

Ephesians Series

9. The God who is Able 2 [Sermon Notes] Ephesians 3:10-21

The story so far:

- We are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sealed by the Spirit.
- Saved by grace through faith
- We are now in Christ
- Paul wants to encourage us that we are someone - we are sons and daughters of the living God and we should act like it.
- My God is so big - there is nothing He can't do

Paul prays twice for the Ephesians in chapters 1-3

1. Paul's first prayer is that might know God better and understand the things of God. That all this stuff won't be head knowledge but it will lead us into relationship with Him.

1: 15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 (C) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

2. Now Paul prays another prayer in the light of how powerful God is and it's what God wants to do in them. It's the other way around. The first was about their relationship to God. Now this is about God's relationship to them.

Right from the outset Paul emphasises the importance of this prayer - he does it kneeling.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Kneeling. Jews just didn't do it unless they were coming before God in deep submission - imploring God - crying out to him. Intercession is a serious business. We need to do this - not just pray for non-Christians but for Christians as well - new, old, the leaders. When was the last time we implored God about something? When we wept for God's people, when we wept for the lost?

What Paul is saying is that what I'm praying for is SO IMPORTANT that I beg that God will do all this for you. v15 - God is right at the centre of all this - he has given us our name - we are children of God - remember that - HIS CHILDREN. This is all a throw back to what we have read earlier - we are His children - and he has enriched us. God has vast resources and they are available to us as His children. Remember last time we said how big God is - now this is related to US.

Paul isn't filling our minds with facts - he's saying - You are the children of God and you have been given the power of God to do His will and this is important as we press on with the practical part of the letter after Christmas. We are not looking at the unattainable, but the reality that is ours now. And it's for all of us.

There are four things that Paul prays for them

- ➡ God may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being
- ➡ Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith
- ➡ that you may know the love of Christ
- ➡ that you may be filled with the fulness of God

1. God may strengthen you with power through his Holy Spirit

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being

God never leaves his people adrift - we have the Holy Spirit - God in us - therefore we have in us the power to do God' s will. I'm going to come back to this point in a few moments.

2. That Christ may dwell in your hearts

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

Christ might dwell in your hearts. Just a minute you say, I' m a Christian - doesn' t Jesus already dwell in my through His Spirit? Yes there is that sense that He' s in our lives but heart always implies deep inside us - in our wills, emotions and every part of our lives - it is a case of the inner being.

Jesus is like a guest. I' ve invited him in, but how far. To many Christians just invite Him into the hallway. They don' t invite Him right into the living room, they don' t show Him to His room, they don' t share the contents of their fridge. He hasn' t been allowed to make Himself at home.

Maybe He' s on the outside - you' ve never asked Him in.

Maybe He' s in the hallway - you are happy to come to worship but the rest of your life is yours. Would you treat your family like this?

Where is Jesus in your life today?

3. That you may know the love of Christ.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Why all this - that you may be rooted and grounded in love - and you' d know how great God' s love is. The only way we can ever get to know Jesus is if we invite him in - if we get to know him.

It' s as we get to know him we get to love him - testimony - how vast his love is.

Love - what is Christian love - agape - what did this mean to Jesus - look at the SCALE of His love. It' s vast - and Paul prays that the Ephesians might comprehend it- even though it is unfathomable.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Rom 5:7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is what controls our response - our love, our compassion - love is a proactive thing - Revolution of Love. That' s why Paul is making so much of a fuss here - if we understand Jesus' love, then we MUST respond like this. Then we see the scale of what God can do, because we see the scale of what He has already done.

We will never forget a one-day campaign we had in Bombay some months ago, when the Lord had laid it on our hearts to distribute a half million tracts in one day. After having distributed some 400,000 tracts throughout the day, we had a meeting in the evening. As we closed that meeting we said that if anyone was constrained to go back into the streets with tracts, we still had a few left . . . about 100,000! There were several volunteers. I had absolutely no desire to go out that night with more tracts. It was 11 p.m., we had started the day at 5 a.m., and I had worked through the night before on the maps of the city. I was tired. I did not feel any love tingling through me. And as I started out, I just stopped where I was and turned my eyes upon Jesus. I saw Him going the second mile-I saw Him going up Calvary' s hill for me. That was love ! It was not cheap sentiment. It was not a letter signed, "I love you. "It was action. And I said to myself that if Jesus could go the extra mile for me, then surely He could help me go the extra mile for those others whom He loved. Love is action . . .' If you love me, keep my commandments.'
George Verwer, A Revolution of Love

Mark, I understand what you are saying - but I don' t have a passion for souls, I don' t even begin to fathom just how wide and how deep Jesus' love is. Maybe Jesus is important enough to

have in your life but you still haven't allowed him to settle in.

OK I can understand that - I've been there. But maybe you feel you just don't have the ability or the faith to do it. Why do you think Paul prays this prayer - why do I think that we should be praying it from one another. Because when we understand the height and depth of Jesus' love it will revolutionise our love, it will revolutionise our lives.

4. That you might be filled with the fullness of God

God wants to fill every part of our lives - he wants to be in every nook and cranny.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

That we might attain the fullness of God. Similar verse in Eph 4:11 which has a similar sentiment.

Eph 4: 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Why be filled - to become mature in Christ? He dwells in our hearts - he fills us completely. This is a very Trinitarian book - he repeats it again in terms of the Spirit in 5:18

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants to fill our lives and be every part, nook and cranny. Why do we hold out on Him when he wants to pour out His presence into our lives so much.

You may say - impossible. Can't be done. What about this issue or that issue in my life? I have an impossible situation in my life.

Impossible! Difficult!?

How can I understand all this - how can I do anything about it - remember that first point I skipped over - *16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being that he may strengthen you with power* - where? in your inner being -through the POWER of His Spirit - the ability is there - His Spirit is in us and we have power

Power major theme in Ephesians - *Eph 1: 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

Greek dunamis - DYNAMITE. God wants to put dynamite into our Christian lives - POW!

And this is the essence of Paul's prayer - What we do and how we act as Christians is a response to what we think he's like - deal with the glory and the vastness of God.

That isn't the end - because there's even more dynamite to come.

That leads on to verse 20 - the benediction, doxology. The previous verse leads to it. When our understanding of Jesus is right, then God acts dynamically - immeasurably more. This is a book of great adjectives. There are extravagant ones here. Its really OTT. Look that word dunamis is here - what can God do here - amazing mighty things.

When we're right before God

-  when we know his power
-  when he is at the centre of our lives
-  when we understand the vastness of His love

 when we are full of Him

... then we understand the vastness of everything else associated with Him.
Then we understand that there is no limit to what God can do.

We have plans as a Church - can this happen? I see two things in the passage, firstly the love of God - which spurs us to compassion, but I also see the power of God which makes things happen. That compassion turns into action. The end result is that God is glorified!

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

God wants to be glorified - be glorified here, he' s going to be glorified.

What are we to do? We are people destined for glory - so why don' t you start acting like you are.