

# PM Ephesians 3:14-21 Powerful Prayer

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let's turn please to Ephesians 3. Ephesians 3 and we're going to consider these verses 14 down to 21, these seven verses of Ephesians chapter 3 together this evening.

Ephesians chapter 3 and beginning to read at verse 14. This is the word of God.

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 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.

[ 1 : 30 ] And Amen. Amen. We'll sing God's praise again this time from Psalm 29. Psalm 29. It's on page 34.

We're going to sing the whole of the Psalm together. You mighty ones, give to the Lord as his right. Ascribe to the Lord both glory and might. To the Lord.

Let's turn in our Bibles then, please, to Exodus. Exodus 32. Exodus, of course, the second book of the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, and chapter 32.

As we come to Ephesians chapter 3, we're going to see what Paul prays for the Ephesians. We're going to see how his concern for them is primarily spiritual. It's primarily that they would be strengthened, that they would be built up, that they would be encouraged in the Lord.

And as we come to Exodus 32, we see Moses praying for the people. And again, it's striking that what he prays for them is for their spiritual good. It's the incident where the people of Israel have built a golden calf.

[ 2 : 30 ] They're worshipping it as God. And Moses intercedes for them. He prays that the Lord wouldn't strike them down. That the Lord would have compassion on them. He prays for their spiritual good.

Exodus 32. We'll read the whole of the chapter together. Exodus 32. I'm beginning to read at verse 1. This is the word of God. When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, Up, make us gods who shall go before us.

As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. So Aaron said to them, Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters, and bring them to me.

So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings.

[ 3 : 46 ] And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. And the Lord said to Moses, Go down, for your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it and said, These are your gods,

O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation of you.

But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.

[ 4 : 52 ] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.

And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, on the front and on the back they were written.

The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

But he said, It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear. And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hand and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water, and made the people of Israel drink it. And Moses said to Aaron, What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?

[ 6 : 10 ] And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord burn hot. You know the people that they are set on evil. For they said to me, Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.

So I said to them, Let any who have gold take it off. So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf. And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose, for Aaron had let them break loose to the duration of their enemies, then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side?

Come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put your sword on your side, each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.

And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. And Moses said, Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.

The next day Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses returned to the Lord and said, Alas, this people has sinned a great sin.

[ 7 : 36 ] They have made for themselves gods of gold, but not if you will forgive their sin. But if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written. But the Lord said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book, but now go.

Lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you. Behold, my angels shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf.

The one that Aaron made. Amen. This is the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Let us turn. Let's turn in our Bibles then please to Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3 and these verses 14 through 21.

Verses 14 through 21 of Ephesians chapter 3. I'll pray for you. I'll remember you in the situation that you're in.

[ 8 : 44 ] I wonder how many times we finished a conversation with that assurance. I'll pray for you. It's kind of the Christian thing to do, isn't it? If someone unburdened a particular problem to you, what do you say at the end of that conversation?

Well, I'll pray for you. Maybe someone tells you about the difficulties they're going through. Maybe someone has told you about a particularly difficult situation they're in at work.

Maybe someone has told you about a particularly difficult situation they're in in the family. Maybe someone has told you about a particular sin that they're dealing with. And you think, what on earth can I do in this situation?

How on earth can I help? Well, the Christian thing to say is, I'll pray for you. But secretly at the back of your mind you're thinking, well, what good is prayer going to do? In that situation that somebody's in, in the harrowing detail of that situation, what's prayer going to do really for them?

It feels like the cliché. It feels like the sort of glib thing to say. It feels like the thing that we have to say. But really we wonder, well, is it doing any good?

[ 9 : 55 ] Yet as we come to Ephesians 3 tonight, as we come to these verses 14 through 21, as we come and see what Paul prays for the Ephesians, we're reminded, aren't we, of the power of prayer.

Remember, we see in this section things that the apostle prays for the Ephesian church, things that he wants them to know, things that he wants them to remember, things that he wants them to be reminded of.

And what does he want them to be reminded of most fundamentally of all? It's the power of God. That whatever situation they're in, whatever difficulty they're facing, whatever problem is in the church, he wants them to remember, verse 20, that God can do abundantly more than they ask or imagine, that God can do far greater things than they think is possible.

We want to see the three things that Paul reminds them of, or three things that Paul wants them to know as he prays for them tonight. Firstly, he wants to remind them that they are rich.

That they're rich in God. That whatever their physical circumstances, whatever the level of wealth that they have, they are rich in God. Secondly, he wants them to be rooted.

[ 11 : 09 ] He wants them to be rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then thirdly, and finally, he wants them to remember that they're resourced.

That the God of all heaven is, has, they have his ear. That the one who can do far more abundantly than they ask or imagine is on their side.

He wants them to be, remember that they are rich. He wants them to remember that they are rooted in Christ. And he wants them to remember that they are resourced in God. So first of them, we see how they're rich.

They're rich. And we see that in verses 14 through 16. Verses 14 through 16. And as we come to verse 14, we notice again what Paul says, don't we?

For this reason. For this reason. We remind ourselves of where we are, don't we? We've thought last week about Ephesians 1, Ephesians 3 verses 1 to 13.

[ 12 : 07 ] We saw in there how Paul started Ephesians 3 verse 1. That for this reason I, Paul, we noticed last week how he got kind of diverted, how he got a little bit sidetracked into the glory, the wonder of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He talked about the mystery that had been revealed. And so as we come to verse 14 tonight, and we see Paul saying again, for this reason, I, it's almost like he's getting himself back on track.

Almost that he's, he's kind of regained his focus, if you like. That that itch that he had has been scratched. So for this reason, Paul says, now that's the same reason we thought about last week.

This is Paul picking up again from Ephesians 3 verse 1. It's the same reason that we thought about last week. What was the reason last week? It was because the middle wall of hostility has been broken down.

Because the Jews and the Gentiles are now one in Christ. Because of that reason from Ephesians chapter 2, Paul does this. What does he do?

[ 13 : 13 ] For this reason, because Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. For this reason, because the middle wall of hostility has been broken down. Because now in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Notice please here the posture that Paul adopts. He speaks of bowing the knee. Now I hadn't really thought about this, but one of the commentaries that I was using to help me understand Ephesians picked this up. Highlighted it for me. If Paul the Jew had been writing this, what would he have written?

If Paul, pre-conversion, if Saul of Tarsus, if you like, had been writing this, what would he have said? He would have said, for this reason, I stand before the Father.

That was the Jewish position of prayer. Think about the wailing wall today. What do you see? You see the Jews standing. By and large, the Jews did not kneel to pray. The exception to this would have been at times of particular fervency, times of particular reverence to the prayer.

[14:26] Solomon, the dedication to the temple, 1 Kings chapter 8. Solomon there, is recorded as kneeling in prayer. So Paul, as he prays this prayer, prays it fervently.

As he prays for the Ephesians, he prays it from his heart. As we come to that, friends, it reminds us of the importance and sanctity of prayer, doesn't it?

That prayer is something that should be seriously engaged in. Of course, we have free access to God the Father through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that isn't something that should be taken lightly.

That isn't something that should be abused. We can pray anytime we want. Of course we can. We have free access.

We don't need to be in a special place at a special time in order to come to God. But it reminds us of the sanctity. It reminds us of the humility of prayer that Paul need.

[15:31] Needed, sorry. If we're going to pray, it should take up all of our focus and attention. It shouldn't be something that's done while our mind is thinking about what do I have to do this week.

It shouldn't be something that's done while we're thinking, well, I wonder how long those buns have left in the oven. It is something that takes up all of our person and all of our attention and focus. But it also reminds us that if we promise to pray for someone, as we thought about at the start, if we promise to pray for someone, we should do it fervently. We should do it with all that we have, with the passion that we see exhibited in Paul here.

That it took up his entire being. So Paul, because there are no differences in Christ, Paul prays to the Father.

And notice how the Father is described then, verse 15. He's the one from whom every family in heaven on earth is named. That's a bit of a strange sort of construction, isn't it?

[16:42] It's a bit of a strange idea. I think we need to try and unpack a little bit exactly what it is that Paul's getting at here. I think the one thing that we can safely say is that not every family is a model of godliness.

We don't have to look too far, do we? We don't have to know too much about the world to know that not every family is a godly family. Rather, the idea I think that Paul's getting at here, the idea that he's coming to is that the whole family, the whole church, both Jew and Gentile, the whole church family is named after God the Father.

That he is the one whom all the church are sons and daughters of. One of the things about following a football team is that it brings you together with people you wouldn't ordinarily meet or socialize with.

It doesn't matter if you're a bin man on minimum wage. It doesn't matter if you're a multi-millionaire businessman. It doesn't matter if you're chairman of the board. You all have this one thing in common. It's your team.

You come together under the banner of your team. You're united together by the banner of your team. You're united by the colors of your team. And similarly, Paul says, well, we all come together under the name of God.

[18:08] We come together under that one family, under that one God from which every family gets its name. The reason I think this is the case is because he's reminding them, isn't he?

Verse 14. Because of what I've said about Jews and Gentiles. Because that middle wall of hostility is broken down. Because there's no longer any difference in Christ. You're one family under God. And so he says, Verse 15, Every family, every church in heaven on earth is named under God. And we see what Paul prays for them in verse 16, don't we?

So he's kind of introduced it, if you like, verses 14 and 15. And then we get to the nitty gritty. We get to the substance of his prayer. And what does he say?

That according to the riches of God's glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with his power through his spirit in your inner being. What a reminder to these Ephesian believers.

[19:15] What a reminder to these people who had left the cult of Artemis. What a reminder to these people who perhaps were doubting their salvation. Who had they come to? Who had they

committed themselves to?

Well, quite simply, they'd committed themselves to the powerful one. They committed themselves to the one who could strengthen them.

But what do we see in this prayer of Paul? What do we see from what Paul's asking for the Ephesians? Well, Paul wasn't particularly interested in their physical condition, was he?

He wasn't particularly interested in their physical needs and requests. Rather, his prayer for them is spiritual. That they may be strengthened in Christ.

That they may be strengthened by God. That they would know the riches of God in their inner being. Doesn't that just blow our prayers out of the water?

[ 20 : 26 ] Prayers which are, if they're anything like mine, are so often, you know, Dear Lord, please be with Jim today. Please be with whoever as they struggle with X.

Now don't mishear me tonight. Don't misunderstand me tonight. It's right. It's good. It's right to pray for physical things. But in the church today, we've made the physical the most important thing.

Pray for whoever who's broken their leg. Okay, that's fine. But let's pray that whoever's broken their leg would come to know Christ. Let's pray that whoever's broken their leg would be strengthened in their face.

The physical has become so much more important to us than the spiritual. If you're stuck to pray for someone, if you're stuck to know what to pray for someone, we could do worse than follow Paul's example here to pray that they might be strengthened.

To pray that they might be encouraged in the power of the Lord. To pray that they might know Christ more and more. To pray that they might become more and more Christ-like. That's what Paul prays for this church in Ephesus.

[ 21 : 45 ] Not that their physical condition would be healed. Not that their physical lives would go well. But that their spiritual lives would go well. So that's the first thing Paul prays then.

That they might know the riches of God. Secondly then, we want to see how Paul prays that they might be rooted in Christ. Rooted in Christ. And we see that in verses 17 through 19.

Verses 17 through 19. So what's going to happen then as the believers are strengthened than God? What's going to happen then as the Spirit strengthens them? What will the outcome of it be? Well we see that in verse 17 don't we? That as they're strengthened, Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith. That Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith.

Christ. It's a lovely picture isn't it? Christ coming in, dwelling in the hearts of believers. But we also see again the intensely Trinitarian nature of salvation.

[ 22 : 51 ] We're strengthened, verse 16 according to Paul, in the riches of God the Father. We're strengthened, verse 16, by the ministry of the Spirit. All of that so that Christ may dwell in our hearts richly by faith.

We see the intensely Trinitarian nature of salvation. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, each with their distinct work in applying salvation to us.

But notice it doesn't stop there. What does Paul say, verse 17? So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. That you being rooted and grounded in love.

Now again, if we were writing in this section, what might we write? If we were writing in this section, obviously we're not inspired by the Holy Spirit. If we were writing in this section, what might we write? I think in the Reformed world, certainly we might be tempted to say, well we're rooted and grounded in sound doctrine.

We're rooted and grounded in right thoughts about God, in right ideas about God. And of course that's good. Right doctrine, right belief, right theology are essential.

[ 24 : 10 ] But what Paul says here is that we're rooted and grounded in love. love. We see here how essential love is to the Christian life. It's the rooting, it's the thing that will keep us safe, secure in the Christian life is love.

There's a plant, I suppose more of a tree really, in the man's front garden which looks to me like it's dead. I confess that I'm not a botanist, I'm not, you know, Monty Dawn or anything, but it's brown when it probably should be green.

It kind of looks shriveled and withered when it should be vibrant. Most of all, when you look at the plant you think, I reckon I could give that a good pull and it would probably come out.

It doesn't look grounded, it doesn't look like its roots are secure, it doesn't look very safe. And Paul here reminds the Ephesian believers, well love is the thing that will keep you rooted in the Christian

life.

Love is the thing that will keep you grounded in the Christian life. Well that maybe leads us on then to another question where we say, well if love is what we're rooted, if love is what we're grounded in, what does that love look like?

[ 25 : 30 ] Is that love the love that God has for us? Is that love the love that God shows us in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that love that we're rooted and grounded in, the love that we have for God as our Father who has redeemed and rescued us?

Is the love by which we're rooted and grounded the love that we have for one another? What love is it roots us? Well in short, I think it's all of the above.

The love that God has for us as Father has to be foundational to what we do as Christians. The love that God has for us as Father has to keep us safe, secure in our Christian life.

But the love that we have for God also must be foundational to that. The love that we have for one another also has to be foundational to keeping us rooted, to keeping us secure and grounded.

We've thought about it on Wednesday evenings in the not too distant past. What does Jesus say?

By this all men will know that you are my disciples. if you love one another, it's love that will give us the solid foundation to build our Christian lives on.

[ 26 : 43 ] It's love that will keep us rooted and secure and fed and nourished. we must love one another.

We must love God and we must know God's love for us in Jesus Christ. It's that that roots, it's that that grounds our Christian life.

And it's that that Paul prays the Ephesians would know in experience. how we love one another, how we grow in love for one another, how we grow in love for God, how we grow in love for Christ will be a clear sign of our progress, will be a clear sign of our growth in the Christian faith.

Yet that isn't even the end of it, is it? We're rooted by this love that Christ is dwelling in our hearts through faith. We're rooted and grounded in this love. And what does Paul pray in verse 18?

That they may have strength to comprehend the love of Christ. And notice how it's described. What does Paul say? That you 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.

[ 28 : 12 ] A lot of the commentaries that I was reading tried to break these phrases up. They tried to figure out well what does the length of Christ's love mean? What does the breadth of God's love mean? What does the depth of God's love mean?

But to my mind that does an injustice to what Paul says here. Paul simply wants these Ephesians to grasp the magnitude of God's love for them.

He simply wants them to grasp the full orb's love that Christ has for his people. That love which has often been said is simple enough for a child to understand.

That love that is so complex that none of us none of us this evening will ever understand it fully. The love with which we're loved in Christ.

the breadth of that love the length of that love the height the depth of that love so that we may be filled with the fullness of God.

[ 29 : 20 ] Verse 19 Not that we fill ourselves but that God fills us. We're filled with the fullness of God.

So Paul's reminded them in his prayer of the riches that are at their disposal he's reminded them in his prayer to be rooted in love and then finally he reminds them that they are resourced that they are resourced and we see that in verses 20 and 21.

This is going to mark the halfway point of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus and as he rounds out this chapter as he rounds out this half of his letter he finishes it with a wonderful doxology a wonderful prayer full of praise to the almighty God doesn't he?

Now to him who is able verse 20 to do far more abundantly than we ask or imagine or we think to him be the glory what a wonderful reassurance that is as we read verse 20 as we come to prayer week by week as we come to the prayer meeting Wednesday by Wednesday by Wednesday as we come to prayer in our daily lives day by day by day to know that God can do far more than we ask or imagine or think that's quite something isn't it?

Because I can imagine some pretty big things I can think about some pretty big things but that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of what God can do now of course this doesn't mean simply that God will give us our wishes that we'll get our lottery win that we'll get our holiday to

Barbados that we'll get our Aston Martin but it's actually far more comforting than that it's actually far more reassuring than that why?

[ 31 : 23 ] Because these are all things that I can imagine these are all things that I can want these are all things that I think might be good but God does even more than that God gives us more than just the trifling treasures of this world God gives us what is best according to his great purpose it's that old William Carey quote isn't it that we're to attempt great things for God that we're to expect great things from God God can do far more than we imagine God can do far more than we ask and to this God Paul says to this God be glory in the church in Christ forever and ever Amen you can imagine the people in Ephesus adding their own Amen as this letter was read aloud to them but what's

Paul doing here what's he doing in these two verses well he's reminding them that they are a church that is resourced a church that has the almighty God on their side as they contended with the people who chanted great as Artemis of the Ephesians as they reached out into a dark world as they reached out into a pagan culture Paul's reminding them verse 20 God's bigger than this God can do far more than you ask or imagine because the God that we serve is the living and true God the resources that are at our disposal are great the God we serve and worship is great as John reminds us in his letters towards the end of the New

Testament greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world God can do far more than we ask or think or imagine God can once again turn this town upside down God can break into this darkness we find it hard to imagine we find it hard to conceive and yet God can do it we have the resources of the almighty infinite God at our disposal so friends let's not lose heart let's not lose confidence because the God we serve is great Amen