

Title: THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT, EPHESIANS 3:14-21
(Chatham, NJ; 07/29/12, AM) [Pc – Analysis of Words]

Theme: Strength to live the Christian walk comes from the power of God working deep within us.

Purpose: To stress the need to daily reflection and experience with the love of Christ.

Introduction:

1. Ephesians 2:18 – all have access to God through Christ.
2. Don't underestimate the significance of this.
3. Often religions seek to connect the spirit realm with the physical—the heavenly and the earthly. Usually they do so by spirit beings, incantations, and spells, etc.
4. Ephesians 3 expands on what that access does for us.
5. We should see this as part of an overall mission to prepare our souls for eternity as suggested by the mission triangle. (We sometimes lose balance by concentrating on one or the other points of the triangle.)
6. Today's lesson focuses on personal spiritual growth.
7. Since we need depth to maintain our spiritual lives, let's look at the words of this section to see how it can be maintained.

I. Your Inner Being, 16

- A. Strengthened with power
 1. This has to happen at the very core of our being
 2. Jesus found strength in the Garden when the disciples deserted him
 3. The seed that fell on rocky ground grew up and withered because the soil had no depth
 4. The power has to reside deep within us.
- B. An experience as much as an intellectual exercise
 1. It begins with the word of Christ dwelling within you, Colossians 3:16
 2. Yet it is hard to put into words the experience of Christ dwelling in your hearts through faith, 17
 3. This becomes intuitive and second nature
 4. Belief is only a beginning point; Christ dwells there but do we experience his presence and love to the point of changing and empowering us?
- C. Conclusion
 1. We must tend to the state of our thoughts, feelings, and desires.
 2. When Christ's love enters our lives, it changes and renews us, our thinking as well as our affections or what we love.

II. Grounded in love, 17

- A. Ubiquitous and thus trivialized, but it should not be so
 1. It is to be the dominant inner condition of our hearts.
 2. Love God and love your neighbor is the essence of discipleship
 3. Love must characterize our fellowship, John 13:35
 4. Paul gives us 1 Corinthians 13 to draw a picture of what it looks like in practice (read it)
- B. Yet this love "surpasses knowledge" 19
 1. On the one hand Paul prays that they might "comprehend" Christ's love
 2. On the other hand it surpasses knowledge
 3. Its depth, breadth, height, and width are beyond full human comprehension
 4. Yet he prays that they move in this direction

5. Our comprehension of Christ's love comes as we live with it and as we learn to obey his commandments (John 14:23)
6. Experience breeds in us a new level of comprehension not gained by acquiring more facts or more data (even beyond memorization and doctrinal certainty)
7. This brings us to a greater level of awareness of God's love

III. The Fullness of God, 19

- A. Christ is the fullness of God, Col. 2:9-10
 1. If you have Christ, you have God – heaven and earth come in contact
 2. In fact Colossians warns about philosophies that cannot satisfy that role
 3. In Ephesians Paul says some related things: every family on heaven and earth is named from the Father; he is the source
 4. To comprehend the love of Christ leads to being "filled with all the fullness of God" (19)
 5. For our spiritual development could we need or desire more?
- B. Even more than we could ask, 20-21
 1. Paul returns to the issue of power from verse 16
 2. It can do more than we can ask or imagine
 3. It is a power at work within us
 4. Words fail to express how this takes place
 5. Christ's love and the Holy Spirit renew and empower us

Conclusions:

1. This must be obtained and maintained.
2. Paul prays that the church would continue to experience this.
3. Our inner beings gain strength from continuing to comprehend the love of Christ.
4. Such strength provides us with power beyond what we can imagine.
5. Spiritual practices of Acts 2:42 lead us to experience it more deeply.