ is free to work His own love through us. We cannot fulfill any of Christ's commands without Christ Himself, least of all His command to love. We can only love as Christ loves when He has free reign in our hearts.

"By this," John says, "the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.... We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:9-12, 19).

When the Spirit of God empowers our lives and Christ is obeyed as the Lord of our hearts, our sins and weaknesses are dealt with and we find ourselves wanting to serve others, wanting to sacrifice for them and serve them—because Christ's loving nature has indeed become our own.

Loving is the supernatural attitude of the Christian, because love is the nature of Christ. When a Christian does not love he has to do so intentionally and with effort—just as he must do to hold his breath. To become habitually unloving he must habitually resist Christ as the Lord of his heart.

To continue the analogy to breathing, when Christ has his proper place in our hearts, we do not have to be told to love—just as we do not have to be told to breathe. Eventually it must happen, because loving is as natural to the spiritual person as breathing is to the natural person.

Though it is unnatural for the Christian to be unloving, it is still possible to be disobedient in regard to love. Just as loving is determined by the will and not by circumstances or other people, so is not loving. If a husband fails in his love for his wife, or she for him, it is never because of the other person, regardless of what the other person may have done. You do not fall either into or out of *agapē* love, because it is controlled by the will.

Romantic love can be beautiful and meaningful, and we find many favorable accounts of it in Scripture. But it is *agapē* love that God commands husbands and wives to have for each other (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Titus 2:4)—the love that each person controls by his own act of will. Strained relations between husbands and wives, between fellow workers, between brothers and sisters, or between any others is never a matter of incompatibility or personality conflict but is always a matter of sin.

This principle applies to everyone with whom the Christian has contact, especially his fellow Christians. Loving others is an act of obedience, and not loving them is an act of disobedience.

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

In the deepest sense, love is the only commandment of God. The greatest commandment, Jesus said, is to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). And "he who loves his neighbor," Paul said, "has fulfilled the law For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10).

The absence of love is the presence of sin. The absence of love has nothing at all to do with what is happening to us, but everything to do with what is happening in us. Sin and love are enemies, because sin and God are enemies. They cannot

coexist. Where one is, the other is not. The loveless life is the ungodly life; and the godly life is the serving, caring, tenderhearted, affectionate, self-giving, self-sacrificing life of Christ's love working through the believer.

When we are rooted and grounded in love, we then become able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of love. We cannot comprehend the fulness of love unless we are totally immersed in love, unless it is the very root and ground of our being.

When someone asked the famed jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong to explain jazz, he replied, "Man, if I've got to explain it, you ain't got it."

In some ways that simplistic idea applies to love. It cannot truly be understood and comprehended until it is experienced. Yet the experience and working of love that Paul is talking about in this passage is not emotional or subjective. It is not nice feelings or warm sentiments that bring such comprehension, but the actual working of God's Spirit and God's Son in our lives to produce a love that is pure and sincere, selfless and serving.

To be rooted and grounded in love requires being rooted and grounded in God. When we are saved, God's love is "poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). It is the Lord Himself who directs our "hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5).

Love is available to every Christian because Christ is available to every Christian. Paul prays that we will become able to comprehend with all the saints. Love is not simply for the even-tempered Christian or the naturally pleasant and agreeable Christian. Nor is it for some supposed special class of Christians who have an inside spiritual track. It is for, and commanded of, every Christian—all the saints.

Comprehension of love comes from being continually immersed in the things of God, especially His Word. "Thy words were found and I ate them," Jeremiah declared, "and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).

Job testified, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12), and the psalmist tells us that the delight of the righteous person "(is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2; cf. 19:9b-10; 119:167; etc.).

To comprehend... what is the breadth and length and height and depth of love is to understand it in its fullness. Love goes in every direction and to the greatest distance. It goes wherever it is needed for as long as it is needed. The early church Father Jerome said that the love of Christ reaches up to the holy angels and down to those in hell. Its length covers the men on the upward way and its breadth reaches those drifting away on evil paths.

"breadth and length and height and depth" don't represent four specific types or categories of love but simply suggest its vastness and completeness.

In whatever spiritual direction we look we can see God's love.

We can see love's breadth reflected in God's acceptance of Gentile and Jew equally in Christ (Eph. 2:11-18).

We can see love's length in God's choosing us before the foundation of the world (1:4-5) for a salvation that will last through all eternity.

We can see love's height in God's having "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3) and in His raising us up and seating us "with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (2:6).

We can see love's depth in God's reaching down to the lowest levels of depravity to redeem those who are dead in trespasses and sins (2:1-3). God's love can reach any person in any sin, and it stretches from eternity past to eternity future. It takes us into the very presence of God and sits us on His throne.

In what may at first seem a self-contradiction, Paul says that to know the love of Christ... surpasses knowledge. Knowing Christ's love takes us beyond human knowledge, because it is from an infinitely higher source. Paul is not

speaking here of our knowing the love we are to have for Christ but the love of Christ, His very own love that He must place in our hearts before we can love Him or anyone else.

We are commanded to love because we are given love. God always gives before He commands anything in return, and love is one of Christ's greatest gifts to His church. Throughout John 14-16 Jesus promises to give love, joy, peace, power, and comfort without measure to those who belong to Him.

The world cannot comprehend the great love that Christ gives because it cannot understand Christ. Worldly love is based on attraction and therefore lasts only as long as the attraction. Christ's love is based on His own nature and therefore lasts forever.

Worldly love lasts until it is offended or rebuffed. Christ's love lasts despite every offense and every rebuff. Worldly love loves for what it can get. Christ's love loves for what it can give.

What is incomprehensible to the world is to be normal living for the child of God.

4. God's fullness

Then you can be filled with the fullness of God.

The inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God's fullness in us. To be filled up to all the fullness of God is indeed incomprehensible, even to God's own children. It is incredible and indescribable. There is no way, this side of heaven, we can fathom that truth. We can only believe it and praise God for it.

J. Wilbur Chapman often told of the testimony given by a certain man in one of his meetings:

"I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Hey, mister, can you give me a dime?" As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, "Father, Father, do you know me?" Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Oh my son, at last I've found you! I've found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours." Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had."

That is a small picture of what God wants to do for His children. His supreme goal in bringing us to Himself is to make us like Himself by filling us with Himself, with all that He is and has.

Even to begin to grasp the magnitude of that truth, we must think of every attribute and every characteristic of God. We must think of His power, majesty, wisdom, love, mercy, patience, kindness, longsuffering, and every other thing that God is and does. That Paul is not exaggerating is clear from the fact that in this letter he repeatedly mentions the fullness of God's blessings to those who belong to Him through Christ.

He tells us that the church is Christ's "body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). He tells us that "He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (4:10). And he tells us that God wants every believer to "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18).

Plēroō means to make full, or fill to the full, and is used many times in the New Testament. It speaks of total dominance. A person filled with rage is totally dominated by hatred. A person filled with happiness is totally dominated by joy. To be filled up to all the fullness of God therefore means to be totally dominated by Him, with nothing left of self or any part of the old man.

By definition, then, to be filled with God is to be emptied of self. It is not to have much of God and little of self, but all of God and none of self. This is a recurring theme in Ephesians. Here Paul talks about the fullness of God; in 4:13 it is "the fullness of Christ"; and in 5:18 it is the fullness of the Spirit.

What a God, who loves us so much that He will not rest until we are completely like Him! We can only sing with David, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior" (2 Sam. 22:2-3). Throughout the rest of that magnificent hymn, David stacks praise upon praise in declaring God's greatness and goodness.

From our human, earthly perspective we can never see more than "the fringes of His ways." No wonder David said that he would not be satisfied until he awoke in the likeness of God (Ps. 17:15).

Only then will we know fully as we have been fully known (1 Cor. 13:12).

5. The Lord's glory in His church

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20, 21

When the Holy Spirit has empowered us, Christ has indwelt us, love has mastered us, and God has filled us with His own fullness, then He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. Until those conditions are met, God's working in us is limited. When they are met, His working in us is unlimited.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14).

There is no situation in which the Lord cannot use us, provided we are submitted to Him. Here is a pyramid progression of God's enablement: He is able; He is able to do; He is able to do exceeding abundantly; He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask; He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.

There is no question in the minds of believers that God is able to do more than we can conceive, but too few Christians enjoy the privilege of seeing Him do that in their lives, because they fail to follow the pattern of enablement presented in these verses.

Paul declared that the effectiveness of his own ministry was that "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4), because "the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power" (4:20).

Throughout his ministry the apostle was concerned about

We do not want anyone to find fault with our work, so nothing we do will be a problem for anyone. But in every way we show we are servants of God: in accepting many hard things, in troubles, in difficulties, and in great problems. We are beaten and thrown into prison. We meet those who become upset with us and start riots. We work hard, and sometimes we get no sleep or food. We show we are servants of God by our pure lives, our understanding, patience, and kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by true love, by speaking the truth, and by God's power. (2 Cor. 6:3-7).

Everything Paul did was in the power of God, and in the power of God there was nothing within the Lord's will that he could not see accomplished.

That same power works within us by the presence of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

When by our yieldedness God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, only then are we truly effective and only then is He truly glorified.

And He deserves glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, not only now, but to all generations forever and ever. The Amen confirms that worthy goal.