

ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE

INTRODUCTION:

Not sure if you heard this big news or not, but a high-profile “death” occurred this week in the area of science. On Wednesday, February 13th, NASA’s six-wheeled robotic golf-cart named *Opportunity* was “pronounced dead” after operating nearly 15 years on Mars. Fittingly it seems, *Opportunity* met its tragic end while exploring Mars’ “Perseverance Valley.” On June 10th, 2018, a fierce sandstorm hit and contact with the robotic land rover was lost. When the sky cleared, *Opportunity* remained silent, scientists concluding that its internal clock was damaged beyond repair because the dust-filled sky had prevented light from reaching the solar panels for too long.

One article I read stated that over 1000 recovery commands were sent to *Opportunity*, but to no avail. The article continued: “With project costs reaching about \$500,000 a month, NASA decided there was no point in continuing. As it became clear the rover was about to be declared dead, Bridenstine said that he was encountering people “a little choked up” but that the general mood was one of celebration.”

The accomplishments of *Opportunity* are as follows:

- The mission was initially planned to last only 90 days—it lasted 60 times more than that
- It was designed to travel 1,100 yards, but it traveled over 28 miles
- It set a one-day Mars driving record on March 20, 2005, when it traveled 721 feet
- It returned to earth more than 217,000 images, including 15, 360-degree color panoramas.
- It exposed the surfaces of 52 rocks to reveal fresh mineral surfaces
- It [found](#) hematite, a mineral that forms in water, at its landing site.

Its greatest achievement—brace yourself—was discovering, along with Spirit (another robotic land rover) evidence that ancient Mars had water flowing on its surface and **might** have been capable of sustaining microbial life. Let me say that again—ancient Mars had water flowing on it and might have been capable of sustaining microbial life. Am I the only one that is thinking “So what?”

Opportunity cost \$400 million to build, \$4 million was spent the last 8 months trying to get it to respond, and the total mission cost around \$814 million. The result—discovering that ancient Mars had water flowing on it!

Why does that matter? Is there any value in knowing if there was microbial life on Mars? One, we know from the Bible that there is and was no **human** life on Mars. God the Creator put us here on the earth and the earth is the center of His creation—period; end of story. Two, we are never going to live on Mars or go on vacation there, so what is the point? Three, is space exploration a beneficial thing to do just because we are curious?

Take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians 3; please follow along as I read verses 14-19 (read). It is interesting to note that Paul’s prayer for them is that they would “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge...” In other words, they were to pursue something that they would not be fully able to understand.

So what’s more important—pursuing the unknowns of space and other planets—or pursuing the love of Christ? This morning I want to begin a series entitled “The Importance of Love in the Life of the Believer.” Next week we will look at “aspiring to know the unknowable” in verses 18-19; this morning I want us to consider the last phrase in verse 17: “being rooted and grounded in love.”

1. *God's Love is the soil for our spiritual life (v 17b)*

Not surprisingly, “rooted” is an agricultural word and we have here the thought that just as a plant is to be rooted in soil, our spiritual lives are to be rooted in the “soil” of love. How does spiritual life rooted in the soil of God’s love compare to a literal plant rooted in literal soil? The analogy is not perfect, but it is obviously helpful in our understanding or God would have led Paul to use a different word!

A. Our Spiritual life **begins** because of God’s love

We understand that seeds have life in themselves—a bean seed can sprout on a dampened napkin—so we can’t say that a plant’s life begins **because** of the soil. But can our **spiritual life** begin w/o the love of God?

Consider for a moment some of the attributes of God. God is all-knowing, all-seeing, all-hearing, never sleeping, and everywhere present. He is also holy—He is pure and perfect; separate from sin. God and sin cannot dwell in the same place.

Habakkuk 1:13a “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:”

He is also just and because He is just, He requires that sin be punished.

Romans 6:23a “For the wages of sin is death...”

Ezekiel 18:4 “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

None of this would be a problem if **we were perfect**, but the reality is that we are not. We are sinful.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”

Romans 3:10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

So, here’s our predicament: God is perfect and holy and allows only perfect people into heaven to dwell with Him. He is also just and must punish sin; we are sinful and deserve to be punished. The bad news gets even worse because no matter what we try to **do**, we cannot **become** perfect, we cannot become sin-free.

Contrary to what some people believe, there is no scale in heaven that weighs our good works and bad works to see which is the heaviest. If there is **one** sin on the “bad-works” side, we are **disqualified** from heaven.

James 2:10 “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

In Ephesians 2:1 we see that we “were dead in trespasses and sins.” The last part of Eph 2:3 says we “were by nature the children of wrath”—meaning in our natural state, the wrath of God is hanging over us. We were as inmates on death row and the spiritual death-penalty—the wrath of God in the lake of fire—was hanging over our heads. “No hope, and without God in the world” we read in Ephesians 2:12.

Now look at Eph 2:4 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us...”

Romans 5:8 “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I mentioned just a moment ago that God allows only **perfect** people into heaven, but none of us **is** perfect and none of us can **become** perfect. So, what does Jesus’ death on the cross have to do with us getting to heaven? In a word...**everything!**

Here’s how it works. Jesus lived an absolutely perfect life—He never sinned once. Because He was perfect—and because He was God in the flesh—He could die to pay for my sins, and your sins, and the sins of the whole world. God took the punishment for **our** sin that we deserved and put it on Jesus.

Isaiah 53:6 (last part) "...and the LORD laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all."

Jesus died a substitutionary death—He died in our place so that we don't have to die. God requires only **one** payment for our sins—not a double-payment. Either **we** pay for our sins or **Jesus** does, but not both.

So if Jesus died for everyone, why doesn't everyone get to heaven? **John 1:12** "But as many as **received** Him [Jesus], to them gave He power [the right, the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:"

I John 5:11-12 "And this is the record, that God hath **given** to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

¹² He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Notice it doesn't say we have life just because we believe about Jesus—we need to **have** Him! So how do you "get" Jesus? How do you **receive** Him so that He becomes yours? I'm going to answer that question with a question—How does a person receive **any** gift? The answer? We reach out our hands and take it!

God sent Jesus into the world as a gift. He does not become our Savior until we **repent** of our sins and receive Him for ourselves. A remarkable exchange takes place when we trust Christ's death on the cross for our sins. --God counts our sins as being placed on Christ and Christ's righteousness—His perfectness—is credited to us. --God does not **make** us perfect, but **declares** us justified—just as if we had never sinned!

II Corinthians 5:21 "For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [have] the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus is God's love-gift to the world. Have you accepted Him as your Savior for yourself? How I pray that you'll do that today if you never have!

Spiritual life **begins** because of the love of God. If there were no love of God, God would not have sent Jesus Christ into the world to die in our place. And if Jesus Christ did not pay the penalty for our sins, we would be paying it ourselves; we would not have spiritual life.

Not only does our spiritual life **begin** because of the love of God,

B. Our Spiritual life **grows** because of God's love

Something that is easy to overlook as we read the phrase "being rooted and grounded in love," is the little word *being*. Paul does not say "be" rooted and grounded in love—it is not a command to get rooted and grounded in love because you **never have been**. Instead, he is saying you **are already** rooted and grounded in love and you are to **continue** in that state. Paul is talking to believers—we only have to go back to verse 16 to see that where he says "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;"

When a seed is planted in soil and sprouts, the desired result is not just a plant—we want a **growing** plant and a fruit-bearing plant. When God saves us, He does not want us to remain a newborn—He wants us to grow!

I Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may **grow** thereby:"

II Peter 3:18 "But **grow** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

And just as plants grow in soil and continue to get their nutrients from it, we are provided what we need for growth in the "soil" of the love of God. **What** does God provide for us?

i. The Holy Spirit

I John 4:13 "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

ii. The Word of God

II Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..."

iii. Other believers

II Tim 1:16 “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me...”

Romans 16:3-4 “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

iv. The church

Look at Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” **Why** does God give us the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and other believers and the church? Because He loves us! He has provided us with all that we need for “life and godliness” we are told in II Pet 1:3.

First, God’s love is the soil in which our spiritual life begins and continues to grow. Second,

2. *God’s Love is the foundation of our spiritual life*

Whereas it is easy to see that “rooted” is an agricultural term, it might not be so easy to see that “grounded” is an architectural term and has to do with being established on a firm foundation. Love is not just the **soil** where our spiritual life begins and grows in, love is also the **foundation** that our spiritual life is founded upon.

Do we not **rest** on the foundation of the love of God? What are the qualities we look for in a foundation?

A. Endurance

We want a foundation that will last, don’t we? Sometimes we have to replace windows or siding or a roof, but the last thing we want to replace on a building or a house is the foundation. How **long** will the love of God endure? Forever! You don’t need to turn there, but there are 26 verses in Psalm 136 and each one ends in the phrase “for His mercy endureth for ever.” God’s mercy endures forever because God’s love endures forever. We have in our hymnal the song “The Love of God.” The chorus goes like this:

*O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forever more endure,
The saints’ and angels’ song.*

Our spiritual life rests on the never-ending, ever-enduring love of God. God’s love can’t end because it is **who** He is. The only way God’s love can end is if God ceases to be God because I John 4:8 tells us “God is love.”

Not only do we want a foundation that lasts forever, we also want a strong foundation.

B. Strength

Aluminum endures a long time; so does plastic. So why do we not build foundations out of aluminum or plastic? Because they have no strength; the building would not stand! How strong is God’s love? As strong as God is—all-powerful—meaning nothing can stop His love toward us. Nothing can cause it to crumble.

John 10:27-29 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man **pluck them out of my hand**. ²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and **no man** is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Question for you: Does the house give the foundation its strength—or is the foundation dependent on itself for its strength? The foundation is dependent on itself, isn’t it—not dependent on the house that is on top of it. God’s love is the foundation of our faith and is dependent on the strength of **God**—not on our strength!

Are you rooted and grounded in love? When I look at the congregation, I see a number of different groups. There are men and women; there are old and young; there are glasses and no-glasses; there are those with hair—and those with not so much!

God sees us differently, though, doesn’t He? He sees those that are His children—those who have obtained spiritual life by accepting God’s Son Jesus Christ—and those who are **yet** in their sins.

Consider this—if you are trying to work your way to heaven, the soil you are planted in is fear—not love. You are motivated by fear—fear is driving you—and you are fearful, always fearful, wondering if you are **doing** enough. You can't ever do enough to tip the scale because there is no scale and even if there were, **only one** sin would keep you out of heaven. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)

If that's you, stop trying to get rid of your own sin and come to Jesus—the only One who can take it away!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. First and foremost, are you saved? Do you **have** Jesus Christ; have you come to Him in simple faith and received Him as your Savior? We don't know what a day may bring forth; we don't know if tonight is the night that God will require our soul from us.
2. If you are saved, it is only because of the love and grace of God. Love is the soil of our spiritual life; it is also our foundation. Do you appreciate the love of God? Are you enjoying it? Are you thankful the for the gifts God has given you to grow—the gift of the Holy Spirit...and the Word of God...and other believers...and the church? Are you using them to grow? God wants us to grow up—not be spiritual babies all our life.