



Ephesians

Part 20

Ephesians 3:14-21
Week of July 25, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 3:14-21
- Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21, ESV

Sermon Notes

Confidence does not equal arrogance before the Father; Access does not become casual in His presence.

How we view and engage prayer is central to our understanding and growth as a Christian. You may say prayer is simply talking with God. Though you may be right, it is about as descriptive as someone walking through tragedy and the Christian brother or sister coming to them and saying "just have faith." Again, this may be correct, but we cannot over simplify it. There are many different levels of faith described in Scripture, from babes who cannot handle more than milk to the adult who is feasting on the meat. Likewise, to engage prayer is to begin a journey that is ever growing, ever challenging, yet incomparably rewarding.

"The Power of Prayer"

- Many Christians also speak of the power of prayer. If you did a simple study on the importance of prayer to the NT, or even to our author here today, Paul, you would quickly see that it is central to the understanding of power and access.
- The book of Ephesians today is a primary example. This book is centered and built on this elongated prayer that Paul is trying to describe to his readers in Ephesus.
- Paul begins almost all of his writings with the mention if not full description of his prayers.
- Also, you will notice that Paul's number one request of the Church, other than financial relief for the church in Jerusalem, is for prayer.
- Yet, so many Christians today say things like, "I'm praying, but I don't feel like I'm doing enough" or, "I wish I could do more, but I'm praying for you" as if prayer is a fall back when something of greater value is not available to us.
- This underlining, and often unrealized, devaluing of prayer and its practice is wreaking havoc on the Church and more pointedly, you!

Understanding Prayer Through Ephesians 3

- Paul begins his prayer in Chapter 1. There are several things about that prayer that we should be sure we have in our heads as we approach this section.
 - Paul is praying for believers, not the unbeliever.
 - This makes this prayer especially powerful for us who have been walking in this Christian life for some time now. Because, as we have seen through the weeks, some of what Paul says we falsely categorize as beginning Christian information.
 - *Ephesians 1:17-19 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*
 - In order that we do not dismiss this as easily understood, Paul chooses to turn his attention to an expanded explanation of these things, especially the last one, "the power of God at work in us"
 - This expanded explanation takes up the last half of chapter 1 and continues all the way through chapter 2. The power that Paul is praying that we might understand is by God's grace, a resurrection power which leads to the mystery of oneness together in Christ.
 - We were told in chapter one that the blessing poured out on us in Christ Jesus were so that we might be to the praise of His Glory.

- There is no greater praise that could be given to God than the visible and transformed heart that you now have as a new creation through the Grace of God in Christ!
- And to this purpose, Christ has built the church, as we saw last week, for the purpose of this corporate declaration...
- *Ephesians 2:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*
- Is this the question we ask when we are "church shopping"?
- Paul's prayer continues
 - There are a few great challenges a pastor faces throughout the week
 - Time Frame - Pastors get about an hour to an hour and a half one day a week to wage war against the enemy in the lives of our congregation by declaring the Glory of his Word. Yet the enemy has about 166 hours a week to confuse, tempt, and to stir up the passions of your flesh.
 - Content - the more I study, the more aware I become of my inability to carry the weight of this Glory. Yet, the longer I, by the grace of God, take up this ministry of preaching, I am more in awe and aware of its importance to the church. So I become more concerned about cutting out these glorious things of the Text in order to move faster or make people feel more comfortable.
 - The Answer - 5 hour service on Sundays!
 - Not really, rather, a focus and hunger that savors all of the beauty of the text as we slowly consume it. By rule, we savor what we value
 - Put aside the desire that seems to be built inside of us to rush through these things. This is how we begin to simplify the Glory of the Gospel to the point that we think it is only for new believers, rather than the very breath of life for the most sanctified every single day.

Progression of The State of Prayer:

- In chapter 1 the introduction to Paul's prayer reads this way.
- *Ephesians 1:15-16 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*
- There is a joyful thankfulness that Paul expresses as a description of his following prayer.
- *Eph. 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,*
- In this text, Paul's prayer progresses to reverent and earnest petition. Whereas the language that introduces the prayer in chapter 1 is descriptive of Paul's emotional and joyful response to what he has heard, the language that continues his prayer here in chapter 3 describes the position in which he is praying "I bow my knees".
- Paul's expression progresses from joyful thankfulness to reverent earnest petition.
- "for this reason" - Paul is praying, in chapter 1, with thanksgiving for what he has heard of the Ephesians faithfulness. That they would be given a Spirit of wisdom and knowledge.
- In our text here in Chapter 3, the construction is pointing backwards to all the things that Paul brought up in the first part of chapter 3.
- It is actually the same structure we see in 3:1. A few weeks ago, when we talked about this structure, we expressed how transformative and important this Gospel is that Paul has just laid out. And even more specifically, this mystery of Christ which 3:6 tells us is the Jews and Gentiles as one in the body of Christ! For this reason Paul is a prisoner of Christ!
- Paul's prayer shifts because he is praying over what he has said to become primary and transformative in the hearts and lives of the Church.

- If the phrase “for this reason” points us to the gospel of ch. 1-2 grammatically, then his description of the Father points us to this Gospel contextually.
- Paul knows that what he has just spoken, though on the surface we may be tempted to say that it is simple enough to understand, is something that will take the very grace and power of God to become truth rooted in our own hearts and lives.
- Paul’s appeal is for “death to life” power to handle the application and grounding of this Glory in our lives.
- We can know with 1,000% certainty that there is a truth that my children need to hear. But no matter how many times I tell them and explain to them, preach at them, and even punish them to try and push it from the outside into the inside, I am powerless to have them root it within themselves.
- So Paul, like I do, turns to the only one who can open the eyes of our hearts to see what we cannot on our own. Paul’s prayer shifts because of what he is about to say. “So that” Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith!

How Does This Impact Your Prayer Life?

- Our praying Apostle can, and does, teach us much about prayer.
- We have talked about this a great deal this morning already.
- Prayer is powerful - Paul cannot do anything else than pray because he is chains.
- However, he knows that even if he were not in chains, that does not change!
- Content - I think that when many of us begin to pray we find ourselves awkwardly requesting desired things or outcomes and soon finding ourselves dry on material.
- Scripture tell us to present our requests to God.
 - *Philippians 4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
 - Even this passage seeks for a centering on the Gospel.
- What do we see in Paul’s examples here?
- The worship of prayer - From chapter one.
- *Ephesians 1:15-16 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*
- Paul here’s of the faith and Gospel work of those in Ephesus and “does not cease” to worship and thank God for the grace he has shown them.
- Every time you hear a missionary report... it is not information being passed on to you so you can account for how the money of the church is being spent... It is a gift of prayer in thanksgiving that should consume you all the day long!
- The Gospel-centered mission of prayer is that what only God can do for the Church.
- Paul does not pray that God change his situation. He does not pray God would keep the Ephesians from suffering, but he prays the would be strengthened in their inner self.
- Reverence: “I bow my knee” You are praying to the Father of all creation.
- We cannot confuse our unhindered approach to the Father, with an invitation to approach him without concern or reverence.
- *Ephesians 2:17-18 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*
- *Ephesians 3:11-12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What is the foundation for the powerfulness of our prayer? Where does the power originate from? How does this effect our approach to praying?
- What is the relationship between prayer and worship?
- Where do we need to shift our understanding of prayer? Do we wrestle with the content of our prayer? Why is that?
- How do we approach prayer with an understanding of the Gospel? Why is this important to our proper understanding of prayer?
- What is the balance between approaching the Lord in prayer with reverence and approaching the Lord in prayer with confidence? How do we do both simultaneously?

Challenge For The Week

Prayer brings the most important things we have to the attention of God.

- If you are being honest with yourself, does your prayer life reflect a true understanding of the power and grace of approaching the throne room of grace with confidence? Spend some time in quiet prayer asking God to reveal anything that is no of Him in your life.
- Who is one person you know who needs an encounter with God? Spend time praying to God, lifting that person up to God and a willingness to allow God to use you to reach them.