

Title: PAUL'S PRAYER/OUR PRAYER, EPHESIANS 3:14 – 21
(Chatham, NJ; 07/26/15, AM) [Pc – Exegesis]

Theme: Paul prays for the Ephesians that they might have inner power to serve God and a more intimate relationship with Him.

Purpose: To develop in us a more intimate knowledge of God's work within us.

Introduction:

1. Several marriage studies have demonstrated that the greatest key to keeping a marriage together is emotional intimacy: people know each other's deepest thoughts, desires, and motivations.
2. This is inherent in the prayer that Paul offers: we must become intimate with God.
3. Jesus teaches us to close a door and pray: this not only prevents self-righteousness but it encourages one-on-one intimacy with God.
4. We'll notice this all the way through the prayer; Paul speaks of what happens in our "inner being."
5. On the structural side of things:
 - Paul bows his knees
 - He asks through God by whom all families are named: everyone's existence and significance come from Him
 - Prayer concludes the armor of God in chap. 6
6. Since so much of this prayer is about power, we ask: "Have we availed ourselves of God's power?"
7. See what Paul asks for them; see it as a request for ourselves as well.

I. Grant Strength in Our Inner Being, 16

- A. Strength, power, Spirit, inner being
 1. Strength and power: living the righteous life demands these
 2. Through his Spirit: prayer stirs the Holy Spirit that God has given us at baptism; show me someone who doesn't live his Christianity outside of church and I'll show you a person with little or no prayer life
 3. Inner being: the heart, not just the seat of emotions, but the very center of a human being
 4. Any difficult endeavor demands more than physical strength; it draws on one's emotional and mental reserves
- B. How open are you to the energizing influence of God?
 1. First, it demands intimacy: in Revelation 3:20 the picture is of Jesus entering into our lives and dining with us, an image of close fellowship
 2. Second, we must make a decision to utilize the power available to us: pray

II. That Christ May Dwell in Our Hearts, 17

- Through faith: they have already expressed their faith by their confession and baptism but dwelling there is more than this
- Dwell: he doesn't just come for a visit, see John 14:23; he lives in our hearts
- In your hearts: Christ must be at the center of our very being; he is the one who animates, enlivens, and informs all that we do
- Rooted and grounded in love: this is the foundation
- This demands an abiding presence of Christ: abiding is one of John's favorite words, 1 John 2:6

III. Strengthened to Comprehend and Know the Love of Christ, 18-19

- A. How much do you know others?
1. Name, age, address, family information, etc.
 2. These are facts about them, but not the same as knowing them intimately
 3. You won't have the deeper knowing with many people, only close family and friends
 4. Deeper knowing comes with sharing life together
 5. Experience helps us know what makes others tick
- B. Strength to comprehend and know
1. Paul asks for strength on their behalf: entering deeply into the life of another is not for the faint of heart
 2. Intimacy breeds vulnerability and we can be afraid of that
 3. It is risky business; it opens us up to being hurt, and it demands our time and effort
 4. We can comprehend God by knowing more teachings about Him, but we know Him when we experience a living relationship with him

IV. Filled with the Fullness of God

- Fullness refers to receiving His power and His character traits which are immanent in all creation
- His power and presence permeates all things; through Christ we experience this
- All Paul's previous requests culminate in developing this fullness
- Essentially we conform to the image of Christ, 4:13
- And He lives within us through the Holy Spirit

Conclusion:

1. Paul concludes by telling us that God's power can do even more than we can imagine.
2. By the time of Revelation, the church in Ephesus had begun to cool off: "you have abandoned the love you had at first," (Rev. 2:4); I wonder if Paul was trying to keep this from happening in Eph. 3.
3. My invitation today is for the church to open up your hearts to intimacy with God.
4. This provides real power for living courageously.
5. It is also for those who've yet made a relationship with him: God is waiting to pour his love into your hearts.
6. For one it is greater growth; for the other it is a new birth.
7. He stands at the door and knocks; let him in.