

Series: "Ephesians"

"The Most Powerful Prayer!"

Ephesians 3:14-21

April 20, 2008

Pastor Corey Sateren

SLIDE –



Let me just take a moment and address both you who are in our congregation and you who are watching at home by way of television today that this broadcast will be our final broadcast. We are sorry to inform you that our funds have run out for our broadcasting so we will have to stop with our service over the CW - channel 15 in the LaCrosse area. We have so enjoyed for the past year being able to reach many of you by way of television and thanks to all of you who have faithfully watched us and worshiped with us at Bethany Evangelical Free Church! IF you want to continue worshiping with us let me invite you to personally attend our services here on County Rd. B just across from the old Valley View Fitness Center at either the 9:00 a.m. or the 10:30 a.m. service. You will be welcomed with open arms and heart!

SLIDE – praying hands vs bottle

ILL. -

Have you ever thought of what you would do if you were walking down a beach and spotted a bottle? A unique bottle! A bottle that had a genie inside of it! And a genie that would grant you three wishes! What would you do? What would you wish for?

There was a young, single man walking down the beach and he comes across such a old bottle. He picks it up, pulls out the cork and (poof) out pops a genie. The genie says, *"Thank you for freeing me from the bottle. In return I will grant you three wishes."* The man says, *"Great! I always dreamed of this and I know exactly what I want.*

First, I want one billion dollars in a Swiss bank account." Poof!

There is a flash of light and a piece of paper with account numbers appears in his hand. He continues,

"Next, I want a brand new red Ferrari right here." Poof! There is a flash of light and a bright red brand-new Ferrari appears right next to him. He continues,

"Finally, I want to be irresistible to women." Poof! There is a flash of light and...he turns into a box of chocolates!!!

We know that there are no genies in bottles that can grant us wishes. But, we do have the awesome privilege to bow before our Heavenly Father in prayer to ask Him for amazing things that will bring Him glory!

SLIDE – "The Most Powerful Prayer!"

Now this section of Scripture that we find ourselves in today as we travel through the book of Ephesians is set here - I believe - as a cheerleader - an encouragement - a rally so that we who read it and come to the end of it can only gasp and sit down in a chair and be in awe. It is truly an astounding set of verses.

With that - we better read it and see what I mean...

Take your Bibles, please and open them to the New Testament book of Ephesians 3. If you didn't bring your Bible with you today I would encourage you to reach forward and grab that burgundy colored Bible and turn to page 1158. (1st Service ~~Back in~~ Video Café – Raise hands for a Bible and someone will come by and hand you one! Keep it up!)

SLIDE –

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole 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...

SLIDE –

...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 saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

SLIDE –

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, for ever and ever! Amen.

Now this is the second prayer that Paul prays for the Ephesians (and really for us too). It is a little bit different and has a different emphasis than the first prayer so let's take just a moment and see the comparisons...

SLIDE –

Paul's Two Prayers In Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-23	Ephesians 3:14-21
Revelation	Realization
Enlightenment	Empowerment
Light	Life
<u>Know</u> what I am	<u>Be</u> what I know
<u>Know</u> the power of God	<u>Use</u> the power of God
Power working <u>for</u> me	Power working <u>in</u> me
Me in Christ	Christ in me

My encouragement to you is to learn them both and pray them both for others and for yourself! Make them a habit of your prayer life!

SLIDE – Some Things We Need To Observe

1. Paul's mind wandered when he prayed!

That's good news, isn't it?! My mind roams all over the place when I pray! I will begin praying for one thing and all of a sudden I think about and start praying for something completely different and about half way through praying for that new item I'll realize I didn't finish praying for what I originally started praying for and so I'll go back to it...and then another thought will pop into my mind and...does that ever happen to you?

If it does, don't be too hard on yourself - even the Apostle Paul had this problem.

He began to share this prayer in 3:1 only to get sidetracked by his busy mind regarding the mystery of the Church.

Look at it...3:1

SLIDE –

2. The prayer is Trinitarian!

That is just a fancy word to mean God; Jesus; Holy Spirit!

v. 14 - Father

v. 16 - Holy Spirit

v. 17 - Christ

SLIDE –

3. The focus is on our "inner man"!

...not our bodies! So many of our prayers have to do with our health and physical needs. Paul is concerned more with how we're doing on the inside! We need to take a closer look at what the content to Paul's prayers is! When he prays he more often than not deals with the spiritual condition, not the physical; the internal, not the external.

SLIDE –

4. The emphasis is on the need for power!

The word "power" occurs 3 times in our section with the words 'strength' and 'work' occurring as well.

And just a reminder to us...this is a prayer for empowerment so that we might use the divine power that we have access to!

SLIDE –

5. Paul 'knelt' for this prayer!

READ v. 14 -

Posture in the Scripture was never a matter of indifference.

Each position of the body meant something!

- Standing - typical; reverence
- Hands upward - dependence on God
- Bowing the head - spirit of submission
- Eyes look to heaven - help comes from God
- Face on the ground - awe!
- Strike the breast - unworthiness
- Kneeling - humility and honor

Paul is kneeling showing honor!

For you and me we need to realize we are never given instruction as to the posture of our prayer...just be sure you are respectful in whatever posture you take. I often pray walking around! (Reason: so I don't fall asleep!)

SLIDE – Some Things We Need To Request

Now at this point there are four requests that are made that I would suggest you highlight or underline or as I've done...put a box around so you can identify as you look at the text! And they all are offset by the word "THAT".

SLIDE – Look at the text...vv. 16-20

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 saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—**that** you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

The first request we should be praying for is...

SLIDE –

1. Strength - (*kratos*) - ruling power

We get our word "aristo-crat" from it. To rule over! And we get this strength from His "Power" (*dunamis*) - active power. We get our English word "dynamic" or "dynamite" from it! It has the idea of 'alive' power.

Do you ever feel spiritually weak? I know I do. Many of us seek strength through friends or family members. We often wait until there is no one left to talk to before we turn to the Lord.

Friends, only the Holy Spirit can strengthen our spirits. He is the one who refreshes, revitalizes and empowers us. And He does it on the inside where God dwells and works. Even though our bodies grow weaker, our inner being can grow stronger. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." As our bodies grow old and frail our spirits can grow strong in the Lord.

The second request we should be praying for is...

SLIDE –

2. Dwelling - (*katoikeo*) - settle down and live

We get our word "home" from it!

I.e. - feel at home; take your shoes off; put your feet up; etc.

Does Christ feel that comfortable in you?

ILL. -



In his booklet My Heart Christ's Home, Robert Munger pictures the Christian life as a house, through which Jesus goes from room to room. In the...

- Library - which is the mind
Jesus finds trash and all sorts of worthless things, which He proceeds to throw out and replace with the Word.
- Dining Room - which is our appetites
He finds many sinful desires listed on a worldly menu. In the place of such things as prestige, materialism, and lust He puts humility, meekness, love, and all the other virtues for which believers are to hunger and thirst.
- Living Room - which is where we fellowship
He finds many worldly companions and activities.

Christ goes from there into the Workshop where only toys are being made; to the Closet where hidden sins are kept and the owner hesitates to open. He can't bear to have Jesus look inside. But Jesus does come inside and cleans it up so He can settle down and be at home!

Do you have some rooms in your life that you haven't allowed Jesus into? Let Him to come into every area of your life and do some cleaning with his penetrating holiness and matchless grace. Jesus dwells in our hearts through faith. Our faith in Him means that we invite Him to do some housecleaning. We put our faith in Him so that He can do the needed renovations in our life.

The third request we should be praying for is...

SLIDE –

3. Grasping - (*katalambano*) - to seize

Verse 18 continues by laying out four dimensions of God's love.

How do you measure the immeasurable?

- How wide is it? It's immense. It reaches to all people, nations, sins, needs, cares, and situations.
- How long is it? It existed before time; it will never end and is unconditional.

- How high is God’s love? It’s high enough to take those who are saved to heaven.
- And, how deep is the love of God? It’s deep enough to rescue the worst sinner from the “uttermost to the guttermost.”

The early Christians spoke of the love of Christ as demonstrated on the Cross. The Cross touched the earth, pointed to heaven, and is stretched out in both directions. How much does He love you? Look at the Cross and you’ll know.

The beginning part of verse 19 seems like a contradiction. How can we know the love of God that is beyond knowing? How do we know the unknowable? Humanly speaking, we can’t. This kind of knowledge is not intellectual, but divine...it comes with salvation. Paul is praying not that we know the love we have for Jesus, but that we would know the love of Jesus. When we contemplate His love, it will overwhelm us and blow us away. The only way to really understand it is by experiencing it for ourselves. If you don’t understand God’s love this morning, it may be because you haven’t personally tasted it yet. (Psalm 139...)

The fourth request we should be praying for is...

SLIDE –

4. Fullness - (*pleroma*) - filled to the brim

We see this in the last part of verse 19: “*that you may be filled to the measure with all the fullness of God.*” How do you contain the uncontainable? This is an amazing thought. As believers we have been created to be the containers of God. He desires to pour His life into ours and fill us until we’re full.

“Filled” comes from a word that means, “to be overflowing, like a cup that is running over.” It means total dominance, to come to the place in your life where you are totally overwhelmed by God’s presence. It means giving everything to God and leaving nothing of your self.

We tend to measure ourselves against other people. Paul tells us that the measure is Christ. When we have reached His fullness, then we will have reached the limit. In one sense, we are already full in Christ. Positionally, we are already complete in Him, but practically, we need to live it out by having strength, depth, and comprehension. The resources are there we just need to start using them.

Do you experience the fullness of God on a regular basis? That’s what Paul prays for believers. If you don’t live with this kind of fullness, try praying this prayer for yourself and for others. Are you willing to say to the Lord, “Lord, fill me up so that my life is all you and none of me?” I often want some of the Lord and some of me.

Think of an empty cup. How do you get all the air out of it? There’s only one way...by filling it with something else. How do we remove the weakness, the sin, and the junk from our lives? By being filled with the fullness of God.

SLIDE – **Some Things We Need To Relish**

And now we arrive at the final 2 verses!

After contemplating the thrill of experiencing God’s power, plumbing the depths of God’s love, trying to grasp all that He has for us, and striving to be filled with the fullness of God Himself, Paul bursts forth into a glorious doxology of praise.

Look at the five traits of God...

SLIDE –

1. **He is able** - There is nothing God cannot do
2. **He is able to do** - God is active in our lives
3. **He is able to do immeasurably more** - His desires are greater than our requests.
4. **He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask** - He listens!
5. **He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine** - God reads our thoughts! (Ps. 139)

The phrase translated “immeasurably more” is the same word for the abundant grace of God in Romans 5:20: “...*But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.*” It literally means, “Superabundantly, with more added to that.” That’s like saying more than more than. God has enough power to do immeasurably more than we can ask or think with more added to that.

Verse 21 shows us that the glory of God is displayed in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Paul sees the church as the means by which much glory can be given to God. In other words, as we utilize the power given to us, God receives the glory.

O. T. People! Moses; Elijah; Elisha; so many!

A little girl turned to her mother after church and said, “Mommy, the pastor’s sermon was confusing today.”

The mother asked, “Why is that, honey?”

The little girl answered, “Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?”

“Yes, that’s true,” the mother replied.

“He also said that God lives within us. Is that true, too?”

Again the mother replied, “Yes, that’s true.”

“Well,” said the little girl, “If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn’t He show through?”

Pray:

Church; family;