

# EPHESIANS

## LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

### Sermon 5 - Ephesians 3:14-21 - Knowing love

1. Any funny stories to tell about children mimicking adults??
2. How did you first learn to pray? Was there someone pretty special who modelled prayer to you?

#### Read again Ephesians 3:14-21

##### Knowing about Jesus is not enough

3. What is the difference between our *outward* being and our *inner* being? (See for example 2 Corinthians 4:16ff)
4. Why does Paul pray for power through God's Spirit so that Christ may dwell (make his home) in our hearts?
5. What might be involved in Christ making his home in our hearts, and why might we resist? Why might we NOT want to pray this prayer?
6. Someone says to you, "you Christians just get forgiven and go off and do the same thing next week!" How would you use this passage to help you answer?

##### Knowing about God's love is not enough

7. How can (or why does) Paul pray for power to grasp what he acknowledges, surpasses knowledge?
8. Someone says to you - "how do you know God loves you?" How do you respond?
9. Why do we need power to grasp God's love?
10. What will lead to God loving us less? What will lead to God loving us more?

##### What are you praying for?

11. God is interested in the 'small stuff', but how can we ensure our prayer concentrates on the 'big stuff'?
12. Read James 4:1-3. Could it be we 'have not, because we ask not'? And that perhaps when we ask, we ask for wrong motives?
13. Discuss: "In many churches, there are many more hours of prayer devoted to someone's pain in a big toe, then to these central issues in the church"

##### What are you expecting when you pray?

14. "We sometimes have a picture of God as a Father who is removed from us and not all that interested, who somehow has to be badgered with a lot of repetitious prayers and by loads of people - thinking that if you thereby increase the pressure, then he'll dribble out a little blessing." True? What do you think peoples sometimes see things this way?
15. "Your God is too small!" This was a book title last century. Discuss this in the light of the God who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine!

*REFLECTION: Will your prayer change at all because of what we've seen in this passage? Share with the group ways in which you think we can put what we've learned here into practice.*

*EXTRA: Examine the quotes Mark used in the sermon at the top of the next page and discuss.*

**Don Carson** in "*A call to Spiritual Reformation*" - this is 'power to be holy, power to think, act and talk in ways utterly pleasing to Christ, power to strengthen moral resolve, power to walk in transparent gratitude to God, power to be humble, power to be discerning, power to be obedient and trusting, power to grow in conformity to Jesus Christ'.

**Don Carson:** "truly to experience that love, to live in the warmth of its glow, invests all of life with new meaning and purpose. Our speech, our thoughts, our actions, our reactions, our relationships, our goals, our values - all are transformed if only we live in the self-conscious enjoyment of the love of Christ."

**CS Lewis:** "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
**Services:** 730, 930, 930 Peregian (via video)  
**Series:** Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel  
**Passage:** Ephesians 3:14-21  
**Title:** Knowing love  
**Outline:**

Paul's prayers show us that

1. Knowing about Jesus is not enough
2. Knowing about God's love is not enough

Two questions arise

3. What are you praying for?
4. What are you expecting?

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- Children are great mimics... how they learn.
- Mackenzie with us for four days... pick up so much!
- Grace.... Bows her head and closes her eyes so tight!!!
- Older children too – learn so much by imitating others.. once they start school... they imitate words you've never taught them and you rather wish they hadn't learned!
- Teenagers – face so much peer pressure. Learned behaviour from copying others.
- Although we adults think we're above all that... the amount of money spend on advertising shows us how effective it is to put before us behaviour worthy of copying...
- Even in the spiritual arena we learn by copying. //
- How did you learn to pray? Wrote – hearing parents
- if converted later – no church background – you learn the same way – you copy others
- You listen, and somewhere along the line, you utter your first public prayer
- As in virtually every area of life – we need to choose the model
- Extremely important that we choose our models well
- We can do no better than to look at the prayers of scripture – and we will learn to pray
- It's good to ask when we see the prayers in the bible - What are they praying for? What's important? – what really matters??
- We already saw one of Paul's prayers back in ch 1 – do you recall? – where he asks that his readers might be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation that they might know God better!!
- In our passage from Ephesians this morning, Paul reports two prayers
- ...and interestingly they are both for **power**...
- Do you ever pray for **power**? // Maybe power to cope – to make it through another day!
- But there's some **surprises** in the power that he asks for...

... for Paul's prayers show us that

1. Knowing about Jesus is not enough
2. Knowing about God's love is not enough

Two questions then we'll need to deal with

1. What are you praying for?
2. What are you expecting when you pray?

- First, let's see

## 1. KNOWING ABOUT JESUS IS NOT ENOUGH

- What does he ask for power FOR?
- Have a look with me at v16 – *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*
- Power so that Christ may dwell in your hearts
- Hearts and inner selves? What is our inner self?
- in 2 Corinthians 4 Paul says, *though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*
- I'm sure you know it's like to be 'outwardly wasting away'... that is, you simply can't do things you used to be able to do... you can't run as far, garden for as long, lift as much as you once were able... that ache and this arthritis and this stiffness... etc... we are all outwardly wasting away... cheery thought!
- However, inwardly, Paul says, if we are Christian, we are being renewed *there* day by day...
- That is, the Holy Spirit is doing his work in us, making us more like Jesus
- And that is what he's praying for here – that we may be strengthened with power – through his Spirit in our inner being.... end result – Christ dwelling in our hearts...
- I don't know how many here have moved recently - but of course it's quite a chore.
- moving in day comes once. But then you spend many months - maybe years afterwards making that place your own.
- you may rip out the kitchen and the bathroom and renovate - update.
- the colours may be all wrong, so you strip back paint or wallpaper and start again. You may find the roof leaks and the electricity needs rewiring so you call in the professionals to do that.
- it takes a while before you make that house your home. You move in on one day - but may spend years taking up residence and making it yours.
- when you become a Christian - Christ moves in by his Holy Spirit.
- he finds us in a bad state of disrepair. Many of the doors to various parts of our life are actually jammed tight.
- Money - stuck.
- Our tastes in what we like to see in the way of movies and TV are foul.
- Our language room really needs cleaning out.
- The thought department is stored with tapes of all sorts of fantasies.
- The department of individual rights and justice is programmed to strike back whenever hurt.
- The ego department is has one goal - self, self, self.
- The love department is obligated again to self-first, so that we only love when its advantageous to self - when it pays.
- It's a real mess.
- that is why Paul prays for the Ephesians that they may be strengthened with power through

his Spirit in their inner being. They - and we - need God's power if we are going to change.

- yes the Holy Spirit moves in on conversion day - but Paul prays that they may be strengthened in their inner being - strengthened in their resolve to surrender more and more of themselves to Christ - so that he may dwell in their hearts - that is - take up permanent residence there - settle down and really make their hearts his home. That is what the word "dwell" here means.
- It takes the power of God working through his Holy Spirit to kick in some of the jammed doors; to wrestle with some of those stubborn locks; to clean out some of the muck that has built up over the years.
- No wonder we cannot do it by ourselves.
- No wonder we meet with frustration - even depression - when we try. This needs the power of God.
- The transforming, cleansing power of God, so that our hearts become a fit place for Christ to dwell.
- What resources are available to bring this about? God's glorious riches. Riches of grace. Wealth of power - the same power which raised Christ from the dead!
- As Don Carson says in "*A call to Spiritual Reformation*" - this is 'power to be holy, power to think, act and talk in ways utterly pleasing to Christ, power to strengthen moral resolve, power to walk in transparent gratitude to God, power to be humble, power to be discerning, power to be obedient and trusting, power to grow in conformity to Jesus Christ'.
- Do you ask for such power?
- Do you - do I - even *want* that power!? - that's a searching question isn't it!! //
- Knowing *about* Jesus is not enough... and nor is it what Christianity is about... it's about Jesus - taking up residence in our hearts by his Spirit - and going to work to shape us and mould us - transform us - into his likeness!
- But in Paul's second prayer - again for power - is again a surprise, because we discover this: that -

## 2. KNOWING ABOUT GOD'S LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH

- Have a look with me at v17b - *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love which surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*
- It's a prayer for power to grasp the limitless dimensions of the love of God
- Paul understands that the Ephesians have already been rooted and established in love - he chose us, he adopted us, redeemed us... he made us alive even when we were dead in our transgressions...
- Yes - our walk with him started with his love...
- Now he prays that it may continue - by us grasping his love for us!
- it is now quite well documented that a child starved of love, will fail to grow to emotional stability and maturity.
- starved of love, put in isolation, grow up in an abusive and violent home, and a child will itself not know how to love, not know how to relate, and its whole process of development and learning and understanding the world will be affected.
- and when Christians fail to understand the love Christ has for them, the implications of this passage are that they will fail to come to maturity that God intended.
- Paul prays that his readers may know the love of Christ for a purpose - that they be filled to

the measure of all the fullness of God.

- And I want **you** brothers and sisters to **grasp** the love God has for **you**...
- Do you realise he's **loved you** before **time**?
- Do you realise he **loved you** when your **back** was still **turned** on **him**?
- Do you realise he loves you **now** even when you do your **own thing**?
- Do you realise that nothing can ever **separate** you from his **love**?
- Do you realise that his **love** for you cost him the **life** of his **Son**?
- Do you realise is **love** for you is **deep, costly** and **sacrificial**?
- Do you realise his **love** for you is **generous** and **without limit**?
- Do you realise he'll never **stop** loving you?
- Do you realise there is nothing you can ever do to make him love you **less**?
- ...and that there is **nothing** you can ever do to make him love you **more**? //
- And when you begin to **grasp** that **love**; to **trust** that **love** and to **welcome** and **revel** in that **love**... then... v19 *you will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.* // . You will be everything God intended you to **be**! Filled with **God**. Filled with his **Spirit**.
- Notice this comes not with filling your **head** with **knowledge**, but filling your **heart** with **love**! //
- but why do we need God's **power** to help us to grasp Christ's **love**?
- Because we often **resist** his love.
- Don't want to get too **close** - too **involved**...
- ...we want to hold God at arm's **distance**.
- no wonder Paul prays that God's power might intervene so that his readers will grasp the immeasurable love, the unknowable love Christ has for them.
- Power to overcome our resistance from getting to close.
- Power to overcome in some cases, our desire just to keep everything cerebral, creedal, rational, manageable.
- power to soften our hearts to Christ's love.
- Quoting Don Carson again : "truly to experience that love, to live in the warmth of its glow, invests all of life with new meaning and purpose. Our speech, our thoughts, our actions, our reactions, our relationships, our goals, our values - all are transformed if only we live in the self-conscious **enjoyment** of the love of Christ."
- Well - two questions I want to ask now:

### 3. WHAT ARE YOU PRAYING FOR?

- If I could listen in on your prayers - or you could listen in on **mine**... what would we hear?
- Are we praying these types of prayers?
- Knowing ABOUT Jesus is not enough
- Knowing about God's love is not enough
- I must ask myself 'does Christ fill my heart - is he transforming my heart'?
- God displays his power, but we do want it sufficiently to help us change by in his indwelling Spirit...

- And: am I overwhelmed by the love of God?
- God displays his love for us in Jesus Christ... but we want him enough to explore all the dimensions of his love?
- Says CS Lewis: "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."
- when was the last time you prayed either for power for Christ to dwell in hearts or power to be touched by God's love?
- For yourself? Your family? Your church?
- Could it be that part of the spiritual weakness of the church lies in the fact that we have prayed for superficial things and ignored the central things?
- Could it be that we have not, because we ask not?
- And that when we ask, we ask only for the small, the trivial... the superficial...
- In many churches, there are many more hours of prayer devoted to someone's pain in a big toe, then to these central issues in the church... //
- But finally... and all too briefly:

#### 4. WHAT ARE EXPECTING WHEN YOU PRAY?

- Often - I expect all too little...
- Note that this prayer is addressed to the Father... *v1 for this reason I kneel before the Father* - that is the one to whom our prayers are addressed... our heavenly Father - who knows - who longs - to give good gifts to his children!!
- What you expect from your heavenly Father?
- We're told what to expect in *v20* - have a look - for he is able to do more than all we ask or imagine... according to his power that is at work within us...
- We sometimes have a picture of God as a Father who is removed from us and not all that interested, who somehow has to be badgered with a lot of repetitious prayers and by loads of people - if you thereby increase the pressure, then he'll dribble out a little blessing...
- That's not Paul's model!!
- Paul's model is that of a Father who is far more willing to give, than his children are willing to ask and receive
- I suggest that if we approach our heavenly Father with this type of prayer for 6 months, we will be transformed people...
- It's almost as if Paul can hear what the Ephesians are saying... oh, it's all very well for a spiritual person like you Paul to talk compellingly about prayer but frankly our prayers don't seem to be answered all that much... ..
- And Paul almost challenges their faithlessness by presenting another image of God which shows that our failure to receive blessing does not rest in God's unwillingness to answer but in our slowness to pray...
- Don't you think that what Paul is asking for is immense?
- But he is able to do more immeasurably more than either we ask or imagine...
- And it's all to God's great glory... it's all about Him!

- Yes, the purpose is our maturity; yes, the purpose is our conformity to Christ, yes, the purpose is our grasp of the love of God in Christ Jesus... but beyond that, these purposes serve the purpose of the glory of God in Christ Jesus and the church...
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- Knowing about Jesus is not enough... so Paul prays for power that his readers will have the reality of Christ dwelling in their hearts.
- Knowing about God's love is not enough – so Paul prays that they might have power to grasp the limitless nature of God's love
- Will you pray for that power too? For you? For us?
- And when you pray, will you expect from God, immeasurably more than all you ask or imagine... and seek his great glory – for ever and ever!