

Faithful Servants & Sermon Critics

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[0 : 00] So, yeah, we're taking a little break today If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians 3, verse 14.

If you're using one of the Bibles under the chairs, it is on page 1817. Starting in verse 14, and the title, if you will, the subheading there is a prayer for the Ephesians.

And in the ESV translation, that subheading is a prayer for spiritual strength. And we'll see that as we go through it.

For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

[1 : 48] And to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now, to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. Okay, so now we're going to kind of look at it one verse at a time. Boop!

Did I go the wrong way? There we go. Verse 14. For this reason I kneel before the Father.

Which, any inquiring mind, of course, says, for what reason? Why is he praying here? Why is he praying here? And like so often in scripture, we need to go before, get some context to see what's been talked about, to know what's going on, where we're at now.

That's exactly what we're going to do here. So, a few verses back, Paul is talking about the mystery of the gospel revealed.

[3 : 12] Back in verse 6, he says, This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

And if we back up even further, he's talking about it in kind of in detail back in chapter 2. He says, Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

And now, the you that Paul is talking to here is the Gentiles. Most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles, and Paul's mission, he was sent to preach the word to the Gentiles.

So, verse 13, But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

So now, because of what Jesus has done at the cross, the promise going forward is for all people. Everyone who places their faith in him, not just the Jews.

[4 : 43] And he goes on, For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Up until now, there had always been this angst between Jew and Gentile. The Jews being God's chosen people, and the Gentiles, everyone else.

Everyone else that wasn't a Jew. But Jesus, it says, has broken down the wall of hostility. So how did he break down the wall? By setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.

And why did he do it? That he might create in himself one new man in place of the two.

So making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross. Thereby killing the hostility. That he might create in himself one new man in place of the two.

[5 : 58] In one body. And that one body is the mystery revealed. It's the church. Or the body of Christ.

Jew and Gentile alike. And now that Paul has made his point that the Gentile and Jewish believers are the same positionally, they're the same in Christ, he's going to pray that they would also be one in experience as well.

That they would both be able to know and experience Christ's love. So that they can live it out. So back to our passage.

For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name. Okay.

Okay. Okay. So, now Paul is not saying here that we are all, that God is the Father of all.

[7 : 19] You know, we hear the saying, I think more and more often these days, that, oh, well, we're all just children of God.

Well, we're all children of God only in the sense that he is the creator of all of us.

Because there are a lot of people that, although he is the creator, choose not to follow him. Choose not to belong to him. What Paul is saying is that God is the prototype of fatherhood.

He's the first father. Father is derived from God, not from man. And every human family exists as a family with a father because of him.

That's who Paul is praying to, God the Father. Father. I pray that out of his glorious riches and the riches that Paul's talking about here are obviously not what the world would call riches.

[8 : 39] If we go way back to the beginning of Ephesians, back in chapter one, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Then a few verses in front of that, verse 18 of chapter one. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

And then in the next chapter, in chapter two, verse four, but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy. So, Paul's talking about the only true and lasting riches here.

back to verse, chapter three, verse 16. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being.

Not just with a head knowledge, but in your inner being, in your heart, deep down in your heart, through his power, and not your own.

[10 : 15] So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Now, when Paul says, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith here, he's not referring to the initial moment of salvation when the Holy Spirit enters the believer's heart.

He's talking here to a body of believers that already have the Holy Spirit. When he says that Christ would dwell in your hearts, it's more the idea that Christ would feel at home in their hearts and not feel out of place.

The idea that their attitudes and their actions would make the Spirit feel comfortable residing there because their actions are in line with the Spirit's leading.

Somebody once said if God took the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what we Christians are doing would go right on and nobody would know the difference.

So, I have to ask myself, does Christ feel at home in my heart?

[11 : 52] And that should be our goal. But, sadly, there are times when I'm sure he doesn't. because I'm human. We're all human and we all struggle with sin in one way, shape, or form.

And we will until this earthly life is through. But even though our position in Christ is secure, even though we have been cleansed by his blood at the cross and we've been made a new creation, we are still fallen human beings.

But even though we are not sinless, there is a way that we can begin to sin less. And Paul's about to show us how.

love. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.

So, what's one of the most important things that a plant has to have to be healthy? Speak up, speak up.

[13 : 14] Good roots, there you go. Okay, and it has to have roots that are deep enough that they go down into the soil so that it can pull up the nutrients and it can pull up the water.

So, kind of an example of some not so good roots. My, Maggie had been asking me for several days earlier when it was garden planting time, she wanted to plant, she had a whole bunch of these gladiola bulbs and we had this spot in the garden that we weren't planning on putting anything.

So, she wanted to have a little gladiola garden. So, and she asked me for help a couple times and I was dragging my feet and finally she just, well, I'm going to do it.

And she took it upon herself to get these things in the ground even though dad wasn't helping. well, I never told her that, okay, these glads, you've got to make sure that you plant them deep.

You know, like if you read, the packet says at least four to six inches deep. And so, I had never conveyed that to her so she planted them a little bit shallow.

[14 : 31] They sprouted, they came up nice, but I think because of the combination of the fact that they were kind of shallow and the fact that we had an awful lot of rain at the beginning of the summer, the roots were just kind of on top and they never went down.

So, the first storm that we had where we had some good winds, we got up the next morning and we looked out and you look down the row of gladiolas and summer standing straight up and summer laying on the ground this way and summer laying on the ground that way because their roots weren't deep enough.

But it's funny that even though they fell down, they still bloomed, it's still pretty but it just looks like a mess. Okay, I pray that you being rooted and established in love.

Another question, what does a, what does a house or a, any larger building have to have so that it doesn't fall over?

And I saw Andrew say a foundation, a firm foundation and a well established foundation. So, what Paul is praying is that we would be rooted in or established on the firm foundation of Christ's love to have power through the spirit.

[16 : 07] And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. To know it, to know the love of Christ, not just to comprehend, but to know it and to lay hold of it, to make it our own.

Now, the English words comprehend and apprehend, they both come from the same Latin word and I don't know if I'm pronouncing it right or not, but the Latin word is *prehendir*, which means to grasp, to take hold of.

A monkey has a prehensile tail, right? And he can, I mean, he can be on a tree branch and his tail will reach up and grab a hold and he can swing from branch to branch.

He can, his tail will grab a hold. So, and the difference between the two words, the word comprehend, it carries the meaning, the idea of I can mentally comprehend that, okay?

[17 : 42] Somebody explain something to me and I say, okay, well, yeah, I get that. Where the word apprehend is, oh, okay, yeah, I got that.

I got a hold of that. I'm gonna, I can make that my own. I can hold on to that. love. And I think Paul's prayer is that we don't just comprehend the love of Christ, but that we begin to apprehend it, and that we take it in, that we make it our own, and that we allow it to change us from the inside out.

to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now, love that surpasses knowledge. if it surpasses knowledge, we can't know all of it, right?

Just like there's no way that we could know or ever be filled with all the fullness of God. Colossians 2 verse 9 makes that evident.

[19 : 04] It says that's only possible with Jesus, for in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. But, there is a measure, there is a portion that we can know, that we can experience.

And if we apprehend it, that's what makes all of the difference. One of the commentaries that I was looking at on this passage was actually titled, Get Your Hands on Your Wealth.

And, obviously, it's talking about the only true and lasting wealth that we saw in a few of the verses that are at the beginning of the chapter. The riches of God's glory, the riches of God's grace, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, riches, and the riches of God's mercy.

And they are all incredible blessings that will transform the way that we live if we just take the time to grab a hold of them and apprehend them for ourselves.

And if we don't, we miss out on so much that God wants for us. if we're satisfied with just a head knowledge of our salvation and we don't ever really take the time or the effort to go deeper and to truly let the enormity of all that Christ equips us with and for through the Holy Spirit, we are, we're only a shell of what we could be for Christ.

[21 : 01] Christ. And this, it stings a little bit for me to say this because I'm definitely preaching to myself here as well.

But that situation, when we, when we're just satisfied with a head knowledge of what it took to save us and we don't ever go deep, we don't spend time in prayer, we don't spend time in his word, we don't begin to, when we don't take that time to begin to try to understand these things that yes, they're not completely understandable, but when we don't try to start peeling back the layers to understand these things, it reminds me of a person that wins the lotto and never goes in to pick up their money.

You know, it's, that person's life could be completely and permanently changed for the better in so many ways and they could bless so many different people in so many different ways with, even with their new worldly wealth, but only if they go in and they take hold of it, only if they go to the trouble of going in and making it their own.

We become strengthened in power spiritually when we begin to understand just how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ really is.

True, we'll never be able to completely grasp the enormity of it. There's an old hymn, The Love of God, says it very well.

[23 : 16] Maybe. The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell.

It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell. As Paul said, it's a love that surpasses knowledge.

But when we take the time and make the effort to start to dive into it, to try to understand it, the more that our minds will be completely blown.

When we start to get a sense of just how much the creator of the universe actually cares about us. And the easier it will be to face and to navigate all the trials in life that seem to come along.

Things that used to be mountains will begin to become mole hills. And things that used to seem like insurmountable obstacles will begin to become light and momentary troubles.

[24 : 42] But we have to remember that none of it is possible in our own strength. It's only through the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us. And Paul concludes the last two verses of this little passage this way.

now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for Paul and for his faithfulness to carry out his ministry.

We thank you for this passage of scripture that we've looked at kind of shortly here this morning and all that it can teach us.

[25 : 57] I pray Lord that you would help all of us to open our hearts and our minds to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives so that Christ truly would feel at home in our hearts.

Lord, help us to pray continually and to faithfully dive into your word on a regular basis so that we can be rooted and established in the love of Christ.

And even though we'll never completely grasp just how wide and long and high and deep Christ's love truly is, help us to apprehend it, to truly grab hold of it and make it our own.

Help us to see that we have riches beyond measure in Christ. Riches that to the world might seem foolish, but yet they are the only true and lasting ones.

Help us to know this love that surpasses knowledge more and more because the more we know of it, the less we will be able to keep silent about it.

[27 : 16] and the better we will be able to explain it and express it to the world around us, a world that so desperately needs to hear it.

Thank you, Lord, for the simple, beautiful, life-changing truth of the gospel. The good news that actually starts with some bad news.

It starts with the truth that we're all sinners in desperate need of a savior. We all have sinned against a righteous and holy God and because you are just, that sin needs to be paid for.

But because of your great love for us, you sent your only son to this world to pay that price for us. And that is exactly what he did at the cross.

in one fell swoop, his death paid the price for all of our sin. And his rising from the dead proved that it was enough.

[28 : 29] And all that anybody needs to do to accept that incredible offer of salvation that you extend to everyone is to realize that they are a sinner in desperate need of a savior, confess their sin to you, and trust in Jesus in the fact that what he did at the cross was enough.

There's nothing we could ever do to deserve it or to earn it. It's all because of him. Lord, I pray for anyone who might be here this morning or maybe watching online that might be wrestling with that decision or on the verge of making that decision.

I pray that you would be working in their heart even now revealing that incredible truth to them and that they would accept it in faith.

We thank you, Lord. We love you. and we give all of the glory and honor and praise to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.