

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-22-14 PM NOTES
"A PATTERN FOR POWERFUL PRAYER"
EPHESIANS 3:14-21
#11 in Series, "The Christian's Wealth, Walk, and Warfare"

Ephesians 1:17 (NKJV) "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

Ephesians 1:18a (NKJV) "the eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**..."

I. The Preparation for Powerful Prayer (vv. 14-15)

Philippians 2:10a (NKJV) "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow..."

Ephesians 3:15 (NIV) "from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

II. The Petitions of Powerful Prayer (vv. 16-19)

"[Paul] prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to 'apprehend' (get hold of) God's great love, which will result in their being 'filled unto all the fullness of God.' So, then, Paul is praying for strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness." —Warren Weirsbe

A. A Petition for Strength (v. 16)

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV) "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NKJV) "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day."

"If a church is not supernatural, it is superficial."

—Adrian Rogers

B. A Petition for Surrender (v. 17a)

C. A Petition for Security (vv. 17b-19a)

1. The Width of His Love

John 6:37 (NKJV) "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

2. The Length of His Love

Ephesians 1:4 (NKJV) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

John 13:1b (NKJV) “... having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

3. The Depth of His Love

Philippians 2:6-8 (NKJV) “⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.”

4. The Height of His Love

Ephesians 2:6 (NKJV) “and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 5:5b (NKJV) “...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

D. A Petition for Saturation with God (v. 19b)

Colossians 2:9 (NKJV) “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

Colossians 1:27b (NKJV) “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

III. The Praise That Concludes Powerful Prayer (vv. 20-21)

He is able
He is able to do
He is able to do all that we ask
He is able to do all that we ask or think
He is able to do above all that we ask or think
He is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think
He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!

*Thou art coming to a king.
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much.*

—John Newton

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“A PATTERN FOR POWERFUL PRAYER”
EPHESIANS 3:14-21
#11 in Series, “The Christian’s Wealth, Walk, and Warfare”

I can’t think of any topic that I preach on that I enjoy more than examining the prayers of Scripture. Right now, I am sensing the Lord’s guidance to do a lengthy Sunday night series (possibly a year long) on the prayers in the Bible. I was going to entitle the series, “All the Prayers of the Bible” until I looked at a book I have by that same title (by Herbert Lockyer), and it has on the front of the book, “Over 650 prayers from the Bible”. I may need to change the series title to “Quite a Few Prayers of the Bible”. Of all the 650 or so prayers in the Bible, the one that we are looking at tonight is in my top three. The prayer we are studying tonight is one of the “Prison Prayers”. That refers to the fact that it is located in a book of the Bible that Paul wrote from prison. Some other “prison prayers” are Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-12. It is interesting in reading these prison prayers that all focus on the spiritual condition of the inner man and not the material need of the body. In other words, you don’t find Paul praying, “Lord, whatever it takes, get me out of here.” Paul understood that if the inner man was right, the outward conditions would be taken care of one way or another in God’s timing. What a lesson for us! When you are in a trial, focus on your response to the trial, not the release from the trial. To focus just on the trial will cause you to miss the reason that God allowed the trial in the first place. Let’s face it; most of our prayers are “reaction prayers”. By that, I mean prayers that are reacting to painful circumstances. We are going to learn in this message how to how to pray more profitably.

The text that we are looking at tonight is the second prayer in Ephesians. The first one was in Ephesians 1:15-23. These two prayers are interesting when we compare them. The first prayer is a prayer for revelation. **Ephesians 1:17 (NKJV)** “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and **revelation** in the knowledge of Him”. The second prayer that we are focusing on tonight is for realization (how to use the revelation). The first prayer requests enlightenment. **Ephesians 1:18a (NKJV)** “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...” The second prayer is requesting enablement – the power to apply the truth we are enlightened to. In so many ways this second prayer compliments and completes what the first prayer lays the foundation for. Our tendency is to gather truth like we gather pretty sea shells on the beach and then leave them in a bag. There are two things that I am responsible to do as your Pastor. First I must teach you truth – teach it clearly and accurately. But secondly, I must exhort you to apply the truth and not put in the bag with the sea shells. The constant exhortation of all of our Pastors ought to be, “Act like who you are; use what He has given you!”

Let me encourage you to strive to understand this prayer, but to not stop with just understanding. I want to exhort you to pray this prayer. Personalize it; pray it for yourself; pray it for your family; pray it for your Pastors.

I. The Preparation for Powerful Prayer (V14-15)

In the last message, I told you that Ephesians 3:1 actually was a part of the prayer in verses 14-21. Verses 2-13 are a parenthesis. Read verse one followed by verse 14 and you will see the connection. The “reason” Paul is speaking of is found in Ephesians 2. In Ephesians 2:5 we see that we have been made spiritually alive in Him. In 2:10 we see that we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus. In **Ephesians 2:19 (NKJV)** we see that we are “... no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”. In 2:20 we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. In **Ephesians 2:22 (NKJV)** we are told that we are “... being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” The very next words in Ephesians 3:1 and then after the parenthesis in 3:14 are, “For this reason...” In other words, this prayer is an exhortation to act like who we are and use the resources that we have.

Notice the posture of his prayer. In a Roman dungeon chained to a guard, Paul in humility bows his knees before the Father. The bowing of the knees should represent an attitude of submission and humility

in recognition of the fact that we are in the presence of one of higher rank and superior standing. I think that kneeling is a wonderful posture of prayer, but it is nowhere commanded. I do not understand why we do not have more people at the front praying on their knees before, during, and at the conclusion of the message. When we come before the Lord at the end, what position will we take? **Philippians 2:10a (NKJV)** “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” I don’t want to make too big a deal about our posture in prayer. I read a long time ago a piece on our position in prayer that I don’t know its source. It goes like this:

“‘The proper way for a man to pray’ said deacon Lemual Keys, ‘the only proper attitude is down upon his knees.’

‘Nay, I should say the way to pray’ said Reverend Dr. Wise, ‘is standing straight up with outstretched arms with rapt and upturned eyes.’

‘Oh no, no, no’ said Elder Snow, ‘such posture is too proud. A man should pray with eyes fast closed and head contritely bowed.’

‘It seems to me his hands should be austereclly clasped in front with both thumbs pointing down’, said Reverend Dr. Blunt.

‘Last year I fell in Hodgen’s well headfirst’ said Cyril Brown. ‘With my heels a stickin up, my head a pointin down. And I prayed right then and there the best prayer I ever said. The prayinest prayer I ever prayed – a standin on my head’” [Unknown]. I think that the key is having a bowed heart whatever the position of your body.

In verse 15, “the whole family in heaven and earth” refers to the saints, the saved of every age both already in heaven and those still alive on earth. I like the NIV of **Ephesians 3:15 (NIV)** “from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.” As children of the one Father, our name is “saint”.

II. The Petitions of Powerful Prayer (V16-19)

There are four petitions or requests in this prayer that are all connected like four parts of a telescope. One request leads to the next one which leads to the next one, which leads to the next one. Warren Weirsbe summarizes the petitions in this prayer like this: “[Paul] prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to ‘apprehend’ (get hold of) God’s great love, which will result in their being ‘filled unto all the fullness of God.’ So, then, Paul is praying for strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness.” [Warren Weirsbe, *Be Rich*, page 83-84]. Let’s look at these 4 requests

A. A Petition for Strength (V16)

The key phrase in verse 16 is “inner man”. The Bible seems crystal clear to me that we are three part beings. **1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV)** “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The spirit is that part of us that gives us the capacity to know and have fellowship with God. The soul is our personality – mind, emotions, and will. The body is our “earth suit” that houses the soul and spirit while we dwell on this earth. Here, and in several other places, the Bible divides man into two parts – the inner man and the outer man. The inner man is the soul and spirit and the outer man is the body. Paul makes it clear that the part that is most important is the inner man. That inner man is the focus of his prayer. We live in a culture that puts all the emphasis on the outer man – the body. We often obsess with exercising that outer man, face lift him, tan him, color his gray, tuck his tummy, dress him in the latest fashions and soak him in the Jacuzzi. But **2 Corinthians 4:16 (NKJV)** says “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” The body is to be cared for because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit and because it houses the inner man, but the inner man is of infinitely more importance than the outer man. The outer man (in spite of all that we do) is going downhill every day, but the inner man should be getting better and better looking and stronger every day!

Notice the strength that Paul is praying for. We are not talking about just enough strength to squeak by; we are talking about an amazing, more than enough strength. He did not say “out of the riches of his

glory”; he said “according to the riches of His glory”. “Out of” speaks of portion; “according to” speaks of proportion. If you found Bill Gates lost wallet and returned it and he gave you a reward of 25 cents, that would be out of his riches, but not according to his riches. Our God is omnipotent and the strength he makes available to us is without limit. The Greek word translated “might” is the word we get dynamite from. It has the basic meaning of being able or capable. How much strength is available to us? All that we need to be capable of accomplishing all that He sets before us to do for His glory!

Notice that this strength is through the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. Every demand on us is in reality a demand on the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and He is fully able to meet every demand! We don’t work up the power to obey and glorify God; He sends down the power through His Holy Spirit! Our problem is that we often fail to live with a constant awareness and dependence on the indwelling Holy Spirit. We know that He dwells in us with our heads, but in our daily life we act as if it is all up to us. A person who obeys and glorifies God by trusting the Holy Spirit to give them the strength to obey and glorify God is a person who cannot be explained. When people look at the church and see the lives transformed, families put together, sacrifices in giving and going to share the gospel, an unexplainable love and forgiveness toward those who have wronged them, and the only explanation is the strength God supplies, then God is glorified. Adrian Rogers used to say, “If a church is not supernatural, it is superficial.” If you are struggling in the Christian life and living in defeat, pray in faith that you would walk trusting in the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in your inner man to live a life of obedience that glorifies God.

B. A Petition for Surrender (V17a)

You may say, “I thought every true Christian has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them”. That is true, but that is not what this is talking about. The word translated “dwell” here means “to settle down and be at home” in our heart. That involves as an act of faith and trust in Him making a total surrender. The only way Christ is at home in us is when we are totally surrendered to Him. Christ’s throne is not a duplex. Only one can reside on His throne and that is the one called in Revelation “the King of kings and Lord of lords”. A paraphrase of this verse might be, “That Christ may be enthroned and completely at home in our surrendered heart.” The only reason one would not do that is because we don’t trust Him. Sin and rivals for our ultimate love and affection is discomfoting to Him and He cannot settle down and be at home in us. You don’t tip your hat to Jesus; you bend your knee. He died to claim us as Lord and He lives to control us as Lord as we in faith surrender to Him.

C. A Petition for Security (V17b-19a)

Only secure Christians consistently glorify God and we are secure only when we are rooted and grounded in his love. When we feel that we have to earn His love and acceptance, then we are serving Him with a selfish motive. He uses a metaphor of a tree and a building. The stability of a tree in a storm comes from its roots that go deep into the ground. The more that we comprehend and accept His deep, deep love for us, the more secure we are in life’s storms. We know that this One who loves us so much has allowed the storm for our ultimate good. The word “grounded” speaks of a foundation for a building. In the same manner, a building on a strong foundation is unshaken in the storms that beat on it. Our security as individuals and as a church comes when we are rooted and grounded in His love. In verses 18-19a he gives more detail about the comprehension of this securing love. It is a paradox. He prays that we would comprehend it in verse 18, but in verse 19 he says that it passes knowledge. Notice the details of this love that we are secure in:

1. The Width of His Love

It is wide enough for Jesus to say in **John 6:37 (NKJV)** “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” His love is wide enough to include all who come to Him. No one who comes to Him for salvation will be cast out.

2. The Length of His Love

That refers to the duration of His love. It began before time when **Ephesians 1:4 (NKJV)** says, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before

Him in love”. This love that began before time continues through eternity. *John 13:1b (NKJV)* “...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

3. The Depth of his Love

We see the depth of His love when we see how far down He reached to rescue those who were dead in trespasses and sins. *Philippians 2:6-8 (NKJV)* “⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.”

4. The Height of His Love

He stooped down to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins and look to what heights He lifted us. *Ephesians 2:6 (NKJV)* “and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus”.

When we are secure and rooted and grounded in His love, then we naturally love others with that same love. *Romans 5:5b (NKJV)* “...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “It is when you get to doubt the love of God that you grow hard and cold. But when you are fired with the love of a dying Savior who gave Himself for you, you feel as if you loved every beggar in the street, and you long to bring every harlot to Christ’s dear feet. You cannot help it. If Christ baptizes your heart into His love, you will be covered with it and filled with it.” [2200 Quotations, pages 122-123].

D. A Petition for Saturation with God (V19b)

There is no way that we can fully comprehend this side of heaven what it means to be filled with the fullness of God. The word “filled” means to be saturated with and controlled by. This is more than just elevated language that has no practical application. *Colossians 2:9 (NKJV)* “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” In Christ is the fullness of the Godhead. *Colossians 1:27b (NKJV)* “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.” When the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) fills us then we are filled with all the fullness of God. This is the equivalent of praying that we will be filled, saturated, and controlled by the Spirit of Christ. We cannot be filled with the fullness of God when we are filled with self. Our goal is not to have the fullness of God and none of self. The whole Trinity is involved in a life that glorifies God. Here in 3:19 we are to be “filled with the **fullness of God**”. In Ephesians 4:13 we are to come to “the stature of the **fullness of Christ**”. In Ephesians 5:18, we are commanded to be “**filled with the Spirit**”. If we would live in a way that consistently obeys and glorifies God, we must be empowered with His strength, surrendered to Christ’s Lordship, secure in His love, and saturated with God’s fullness.

III. The Praise That Concludes Powerful Prayer (V20-21)

I will never forget one Sunday night in May of 1974 at the FBC of Donelson, in Nashville just after I had preached my first sermon [it was really pathetic] and we were leaving for Texas for seminary in a few days, that a precious lady, Barbara Penley, came up to Kathy and me and gave us verse 20 as a theme for our ministry. We have experienced this verse in the 40 years since then. Paul builds this verse precept upon precept:

He is able
He is able to do
He is able to do all that we ask
He is able to do all that we ask or think
He is able to do above all that we ask or think
He is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think
He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!

John Newton wrote these words:

Thou art coming to a king

*Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much*

Your capacity to be successful in giving glory to God is unlimited because it is the God that we seek to glorify who gives us the power to do what we've been placed here to do. There is no obstacle so high, no problem too deep, and no difficulty too wide but that He is able to go over, under, around, or through! Never forget that everything over our head is under Jesus' feet!

CONCLUSION

This is Paul's prayer, my prayer, and hopefully your prayer for our lives and this church. And as God (who is able) answers it then we will have unexplainable live and God will receive glory in His church!