

Ephesians Chapter 3 v 8 - 21

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[0 : 00] Well, not even better, but that's great as well. Can I encourage you to turn with me to Psalm 8? From time to time, on a Sunday evening, when we come to worship, we read a psalm together.

We're going to read Psalm 8, and then we're going to come to worship the Lord, and then we're going to come to prayer and continue in our worship. So Psalm 8, and listen and follow, if you can, in your Bible, this hymn of praise.

Psalm of David, hymn of praise to our God. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foal and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you've set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

[1 : 14] You've made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet, all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, or that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Wherever we look, whether it be into the wonder of creation, nature we may call it, where we look at human beings, we look at the stars, the universe, wherever we look, we see God is God.

Lord, our Lord. He is majestic. He is revealed in all his creation, all the earth. And we come to worship him, not only because he is our Lord, but he is our king.

Rejoice, the Lord is king. Your Lord and king adore. Now, as good free church people, we don't use a liturgy.

We don't have set prayers or set things to repeat and so on. But I want to encourage you.

Sometimes it can be hard to think about what we should pray or how we can pray.

[2 : 42] Some of this is hard to get started in prayer. And one of the things that I've done in the past and from time to time even now is take something like the psalm, Psalm 8, and pray it.

Not pray it as it were word for word, but use the sense, the phrases, what's going on as the building blocks as it for prayer. But also, and I don't think it's, I hope you won't find this a fair, I also do it with hymns.

Because some of these great hymns, like the one we've just sang, really are, well, they're not the word of God. Of course, we're not saying that. But they're often prayers or they're expressions of faith.

And they too can be a great help to us in prayer. And I'm actually going to lead us in prayer now, but I'm going to use the hymn we've sung to lead us in prayer and to come to God.

So let's pray together and bring to him our prayers and our thanks. Oh Lord, our God, you are the king. You're not just a king, a king who comes and goes, but you are the king.

[3 : 51] The king of the universe, the king of heaven, the king of earth. Lord, if we can even say this, you are the king of hell. All things are under your dominion and domain.

All things are under your power. All people, oh Lord, owe their obedience and allegiance to you.

And we come this evening, oh Lord, and say that you are our king, and that is the greatest cause for our rejoicing.

You are my king, our king. Because you are the king of the universe, yes, we rejoice in that, for we know that you work all things according to your purposes. But, oh Lord, thank you that you are my king, our king, so we know that you work all things in our lives according to your purpose and will.

And we gladly bow the knee to you and acknowledge you as our king. We want to give you the thanks that you deserve. We want to lift our hearts up, not just our voices and not even just our hands.

We want to lift our hearts, our souls, our whole being to worship you, oh Lord, not just today but every day, to rejoice in you, even in times where we feel that we cannot rejoice.

[5 : 12] Lord, we all go through those times. We all feel those burdens, those pressures upon us where to rejoice in you is hard. But, oh Lord, we thank you that when we lift our eyes to you, we can rejoice in you.

We can rejoice that Jesus, the Savior, reigns, the one who is truly God, who is truth and love, the one who came into this world and who took our sin upon the cross, who purged our stains.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that whatever else is going on in our lives, you have made full atonement for all our sin. There is no punishment.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We thank you that that finished work of the cross is seen in the reality that you have taken your seat above, at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

We thank you from there that you are ruling over your kingdom, a kingdom that cannot fail. We thank you, oh Lord, that you are the one who is building your kingdom and your church, that you are the one who is establishing your people, that you are the one who is saving, bringing men and women from east and west, north and south to trust in you.

[6 : 32] Thank you that you are at the Father's right hand until all your enemies fall at your feet, until all are made your footstool. Lord, we once were enemies of yours.

We once, Lord, were enemies in the way that we acted and spoke and thought. We were living lives contrary to your will. But we thank you, oh Lord, that you brought us to that place where we gladly and joyfully bowed the knee.

We gladly and joyfully acknowledged our sin and brought it to you with faith and repentance. We thank you that even now that's what you're doing.

We pray, oh Lord, that indeed we might see in our own day, in our own generation, men and women, boys and girls, bowing before your feet, acknowledging you as their Lord and Savior.

Oh Lord, this would indeed be great reason for rejoicing, great reason for delight. But we thank you that we have even more reason to rejoice and delight.

[7 : 35] We have a glorious hope, a heavenly home. Thank you that this world in which we live is not our home. We are citizens of heaven. We are temporary, sojourners, pilgrims passing through.

But, oh Lord, that day will come when you will return as the judge of the living and the dead. It will be an awful, awful, awful day for those who have rejected you, who are still your enemies, who have fought against your grace, your will and your goodness.

But Lord, we thank you for those who have surrendered, those that you've brought under your wonderful hand. Lord, for us it will be a day when you take us up to be with you, to be at home forevermore.

Lord, we look for that day, that day when the trumpets will sound, that day when Jesus shall come back. We look for that day with great rejoicing, and yet, oh Lord, we acknowledge that until that day, we have a work to do.

That, Lord, until that day, until all your elect are gathered in, we have a ministry to proclaim Jesus, to make him known, and that you will save every single one for whom Jesus died.

[8 : 50] Help us, oh Lord, in that ministry. Prepare us, equip us, strengthen us, even in this time this evening. Give us rejoicing hearts in the week ahead, whatever we face, because Jesus is King, and he is my King.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son, our Saviour. Amen. Amen. We'll sing our next hymn. Okay, so Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14.

For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory, in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. I'm just going to read three more verses. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[10:32] Okay. Okay. Pray very briefly before we have a look at this word. Father God, thank you, Lord, that we can be gathered here again this evening, Lord, and I do ask as we come to your word that you'd open all of our hearts to hear what you have to say.

Please speak through me. I'm only a vessel, Lord, and we need you to speak to each of our hearts. So, Lord, please meet with us this time. In Jesus' name. Amen. Okay.

So, we're looking at this prayer in Ephesians chapter 3. And I'll just give you a quick introduction. It's well placed in Ephesians.

It comes right in the middle, and Paul has done that for a reason. He was writing this letter to the Ephesian church, but scholars think it could have been a general letter written just to a region and an area.

So, it certainly does apply to us today. But Ephesians is split into roughly two halves. You've got the first half, or the first three chapters approximately, are doctrine and truths, and the second half are full of applications.

[11:39] And just as we look at this prayer, and as I want to draw out some things and hopefully show forth the importance of it, I'm just going to read a few of the applications that Paul exhorts us in our walk.

We already read some of it from the start of chapter 4. We're called to walk worthy of the calling, in loneliness and gentleness. We're to keep unity.

We're to walk following Christ. We walk in love, edifying each other. We're not to walk as the Gentiles. We're to put off the old man and put on the new.

In verse 29, he says, Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it might impart grace to the hearers.

We're to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Then chapter 5, verse 1, We're to imitate God as dear children. And the list goes on.

[12:38] There's so much. We're to walk in the light. We're to be filled with the Spirit. We're to submit to one another. And then he goes on to speak of wives and husbands, parents and children, masters and bondservants.

And then finally, in Ephesians chapter 6, he says, Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day. There is so much, so much that we're called to as Christians.

And this prayer, I think God has been making it real to me, and I want it to be more real to myself, but I want to be able to share just how important it is to be empowered with the truths that Paul was getting at in the first half of Ephesians.

So from verse 14 then, For this reason, Paul says, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

He'd just been speaking of the wonderful mystery that had been revealed, how the Gentiles were partakers of the Jews, and how we can have fellowship with God. And what is he doing?

[13:41] He's praying. And who is he praying to? Well, he's praying to God. And who is God? Well, God is the creator. And I don't know if you ever look around you at nature.

I find it absolutely beautiful. I love the human body. In fact, it was looking at creation, really, and looking at science and the natural world that helped me to come to God just a few years ago.

But God is a creator. He's created the stars. And I wonder, have you ever counted the stars or tried to count how many there are in the sky? Would we say 10,000?

No. Apparently that number is what you can see with the naked eye. What about 10,000 billion?

That's a huge number, but no. What about 10,000 billion billion?

That's the best estimate of scientists at the moment. 10,000. Take 10,000 billions and then take a billion more of them and you have how many stars are in the universe.

[14:43] It's absolutely incredible. But this God, our creator, the one who Paul is praying to, is one who Isaiah says of in Isaiah chapter 40.

And I'll turn to these places. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 26. He says, Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number.

He calls them all by name, by the greatness of his might and the strength of his power. Not one is missing. Now he doesn't say star 101, star 102, but what he's saying is he has a name for all of them.

Isn't that amazing? God, who Paul is praying to our creator, knows all of the stars by name. And Jesus, in Matthew chapter 6 on the Sermon on the Mount, he spoke some amazing truths.

In fact, I'll read at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. It says, And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

[15:46] And he said this in chapter 6, verse 9, In this manner we know it well, therefore pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. You know, it was an astonishment to those Jews to hear those words because God had been a father to a nation but never individually and to be able to call him Father individually was something very special.

But you know, we pray to a father. Paul was praying to God the creator who is our father and we know in Luke 12, and again, I'll just turn there briefly, he says this, Jesus was speaking and he says, Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?

Not one of them is forgotten before God, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, therefore, for you are of more value than many sparrows. God cares.

This infinite creator is a personal God and he cares for us. Okay? And when it says the very hairs of your head are numbered, he's not just saying he knows how many hairs are on your head.

Of course he does, he knew how many were on Hitler's head. But he's saying he cares that much.

He cares when a sparrows and he cares about you. And so, just as we look at this prayer, turn back to Ephesians, we need to remember that we're praying to a father, a father who really does care.

[17:04] Okay, we're praying to the father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man.

Now, I don't know about you if you read that, but I can tell you I need strength. I can really relate to this. I need strength inside of me. And isn't that true for all of us?

We're all needy in many, many ways. We're all needy and the Christian experience is that of neediness, essentially. We're in need of strength. We don't have enough ourselves.

It was Elijah's. I don't have a clock, so I don't know how I'll be doing for time if I start. Okay, so 1 Kings chapter 19, and I'll just read, Elijah had just won a great victory with God's help on Mount Carmel with, I think, 450 prophets of Baal and 400 of Asherah.

And then what happened? And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so let the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

[18:13] And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree.

And he prayed that he might die and said, it is enough. Now, Lord, take my life, for I'm no better than my father's. Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, arise and eat.

Then he looked and there by his head was a cake baked on coals and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time and touched him and said, arise and eat because the journey is too great for you.

So he arose and ate and drank and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. So Elijah, he was in need.

He'd won a great victory but he was in need of strength and he went to the wilderness and an angel met him and strengthened him. So Elijah, well, Hebrews says he was a man with a nature like ours.

[19:19] He needed strength but it might be hard to relate to Jesus. In Luke chapter 22, when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, he said, I'll turn there, I can't remember it.

And he said, he was withdrawn from his disciples about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, Father, if it's your will, take this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.

And it says, then an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him. Jesus needed strength. Elijah needed strength. Paul needed strength. In Philippians chapter 4, verse 13, we will probably know it.

He says, I'll read a couple of verses before, not, I've learnt in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound essentially to live humbly and to live in prosperity.

Everywhere and in all things I've learnt both to be full and to be hungry, to both be abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

[20 : 27] Paul's experience was one where he needed Christ's strength. Okay? And it's ours too. So let me just, let's just think about this for a minute. How does God empower?

How does he give strength? Paul is saying that we need to be strengthened with might through our spirit in the inner man. And I think Paul, well Paul understood this, didn't he, as we've just seen in Philippians.

He was the one who in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, he was given a thorn in the flesh and he says, you know, a problem, some, something to hinder him, something perhaps painful and he says, concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. So we see here that it's through weakness that God empowers.

We need to acknowledge that we're weak. Paul was humble and God gave him something to humble him, okay, but we need to acknowledge that we are nothing and we need God to strengthen us.

[21 : 38] And finally, just on this aspect of strength, a wonderful psalm, Psalm 40. David wrote approximately half of the psalms and Psalm 40, reading verse 1, says this, I waited patiently for the Lord.

That word waited patiently, well, two words are the same word. It's I patiently patiented. I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined to me and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my steps.

He has put a new song in my mouth. Praise to our God. Many will see it in fear and will trust in the Lord. David's experience was one where he struggled.

He had difficulties. He speaks of being in the horrible pit, of being in the miry clay, but he waited on God and what happened? God strengthened him. And then he's able over the next few verses to exhort, give wonderful truths about God.

This is how God helped me. And in fact, the psalm, it's really very interesting. It would do well to finish almost at verse 11, we might think. And I read, it says, do not withhold your tender mercies from me, O Lord.

[22 : 50] Let your loving kindness and your truth continually preserve me. But then he goes on to say this, for innumerable evils have surrounded me. My iniquities have overtaken me so that I'm not able to look up.

They are more than the hairs of my head. Therefore, my heart fails me. You know, David had so many external troubles running perhaps from Saul and others for 15 years in danger of his life. I've not experienced that. But not only external troubles, David had internal troubles. And we can certainly relate to that. We live in a battlefield, aren't we, as Christians internally?

Okay, but what happens again? He came back to God. He said, help, be pleased to deliver me. And we see that God did deliver him. But it finishes with verse 17 and it's a wonderful verse, one that I've often prayed and need to pray more actually.

And it says this, but I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer. Do not delay, O my God. David was humble and he acknowledged his need.

[23 : 58] And I tell you that as you acknowledge your need for strength inside and as you come to him and pray and seek his face and wait on him, God will give you strength and we need it so often, don't we?

Okay, back to Ephesians 3, verse 17. So we've seen we need to be strengthened with might through his spirit in our inner man. And then he says that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Now as I read that, read it for the first time a little while back, I thought that is strange. Why is he saying that? Because as Christians, doesn't Christ dwell in our hearts through faith?

Well, what he's getting at is a lot more. I've got this proverb. It says, if you sit on your horse, it is under you. If you don't, it's not. Quite simply, if I get off my horse, it's not under me anymore.

The point is, trust is continuous. We're to continually trust in God. We must continue to have faith with him. It's a daily thing. Okay, we're trusting in his merit.

[24 : 59] What he's done for us is strength to empower us. His righteousness. We don't have a righteousness of our own. As Christians, we must daily trust in him to present us right before God.

Okay, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 7, he says, for we walk by faith, not by sight. It's seen several times in the New Testament and once in the Old, I think, as well.

But we are to walk by faith and not by sight. But the fact is, I would rather walk by sight a lot of the time. Wouldn't it be so much easier if we could see what we should do?

But we're called to walk by faith. Again, David, he understood this and God's given us the Psalms and David's life to learn from and gain encouragement from.

So Psalm 18, really, it's a marvellous Psalm and I'll read the title and it shows his, yes, Psalm 18, it shows his trust. So the title really tells the lot.

[25 : 58] It says, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

It's a victory Psalm. Okay, he'd been delivered. But what did he say? Looking back on his life, on his troubles, he was able to say this, God is my rock, he's my strength, he's my deliverer, he's my fortress, he's my shield, he's my salvation, I will trust in him.

And then he says, in my distress, you know, David, although he trusts in God, he went through trials and he says, in my distress, I called upon the Lord.

The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me. But anyway, he cried out to God and God heard from his temple and my cry came before him even to his ears.

And what did God do? You know, when we cry to God, does God hear us? He does, but is he inactive? No. It says, the earth shook and trembled. It says, God rode upon a cherub.

[27 : 06] It says, he sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters, he delivered me. And this was David's continual experience. In difficulty, he trusted. Whatever difficulties you go through, do you trust God?

Because we need to. David said this in verse 30 of Psalm 18, as for God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord is proven. He is a shield to all who trust him.

The life of faith, it's so difficult. You know, there's times as Christians that we go through darkness and we might question God's goodness and God's hand upon our lives.

is he even for me? Does he even care? But Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter 50 verse 10, who among you fears the Lord, who obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light?

Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God. You know, there's times that you can be in darkness and you think, God, where are you? but you know what? He's there.

[28 : 09] He says, trust, still trust, rely on the name of the Lord, even in darkness because you know what? He really does care. And we know the story of doubting Thomas, don't we?

As he's known. In John chapter 20, the disciples had met Jesus. The 10 disciples, I think, they were in a room and Thomas said, unless I see Jesus for myself, only then will I believe.

But what happened? After eight days, his disciples were inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut and stood in the midst and said, peace to you. Then he said to Thomas, reach my hand here, look at my hands and reach your hand here and put it into my side.

Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to him, my Lord and my God, Jesus said, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

You know, we're to trust. We might not see Christ with us. Sometimes I wish Jesus was at my side. But you know what? He's more than that. He's inside of me. And we're to walk by faith and not by sight.

[29 : 18] We're to trust Christ even when we can't see him. And finally, Peter. Peter in Matthew chapter 14. Remember, they'd fed the 5,000.

Jesus had sent the disciples off in a boat. He'd gone to the mountainside to pray. And they're out in the storm or something. Anyway, Jesus came out to them and Peter jumped over. He said, can I come to you, Lord?

And Jesus said, yes, go for it. Jump. Wow, what faith. I don't know if I'd have that faith. But what happened? When he looked at the storm around him, the tempest, he started sinking.

And you know, this is what Paul is getting at in Ephesians. If we don't fix our eyes on Christ, then we'll sink. Christ goes out of the picture and it's like we take the reins ourself.

We want to lead, but it's no good and we'll sink. So we need Christ to dwell in our heart through faith. I'll read the proverb again. If you sit on your horse, it's under you.

[30 : 16] If you don't, it's not. But then Paul goes on to say this, that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now we understand this idea about rooting, don't we, and grounded. I'm from Harrogate and our house, family home there was built in the 1920s, shortly after the First World War and no doubt resources were scarce and its foundations aren't that good and when we had an extension put in, they put in tons of concrete, literally nowadays.

They do a very good job of foundations and what happened was when, as the ground moves, cracks have appeared because the foundations are different but we know the importance of good foundations.

I don't know if any of you have heard of the Burj Khalifa which is the world's tallest building at around 830 metres, nearly 3,000 feet and you don't think that building would stand if it didn't have foundations, of course it wouldn't and we look at trees grounded but rooted.

A tree without its roots is useless. How else can it withstand the storm unless it's rooted? In fact, I think the tallest tree in the world is in California.

[31 : 43] It's a, I can't remember what it is now anyway, it's about 150 metres high, 380 feet or something. Absolutely amazing but don't you think that for that great tree up in the air there's also a great network of roots holding it in place and Paul is using this analogy and he's saying we need roots and Jesus, again, he would allude to all these truths and he said we need to be rooted and grounded on the right thing and so again the Sermon on the Mount he said this, we know the parable of the wise and the foolish man.

Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain descended, the floods came and the winds came and beat on that house and it did not fall for it was founded on the rock but everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain descended, the floods came and it fell and great was its fall.

You know, Jesus hit the point here, didn't he? Unless your roots are right, you'll never stand. Are you rooted and grounded in love? We know that God is love and the thing is, as Christians, if we have built on this foundation of Christ, we are rooted in his love but it's also a case that we need to continually be rooted.

We need to put our roots out deeper and deeper. The deeper our roots go, the more we'll be able to withstand in the storm. That's so important. So that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints, essentially to comprehend and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Now again, does that seem strange to you? How can you know the love of Christ which passes knowledge? What's he getting at? Isn't that contradictory? Not at all because the words are actually different in the Greek and the word for knowledge is an intellectual knowledge.

[33 : 47] You know, the love of Christ passes intellectual knowledge. You can't learn it at a university. You can't learn it by studying academically. It's something that we have to know ourselves and Adam, it says Adam knew Eve, his wife.

He had an intimate relationship with her and so we must know, we must know God's love for us personally. It's no good in the mind. It's got to be real.

It's got to be in the heart but let's look at this love a little bit. You know, what is it? God's love for us. We know it. It comes out of our mouths but do we know it in our hearts?

Let's just have a look at Ephesians chapter 2. It's part of the context of what Paul is getting at in this prayer. In fact, Paul is essentially, he's saying this prayer and it comes off the back of the last two

chapters and he says, in chapter 2 verse 1, we see this.

And you he made alive, you believer, who were dead in trespasses and sins. That's quite strong. That's quite a strong word there.

[34 : 50] Paul says that we were dead. Now, I don't know if you've ever been to a museum and seen some bones and we use the phrase, don't we, bone dry. Okay, but bones are absolutely dry and in the British Museum, you'll have bones there that are thousands of years old and they're absolutely bone dry.

but Ezekiel, he drew mention to these bones and really, it just draws out how dead we were. You know, there's no life in bones and I'm going to read from Ezekiel chapter 37.

Ezekiel was carried captive into Babylon and he was a prophet there and he was prophesying, saying that one day you would come back, the people of Israel would come back, they would be able to worship God, rebuild the temple and yes, be back in Israel but ultimately, you know, it points to us, it points to the church as well and so Ezekiel chapter 37, it's one of my favourite passages actually, it says, the hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley and it was full of bones.

Then he caused me to pass by them all around and behold, there were very many in the open valley and indeed, they were very dry and he said to me, son of man, when can these bones live? So I answered, oh Lord God, you know and he goes on to say, prophesied them, speak, the spirit was to come upon them and essentially, what happened was these dry, dead bones had sinews upon them and tendons and life and skin and they lived.

[36 : 25] You know, we were dead but Christ has given us life. We were very dead. Back to Ephesians chapter 2. He made you, he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath just as the others.

Again, that's very strong language. Paul says that outside of Christ you were children of wrath, children of God's hatred and you might say, Paul, that's not me.

That wasn't me. I know you murdered. Paul, in Acts it says, he wreaked havoc of the church going to every house and pulling them out and throwing them into prison and beating them and the lot.

Okay, but the truth is that we were children of wrath. You know, didn't David say in Psalm 51, in sin did my mother conceive me. Okay, and in fact if we compare ourselves not simply to the Ten Commandments but even greater to Jesus Christ, how far short have we fallen every single one of us.

But then we have the wonder of it in verse four, but God, and you know that's got to be the greatest but that you've ever had. You know, what a contrast, what a wonderful thing that God has done.

[37 : 56] But God, God bridged the gap. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ by grace he have been saved and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

You know something, love is measured by cost. Love is measured by what it's willing to give and in fact you can measure your own love towards other people, perhaps towards God by what you're willing to give, what you're willing to sacrifice.

But we know Jesus, he gave everything, didn't he? He gave his life. God sent his son, the best thing that he had and he spared not his own life but laid it down for us.

That's the extent of God's love and that shows love. And he says that in the ages to come he might show us the exceeding riches of his grace. You know, this world isn't the end.

If it was, then so often, well, we'd live for something totally different, wouldn't we? And sometimes we might do but we mustn't because it's not the end.

[39 : 10] There's an eternity to come. Okay, and God's going to show his riches towards us and he asks that we keep trusting him because there's something so much better. Don't hang on to your possessions or your abilities, what you have on this earth but live for eternal things.

Sorry, back to Ephesians, back to Ephesians 3. So, we've seen some of Christ's love and there's so many other places we could go to look at his love. You know, he was a man of sorrows, Isaiah

says, acquainted with grief.

We hid, as it were, our faces before him. What does it say? He was despised and rejected. You know, that's our saviour but he did all that for us. His love is tremendous and you know what? I cannot live the Christian life unless I'm taking hold of Christ's love for me. We've got to, we've got to be rooted and grounded. Okay, and as we're rooted and grounded in love and as we know the love of Christ in our hearts, not just in our head which passes knowledge, we're able to be filled with the fullness of God.

Now that's an astonishing statement that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. You know, we read Psalm 8 at the start and we see here in the heavens the work of your fingers.

[40 : 27] Wait there, God just made the stars with his fingers and we're saying that this creator God can indwell us. That's absolutely incredible. And so I won't say too much about that but essentially what's this fullness, this abundance, this completeness and it just reminds me of Colossians and maybe it reminded you as well being filled all the fullness of God.

Who was filled? Well, in Colossians 2, verse 9, for in him, in Jesus Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power. and then he says in the chapter before, to them, to God's saints, to the people of God, Christians, to Christians God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is in you, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

You know, that's amazing. We can be filled with the fullness of God with Christ. Christ was filled with the fullness of God but we can be filled with him. That's amazing. And Paul, he understands how amazing this is and you know what?

He just wants us to understand it too. We need so much empowering. Just a couple other things then as we make our way to the end. We are to be God's dwelling.

[41 : 57] In fact, we are God's dwelling. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in Corinthians, do you not know that you are the temple of the Lord and the Holy Spirit lives within you? But you know, not simply individually but corporately.

You know, you guys here, we are the temple. In Christ, we are the temple and you know what? You know, that means we're a body. We're together. In fact, in Ephesians chapter 4, Paul is saying, growing up in Christ, you know, setting Christ first, from him, the head, Christ, all of the body is to grow for the edifying of itself in love.

Okay? We're a body. I wonder, do you treat yourselves like that? Do you interact as a body?

Because we need each other, you know, so many times the scripture, the New Testament is full of this.

We are to be united. Okay? We're to be a body and work together. Exhort one another daily whilst it's called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. But just a couple of the things, the wonder of it, we are God's dwelling, we're his temple.

And this was quite amazing when I realised this, Zerubbabel's second temple lacked the glory of the first one. You know, Solomon's temple actually was incredible. It was filled with gold, it must have shimmered.

[43 : 15] In fact, I think at one point it says it was maybe the wonder of the world or something at that time. Okay? But the second temple after they'd come out of Babylon was so much less and in fact, the people wept because its glory was so much less.

And one thing that was different, there was no ark and actually what had happened at the first temple was the glory of God and it happened at the tabernacle with Moses but the glory of God had descended in a cloud and nobody was able to go near.

But it didn't happen in the second temple. But then the prophets say this, Habakkuk says, the glory of the second temple shall be greater. And you know, the thing is, the wonder of it, it has its ultimate fulfilment in us because the glory of God did and will come upon the temple.

And we see this in Revelation at the end, Revelation chapter 1 verse 3 and it says this, I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God, the dwelling place of God is with man and he will dwell with them and they will be his people.

God himself will be with them and be their God. You know what? God's glory is going to fill us the temple. In fact, he wants to fill us now. You know, being filled with the fullness of God, I ask, do you comprehend this?

[44 : 32] I tell you, don't we need to so much? And so, as we come to our close, there's just one thing that I missed. I missed deliberately. And I wonder if you noticed it.

