

To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . A Church is Faithful

Ephesians 3:14-21 January 30, 2011

Intro. One of the stated values that give direction to our church is . . . *Dependence is our strength. Therefore we rely on prayer and God's Spirit to empower our lives and ministry.*

A faithful church prays. A faithful church has an acute sense of need that the power necessary to glorify God is available only through believing prayer. The church is the centerpiece of God's creation designed to manifest his glory and wisdom. The picture of chapter 3 verse 14 of the Apostle on his knees before God in prayer serves as a powerful and timely reminder of our dependence on God for the power to be his church in this world.

You and I know well what it is like to attempt supernatural work through the limited resources of human ability. We constantly flirt with self help efforts, new counseling methods, creative explanations and a deep sense of self sufficiency only to experience the frustration of realizing that nothing has really changed. We long for some powerful breakthrough in our lives, relationships or problems and consistently experience the sense that the only power out there is what we are able to generate ourselves.

With our heads and mouths we are able to say that God is able to do powerful things. We speak with respect of the few that we know that seem to be connected in some way to God . . . his hand seems to be on their lives. The problem isn't that God is not powerful and willing to work powerfully in our lives and church, it is that we have developed a clear and consistent anti-supernatural bias. Seeking hard after God, humbling ourselves before him, waiting patiently on him, submitting our desires to his will, listening to him carefully, praying for the necessary power to become the person God saved us to be . . . dying to our self rule to find our new life in Christ . . . all of this is clearly implied in the picture of the Apostle on his knees before God. Our refusal to learn to pray and then pray is the compelling evidence of our anti-supernatural bias.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

Request #1	Life Transforming Power	14-17
Request #2	Love Comprehending Power	18-19
	Confirmation of Purpose and Praise	20-21

Request #1 teaches us to pray for life transforming power. A faithful church prays for life transformational power to become more like Christ.

How is your energy level in your battle with bitterness, living with contentment, being joyful in all things, telling the truth with love, bearing patiently with others, forgiving those who sin against you, loving those who hurt you, saying no to your flesh and talking in ways that build others up? Power to obey with joy in these ways is available through faithful prayer.

Request #2, our assignment for this morning, teaches us to pray for the power to grasp and experience the love of Christ. Without the help and power that God gives, you will have too little appreciation for the love Christ has for you. A part of our weakness and self centeredness is that independent spirit within us that does not appreciate being loved by Christ. This request is not to love Christ more, nor to love others more and certainly not to be able to explain Christ's love more articulately.

As important as all of those may be, these verses teach us the importance of asking God for strength to grasp and feel the incredible love that God has for us.

Some may remember the series of teaching we did a few years ago on the love of God. We encouraged each other to turn to your neighbor and say “God really loves me!” Knowing and believing God’s love is a core component to our Christian walk.

1John 4:16 reads . . .

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Already in our study of Ephesians (1:4; 2:4) we have been taught the essential truth of God’s great love for sinners in both choosing and rescuing us from our sin. His love is measured not by how many people he loves but how sinful and rebellious each one is that he loves. Eventually we will learn that our behavior as Christians is rooted in his love for us (5:1-2).

Does God love you? Are you so confident in his love that you have experienced the overwhelming peace and hope that can only possibly come from that supernatural source?

Praying to grasp and experience God’s love for you in Christ . . .

1. Understand the importance of this request. 3:17b

Note the two metaphors used to describe the crucial relationship between your spiritual health and fitness and God’s love.

Rooted . . . God’s love is the life giving soil which nourishes your functioning as a Christian. If the roots of your life are deep in the love of God, you will be fruitful and strong in your faith.

Grounded . . . God’s love is the foundation which provides stability and support for you functioning as a Christian. If your life is connected firmly to the love of God, you will be established and strong in your faith.

Cmp. Col. 2:7

1Cor. 3:9

1Peter 5:10

Matt. 7:25

Survey the life of faith/love in Ephesians . . . 4:2, 15-16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; 6:23-24

2. Accept the challenge of this request. 3:18-19

Note the terms used by the Apostle to explain/help us appreciate the challenge of this way of praying. What follows in verse 18-19 is a consequence of the indwelling Christ making himself at home in you.

- You need divine strength to grasp God’s love. You are incapable to do this on your own.
- You need to grasp for yourself the reality of God’s love. Comprehension/implications

You battle with both self rule/submission issues and self love/pride issues. You grasp these easily because they fit your nature. God’s love is new and transformational.

Praying to grasp and experience God's love for you in Christ . . .

1. Understand the importance of this request. 3:17b
2. Accept the challenge of this request. 3:18-19

- You need to personally experience God's love. To know the love of Christ

Recognize in your own complicated, complex life. God's love becomes a genuine stabilizing, hope producing, joyful factor . . . Psa. 42:1-8

Each of these concepts have to do with the intense spiritual battles that go on daily for our affections and obedience. You must pray for strength to have your roots sink deeply into god's love.

3. Be motivated by the dimensions of this request. 18-19

Note the metaphor and the paradox used to motivate or excite our hearts about asking God for the necessary power to be connected with the love of Christ.

The love of Christ exceeds dimensions or measuring. 18 vastness, extent, unlimited dimensions

The love of Christ surpasses knowledge. 19 it can never be known fully; a lifetime pursuit

Cmp. Romans 8:35-39 Eph. 2:4 . . . the great love with which he loved us

God's love expressed at the cross . . . Rom. 5:6-8

4. Look for the intended results of this request. 18-21

Note the evidences or signs that are given that you are grasping God's love for you. Your grasping and experiencing God's love will be evident in these ways. This is the life transformed by God's love.

- Your loving relationships with others in the faith community. 18/with all the saints
1:15 4:2-3
- Your spiritual maturity seen in a God centered life. 19/filled with all the fullness of God
4:13-14 1:23
- Your active faith in God's power to do what he promised. 20/who is able to do
No limit to what God can do 1:19-20 God capable and sufficient to answer prayer
- Your intentional worship endorsing God and his glory. 21/to him be glory
God's glory reflected in the church God's glory reflected in Christ.
Profound God centeredness. This section ends as it began (ch.1) with blessing to God.

Take Aways

1. Examine your heart for evidence of self reliance . . . you do not feel a need for power from God.
2. Repent/Confess your sin of neglecting to pray as commanded by God.
3. Acknowledge in a fresh way your dependence on God to know God's love.
4. Ask God for strength to grasp and experience his love for you.
5. Consider and make better choices regarding prayer personally and corporately.

Study Questions

1. Read Eph. 3:1-21 as a group. Share observations, terms or concepts that grab your attention from your reading. What's your favorite concept this week from this chapter? Why?
2. Review the 4th paragraph of the intro/notes . . . what do you think an 'anti-supernatural bias' is? What does it look like? Do you see it in your life in any way?
3. Share from your experience of walking with God the important relationship between your spiritual health and knowing God loves you. How do the examples of soil/rooted and grounded/building help you understand this relationship (v.17)?
4. Why is it hard to accept, enjoy and actually depend on the fact that God loves you? What can you do about these challenges?
5. Review the 4 expected results of grasping God's love and being transformed in the inner man listed in point #4. How do these compare with what we may typically see in our lives and church?
6. Share with the group how you plan to change your approach to prayer as a result of this study and ask them to pray for you that you would be strengthened to grasp God's love. Start using the new prayer vocab you are learning with your group!