

Book	Ephesian – Study 10
Topic	The Issue of Prayer
Reference	Ephesians 3:14-21
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The usual idea about prayer is that there needs to be a purpose. Most of us will pray when we need help and that's the same all over the world. In Chapter 1, we have the prayer for power. Now in chapter 3 we have got the prayer for spiritual transformation, the power to change.

Ephesians 3:14-21 (ESV) 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 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, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

It is a complicated prayer. We need to break it down to understand it. When you look at the prayer like that, you need to ask yourself, what is Paul asking to pray for? If you know what he is praying for then you can work backwards. So if you look at this particular prayer and you can see in verse 19, ***you may be filled all the fullness of God.***

That is the purpose. The end result is that you may be filled with the fullness of God. God is going to be able to do that, because he is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

Moses was on the right track but not quite far enough and Moses was in trouble when people of God rebelled and then God has decided that they cannot go to the promised land. It is right after the episode with the golden calf and he was really upset and he didn't know what to do, so he really wanted God to reassure him and so he asked

Exodus 33:18 (ESV) Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

This prayer doesn't quite go far enough. What Paul is describing is that he wants to be. You see, if you look at Jesus, in him the whole fullness or deity dwells. That means all of God, all the essence of God. So you have been filled with him who is the head of all rule and authority.

Colossians 2: 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Colossians 1:18-20 (ESV) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of

God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus has the fullness of God. So if you look at Jesus, you are looking at God. He has got all of God packed into a six-foot human being. Now if you look at that

*Romans 8:29 (ESV) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.***

So if the son has the fullness of God and we are to be conformed to the image of the son, so we are actually asking that we will be filled with the fullness of God. So basically what Paul is asking is that we will be like God. We are destined for glory, we always worship something, we always admire something and we don't admire people who have done wrong obviously because there is nothing for you in it. There is something that you want inside a personality, we are always looking for glory, something higher than ourselves. All of us are looking for that. We are actually designed for that. There is something about our DNA that makes us want to latch onto something. So when you are actually filled, the metaphor is you take a cup and you fill it, the cup has got God and you fill it, so that you are like God. So therefore filled with the fullness of God means moral excellence, perfection, power, glory, all that God is we are. That is what actually moving us. The negative image of God is like, don't do this or that.

We don't really want to be like God as we are recovering sin addicts. First of all, we have got a wrong opinion of what God is like. Secondly, we also are recovering sin addicts. Even though we are saved by grace, we are slowly changing. The other thing is that,

Romans 1:21-23

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

So we actually look and honor the princess, the kings. Everybody else, actually they are all below God but we are actually latching onto them.

So how do we actually become?

It is actually when you are praying for good health, you are praying for all those things, actually those things are actually peripheral, they are not as important. If you are asking God for things like just passing the exams, my relationship go well, for my health, for the people around me. If you are always doing that, you are actually missing of what it is. If you have the fullness of God, because we are all created in the image of God, and actually we are supposed to be like God, we are supposed to be filled with the fullness of God, that's what it is like.

Moses asked God to see his glory, we should be asking to have the glory of God, to have the fullness of God in our lives. That's why this is a very-very bold prayer. This is a prayer that shakes heaven and say, God I want you, nobody else but you. That's what this prayer is about. Now you if

you are going to God in prayer and praying that, your father's heart will bleed for you, he will grant you this prayer. It is a very powerful prayer.

Now how do we do that? Why should I be filled with the fullness of God?

*Ephesians 3:14-19 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before **the Father**, **15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named**,*

Why do you think he starts of his prayer, why should we will be filled with the fullness of God and then up there he starts to pray about the father for whom every family on heaven and earth is named? What is in the name?

When your parents named you, they named you for a particular purpose. Your name reflects their character. For example, when you actually misbehave when you are young, your father and mother will be very embarrassed, sometime they will say, don't call yourself my son, because you actually embarrass me. Because the whole idea is that, the father's name goes down to you and you reflect the father. Now when you say, I am praying to the father and it says from **whom every family in heaven and earth is named**. The name is a reflection of a person's character. So if you bear your father's name, you bear your father's character.

So when you are actually saying, I am going to pray to the father from whom every family get his name, that means we must all reflect the character of the father. So you are asking, papa I want to reflect you, your father will be over the moon. So you are asking God for something that he actually is very passionate about which is his name. So because we all bear his name, we can actually confidently pray. The name is very-very important.

So when we pray we pray according to purpose.

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

So therefore when you look in all of us, in whole of humanity, we are like diamonds. We have got all sorts of facets; we are all reflecting God. We are all made in the image of God. That is a vision of creation.

How can I be like God?

You have to pray for two things

1. That He give me the power to be like Jesus
2. That He give me the power to grasp the love of Jesus

How do we get to these two?

*16 that according to the riches of his glory **he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,***

So the first thing is to be **strengthened**. We always think about power as something muscular, but power is reflected in other things. For example, you got great power, some people think that if you pray for people, everybody fall down and this is power, or the power to give birth to a child, great endurance and strength. Different aspects of power. Power in a couple who support each other through suffering. That's all different manifestations of power. Now power always is given for a purpose.

There are two aspects. The first one is that

*16. that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being¹⁷ so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—***

The second aspect is that you understand what is your breadth and height and length and depth of Christ's love.

So the first part is about the reality of Christ presence. The first thing that you pray is about the reality of Christ, wherein Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. The heart is the, whenever the Bible talks about heart, it is a center of your being. It doesn't mean it is your muscle that beats. It is a center of your being. So in the center of your being, dwell. Dwell is a housing metaphor. So what he is saying is that, he is going to pray that in the center of your being, the Holy Spirit, which is where your moral intellectual life, feelings, emotions, will, thought, understanding, Christ is going to be established there. That's Christ is going to be the controlling factor in all aspects of your life. It is like under new management; it is under Christ's management. So that is what he is asking to be prayed for.

*Galatians 4:19 (ESV) my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is **formed in you!***

So he is actually asking that Christ is actually formed inside you.

*Galatians 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me**. And the life I now live in the flesh I live **by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

So basically Christ is coming in to take over. It is not like some of us live as if we are dating Christ. When Christ moves into your house, it is like getting married and after a while getting married you feel like strangling your husband, it is a fact because of all the things that he does that you don't like. So there is conflict involved. It is a continual presence. We have independence, self-determination and self-fulfillment, but when Christ comes in you have got dependence on Christ, determination by Christ, fulfillment by glorifying Christ. These are the things that we are not used to, we are not used to and we don't want that to happen, so therefore in order to experience a reality in his presence, we need to ask for the power to do that. That Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith, because we are sin addicts, we don't really want Christ to come in. The first way for Christ to come in,

Philippians 1:21-26 (ESV) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between

*the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25 **Convinced of this**, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.*

So there are two options in his mind. To go and to be with Christ is better or to stay and then the process goes through and he decides that I need to stay for the glory of God in ministry. The word used there is convinced. There must be an intellectual process by which you are convinced. So it takes faith, belief that remaining glorifies God. So you need to change convictions, but the trouble is there is conflict in our lives. If you look at Romans chapter 7

*Romans 7:14-16 (ESV) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. **For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.***

*Romans 7:21-25 (ESV) 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 **Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?** 25 **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin*

The Lord delivers you but the fact is that you actually have great conflict. So what is happening is that the Holy Spirit does two things. It actually changes your desire, you rather to go shopping, the Holy Spirit moves you to serve other people, we start of we have to become, you want to. So there is a process of your mind being convinced that serving others is better than going shopping. So that process must take place, because it doesn't take place magically. I mean if you pray 'Oh God let Christ dwell in my heart and suddenly your heart automatically moves and you take the label and then you serve. It doesn't do that.

The Holy Spirit works is that it works in your mind to change convictions. So maybe you shop a bit less and you serve a little bit more. **Why?** Because there is a change in the way you think. So the change in conviction requires strength to believe the whole set of different values. It is like me looking at the salad. Salad is good for you, I know it is good for me, I am convinced, I should have it, I should lose weight but you think you will eat your salad. There is a step between knowing what is good to convince, but the salad tastes awful. So the difference between conviction and action, is another step. The Holy Spirit is involved not only in changing conviction but there is a step between I know what is good, I am going to eat the salad, that's the difficult part. So because we are recovering sin addicts we always believe Christ way is the best way but to reject my old ways and accept his way is going to be extremely different. There is a difference between conviction and action and that requires spiritual strength. That's the gap. So you not only need conviction, you also need spiritual strength.

So when we actually pray, you pray you know Jesus is strong enough to support you and you are going to act by faith, you are going to do that, but you can't do that because there is a big jump that, you can either do two things,

1. Screw up enough courage.

2. Or you can ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit and give you the actual courage to take that jump. This prayer is about that. That little strength in between, conviction of mind and actual strength to carry it out. You can't do it on your own. It is a supernatural act, because we are sin addicts. We are impossible. So therefore it requires the spirit to do that.

So Christ will dwell you in the word and his spiritual strength is given by according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

If Christ wants you to change, he will give you the power. Why it is according to riches to his glory? Some of us think that God is so stingy, he won't let us change, he frustrates us, but you are talking about God who is rich, can do far more than we can actually imagine. The trouble is that; our view of God is so small.

So another example of how this actually happens is wrestling with God. Jacob was going to meet Esau, who was going to kill him because he stole his birthright. So Esau is coming with 300 men and he is really upset with Jacob and Jacob is a real swindler. So therefore he sends some gifts to plicate his brother, but he is not quite sure whether his brother will come and kill him and his whole family or his brother is going to reconcile with him. So therefore he sends his wife away and what he does is that he is left alone. He spent some alone time and then a man wrestle with him until the breaking of the day.

That wrestling match is actually a metaphor about the life of Jacob. All his life, he has been wrestling with God. God wants him to do this, but he doesn't want. He is trying to snake God, trying to get all sorts of things away from God and try to get ahead in life and cheat everybody else, because he is a bit of a snake. In the end he realizes when he is weakest, when his hips get dislocated and when his hips get dislocated he changes technique, he starts to hang-on to God. Instead of fighting God, he hangs on to God. God I am not going to let you go. When he does that, his life is changed. Now when you are praying that Christ will dwell in you, there are two things you can do, you can do like Jacob and you are actually fighting God, God tells you I want to do more Bible study, I want you to go to Gamma, and you are saying, I can't do that it is too boring, and you are struggling with God all the time in trying to overcome God. In this story, the breakthrough comes when you actually let go. You allow God to come into your life and you hang on to him and the trouble is, the only time you do this is when your hip is broken. When we go through a difficult time in our life then instead of trying to wrestle or work against God, you say God I give up. That is when the spirit takes over. That is when you wrestle and you actually win. That is what happened to Jacob.

Jonathan Edwards describes the relationship with God,

Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness

It is basically experiencing. So you are actually asking God to help you experience him. Being convicted that he is good, that he tastes good and secondly having the strength to be able to do as he wants you in your life.

SECOND PART OF THE PRAYER REQUEST

18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The whole idea is to comprehend or grasp, the word is to be ambushed, to be surprised,

1 Thessalonians 5:4 (ESV) But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

God expects you to use your mind and your emotion. The paradox is to know the unknowable

19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge

This is actually a conundrum. How can you know something that is unknowable? That is a fact, you know, why because you are finite human being, one tiny little person here and all your life you only know one person. It is almost an impossible task to know God, but you can begin to know.

How do you know all that?

Knowing all that requires something to change. For you to understand the height, the breadth and depth of the love of Christ, that means Christ died for you, he loved you on the cross, you sit down there and okay he loves me but you don't feel it, you don't see it, you don't smell it, you don't love it. If you see and smell and love it, it will then change your conviction and it will change the way you live. That is what Paul is asking. Paul is asking that we understand the height, the breadth and the depth of the infinite love of God.

How do we do that?

There are two conditions that you need to have before you can experience Christ's love.

- Rooted in his love
- Comprehend with all the saints

These are the two prerequisites for you to understand and experience God's love in your heart. Now rooted and grounded are two metaphors. Rooted is an agricultural metaphor, which means it is like the plant which is rooted and the other one is a foundation, which is grounded. So every time you have something and the wind blows, you always go back to your roots. The roots keep you upright. The roots support you, everything that you build in your house, you build on top of the foundation. That is where everything emanates from.

Judge Albert Wong is actually a judge who climbed up very high position in Canada and he loves Canada, his new country. He is from Malaysia. He went to Canada at the age of 13. He is an immigration judge where he actually swears people into becoming citizens. The thing that actually change his mind about Canada was the foundational event. He outlook on Canada as rooted on one event. In this event, he came to Canada at the age of 13, his parents were poor. So they manage to get onto a train to take them into their destination. Because they were so poor, they

suddenly looked at the Canadian dollar to the ringgit in those days was 6:1 and they went into train and they saw the menu. Everybody is multiplied by 6, which they cannot eat. So the first day, they sat down there, they went back to the car, after that didn't eat anything. Second day, they went and the whole family ordered one soup and it comes with free crackers and it cost 6 dollars.

The two brothers had the crackers and two sisters had the soup, that was it. Next day, they came back again to the dining car, they were going to order the same soup again and suddenly a plate of chips and fish came, another plate of steak came, they were shocked, how to pay for this and then they asked, we didn't order this. They said, the other table ordered for you. This event so touched their hearts about Canadian people that out of their hearts of love and generosity from strangers and he never forgot that event. He never forgot it for the rest of his life and everything that happened to him in Canada later on, it went back to that foundational event. It is interpreted, even if somebody did something bad to him in Canada. That is what Paul is trying to say, we can only understand the height, the depth and the breadth of the love of God if you are rooted in a foundational event of love.

What do you think is the foundational event of love in our lives?

The cross is the event. Every time you go back to the cross, and you interpret all the events that happened in your life, then you actually feel the love of God. That's how it works. Foundational events use to interpret what life is about. So if you have anger every event will be interpreted in the light of anger. If you have got fear, every event in the future will be interpreted as fear. If you have got a lie, everybody will be interpreted later on like that.

So your foundational event, as you grew up, you got divorced, your parents got divorced. That will actually influence how you interact with your wife next time, your family next time, with your colleagues and your church. The statistics show:

- Middle class girls in late 30's half as likely to have gone to university
- 45% middle class girls were married before age 20 compared to 15.6% of those whose parents did not divorce
- Middle class boys had 25-33% less chance of going to university
- Poorer, behavioral problems, worse jobs, more psychological illness

Why because their foundational event is a catastrophe and you look at life through the lens of that event. So if your foundational event is a lie and your father tells you and you always remember, you will never mount to anything. That becomes a foundational event, you are always on low self-esteem, always trying to prove yourself to others, always desperately trying to gain love and the whole picture of life is based on that event.

If your foundational event is fear

- Low self esteem
- Caution
- Never let anyone in
- Hide
- See world from fear perspective of what threats
- Never bold or adventurous

- Read about all the catastrophes in world to confirm your fears

We look at life through the cross. When you go back to the cross and relook at the gospel, it will color the way you look at events in your life.

*1 John 4:7-8 (ESV) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has **been born of God** and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

So if your foundational event is love, how can you not love other people. If your foundational event is divorce, then you divorce. When you have fear, you have low self-esteem. If your foundational event is the love of God and then you treat other people with no love then I really doubt if you have been born again, because you are born of love.

Forgiveness: The foundational event is the cross.

Matthew 6:14-15 (ESV) For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

If you don't forgive others, your father will not forgive you. He is saying that if your foundational event is a forgiveness from God, and you turn around in your life and you never forgive other people, everybody is your enemy then I really question whether you are actually born again, because your foundational event must influence all other events. So your father is a loving person, your father is a forgiving person and you don't forgive everybody as they are against you, it means you may not be saved. So the only way you can understand the height, the breadth and the depth of God is that you actually rooted in love, that foundational event.

If we are not transformed by his love, we cannot experience his love

Matt 25:40 (ESV) Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

John 15:12-13 (ESV) This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 1

So you deal with difficult people and you look at them and you see, why, because you look at them through the foundational event, which is the cross. They may look awful, but they are in front of you actually sinners just like you, as awful as you are and then you begin to look at the world like that, through your foundational event and then your love, your pity comes up, because they are not being because they are just blind, they need Christ just like you need Christ. If you begin to see the world like that then you can see the love of Christ.

Things like Lord's Supper is important as it remind you of your foundational event. As you go back to your foundational event, it actually increases your understanding of the love of God, every time you practice the Lord's Supper.

Emily Esfahan Smith wrote a book in which she says that everybody in the Western world is looking for happiness. She actually looked at the psychological literature about happiness and they found out, if you actually look for happiness, you actually become very unhappy and the trick in life is actually meaning and meaning is derived in four domains.

- The meaning is belonging that means for you to have meaning, you must belong to a family or a nation.
- you must have purpose beyond yourself. If your purpose is always to make yourself rich, that's not it. It is a purpose to serve others. People become happy when they do that.
- Transcendence, an idea that what you do will transcend this life into the future life.
- Storytelling. That means your life has a story. The blind man in the Bible has a story too. He said, I was blind and now I see. So all of us actually have a story. You can actually look at our lives through the lens of the cross and you actually see a story of why you are here, what did you do and what is your purpose. With that meaning in life, you may not be very happy but you have that storytelling, it is part of your meaning in life. It makes your life meaningful.

So now to know the dimensions of God's love.

We are going to get the glory that God gave his son. If you actually think about that, that should blow your mind. These are the things that you need to take your mind and feast on them and meditate on them, then you actually feel. What are the implication effect that Jesus say, I am going to give you my glory, we need to feast on these things, because it blows our mind and the love that you actually have with God increases. You actually feel it.

COMPREHEND WITH ALL THE SAINTS:

You cannot experience the dimension of God's love on your own. There is no privatized spirituality. We live in a Western dominated world where we all look after ourselves, my family, myself, my spirituality. If I want to be holy before God, I go up to the mountain myself. That is not how it is.

We have to experience God's love with other people, sharing, learning and being accountable.

The enjoyment and glory you have eating alone and eating with your friends is completely different.

So basically God's love is so great that you actually need the entire body of Christ to actually feel it, experience it. If you are a person that only listens to the sermon and then go home, you never join a group or never become accountable in the group, you can only experience a little bit of Christ. You need to see Christ through your friend's eye, ear and pain. Then you can see how beautiful Christ is. If you only experience Christ on your own, that is not how God designed us. That's what it says, you can see the love, the length and breadth and height of Christ's love together with the saints. That's why church is very-very important. Jesus Christ died to make one new man all of us and some of you are functioning as not part of the new man, you are functioning alone and you won't grow that way, you will not grow outside the environment; however, imperfect your church is, but this is how we are supposed to grow.

- Christ indwelling is like an engine and the petrol is like God's love. You need to pray for him to indwell you
- You pray to experience God's love in the foundational event going back to the gospel and also within the environment of the church.