

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

11.20.22

Ephesians Series

Sermon 11

Ephesians 3:14–21 (CSB)

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. ¹⁶ I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, ¹⁹ and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

A. Prayer is both simple and complex.

1. Children can easily pray with prayers that echo heaven.
2. Adults can also pray an entire lifetime without exploring the great depths that are there.

B. This prayer for spiritual power ends a section within Ephesians.

1. Chapter 4 institutes a change in direction for Paul.

2. The next section begins with Therefore, and talks about believers WALKING with Christ.
3. The first section was to teach believers how to be SEATED with Christ.
4. The last section of Ephesians ends with "Stand".
5. Sit, Walk, Stand is a helpful lens to study Ephesians.

C. Today, we dig deep into Paul's prayer for the believers.

1. This is the second prayer in Ephesians, ending the section on how believers are "seated" with Christ in the heavenly realm.
2. Because of Jesus, we not only have access to the Father in prayer, but we can get close enough to know Him.
3. Imagine: Gentiles who had no opportunity to draw close to God in Judaism or paganism could now not only pray but could grasp the depths of God's love for them.

D. My hope is that your walk with Jesus will not only be academic.

1. I have plenty of colleagues who are brilliant scholars of the Bible and religion but have no relationship with Jesus.
2. It is possible to sit in this room year after year and hear sermons and teaching and yet not draw close to God.

a. Neither the Apostle Paul or this Pastor Paul want that for you.

b. Today, let us look at the kind of access that Paul prayed for these believers to have.

1. You need to know who you are praying to.

A. Have you ever heard someone pray and it sounds like they don't know who they are praying to?

1. I hear people pray who use every name or spiritual buzz word they can find, hoping something sticks.

2. Some people's prayers are more like shotgun blasts in the dark instead of a laser pointed at Jesus.

B. Paul KNOWS who he is praying to.

1. He just said that "in Christ we have boldness and confident access."

2. Now, with boldness, Paul kneels before the Father.

a. Boldness is not the same as rudeness.

b. Confidence is not the same as disrespect.

3. Paul, bold and confident that God will hear and answer his prayers, kneels before the Father.

a. Even though we are co-heirs with Christ Jesus,

b. Even though we are seated at the right hand of the Father,

c. He is STILL the One who is above all names.

C. When you pray, do you know the one you are praying to?

1. God answers prayers on the basis of relationship.

2. Our best prayers are prayed in relationship, with specificity.

What did Paul pray for on behalf of the Ephesian believers?

2. First, Power for the inner being through the Spirit.

A. The work of the Holy Spirit is internal before it is external.

1. Often we focus on the outward expressions.

2. These outward expressions are good and necessary.

a. But they are also easier to deal with.

b. Just because we no longer sin with our hands or mouths, that does not mean we have stopped sinning in our heart and mind.

B. It is vital for all of us to grow IN Christ.

1. Have you noticed that it doesn't get easier?

a. Life does not get easier.

b. The challenges, at least for me, grow larger and more complex.

c. The spiritual battles I find myself engaged in grow larger, not smaller.

2. What is increasingly clear is that I need Jesus more each and every day.

a. The Apostle understands this.

b. So he prays for them to be granted the opportunity to grow in Christ Jesus and to be strengthened in their inner being.

3. I absolutely believe that everyone in this room is being given a chance to grow in Christ Jesus.

a. Each week you are challenged with the Word.

b. Each week you are provided opportunity to grow in worship.

c. Do not waste this.

C. The only thing holding you back is you.

1. Paul establishes this request "According to the riches of his glory."

2. Remember the difference between giving from your riches and according to your riches?

a. A \$100 from a billionaire is giving from their riches, not according to their riches.

b. I was incredibly humbled when I watched this body of believers give generously toward paying this property off.

c. You all gave according to what God has provided.

1. No one here is wealthy.

2. Yet many of us gave sacrificially.

3. The Good News is that the heavenly Father has no limit to His resources.

a. Because your Heavenly Father is rich, we have no reason to be discouraged.

b. "In Christ we are given the means and capability to be what we previously could not be."¹

c. In Christ, the excuses for discipleship are removed because there is no limit to His resources.

3. Second, Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

A. Most of us understand that at salvation, Jesus enters our hearts.

1. The "heart" is not the physical organ that pumps blood.

2. Instead, it refers to that innermost part of us that makes us who we are.

a. It's our personality, and emotions, and our Spirit.

b. Paul's prayer is not only that Jesus will change our hearts, but that He will inhabit our innermost life.

c. Accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior will change every aspect of our lives.

B. Paul prays that Christ may "dwell".

¹ Bock, Darrell L. 2019. Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary. Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel. Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. London: Inter-Varsity Press.

1. The term for *dwell (katoikeō)* refers to a residing, a habitation, not a temporary stay.²
2. When someone comes to live with you, things change.
 - a. When we have people stay over, many of our habits change.
 - b. We men may do the same things, but the women in our lives become very focused on meals, and comfort, and making sure things are clean.
3. Paul is praying that the Ephesian believers might experience Jesus in such a way that their innermost lives are changed.
 - a. Paul prays for the inner life of the believers to be a place hospitable to the presence of God.
 - b. Not every house is hospitable.
 1. Some structures are simply not safe places to live.
 2. Truth: Even nice homes have the potential to become inhospitable if we fail to steward it.
 3. Julie and I drive by many farm houses and old houses in cities and wonder “I wonder what that place use to look like?”
4. Ephesians 4:30 says that we can “grieve” the Holy Spirit.
 - a. It is possible for us to live in such a way that the Holy Spirit won’t dwell in you.
 - b. My grandpa was an old time preacher, who had lots of stories and jokes.
 1. He told the story of a young preacher who went to the house of an older lady.

² Ibid.

2. He was new to the church and was trying to be a good pastor, and was invited to her house for Sunday dinner.

He arrives and the settings were set for him.

He noticed that the plate wasn't clean, but still had remnants of food on it.

Trying to be polite, he didn't say anything but she noticed his discomfort.

The lady said, "I'm sorry, but that's the best cold-water could can do."

He thought, oh that makes sense: She is poor and doesn't have a dishwasher and maybe she doesn't have a hot water heater.

As food is put on his dirty plate, he picked up his fork and noticed the same. I'm sorry, she said but that's the best cold water can do.

He doesn't want to offend, so he eats with a smile praying a little extra for the blessing upon the meal.

Dessert is served, and he notices the same thing: The bowl isn't super clean and the spoon was OK so he eats. Again, the older lady apologizes, "That's the Best cold water can do."

After lunch is served and eaten, the pastor offers to help her wash the dishes hoping he could show her a better way.

But the lady stops him and says, "Don't worry, Cold-water will take care of it." She then whistles, calling her dog "Come here cold-water, time to wash the dishes: he comes, she puts the plates and bowls down, let's the dog lick it up and puts the dishes into the cabinet."

2. Even the friendliest pastor wouldn't come back to her house for lunch.

3. Hopefully, you would never subject your friends or pastor to that kind of behavior, so why do we expect the Holy

Spirit to dwell in our lives while we subject Him to all sorts of sin and nastiness.

C. Paul adds a conditional word "May".

1. He prays that Christ "May" dwell.

2. What are some of the conditions?

a. First, is faith.

b. Others include:

1. Habitual disobedience.

2. Unrepented sin.

3. Paul is praying that these believers would live such faith filled lives that Jesus would live, stay, and inhabit every part of their lives.

4. Third, Paul prays for Comprehension of God's love.

A. Love brings security.

1. We do our best in an atmosphere of love.

2. Many of us were taught God's wrath before we were taught God's love.

B. Fear and Love cause different responses.

1. People motivated by fear will leave the first chance they get.

2. People motivated by love will stay no matter how difficult the present moment.

3. Paul wrote to the pastor of Ephesus in 2 Timothy 1:7 (CSB)

A. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

B. God wants us to live in love, not in fear.

C. Remember that God's love is different than our love.

1. Love is not the absence of discipline:
 - a. God disciplines those HE loves.
 - b. In Junior High and HS, I had a new baseball coach each year.
 - c. One coach, however, demanded the absolute best:
 - a. We showed up to practice.
 - b. We ran, and did pushups and learned the cost of mistakes.
 - c. We conditioned and dressed for success.
 - d. Several of the other coaches didn't even have practices.
 - a. My first game with one, I didn't even have a uniform.
 - b. The first time I ever pitched wasn't in practice but in a game.
 - e. 20 years later, guess who I still love the most: The one who loved me enough to encourage, discipline, and push me to be the best I could be.
2. God's love is also not fickle.
 - a. He loves you through thick, thin, and ups and downs.
 - b. The purpose of God's love is to provide safety for you to grow.

'Being rooted in God's love provides a stability and security from which to grow.'³

³ Bock, Darrell L. 2019. [*Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#). Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel. Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. London: Inter-Varsity Press.

5. Lastly, Paul prays to know Christ's love so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

A. "the fullness of God includes the infusion both of divine power and of divine love."⁴

1. Power, without love, is tyranny.

2. Love, without power, is impotence.

3. God wants us to be filled with BOTH power and love.

B. This is not anyone else's power.

1. Not the power of Rome.

2. Not the power of a false-god.

3. But to know the FULLNESS of God in a personal way.

C. Paul depicts a life that constantly being filled with God's love.

1. I'm so sad that many Christians believe that at Salvation, that is as good as it gets.

2. Paul described a life with Jesus that grows ever deeper the more we explore and mine the depths of His love.

3. Thus Paul prays for them to KNOW Christ's love and to be filled to the measure.

D. Paul calls us to a relationship of love for Christ, not lust.

1. Lust is shallow and shrinks over time; whereas love deepens with time.

2. Paul's prayer is that we might grow in our love for Jesus!

Close: To Him who is able...

A. May be this seems impossible.

⁴ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1. To grow in love for Jesus seems nice for others but not possible for you.

2. Other people experience Jesus, and others have encounters, and others receive miracles, and others are used in the gift: but not you.

B. Paul ends by saying: To Him who is able to Ephesians 3:20 (CSB)

1. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—

2. God is not limited by your prayers or by your thinking or by your power.

3. Because He is able to do ABOVE our thinking, and our asking, and our ability.

C. Each week, as we pray, we are not praying to ourselves or to each other.

1. But we are praying to Jesus!

2. The One who is seated at the right hand.

3. The One who conquered death.

4. The One who all power in heaven and earth has been given.

5. Thus we pray with boldness and confident access, and to Him be glory in the church and in every generation.

Prayer.