

How to Pray for One Another, p. 2

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Bible Text: Ephesians 3:14-21
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Ephesians 3. You know, when you are the preaching pastor in a church, you come to the pulpit a lot of Sundays not 100% and the doctor just recently put me on steroids for a bad foot. You know, some of the funniest things are things that simple country folks say and when I was growing up, if there were folks who were known to have a drug problem, maybe they lived in a certain place, you know, somebody in my family might say, "They are on the dope." Have you heard that? They are on the dope down there. Well, I'm on the dope today, that's all I can say. I don't think it's altering me mentally, it may be, but it is sure messing with my body.

But a week from tomorrow, Steve and I are flying out and doing the conference for pastors in London that we've done for many years. We have an exciting opportunity in India. We're going to be meeting with the leader of a ministry there that has many many years of proven service there to see if we want to connect and co-labor there with them, and then visit our work in the Philippines. I have never been there and it's probably the most solid, most advancing, most blessed work our missions program is a part of. Tim is working in the Philippines. We have a Bible college there and I thought, "I at least need to see it." So I'm going to go and do some preaching there and do a lot of Q and A with those guys, and I knew before I got on that plane in a week I've got to try to get this foot better and he said, "Well, we need to start these steroids and get that in your system." But somehow it feels like it is affecting my throat. I don't know how. My voice, I'm kind of having an allergy thing in my throat. So anyway, I'll do the best that I can and we'll get through it together, all right? And pray for us on our trip. Somehow when Brother Steve arranged these flights, he's got us flying into South Korea twice and so it's not the best place to be right now but we are. I'm not worried about it. I'm not concerned about it but we do covet your prayers.

But as Paul is going to show us in this passage, you might say there are primary prayers that Christians ought to be praying for themselves and one another, and then there are secondary prayers. The secondary prayers aren't wrong but as I study through this afresh and anew, I realize how often, how prone or predisposed we are to get the secondary prayers as the primary prayers and the primary prayer as secondary or forget it altogether. So as Paul has been writing to the church at Ephesus and he has unfolded these glorious dimension after dimension, precept after precept of all of God's love for us in Christ Jesus, and he wants you to just keep grasping more of it and grasping more of it. By the

way, saints of God, if we faithfully preach through this word until your dying days, you need to be learning grander, more wondrous, deeper dimensions of all this love God has for you through his Son, Jesus Christ.

So he has unfolded how God did all of that and what salvation is, then you get to chapter 2 and he starts weaving in, "Okay, now here is how this works out. Here's how we ought to live if we are people saved by and apprehended by this glorious love salvation that God has for us." So he gives this prayer that he is praying for the church at Ephesus which should be a basis for our prayer for one another and for our church family, and it harmonizes beautifully with the priority of prayer that Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount, we call it the Lord's prayer but it's really a model prayer to remind us of how we should focus our minds and the things we should be praying for.

So here Paul goes, we are down in Ephesians 3, beginning in verse 14. There will be a little review and then we will pick up new material. Paul says,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom [the whole or] every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

Let me just stop right there as we are reviewing. First of all, notice the passion of his prayer. He says, "I bow my knees." Now, the Bible does not tell us that bowing on your knees is essential to prayer but it is mentioned often and Jesus would bow on his knees and pray from time to time. There are times when I just feel like I have to bow before the Lord. Now, but what it does show is the weightiness. Paul says there is something weighty on my heart, there is something heavy, something highly important, and I am praying about it. Now here's the interesting thing: Paul is writing this from prison. He was literally locked in prison and he does not ask them to pray for his predicament, he does not ask them to pray for his circumstances, he does not ask them to pray for his release. As a matter of fact, that's not in his mind.

Now, I'm sure he did pray those things but those are not priority prayers. They are important but they are secondary prayers. Here he gets to the more priority of prayer and when you get down to verse 16, he talks about, "I want you to know this power of God and be strengthened in the inner man, the spiritual man. I want your spiritual man, the man in you, the new you that lives inside of you, to be strengthened and to be stronger." So he prays for the inner man as his priority and not the outer man. Now, the outer man needs to drink fluids, the outer man needs to eat foods, the outer man needs to be clothed in clothing, the outer man needs a place to live, the outer man needs cars to drive in. It's not wrong to pray about those things but Paul is saying those are secondary things. There is something higher than that.

You know, you are a new creature in Christ Jesus. You are an eternal being and let's pray primarily for that new part of you to be strong and healthy and right and good, and then as Jesus told us on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, "Seek first the kingdom of

God and his righteousness," that is, pray for the inner man, the kingdom of God lives in you in that born-again new man in you, pray that that would be strong and then he says, "Then all these things," what you shall wear, what you shall eat, all of those things, he said, "shall be added unto you." It is unbelievably consistent how if we can walk with a decent consistency of putting these spiritual values first, the health of the inner man first, God seems to just take care of the outer man. It doesn't mean you can sit around the house and not go to work, but God just seems to take care of the other stuff when you get the priority stuff in its perspective.

So he talked about these things and we get down through, let's see, the end of verse 16 and then you pick up verse 17, and let's go on to the new material. So let's talk about here the particular petitions he's going to pray about this being strengthened in the inner man. He says there first of all in verse 17, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." The word "dwell" there is a word that literally means "to be at home."

Now, Christ dwells in our hearts at conversion. We are in Christ, that's sort of a metaphysical reality, you might say. We can't see that or touch that but it is a reality. The moment you are saved, you are in Christ and God looks at you as having the righteousness of Christ because you are in Christ. But also when you are saved, you still have to live down here in time and space history. Eternally speaking, you're already in Christ. As a matter of fact, the weighty thought is and the Scriptures bear this out clearly, you are even in Christ before the foundation of the world. You are so saved it's pitiful. You are just so secure it's unbelievable. But now you have to live your life down here as a Christian in this godforsaken world and we have Christ in us, and that is what Paul is praying for, he says, "I'm praying that Christ would dwell in your hearts." Now, he doesn't mean get converted. That has already happened, he is writing to converted people. What he means is, "I'm praying that Christ would be at home in your hearts." Now, that's different. As a Christian, he dwells in you but are you of such a temperament, a disposition, do you treasure him so that he feels at home in your hearts?

Have you ever stayed with somebody, visited somebody, and they were nice but you just didn't feel at home? Maybe you felt like you wore out your welcome a little bit? Well, that is what this is talking about. Does Christ feel welcomed? Does Christ feel at home? Or as the Bible says, is there a grieving to him as we might grieve the Holy Spirit, the Scripture says, because we are making priorities of what God says are secondary things? And sometimes we make priority of things that are not even secondary, they are sinful, and in that kind of walk, Christ is not at home.

He said, "I want you to grow so that the priority of your thinking in your heart and your life is to be strong in the inner man, in the new spiritual man, and that you put the other things as secondary because that's where Jesus is." Now, when Jesus lived on the earth, he had to sleep somewhere, he was concerned about that. He had to eat food, he was concerned about that. But those were secondary things to his Father's will. And when we walk like that, let's say this, when we are progressively learning to walk with God's priority as our priority, then Christ begins to feel at home in our hearts. It's an interesting thing.

Now, here's the thing about it. You're going to get there. You're going to get to the place one day where Christ feels fully at home in your heart. The gift is – listen, child of God – the gift is that you get to begin growing in that and learning how to walk in that now. Those who are unsaved don't even see it yet. I mean, to the unsaved man, when he looks at evangelical Christianity, he basically sees: say a prayer, ask Jesus in your heart, walk down the aisle. All of those things aren't necessarily bad, but just not enough to know you're saved. Or jump through this hoop or that hoop, get your ticket stamped, get into heaven. Now the rest of the time, leave me alone. I want to enjoy the world. Paul says, "No, that's upside down. You're putting the secondary things first. I want you to be strengthened with power in the inner man to the point that Jesus is starting to feel welcome in your heart." Now, he's never going to leave you but is he welcome there? Does he dwell there as if he is at home?

So as we grow spiritually, Christ increasingly feels at home in our hearts and we begin to feel glad that he does feel at home in our hearts. There is this joyous, welcoming spirit that we should cultivate toward Christ. So the question again from some of you perhaps: is Christ home in your heart? That's conversion. Secondly, for those of us who are saved: is Christ at home in your hearts?

I asked a number of men and thank you again for your graciousness to let me get away and study without the burdens and the regular distractions of everyday pastoring, and during my study break, I put the two conferences, one of them completely together, one of them a good start and that's just a wonderful blessing to have that already behind me. Anyway, as I contacted some of these men to preach, one of the men said, "Man, coming to your church is like being at home." He just meant your people and the love for Christ and the love for truth, I just connect with them and I love being there.

Well, that's what we want Christ to feel like in our hearts. Does he have – listen now – welcome rule of the whole house? Paul said, "That's what I'm praying for." In other words, we don't just keep Jesus in the living room, "Jesus, stay right here. You are welcome here but the living room is where you stay." No, Jesus wants to go down the hallway, he wants to be in the dining room, and he wants to be in the den, and he wants to be in the bedroom, and yes, go back in that closet, on that shelf back in the corner of the closet, he wants to be welcome there too. Paul is saying, "I'm praying that you'll keep growing in the inner man, so valuing and so making a priority of knowing Christ and what Christ wants in your life and through your life, that Christ feels welcome in the totality of your life." You know, one of the ways you can walk in this is when you regularly find those dimensions of your thinking in your life where Jesus would not be comfortable, you are immediately humbled and you immediately say, "O Christ, that's just like me. Isn't that just like me? That's why you died for me, because I'm that bad. I'm that vile. I'm that corrupt. Lord, I agree with you, all have sinned and fall short of the glory. Lord, that is just like me and I repent of it. Take your place back here in this back corner I've been keeping away from you."

Paul says, "I'm praying for the church at Ephesus, that you keep growing in the strength of the inner man so that Christ really feels at home in the totality of your life." Now again, in this earthly pilgrimage, you're not going to get there 100% but you should be progressing in this. Are you listening to me? This is why church is so important. In church life, you want to be around other people who will help you progress in this walk, other people who are serious, who have God's values, who have biblical perspectives. As a matter of fact, I almost said that's so very important. No, it's not important, it's essential. God has so ordained things – are you listening to your pastor this evening – that we are irrevocably hopelessly dependent on each other in the church. I need you. You need me. We have to have each other or this kind of sanctification and walk is not going to happen. Now, there are a lot of subsidiary points we could throw out but let me just throw this out as a thought: who you hang with is either helping you or hurting you in growing to where Christ feels at home in your heart.

Well, not only does Paul say, "I am praying in a particular way for that," and all these are interconnected together, he continues on in verse 17, "and that you, being rooted and grounded in love." These two metaphors he uses, the roots of a plant and the foundations of a house. He said, "I want this great unfathomable love that God has had for you." Now listen to me, church: if you've missed the first 25 sermons of Ephesians where we tried or I tried with the weak puny capacity and vocabulary that I have to unfold for you all that Paul said about how God loves his own children, all the love he has had for us, all he has done for us, if you missed all of that, then you're not going to really grasp what he's saying now that he wants you to be rooted and grounded in that. You see, one of the ways that you get rooted and grounded in Christianity and in the love of Christ is you must keep learning and learning and learning and learning and learning that the many dimensions and dynamics and aspects of all that is involved in his love. Listen to your pastor this evening: what you learned in vacation Bible school about the love of Christ may be true but it was not enough. You are to keep learning and keep learning and keep learning.

So he says, "So much so, I want this knowledge and treasuring, I know it and from my heart I'm beginning to treasure this unbelievable love this book unfolds and explains to me that Christ has for me." As your pastor, I want you to be so overwhelmed with this love, not your love for him, that comes second, his love for you. I want you to be so overwhelmed with this magnanimous incomparable love that there are nights when you can't sleep for joy. That's my hope as your pastor.

And I know this is a little bit morbid and I've said this to you a few times, that when you are on your deathbed, and the reason I use the phrase and the illustration of the deathbed is because when you get on your deathbed, none of the rest of it matters. Whether or not Jeff Noblit was humorous is not going to matter on your deathbed. Whether or not I was interesting is not going to matter on your deathbed. I hope I'm interesting. What's going to matter is the truth I gave you about Christ and I hope on your deathbed you may have suffering emotionally and physically, but I hope behind all of that there is an inner joy as you have learned to know and comprehend something of this unfathomable love and it gives you something that nothing else can give you. That's my joy as a pastor, to see my

people so know him and treasure him that he makes all the difference when it really matters in life.

Paul expresses it, "I'm praying you'll be rooted and you'll be grounded in this love." I think the one thing that is troublesome to my spirit and my soul is how often the church brings in a worldly type of love, a love that is built on just emotions and sentiments or sentimentality, and they call that God's love. It is not God's love. Here is one of the ways you know worldly love from true God's love, is that God's love is always in accordance with truth. It always says what's true from God's definition of moral absolutes and what's true. "Oh, but she's so sweet and she's the most loving and she's the most giving." Yes, but she doesn't walk according to truth. That's not God's love. You're just being stirred in your emotions thinking somebody is loving when from God's definition, they are really not. Love always functions according to the truth.

Now as we brought out already in the earlier part of our message and what floats throughout, permeates the entirety of the canon of Scripture, there are two things that are primary in Paul's thinking as he is teaching us on prayer. 1. Our prayers ought to be concerned with the glory of God. 2. The good of the church. The glory of God and the good of the church. We're going to talk about this a little bit more in a minute but why are those two things so primary? Because God's glory is everything. It's not everything for men to be saved, as important as that is. God saves men to glorify himself, so the glory of God is preeminent and then God saves men and illustrates his power, his beauty and his wisdom, by saving them and putting them together in local church bodies whereby they walk in this love Paul is talking about and praying about, and thus the church is the theater that shows forth to the world the glories of God by saying, "Look at what he has done to us." That is why I am so tenacious and unrelenting on us being a true church, as true as we can be. Not perfect, you never will be as long as I'm your pastor or as long as you are a member, but we can be striving to be true to the book to the extent that we are an accurate portrayal, we are showing a true projection as God's theater into the world of what God is like and what God can do, and that gives him glory. So Paul is wrapped up in this glory of God, the maturity, the truthfulness, the rightness of the church. The glory of God and the good of the church.

John 17:4, for example, "I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast sent me to do." So what does Jesus say? Jesus says, "My compulsion, my passion was to see that my Father was glorified by doing the work he called me to do." What is the work God the Father told God the Son to do? Build the church which he did on the cross and he is continuing to do through the agency of the Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel. So he says, "I did that work and I am continuing that work because that glorifies my Father." And then 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." We want God to be made much of. John 10:15, Jesus says, "I lay down My life for the sheep." The sheep is the church, those Christians. 1 John 3:16, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Who is the brethren? The church. So Paul is praying, "I want you to be rooted and grounded in this love so that as you grasp more fully God's great love for you as a sinner and all he has done for you, that grows out to a

bigger component of you saying, 'Oh, and as God changes me, people see that change and as he changes me and I fellowship with other people, a local church who are changed, and people see that change and that new capacity to love that only God can put in people, then God is seen through us and God gets glory.'"

He continues on, elaborating, building upon this where he says in verse 18, "may be able to comprehend with all the saints," notice how he elaborates on it, "what is the breadth and length and height and depth," verse 19, "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." So first of all, he says he wants us to grow that we are increasingly grasping with our minds and then treasuring with our hearts the boundless dimensions of Christ's love for us. "Comprehend" in this verse is the idea "to grasp with the mind."

He uses those four descriptives, the breadth, the length, the height and the depth. There have been a lot of commentary writers who try to say, "Well, this is what he means by height and length and this is what he means by depth." I don't know. We don't know but what he means is it's limitless. It's boundless. It knows no end. But by staying in the word, staying under the preaching of the word, we can continue growing and grasping this boundless love but we will never fully comprehend it, at least not here. As a matter of fact, I'm convinced you will not fully comprehend it in heaven because it has an infinite value and when you get to heaven you will be perfected but not infinite. Perfectly you will begin taking in this infinite love God has for you and it's going to be, the pleasure, look, all the pleasures that all men have ever enjoyed in the world cannot even be compared to one moment of pleasure we will have in the presence of God, taking in the infinite love he has for us. Now, we are tasting it now, we're seeing it now but as Paul says, we do see through a glass dimly. But we are seeing it. We are tasting it now but we are not fully swallowing and taking it in and we just can't handle it yet but we are tasting it now. We are tasting it and that's what Paul says. "I'm just praying that you as a church can increasingly grasp, know and treasure this boundless love God has for you in Christ Jesus."

Are you listening to me? If you, Grace Life Church, are growing increasingly in knowing and grasping and treasuring that kind of love, then faithfulness to church takes care of itself. Being a person who does not get in conflict and cause trouble in the church takes care of itself. Loving your wife like Christ loves the church takes care of itself. Submitting to your husband as your head, ladies, takes care of itself. Why? Because you are overwhelmed with this love he has had for you and you are very glad to walk in what he has called you to be and do. Giving the tithes and offerings just takes care of itself. And that's why I've told you before and I said it again this morning, I hope as a pastor I've grown out of browbeating you into something. I want you to love him so that you do do something for him and you enjoy doing something for him. So while we will never comprehend it, we can comprehend some of it. While we will never know the full, we can know a part of it. It's so true in my life and I hope it's true, if it's not true in your life, don't tell me, but I hope it's true that as we journeyed through Hebrews, as we journeyed through Luke, as we journeyed through Ephesians, as we journeyed through Hosea and all the books I've preached through, that you would say, "Do you know what? I know him

better and I treasure him more, especially his love for me." It certainly has been true in my life.

Now again, all of this, it's already fully ours and you might put it this way, positionally we are in Christ and this great great love is fully ours, it's just that we don't get it yet. It's like a baby born into a family with immense wealth and an unfathomable inheritance, he just doesn't grasp it yet. He's a little baby. Well, that's what we have, this incredible inheritance, this wealth of divine love that has been particularly and personally showered on us as individuals. Do you not get that's undeserved but it is irrevocable because you are his? He's just got this infinite God-gusher of love pointed toward you and you're a big dummy and I'm a big dummy and we are at the end of that big gusher and we don't even quite get what it is and Paul says, "Boy, I'm praying, though, that you will begin to get more of what that is. The glories of it, the wonders of it, the depths of it, the heights of it, the width of it, the length of it, that great great love." When we were saved, the genetics of all that Christ is is ours, the spirituals genetics. The DNA came in, if you will. We need to keep discovering it and living it and enjoying it and walking it out.

Paul is writing this like we have this infinite storehouse of treasure and you only have so much time and so much energy every day but every day we open the door and we walk in there and think, "Oh my goodness," and we grab a great big armload of it and we come out and enjoy it that day. And the next day we go in again and we think, "Oh my goodness," we get more of those wondrous glorious treasures of the love of Christ and all that it means and all that it's about and all the dimensions of it, and we take it out and for all eternity you'll keep going there and you'll never exhaust the treasure. Never exhaust it.

When I was just a little boy, I had an aunt who had a real true old-fashioned featherbed. I mean a real true one. It was about 64 inches deep, at least it seemed that way to me. It was the most amazing thing. She would fluff that thing up and then I would lay on it and it would completely envelop me, and it was just a wonderful thing. You just felt like, "Ah, I'm just secure forever right here." Well, that's pretty much what Paul is praying. "I'm praying that you will just be overwhelmed, swallowed up grasping and treasuring this great great love God has for you." Now listen to me, a Christian that is learning to grasp and treasure the great love of God for them through his Son, Jesus Christ, is a good, faithful, humble, repenting, trustworthy, you can count on them kind of Christian. That's why he is praying this. If you want to pray for your pastor, I know you do, ask God to make me capable of unfolding for you and revealing to you the great love of Christ for you. It's the best thing I can do.

Verse 19, the last part, "that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." Now, got to be careful here. When you receive Christ Jesus – now listen to me – you have all the fullness positionally. You now hold a place, a fixed unchangeable position of being completely righteous as God is righteous. That's why your salvation is so secure. Jesus Christ so saved you, he imputed into you his very righteousness and you stand before God with the righteousness of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Positionally, the fullness of God is yours now but there is a sense in which in time and space history, that's the eternal perspective of who you are in Christ. In time and space history, you live a life where you

are learning to live more full of God, more like God, if you will. This great excellence, this supreme dignity of who God is, should be more of who we are.

Some ways the Bible phrases this. Ephesians 4:13, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man," that's what he's talking about, "to the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." Until we are godlike or Christlike in the totality of our life, he says, "I'm praying you keep growing." But notice Paul's priorities here. Notice the progression, I should say. First of all, I want you to be slain, overwhelmed, overcome as you grasp how much love he has for you. Then I want you to live your life out with the fullness of God in you. You're not going to live that life out until first you are overwhelmed and humbled by the love he has for you, because if you are not overwhelmed and humbled by the love he has for you, do you know what you're going to do? You're going to go out in life and you're going to think, "Well, that's not fair. That's not right. That's not equal. Where is my part?" But a person that is walking in the overflow of being overwhelmed by the love of Christ, they can walk out in the world and say, "It doesn't matter if that's fair. It doesn't matter if that's equal. I can't get over his love for me so I want to love others and I want to serve others and I want to be kind when others have been unkind to me." Don't you wish we could walk in that perfectly? One way to walk more perfectly is to more grasp the love God has for you already.

Romans 8:29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." That's what Paul is saying, the fullness of God. We are to keep growing and one day God is going to make it to where we become like Christ. Now, we will not be little Jesus but we will be like Christ in the fullness of the holiness, the moral, ethical, high dignity and excellence of who God is. I wish we could walk that out perfectly down here. We don't quite get there, well, we don't get close there, but we will get there one day. But our goal, our pursuit, our aim is the fullness of God because that's going to be ultimately my destiny anyway. He's my Father and when I grow up, I want to be just like him.

Look, being one of God's – I'm using Paul's terminology he has already given in Ephesians – I'm one of God's called ones, I'm one of God's chosen ones, I'm one of God's predestined ones, I'm one of God's elected ones, and so the promise that one day I will be perfected and be like God in heaven, is irrevocable. Listen, his love will make sure you get there. His love will make sure you get there.

In 1 Peter 1:16, the apostle writes, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," quoting God. God said, "I want you to be full of me. I want you to be like me." So how honest am I to be in this life? As honest as God is honest. How pure am I to be in my walk? As pure as God is pure. How loving am I to be toward others? As loving as God is loving. How faithful am I to be? As faithful as God is faithful. How holy am I to be? As holy as God is holy. Now, we don't pursue this to gain salvation, we pursue this because we have already gained salvation in Christ, that's secured and settled, and I begin to be overwhelmed by this great love he has for me so I want to live this out in just gratitude and just appreciation for this great love he has had for me in Christ Jesus.

So Paul is praying these particulars. He said, "I want you to be such a person that Christ increasingly feels at home in your heart. I want this great, great, unfathomable, incomparable love God has for you in Christ Jesus to take root and form foundations in your heart. You just can't get over it. I want you to increasingly grasp, increasingly grasp and treasure the boundless dimensions of that love. And I want you to keep growing until you become just completely full of God." That's what he's praying.

Now he says, "This isn't dependent on my prayers, this is dependent upon God's power." Look at verse 20, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." Yes, we should pray these things and these are the priorities of prayer in the Christian life. Make sure that we don't let the secondary prayers get above the priority prayers. This is the kind of praying we need to be praying for each other but he said, "God's power is going to see that it all gets accomplished."

Now, again, as we sort of circle the field and I'm about to close, Paul doesn't mention food or clothing or a job or my marriage or a lot of things, things you should and must pray for, because he is staying at this time and at this point with the priorities in prayer. And all that, again, centers around two things, in our prayer life, what two things should be woven into everything, and all of our praying life should be inseparably connected to these two things: the glory of God and the good of the church. The glory of God and the good of the church.

Now you say, "Well, God is doing a lot of things in the world other than his church." Yes, but overwhelmingly so, the pinnacle of what God's power, wisdom and beauty can perform is his church. That's why Paul concludes this section with a verse we stand on as a local church and that verse is Ephesians 3:21. Look at it in your Bible, "to Him be the glory," there's the glory but where is the avenue, the theater, the instrument through which he primarily wants to bring himself glory? "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus." In this case, he puts the church on equal footing with Christ himself. Why? Because the church is his body. The church is his bride. God's glory through Christ Jesus is inseparably connected to God's work through his Son which is the church, building the church, keeping the church, regenerating the church, sanctifying the church, and one day glorifying the church.

Well, how good is this for? "Pastor, if I'm committed to the glory of God and the good of the church, how long does this last?" "To all generations even forever and ever," he says here, "Amen." No wonder Paul says this is the priority of prayer.

So you might summarize all that Paul has said this way, Paul says, "I'm praying that you'll know in your minds and treasure in your hearts and walk out in your life the unfathomable love God has for you in Christ, and when you do that, you will be filled up to more of the fullness of God and this brings God glory both now in time and for all eternity." This is a good outline of how we ought to pray for one another.

When you are praying for your children, oh, my goodness, of course we pray for all kind of particular and specific things, and of course we should, but ask yourselves: is my priority like the word's priority? I want my children to do well in 101 different ways, just like you want your children to do well but let me ask you something: do you want more, that they would learn to know and treasure the love of Christ? Because all the rest of that stuff will fall in place if that is right. All the rest of that stuff will get in order if that's right. I'm committed with all my heart to help you get them there so make sure they are here to hear me yell at them every week. Help them.

Here's the most unbelievable thing: as we have seen our children grow up and our teenagers, sometimes I can talk to one of our 14, 15, 16 year old kids and they get this stuff better than a lot of 60 year old deacons in Baptist churches get it. All of this foolish nonsense that we have to make Christianity some sort of goofy gimmicky game in entertainment to get kids to buy into it. That's a lie from hell. Let me make that clear: that's a lie from hell. They can get geometry, algebra I, II, III, VI, whatever it goes to, trigonometry, physics, chemistry, they can grasp the glories of the doctrines of Christ and of God, amen? Give them the truth. Give them the truth and watch the Spirit take that truth and meld it into their hearts. And moms and dads, when they get that, they are going to love you deeply. They are going to honor you fully. Are you with me, church? No wonder Paul said this is the priority stuff right here and the rest of it just kind of falls in line.

I'll never forget when I was converted at age 19, no church background, quasi-agnostic, stupid, God saved me in my car that night. One of the first things I did was hug my mother's neck and tell her I loved her. Before that I couldn't remember when I had done that. All the other stuff gets in place when the priority things are right. And all of God's people said? Amen. Isn't the word of God amazing? Who could have written that but God?