

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 7

Speaker	Bible Basics Conference; Simon Attwood; Michael Hardt; Graham Warnes; Hugh Clark; Paul Dronsfield; Andrew Poots
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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Turn please to the latter part of Ephesians chapter 3, and we'll read the verses from 14 to 21.

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, 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, 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, [00:01:03] and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. 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, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

We are come to a particularly important part of the epistle to the Ephesians. Verses 14 to 21 of chapter 3, Paul's second prayer, are the bridge between the teaching part of [00:02:06] the letter and the practical part of the letter. It is the part of the letter that converts right Christian teaching into right Christian living, and we must all of us pass this way. God does not want us to be like people that come together, and we take down a locked chest, and we unlock it, and we take out the precious gems and the precious things [00:03:05] that are within, and we hand them round, we admire them, we talk about them, perhaps we even thank God for them, and then at the end of our being together, we put them all back into the chest again. We lock it up, and we put it back into the cupboard. What the devil wants to do is to bring in a disconnect at this point. If he cannot prevent us from knowing the truth, he will do everything within his power to prevent us from living out that truth. And it is self-evident that this being so shows how important prayer is.

[00:04:21] In chapter one, Paul had written thirteen verses before he felt the need to put his pen down and to get down on his knees and pray. Of course, he tells us in the latter part of chapter one what his prayer was. And here in chapter three, he only writes thirteen verses before again he feels the need to get down on his knees and pray. Because [00:05:04] it is not in us, not in any one of us, by our own intelligence, by our own application, by our own strength, to enter in to the truths that are being brought before us in this letter. We need the help of God. And one of the things that I would like to emphasise is the importance of the quiet time. One of the first pieces of Christian literature I was ever given after I was converted was about the importance of the quiet time. Paul [00:06:08] isn't here to

pray for us anymore. Perhaps there are others that do pray for you if you've been brought up in a Christian home. I'm sure there are. If you are known to other Christians, I'm sure they're praying for you too. But it is of vital importance that every one of us here maintains a quiet time. That means that we have a set period of time, a set time every day when we read God's word and we pray. And we don't allow this time to be crowded out. If we follow the example of the Lord Jesus, we know that he had his quiet times [00:07:09] in the morning. And if we are going to follow his example as we ought to, if we are going to follow in his steps, that's when most of us should have quiet time. And the time that we get up in the morning is largely determined by the time that we go to bed at night. It's simply a matter of self-discipline. Something that we are exercised about because we don't want to be [00:08:01] hypocrites. After all this high teaching, after all this high talk, and Paul's teaching never reaches higher than it does in the epistle to the Ephesians, we do not want our answer to these things to be a low and inconsistent walk, but a walk that is altogether consistent with the truth that we have been hearing about. We can see in the wider context of Paul's prayer why prayer should be necessary. We've seen that Paul speaks of himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you [00:09:05] Gentiles, as the prisoner of the Lord because he was faithful to the Lord in the ministry that the Lord Jesus committed to him. And right at the beginning, the Lord Jesus said to Ananias who went to Paul with some hesitation, go thy way for I will show unto him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Paul lived a life that was wholly consistent with the truth that he brought to the saints. As a consequence, he was a sufferer in this world. We thought of him already today as persecuted by those at Ephesus, when the hopes of their gains were fast disappearing because people were turning from their idolatry to the Lord Jesus, and he suffered too continually [00:10:08] at the hands of the Jews. Because Paul's gospel was, well there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the Jews realised that Paul was saying in effect, at least for the time, certainly on the basis of the keeping of the law, their special place had gone. Is this our experience? Suffering, persecution. The way in which we suffer, the way in which we are persecuted may be more subtle than it was in the days in which Paul was living, but this is sure because scripture asserts it that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus [00:11:02] shall suffer persecution. And that's why Paul suffered persecution. You remember he says in 2nd Timothy chapter 3 to Timothy, that has fully known my teaching manner of life. Teaching manner of life. Persecution. It is to be expected if we live consistently, one of the remarkable things about this subject is that the Lord Jesus himself referred to the fact that in the world we should have tribulation. And all the major writers of the New Testament also emphasised the fact that if we are really following the Lord we can expect sorrow and suffering. And the persecution that [00:12:14] we will experience, the attacks that are made upon us will be particularly severe if we are living out the truth of Ephesians. We've been reminded already of that spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. There are spiritual forces that are arraigned against us. So that for all these reasons, we have need to bow our knees. To pray that we, the faithful in Christ Jesus, [00:13:12] that we, the faithful in Christ Jesus, may be given all we need to put the truth into practice. And again, I want to challenge you as I find my own heart challenged by the fact that right at the beginning of the epistle, this is how it is addressed to the faithful in Christ Jesus. So that if we are going to benefit from the truth set out [00:14:03] before us, then this is what needs to characterise us, faithfulness to God. We then come to the prayer, looking at it in more detail, not merely in its immediate context. And the first thing I want to emphasise is that we can pray with confidence. Because if you read verse 20 it says, unto him that is able to do, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. We are praying to the Father who loves us. We are praying to the Father [00:15:05] who is omnipotent, in whose hands all power is to be found. And this power has its exercise towards us. You know it is, I think most will know, that the word power is the word from which we get our word dynamite. But the power of God towards us isn't quite like dynamite because dynamite goes off with a

bang and the power is gone. And the power of dynamite is a destructive power. Well the power of God is neither of these things. The power of God has its exercise towards us, [00:16:07] continually. We read about this in 2 Peter chapter 1. We are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time. And this is the power of God on which we can count. And as we go around the verses, and we're going to look at them quickly first of all, in the way of an overview, I'll come back to explain the basis of the statement that I'm putting up on the slide. But the first thing is that we, there is the prayer that we may understand the progressive self-revelation of God and the special place of the assembly. If it [00:17:07] doesn't stick as I go through, don't worry because we'll come back to this if there's time. In verse 16, this power is exercised in order that our spiritual condition may be consistent with the truth that has been brought before us. If our spiritual condition is consistent with the truth that has been brought before us, then that condition will solicit persecution and we need power to face opposition and stand firm in our hearts. God wants us as Christians to enjoy our own special portion, his wonderful love, to be rooted and grounded in love and to know the love [00:18:02] of Christ which passes knowledge. He wants us to understand the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ to everything that God has purposed, to everything that God is doing. That's absolutely key to understanding the Word of God, to understand first of all that the Lord Jesus is at the heart of everything that God is about because he is God's well-beloved Son. He wants us to enter into God's counsels and purposes and that's what those words which don't actually describe what they are describing, that we may know, be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height. And what Paul wants us to comprehend is the breadth and depth [00:19:05] and length and height of the counsels and purposes of God. And all this has in view that there may be a response to God, there is going to be a response to God, thank God, from all of those who are believers, that's what verse 21 tells us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end. That response to God, that eternal response to God has been secured by the work of the Lord Jesus. But if we would bring glory to God now while we are left here on earth, this is the way that we do it. We come back now and go quickly down the [00:20:07] prayer again verse by verse. And verse 15 speaks about the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole or every, as it should be really, family in heaven and in earth is named. Because as I think was made clear by Paul's answer to one of the questions posed in the question and answer session, God has different families. He has more than one family. He has the assembly at the present time, the Christian company. But after we've gone to be with Christ, God will begin again to work [00:21:03] with those who are upon the earth, with the Jews and through them with the Gentiles. And each of these families stands in relation to God according to the particular way in which God has been pleased to reveal himself to that family. To the Jews, God has revealed himself as Jehovah. Amos chapter 3 verse 2 says that you only have I known of all the peoples of the earth. We can turn to other scriptures which I think show that the name by which the Gentiles will know God is the name Most High God. And I might mention at this point that there's a typing error, my error, in [00:22:04] that reference to Genesis under Most High God. It's not Genesis 32 verse 8 at all. It's Genesis 14 verse 18 where the reference is to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God who comes forward after the battle that is described in that chapter to bless Abraham. And that first battle in scripture is a picture of the last battle of scripture. And after that last battle of scripture there will be those of the nations, those who are Gentiles blessed, those who have the testimony of the everlasting gospel during the course of the tribulation. But when we look [00:23:04] at the Christian family, and now we're looking at the father revealed in the son, what we have is not a name of God that is connected with his partial revelation, but what we have in the father revealed in the son is the full and final revelation of God. Everything that we may know about God has now been revealed in the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. It is God's desire in view of these things that we might be strengthened according to the riches of his glory with might [00:24:07] by his spirit in the inner man. And we come back again to the

question of our actual condition, our practical state. And God desires that our practical state might be a spiritual state. And those of you who are acquainted with the early chapters of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians will remember that toward the end of chapter 2 at the beginning of chapter 3 he presents three possible states. He talks in those verses about natural men, he talks about the Corinthians as being carnal, and he goes on to speak about the spiritual. The natural man is the unconverted [00:25:08] man. The carnal man or person is a Christian who has not finished with the flesh. They are still in their practice characterized by that fallen nature, that sinful fallen nature that each of us still has. But the spiritual person, on the contrary, is characterized by the indwelling Holy Spirit. And that's what God our Father desires for us. And the spirit who dwells in us occupies us with the riches of the Father's glory made known to us by the Son. Glory is not something [00:26:10] difficult to understand because it simply means manifested excellence. And whenever God reveals himself he is glorified because he is showing something of his intrinsic excellence. And the Lord Jesus, who has made the Father known, who has revealed the Father to us, is the one in whom all these excellences of God have been brought into display. They were seen in his pathway, they were seen too in his work upon the cross. When we come to being rooted and grounded in love, [00:27:10] and I'm going to go over the remaining verses quite quickly, I think, to obey the exhortations that several times have been given. Rooted and grounded in love. Rooted and grounded in love. What does that mean in practice? It means that we are in touch with God. We are in fellowship with him, in communion with him. We don't just know about him because we have read certain things in the Word of God, praise God for that, but we know them in our hearts because we have fellowship with him. We're walking with him. We are rooted and grounded in love. And a Christian who is rooted in love is a growing Christian. And that's what we all want to be from day to day. We'll go to the [00:28:05] Word because we're rooted in the love of God. We'll go to the Word of God. We'll read about God. We'll read about the Lord Jesus. We'll read about the truth of God. And if we set out, asked all, determined to make these things our own, I assure you they will be made your own. If you are determined that these things should be taken possession of by you, really entered into, and your life is bent to that goal, you will achieve that goal. God will help you to achieve it. Rooted in love is a growing Christian. Grounded in love is a stable Christian. Brother Andrew was talking about, you know, we don't want to be wishy-washy Christians who are blown about by [00:29:06] every wind of doctrine, who are troubled when we hear this or we're troubled when we hear that. No, neither in our experience are we to be on the crest of the wave one day and in the trough of it the next. God wants us to be stable Christians because we are in touch with him through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is achieved by Christ dwelling in our hearts. He's not merely a passing visitor. He is the one that we are occupied with continually. He's the object of our love just as he is the object of the love of God his father. But the heart in scripture is not just about the [00:30:07] affections. And this is a most important point because the heart is actually the seat of the conscience. And I've given the references where the scripture shows this to be the case. The heart is the seat of the conscience. It is the center of our moral being. And if the Lord Jesus dwells there, if he reigns without a rival there, then we shall as a matter of course live out the truth because we are in touch with him. And because Christ is dwelling in our hearts and we have the Lord Jesus as our object, we realize, we come to realize that he is at the center that everything, [00:31:06] he is at the center of everything that God is doing. And having Christ in our hearts places us at that center. And so we are able to look out on the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the purposes and counsels of God and to enter into them. You know the scripture says, shall I hide from Abraham my friend the thing that I am doing? And the Lord Jesus counts us his friends and desires to show to us everything that God is going to do for the glory of the Lord Jesus and for God's own glory. So the counsels and purposes of the Father are vast but we are [00:32:06] brought back again to the love of Christ. This is a wonderful thing. Sometimes you know your head gets full to bursting and you think I can't take anymore, you know, I'm getting a headache or

whatever it may be. But here is something that where we are always at home, where we are always comfortable. And this is so sweet and as we know this love of Christ and we learn more and more about the revelation of God in him, we learn it practically, then our fellowship with God is developed. We are filled with all the fullness of God and Andrew has already stolen my thunder by [00:33:02] talking about the bucket in the sea and the bucket full and then we return to praise and worship God the Father and the Son by the Spirit. Well my apologies for going slightly over time but may the Lord help us to put the precious truth that we have been learning about today and are to learn about tomorrow into practice and to live Christian lives that are consistent with that truth. Thank you.