

Key Thought:

God wants us to know experientially what we are positionally in Him

Introduction:

Sometimes we must experience a thing to fully comprehend it

- My Grandpa's first airplane flight
- A woman may completely understand the biology of having a baby, but until she experiences giving birth, she really doesn't comprehend all there is to childbirth.

In today's passage, Paul moves from the position we have in Christ to experiencing the wonderful relationship we have with Him.

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I. The Compulsion to Pray -For this reason: 3:14 (3:1)

- a. For this reason, pulls us back to two earlier passages (3:1, and chapter 2)
- b. Paul was describing in great detail the position that the Ephesian believers had in Christ
 - i. 2:1 – You were dead
 - ii. 2:5 – You are now alive
 - iii. 2:13, 17 – You were far off, but now are near
 - iv. 2:19 – Not strangers or aliens (illegal immigrants)
 - v. 3:6 – Ephesian Gentiles are fellow-heirs in Christ's body
 - vi. 3:7-11 – Paul's heart and ministry to the Gentiles
 - vii. 3:12-13 – Paul's desire for the Ephesians to continue and not faint (vs 13)
 1. Paul knew what he was asking could only come through the power of God

II. The Prayer: 3:15 – 19

- a. (15) Pleading for the *Church* to experience the fullness of the riches in Christ
 - i. The whole family (every family) vs 15 and by extension vs 21
 1. Taken in context must mean the saved, both Jew and Gentile (Chapters 1-3:13)
 2. There is no segregation or distinction in the 'whole family' KJV
 - a. Rev 5:9
- b. (16) To have the inner man strengthened through the Spirit (because of His inexhaustible riches and glory)
 - i. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (1:13)
- c. (17) That Christ dwell in their hearts by faith
 - i. Paul is not only addressing their standing in Christ
 1. He is addressing their experiential understanding of the indwelling Christ
- d. That Love be the foundation of their Christian living (17)
 - i. Cannot be conjured up, it is a work of the Spirit
 - ii. Love of God and Love of Neighbor (all the law and prophets hang on these two commandments)
 1. Matt 22:37-40
 - iii. You cannot love God and hate your brother (1Jn 4:20)
- e. That the Ephesians would know the unknowable (18-19)

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- i. Paul prays in vs 18 that we may be able to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height and to know the love of Christ.
 1. Then he says that we cannot know it all.
- ii. Although we cannot know all there is to know of God, Paul is asking that we may understand that we serve a great God who is above all of creation and beyond our total comprehension, BUT that we can have access to Him through Jesus, and experientially enjoy fellowship and blessing from Him.
 1. Rom 11:33
 2. Isa 55:8
 3. Phil 3:10

III. The Benediction: 3:20-21

- a. The outpouring, exuberant conclusion of Paul's prayer for the Church is this familiar benediction
 - i. If we live in the experiential knowledge of our positional standing in Christ
 1. Then we have confidence that God will do good for us and He is able to do more than we can ask or think
 2. Not because of who we are, but because He works through us, for His own glory.
- b. Paul proclaims that it is God who gets the glory, through the finished work of Christ, now and always
- c. The glory is given by the bride of Christ, the church!

IV. Imperative Applications

a. The Compulsion to Pray -For this reason: 3:14

- i. Studying the Bible is imperative to a balanced Christian walk
 1. Expository study is important.
 2. Look for words or phrases that repeat and pull in other passages
 - a. In this case 'For this reason' led us back to previous passages
 3. It was Paul's understanding of the scriptures (the Gentiles standing in Christ) that invoked the response of fervent prayer.
 4. Meditating on scripture is the catalyst for meaningful prayer
 5. Prayer is the natural expression of an experiential understanding of the relationship we have with Christ
 6. Neglecting the Word and Prayer impacts all around you
- ii. Neglect the Word of God and others will suffer. Paul's response to his understanding of the Ephesian's position in Christ was to pray that they would experience the blessings of being grafted into Christ.

b. The Prayer: 3:15 – 19

- i. (15) Pleading for the *Church* to experience the fullness of the riches in Christ
 - a. The emphasis is not on the individual, it is on the church
 - b. There is no such thing as a successful lone wolf Christian
- ii. Our prayers should be centered on God, and not on us

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1. James says that we have not because we ask not, and we receive not because we ask amiss
 2. If we ask anything according to His will, he hears us
 3. Our business ought to be that we walk so closely with God that there is no doubt that he hears our prayers, and that we are content with His answers.
- iii. That Love be the foundation of their Christian living
1. Gal 5:14 and 15 say that the ‘... whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.’
 2. The love of Christ should control us (2 Co 5:14-15)
 3. Love God’s word, and it will be easier to endure the slights of men and display the love of God.
 - a. Great peace have those who love your law and nothing can make them stumble (Psa 119:165)
 - b. May nothing offend us, but the sin that keeps us from loving God and loving our neighbor!
 4. When your children offend you, most of you are wise enough not to lash out in anger at your children.
 - a. Why then when a brother or sister offends you do you respond in anger? Does God so deal with us? Does God so deal with you? He does not.
 - b. Jas 1:20: For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.
 - c. Thankfully, through Christ, the patience and longsuffering of our loving God can be demonstrated.
 5. Praise be to God for his excellent greatness and love. May we who claim His name aspire to love our brothers and sisters as much as He has loved us.
- c. The Benediction: 3:20-21**
- i. Our time of meditation and the resultant prayer culminates in the expression of a truth that gives glory to God and encouragement to our souls. This is what we witness at the end of Chapter 3

Questions:

1. Paul’s prayer was for the church. How do we as Americans like to personalize things that should be considered in the context of being part of Christ’s Church?
2. Why is prayer the right response when we desire others to understand scriptural truths experientially?
3. How does the acrostic Fact, Faith, Feelings apply as we realize experientially what we are positionally in Christ?
 - a. Can our feelings and experience betray us?
 - b. How can we keep from being self-deceived by our own experiences?
4. Is being rooted and grounded in love an easy thing?
5. How can our neglect of walking with God and prayer be a detriment to others?