

Ephesians 3:9-21

Good morning and thank you for joining us! We're continuing our VBV study through Ephesians, so would you please turn in your bibles to Ephesians 3?

Last week in our study we saw Paul describing in detail the mystery, that the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been broken down because of Jesus. This unity is no small issue, because remember it was blood bought. Every requirement that religion could put upon you has been blown to smithereens by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We only studied through the first 8 verses last week, so this morning we'll pick up in verse 9 of chapter 3 and finish the chapter.

The title of this morning's message is More than a feeling
Let's pray

As we've often done in this study, to ensure we have the full context of the verses we're studying this morning, let's read the verses we studied last week, v 1-8 then we'll dive in at verse 9.

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the

Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

9 and to make all see what is the fellowship^[fn] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;^[fn]

Jesus was not the first thing God created as some cults will claim. While Jesus is held in high regard by Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others, those groups all teach that Jesus was a created being.

But the Bible is clear, Jesus was with God from the very beginning and in fact, creation occurred through Jesus.

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

10-11

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The principalities and powers in the heavenly places mentioned here is talking about the spiritual realm of God's holy angels and demons. Now when we get to chapter 6 we're gonna spend a lot of time talking about spiritual warfare, fallen principalities and powers.

Here's what's shocking- in v10 it says the wisdom of God might be made known BY the church TO the principalities and powers in heavenly places. Angels are staring in awe at us!

1 Peter 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

There's a lot of scripture that talks about angels, and again we'll dive head first into that in chapter 6. But look at this intriguing verse in 1 Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

So, think about this for a minute. We see in the bible that the angels in heaven are very structured and ordered, there's rankings and everything is very organized. There's cherubim, seraphim, Michael, Gabriel, all these orderly around the throne of God.

And then here comes you and me. God's dirty little kid's running into the throne room, and we jump up to the throne onto our

father's lap and go ABBA, Daddy. And the angels are astounded. It says they're amazed, they're shocked.

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. The angels in heaven are astounded, they must be saying, "Father, this motley crew can come marching into Your throne room anytime they want, cast their cares upon You, and get help from You?" And because of what Christ did for us on the cross at Calvary the answer is a resounding "Yes!"

Look what it says. It says in whom we have boldness. In the greek boldness means freedom of speech. We can pour our hearts out to Him and share everything with our Lord.

But it's more than just that. Because it also says we have access- not just to a place, no it means we have access to God the Father personally. And we have that access with confidence. In the Greek, it's confident assurance.

Folks this is the reality every follower of Christ has right now.

SHOW PIC Several years ago when my kids were little I used to travel alot for work. Whenever I came home, my kids would run to meet me at the door and give me the biggest hugs. They desired access to me. Did I turn them away? Did I say not now I'm busy? Of course not. I delight in them-because I love them! **CLOSE PIC**

Guys the issue with access to God is not on God's side, it's us. The question is, are we using what He died to give us!!!

Don't let Satan lie to you. Don't let him tell you God doesn't love you. Don't let him tell you you've worn out His grace.

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

What a wonderful picture of love. Even though Paul was in prison because he preached the gospel, he tells the Ephesians 'hey it's nothing for me to be in prison for you.' Paul knew his imprisonment was for the good of the Christians at Ephesus.

Yet Paul was being used in a greater way than he ever imagined. He had no idea that his Roman imprisonment would produce the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon and touch countless millions and millions of lives for Jesus. He had no idea!

In the same way, each of us has a place in the service of God's eternal plan. And we have no idea the magnitude of it. Don't ever think God can't or isn't willing to use you. To resign yourself to the place of eeyore-'oh God can't use a schmuck like me' is trying to limit the power of the cross. No, the One who created you, He delights in you, and He wants to use you for His glory even in the midst of your dark days.

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, This is what's so beautiful about knowing God - it's so simple. Dropping to one's knees is a sign of humility-if you want to experience God all you have to do is humbly seek Him!

SHOW PIC You don't have to coil your body into a mantra position and chant mindlessly... or walk barefoot over hot coals... or go door to door distributing religious propaganda... or spend countless hours listening to the latest spiritual guru... **CLOSE PIC**

If you want to experience the living God all you have to do is step over your pride, admit your sin, humble yourself, and bow to your knees - even if it's just in your heart.

Jesus sends out an invitation in **Luke 11:9-10 So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

Jesus can invite us to come to God because He's paid our admission! His blood covers our sin and gives us access to God. Jesus left His home in heaven, born in the flesh, went to the cross - so that now we come to God in an instant - in the speed of prayer.

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, In remembering that all God's family is called after His name, it emphasizes the unity of the Body of Christ. God is Father of both Jew and Gentile.

Now in verses 16-19 Paul prays again for the Ephesians.

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, There is an inner man just as real as our physical body. Yet often

our tendency is to focus on the strength in our physical body, and neglect the strength of the inner man.

SHOW PIC Spiritually speaking, apart from Christ we're about as strong as a wet noodle. **CLOSE PIC**

But Jesus promises to make us strong! Bring your weakness to God - He'll add His power.

Please notice the focus of Paul's prayer, and God's strength, is the inner man, not the outer man. It's the spiritual portion of the person.

It's important to realize that every person is divided into two parts. We each have a physical side, that which we see, and a spiritual side-that we don't see.

And it's the inner man, the spiritual part of a person that lives forever. Whereas, the outer, material person is the part that dies and reverts back to dust... **2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.**

Sadly, much of our society devotes their time to the outer man - the deteriorating part of our person - while ignoring the inner person of the heart that lives forever.

I crunched some numbers this week, and found that each day Americans spend \$322 million on new clothes? Each day we scrub our teeth with 550,000 pounds of toothpaste. We gargle

69,000 gallons of mouthwash. And to top it all off, we consume 250,000 packs of breath mints... That all happens in just one day!

I'm not suggesting you shouldn't brush your teeth, or gargle, or pop an Altoid before you come to church... But we tend to get obsessed with the outer man - to the neglect of the inner man.

Listen, we do have a responsibility to take care of these physical bodies. **1 Timothy 4:8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**

Sadly I talk to people all the time who are working hard to lower their cholesterol levels, or manage their weight gain - who haven't given the health of their spiritual life a second thought!

News flash-your body is going to die! **SHOW PIC** Everyone of us has an expiration date. Thankfully, it's not stamped on the package, but trust me, you have one. **CLOSE PIC**

Have you noticed how much sickness is going around lately? Covid is floating around, RSV, common cold, flu, and pneumonia are all everywhere.

When our physical bodies grow weak and sick - we know how to treat 'em. We eat some chicken soup, get some rest, or we visit the doctor and fill a prescription.

But what do you do when the inner man gets down, gets weak, and sick and overwhelmed? Some people try to escape the problem... or numb the pain.

Paul would tell us to pray! Pray that God will send His Holy Spirit to strengthen you with His might!

SHOW PIC I think one of the most wonderful inventions of our modern world are rechargeable batteries. When your batteries start to fade just plug them into the charger and they're good for several more hours. **CLOSE PIC**

With standard batteries you use them and lose them. And these disposable batteries are a good picture of the outer man. We use them - then we lose them!

But the spirit of a man is rechargeable. Through prayer we can plug into God's power and gain fresh energy. His Spirit stimulates a spiritual current deep within us to empower us to live our lives for Him

!

Let's read verse 16 one more time

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

It's interesting, the Greek word translated "might" is "dunamis." From this word comes the English words, "dynamic, dynamo, dynamite." The Holy Spirit is our dynamite! He creates spiritual combustion inside us.

SHOW PIC Do you remember when Reebok Pumps came out. They were hailed as a breakthrough in basketball shoes. When the going got rough - and you needed a lift or you wanted to jump a little higher - or run a little faster - you reached down and started pushing the orange button on the tongue of the shoe. As you pumped it up, it inflated the shoe's inner-lining. **CLOSE PIC**

I thought, "This is so cool! At last, white guys can jump!" In fact, they still make those Reebok Pumps. Wearing a pair of Pumps meant that though your foot received the same jolt as it did before. But now there was a cushion between the sole of your foot and the floor.

And this is how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. When life gets jarring and pounding - you can pray and the HS pumps us up-the HS provides a spiritual cushion between our soul and the difficulties of this world.

Difficulties won't vanish - but now when you take the hit, you'll bounce rather than bruise!
Paul's prayer continues

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; Pause here.

Dwell uses the ancient Greek word for a permanent home. Jesus wants to settle down in your heart, not just visit as a stranger.

John 14:23: Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

See this is why a Christian can never be truly alone. If you're in Christ - Jesus lives in you. You have a permanent roommate. Jesus has made your heart His home.

But please know Jesus wants much more than just an address... Jesus wants a place where He can really be at home. Again the word translated "dwell" means "to settle down and settle in." It carries the idea of unpacking your stuff and arranging the space to your liking...

Imagine for a moment if I were to walk into your house one afternoon, and you casually said to me, "Brian, just make yourself at home!" You would say it, but you wouldn't really mean it! There's no way!

And you know how I know this? If I made myself at home in your home, I'd take off my shoes and socks, and sling them into the corner of the room. I'd raid the pantry and fridge and start drinking your energy drinks. I'd move furniture around to my liking - find a basketball game on TV and flop on the couch. I'd eat any beef jerky you had and leave crumbs all over your furniture. If you don't believe me just ask Kim!

It wouldn't take long before I made you so irritated you'd quickly rescind your offer to come over!

But Jesus really does want to make Himself at home in your heart! He wants to move in with all His stuff - unpack - take over - settle in - feel at home...

And at first, it's great to have Jesus move in! Wherever Jesus goes He brings His love, joy, peace, power. Jesus has some really cool stuff, and He shares it with His roomies! Jesus makes for a great roommate. He's always up to something new and exciting. Believe me Jesus knows how to have a good time!

But the difficulty comes when Jesus starts to make changes uncomfortable for us. When He wants to get rid of some trash in our lives, or reprogram the TV - or get rid of some time wasters on our phone, or even adjust the music we're listening to.

At first our tendency is to resist these changes, until we're reminded who He is and what He's done for us. Jesus is Lord! Listen Jesus will never be a passenger, nor even a co-pilot! No Jesus always takes the driver seat! And what He wants of you and I, is to loosen our grip, and be led by the HS.

Let's read all of verse 17

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Think of what it means to be rooted. **SHOW PIC** It's like a tree where the roots sink deep into the soil and twist and turn to wrap it's roots around the rocks.

SHOW PIC Then there's the word grounded, in the Greek it means to establish or make stable the foundation, so that it cannot be moved. **CLOSE PIC**

And notice how we're to be rooted and grounded? In love. This world is looking for love in all the wrong places. And if we're going to be a witness to this lost and hurting world, we need to be rooted and grounded in God's love. How do we do that? By knowing Him more.

Let's read verses 18 and 19 and then we'll dive into them

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Notice the description in verse 18.

The love of Jesus has width. You can see how wide a river is by noticing how much it covers over. God's river of love is so wide that it covers over all my sin, and it covers over every circumstance of my life, so that all things work together for good. His love is as wide as the world: **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The love of Jesus has length. Think about it-when did God start to love you? Before you were even born. When will God's love end for you? Never! **Jeremiah 31:3** The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."

V 18 tells us the love of Jesus has depth. How deep is Jesus' love? He left the hallowed halls of heaven to suffer the brutal death on the cross for you and for me **Philippians 2:7** but made

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Finally the love of Jesus has height. Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

It's interesting, some scholars point to the cross as an illustration of verse 18! **SHOW PIC** The cross pointed in four ways, essentially in every direction, because:

God's love is wide enough to include every person.

God's love is long enough to last through all eternity.

God's love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner.

God's love is high enough to take us to heaven. **CLOSE PIC**

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; Pause here. Paul wrote of something we can know. This isn't speculation, guesswork, emotions, or feelings. We can know the love of Christ!

It's interesting that he says to know, that which passes knowledge. At first glance, this is an odd statement. Yet think it through, there really are only two means of discovery - either through study or experience.

SHOW PIC Take a bowl of ice cream for example. How do I know it tastes good? Well, I can put a drop on a slide and place it under a microscope. I can run chemical tests on the ice cream comparing it to my taste buds. I can feed the data into a computer, and it'll tell me what kind of a sensory reaction I can expect when the ice cream hits my tongue... Or... I can just eat a bite! **CLOSE PIC**

That's the approach David recommends in **Psalm 34:8 "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**

God invites us to taste and see! Listen you can spend years studying and researching God's love, but God makes it easier than that. You can taste, experience His love right now and see for yourself that His love is good.

Ask God to pour out His love into your heart. And you know what happens when that happens...
...19 that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul wanted Christians to experience life in Jesus, which is the fullness of God **Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily**; Remember everyone of us are as close to God as we desire to be. We can never reach the end of Him.

20 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,

Looking back on your life, wouldn't you confirm the truth of verse 20? Hasn't God done things in your life you never could have dreamed of? And how did it happen-the power that works in us-through the HS.

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. The only fitting response to God is to give Him glory.

When the church understands and walks in God's eternal purpose, God will be glorified and the church will fulfill its important duty of simply glorifying God.

SHOW PIC A fire hydrant is small, but it can gush water in volume and force that is totally out of proportion to its small size. How can it be? It's because the water isn't in the hydrant. The hydrant is connected to a reservoir that is always full and full of power.

CLOSE PIC

When our internal connection to Him is tight, we'll gush out the power of God in and through our lives individually, and as a fellowship.