

Rooted in Love (Ephesians 3:14-21 & Job 11:7-12) 12-Nov-2017

Ephesians chapter 3 - verses 14 to 21 is our passage this morning

There's the usual outline to jot down some notes

But let me pray for God's help before we begin...

Intro/Are we praying?

This morning we're going to look at **prayer**...

Here's some children's prayers I came across

Dear God: Please send a new baby for Mummy. The new baby you sent last week cries too much. (Debbie, aged 7)

Dear God: Who did you make smarter? Boys or girls? My sister and I want to know. (Jimmy, aged 6)

Dear God: This is my prayer. Could you please give my brother some brains? So far he doesn't have any. (Angela aged 8)

Dear Lord: Thank you for the nice day today. You even fooled the TV weather man. (Harry, aged 7)

Children seem to have this knack of knowing exactly what to pray don't they?

Jokes apart - some questions for us - to begin with...

Are we praying for our minister?

Are we praying for our elders?

Are we praying for our Committee of Management?

Are we praying for our church family?

How serious are we about praying?

(pause)

Perhaps - you're not comfortable about praying - or not sure how to pray - or what to pray...

In this passage the Apostle Paul teaches us how to pray and he's very serious in his prayers for the church family - the Ephesians in the city of Ephesus

Like anything that we want do well

There needs to be some **preparation** beforehand

It's not going to be that easy to have a serious prayer time - in the middle of Lakehaven Shopping Centre or at the Swimming Pool with hundreds of children screaming

So first off we might need to find somewhere quiet where there are no distractions before we pray.

Preparing to Pray (Ephesians 3:14-15)

[PowerPoint 1-Preparing]

And then we can **prepare** to pray

And our preparation to pray should include the **purpose** for our prayer

We should have a **purpose or reason** for praying.

That's how the Apostle Paul starts his prayer off in verse 14 - with the words "For this Reason..."

What reason?

Well - the reasons are in the first part of Ephesians chapter 3 which we looked at last week.

And we could summarize those reasons that Paul is praying as:

- Because God's grace gave Paul the *job to bring the Good News of Jesus to the Gentiles - as well as the Jews*
- Because God's grace gave Paul the *insight into the mystery of Jesus - being part of God's eternal plan from the beginning of time - to come and save Jews and Gentiles - from their sins*
- Because God's grace meant *this mystery was no longer hidden*
- Because the *Church is to be the instrument to make known the wisdom of God*
- Because of what Jesus has done in his death and resurrection - *we can approach God with freedom and confidence*

So because of all those reasons - Paul prepares to pray for the church family

And look at the **posture** of his prayer still in verse 14

Paul kneels to pray.

Kneeling is the position of utmost humility - the normal posture of prayer in the culture of Paul's day - was to stand to pray - with hands raised up

But Paul gets down on his knees in humility

Humbled when he considered God's great eternal plan in Jesus - and how that plan involved Paul himself (once a persecutor of Christians) and a plan that is unstoppable - even though Paul is in jail!

Getting down on one's knees to pray - seems to also be an intentional thing - when an intense and serious situation is to be faced - like Daniel praying after there was a decree made by the King of Babylon - not to pray (Daniel 6:10) - and like when Stephen was martyred and he got down on his knees and prayed that God would not hold his murderers' sins against them (Acts 7:60) - and like when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane when facing death (Luke 22:41)

Also King Solomon knelt and prayed when the temple in Jerusalem was built and dedicated to the Lord. Now here - Paul kneels and prays and dedicates to the Lord - the new Christian Church at Ephesus - as it grows

The bottom line is Paul's cares about the church family - and that's worth kneeling for in prayer...

Then the final part of Paul's preparation to pray
Seems obvious - but we need to know who to **address** our prayer to

Still in v14 - he addresses his prayer to the Father

Why?

Verse 15 explains why...

Because the Father is the Father of Heaven and Earth - and all beings in Heaven and Earth - owe their existence to Him and belong to Him.

The Lord's Prayer - starts the same way - 'Our Father, who art in Heaven'

Then comes the prayer itself - which is divided into **three** parts
And it's like a staircase of three steps - each step leading to the next

Petitions of Paul's Prayer (v16-19)

Step 1 or petition 1 of Paul's prayer is in v16

He prays...

[PowerPoint 2a-Petition 1-Stregthen - HS]

That they be **strengthened with power through God's Holy Spirit**

This strength is not physical strength - like God's making them into an iron-man or body builder

No - it's glorious inner strength - from God's divine, holy and perfect being

Which is passed on to humans through God's Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit comes to live in all Christians - because a Christian's inner being is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 16:9) - and Paul's prayer is that that inner being would become stronger

The purpose of this strengthening with power through the Holy Spirt is so that
Firstly - Christ Jesus may dwell in their hearts

Paul is praying that Jesus would live in the Ephesians just as Jesus had promised the disciples in John 14:23

Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them

Dwell here in the original Greek language means a permanent home - Jesus wants to settle down in our hearts permanently - not just visiting as a stranger

This indwelling of Jesus is something we know by our faith in Jesus

We need spiritual strength to let Jesus dwell within us because there is something in us, due to our sinful nature that wants to resist the influence of the indwelling of Jesus

That something inside us can be conquered as the Spirit of God gives us the victory through our faith

Secondly - being strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit is so that we may be **"rooted and established in love"**

What does it mean to be "rooted and established in love?"

It means that the love of God is instilled in our hearts (Romans 5:5)

"Rooted" has the idea of the roots of a tree - like a fig tree roots which lay hold of the soil and twist around each other and around rocks - so that the tree cannot be overturned or uprooted

And "Established" has the idea of a building which has been built on rock solid foundations so that it will never show any cracks or flaws in the future

In the same the love of God inside us is so firmly rooted in us and built on the rock solid foundation of God's love - that it can't help but show itself in how we love God and in how we show God's love to others. That's what Paul's praying for the Ephesians

So having been strengthened by God through His Spirit so that Christ Jesus dwells in our hearts and we are well established "in love" -

[PowerPoint 2b-Petition 2 -Love of Christ]

The next step - step 2 or petition 2 of Paul's prayer - is in v18 - and that is - along with all other believers - they **grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ**

Paul basically wants us to know all about this wonderful love of Christ

Every dimension of it!

But Paul says in v19 - this love surpasses all knowledge

How is it possible for us to "know" the love of Christ, if it surpasses all knowledge?

Only in the sense that no matter how much we love about Christ's love, even with the strength of God's Spirit - there is always much more to grasp!

It's like our goal in life is to know more about Christ's love and to experience more about Christ's love - as we grow spiritually

So Paul is saying - the love of Christ has dimensions!

It has **width** - You can see how wide a river is by noticing how much land it covers over. Christ's love is so wide it covers over our sin and it covers over every circumstance of our lives; so that all things work together for good. When we doubt His forgiveness and His provisions, we are narrowing the river of Christ's love. His love is as wide as the world - because God so loved the world - He sent His Son to save us

The love of Jesus has **length**. When we consider the length of Christ's love, ask ourselves - 'When did the love of Jesus start coming towards us? And how long will it continue?' The truth is God's love in sending Jesus is an everlasting love - as God says in Jeremiah 31:3 - [I have loved you with an everlasting love](#)

The love of Jesus has **depth**. Philippians 2:7-8 tell us how deep the love of Jesus goes:

- [⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.](#)
- [⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!](#)

You can't go deeper and lower than death on a cross - and that's how deep the love of Jesus is for us

And the love of Jesus has **height**

To see how high Christ's love is, ask ourselves 'How high does His love lift us up?'
His love lifts us up to the heavenly places where we are seated with Jesus.

See Ephesians 2:6

6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

To really grasp and fully understand the width and length and depth and height of God's love in Christ Jesus. Ultimately we must come to the Cross of Jesus

The Cross pointed in four ways - essentially in every direction

Because

Jesus' love is wide enough to include every person

Jesus' love is long enough to last through all eternity

Jesus' love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner - no one is too bad - that Jesus can't save them

Jesus' love is high enough to take us to Heaven

It's only as we begin to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that we are beginning to experience the last step - which Paul is praying

Step 3 or petition 3 of Paul's prayer is in the second half of verse 19 and that is **to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God**

[PowerPoint 2c-Petition 2 - Fullness of God]

To experience the all the fullness of God is only possible as the first 2 steps of the prayer are answered

To be filled with all the fullness of God - is the objective - or goal of all that Paul has prayed previously

As people are strengthened by God the Father

Through His Spirit

Christ dwells in their hearts

The whole Trinity is at work

As people are filled with the love of Christ

They experience the fullness of God - that is in Jesus (Colossians 2:9) - they experience that same fullness of God - as Jesus lives in them
 Just think about what Paul is praying here
 To be filled with God would be a great thing
 To be filled with the fullness of God is an even greater thing
 But Paul prays that people are filled with ALL the fullness of God - that is an amazing and wonderful prayer

What a prayer by Paul - He prays on behalf of the Ephesians that:

1. They are strengthened by the Spirit of God
2. They can comprehend the love of Christ
3. And so they can be filled with all the fullness of God

Is God able to fulfil these prayer petitions?

Well - there's no doubt in Paul's mind

As we see how Paul closes his prayer...

Close in prayer - giving God all the Glory - Doxology (vv20-21)

As Paul closes his prayer

He gives all the praise and glory to God - in a doxology (glorious words) in verses 20-21 -

And he closes his prayer with confidence in what God is able to do

[PowerPoint 3-Close in Prayer]

He says in verse 20 - **God is able to immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine**

In 2008 I was diagnosed with a tumor in my abdomen

I had a PET scan - where they inject you with a dye - and the scan lights up where there is cancer - and they found a big tumor in my six pack

The doctor decided the best course of action was to remove the muscle all together

We prayed that the doctor would get all the cancer out and the cancer wouldn't spread

I had the surgery and the muscle was removed and sent for pathology

The result was that - the pathology of the muscle that had shown on the PET scan as cancer - had no cancer at all

And there was no need for radiotherapy or chemotherapy

God had done immeasurably more than we asked or imagined

The Doctor couldn't explain it - but God could!

(pause)

That's not the end of Paul's doxology though

Because God can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine

See v21

God deserves all glory

And the way God is given all the glory is through us in his Church

The Church has the potential to bring much glory to God

Only by and through and in our faith in Jesus

You see the only right response to us:

Being strengthened by the Spirit of God

And comprehending the love of Christ

And being filled with all the fullness of God

Is for us to respond by giving God glory - especially in the church - the body of believers in Jesus - and that God receive that glory from us and His church - throughout all generations

Paul is calling all people of God to praise and glorify God's Holy Name forever!

Conclusion/Response

Now we've learnt *how* to pray and *what* to pray

I return to my original questions at the beginning...

[PowerPoint 4-Conclusion/Response]

Are we praying for our minister?

Are we praying for our elders?

Are we praying for our Committee of Management?

Are we praying for our church family?

How serious are we about praying?

My challenge for us all this morning is...

When you get home from church

Find a quiet spot

Get down on your knees (if you're able)

And pray for our minister, elders, COM, and church family

1. To be strengthened by the Spirit of God
2. To comprehend the love of Christ
3. To be filled with all the fullness of God

And give God all the glory and honour He deserves

[You can send me your prayer if you'd like - I'd love to read it]

What a difference our prayers would make to our church family as we show that strength, that love of Christ and that fullness of God - to the community...

Let's pray...