



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

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Love Transcendent

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

To know the love of Christ as well which transcends knowledge - that you may be completed for the entire complement of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Paul, after he had set forth the three sections of the secret (Ephesians 1:3-2:22), began a prayer for the appreciation of the fathomless favors which he had revealed but broke off at its very commencement to give a summary of this grace, which is now shown to the nations. He says,

On this behalf, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you, the nations (3:1).

Then he introduces a parenthetical digression. He would have us be clear as to the two mysteries: the *Secret of Christ*, and the *Secret Administration*;¹ otherwise his proposed prayer would be impractical.

This knowledge is essential to its fulfillment. Let no one read the prayer, or its exposition, without first drinking the preceding cup of blessings to its dregs. Paul would not have interposed this parenthesis unless it was vital to his petition.

Now, however, he resumes,

On this behalf I am bowing my knees to the Father (:14).



There is a practical lesson to be learned from this parenthetical procedure. A prayer of such intensity as the apostle's would not easily be diverted into an exposition. If another had interrupted him, it would have seemed most offensive.

There must be a very powerful reason why we must have knowledge before strength. We must understand and grasp God's grace before we can realize His love. It is useless to expatiate in glowing but abstract terms on the transcendent love of God.

We need to see that love in exercise. We must view its activities. We must marvel at its achievements. We must wonder at its wisdom. Its scope must astonish us. Its riches must ravish us. If a celestial messenger were to fly in mid-Heaven with the proclamation "God is love," it might reach their ears, but it would find no harbor in men's hearts.

The evangel consists of God's words concerning Christ. Paul's prayer was interrupted in order to explain God's attitude and the basis of his exhortation. Love cannot be pumped out of a dry well. First prime the pump with the overflow of God's love before seeking a response in the hearts of His saints.

This meditation is utterly dependent, therefore, on those which have preceded it. It has little force for those who have not grasped the gracious glories which God has granted to the nations in the present *Secret Administration*.

1. [Editor:] For more information on the Secret Administration see: *The Present Secret Administration*, A.E. Knoch, [Bible Student's Notebook #575](#);
— *A New Administration at the Close of Acts*, Adlai Loudy, Part 1 — [Bible Student's Notebook #562](#); Part 2 — [Bible Student's Notebook #563](#);
— *The Pentecost, Readjustment & Secret Administrations*, Adlai Loudy, [Bible Student's Notebook #497](#).



A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

Once before, he had issued a prayer on our behalf. The burden of that petition was that we should receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation in order that we may perceive the threefold secret (1:15-19). Now his petition is for *spiritual power* to realize the love that underlies the new revelation (3:14-21).

What a contrast with the approved prayers of today! We pray for power, but it is for service. Our “god” is a little deity who needs our help, not a great God Who desires our heads and our hearts.

Let us not decry diligence in doing His will, but let us never forget the better part chosen by Mary, and the fact that she, though condemned by her sister, was commended by her Lord. Who shall say that Mary did not devote as much as Martha did to her household duties? Did we devote one tenth as much energy to delving into the depths of revelation as we do into the duties of a livelihood, how great would be our appreciation of God’s grace!

THERE IS BUT ONE FATHER

It is customary to name those derived from a common stock after the father from whom they sprang. So we find the sons of Israel divided into twelve tribes according to the patriarchs. They are known by the name of their ancestors.

In the world of spirit there is but one Father, and all who are His, own Him as such. They may be many families in the flesh, but in spirit they are one. Israel, on earth, will receive her bounties² from the same Hand as the saints among the celestials.

The previous prayer was to God: that is, to the Father. We rightly connect power with God, and affection with the Father. Why, then, does Paul pray to the *Father* for *power* in this passage?

Because the greatest display of power is not connect-

2. [Editor:] For an in-depth look at Israel and her place in God’s plan, read:

– *God’s Holy Nation: Israel and Her Earthly Purpose* (Contrasted with the Body of Christ and Its Heavenly Purpose), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., see order form.

ed with God as Creator, or with the reconciliation of the sinner, or even with great supernatural manifestations. Far more is needed to give the saints a grasp of the love which underlies this latest overflow of God’s affection, as manifested in *the Mystery*.

If the reader of these lines has been enabled to apprehend the truth of the epistle to this point and goes on to lay hold on the love which it reveals, he may rest assured that it is the fruit of a *spiritual force* far beyond any other in this *Administration of God’s Grace*.

On all sides saints are seeking *power* – power for service, power for miracles, power for healing, power for everything except the one thing essential: power to entertain and respond to the truth of *the Mystery*. It is this response for which the apostle is bowing his knees.

Why should not the supremest display of God’s grace and wisdom lead us into the greatest grasp of His affection? How else could this be revealed?

Yet even after we are graced with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to fit our minds to apprehend *God’s Secret Grace*, we may still be unable to fathom the love from which all springs, and for which all operates.

LOVE ALONE HAS VITAL VALUE

God’s glory is the universal goal. From the tiniest insect in its seemingly aimless way, to the most sovereign sun star in its parabolic path, all have one common aim, one pure purpose to perform. Men may deem the one a foolish, fruitless wandering; and on the other hand they cannot see the star’s objective; but God has harnessed both to His chariot of glory.

The earth is His most fruitful field. Mankind is the creature fittest to display His varied excellence. To trace God’s footsteps in the earth – that is the true history of humanity. Such a narrative will yet transform this darkling world into the brightest of the heavenly luminaries, whose effulgent rays will reach the utmost borders of the universe, and radiate the deepest recesses of God’s love.

God's goal is not gained until He receives the heart-felt adoration of all of His creatures. As great as His efforts on our behalf are, they are but the means to make Him known. Ephesians does not find its climax in *the Mystery* itself, but in a prayer for its appreciation. *A knowledge of the Secret is not sufficient or satisfactory to God unless it includes a heart-hungry occupation and enjoyment of the surpassing love of Christ.*

Even before *the Secret* was made known the apostle could say,

If I should be perceiving all secrets ... yet have no love, I am nothing (I Corinthians 13:2).

Nothing has any vital value unless it leads to love. It is the glory of God's wisdom that all things in the universe, including sin and hate, shall be lured into the livery of love.

At present, most of God's creatures are out of harmony with Him. He is either unknown, ignored or defied. The ideal relationship with God is well expressed by the word "*complement*."³ His creatures should combine with Him to make one harmonious whole. All that is in Him should find a response in them. There should be such mutual reciprocation in every relationship of life as will be most delightful to both.

As Creator we should take our place as His creatures. As Father we should be His beloved sons: He the Reconciler, we the reconciled. He the Deliverer, we the delivered.

However, more than this, we are accorded a place with Christ in His work of revealing Him to the celestial hosts. It is only as we ourselves are filled with His affection that it can overflow to others.

HIS GLORIOUS RICHES

No epistle in the Scriptures is so full of harmonies as Ephesians. There is a continual assurance that each phase of our blessing is in accord with all of the rest.

3. [Editor:] For more information about the complement, see:
– *The Complement Which Completes*, Frank Neil Pohorlak, [Bible Student's Notebook #455](#).

Our sonship suits the delight of His will (1:5). The "forgiveness" of our offenses is raised on the scale to harmonize with the riches of His grace (1:7). The secret of His will is consonant with His delight (1:9). Our predestination is in unison with His purpose (1:11). Paul's dispensation agrees with God's grace, which in its turn is attuned to His powerful operation (3:7). The insight of the celestials is in line with the purpose of the eons (3:11). So, now, power is desired such as will harmonize with His glorious riches (3:16).

Paul prays for a power which will accord with the wealth of glory which has become ours through this new revelation. God's riches are glorious. In these days riches have increased.

There are many men of vast wealth, and fortunes have been amassed which are amazing. Great as is their material magnificance, they are sadly lacking in divine glory. Much of our unrighteousness and crime is connected with money. It occasions far more misery than it alleviates. In general, riches are a menace to society.

Yet all will acknowledge that wealth has power. It is fast becoming the paramount force in human affairs. It overrides social prestige and political influence. What could we not accomplish with an unlimited command of means!

Yet one thing cannot be bought by all the wealth of all the world. That is love. God's wealth alone has the divine glory that influences the affections.

Outwardly we may be as weak as Timothy, with his frequent infirmities. We may be clothed in rags and live in the meanest of shelters. There may be nothing to indicate that we are rolling in the real riches. This wealth is not for the outer man at present. It is spiritual, and for the spirit. It is for the man within.

Men behold the external appearance, God looks on the heart. Through His spirit our hearts become the habitation of Christ. This is the ground of our strength. The meanest human heart, indwelt by Christ, has a glory that surpasses the temple of Solomon. All its moral values are living in him.

GROUNDING IN LOVE

Our vitality and stability depend upon the apprehension of God's love. As a plant seeks its sustenance and strength in the soil, so we should search for our sustentation and support in the subsoil of all of God's activities, the fact of His affection. We can flourish in no other ground. Here alone can our roots find nurture and our trunk find strength. Both of these are necessary for fruit.

The most beautiful tree in all my garden fell to the ground. It had ample roots, but was not well grounded. It could not withstand the winds of adversity. How many of us have failed to fasten firmly on the love transcendent? Only in this can we stand and bring forth fruit for God's delectation. Nothing else will delight Him. No substitute should satisfy us.

Hence, let us pray this prayer for ourselves. Let us make it a petition for all saints. Only thus can we grasp these immeasurable measurements.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE MYSTERY

The transcendent love of Christ and the dimensions of *the Mystery* are usually merged into one, according to the rendering of the *Authorized Version*. Let us remember that the apostle has interrupted his prayer⁴ to explain *the Secret*, and this is the subject on his heart as he proceeds. He expatiates on the vastness of its scope in order to make this a stepping-stone to that which lies beyond. No one can grasp the love of Christ without an amazed wonder at the divine breadth and length and depth and height involved in this, God's latest and highest revelation.

Its Breadth

A characteristic feature of the tabernacle in the wilderness was the width of the gate which led into the court. It indicated something of the breadth of the evangel in the era which it typified. Though Israelites could enter, yet all aliens were shut out. So with the proclamation in the early part of Acts. They spoke

4. [Editor:] For an in-depth study of Paul's divinely inspired prayers see:
– *The Prayers in Ephesians*, E.W. Bullinger, Bible Student's Press (see order form).

to the Jews only. Gentiles could not enter without becoming proselytes of Judaism. Now, the evangel is for *all*.

In effect, the gate of the tabernacle is only a hindrance, for the whole wall surrounding the tabernacle is now taken down. Access to God is unhindered. The evangel could be no broader. Corresponding to this, the central wall of the temple has been abolished. In this aspect the present grace is unlimited in breadth.

Not only is the secret evangel all inclusive now, but the future service of the saints is all embracing. Israel will broaden out to evangelize the whole earth in the day of her glory. When we enter our proper allotment, we will reach out to the utmost bounds of the universe. Our parish will include all of the celestial hosts.

Tell me the breadth of the universe and I will give you one of the dimensions of the mystery. The physical measure is an index of its moral extent. It is an indication of the vastness of Christ's love.

Its Length

In space, we can hardly make a distinction between its length and breadth, for both are beyond our grasp. Perhaps we should think of time, when meditating on its length. It goes back before the eons, long before the entrance of sin. It preceded the "disruption" in God's purpose. It is the earliest intimation of God's love for His creatures. We were not an after-thought with God.

Let us revel in the realization that He thought of us long before He took up His earthly people Israel. His care for us is not due to the rebound arising from Israel's rejection of His favor. We are His first love, the earliest to call forth His affection.

Its Depth

The mystery not only has the greatest sweep of any of God's administrations, but it digs down into the very dregs of human depravity and soars to the highest heavens. Israel had promises and privileges which

raised them above the balance of mankind. The Gentiles were below them, far from God, sunk in sin, ignorant and alienated, deserving only death. The grace of God reaches down into the deepest depths of degradation for the trophies of its triumph.

Never in the story of this somber scene had come a time so dark and dismal as the days that followed Paul's final visit to Jerusalem and his imprisonment in Rome. The Jews will not have Messiah. Neither will they allow the other nations any place. Paul is a prisoner. Every avenue of blessing seems effectually choked. Everything is ripe for judgment. So it seemed.

Then, with a spiritual convulsion⁵ as great as the material cataclysm which ends Jehovah's day, a place is prepared for a new creation. God creates a new, a spiritual sphere, unheard of and unknown. He reveals this present *Secret Economy*, which fills the hosts of heaven with admiring wonder and the hearts of His hallowed with impassioned praise.

Its Height

Israel will have the highest place on earth. We will have the supreme position in the heavens. What can be higher than that? No celestial creature will be above us. All will be beneath.

Had we been raised to a place of blessing under Israel, as will be the portion of the nations in the coming eon, that would have been an undeserved and undreamed exaltation.

Had we been put upon a par with them, that would have been an almost unthinkable elevation. To be the humblest in heaven, how far beyond our highest hopes!

To be equal to celestials would seem the limit of human anticipation. Truly, it never has entered into the human heart what God has for those who love Him! Highest of the high, we shall be above all the heavenly host.

5. [Editor:] For a deeper understanding of this see:
– *God's Eonian Purpose*, Adlai Loudy, chapter 6: The Adjustment of the Eons (see order form).

TRANSCENDENT LOVE

All of these dimensions are love tokens. Each adds to our assurance and appreciation of His affection. Each is a step which raises us to the temple of Christ's love. We cannot now measure these dimensions. We have no means to calculate their immensity. They are beyond our powers. So is the love to which they lead. It is like the universe itself, which seems to expand as it is explored.

The most powerful telescope, with photographic plates that picture millions of stars that human eyes have never seen, cannot find the boundary of God's material world. Its transcendent size is a parable of the immensity of the love that conceived it, which is embodied in His Christ, and which has been revealed in the moral dimensions of the mystery.

THE EON OF THE EONS

The coming eon is particularly concerned with God's glory in Israel. It includes the Day of Jehovah. The succeeding eon approximates the present. It will be the Day of God. Then God's glory will be publicly displayed in accord with the present spiritual manifestation. Israel's spiritual supremacy will be past in that concluding eon. Now it is only eclipsed temporarily. Then God will tabernacle with mankind, as such. No temple, no priesthood will bar their approach to Him.

It is serenely satisfactory to see that the only occurrence of this phrase, "the eon of the eons," occurs in Ephesians, for this epistle sets forth spiritual blessings for the nations which parallel those of that day. It is true that the Son still rules, and the saints still reign, but their authority will be near its vanishing point for lack of opposition. Those who are near God need few restraints.

However, that eon will not only witness the nearness of the nations on the earth, it will be the scene of celestial splendors among the star-strewn empyrean. God will be glorified on earth beyond all previous administrations, but His greatest glory will shine forth through the celestial saints, the ecclesia which is Christ's Body.

Having learned the lesson of Christ's transcendent love, His Body will have as their lot to publish it abroad among the heavenly hosts. Then we shall have the greatest privilege which can be accorded to any person. We shall bring glory to God and good to His creatures. Vessels of grace are we, not only to have and to hold, but to give and to gratify. Our bliss will not be based on ourselves, but in blessing God and benefitting His handiwork.

This is the key note on which our happiness began. Our salvation, our justification, our reconciliation, our glorification⁶ are merely the means of glorifying God. This thought, once it enters into our heart, will give us rest and relief from ourselves, and serene surcease from dread of the future.

Our personal destiny is so pitifully unimportant in this great universe, when viewed by itself. When it is seen to be a part of God's own glory, it ceases to be insignificant. It is no longer inconsequent. It must be safe and sure. It cannot fail or fall. It is not the reward of our merits, for we have none. It is reared on our demerits, of which we have no lack. Let us but see that we are the instruments for revealing God's

grace, and essential to His goal, and we have the best basis of eonian bliss which man has ever imagined.

Here we have a series of superlatives seeking to set God's glory on the summit of the eonian times. God's greatest glory will be displayed in our Lord under the contrastive title, *CHRIST JESUS*; Jesus, the symbol of His humiliation; Christ, the title which combines all of His official dignities. Of all of the elect, the members of Christ's Body are the most exalted, though once the most debased. Of all of the eons, the last will bear the rich fruitage of the rest. In the most blessed time, in the most blessed class, and in the most exalted Personage, will God garner the *GLORY* which is His as the Administrator of the Mystery. ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*
Volume 22 (1931)

TOPICS:

Major: God; Love; Prayer; Mystery; Secret; Body of Christ; Ephesians
Minor: Power; Administrations; Eons; Celestials; Glory

6. On all of these themes – salvation, justification, reconciliation and glorification – see the [BSN Master Index](#) for the location of multiple articles concerning these doctrines.

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- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
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- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
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- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
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