

# CHIEF MINISTRIES

May 2017

Here's an equation for you: **Knowledge + the Will + Spiritual Power = Holiness**

We're going to look at one of the most amazing, comprehensive prayers in the Bible - the most important prayer I know how to pray! It's found in Ephesians 3:14-21. Let's spread these verses out and take a look at them!

For this reason  
I kneel before the Father,

from whom His whole family  
in heaven and on earth  
derives its name.

I pray that out of His glorious riches

*he may strengthen you with power  
through His Spirit  
in your inner being,  
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts  
through faith.*

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,  
*may have power together with all the saints,*

to grasp how wide  
and long  
and high  
and deep

*is the love of Christ,  
and to know this love*

that surpasses knowledge –

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do

immeasurably more

then all we ask or imagine,

*according to His power* that is at work within us,

*to Him be glory* throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

In the church and

in Christ Jesus,

Amen.

Can you imagine any better definition of holiness than to *“be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”!* I can't.

**An awareness of one's identity and meaning in life.** Paul begins his prayer with a solid awareness of truest self-identity, *“in your inner being,”* that deepest realm of human personhood which will someday grace heaven itself and which alone is equipped by God to express authentic meaning in life (which, by the way, is the essence of the entire prayer). I believe I've covered identity fairly well these last couple of months.

Next, **The unconditional issue of Lordship.** Paul begins with the absolute submission to the Father. *“I kneel before the Father”*. He then concludes his prayer with absolute commitment to the glory of God, *“to Him be the glory!”* And in between he acknowledges the fundamental necessity of Christ dwelling in our hearts. Interestingly, the word Paul chose for *“dwell”* literally means “to be at home in”. In other words, there can be no practical holiness unless Christ is truly “at-home” in your life. That’s Lordship.

**The Holy Spirit’s presence as power as an experienced reality** *“Strengthen you with power through His Spirit.”* Could that possibly be non-experiential? Not a chance! Why? Because the presence of that power will produce in you (1) spiritual comprehension with dimensions beyond your dreams, and (2) an awareness of the love of Christ which *“surpasses knowledge”*.

**A body life participation rather than an isolated pilgrim** *“being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints... To Him be glory in the church.”* If this were not enough, the next couple of months writings will flow out of this prayer and will be packed with relational issues with love at the center.

Now, **Holiness demands the active participation of the will.** Fundamental in this prayer is *the earnest, fervent asking* by Paul. Not only for others, but certainly we should assume for himself also. One more word in this prayer spotlights the will. It’s the word “faith”. It is through faith that the fullness of God is received. And faith is an action word - solid commitment, firm expectation. There can be no holiness apart from the exercise of your will - in asking God and believing God!

That in deed is a remarkable prayer, but it doesn’t stop with verse 19. As if to underline the scope and mystery of his request, Paul adds verse 20. This God to whom he prays *“is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.”*

So often this expression is used as an encouragement to trust God for big things with the knowledge that he enjoys giving us more than we ask for. We ask for a car and He gives us a Porsche. We ask for a godly wife and He also gives us a beautiful one. *But that’s not the point of this passage at all.* What is the point? As he prayed, Paul was aware of the mind-boggling scope of his prayer - *“the love of Christ....that surpasses knowledge....the fullness of God!”*

Our automatic response would be, “Paul - no! That is too much. A dream beyond any prospect of fulfillment!”

But Paul responds, “You don’t know God! Our God does things beyond all we ask or imagine.” And then the apostle brings us back to the proper focus, reminding us of the power that works within us. Whose power? The glorious power and Person of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Are you listening? Are you allowing yourself to be stretched as you have never been stretched before? Are you asking for this ‘power’ Paul spoke of? Daily asking Him? Exercising your will on your knees? Remember it is not only for yourself, but it is *“with all the saints”*. Remember too, that the end in view is not self-centered; the end is the glory of God. The glory of God *“in the church and in Christ Jesus....for ever and ever.”* Oh, what an open door. Walk through it!

The New Testament calls upon us to take action, it does not tell us that the work of sanctification is going to be done for us. That is why it does not put us into a hospital where the patient is told ‘it will be done for you,’ and ‘allow the Lord Jesus to do it for you’ – It calls upon us to take action and exhorts us to do so. And it tells us and commands us to do so for this reason, that we have been given the ability to do it. If we had not been given the ability, if we had not received the new nature as a result of the new birth, if we had not been given the new life, if the Spirit was not in us, then, of course we would need someone to do it for us. But as we have been given the power and the ability and the capacity, the New Testament quite logically, and in perfect consistency with itself, calls upon us to do it. ‘Do not let sin reign in your mortal body’ it says. ‘Do not present your members as instruments unto sin or unrighteousness.’ Do not do it! This is something you and I have to do; it is not going to be done for us.

Knowledge + the Will + Power. God wants us to realize that these are inseparable. The “Spirit of strength” is also *“the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isaiah 11:2).* The “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17, 15:26) is also the Spirit who strengthens *“with power”*. This fact is so pointed in Paul’s other prayer in Ephesians 1:17. *“The Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better”* is clearly followed by *“His incomparable great power for those of us who believe.”*

Let’s take the connection one step further. By the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit God transforms that which I assent to into truth that is lived. First, the truth is received and registered in my mortal brain. Then, by the Spirit, the truth moves deeper as an emerging force in my inner man (Ephesians 1:18; 4:23). In the process, it becomes a part of a much larger

picture that gives that single truth significance it never had before. It is almost like looking at a tiny part of a large painting. I honestly see it. I believe I can see it. I can describe what I see. But the relevance - the power of what I see - eludes me. Then suddenly the whole painting is revealed and it is as though I had never seen that one truth before.

Perhaps this is part of the ministry of Ephesians 3:19 in which Paul speaks of knowing that which “surpasses knowledge.” Let’s look at it this way: I observe some biblical fact. I could pass a test on it. But then the Holy Spirit takes that same fact and, without changing it a bit, leads me in a supernatural way to see the fact from God’s perspective. I cry out, “Now I see!”

It is also something like an optical illusion. Although there is absolutely no change in the object I observe, there may suddenly be a remarkable change in how I see it. If I described what I saw first I might say, “that’s not much,” or “it doesn’t make much sense.” And of course, I would have little motivation to consider it any further. Yet if my perspective changed my response might be one of unrestrained awe.

So also the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are moved in utter amazement that something so profound - so life-changing - could have been in God’s word all the time and we didn’t see it, even though we did ‘see it’. Consider the remarkable statement in 1 John 2:27. *“As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit - just as It has taught you, remain in Him.”*

Imagine a car. All the accessories get their power from the battery, the battery is not the core of the car at all. The core is the engine.

Now for the Christian, the engine is the inner man. The battery is the will. Sadly, it is possible for a Christian to become so involved in all the varied potentialities of his flesh - his mortal being - that he may begin to think that life is right there....in the accessories. But that isn’t really life for him at all. His radio may be blaring, his horn honking, wipers wiping, lights blinking - he may have everyone thinking he’s a productive person. But he hasn’t moved. He’s still in the driveway.

On the other hand, the Christian might honestly realize the reason for which God saved him. Therefore he exerts his will to roll forward. (At this point his will would be expressing the earnest desire or motivation of his inner man - see Romans 7:18,12) of course he finds it very difficult. He presses on the starter with the gears meshed - and ah! - the good old battery comes through. The car lurches forward. About two inches. Somehow, he knows that moving must involve something more than that. One inch here a lurch there. And before long the battery’s worn down anyway.

Hmmmm. Well, it’s back to the turn signals or multi-media touch screen to play some tunes. Something that’s not so hard on the battery.

Maybe.....someday.....he’ll get the hang of this “moving” idea. But then, none of the other cars around him seem to be moving, so why should he? Everyone else seems satisfied with the gadgets and accessories. No one seems to disapprove of his lifestyle. Maybe this “moving” idea is something you are to just “take by faith”. One thing for sure....the scenery hasn’t changed a bit.

And then one day he stops and thinks - really thinks. “Just what am I doing?” Something inside of me - way down deep - is crying out for action. Real action - moving action! Who am I? What is my identity? I am a person created by God to express the very life of Jesus in the world. I was created to move! Oh God, I want to move!”

Quickly he turns to his Bible and begins to read and diligently study. “Maybe”, he thinks, “if I knew more of what this book says, that would make me move. So with his will he sets his alarm to go off half an hour earlier in the morning. With his will he rejects the urge to tap the snooze button on his alarm. With his will he opens the Bible, reads the verses - even takes notes and memorizes a verse or two. He closes with a prayer and his day begins.

But is he moving?

We all know that our simple wills cannot produce holiness any more than a battery can make a car go. No, he isn’t moving.

“Well, what next?” “Maybe if I start playing in the band or sing in the choir? Or, better yet....I’ll put in to do and exhortation in front of the whole church. No, I’ll tell the inner circle guys under the leadership that I feel called to teach so

I can get my own class!! Then I'll for sure be seen as holy!" What then *can* produce holiness? What does it take to get the car moving? How bout the fuel tank?

Consider the similarities in our lives as Christians. A Christian's will in and of itself *does not* produce holiness. But it does initiate the circumstances in which holiness can be realized. That most important act of turning the ignition key to "on" and holding it there also parallels an essential spiritual act: The conscious openness, dependency, and expectation of receiving the necessary energy in the person of the Holy Spirit. *That openness to Him and His supernatural empowerment must be an attitude of the mind, not simply a passing thought.* I resolve not to resist *anything* He wished to do in my life - He is sovereign. It is then that I find myself moving into an entirely new dimension of living. The scenery *is* changing. I *am* moving. Jesus is being seen through me.

Yes, my will does set the alarm to go off. And that will continues to function as I open my Bible and read words and sentences using my intellect. But I find that I cannot credit my will (battery) with the adequate power to move even though it is fundamentally part of the power system of being wired to the engine (my inner man). The credit goes to God the Holy Spirit. He is the fuel! He is my life! He is my strength...."*the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 1:19)

I believe that in a most tangible way this is the essence of those paradoxical words of Paul, "*therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you too will and to act according to his good purpose*" (Philippians 2:12-13)

In this illustration there is a difference that parallels the thoughts of Paul, "through our outward man (all those things which work off the battery) is perishing, our inward man is renewed day by day." The capacity for my engine to work more effectively in enabling me to move seems to improve with age! In fact, it never wears out!

Also, it doesn't make much difference whether my car is a clunker or a Cadillac! Of course, it's nice to move in style, but if my focus is not simply on moving, but on what moving can accomplish, then the style of that moving needs scarcely to be considered; it really isn't relevant no matter what other "cars" appear to make out of it and measure by it.

Sometimes a person discovers that he is a terribly weak-willed individual. He feels helpless to even begin the process. What does he need? He needs a "jumper cable" link to some strong-willed person to temporarily support his weak will. "*And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

Jesus' life was not holy simply because He was an honest carpenter or a boy who respected His parents. He was holy because as He said, "*I can do nothing for myself.*" Christianity is not simply living that ideal "Eagle Scout" type of life; *it is dependent resurrection life.* It is not simply discipline; it is the discipline of the Spirit. It is not simply the biblical instructions to the brain; it is the infrastructure of the inner man. It is not as though Jesus said, "the words I have spoken to you are the Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63) No matter how we look at it we can't get away from the fact that spiritual life is just that: Spiritual.

There is a most remarkable bird I watched on National Geographic Channel years ago called the Arctic Tern. Once a year it travels on the longest migratory journey of any bird known on earth; all the way from one pole to another. The bird soars across trackless oceans, thousands of miles to its own particular nesting place. That alone would make it a very unusual bird indeed. But there is something even more remarkable about it.

After the tiny Terns are hatched and old enough to care for themselves, the parent birds leave for the South Pole. Weeks pass by and the young bird grows and exercises their wings, enjoying all the games that seagulls seem to play in the sky. But finally a time comes when the young Terns take one last long look at the only place they have ever known, and began a journey to a place they have never been!

Somehow, deep within them, they know they cannot stay. They must go: They *want* to go. But which way? Did Mama and Papa Tern leave a set of directions propped up in the nest? 'Follow the star Arcturus until you see the Southern Cross, then, going south by southwest.... No! This trip is buried deep in their natures. No, the Terns do not resist leaving, no matter how tantalizing those Seagull games may have been, catching the updrafts, playing tag over cliffs above the sea.... Oh yes, they waited for no matter how strong their desire was they knew they could not leave without *the power* to make that remarkable journey.

God's purpose is not merely learning His will and trying to do it. It is rather a matter of becoming a living, God-empowered expression of His will which He, by the new birth, has *already* implanted in your deepest self. You are living in the age of the New Covenant; God has written His law on your heart. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 3:3). You and I "are from God." Our nature is His!

And the power? The pattern for us is the same as it was for the Lord Jesus. "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me."

"I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity....."

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 6:57; 17:23; 20:21)

Well then is it that simple? Not quite. It would appear that God has chosen a catalyst, a particular environment in which the joining of **Knowledge + the Will + Spiritual Power** takes place.

Where is your environment? What is in your environment?

Trouble times - stress times.

Perhaps it is because at those times we see most clearly the fragile nature of our earth-oriented, time-bound relationships, dreams, and securities. In our intense awareness of our weakness and our inadequacy, we cry out for holiness. And Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*" (Matthew 5:6)

I have come to believe that *there is no growth in holiness apart from trials*. "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives....but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His Holiness. (Hebrews 12:6, 10)

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* (James 1:2-4)

*"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us."*

Could it be the day is coming, even just a few minutes of the day that you and I could say, "He that has seen me has seen Jesus!"

Go..... He knows the way

## **Chief**

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*Christ's*

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