|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topic | Praying for Spiritual Experience |
| Reference  | Ephesians 3:14-21 |
| Date | 31 July 2016 |
| Speaker | Bro Arnold Lim |

Love is related to emotions that is why the symbol of love is the heart. We all have fuzzy feelings in our life at certain times that we remember throughout our lives and they come in big gushes that we feel so overwhelmed. We remember these movements when life is difficult and we need passage of time where we need our friends and families support, all these little spurts remind us we are loved and that is what living is all about. Paul says that

 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

**18** may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

**19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge

What is true on an emotional level with our parents, children, close friends, people that we circle ourselves that it makes life meaningful? It is true on a spiritual level. The tragedy is that most of the time we if we are honest with ourselves don’t feel the love of God.

Do we feel His love or to be exact do we have a spiritual experience. We all have emotional experiences but do we have a spiritual experience?

There are three things in spiritual experience:

* What is it?
* Why do we need it?
* How do we get it?

The prayer is divided into two parts. We have two prayers.

**16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that

God is a gracious God. In His glorious riches he wants to strengthen us. Implication here is that we are weak. We need that power and it is an internal strengthening not an external strengthening. It is through his spirit in your inner being and the Greek rendering of inner being simply means your heart, you feel it, it is an emotional response and he repeats that and he says,

**17** Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

There is an emphasis on a few things.

1. Emphasis on our heart. We get to our heart and it says two things: Christ is intertwining in our heart, through the Holy Spirit works to our heart. Just because you get emotional when you get to church does not mean it is spiritual. What is the danger of having altar calls every week and the risk of being judgmental and you play the piano and the music and drams people come in front to get their high and they feel it and they get their rush and they feel good but does that mean they had a spiritual experience. When we are in a crowd and the crowd roars and the crowd raises their hands and you get caught in it you get emotional. In the midst of this it is very easy to get an emotional response, you went to church and the band starts to play the music and you feel something and you had a bad week, you feel an emotion. The question of not whether that emotion is real or not, the question is what happens when it is over. When the doors are closed and everyone goes home and you leave the church where does it lead you and Paul tells us this. What he is saying is, *a spiritual experience brings you closer in your relationship with Christ*. If it does not lead you to that it is not a spiritual relationship. It is just an emotional thing. Paul begins the prayer with this word, for this reason and in the beginning of chapter 3 he says the same thing, for this reason. So the immediate context he ties it with that. At the end of that section before you begin the prayer, he says this in verse 13, I ask you therefore not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you which are your glory. Paul was suffering because he had been trying to bring Jews and gentiles together in chapter 3, probably he is in prison but we are not sure and even though he is suffering he has joy. In the midst of all this wrestling he finds rest in the presence of God. That is what he is saying. So it is not just the emotional high, the emotional high has to lead to something and it leads him to Christ, he rest in Christ.

Our actions without any meanings are empty words unless we mean it. We need to know God but the danger with us is that especially in what we will call ourselves evangelical church that knowledge has no value unless it is translated into an emotional experience they have to tie.

Any spiritual experience will involve an emotional response. The word must have an emotional response. Our little gestures have an emotional response. When we sing those words in church and when we pray it what the text is saying, if you don’t feel anything then you really got to ask yourself why you are singing it because if you don’t it makes no difference.

Ephesians 1:

**14** For this reason I kneel before the Father,

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

He didn’t say renew your mind. He says eyes of your heart. Interestingly the preceding verse he said, God give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, meaning if you have a revelation of your mind, if it doesn’t go to your heart and the eyes of your heart meaning your eyes are open, your heart is open, it is not close and shut that revelation has no value. So we can almost say an emotional response requires a deeper understanding of God. A spiritual experience gives us rest because in this world we wrestle all the time. Some of us might be wrestling with problems at work, with struggles with sin, with uncertainties. We are probably living in the most un-safest time in human history. Against this backdrop against this uncertain life God calls us to find rest in him and to experience him. A spiritual experience draws us close to God, it makes you feel something, and how we express that feeling that is up to us.

Why do we need it? Beside the fact that we need to rest when we are wrestling in life and look at the whole prayer, you find one word repeated again and again and it is **power** and it is like a glue that holds the text together. God is blessing us with the spiritual experience beyond just giving us this comfort and rest and here is this word we all need and it is this word “**power**”. It is something that all got to tap to because if we are to survive this world, if we are to be witnesses for Christ, if we are to take up our cross and when persecution comes and to stand for him. There is power in love. Everyone have their understanding of the power of love.

There is a problem with human love, it is tainted. Some of us unfortunately go through it with spouses who are not very loyal. There are spouses who are cold, some of us go through that. We have children who are not appreciative. Some of us who are older generation feel alone and worse there you feel backstab. Love can very quickly turn to hate and we see this again and again and the church has this problem. A lot of people are hurt due to betrayal, so people get cynical, love is cheap, and talk is cheap. At that moment when you we are in love, you meant it, you felt it, you had an emotional rush but later on it went cold and betrayed. We have siblings who love one another genuinely, later they don’t talk to one another and that is so true. Love and hate are two sides of the same coin and because of us God beckons us to a higher love. God invites us to embrace this love, we may have been a Christian for a very long time, you may not even be a Christian, this is God’s greatest blessing to us and God invites us this morning to soak in it, to bathe ourselves in it, to immerse ourselves in it, a love so deep and pure. The love of Christ compels us. He does many things to us.

We will not feel the love of God when we don’t know God. God puts on us a new self. God not only take a sinner and rescue from sin but put his love and cloak in his love. He gives a new purpose. He gives us honor and His riches were put on us, not because we worked at it but because of His grace. Why do we really need it: There are three key reasons to it:

1. It renews us during times of difficulty.
2. It is our main source of strength in fighting sin.
3. It encourages us to reach our true potential for God.

At the end of Romans chapter 8 Paul tells the Roman Christians about the Holy Spirit. He talks about although outwardly we are growing inwardly we are renewed. He tells us we are predestined. He tells so many wonderful things of it that at the end of chapter 8 Paul writes this in response to all he realizes God has done. God has given him the Holy Spirit, God has predestined him, He can call God father. God’s love is so much on him he says

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A38-39#fen-NIV-28155a)] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we read that we understand why in Ephesians 3 in the midst of suffering he can say the same thing. How does this work out for us. When you have a bad day in the office, you got backstab then you pause and say, thank God I have my family because that gives us strength. Because with that it helps you go through the suffering and now that is on the emotional human level. Imagine the power of that when you unleash it on the spiritual level. It makes us more than conquerors and when you really grasp it you become like Paul, no bomb, no terrorist attacks, no intimidation, no personal insult, injury, illness, cancer, bankruptcy, isolation, humiliation will prevent us from the love of Christ and when we get there the power of God is with us.

Elvis Presley wrote a song,

This is living

Full of fun and free

This is living

That's the life for me

It's good to laugh and sing

Don't worry about a thing

Wear a happy smile

Cut loose and run a mile

If you relax and just enjoy it all

Life has got to be a ball

He has got an emotional experience. But it is not a good song because this kind of happiness is not going to last. The second last stanza says,

Don't wanna settle down
I gotta move around
I gotta lot of time
I'm gonna wait and find
The kinda girl who's heart is restless too
The kind who feels the way I do

We all seek that happiness and joy in all of that and if this is living then we are in for a lot of pain. Now there is another song, it is by Hillsongs Young and Free.

The sweet embrace, the lovely taste, I taste and see I'm under grace, the place to be
It means I'll never need an umbrella
I'm cool in the cold and the hot weather

It is Romans 8. He says that he has tasted grace, whether whatever the weather is in his life, whether there are storms in his life or whether things are going sailing he has tasted grace and he knows what is to live. I wish this could be our song. The singer is a person who is not depressed on a routine of work and he goes on.

See the sun now bursting through the clouds
Black and white turns to colour all around
All is new, in the Savior I am found

This is living now
This is living now

He has got a perspective of life.

You take me higher than I've been before
It's Your perfect love that sees me soar
God your freedom is an open door
You are everything I want and more

Christians should be happy as Paul with all the sufferings was happy. The author of this song is saying even though storms come he is cool. He is happy because he has got grace. He has found the love of God. God greatest blessing to all of us is that we are meant to be joyful and happy. God’s love helps us take through times of suffering. Suffering is tied to another thing called sin, because when we suffer too much and Christian life becomes a life of guilt and pain and there is a lot of place for feeling guilty of the sin and carrying the cross but life is not all about wrestling, you rest to wrestle and if we are depressed about our Christian life, you feel bitter, you feel guilty that you are not a good Christian, you are trying to fight sin, you are not willing to tell people what you are going through and inside you feel like you are an hypocrite. The text tells us that the main impetus to fight sin and we all need discipline. We all need to fear wrath of God who hate sin, knowing God leads to experiencing God, experiencing God leads to desiring God and when God so satisfies you, the things of the world don’t and fighting sin becomes easier because God is your all in all.

Kim Phuc got burned in Vietnamese War when she was a little girl and years later scars can still be seen on her back, they are very painful. She describes this as her daily painful experience. She says, “*I got burned and I became ugly. People would see me and they would turn away. It filled me with hatred, bitterness and anger.”*

When the communist took over the government they used her as a main propaganda too. She was paraded around everywhere to show the evils of the American government. So she was full of hate for Americans who did this for her. She was very full of hate for herself. She was insecure. As she was studying medicine, one day in the library in communist Vietnam she comes across a book and the book is about Jesus. There in communist Vietnam without evangelism explosion, without pastors and preachers, without a church, in the most unlikely circumstances the Holy Spirit coming down to Vietnam to a girl that was so full of anger and hate she makes a confession of faith and that in itself is remarkable and after she managed to find asylum in Canada and years later she shares her love for God in an article. This is the power of God’s love. It is a remarkable story and she shared in one interview how she said she was so ugly, she was so insecure she felt no one loved her but then she realized God loves her. So when scripture says the love of Christ has power, it means that love of Christ has power. It changed her. She got in contact with the old photographer who shot her picture, she forgave all those who caused her trouble, it made her what she was with daily pain but this is what the love of God does, it goes beyond that because after that she learns as the song goes, this is living. Because when you embrace this verse,

Eph 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Eph 3:18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We tend to have our faith in our brains but the moment it goes into our heart and our eyes are open here you start to live and breathe and stop thinking of yourself as a victim because many of us see ourselves as a victim. We have to live life for Christ and be happy, why because that is our destiny that is our predestination that is our will. We are not to be ordinary people, each one of us are meant to be extraordinary and extraordinary can come in many ways. When God puts in adventure he does strange things to you. God takes us unto roads which we don’t expect and life begins to breath and you find joy in so many things and that is why he then ends the prayer,

**20** Now to him who is **able to do immeasurably more that all we ask or imagine**, according to his power that is at work within us,

**21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

*Gal 4:20-21*

Do we believe sincerely God is able to do more than we ask or imagine. How can we have this happiness and joy? We think sometime that we have no joy in our life and God is punishing us. We have to kneel before the father. We kneel before God when we have problems. If we want to have power we have to pray on our knees.