

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 14)

Ephesians 3:14-21

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During these difficult times as we fight this disease, this invisible enemy, just as when we fight spiritual battles against invisible spiritual enemies, we are reminded how much we need God. We pray to Him because what is difficult for us is easy for Him. Much is out of our control, but everything is in His control. So we come with a heart of dependency. In today's passage, which wraps up the first section of Ephesians, Paul turns our attention to the heart of prayer. In praying for us, he teaches us how we should pray.

The first thing Paul tells us about prayer is to remember to whom we pray (Ephesians 3:14-17). Paul says he kneels before the Father in v. 14. The word "kneel" means to fall or bow your knees (also used in Philippians 2:10). It reminds me of my frail grandmother, who would kneel to pray for an extended period of time every day after lunch. This kneeling represents the proper posture we should have before the throne of God. It represents a heart of humility and dependence on God, a heart that acknowledges His supremacy, that reveres and honors Him, and that submits to His authority. Furthermore, in v. 15 Paul says that all the families in heaven derive their name from God, to whom we pray. These families are the different nations, both Jew and Gentile, which have become united in God's kingdom. God's renaming of His people signifies His authority over us as well as a new relationship established with us. All those who are in Christ have a new name, a new identity in Him. In v. 16 we also see that the God we pray to is glorious, abundantly rich, strong, and powerful. And He generously strengthens us in our inner being. Finally, notice that Paul mentions the Father in v. 14, the Son in v. 17, and the Holy Spirit in v. 16. The God we pray to is Triune. Although one Person of the Trinity would be more than enough to answer our prayer, all Three are involved. God employs the totality of His being and ability to meet our needs. So when we pray, let us remember that we pray to the King who is above all, in whom we have our identity, who is glorious, rich, strong, and powerful, and who cares about us with the totality of His being.

The second thing Paul tells us about prayer is what we should pray for (vv. 16-19). Paul prays that we are strengthened by the power of the Spirit in our inner being. We should pray for ourselves and each other to be strengthened in faith. When we are weak, struggling to resist sin, suffering physical ailments, or discouraged in our hearts, our faith is impacted. We must turn to

the God who alone can touch our hearts and strengthen our faith. In v. 17 Paul says that we should pray for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith. This is the idea of becoming obsessed with Jesus, fully devoted to Him in our lives. Paul continues to pray that we be rooted and established in love. The only sound foundation we can have is in the love of God. Next, Paul prays that we have the power (that is, the ability) to grasp the scale of the love of Christ, to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Finally, he prays for us to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God, which is to be filled with the fullness of His love. For when we understand how deep His love is for us, we will be filled. We should meditate on His love, and we must be legitimately impressed and moved by it. Then we will have established deep roots and have a strong foundation for our faith. When we are stuck with our families all day, our love for each other is tested. But think about how much God put up with you, how much He sacrificed for you when you were treating Him with contempt, and you will be able to forgive and love those whose offenses towards you are small in comparison. Let us pray that we truly understand the depth of His love, which can only be fathomed by acknowledging that it is unfathomable.

The third point Paul makes is the ultimate purpose of prayer (vv. 20-21). He concludes this section about prayer, as well as the entire first half of Ephesians, by turning our attention to God. The ultimate purpose of prayer is to glorify God. This passage is not often used for benedictions, but I use it because it makes us stop focusing on ourselves, which we naturally do, and focuses our attention on God. Whereas many benedictions focus on the blessings we receive, this passage focuses on the One who blesses, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. He deserves all glory and honor forever. We must be reminded to focus on God. So when we pray, let us recognize to whom we pray, ask to be impressed by His love, and give all glory to Him.