

Paul's Prayer

Ephesians 3:14-21

Introduction:

I. A prayer for Strength to love is offered.

A. It is a prayer that is offered purposefully.

Ephesians 3:14 (ESV) **For this reason** I bow my knees before the Father

He had explained that believing Jews and believing Gentiles had become “one new person,” the body of Christ—positionally speaking. He now proceeds to pray that they would be united experientially. He desired that they would experience the power of Christ’s love in them and through them in their love for one another.

Hoehner, Harold W., Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon. Vol. 16. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008. Print.

B. It is a prayer that is offered with earnest desire and pleading.

Ephesians 3:14 (ESV) For this reason **I bow my knees** before the Father,

C. It is a prayer that is offered to God the Father (creator)

Ephesians 3:14 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees **before the Father**

1. Father in the sense that God has created us.

Ephesians 3:15 (ESV) **from whom every family in heaven and on earth** is named,

Ephesians 4:6 (ESV) **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

It is one more argument that God is over both the Jew and the Gentile. All families of the earth belong to God. He is not the Father of the Jews only.

2. God has a purpose for all that He creates including all peoples.

Ephesians 3:15 (ESV) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is **named**,

Psalms 147:4 (ESV) He determines the number of the stars; **he gives to all of them their names**.

God in His wisdom and power gives meaning and purpose to what He creates.

Isaiah 40:21 (ESV) Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

Isaiah 40:22 (ESV) It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;

Isaiah 40:23 (ESV) **who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness**.

Isaiah 40:24 (ESV) Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

Isaiah 40:25 (ESV) To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Isaiah 40:26 (ESV) **Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name**; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

II. The petition of the prayer.

A. It is a prayer for spiritual fortitude.

Ephesians 3:16 (ESV) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you **to be strengthened with power** through his Spirit in your inner being,

B. It is a strength that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:16 (ESV) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power **through his Spirit** in your inner being,

C. The sphere of strengthening is in our hearts and minds.

Ephesians 3:16 (ESV) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit **in your inner being**,

1. Definition of the "inner being" or the "inner man"

John Eadie *Greek Text Commentaries* "The inner man is that portion of our nature which is not cognizable by the senses, and does not consist of nerve, muscle, and organic form, as does the outer man."

2. In Romans the "inner being" is identified as the mind.

Romans 7:22 (ESV) For I delight in the law of God, **in my inner being**,
Romans 7:23 (ESV) but I see in my members another law waging war against **the law of my mind** and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

3. The body or flesh is seen to promote natural impulses that motivate actions.

Ephesians 2:1 (ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
Ephesians 2:2 (ESV) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
Ephesians 2:3 (ESV) **among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

We lived according to natural sinful instincts and impulses.

4. The mind or "inner man" of the believer produces thoughtful decisions that govern our actions in keeping with our knowledge of Christ.

5. In Corinthians the "outer" and "inner man" are contrasted.

a. The outer man decays and grows old.

2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV) So we do not lose heart. **Though our outer self is wasting away**, our **inner self is being renewed day by day**.

b. The inner man is constantly being refreshed, like a refresh icon on a computer.

2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, **our inner self is being renewed day by day**.

6. In Ephesians the mind is to be renewed in its purpose to God.

Ephesians 4:23 (ESV) **and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,**
Ephesians 4:24 (ESV) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

7. In Romans the mind is seen as the agent of transformation in our lives.

Romans 12:2 (ESV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

8. In Ephesians there is a stark contrast of our minds before we were saved and after we are saved'

Ephesians 4:17 (ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, **in the futility of their minds.**

Ephesians 4:18 (ESV) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

Ephesians 4:19 (ESV) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Ephesians 4:20 (ESV) **But that is not the way you learned Christ!**—

Ephesians 4:21 (ESV) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

Ephesians 4:22 (ESV) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

Ephesians 4:23 (ESV) **and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,**

Ephesians 4:24 (ESV) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Application:

- a. Paul prays that inner resolves to follow God would be reenforced.
 - b. That we would be more resistant to our fallen desires, less affected by the outside pressures around us, and more resolute to follow through on what we have learned from and know about Christ and thus have purposed in our minds to do.
- D. The strengthening is a matter of Christ taking up a personal residence in our hearts and minds through faith.

Ephesians 3:17 (ESV) **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that** you, being rooted and grounded in love,

It is the abiding presence of Christ that is experienced by means of faith.

- E. As Christ is firmly planted in our hearts and minds through faith, He produces a love within us.

- 1. It is Christ in our hearts that is the source of our love for others,

Ephesians 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, **being rooted** and grounded in love

- 2. It is in Christ's love that our love stands and finds meaning.

Ephesians 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and **grounded** in love

He is the nature and defining element of our love.

- F. Paul then prays that the Ephesians would have the ability to understand what is the immeasurable love of Christ.

Ephesians 3:18 (ESV) **may have strength to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

This is a different word for strength. It is the strength to be able to understand,

- G. This is a prayer that is appropriate for and needed by all believers.

Ephesians 3:18 (ESV) **may have strength to comprehend with all the saints** what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

- H. It is a prayer to be able to grasp the full measure of Christ's love.

Ephesians 3:18 (ESV) may have strength to comprehend with all the saints **what is the breadth and length and height and depth,**

- I. It is a prayer that we would know fully what cannot be fully known.

Ephesians 3:19 (ESV) and to **know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- 1. It is a word picture of the inability to get our hands completely around something..

2. Thus an inability to” fully grasp.”
 3. We cannot know the love of God exhaustively, but we can know the love of God partially. And furthermore, what we can know in part, we can know accurately and usefully.
 4. As for an illustration think of the differences between a foot ruler and a yardstick, and a yardstick and 50 foot tape measure.
 5. Each can measure accurately, and usefully, and while there is with each tool an increasing ability to measure distance, yet even the 50 foot tape measure has its limitations and is insufficient for measuring the height of a mountain.
 6. So too, our knowledge of the love and of Christ can grow incrementally, but we are still unable to measure that love fully.
- J. The ultimate purpose of knowing and experiencing this love is so that we would conduct ourselves in more godly manner.

1. The goal is to be manifest a complete likeness of God.

Ephesians 3:19 (ESV) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.

- a. Jesus is the very embodiment of God.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV) For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

- b. To see Jesus was to see God.

John 14:9 (ESV) Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father**. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

- c. The goal is that when people see us they see Christ.

2. The fact that the goal cannot be completely reached is expressed in the subjunctive mood.

Ephesians 3:19 (ESV) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled** with all the fullness of God.

3. The point is just as we cannot fully know the love of Christ, so too we can fully express that Love to others.
4. However, the better we know and experience the love of Christ the better we can express that love to others demonstrating the work of God in our lives.
5. We should never, stop or give up in a pursuit of the full knowledge of God's love or the full expression of it.

III. The doxology - God is praised.

- A. God is praised because God has the power (capability, ability) to do way beyond what we can even dream of.

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) 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,

1. God is able to do more than what prayer for.

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) 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,

2. God is able to do more than we can even imagine or comprehend.

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) 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,

- B. God is able to do way beyond what we can dream of as He we works is us and through us.

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) 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**,

1. It is the power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Ephesians 1:19 (ESV) **and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might**

Ephesians 1:20 (ESV) **that he worked in Christ** when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

- C. God will receive will be praised, in, by and through His church.

Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) **to him be glory in the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

D. God will be praised for it in Christ that the church is able to bring glory to God.

Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

E. God will be praised with an everlasting praise.

Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus **throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

IV. Conclusion:

A. First we should never be satisfied with our spiritual attainments.

God is able to do so much more.

1. We should not be satisfied with our knowledge about God.

2. We should not be satisfied with our experience with God.

B. We should be pleading with God to give us an ever increasing knowledge and experience of His love for us.

C. That love will create a unique appreciation and , bond between God's people.

D. We should be praising God with our words and actions as God's love flows through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.