

A Powerful Prayer II

Ephesians 3:14-21

4/ 30/ 06

Intro

Last week we studied Ephesians chapter 1 where Paul tells them about how he was praying for them. Here in chapter 3 we see another prayer that Paul prays for them.

And this prayer is for us as well. Paul says that he prays that God would grant them, according to the riches of His glory... that they would be strengthened in the inner man with power through the Holy Spirit.

It's a powerful prayer because he is praying about that which is the deepest place within us. That, Paul says is where we need to be strengthened with power.

These are insights into how Paul's prayer for the Ephesians applies to our lives today.

I. Be Strengthened in the Inner Man

A. The inner man is often neglected

- Paul says that he prays for them in regards to their inner man. The problem is that the inner man is often neglected.

Illus – Think about how much time we spend on the outer man primping and prepping our appearance. But how much time do we spend on the inner man?

- Could this be because other people can't see the inner man?

I Samuel 16:7, God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

B. A weak inner man has weak motives

- The condition of the inner man is seen in the motives that drive us.
- What are your desires? What drives your life? We are often driven by motives of self focus.

Illus – We can see this in the things we pray for...

James 4:2-3, You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Illus – Should we repair the inconsistency by ignoring the outer man? – No, we should strengthen the inner man.

C. God wants us strengthened with power

- God looks at what is happening on the inside and is very concerned about what is happening there.
- What men desire is often very different than from what God desires.

Luke 16:15, God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

- When King David was nearing the end of his life, he gave a strong word of wisdom to Solomon...

I Chronicles 28:9, As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.

I Timothy 4:8, For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

II. Let Christ Be at Home in Your Heart

- Paul was talking to the church there in Ephesus so we know he wasn't speaking about asking Christ for salvation.
- The word "dwell" means to be "at home."

A. Invite Him into the inner rooms

Illus – You know how we are when someone knocks on the door; the more we like them, the further we invite them in.

- Invite Christ into the 'family room' and invite Him into conversation.

Illus – There are other places in the house that are even more personal than the family room. Christ will want to go there as well.

Illus – What about that smell in the house? Will you let the Lord do something about that? (We had guests coming over once, and a strange smell began to creep up from under the house...)

II Corinthians 2:14, But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

Illus – Some people are just "stinkers." The cowboy and the old man...

- The inner quality of the heart should be important to each of us.

I Peter 3:3-4, And let not your adornment be merely external -- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

B. Be rooted and grounded in love

- When Christ is 'at home' in your heart, you will find that you are 'at home' with Christ and a relationship of deeper love will change your life.
- Rooted – deeper roots are needed to go down and find strength as well as to find that God brings fruit in season.

Psalm 1:1-3, How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

- Grounded – a deep foundation. This is the same word Jesus used when He said that we need a foundation that comes from not just hearing, but also doing.

Luke 6:47-49, Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

C. Experience the love of Christ

- Paul says that he prays for them that they would experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.
- The words ‘know’ and ‘knowledge’ are different words, they come from the same root, but have very different meaning.
- **“Know” - experience** the love of Christ that surpasses all **“knowledge” – science.**
- There is a great difference between a scientific or theological knowledge of Christ and experiencing His love.

Illus – You can study what is in food, you can read all the labels, but unless you have tasted it, you haven’t experienced it – you haven’t known it.

- Experience the love of Christ, Paul is saying, so that you may be filled up with all the fullness of God!

- Heaven cannot contain the glory of God, yet he desires to be at home in our hearts, filling us with all the fullness of God.
- We may not be able to contain all the fullness of God, but God can fill all we can contain.

Conclusion

Paul is so moved by what flows through him that he pauses and offers up to God a moment of doxology; of worship. “Now unto Him be glory;” who does all things by the power that works within us.