

That Christ May Dwell

Ephesians 3:17-21



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FOCAL Read Responsively Ephesians 3:17-21 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **(18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. (20)** 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, **(21) Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.**

I always had a problem with advanced mathematics in school. Though I could understand that the *sum* of $1 + 1$ equals 2, I found it hard to understand what was meant when the teacher began to add *letters* together. How could the *sum* of "x" and "y" equal "3"? My confusion cleared somewhat when I began to understand that the teacher substituted the numbers "1" and "2" for these letters so she could arrive at the correct sum. If the wrong numbers were placed in "x" or "y", we could not get a correct answer. This was the teacher's way of making us think, to stretch our minds, to cause us to seek out other possibilities. Take your mind "outside of the box" and you will understand.

The Apostle Paul – through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit – gives us a Heavenly math lesson today. The *sum* of his equation is found in verse 21:

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Think about this *sum*. The Apostle has suffered terribly for the Lord Jesus. He gave his litany of suffering to the Corinthian Church when he wrote:

2 Corinthians 11:24-29 **Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. (25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; (27) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (29) Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?**

Here you have a man, a missionary led of God, who serves the Lord with all his heart. What is his reward? Is he applauded, honored for his work as *Mother Teresa* was honored many years ago? No, not at all. His brothers, the *Jews* whom he would give his very life for, have beaten him five times – each time tearing his back open thirty nine times with a belt of leather. They could beat him no more because *the Law they revered* would allow no further beating. The *Gentiles* whom he also sought to reach, despised him, beating him with *wooden or steel rods*. The rod, by the way, often broke bones, whereas the lash merely tore skin. Paul was *stoned* to death, beaten with rocks by his brothers and sisters until

they were certain he was dead. Some expositors believe this was the time when God took him into Heaven and showed him things that he could not repeat (**2 Corinthians 12:2-5**). The Apostle spent twenty four hours in the sea when he was shipwrecked. He had been hungry, thirsty, deprived, imprisoned, cold, naked, humiliated, and hated by those he loved. The Churches he gave his all for had a bad habit of denigrating his ministry. "**Apollos is better than you, much better!**" And yet, for all of this, the *sum* of the Apostle's life is:

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

1. Paul, though suffering terribly, did not *curse God and die*, (**Job 2:9**) but he *praised God and lived!* In immense suffering, *none of it his fault*, the Apostle praised the Lord. How can the *sum* of such vast suffering, suffering neither you nor I have ever experienced, equal *thank You and Praise You, O God?*

How are we in our lives to reach such a *sum* as this? How can we add "x" and "y" and reach the sum of "**unto God be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end**"? We cannot unless we put the right things in "x" and "y". If we put "beatings" in "x", and "rejection" in "y", we will always come up with a sum of "misery", not "glory to God".

What was in Paul's equation of life?

X + Y = GLORY TO GOD FOREVER

FOCAL Ephesians 3:17-18 That **Christ** may **dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

2. What was the "X" in Paul's equation of life? It is that **Christ dwelt in his heart by faith.**

Let's look at this word **Christ**. Bible teacher **Elmer L. Towns** notes that:

"... "Christ" is a favorite name of the Apostle Paul, and he uses it independently of other titles some 211 times in his writings. In addition, he often uses this title with other names and titles of Christ. For this apostle, the title "Christ" had a very special significance. The Greek word *Christos*, translated "Christ," literally means "anointed one" and was used in the Septuagint to translate the word "Messiah" (cf. Daniel 9:25,26). The ... predominate use of "Christ" in the New Testament is as an official name of Jesus in the context of a work completed."¹

When Paul spoke of **Christ** dwelling in the heart by faith he was recognizing that the work that Jesus did at Calvary and at the empty tomb was a *completed work*. Jesus died for our sins:

1 Thessalonians 4:14 ... **we believe that Jesus died and rose again...**

God took on humanity, being born of a virgin. He in this humanity grew to full maturity, lived among us, went to the Cross of Calvary, and *died for us*. **Jesus died** for the sin of Adam. When we mention the name **Jesus** we are noting that the *humanity of the God-Man died in our place*. But when we see

3. The word **Christ** in Scripture is the same as saying **the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Promised Redeemer, the Only Begotten of God, the Only Savior**. Though the word combination **Jesus died** is only found once in the Scripture, the statement **Christ died** is found many times.

We read:

Romans 5:6-8 For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**.

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is **Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again**, who is even at the right hand of God, who

¹ The Names of Jesus, online at: <http://elmertowns.com/>

also maketh intercession for us.

Romans 14:8-9 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

(9) For to this end **Christ both died, and rose, and revived**, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Romans 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, **for whom Christ died.**

1 Corinthians 8:11-12 And **through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?** (12) But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

As our Savior went forth to Calvary to die for our sins, it was **Jesus** Who hung in our place. It is **Jesus** on Whom God poured out our sins. It is **Jesus** Who took the beating I should have taken. But it is **Christ** Who died for our sins. **Christ, the Anointed One**, the Only Messiah – this title emphasizes that His work on the Cross was *singularly His*, and was completed and accepted by God the Father *because He alone is the Christ*.

Christ means that God accepted the work, and that we are *completely saved*. Too many people regard Christianity as if it was a tattoo, something only skin

deep, a *title* to be worn in place of another name. This is not the case. The root of the word **Christianity** is **Christ**, and that name stands for a *completed salvation, a completed work*. Those who have called on the Name of the Lord, believing, are *completely saved*. Not only are they forgiven of their sins, not only has the *wrath of God been removed*, but **Christ dwells in their hearts by faith**.

Let's look at that phrase,

FOCAL Ephesians 3:17-18 That **Christ may dwell² in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

4. **May dwell** in verse 17 literally means **may take up permanent residence**. It is God's Will that the Christian, *saved by faith in Christ*, have **Christ take up permanent residence in the heart**. The birthright of every Christian is that **Christ be at home in their hearts**.

There are many people who have asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior, and *have been saved* because they asked. The Bible is very clear that:

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave

2 Aorist Active Infinitive of G2730, κατοικέω, katoikeō, *kat-oy-keh'-o*, From G2596 and G3611; to *house permanently*, that is, *reside* (literally or figuratively): - dwell (-er), inhabitant (-ter).

his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

and, as Jesus said:

John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

This is *non-negotiable*. When you believe on Jesus Christ you are saved. Who have been passed from death to life, you are now Children of God, indwelt *by God's Precious Spirit*. This is wonderful, the life that *is to come*. But God has promised more to the Christian than the *life that is to come*. He has promised to those who will follow Him **Christ at home in the heart of every believer** – a deeper walk with God.

Here is the first part of the equation. Here is the "X" that many fail to realize, not only in the early Church, but in the Church of today.

5. The work of Calvary did not just *save us from future wrath*, but it *enables us to walk in this present evil world*. How shall I glorify God in the midst of suffering? By realizing that **Christ will make Himself home in my heart, if I will only prepare a**

place for Him.

Christ Jesus will walk with me and talk with me through every trial and tribulation that this life can throw my way. I want you to notice the text carefully:

FOCAL Ephesians 3:17-18 That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

The difference between **may** and **shall** are very important.

6. Is Christ at home in your hearts? Your attitude to Him will determine whether He is at home in your hearts or not.

Jesus told His disciples:

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Christ Jesus **manifests Himself** to the hearts of those who seek and love Him. When we *obey* Him, when we

follow Him, Jesus said **I will love him and will manifest {or make myself known} myself to him.**
Judas (not Iscariot) asked Jesus:

John 14:22 ... Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

This is a very simple – and yet a very profound – question. How is it, Lord, that *we will see you at all times* and yet the world will not? Jesus replied:

John 14:23 ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

7. We can reduce what Jesus said in John 14:23 to a mathematical formula:

obey Christ + love Christ = Christ manifested

Illustrate The Christian, saved by faith in Christ, *continually seeks a closer walk with the Savior.* We who believe set a place in our lives for Jesus – we want Him to be at home in our hearts. A person who is blind will, while at home, walk through his or her house as if they were sighted. How do they do this? They do it because they know *exactly where* each piece of furniture is, where every decoration and dish, cup and cupboard is.

The house is *familiar*, ordered so that they can walk through it unhindered. When this same blind person goes to a strange house he or she must be guided carefully throughout, for tripping hazards abound.

God will not make Himself at home in a house filled with sin and every evil work. God will not make Himself at home, nor manifest Himself to those who consider Him an imposition or an intrusion. Jesus Christ said to the **Church at Laodicea**:

Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

These were not words written to the lost – though they can be applied to the lost – but were words given to **the Church**. Christ wants to make Himself at home in every Christian heart. He will only make Himself at home in your hearts when you *conform your hearts* to His Word and His Will.

**CHRIST AT HOME IN MY HEART + Y
= GLORY TO GOD FOREVER**

We've begun to fill out our equation, but we still need the *value of Y*. Let's look at our text:

FOCAL Ephesians 3:17-19 ... that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) **May be able to**

comprehend³ with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know⁴ the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

8. The *value of Y* is **knowledge of the love of Christ**. Knowing that He loves you, knowing that He is with you, knowing that He wants to dwell in your heart by faith.

B.H. Carroll⁵ said:

"... so, is it with the Christian. The outward man perishes, but the inward man is renewed day by day. The fact is that no man is whipped until he is whipped inside, and when whipped inside he is whipped altogether. Just as long as his soul is firm and steadfast he is invincible by any force that can be sent against him."

3 Aorist Middle Infinitive G2638, *καταλαμβάνω*, *katalambanō*, *kat-al-am-ban'-o*, From G2596 and G1983; to *take eagerly*, that is, *seize*, *possess*, etc. (literally or figuratively): - apprehend, attain, come upon, comprehend, find, obtain, perceive, (over-) take.

4 Aorist Active Infinitive of G1097, *γινώσκω*, *ginōskō*, *ghin-ocē'-ko*, A prolonged form of a primary verb; to "know" (absolutely), in a great variety of applications and with many implications (as shown at left, with others not thus clearly expressed): - allow, be aware (of), feel, (have) known (-ledge), perceive, be resolved, can speak, be sure, understand.

5 *Interpretation of the English Bible*, Commentary on Ephesians, AGES Software

9. What Paul literally said in Ephesians 3:18 is **I want you to reach out and seize so as to possess this knowledge – CHRIST loves YOU!** Having seized this knowledge, even when beaten on the outside, Paul could not be beaten on the inside. **Christ loves YOU!**

If I know that Jesus loves me, no matter what may come, then I can stand the things that this life will throw my way. There is a difference between *knowing* and *really knowing*. When I say to many of you, "Jesus loves you", your response will most likely be "I know that". But do you really know that? Is this knowledge deeply embedded in your hearts? You see, as Paul was **being beaten with a leather strap** – five times *thirty nine times* or *one hundred and ninety five skin tearing lashes* – the thought he kept in His mind was *Jesus loves me*, Christ died for me. He is at home in my heart as I am being beaten. He will repay, He will avenge – I am His. As Paul was **beaten with rods**, perhaps breaking bones, He prayed unto Jesus Who loved Him and gave Himself for Him. Having died with Christ on the Cross:

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

he knew that **the Christ had not left him now**. It was not merely him who was being beaten, but he and Christ.

As Paul was stoned to death by his brothers and sisters I suspect it was not the stones that hurt half as much as the betrayal by those you love. Yet as he was bashed, as bones broke and skin bruised he remembered this – it is Jesus Christ Who ...

Revelation 1:5-6 ... **loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,** (6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Christ has not left us alone to deal with the things of this life. The salvation that He has given unto us saves us not only from the wrath of God, but goes with us *through the wrath of the things of this world*. Are you sick?

Quote A.W. Pink said⁶:

"Consider Jehovah's condescending to take upon Him a nature that was inferior to the angelic, so that when the Word became flesh His divine glory was almost completely eclipsed. Contemplate the unspeakable humiliation into which the Son of God descended, a humiliation which can only be gaged as we measure the distance between the throne of heaven and the manger of Bethlehem. Bear in mind that even as the incarnate One He made Himself of no reputation, that instead of appearing in pomp and splendor, He "took upon him the form of a servant." That He came not to be ministered to but to minister, not deeming the most ignominious acts as beneath

Him. Remember that He knew from the beginning the kind of treatment He would receive from those He befriended. He knew that instead of being welcomed, appreciated, loved, and worshiped, He would be despised and rejected of men. He knew that though He went about doing good, healing the sick, relieving the needy, preaching the gospel to the poor, He would be opposed and persecuted by the religious leaders, hated without a cause, and misunderstood and ultimately deserted even by His own disciples. What love that was — love indeed which passes knowledge, love which should ceaselessly occupy our hearts and shape our lives"

If Christ loved you this much when you were totally unlovely, will He not love you now? If Christ loved you while you were yet an enemy of God, will He not love you now that you have called upon Him for salvation? Do you believe Him to be a fair weathered friend, one Who only loves and walks with you while the sun shines? Absolutely not!

10. Christ loved you then, He loves you still. The sad fact of life is that we who are human are *frail creatures*, subject to failure. God knows this, and yet desires to make Himself at home in our frail hearts.

If Christ be at home in your heart, if He manifests Himself to you and reminds you of His love at even the darkest of times, that love has the power to dispel the darkness of depression as surely as the sun dispels the dark of the night. He loves you, and wants you to know

Him more. He loves you, and wants to fellowship with you more and more each passing day.

Now we begin to understand the Heavenly equation.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{CHRIST AT HOME IN MY HEART} \\ + \\ \text{CHRIST LOVES ME} \\ \hline \text{GLORY TO GOD FOREVER} \end{array}$$

THE SUM OF IT ALL

FOCAL Ephesians 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, **that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.**

What is the SUM or conclusion of this matter? God wants us to be **filled with all the fullness of God**. The **Amplified Version** of the Bible puts it this way:

Ephesians 3:19 ... that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God {and}⁷ **[may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!**

God wants you to know that He is there. Christ at home

in your hearts will give you the courage to go through the trials of this life without giving up, to continue serving Jesus Christ even if no one else will. The Presence of God in your lives will encourage you when all else seeks to discourage you.

11. There is no joy in the Christian's life without Christ at home in the heart, and the sure knowledge that He is with you no matter what may come.

The Apostle wrote:

1 John 1:2-4 "(For **the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father,** and was manifested unto us;) {3} That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, **that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** {4} **And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.**"

My prayer for you is that this Word preached will lead you to where **your joy may be full**. May God bless the reading and preaching of this Word.