

God Revealed through the Church

The Church - A Demonstration of God's Love

An Armenian nurse had been held captive along with her brother by the Turks. Her brother was slain by a Turkish soldier before her eyes. Somehow she escaped and later became a nurse in a military hospital.

One day she was stunned to find that the same man who had killed her brother had been captured and brought wounded to the hospital where she worked. Something within her cried out “Vengeance.” But a stronger voice called for her to love. She nursed the man back to health.

Finally, the recuperating soldier asked her, “Why didn’t you let me die?” Her answer was, “I am a follower of Him who said, ‘Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you’ ” (Luke 6:27).

Impressed with her answer, the young soldier replied, “I never heard such words before. Tell me more. I want this kind of religion.”

Ephesians 3: 14 - 21

This is a prayer that Paul is praying for the Church at Ephesus. He makes it clear who He is praying to, who he is praying for and what he is praying for. Although this is a prayer it is clear that this is what God desires as we pray according to God’s will.

1) Being God’s Offspring

- God had created all things out of nothing and in that sense all things have their origin in God Himself – all things in heaven and earth are the offspring of God
- However it was only man that God made in His image and likeness.
 - It is only man that had “derived his name from God”
- What do we mean by “name”?
 - The biblical sense of a name has a deeper meaning than that by which we are called for the purposes of physical identification.
 - The name that was given to someone had a deeper meaning according to who they were and what their God given life’s purpose was
 - Abram’s name was changed to Abraham because he would be the father of many nations (Gen 17: 5)
 - Jacob meant “he grasps the heel” or figuratively “he deceives” and he was a deceiver. His name was changed to Israel which mean “he struggles with God”
 - Jesus means “Saviour”
 - A person’s name revealed their character
 - In Exodus 20: 7 God commanded: “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord (Yahweh) your God (Elohim).
 - Name – shêm (pronounced shame) - as a mark or memorial of individuality; by implication honor, authority, **character** (Strong)
- When man derived his name from God – he was created in the image and likeness of God – we derive our character from Him
 - God is love therefore man’s character was love
- When man sinned he became sinful losing the character of God
 - We can see this in our world by the amount of enmity, strife, division and segregation in the world.
 - Love was lost at the Fall.
 - We say we love but our love seldom goes to the point of sacrifice – we will love if it doesn’t hurt us in any way.

- God saved us not merely that we can go to heaven but that we can be His children – His spiritual offspring.
 - How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3: 1)
 - We can also say “we were named children of God”
 - Along with being children of God the character of God is returned to us
 - If God is love then we become people of love

2) The Love of God Revealed

- Our nature is to live lives in response to the world around us.
 - When we are love then we love
 - When we are hated we hate
 - When we are hurt we are resentful.
- Paul’s prayer is that God will strengthen us with power through His Spirit in our inner being so that Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith
 - We are to have the inner strength to live our loves from the inside out and not from the outside in
- We are to be rooted and established in love
 - Our responses are due to our identity being grounded in the love of God.
 - We don’t need to feel insecure, fearful or intimidated by the way people in the world treat us because our security lies in the love of God
 - 2 Tim 1: 7 “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”
 - 1 John 4: 8 “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear”
- The power that Paul is referring to is power to grasp and know the love of Christ
 - This love is agape – sacrificial love.
 - This love is that which says “I will go to any extreme for your benefit.”
- When we have grasped how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is and come to know – experience – this love then we will filled with the measure of all the fullness of God
 - As the fullness of God dwelt in Christ (Col 1: 19; 2: 9) so God wants His fullness to dwell – be manifest – in us.
 - The old nature has passed away and the character of God – love – becomes natural to us.
 - Romans 5: 5 “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

3) Doing Immeasurably More than we ask or Imagine

- We are often faced with tough relationship issues that we would normally consider impossible to overcome
- When we realise that the fullness of God and the love of Christ dwell in our inner being then we can overcome all relationship issues.
 - We may have a difficult boss or colleague – we can love that person
 - We may have someone close to us who has rejected us – we can, in love, forgive him/her
 - We may be discriminated against – we can respond with kindness
- We can do these things because of Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.
- This is the power of love
- When we, the church, demonstrate this type of love we are demonstrating the love of God to the world around us.