

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON THIRTY-SIX)

“ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE”

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 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 fulness 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.

Brothers and sisters, in our last **Lesson**, I indicated that we would be completing our examination of chapter 3 with that **Lesson**. However, the

phrase “*being rooted and grounded in love,*” kept forcing its way into my thoughts and I felt that there was a need for us to look at it in greater detail. So, we will be looking at this phrase this evening, to see what else the Lord would desire for us to learn from it.

The word “*rooted*” is a translation of the Greek word **rhizoó: (hrid-zo’-o)**, which literally means to cause to take root, or to strengthen with roots. Figuratively, **rhizoo** means “to become stable, to be firmly established, to be firmly fixed with the focus upon the source of such strength. The word is in a construction in the Greek which indicates that the source of this strengthening and stability is not intrinsic to the believer. The source of this strength and stability lie outside of the believer. Believers are strengthened and stabilized in the love of Christ. We are to be planted and rooted in the soil of His love. It is in the love of Jesus Christ that believers find life-giving soil. And it is only in the soil of His love that we are able to grow strong and healthy. The nutriment and nourishment, and all that helps to build us up and make us strong, comes from the soil of His love. Therefore, we are to be rooted in it.

To be rooted in love pictures a sturdy, growing tree that sinks down deep roots that enable it to withstand drought and fierce storms. A tree is a living, growing organism. Even so, the Christian life is a living, growing relationship with Jesus Christ and with others. The love of Christ is the soil in which it is rooted and it necessarily results in our growth in love for Him and for others.

In **Isaiah 61:1-3**, we see an illustration of how the ministry of the Messiah will provide strength and stability for His people that He might be glorified:

I The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

*3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; **that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.***

The word “grounded” is a translation of the Greek word **themelioó**:

(them-el-ee-o’-o), which means, “to lay the foundation, to make stable, establish.” The word always refers to that which is secure and permanent. The picture conveyed by **themelioó** is that of a house which is so firmly fixed on a foundation that it is not moved by winds or floods or, figuratively, by the stormy waves of suffering or the loud howling roar of our adversary, the devil.

To be grounded in love pictures a solid building, with a foundation that goes down to the bedrock. It can withstand a flood or an earthquake, because it is built on the rock. This pictures the love of Christ. His love for us is not based on fluctuating feelings or circumstances. Rather, it is solid and steady, undergirding everything else in life.

The words of **Edward Mote**’s hymn, “*The Solid Rock*,” beautifully describes the meaning of the Greek word **themelioó**:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus’ name.*

***On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.***

*When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.*

*In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

***On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.***

Every person who worships at **The Grace Workshop Ministries**, needs to be realistic and practical in applying Paul's words here. Some of us have come to faith in Christ from an environment where love was nonexistent. We have known only anger and abuse. Yes, we heard about the love of God, demonstrated by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. Yes, we were saved by grace and translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. But because we have never experienced genuine love, it is very difficult for us to accept the fact that God loves us and it is therefore very difficult for us to love others.

How are we to begin to address this problem?

Brothers and sisters, we must bear in mind that the four requests of God for the saints in his prayer, must not be looked on as four isolated, individual petitions. These four requests are more like four parts of a whole. One request leads into the next one, and so on. In verse **16** and **17**, Paul prays that God would grant the believers in Ephesus "*to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may*

dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love. ”

Being rooted and grounded in love is the result of the believer being strengthened with might, by the Holy Spirit in the inner man, and having the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and feel at home in his or her heart. If we are not strengthened with might in the “*inner man*,” Christ will not “settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts,” and we will not be “*rooted and grounded in love*.”

What does it mean to be “*strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*?” It means that our spiritual faculties are controlled by God, and that we are exercising them and growing in the Word. It is only when we yield to the Spirit and let Him control the inner man that we succeed in living to the glory of God.

Brothers and sisters, what Paul desires for us to understand is that our being rooted and grounded in love, is determined by the degree to which we have surrendered to the Holy Spirit. The more we yield ourselves to Him, the more He is able to strengthen us with might in the inner man. The more we are strengthened with might in the inner man, the more comfortable the Lord Jesus Christ will feel in our hearts. The more comfortable the Lord Jesus Christ feels in our hearts, the more we will be rooted and grounded in His love!

Thus, the secret of being rooted and grounded in love is found in surrender to a divine Person, the Holy Spirit. It is the responsibility of the believer to yield to the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, it is critical for us to understand that before we were saved, our wills were enslaved to the totally depraved human natures which we inherited from Adam. When we were saved by the grace of God, the compelling power of the totally depraved human nature over our wills was broken. If we obey our depraved human natures now, it is not because we have to do so, but it is because we choose to do so.

The Holy Spirit has given us a new nature, the divine nature. And the sweet and powerful influences of that nature are constantly permeating the activities of our wills as we yield to the Holy Spirit. In that way, the Spirit keeps on suppressing the activities of the depraved human nature and any control which it might attempt to exert over us.

The Holy Spirit does that for us when we intentionally put ourselves under His control. Beloved, the Holy Spirit is not a perpetual motion machine which operates automatically in our lives, grinding out holiness in our lives no matter what we do. He is a divine Person who is waiting on us to depend upon Him for His ministry. Thus the choice lies with us as to whether we are going to yield to the Holy Spirit or obey the depraved human nature.

Paul desires that we should be rooted and grounded *“in love.”* He does not say that we should be rooted and grounded in wisdom, or in truth, or even in faithfulness. He does not say that we should be rooted and grounded in the Law, or in the doctrines of men, or in the standards of an organization, or in our own efforts. He does not say that we should be rooted and grounded in fear, or in uncertainty, or in condemnation. Unfortunately, it is in these very things that many of us have been rooted and grounded for many years. Our roots have been sunk deep into religion and we have been grounded on a foundation of *“churchianity.”*

Are you understanding why some of us are struggling so greatly brothers and sisters? Our hope has been built on everything other than *“Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”* We have trusted in our works and our faithfulness and our sacrifices, not in *“His unchanging grace,”* and not in *“His oath, His covenant, His blood.”* We have sung *“On Christ the solid rock I stand,”* but in reality, we have been standing on *“sinking sand.”* We hope to stand faultless *“before the throne,”* but we do not understand that the only way we can do so is to be found in Him, *“dressed in His righteousness alone.”*

Beloved, do we realize that we have to ask God to uproot us completely from the soil of religion and separate us entirely from the

foundation of “churchianity,” in order for us to be planted in the soil of Christ’s love and built upon the foundation of His love?

Paul is praying to “*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” that the believers in Ephesus would realize that the knowledge of God’s love for them was the foundational truth upon which all other truths must be built! If our Christian lives have not been constructed upon the foundation of the love of God for us, then it is impossible for us to achieve any significant spiritual growth and development, because our foundation is not a secure one. We may have to tear down the entire foundation and build again on the foundation of His love!

Brothers and sisters, I am not saying that if our lives as believers have not been constructed on a foundation of God’s love, we will not be able to sing well, preach and teach “under the anointing,” pray for people, hold a ministerial office or be used by God to minister in one or more areas. What I am saying is that if our spiritual lives have not been constructed on a foundation of God’s love, we will not enjoy any lasting peace, because we will never have the assurance that our sins, past, present and future have been forgiven. The heavy cloud of condemnation will always hang over our heads and we will still be in dread of the judgment of God. When we hear about the “rapture” we will not be able to “*comfort one another with these words,*” because we will never be certain that we have done enough to be ready.

Brothers and sisters, how much higher can we build on the shaky foundation on which we were grounded?

You may sing,

*“But it’s real, it’s real;
Oh, I know it’s real;
Praise God, the doubts are settled,
For I know, I know it’s real!”*

You may sing and even shake and speak in tongues while doing so, but when the song is over, and you are all alone, you will be harried by day and haunted by night by the terror of spending eternity in a lake of fire, even though you are “filled and baptized.”

Let me state categorically that Christians who live in guilt, fear and condemnation are not “*rooted and grounded*” in the love of God. Our heavenly Father sent his Son to die for our sins and weaknesses. And without fully knowing and fully understanding that kind of love for you, you will never have a stable or permanent foundation!

Brothers and sisters, whether or not we are honest enough to admit it, the only one of God’s wonderful attributes that has the power to draw us to Him, wrap itself around our hearts and knit our souls to His is love! Remember that “*When nothing else could help love lifted me.*” Not holiness, not righteousness, not omnipotence, not, omniscience, not immutability, but love. Love is the only attribute of God that can lift us. The Apostle John in **1 John 4:19** writes, “*We love him, because he first loved us.*”

God’s other attributes may arouse my awe, my admiration and my respect, but it was His love, and nothing else, that touched the heart of a vile wretch named John-Mark Bartlett and pulled him from the precipice of eternal damnation. And it is His love that has kept me secure through all of my fumbling and stumbling, reeling and rocking, slipping and sliding all over the place, sometimes up but most times down.

*I’ve found a Friend, oh, such a friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am His, and He is mine,
Forever and forever.*

*I've found a Friend, oh, such a friend!
So kind and true and tender,
So wise a Counselor and Guide,
So mighty a Defender!
From Him who loves me now so well
What pow'r my soul can sever?
Shall life or death, shall earth or hell?
No! I am His forever.*

In **John 17:22-23**, John records a portion of our Lord's prayer to His Father that contains perhaps the most remarkable expression to ever proceed out of His mouth. *"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, **and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.**"*

Brothers and sisters, here we have a truth that is almost incredible. God loves us as much as He loves His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ!

The difference between human beings and God is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the matter of love. While it is true that we human beings have love and are therefore capable of expressing love, **1 John 4:8** informs us that *"God is love."* If the character of God was to be distilled to its very essence, that essence would be love!

Love is not one of the many activities that God pursues; love is God's entire being. When God loves, He loves with His entire being! All of His love is given to all whom He loves!

The love of God is radically different from our natural way of loving. We are drawn to love persons who are appealing. We are attracted by certain qualities that we find in them that stimulates us in a pleasing way. We love persons for what we find in them. But that is not how God loves.

God loves persons, not for what He finds in them, but for what He finds in Himself. He does not love us because we are good. He loves us because He is good. He loves the loveless in order to make them loveable.

The love of God reaches in to the deepest, darkest, nastiest part of us and embraces us as we are, not as we are considered to be by others or even by ourselves.

God loves us so creatively, so intimately, so tenderly and so consistently that if we ever understood how much He loves us, our self-esteem would immediately be enhanced; our fears would be banished; our defense mechanisms would be dismantled. If we ever realized how much God loves us, we would abandon our self-righteousness; we would stop pretending that we have it all together; we would take off our masks and quit being hypocrites; we would become more open, more honest, more authentic, more Christ-like.

Every saved individual needs to be *“rooted and grounded in love.”* When we are exposed to the love of Christ, when we appreciate it, when we enter thoroughly into it, when we appropriate it for ourselves, when we make personal possession of it, the roots of our hearts will wrap themselves around him until we are completely entwined to Him and His love for us will call out of our hearts a love for Him, which will in turn call out a love for our brothers and sisters.

When we get a right view of God’s love, and that love comes into our hearts, our own affections will be expanded. It must be so. Someone has said that if we exercise our minds with small matters, our minds will become diminished in their powers and capabilities. But if we exercise our minds upon great matters, our minds will expand. If our hearts are fixed on a small object of affection, their affections become small. But if our hearts are fixed on a great object of affection their affections will be enlarged. If we fix the attention of our minds and hearts on the love of

God for us, our love for Him and for our brothers and sisters, must of necessity increase.

When we become rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, another result will be a feeling of security in regard to our position in Christ. We will never have an assurance that our salvation is secure until we enter into the depths of God's love for us. Interestingly, both the word "*rooted*," and the word "*grounded*" are in the perfect tense in Greek, emphasizing the permanence of the rootedness and the groundedness.

Brothers and sisters, if the roots of a tree go down deep in the earth, the tree will be secure. If the foundation of a building is deep, the building will be secure. When we come to recognize and appreciate the depths of God's love for us, when the roots of our hearts go down deep into the soil of that love, and when our lives rest securely on the foundation of that love, a sense of security will flood our hearts and my minds.

Can you have a strong tree, full of leaves and bearing fruit if it does not have deep roots? Can you build a skyscraper without a good foundation? How then can we expect to enjoy a fruitful, exalted Christian experience if our roots have not gone down deep into the soil of Christ's love and if our building does not rest on the security of His love? The believer who is rooted and grounded in His love, is made stable for every season of life.

Almost all of the Christian life comes down to this relationship with Christ's love, for many have tried to build a life of good works, attempting to do something radical for God, in an attempt to attract His love. Of course, they have failed. It is far better to be utterly convinced of His love and then respond to it through a radical life of good works.

It is important for us to remember that Paul's concern for the Ephesian believers is that they might know the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He does not desire for them, to seek the blessings that Christ can give to them, nor even for them to seek holiness, but to seek the Lord Himself. Brothers and sisters, listen to me carefully, all holiness, all

sanctification, every kind of blessing and all usefulness in the Christian life, must result from our knowledge of Jesus Christ and His love for us.

In this regard, **Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, made the following comments: “Our holiness is the result of our knowledge of Him, and of our relationship to Him. In a sense, therefore, we must not even speak about ‘the deepening of the spiritual life;’ we should speak of the deepening of our knowledge of Him and our love of Him. When that happens our spiritual life of necessity will be deepened. So what the Apostle is saying here is that if Christ dwells in our hearts the result will be that we shall be ‘rooted and grounded in love.’”

When we become “*rooted and grounded in love,*” love will become the controlling element and the motivating factor in our experience and in our lives. It is not possible for us to be “*rooted and grounded*” in Christ’s love for us and not love Christ and the members of His Body. Indeed, the chief characteristic of the Christian life is love-love for the One who first loved us and love for all those whom He loves.

Brothers and sisters, I am beginning to appreciate that love is the primary ingredient in the building up of the Christian life. It is love which makes the life of a believer like the life of Christ Himself. The real strength of a believer’s life is love. Love is always the ultimate test of our Christian life. The important thing is not how much we know, but how much our knowledge has caused us to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

As we noted earlier, love should be our motive for living holy, consecrated lives. The only real motive should be that such a life pleases God. We must not, as many do, set up our own standards of holiness and our own code of conduct, and think that by observing these standards and codes rigidly, we are pleasing God. Such a thought is anti-God. The Scribes and Pharisees operated like this and they were denounced by our Lord as hypocrites. Our desire must be to please Him; not simply to obey a set of rules.

The truth is that there will be no ultimate value in all our work, and all our activity, unless it is rooted and grounded in love. In **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**, Paul writes,

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

As **Dr. Lloyd-Jones** remarked, “The day of judgment will be a revelation, a day of surprises. What appeared to us to be very great may then appear to be nothing at all; and what appeared to us to be trivial will then be seen to be of great value with the arc-light of God’s love shed upon it. What a reversal of our judgments and our conceptions we shall find!”

The truth is that even if we were raised in a Christian home where we were nurtured in a loving environment, and taught to think of others, we still must pray and ask God to help us to sink our roots down and lay our foundations in love. As we have stated earlier, our being rooted and grounded in love, is determined by the degree to which we surrender to the Holy Spirit. The more we yield ourselves to Him, the more He is able to strengthen us with might in the inner man. The more we are strengthened with might in the inner man, the more comfortable the Lord Jesus Christ will feel in our hearts. The more comfortable the Lord Jesus Christ feels in our hearts, the more we will be rooted and grounded in His love!

In other words, the heart of loving Jesus Christ and our fellow believers is dying to self, and none of us dies to self without a lifelong struggle. It

is to this struggle that the Apostle Paul calls us in the passage we have been studying.

Brothers and sisters, I am going to follow the example of Paul and “*bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” in prayer. I invite you all to join me in prayer.

“O God our Father, You are very great and you are greatly to be praised! When we think about the unsearchable riches of Your grace in Christ Jesus, we do not know what to say to you, or what to do with ourselves. What shall we render unto You for all Your benefits toward us?

You have blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. You chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before You. In love, You predestined us to adoption as Your legal heirs through Jesus Christ. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of Your grace.

And when we heard the word of truth and believed the Gospel, You sealed us with the Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of Your own possession. And You did all this according to the pleasure of Your will and to the praise of the glory of Your grace.

We well remember Lord, that once we were dead in trespasses and sins, enslaved to wicked lusts and passions, and were by nature the children of wrath. We were no better than anyone else. In fact Lord, we probably were the worst of a bad lot! At that time Lord, we were without Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. We had no hope whatsoever Lord, and we didn't have You.

But because of Your great love for us, Your mercy was rich toward us, and even though we were dead in our trespasses, You made us alive

together with Christ, and raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenly realms.

In loving-kindness Jesus came,
Our souls in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted us.

From sinking sand He lifted us,
With tender hand He lifted us;
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His Name, He lifted us!

You saved us by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Our only contribution Lord, was our sin

We traded our sins for salvation,
We traded our load for relief;
We exchanged peace for our condemnation,
And the joy of the Lord for our grief.
We traded lives that were wasted,
For temples to dwell in that You made;
What we got was so much more than what You received,
We sure got the best of the trade.

We used to be far away but we have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Through the Cross, we have been reconciled to You, and to all the other members of the Body of Christ. You destroyed the hostility that existed between us that had become a wall of separation, and You united us in one body-the Church.

So now we are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of Your household. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him, we who once were foolish, and weak, and base, and despised, and worthless, are growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

It is because of all this Lord, that I kneel now in Your presence. I am praying Lord, that You will give spiritual wisdom and revelation to every person who is connected to **The Grace Workshop Ministries**, so that we may all grow in our knowledge of You. I pray Lord that you will enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we can know what is the hope of Your calling, and what is the wealth of Your glorious inheritance in us, and what is the incomparable greatness of Your power toward us.

I am praying Lord that according to the wealth of Your glory, we will be strengthened with power through Your Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may finally settle down and feel completely at home in our hearts through faith, so that, because we have been rooted and grounded in love, we will be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we will be filled up to all the fullness of God.

I pray Lord that we who worship at **The Grace Workshop Ministries**, will love each other with the same patient, tender, consistent love that You have exhibited toward us. Help us to understand that the only authenticating sign of genuine discipleship, and that which supremely identifies us as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, is love, love for our fellow believers.

Finally Lord God, help us to understand that **The Grace Workshop Ministries** does not primarily refer to a place where we gather for worship, but rather to a community of believers who are increasingly speaking and practicing the truth in love, learning to deal with the deepest divisions in a Christ-like manner, resolving conflicts by engaging in loving confrontation, fellowshiping our differences, exercising appropriate church discipline and demonstrating redemptive love.

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, Unto him be

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