**Honoring the Stewardship of the Gospel**

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

**Introduction**

1. **John 4:38** – this is true for everyone, especially us – having obeyed the gospel and having been added to the church, we have entered into the labors of others, and we need to honor those invaluable efforts by our own effort.
2. Paul was entrusted with the stewardship of the gospel to the Gentiles – **Ephesians 3:1-4, 8** – with this work, by the grace of God, the Ephesians were brought into the family of God (**cf. Ephesians 2:19-20; 3:14-15 – *“whole family,”* i.e. including Gentiles**).
3. Having labored among them extensively, Paul had a special place in the hearts of the Ephesian brethren, who were deeply moved by the news of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome – **Ephesians 6:19-22**
4. Knowing the brethren were affected by Paul’s circumstances, he encouraged them not to lose heart – **Ephesians 3:13 (vv. 11-12** – not lose heart, but boldness and access with confidence through Jesus)
   1. ***“which is your glory”*** – **2 Corinthians 1:6; 4:12, 15** – His affliction was a consequence of his ministry, of which they had benefitted.
   2. It would be more of a travesty of honor (than his unjust imprisonment) if they allowed his affliction to discourage them and hinder their fruitfulness.
5. His labor in the gospel which they entered into would be in vain if they did not take advantage of it by allowing it to fully work in them.
6. **Ephesians 3:14-21** – Paul prays (and through such instructs) on behalf of the Ephesians for God to work fully in them through the mystery of which he was a steward.
7. Rather than ***“lose heart”*** at Paul’s distress for their sake, they were to honor his sacrificial labor as a steward of the gospel by allowing it to transform their lives. (**cf. Philippians 2:16-18**)
8. We too must realize the great responsibility we have to honor the stewardship of the gospel (the great labor others – Christ and the apostles – have endured for our benefit) through allowing the gospel to have its full effect in our lives.
9. Let the Spirit Empower You (**Ephesians 3:16**)
10. The Lord shows the greatness of His strength in contrast to that of man – **Luke 1:51-52** (Mary’s Song)
11. God is not impressed with the strength of man, but with man’s humble recognition of his own weakness, and reliance on God – **Psalm 147:10-11; Romans 9:16**
    1. We must get in touch with our own weakness to gain access to God’s strength – **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**
12. To walk worthy of our calling (**cf. Ephesians 4:1**) requires great strength.
13. God supplies that strength through the Spirit – **Ephesians 3:16**
    1. Revelation – **Ephesians 3:3-5**
    2. Word – **Ephesians 5:17-18 (cf. Colossians 3:16); 6:17**
       1. Living and powerful – **Hebrews 4:12**
14. Let the Spirit empower you! Don’t quench the Spirit – **1 Thessalonians 5:19-20**
15. Let Christ In (**Ephesians 3:17a**)
16. **Philippians 4:13** – Christ strengthens us.
    1. Spirit’s empowerment in the inner man is how Christ dwells in us and grants us strength to do all things according to His will.
17. Jesus wants to make His home with us – **John 14:23**
    1. Figure – that of fellowship (**cf. John 14:20**). (not literal)
    2. ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word” (John 14:23, 21***).
    3. Through the HS – **John 14:16-18**
    4. ***“by faith” (Ephesians 3:17***) – **Galatians 2:20**
18. Christ will fill us, and dwell in us if we let Him:
    1. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – fills all in all.
    2. **Ephesians 4:7-13** – ascended to ***“fill all things,”*** by leaving gifts for our edification into the stature of Himself.
19. Let Christ be formed in you (dwell in you) through the word! – **Galatians 4:13, 19**
20. Be Rooted and Grounded in Love (**Ephesians 3:17b**)
21. Spirit strengthens, that Christ may dwell in heart, that you be rooted and grounded in love…
22. **1 Corinthians 16:13-14** – all we do is to be done in love. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3**)
23. Christ dwelling in us accomplishes this, as all He did/does is in love, because HE IS LOVE – **1 John 4:8; Colossians 2:9-10**
24. Twofold figure:
    1. **Rooted** (agricultural) – **Jeremiah 17:7-8** – fruitful – ROOTS REACH DOWN INTO THE SOIL OF LOVE.
    2. **Grounded** (architectural) – **Matthew 7:24-25** ***(“founded” = “grounded’***) – edification – GROUND/FOUNDATION FOR BUILDING UP IS LOVE.
25. **Love is the firm base and nutrient source (roots) which allows for upward ascension into fruitfulness to God:**
    1. **Colossians 3:12-14** – love is the bond of perfection (completion – glues everything together, holds together) (context: **v. 3** – life hidden with Christ; **v. 17** – doing all in Christ’s name)
    2. **Galatians 5:22-23** – love begins the list as it produces the rest (**2 Peter 1:5-7** – tops the list as it is transcendent and encompasses the rest).
       1. Fruit – singular – Spirit produces all these together – a unit (love binds together).
26. Grasp the Dimensions of Christ’s Love (**Ephesians 3:18-19a**)
27. God wants to share His love with us, and wants us to know His love – **Romans 5:5-6, 8**
28. Our involvement in love (rooted and grounded) allows for our comprehension of the incomprehensible – Christ’s love for us.
    1. Parent to child – “I wish you knew how much I loved you.”; Adult child (who now is a parent) to parent – “Now I know.”
29. NOTE THE IMPLICATION:
    1. We cannot claim knowledge of Christ’s love for us through the unprincipled living of false humility. (See denominational concept of grace, and appreciation for God’s love.)
    2. We can only truly grasp Christ’s love for us through abiding in it – **John 15:9-10; Jude 20-21**
30. EX: **Ephesians 5:25-29** – we gain a greater grasp of Christ’s love for us as we participate as the giver of such love.
31. **God wants us to meditate on His love, and to be enveloped by it. He wants us to know it so well that it defines our very being – and through the strength provided by the Spirit, Christ dwelling in us, and us being devoted to love we may be able.**
32. Let God Fill You with His Fullness (**Ephesians 3:19b**)
33. All the context has been leading up to this point:
    1. Empowered by the Spirit…
    2. …leads to Christ dwelling in you…
    3. …leads to being rooted and grounded in love…
    4. …leads to grasping Christ’s love…
    5. …leads to being filled with God’s fullness.
34. We were made to be God’s image bearers – **Genesis 1:26**
    1. This is a gift, that we are made to participate in, and be a part of the glorious God of the universe.
    2. This is the gift of salvation – **John 17:3** – to know God – through becoming like Him (**cf. 2 Peter 1:4**).
35. ***“the fullness of God”*** represents the extent of which God desires our fellowship with Him – entirety.
    1. **Cf. Matthew 5:43-48** – perfect as God is perfect (complete) – not just being filled with God’s love as it pertains to those who love us, but even our enemies.
36. God is our Father – **Ephesians 2:18; 3:14-15** – He wants full custody – full involvement – total fellowship.
    1. He is seeking to pour every bit of Himself into us for our well-being…
    2. …and we must let Him.
37. If He wants to fill us with His fullness, we must empty everything else to make room – **cf. Matthew 6:19-24, 33**
38. Live to Glorify God (**Ephesians 3:20-21**)
39. This is all to God’s glory!
40. ***“to the praise of the glory of His grace”*** – **Ephesians 1:3, 6, 12, 14**

**Conclusion**

1. Christ’s gospel is the product of the infinite wisdom of God, and the men (like Paul) He used to reveal it and spread it.
2. This labor is in vain if we do not allow the gospel to fully work in us. We must honor it, and those who have been stewards of it to our benefit by allowing it to work in our lives.