

## Much More

Eph. 3:14-21

Series “Ephesians”

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According to my study and research this week, there are over 650 prayers in the Bible. It is a recurring theme. The first-time prayer is mentioned or lauded to is in:

**Gen. 4:26b** – “...**At that time** (Cain killed Abel and Eve becomes pregnant again, giving birth to Seth) **people began to call upon the name of the Lord.**” - that’s prayer!

And from that time on, we see a theme of prayer woven throughout the pages of scripture. There are what we would consider “famous prayers” like Moses’s prayer-song of deliverance in (Exodus 15) after God has destroyed Pharaoh’s army via the crossing of the Red Sea...or we have Solomon’s prayer when he dedicates the Temple in (1 Kings 8) and you recall the glory of God, like a thick cloud envelope the entirety of the Temple.

The psalms are of course filled with prayers...you make your way to the New Testament and just six chapters into the very first book (the Gospel of Matthew), we have Jesus’ teaching people how to pray and giving us what we refer to as *The Lord’s Prayer*.

The Bible is FULL of prayers and in the passage, we are looking at today in our study in Ephesians...I believe we have the greatest prayer in all of scripture.

Now, that’s a statement, but after reading this, thinking on it all week, studying it in depth – I’m ready to stand by it! I believe of the over 650 prayers in the Bible, (Eph. 3:14-21), is the greatest.

I’m calling the message this morning: **Much More**

**Eph. 3:14-21** – “**For this reason** (Now, remember, he started this thought last week c/f Eph. 3:1 and then he went on a tangent about this revelation he was given along with a responsibility– we worked that out last week! Paul then picks back up from his original thought – “for this reason” – who we are “in Christ” and what we have “in Christ” (Chapters 1-2) – because we’ve been raised up with Christ AND brought together and made one in Christ) **I bow my knees before the Father,**<sup>15</sup> **from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,**<sup>16</sup> **that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**<sup>17</sup> **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**<sup>18</sup> **may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,**<sup>19</sup> **and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.** (that’s MUCH MORE)<sup>20</sup> **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly** (that’s MUCH MORE) **than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,**<sup>21</sup> **to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

Now, this prayer serves as a transition if you will between (Ch. 1-3 and Ch. 4-6).

Ephesians is a book that is deeply theological (this has been the space we have been in since we started the book), but it is also extremely practical. Starting next week and through the rest of the book, Paul takes us from the heavenlies right back down here to earth where we have to live out what we know to be true.

- We go from a focus on what we believe to a focus on how we behave...
- We go from an emphasis on our identity to an emphasis on our practice...
- We go from the theological to the practical...

This prayer is what takes us there. Now, before we get into the specific requests Paul prays (which is the meat of this passage and where we'll spend the majority of our time today), I want to highlight something very important as it relates to the subject of prayer.

We won't stay here long, but I want to make two points very quickly that I think will help us as it relates to prayer. First, I want you to take note of Paul's posture and second, his perspective.

First: **Paul's Posture**

**Eph. 3:14 – “For this reason, I bow my knees...”**

Paul recognizes what he has “in Christ” – all the spiritual blessings mentioned in (Eph. 1) – chosen, adopted, redeemed, enlightened, sealed, enriched...he then considers NOT just what he has “in Christ”, but what all God has done “in Christ” – this is (Eph. 2) – God has made him alive – given him a resurrection AND “destroyed the hostility” that once existed between Jew and Gentile – he brought the two together and made them one “in Christ” – i.e. he founded the Church.

Next, Paul considers the stewardship he has been given to explain this mystery of the Church to the world and to preach the gospel...and his heart just about bursts within him.

He can't help but fall on his knees in worship. Paul KNOWS what he has in Christ and because of Christ, and look at what it does?!

It drives him to his knees...it humbles him. This is a posture of submission...and again, of worship! You bow before people you serve. You bow before those who are greater than you...more worthy than you.

And Paul's physical posture is expressing something that is deep within his heart.

There are all kinds of ways that we are taught in the Bible to pray:

- Some prayed standing...
- Some prayed lifting hands...
- Some prayed, laying prostrate on the ground...

- Some prayed sitting down....
- Some prayed walking around...

Paul prays this prayer – KNEELING. I’m reminded of the quote by pastor and author, **Mark Batterson** (In his book, *The Circle Maker* – it’s all about prayer):

**“Physical posture is an important part of prayer. It’s like a prayer within a prayer. Posture is to prayer as tone is to communication. If words are what you say, then posture is how you say it...physical postures help posture our hearts and minds.”**

For what it’s worth, I think Batterson is right. As you consider your prayer life, consider you posture. When’s the last time you physically bowed before the Lord in prayer?

I understand there are some that physically can’t bow before the Lord. I’m not talking about that person...I’m talking about the person who can!

Paul’s physical posture represented something MUCH deeper going on in his heart. He was overwhelmed by the blessings of God that he kneels.

I’m telling you, try it this week. After you get through reading in your time alone with the Lord, take a massive pillow and just bow before the Lord, praying in what you just read.

Second, notice: **Paul’s Perspective**

**Eph. 3:14-15 – “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named...”**

“The Father” – Now, Paul has been writing about some pretty heady things. It would have been easy for him to write here, “For this reason I bow my knees before God, the King of the universe...the all-sovereign one.

But, instead...he chooses to refer to God here as “Father”. 42x in Paul’s 13 letters, he refers to God as “Father”. It was a “go to” title for Paul to use and attribute to God.

Now, we know from Jesus’s teaching that this was a revolutionary concept – God, as “Father”?!

Part of what made the teaching of Jesus so powerful was he came on the scene describing God in this way. Most people thought of God:

- as distant...
- he was far off...
- aloof...
- impossible to please...

But Jesus taught differently. And I have to believe that once Paul was converted and began to understand who God was...once he listened to the disciples praying the model prayer, the first two words of that prayer had to have captured his heart, “Our Father.”

Remember, Paul was a Pharisee. His whole life revolved around observing the law, participating in the religious ceremonies of the day, knowing the Old Testament scripture backwards and forwards. He better than anyone knew the weight of trying to please God through the law.

Learning that God was a “Father” who cared for him personally and desired to meet his needs...it had to be revolutionary to his heart! It had to grip him!

And if we will think about it long enough, it will grip our hearts as well.

I get that you may not have had a good, earthly father. I get there are some whose dads were absentee...they never came through on their promises...saying, we have a “Father who cares” just doesn’t do it for you.

Let me remind you though, our heavenly Father, he’s not like earthly, deadbeat dads.

- He is perfect...
- He doesn’t make mistakes...
- He keeps all of his promises...

He is ALWAYS there for us...ALWAYS protecting us...ALWAYS meeting our needs.

Our God is a “Father” who cares! I’ve got to believe this perspective Paul had allowed him to keep his sanity while in prison.

You know, it would have been very easy for Paul as he was going through a tough time to think that God had forgotten him...forsaken him...neglected him.

Isn’t that how we think sometimes? God, if you were really a Father that cared then:

- I wouldn’t be going through this struggle...
- I wouldn’t be going through this trial...
- My back wouldn’t be up against this big of a wall...
- I wouldn’t be facing these kinds of odds...

I want to remind you this morning, as Paul reminded the Ephesians, don’t forget or simply look over the fact that if you are a Christian, you have a God who is “Father” and a “family” (v. 15) in the body of Christ that loves you – as part of the family of God, you’ve been named by him...you are his!

So, before we ever get into the prayer itself, I think a big take home for us is to reflect on Paul’s posture – his heart wasn’t just bowed before the Lord, his body was...AND Paul knew that in God, he had a “Father” that loved him and was committed to meeting his needs and the needs of the congregation in Ephesus.

It's in THIS context, Paul prays – and we will see in what he asks God for why I’m calling this the greatest prayer in the Bible.

There are three specific requests here and they build on top of one another. We’ll look at them one at a time, and I’m telling you, if we will pray for ourselves AND one another what Paul prays here for the believers in Ephesus – and God answers our prayer...the world better lookout!

The first prayer request is for: **Sanctification**

**Eph. 3:16-17a** – “that according to the riches of his glory (How many know God is rich? And while he gives and gives and gives his riches never run dry...never run out!) **he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,** <sup>17</sup> **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...**”

At its root this prayer request is for sanctification. He asks the Lord to strengthen the believers with power through his Spirit - we'll see the Trinity in action in these verses!

Paul is praying to God, asking the believers to be strengthened by the Spirit, **SO THAT** Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith.

Now, the word I want us to focus on in this request is the word, “dwell”. It means to settle down...to reside...to inhabit. Many times, in the New Testament its simply translated as the word, “lived”.

**Illus. Places I've lived** - I've lived in several places. I grew up in Bossier City, Louisiana – lived in two homes there. In one, I shared a room with my brother...then we moved to a different home when I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and I got my own room. I took the smallest room because my parents made a deal that whoever took the smallest room would get a waterbed! I thought those were so cool!

Then I graduated and moved to Arkadelphia, AR. And I lived in a dorm room, on the third floor of Conger Hall. Then I *Three Jefferson's* moved on up to the upper classmen apartments and then to apartments off campus as a junior and senior.

When I moved to Dallas, I moved in with a family, and I lived in their upstairs as I was an intern and going to seminary – I didn't have a Trowbridge Village!

After a while, I moved into an apartment with some buddies and my room was in the garage (tell story). THEN Debbie rescued me...we got married and we lived in several apartments, and then bought our first house. I think we moved six different times in Dallas before coming to Houston.

If you remember our first year, the home we were living in burned down Palm Sunday weekend! Then we moved into another home before landing in the home we're in now.

What's the point of all of this? The point is I dwelled in all of these homes for different seasons of my life.

- It's where I had all my stuff...
- It's where I ate my meals...
- It's where I laid my head...

Until I got married, I could put anything up on the walls wherever I wanted. In college, I had a big poster of the wrestler Goldberg on the wall! I lived there...dwelled there...my friends knew this was my home.

What Paul is praying for in this first request is that Christ would live in us. It's this idea that he is moving in and taking up residence. He's the keeper of the house, and there are new house rules!

He can go in any room he wants...he can take down anything on the wall he wants...he can put up a wall anywhere he wants!

This is the prayer request, and Paul says in order for this to happen the Holy Spirit of God has to strengthen us in our inner being – that's another way to say, our soul.

I say this is a prayer for sanctification because this is very much a part of salvation. When we ask Christ to come into our lives, he takes up residence. It's true, if we are believers in Christ, he lives in us. He dwells in us.

BUT...it is also true as the theologian, Charles Hodges writes, "The indwelling of Christ is a thing of degrees."

Meaning: Christ may indeed live in us, but that doesn't mean we have given him access to every room in the house! It doesn't mean that we have given him permission to come in and fix it up the way he wants it! The idea is:

- "Don't go in that room, Jesus. What's behind that door (my "secret thought life" – my porn addiction), that's not for you to see or mess with."
- That leaky roof up there...it's just drip, drip, drip of anger and bitterness over what someone did to you – "I like that roof, the way it is, Jesus – don't try to fix that!"
- Or we say, "You can have your way over here, Jesus, but this "junk drawer"...this closet over here, it's mine. You don't get access to how I spend my money in this drawer...you don't get access to what I do over here and what I accumulate in this closet. You can live here...stay here, but don't snoop around!"

What Paul is praying for here is that when Christ comes to live in us, he gets access and permission to every room in the house.

Again, he is not just living here, he is ruling here – this is what sanctification is. It's the process of being made holy and becoming more and more like Jesus, and in order for this to happen, Paul knows that we must be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in our inner being.

This is a "have thy own way, Lord" prayer. I am the potter; you are the clay. Mold me. Make me. Form me. Set me apart and make me your own – Paul knows we'll never pray this apart from the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Second prayer request is for: **Comprehension**

**Eph. 3:17b-19a – “that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,<sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...”**

The greatest prayer in all of the Bible – Paul says, I want the fullest sanctifying effect in my life as possible. Christ living in me. And then he asks that we would have strength to grasp and understand the love of Christ.

The role of the mind plays such a significant factor in our walk with Christ. Paul knows this...it’s why he spends the first part of this letter (the first three chapters) talking about our “identity” – this is who you ARE “in Christ”, regardless of how you think or feel.

He calls on believers’ time and again to remember...he prays that they would be enlightened...here, it’s the same thing. He wants believers to fully comprehend...wrap their mind around the love of God.

Now, this is a prayer request right here. I don’t know of a “bigger ask” in the Bible than this? That we would be able to fully comprehend the love of Christ...and he adds it’s breadth and length and height and depth!

That’s like me telling you to go to ocean and bottle it up! Is this even possible? Afterall, the love of Christ (v. 19) “surpasses knowledge”.

Well, Paul is probably exercising with the imagery and stretching the verbiage here – I don’t think we could ever fully comprehend the love of God (we’ll have all of eternity to try!), but what a wonderful prayer request and ambition to have.

“God, I want to know...fully understand...grasp your eternal love.”

? – I wonder what would happen, if we started praying this?

Think about the messes we get into because of a failure to really know and understand the love of Christ:

- this is where all our insecurities come from...
- this is why our pride gets in the way...
- this is why we don’t forgive...
- this is why we have in us a spirit of competition and comparison...

If we prayed this – “God, help me...give me strength to fully comprehend your amazing love...and God answered it even to a small degree, it would radically change our life.

Again, these requests are circular...they ride on one another. The more we understand God’s love, the greater our sanctification will be...the greater our sanctification is, the more we will be praying and working to fully comprehend God’s love.

To know the breadth, length, height, and depth of God's love – just put your mind on the cross and leave it there!

Commentator, **David Guzik** – “**God's love is wide enough to include every person. God's love is long enough to last through all of eternity. God's love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner. God's love is high enough to take us to heaven.**”

The cross is “exhibit A” of the immeasurable love of God.

**Illus. Good Friday** – Isaiah 53 – focus on the cross

If we fully comprehended the love of Christ, I'm telling you it would solve everything!

- Giving would increase...
- Serving would increase...
- Worship would raise the roof...
- Love for one another would increase...

And it's very interesting here that Paul says here in (v. 18) that we would “comprehend with all the saints” – there is an element to this, that we will never fully understand the love of Christ apart from the family of God – we grow in this together.

I grow in my comprehension of the love of God as we gather together. As I hear your story of the faithfulness of God, and you hear my story of his love toward me – it grows our love.

HUGE focus on the “Church” in the book of Ephesians. We'll see in (Chapter Four) we don't reach maturity without one another and we will never fully understand and comprehend the love of God without one another – this...it's special!

The first request is for sanctification. The second is for comprehension. The third request is for: **Expansion**

**Eph. 3:19b** – “...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

This is a beautiful prayer right here...that we would be filled with ALL the fullness of God.

The only other time in scripture this phrase “fullness of God” is used is in **Col. 1:19** – “**For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.**”

Paul is asking God to fill the believers in Ephesus, and this is a prayer we need to be praying for ourselves AND one another that we would be “filled with the fullness of God” just as Christ was the fullness of God – this is prayer to be overwhelmed by God...totally consumed by God himself – what a “ask”!

**Illus. Eating a meal** – “may my capacity be as great as my opportunity.”

It's a prayer of expansion – “God, fill me with yourself to the fullest! I want to be as much like Christ as possible. Expand my capacity for you and fill it with yourself!

If we pray like this, look at what it leads to – what I'm calling the “MUCH MORE” zone  
(SHOW IMAGE)

Do you know what the “MUCH MORE” is? It is:

1. **Maturity** – growth – this is what sanctification is and leads to
2. **Power** – if we comprehend the love of God, it will lead to power in our lives – power to say “no” to sin and “yes” to the Holy Spirit
3. **Life** – “filled with the fullness of God” – that's LIFE and life to it's fullest as Jesus promised!

Think about what the Enemy comes against us with!

- He tries to discourage us. What's the answer? “MUCH MORE” praying! (sanctification, comprehension, expansion of God – maturity!)
- He tries to defeat us. What's the answer? “MUCH MORE” praying! (sanctification, comprehension, expansion of God – power!)
- He tries to create distance between us and God? What's the answer? “MUCH MORE” praying! (sanctification, comprehension, expansion of God - LIFE)

MUCH MORE praying...leads to our MUCH MORE God answering! And that's the final verses of Eph. 3

**Eph. 3:20-21** – “**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,** (always thought this verse had to do with achieving dreams and accomplishing great feats – well, it does in a way. If your dream and feat is sanctification, comprehension and expansion – God is able to answer that prayer and more! He is the “MUCH MORE” God) <sup>21</sup> **to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

Will you pray with me?

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