

## EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3:14-21- PAUL'S PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY

ON BOARD:

INTRO:

### I. TO WHOM DOES PAUL PRAY?

- vs. 14, 15 - "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"

#### A. Vs. 14: "For this reason I bow my knees"

- "For this reason" points back to 3:1. Here Paul repeats it after a 12 verse parenthesis about the mystery of the gospel, Christ and the church.

- So the reason for Paul's prayer extends to the first two chapters:

- The grace and greatness of God's plan of reconciliation and calling
- The work of Christ in securing our redemption and adoption
- The gift of faith that reaches out to Christ as Savior and Lord
- The union of both Jew and Gentile as equal members in the body of Christ, the church - new citizenship
- The fullness of spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ (Eph. 1:3)

- "I bow my knees" - Paul knows that doctrine alone cannot change the heart. The Holy Spirit must apply it to hearts. God must do something amazing, so He sanctifies us through His word. If you're understanding the Bible and it's changing your life, that's miraculous. Eph. 2:1-3. I Cor. 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

- If we cross reference Paul's prayers and comments on prayer we learn:

- He prays for all the saints in all the churches
- He gives thanks for them, specifically the Ephesians in 1:15-19.
- He encourages us to pray without ceasing and in all things
- He prays for us to be joyful, thankful, watchful, hopeful, patient
- He prays that we would have the peace of God
- He prays for us to be united
- He prays for God's blessing on the godly (household of Onesiphorus)
- He asked believers to pray for him in certain circumstances
- He prayed for himself: thorn in the flesh
- He prays for abounding love in the churches
- He prays for our growth in grace and the knowledge of Christ
- He prays that God would be glorified in us
- He prays for the salvation of sinners
- He prays for government authorities
- Paul prayed on his knees (how important is prayer posture?)

B. Vs. 14: “to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

- Paul almost always directs his prayers to the Father, but in 2 Thes. 2:16 and 1 Tim 1:12, he calls on Jesus the Son.

- Is it biblical to pray to the Holy Spirit? Examples? The Holy Spirit helps us pray. Should I thank Him for the role He plays in my life? Should I ask His forgiveness when I grieve Him or go to the Father?

C. Vs. 15: “from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”

- Paul includes all believers in God’s family - all who call upon Him as their heavenly Father - all who have taken His name on their lips and have taken His name in the name of His son, Christ Jesus — Christians.

- As God is holy, so we are called His holy ones — saints.

- “in heaven” - believers in heaven.

## II. FOR WHAT DOES PAUL PRAY?

- vs. 16-19 - “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

A. Vs. 16: “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,”

“according to the riches of His glory”

- God isn’t stingy - He owns all and His are the true riches

- God can infinitely supply

- He can dispense His glory to all who ask: John 16:20-23

- He is the source for all our needs: Philippians 4:19

“to be strengthened with might in the inner man” - Implication? Our utter weakness. God alone can increase our faith and give us the power to wage war against the world, the flesh and the devil - to love in truth - to have a sure hope.

- Remember the old comic books with the Charles Atlas ad in them? The 98lb weakling vs. the beach bruiser? We’re all the 98lb weakling spiritually until we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus says, “Without me, you can do nothing.” John 15:5 We can only bear spiritual fruit as we’re inwardly strengthened.

B. Vs. 17a: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;”

- This is the only biblical reference to Christ living in our hearts, although it is implied elsewhere.
- God’s nearness is linked to faith
- The reality of His presence grows through faith
- Calvin: “By faith we not only acknowledge that Christ suffered and rose from the dead on our account, but, accepting the offers which He makes of Himself, we possess and enjoy Him as our Savior . . . In a word, faith is not a distant view, but a warm embrace of Christ, by which He dwells in us, and we are filled with the Divine Spirit.”

C. Vs. 17b, 18a: “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints”

- God wants us rooted and grounded in His love
- The pictures of trees and buildings – source for growth -strength and stability. Christ is the Living Water.
- The love of God and others is the ground and foundation of pleasing and enjoying Him
- Not rooted and grounded in going to church, keeping an outward form of morality, or being a bible trivia expert

“comprehend with all the saints”

- Paul prays this for all believers
- He prays that the eyes of our spiritual understanding may be open

D. Vs. 18b, 19a: “what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge;”

- Both a mental/intellectual knowledge and an experiential/inner knowledge.
- Paul uses a mental picture that we can all relate to that points to a spiritual truth that only true believers can understand.
- How can you know something that is unknowable?
- William Hendricksen: “The finite heart and mind can never fully grasp or know *infinite* love. Even in the life hereafter God will never say to His redeemed, ‘Now I have told you all there is to be told about this love. I close the book, for the last page has been read.’ There will always be more and more and still more to tell. And that will be the blessedness of the heavenly life.”
- John Owen, “We are never nearer to Christ when we find ourselves lost in holy amazement at His unspeakable love.”
- And as John Gill pens, “it is matchless and unparalleled . . . it is wonderful and surprising.”

- E. Vs. 19b: “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”
- Paul’s prayers are big and wide prayers – spiritual prayers – inclusive prayers – bold prayers.
  - He asks for the greatest and the best
  - But isn’t he asking for the impossible? What does “all the fullness of God” mean? Note: 1:22, where the church is His fullness. And 4:13, where the “perfect man” and the “fullness of Christ” is mentioned.
  - Hendricksen: “To contemplate the glory of Christ’s love means to be increasingly transformed into that image.” We won’t be fully God in the ages to come (as Mormons teach), but we will be fully filled as much as a finite being can be!
  - Note: This should be the foundation of everyone who opens God’s word: prayer for illumination, application and glorification.
  - Note: This is the prayer I want prayed for you, and you should want prayed for me!

### III. PAUL’S SUPERLATIVE DOXOLOGY

- Vs. 20, 21 – “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
- A. Vs. 20a: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,”
- Doxology definition: an ascription of praise to God; words of praise
  - “What a mighty God we serve” – He deals in superlatives – God occupies an unseen dimension, separate from creation – His power is infinite.
  - Paul doesn’t just say “above all . . .” or “abundantly above all . . .”, but “exceedingly abundantly above all . . .”
  - Yet, we try to put Him in a box where we can understand Him
  - When we have a small God, we ask for small things
  - When we have a small faith, we believe only for little things
  - “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” and “Lord, increase our faith,” should be on our lips, knowing He will answer.
  - God is a big God; trust Him for all we ask and more.
- B. Vs. 20b: “according to the power that works in us,”
- This power is mountain moving (bringing the spiritually dead to life)
  - This power is life moving (we grow from faith to faith)
  - This power is history moving (spread of Christianity)

C. Vs. 21: “to Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

- Paul’s praise extends to Christ’s glory in the church. Meaning?
- True gospel churches radiate the glory of Christ’s love and truth
- They change the world around them
- They fulfill their purpose
- They lift up the Lord Jesus in all His attributes, accomplishments and greatness
- They worship Him alone and He is the center of their gatherings
- They give thanks and praise for undeserved grace

NOTE: Paul’s focus in all he does is God’s glory

- He runs the race with his eye on the prize and his ear tuned to Jesus saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
- May God make us more heavenly minded and Christ focused as we endure this dying world.
- May our joy be full as we consider our great and loving Savior