

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle hints at his state and condition as a prisoner, and at the afflictions he endured for the sake of the Gospel; and whereas he knew these would be objected to his ministry, and be discouraging to the saints, he chiefly insists on these two things; namely, to assert his office of apostleship, and observe the knowledge of divine mysteries, and gifts of grace bestowed on him, which he does with all modesty and humility; and also to exhort the saints to constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding his tribulations; for which purpose he puts up several petitions for them; and the whole is concluded with a doxology, or an ascription of glory to God. In (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:1), he declares himself a prisoner of Christ, for the sake of the Ephesians; and which was no objection to his being an ambassador of Christ, and an apostle of his, seeing he had a commission from him to dispense the word of his grace, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:2), of which, his knowledge in the mystery of Christ, he had by revelation, was an evident proof, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:3), which might easily be understood by what he had written in the former part of his epistle, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:4), and was such as had not been given to the saints in former times, as it was to him, and others, now, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:5), particularly the knowledge of the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles by the Gospel, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:6), of which Gospel to the Gentiles he was made a minister, through the gift of grace, and the energy of divine power, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:7), of which high honour he was unworthy, being, in his own esteem, the meanest of all the people of God; and the grace and favour was the greater, inasmuch as it was the unsearchable riches of Christ he was sent to publish, and that among the Gentiles, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:8), and to give men light into a mysterious affair, which from eternity had been hid, and kept a secret in the heart of God, the Creator of all things, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:9), but was now committed to him with this view, not only to be made known to the church, but by that to the heavenly principalities and powers, even that wise scheme of things which displays the manifold wisdom of God, and was formed according to an eternal purpose in Christ, (~~HRB~~Ephesians 3:10,11), through whom a way of access is opened to God, with boldness,

faith, and confidence, as the Gospel declares, (^{<BRD>}Ephesians 3:12). Wherefore, though he endured much tribulation for the sake of preaching this Gospel, this should not at all sink their spirits, or move them away from the hope of it; but they should rather glory that they had such a faithful preacher and defender of it, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:13). And as he desired their perseverance, so he prays for it, and for several things in order to it; the posture in which he prayed was by bowing the knee; the person to whom he prayed is described by his relation to Christ, as his Father, of whom, or of Christ, the whole family of God in heaven and earth are named, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:14,15). The petitions made by him are for internal strength from the Spirit of God, that so they might be enabled to persevere, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:16), and also, that Christ might continue to dwell in their hearts by faith, which would keep them from falling; and likewise, that they might have a lively sense, and a full persuasion of their interest in the love of God; even so as to comprehend with others its breadth, length, depth, and height, which would engage them to press forward, and to hold on, and out, and not faint at tribulations, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:17,18), And particularly he prays; that they might know more of the love of Christ, which is not fully to be known, and which would constrain them to follow him, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart; and that they might have a full supply of all grace to support, influence, and assist them, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:19), and for his own, and their encouragement, with respect to having the petitions made, the apostle ascribes glory to God by Christ, as it should be done in the church throughout all ages of time, under this consideration, as being able to do for his people abundantly more than they are able to ask of him, or can think of asking of him, or receiving from him, (^{<BRB>}Ephesians 3:20,21).

Ver. 1. *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, &c.*] Not actively, whom Christ had apprehended by his grace, and made a prisoner of hope; but passively, who was made a prisoner for Christ, on account of preaching Christ, and his Gospel: he was not a prisoner for any capital crime, as theft, murder, &c. and therefore he was not ashamed of his bonds, but rather glories in them; and a prison has often been the portion of the best of men in this world: from hence we learn, that this epistle was written when the apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and the consideration of this his condition serves much to confirm the truths he had before delivered, seeing they were such as he could, and did suffer for; and which

must engage the attention of the Ephesians to them, and especially since his sufferings were on their account:

for you Gentiles: because he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, which the Jews forbid, that they might not be saved; and because he taught them, that circumcision and the rest of the ceremonies of the law were not binding upon them; which gave great offence to the Jews, who were the means of bringing of him into these circumstances, and particularly the Asiatic Jews, the Jews of Ephesus; who having seen and heard him there, knew him again when in the temple at Jerusalem, and raised a mob upon him, having bore a grudge against him for his ministry at Ephesus, by which means he became a prisoner; so that he might truly say, he was a prisoner for the sake of them; (see ^{<4217>}Acts 21:27-33). One of Stevens's copies adds, “am an ambassador”, as in (^{<4050>}Ephesians 6:20) and another of them, “glory”, or “rejoice”; (see ^{<5076>}Philippians 2:16,17).

Ver. 2. *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God*, &c.] Not the free love and favour of God in his heart towards his people; nor internal grace wrought in the heart of the apostle; but either the gift of grace, as in (^{<4887>}Ephesians 3:7) qualifying him for the work of the ministry; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “if ye have heard the gift of the grace of God”; or rather the doctrine of grace, the Gospel, the subject matter of which is the grace of God; it is a declaration of the free grace of God in the salvation of men; and it is the means of conveying the grace of God into their hearts. Now the apostle had a dispensation to preach this Gospel committed to him; he acted by authority, and as a steward of the mysteries of God; and which he faithfully dispensed to the family of Christ, who appointed him to this service: this the Ephesians had heard of, from the relations of the apostle, and others, and knew it themselves, having often heard him preach, for he was with them for the space of three years; wherefore this is not said as if he questioned, whether they had heard or not, but as taking it for granted that they had: “if”, or “seeing ye have heard”, &c.

which is given me to you-ward; it was not for his own private use, that the Gospel was committed to him, or gifts were given him to qualify him for the dispensation of it, but for the sake of others, especially the Gentiles, and particularly the Ephesians.

Ver. 3. *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery*, &c.] Or “is made known unto me”: so the Alexandrian copy, and some others,

and the Vulgate Latin version. The Gospel, which is sometimes called a mystery, the mystery of the Gospel, the mystery of godliness, and the mystery of faith: the several doctrines of the Gospel are the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; such as a trinity of persons in the Godhead, the union of the two natures in Christ, the saints' union to Christ, and communion with him, the resurrection of the dead, and the change of living saints, and the whole doctrine of salvation by Christ, of justification by his righteousness, pardon by his blood, and atonement by his sacrifice; and this was made known to the apostle, not in a mere notional and speculative way, but in a spiritual and saving manner; not by men, for he was not taught by men, nor did he receive it from them, but had it by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

as I wrote afore in few words: in the two first chapters of this epistle, which are a compendium of the mystery of the Gospel, in its several parts; as predestination, election, redemption, regeneration, and salvation by free grace.

Ver. 4. *Whereby when ye read, &c.]* The above chapters, and seriously consider what is contained in them:

ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ of his person, office, and grace; and which knowledge was very large indeed.

Ver. 5. *Which in other ages was not made known unto, the sons of men, &c.]* That is, which mystery of Christ, and of the Gospel, was not made known to men in general, nor so clearly as under the Gospel dispensation. Some hints were given of it to Adam, immediately after his fall; and the Gospel was before preached to Abraham, Moses, and David, and others knew something of it; and it was still more fully dispensed in the times of the prophet Isaiah, and other following prophets: but then the knowledge of it was not so extensive, nor so clear as now; it lay hid in types and shadows, in obscure prophecies and short hints. Moreover, this may have respect particularly to the calling of the Gentiles, as appears from the following words; this was, in some measure, made known, as that in Christ all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that when Shiloh came, to him should the gathering of the people be; that the Messiah should be an ensign of the people, and to him should the Gentiles seek; that he should be the covenant of the people, and a leader and a commander of them; and that there should be great flockings to him; but then this was not known to

many, and the time, mode, and circumstances of it were but little understood, and comparatively speaking, it was not known: however, it was not so known,

as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit. The apostles and prophets were the superior officers in the Gospel dispensation; the former design the twelve apostles of Christ, and the latter such who had the gift of interpreting the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of foretelling things to come, having received gifts from Christ to fit them for such offices, some apostles, some prophets; and to these a revelation was made of the mystery of the Gospel in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular, by the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, and reveals them, and leads into all truth; and who, by falling upon the Gentiles, as upon Cornelius and his family, and by the success which he gave to the Gospel in the Gentile world, made their calling clear and manifest. The Complutensian edition reads, “by the Holy Spirit”; and so the Arabic and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 6. *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, &c.*] With the Jews, of all the blessings of grace, of lasting salvation, and of the eternal, incorruptible, and never fading inheritance in heaven; that they should be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus, and inherit all things: and heirs they are by being Christ's, and on account of their special adoption through him, and their justification by his righteousness; and which appears by their regeneration to a lively hope of the inheritance reserved for them in heaven:

and of the same body: coalesce in one and the same church state, with the believing Jews, under one and the same head, Christ Jesus, and participate of the same grace from him, being all baptized into one body, and made to drink of the same Spirit, and enjoy the same privileges and immunities.

And partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel; as of God, being their covenant God, which is the great promise of the covenant; or of the Spirit, his gifts and graces, called the promise of the Spirit; or of eternal life and happiness, as the gift of grace through Christ. Now all these promises, and all others, are in Christ, yea and amen, safe and secure; and it is through being in Christ that any come to partake of them; and that by the means of the Gospel, as these Gentiles were to do, and did: the Gospel is a declaration of what God has promised in covenant to his people; this was

carried among the Gentiles, and was made effectual to their participation of the things contained in it.

Ver. 7. *Whereof I was made a minister, &c.*] That is, of the Gospel, not by men, but by God: and he is a true minister of the Gospel who is called of God to the work of the ministry, and is qualified by him with grace and gifts for it; and who faithfully discharges it according to the ability God has given; and such an one was the apostle:

according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me; not according to his natural capacity, his liberal education, or acquired learning; but according to a gift, a ministerial gift bestowed upon him, for such service: for this gift of grace does not design the grace of God wrought in his soul; nor the doctrines of grace, the subject of the Gospel ministry; nor the efficacious grace of God, which makes that successful and useful to the souls of men; but a gift of interpreting the Scriptures, and of explaining the truths of the Gospel to the edification of men; and which is a distinct thing from natural abilities, human learning, or internal grace; for there may be all these, and yet a man not fit to be a minister of the Gospel; what qualifies men for that is the above gift, which God, of his sovereign good will and pleasure, gives to some of the sons of men:

by the effectual working of his power; the power of God is seen in working grace in the hearts of men, thereby making them believers in Christ; and it is also displayed in the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on men, which is called a being endued with a power from on high; thereby making men, and not angels, and these oftentimes the meanest and weakest, ministers of Christ; and likewise in assisting them in their work, and in carrying them through it, and in making them successful in it, to the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints.

Ver. 8. *Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, &c.*] This is an instance of the great humility of the apostle, and indeed the greatest saints are generally speaking, the most humble souls, as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and others; these have the meanest thoughts of themselves, and the best of others; they rejoice in the grace of God manifested to others; they are willing to receive instruction, nay admonition, from the meanest believer; they have the least opinion of their own works, and are the greatest admirers of the grace of God; and do most contentedly submit to the sovereign will of God: the reasons of their great humility are, because they have the largest discoveries of the love and grace of God and Christ,

which are of a soul humbling nature; they are the most sensible of their own sinfulness, vileness, and unworthiness, which keeps them low in their own sight; they are commonly the most afflicted with Satan's temptations, which are suffered to attend them, lest they should be exalted above measure; they are the most fruitful souls, and boughs laden with fruit hang lowest; and they are the most conformable to Christ, who is meek and lowly. The phrase seems to be Jewish: there was one R. Jose “the little”, who was so called, it is said, because he was *μυδυσj ἡj q*, “the least of saints”^{f35}: but the apostle uses a still more diminutive word, and calls himself less than the least of them; and adds,

is this grace given; that is, the gift of grace, as before, the ministerial gift:

that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; the riches of Christ, as God, lie in the perfections of his nature, in the works of his hands, in his empire and dominion over all, and in the revenues of glory, which result from thence; and these riches are underived and incommunicable, and are ineffable, yea inconceivable: his riches, as Mediator, lie in the persons of the elect, in the grace that is laid up in him for them, called the riches of grace, and in the inheritance he is possessed of for them, called the riches of glory; and these rich things are communicable, as well as solid, satisfying, and lasting; and they are unsearchable to the natural man, and cannot be fully investigated by believers themselves; they will be telling over to all eternity: and they will appear unsearchable, when it is considered what they have procured, and what blessings have been dispensed according to them; what a large family Christ has maintained by them, and how richly and fully he has provided for them, and to what honour and grandeur he raises them all. Now it was great grace to intrust the apostle with such a ministry, to put such treasure into an earthen vessel; it was great grace that qualified him for it; and it was great grace in particular to the Gentiles, that he should be appointed to publish these among them; and so the apostle esteemed it, and himself unworthy of such honour.

Ver. 9. *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,* &c.] Or “the dispensation of the mystery” as the Complutensian, and several copies, and the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions, read. The mystery is the Gospel; the fellowship of it is the communication of grace by it, a participation of the truths and doctrines of it, communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, which the Gospel calls and leads unto, and that equal

concern and interest which both Jews and Gentiles have in the privileges of it. Now men are naturally in the dark about these things, and the ministry of the word is the means of enlightening them, and is indeed the grand design of it; and the ministers of the Gospel do instrumentally enlighten persons, though it is God only that does it efficiently; and for this, gifts of grace were bestowed upon the apostle, even for the enlightening of all men, not every individual person in the world, but some of all sorts, particularly Gentiles, as well as Jews. The word *παντας*, rendered “all men”, is left out in the Alexandrian copy.

Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God; in the heart of God, in his counsel and covenant; which shows the original and source of the Gospel, and expresses the richness and valuableness of it, as well as its safety and secrecy: here it was hid in some measure from the elect angels, and from Old Testament saints, and altogether from natural men, and especially from the Gentiles, whose times of ignorance God winked at, or overlooked: and this was kept so from ages past, from the beginning of time, till now, and was laid up in the breast of God from all eternity; for it was ordained before the world for the glory, of his people. What the apostle says of the Gospel, the Jews say of the law, that it was hid and treasured up two thousand years before the world was created^{f36}; yea, they say^{f37}, that many ages before the creation of the world it was written and left, *hbqh I ç wqyj b*, “in the bosom of God”: and he is here described, as he

who created all things by Jesus Christ; not as an instrument, but as a co-efficient cause: and this is to be understood, not of the new creation, but of the old, and of all things in it; for without Christ, was not anything made that is made. The phrase, “by Jesus Christ”, is left out in the Alexandrian and Claromontane copies, and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 10. *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, &c.*] By whom are meant, not civil magistrates, much less evil angels, but the good angels, the angels in heaven; (See Gill on “~~402~~ Ephesians 1:21”).

might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God; not the perfection of wisdom, nor Jesus Christ the wisdom of God, nor the holy Scriptures; but the Gospel, which is the pure produce of the wisdom of

God; which is gloriously displayed in the several doctrines of it; as in election, in choosing men in Christ for the security of their persons, in founding it not upon their works, but his own grace, for the security of his purpose, and in pitching on such persons as he has, for the magnifying of his grace: and in redemption, which is seen in the person of the Redeemer, who is both God and man; and in the manner in which it is effected, being both for the glory of God's grace and mercy, and for the honour of his justice and holiness; and wherein Satan is mortified, sin is condemned, and the sinner saved: and in justification, whereby sinful men become just with God: God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes; the ungodly is justified, and yet not justified in his ungodliness, but from it: and in the pardon of sin, in which iniquity is forgiven, and yet vengeance is taken on men's inventions; it is an act of mercy, and yet of justice; it is by price, and yet of free grace; and the like may be observed of all other doctrines of the Gospel. And it may be called "manifold", because of its various doctrines and promises and because of the various instances of wisdom in them, and the various persons to whom it is made known, and the various times in which it is displayed: and now under the Gospel this is more clearly known, or made known to the angels by the church of God, through the ministry of the word in it, on which angels attend, being desirous to look more diligently into the mysteries of it; and by the displays of the wisdom and grace of God unto his church and people.

Ver. 11. *According to the eternal purpose, &c.*] The whole of salvation, in which is displayed the great wisdom of God, is according to a purpose of his; the scheme of it is fixed in the council of peace; the thing itself is effected in pursuance of it; Christ, the Redeemer, was set forth in it; his incarnation, the time of his coming into the world, his sufferings and death, with all their circumstances, were decreed by God; and the persons for whom Christ became incarnate, suffered, and died, were appointed unto salvation by him; and the application of it to them is according to his purpose; the time when, the place where, and the means whereby souls are converted, are all settled in the decrees of God; the Gospel itself, the preaching of it by such and such persons, its use to make men see the mysteries of grace, and the fellowship of them, and to make known these things to the angels of heaven, are all according to a divine purpose: and this purpose is eternal, or was in the mind of God from all eternity; for no new will can arise in him; no purpose, resolution, or decree can be made by him in time, which was not in his breast from everlasting; and his purpose

concerning the salvation of men must be eternal, since a council of peace was held, a covenant of peace was made, a promise of life was given, persons were fixed upon to be saved, a Saviour was appointed for them, and grace, and the blessings of it were put into his hands before the world began.

Which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; the constitution of it was in him; God was in Christ contriving the scheme of salvation; eye was upon him, his thoughts centred in him, in him are all his promises, and blessings of grace designed and provided for his people; and the execution of this purpose is by him; though some refer this clause to the church in (~~AND~~ Ephesians 3:10) which he has made in Christ, or by Christ, has built upon him, and united to him; and others, to the manifold wisdom of God displayed in Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.

Ver. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access,* &c.] Into the holy of holies, to the throne of grace there, and to God the Father, as seated on it: Christ is the way of access; union to him gives right of access; through his mediation his people have audience of God, and acceptance with him, both of person and service: and this access is with boldness; which denotes liberty of coming, granted by God, and a liberty in their own souls to speak out their minds plainly and freely; and an holy courage and intrepidity of soul, being free from servile fear, or a spirit of bondage; which is owing to the heart being sprinkled from an evil conscience, to an act of faith, on the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, and to a view of God, as a God of peace, grace and mercy: and this access may be had

with confidence by the faith of him; with confidence of interest in the everlasting love of God; of relation to him, as a covenant God and Father; of his power, faithfulness, and willingness to fulfil his promises; of his hearing and answering prayer; of the fulness of Christ, the prevalence of his mediation, and of the acceptance of persons and performances through him; and of the work of grace being carried on till the day of Christ; and of entrance at last into the heavenly glory: and this access is not local but spiritual; it is by faith, and so is peculiar to believers; and the confidence with which it may be had, arises from its being by the faith of Christ; not that faith which Christ himself had, and exercised as man, but that of which he is both the object and author; or that by which souls believe in him for

acceptance, for righteousness, for pardon, for every supply of grace, and for eternal life and happiness.

Ver. 13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you,* &c.] The apostle was a man attended with many tribulations, and great afflictions, which he did not suffer as an evildoer, either from God or men; wherefore he was not ashamed of them, but gloried in them; yea, he took pleasure in them, having much of the presence of God in them; they did not come to him unawares, he always expected them, and was helped to look to the glory which should follow them, the view of which greatly supported him under them; and these tribulations were endured for the sake of the elect, for Christ's body's sake; the church, and among others, for the Ephesians, for the sake of preaching the Gospel among them, and for the confirmation of their faith in it; and yet they were a stumbling to them, they were ready to faint at them; but he desires they would not, since they were on account of the Gospel, which he had such a distinct knowledge of, and so clear a call to; and since they were for their sakes, and since he and they had such nearness of access to God by the faith of Christ, with so much boldness and confidence; and seeing also they turned to their account: which is your glory; meaning either that it was matter of glorying to them, and what they might boast of, that the apostle's afflictions were not for any crime that was found in him, but for preaching the Gospel to them, and that it was an honour to suffer in such a cause; or that their perseverance and constancy in the doctrines of the Gospel, notwithstanding the scandal of the cross, would be an honour to them.

Ver. 14. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,* &c.] That is, pray unto him for the perseverance of the saints; for nothing is more desirable to the ministers of Christ than that; which is the pure gift of God, and is what he has promised, and therefore should be prayed to for it; for what God has designed and promised to his people, he will be sought to; and the apostle's view might be also to stir up these saints to pray for themselves: the gesture he used in prayer was bowing the knees; a man is not tied to any particular gesture or posture in prayer, the main thing is the heart; mere postures and gestures are insignificant things with God; though where the mind is affected, the body will be moved; and this gesture may be expressive of reverence, humility, and submission in prayer: the object he prayed unto is the Father; that is, as follows,

of our Lord Jesus; though these words are wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and Ethiopic version, yet are rightly retained in others; for God is the Father of Christ, not by creation, nor adoption, but by generation, being the only begotten of the Father; and as such he is rightly prayed to, since not only Christ prayed to him as such; but he is the Father of his people in and through Christ; and there is no other way of coming to him but by Christ; and all spiritual blessings come through Christ, and from God, as the Father of Christ.

Ver. 15. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*] This may refer either to God, the Father of Christ; who is the Father of the whole family in heaven and in earth; not only the Father of Christ, but the Father of spirits, of angelic spirits, as well as of the souls of men; and the Father of all the saints by adopting grace, whether above or below; they are all the household of God: or else to Jesus Christ, who is the everlasting Father, the Son over his own house, and the firstborn among many brethren: and this family consists either of elect angels and elect men, who are both under one head, Christ, and are in one family, only with this difference, the one are servants, the other sons; or else only of elect men, of saints in heaven and in earth, who all make up but one family; and that part of it, which is on earth, consists of persons of various sizes and growth, as fathers, young men, and children, though they are all the children of God, and partake of the same privileges: and this family is named of Christ; they are called Christians from him, and he is the master and governor of them; they have their laws, directions, and instructions from him; and he is the great provider for them, and the support of them; they have their food and clothing from him, as well as are called by his name. Frequent mention is made in the Jewish writings^{f38} of the family of the holy angels, and of the family above, and the family below, to which here may be some reference.

Ver. 16. *That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory,* &c.] Or according to, and out of that rich, plenteous, and glorious fulness of grace and strength in Christ Jesus.

To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; this is the petition which the apostle puts up on his bended knees to the Father of Christ, that he would strengthen these saints, that so they might not faint at the tribulations which either he or they endured. Believers in Christ need fresh supplies of strength to enable them to exercise grace, to perform

duties, to resist Satan and his temptations, to oppose their corruptions, and to bear the cross, and undergo afflictions cheerfully, and to hold on and out to the end: this is a blessing that comes from God, and is a gift of his free grace; a “grant” from him who is the strength of the lives of his people, of their salvation, of their hearts, and of the work of grace in their hearts: the means whereby the saints are strengthened by God, is “his Spirit”; who strengthens them by leading them to the fulness of grace and strength in Christ, by shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts, by applying the promises of the Gospel to them, and by making the Gospel itself, and the ordinances of it, useful to them, causing them to go from strength to strength in them: the subject of this blessing is the “inner man”, or the Spirit, or soul of man, which is the seat of grace; and this shows that this was spiritual strength which is here desired, which may be where there is much bodily weakness, and for which there should be the greatest concern; and that this strength is not naturally there, it must be given, or put into it. This last phrase,

in the inner man, is joined to the beginning of the next verse in the Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, “in the inner man Christ may dwell”, &c.

Ver. 17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*, &c.] This is another petition put up by the apostle for the Ephesians, which is for the inhabitation of Christ in them: the inhabitant Christ is he who dwells in the highest heavens, who dwells in the Father, and the Father in him, in whom all fulness dwells, the fulness of the Godhead, and the fulness of grace; so that those in whose hearts he dwells cannot want any good thing, must be in the greatest safety, and enjoy the greatest comfort and pleasure; and this inhabitation of Christ prayed for is not to be understood in such sense, as he dwells everywhere, being the omnipresent God; or as he dwells in the human nature; nor of his dwelling merely by his Spirit, but of a personal indwelling of his; and which is an instance of his special grace: he dwells in his people, as a king in his palace, to rule and protect them, and as a master in his family to provide for them, and as their life to quicken them; it is in consequence of their union to him, and is expressive of their communion with him, and is perpetual; where he once takes up his residence, he never totally and finally departs: the place where he dwells is not their heads, nor their tongues, but their hearts; and this is where no good thing dwells but himself and his grace; and where sin dwells, and where he is often slighted, opposed, and rebelled against: the means by which he dwells is faith; which is not the bond of union to Christ, nor the cause of his being and dwelling

in the hearts of his people; but is the instrument or means by which they receive him, and retain him, and by which they have communion with him:

that ye being rooted and grounded in love; either in love to God, and one another; for faith and love go together; and love is sometimes weak, and needs establishing; and what serves to root and ground persons in it, are the discoveries of God's love, views of Christ's loveliness, the consideration of blessings received, and the communion they have with God, and Christ, and one another, and a larger insight into the doctrines of the Gospel: or rather in the love of God to them; which is the root and foundation of salvation; this is in itself immovable and immutable; but saints have not always the manifestations of it, and sometimes call it in question, and have need to be rooted and grounded in it; which is to have a lively sense of it, and to be persuaded of interest in it, and that nothing shall be able to separate from it.

Ver. 18. *May be able to comprehend with all saints, &c.*] This is the end of their being rooted and grounded in love, that they, together with the rest of the saints interested in it, might have a larger and more comprehensive view of

what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; not of God himself, who is incomprehensible by finite minds, and is not to be found out to perfection; (see ^{<18107>}Job 11:7-9) but either of the great mystery of salvation, particularly the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles mentioned in the beginning of the chapter; or of the spiritual building, the church, the dimensions of which are given, (^{<6115>}Revelation 21:15,16) or rather of the love of God, which in its length reaches from one eternity to another; in its breadth to all the elect, in all ages, places, and nations; and in its depth to saints in the lowest state of life; and in its height to bring them to an exalted state in glory.

Ver. 19. *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, &c.*] The love of Christ to his own, to his church and people, is special and peculiar; free and Sovereign; as early as his Father's love, and is durable and unchangeable; the greatest love that ever was heard of; it is matchless and unparalleled; it is exceeding strong and affectionate, and is wonderful and surprising: the instances of it are, his engaging as a surety for them; his espousing both their persons and their cause; his assumption of their nature; his dying in their room and stead; his payment of their debts, atoning for their sins, and bringing in for them an everlasting righteousness;

his going to prepare a place for them in heaven; his intercession for them there; his constant supply of all their wants, and the freedom and familiarity he uses them with. The saints have some knowledge of this love, some tastes of it; their knowledge is a feeling and experimental one, fiducial and appropriating, and what influences their faith, and love, and cheerful obedience, but it is but imperfect; though the knowledge they have of it is supereminent, it exceeds all other knowledge, yet this love passes knowledge; not only the knowledge of natural men, who know nothing of it, but the perfect knowledge of saints themselves, in the present life, and of angels also, who desire to look into it, and the mysteries of it; and especially it is so as to some instances of it, such as the incarnation of Christ, his becoming poor who was Lord of all, being made sin, and a curse, and suffering, the just for the unjust. Now the apostle prays, that these saints might know more of this love; that their knowledge, which was imperfect, might be progressive.

That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God; this is the last petition, and is to be understood, not of a full comprehension of the divine Being, nor of a communication of his divine perfections, nor of having in them the fulness of grace, which it has pleased God should dwell in Christ; but either of that fulness of good things, which they may receive from God in this life; as to be filled with a sense of the love and grace of God; with satisfying views of interest in the righteousness of Christ; with the Spirit, and the gifts and graces thereof; with full provisions of food for their souls; with spiritual peace, joy, and comfort; with knowledge of divine things, of God in Christ, of Christ, of the Gospel, and of the will of God; and with all the fruits or righteousness, or good works springing from grace; or else of that fulness which they shall receive hereafter, even complete holiness, perfection of knowledge, fulness of joy and peace, entire conformity to God and Christ, and everlasting communion with them.

Ver. 20. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly*, &c.] This is the conclusion of the apostle's prayer, in which the power of God is celebrated, a perfection which is essential unto God, and is very large and extensive; it reaches to all things, to every thing that he wills, which is his actual or ordinative power; and to more things than he has willed, which is his absolute power; and to all things that have been, are, or shall be, and to things impossible with men; though there are some things which God cannot do, such as are contrary to his nature, inconsistent with his will, his

decrees and purposes, which imply a contradiction, and are foreign to truth, which to do would be to deny himself: but then he can do

above all that we ask or think; he can do more than men ask for, as he did for Solomon: God knows what we want before we ask, and he has made provisions for his people before they ask for them; some of which things we never could, and others we never should have asked for, if he had not provided them; and without the Spirit of God we know not what to ask for, nor how to ask aright; this affords great encouragement to go to God, and ask such things of him as we want, and he has provided; and who also can do more than we can think, imagine, or conceive in our minds.

According to the power that worketh in us: either in believers in common, meaning the Spirit of God, who is the finger and power of God, who begins, and carries on, and will finish the work of grace in them, and which is an evidence of the exceeding greatness of the power of God; or in the apostles in particular, in fitting and furnishing them for their work, and succeeding them in it; which is another proof and demonstration of the abundant power of God, and shows what he can do if he pleases.

Ver. 21. *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, &c.*] This is a doxology, or an ascription of glory to God, with which the apostle concludes his prayer; glory is to be given to God on account of his perfections, which are to be celebrated; and on account of the works of creation and Providence, which are to be commended and acquiesced in; and on account of temporal mercies, for which thanks should be given; and especially for spiritual mercies, and above all for Jesus Christ: the glory of salvation, from first to last, is to be ascribed to his free grace; and his worship is to be regarded and constantly attended on; faith is to be exercised on him, as a promising and covenant keeping God; and our lives and conversations are to be ordered aright according to his word; and we are cheerfully and patiently to suffer for his cause and interest, in all which instances he is glorified: and the place where this glory is to be given, is the “church”; for the church, and true believers, only know the blessings and mysteries of divine grace; and they only know how to glorify God aright; and besides, glory must be given to God by believers, not only separately and apart, but conjunctly and together, in a church state; because there the Lord appears glorious, grants his presence, and displays his mighty grace: and this is to be done by “Christ Jesus”, or “in” him; and may refer either to the church, which is in Christ; or to him as the medium by whom praise

and glory are to be given to God; for all blessings are in Christ, and come to us through him, and he is the only way of access to God; nor can our praises and thanksgivings be acceptable unto God, but through him: and this glory is to be given

throughout all ages, world without end, Amen; for the church will abide for ever, in which it is to be given; the blessings of grace will be for ever dispensing, for which it is to be given; and Jesus Christ, the Mediator, will continue for evermore, by whom it is given: to all which is added the word “Amen”, signifying his wish, that so it might be, and his faith, that so it would be.