

Ephesians 3:14-25

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[0:00] How do we pray? In chapter 1 of Ephesians, Paul has already told the church there in Ephesus that he prays for them.

! He says, I pray that you might realise really where you're going and what's happened to you. If you want to summarise Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1. But here in Ephesians chapter 3, he tells them more of what he's prayed for.

Verses 14 to 21 of chapter 3. It is noble and it is elevated. It is sublime, the truths that are contained here. It's a passage which is, in many ways, indescribable in its grandeur.

It divides really simply into three parts. There's verses 14 and 15, and then 16 to 19, and then 20 and 21.

So, and the first part is in verses 14 to 15. And that tells us about Paul's approach in prayer. How do we approach God in prayer? Paul's approach in prayer.

[1:10] And he starts like this. He says, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. It's a surprising verse in many ways.

Paul intended to write this paragraph. I'm just after verse 1. You see there's a little light at the end of verse 1. It's as if he got carried away. And his mind got triggered by another train of thought.

So, he started off in verse 1. For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. And then he goes off. And he tells us what caused Paul to pray.

Well, what caused Paul to pray like this is chapter 2. Chapter 2 of Ephesians, the very famous chapter. And he says that in God's sight, there is no longer Jews and Gentiles.

There's no longer his people, the Jews, and then the rest of the world. There's no longer Jews who believe and non-Jews who believe.

[2:09] They are one people. They're one nation. And they're one building. And it's a great mystery. That now the message of Jesus Christ is for all nations.

That's what's been revealed. And for all peoples. And whether you're from Japan or Ireland or America. You are just as much a member of God's people as if you're from Israel.

And you can trace the English back to Abraham. That is the great mystery. There is only one body of Christians. There's no division amongst Christians anymore.

There's not first class Christians and second class Christians. And when Paul thinks about that. And he sees that fleshed out in the church in Ephesus. He sees Jews believing in Ephesus.

And he sees Gentiles believing in Ephesus. He sees slaves believing in Ephesus. And cultured masters living in Ephesus. He sees people from wealthy backgrounds.

[3:14] And from poor backgrounds. All coming together. In one church. And it moves him to pray. Verse 14. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father.

So look at verse 14. It's surprising isn't it? Why is it surprising? Do you see verse 14?

Isn't it shocking? I was with my father this week. My dad for four days. I greeted him. I gave him a hug.

Gave him a kiss on the cheek. Grabbed my arm. I didn't bow before him. Most of you have been with your father this week. Did you bow before your father when you met him?

Children is that what you did on Christmas day? I'm so thankful for the presents. You didn't do that did you? But can you see it? There's two aspects there aren't there?

[4:13] Do you see what Paul remembers in verse 14? He remembered that God is father. He approached God as father. But also asked who do you bow before?

You bow before the king. And when he approached God he remembered he was the great God. Of whom he's already spoken of in this chapter.

So he bows his knee like a subject. Or a suppliant would bow there before the majestic king. And kneels before the throne. And pays homage. And he prostrates in utter abasement. But when he comes to God. He bows. He bows. But he bows to him as father. Look at verse 14. For this reason. I bow my knees before the father. From whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

He sees God as his father. God has one eternally begotten son. He is the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 13] But you also learn in chapter 1 of Ephesians. That God has an immense amount of adopted sons. And each one of his sons takes his name.

And his name is named upon them all. Some of those adopted sons have died. And they are now in heaven. Some of them are still alive and here on earth. And look at verses 14 to 15 again.

For this reason I bow my knees before the father. From whom every family in heaven and earth is named. There is a note of adoption. Christians generally speaking.

It is a really broad brush. But they fall into one of two extremes. There are those who see the greatness of God. And his majesty. And they can only think of God in terms of distance.

You have heard people pray like that. I am sure. And God seems so great. And so majestic. And so distant. That you wonder. How could he have anything to do with me?

[6 : 12] And then there are those. Who fall into the other trap. Of only remembering that God is father. And they speak to God. With a kind of. Sickening love.

If I can put it like that. As if he was some sort of. Best pal. And yes there is intimacy there. But there is no sense of the. Godness of God.

He is just some form of invisible playmate. Well that is the way it comes across. But Paul doesn't fall into either of those extremes. He remembers that God is God.

To whom every knee should bow. And that God is father. And is that exactly in line. With Lord Jesus Christ. Who taught us to pray.

Our father who is in heaven. He is a king. And a father. He is a king. But the one who is a king.

[7 : 10] Is also a father. God is king. And you forget that at your peril. And if we don't bow our knees. In homage and reverence. Our prayer life is defective.

But the one who is king. Is father. And that's what makes us prince and princesses. This morning. We can approach the king. As princes approach the king.

And Paul marries those two things together. And his prayer is prayed in that spirit. And our prayer should be prayed in that spirit too. Look at verses 16 to 19. And we see what Paul prayed.

We see how Paul prayed. Verses 14 to 15. 16 to 19. We see what Paul prayed. Before I name you. I want you to notice.

That God. That Paul still regards God. As both father and king. So can you see that in verse 16. He speaks about the riches of his glory. He's going to make large requests.

[8 : 05] From God. That God is majestic. And glorious. And infinitely rich. And that is why he can give the request. He has a sense of the kingship. And at the end of verse 19.

He says. And to know the love of Christ. That surpasses knowledge. That you may be filled with all the fullness of God. So let's just imagine. You are invited out to dinner. By a very very rich man.

And you know that he has immense wealth. Enormously wealthy. Lavishly wealthy. You wouldn't choose.

Would you. As in chips. That's 3.75. 5. You wouldn't would you. Because you would know. That his wallet. Can stretch to much much more than that.

You wouldn't mind running up a bill. Of 70 or 80 pounds. As long as you're not fitting the bill.

Because his wallet. Will stretch to that. Let me give you an explanation of that. There's a minister. That was a minister in Richmond.

[9 : 03] And he took me out for dinner. Before he left. And we went to the Ealing Park Tavern. And I went for. I can't remember what I had. I had a burger or something. Anyway he moved to Philadelphia.

Where he's now the minister of a church of 4,000. And he came back the following year. And we went to the same mascot. And I said. Who's paying? And he said. It's on the church card.

So we knocked ourselves out. On the church card. Because I knew that. His wealth was paid.

Imagine you go to university. You're a student.

And you're struggling for bills. But you've got a billionaire father. And you ask your father for help.

And your father sends you five pounds a year. Five pounds a month. He is paying. Isn't he? Given from his riches. But do you see what it says?

[9 : 58] It says that he has given. According to his riches. Can you see that? And so if he gives. Five pounds a month.

Your billionaire father is giving you. Out of his riches. But if he's giving. According to his riches. He will give. Far, far more. Won't he?

There is no limit to his giving. And can you see that? It's the same with God. God. Because God. By his definition. Is limitless. And therefore.

The request that I'm making. Is that you may experience. Can you see what he says? That you may experience. Certain things. Unto the fullness of God. I'm asking that you might be. Filled. And filled. And filled. Up to the limit. Of God's ability to give. But there is no limit. On God's ability to give. So I'm asking that you may be. Filled. And filled.

[10 : 56] And filled. Up to the fullness of God. There's kingly language. He is aware. That God is a king. But he makes the request. Nonetheless. And he expects. To be heard. And he expects.

That the slaves. And the masters. And all the Ephesian church. Will receive what he prays for. Now why should God. Bother with slaves? Why should God. Bother with the despised.

In Ephesus. Why should God. Bother to listen to the Ephesians? Why should God. Bother to listen to your prayers? Simply because. He is father. Father. So even in his petitions.

He can confidently address. God as king. And boldly address him as father. Now Paul asks for three things. And each one should begin with the word that.

Look at verse 16. The first thing he asks for is. That according to the riches of his glory. He may grant you to be strengthened with power. Through his spirit. In your inner being. Number two is verse 17.

[11 : 52] That you being rooted. And grounded. So that Christ may dwell in your heart. Through faith. And then verse 17.

Again in the second half of the verse. That. You may be rooted. And grounded in love. And you may have strength. To comprehend with all the saints. What is the breadth. And length. And height. And depth.

And to know the love of Christ. That surpasses knowledge. That you may be filled. With all the fullness of God. Now let's just look closely at those verses. Can you see. Paul is praying something for their will.

He is praying something for their will. And he is praying something for their heart. And he is praying something for their mind.

Can you just see that. So verse 16. At the end of verse 16. It is their inner being. Their will. Verse 17. May dwell in your hearts.

[12 : 50] And verse 18. That you might have strength. To comprehend your mind. And you will see that in his prayer. He speaks about the Father.

And he speaks about the Son. And he speaks about the Holy Spirit. See those three things. See those three persons. The Father.

The Son. And the Holy Spirit. The heart. And the mind. And the will. So he is asking. Isn't he. That the whole of the Godhead. Will do something for the whole of man.

And that's what his prayer is. He is praying that something internal will happen. He is not praying for externals. The gospel is not about that. He is praying that something will happen. Inside of the Ephesians.

Now look at verse 16. At the first request. This one has got to do with the will. That according to the riches of his glory. He may grant you to be strengthened. With power through his spirit. In your inner being. Now you can quickly see what Paul is getting at.

[13 : 51] Let's put it like this. There is a girl in the church. Who has become a Christian. And she is obviously a Christian. She has come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And it has changed her life. And she is growing.

As a Christian. But on Tuesday she will go back to work. And in work. She is the only Christian. And she is separated from her friends who are Christians.

She can't really read the Bible. It is really pressured. And in work. There is a guy in work. Who is really good looking. He is a charming guy.

And he presses her. To go out with him. And he presses her. And he presses her. He pursues her. And she knows that for a Christian.

For somebody who is in Christ. To go out with somebody who is not a Christian. For somebody who is outside of Christ. It is wrong. And it is an offence against God. It is unthinkable.

[14 : 49] And she knows that she should never go out with this fellow. But he is so charming. And so witty. And he is a really nice guy. Nice to the lot of the guys in church. That eventually she says yes.

Why does she say yes? Because she is not spiritually strong. And she needs to be strengthened. In her inner being.

She is not sufficiently spiritually strong. And she wants to keep saying no. There is a guy. Who is a really good guy.

He loves his Christian friends. But at work. He is alone again. He is only Christian in his office. He is a luncheon. He goes out with his mates at luncheon.

He gets on really really well. And he goes out to the work office party. And all the other guys are drinking like he is going out of fashion. And they are putting huge pressure on him to keep drinking.

[15 : 49] He stops after two pints. But the pressure goes on. And on. And on. And he is a third. And a fourth. And suddenly he finds himself.

Out of control. Breaks up for himself. Why did that happen? Because. He was spiritually weak. And he needed to be strengthened in his inner being.

Think of children. Are you going to school this week? You are back in school. And you are in the playground. And your friends start to do things that you know is wrong. And you know it is wrong. But they are desperate to get you involved. And they are desperate to. For you to do it as well. And you stand against it. But in the end you give in.

Why? Well the answer is. Because we are spiritually weak. And we need to be strengthened in our inner being. And yet.

[16 : 49] We know. Don't we. That there are people that are like that. And so you think of a Christian woman. Who has got a strength about her. A Christian guy. Who has got a certain resolve. A determination.

They are gracious. But they are principled. You meet Christians. That you just can't budge. They weren't like that.

When they were non-Christians. And it is a work. A real work. Of the Holy Spirit. Which has made them firm. And resolved. And gracious. And unmovable. And Paul is praying for that.

And don't you need that? That you might be strengthened with power. Through his spirit. In your inner being. Do you pray for each other like that?

How are Christians made strong? It's by the church's prayers. Now look at verse 17.

[17 : 50] The first half of the prayers. Not only to do with the will. But to do with the heart. And here's the second petition. That Christ may dwell in your hearts. Through faith. That means that Christ may be at home in your hearts.

What is Paul getting at? He's speaking to Christians. That Christ may be at home in your heart. And to find that. To find. To find that out.

Turn with me to John chapter 14. John chapter 14. Let me read to you from verse 15. Where Jesus says in John 14 verse 15. If you love me. You will keep my commands.

And I will ask the Father. And he will give you another helper. To be with you forever. Or abide in you. Forever. Even the spirit of truth. And the world cannot receive. Because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him. For he dwells with you. And will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you yet.

[18 : 48] Little while. And the world will see me no more. But you will see me. Because I live. You also will live. And in that day. You will know that I am in my Father. And you in me. And I in you. Whoever has my commands. And keeps them.

He it is who loves me. And you who loves me. Will be loved by my Father. And I will love him. And manifest myself to him. Verse 23. Jesus answered him. If anyone loves me.

He will keep my word. And my Father will love him. And we will come to him. And make our home with him. What's Jesus saying then? He said.

If you do what I say. I will be a living reality to you. If you do what I say. By means of the Holy Spirit. I will make myself at home in your heart.

You will have a consciousness. Not only that I am with you. But that I am in you. If you love me. And keep my words. My Father and I will come. And make our home in you.

[19 : 42] And that is what Paul is talking about. When a person obeys the word of God. He has a sense of the presence of God in his life. And when a person obeys the word of God.

He has a sense of the presence of Christ in his life. And why should anyone obey Christ's word? Because they believe. They believe it.

That is what Christ is praying for. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. You ever met people like that? They have such a sense of the presence of Christ.

That they talk naturally to him and about him. And Paul is praying that to the Ephesians. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. The third petition is in verses 17, 18 and 19.

And it's to do with the will. It's to do with the mind. I'm sorry. Look halfway through verse 17. That you being rooted and grounded in love. May have strength to comprehend with all the saints. What is the breadth and depth and height and depth.

[20 : 41] And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. And that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. When your life is filled with love. When you're rooted and you're grounded in love for Christ.

I pray something else for you. I pray that you'll understand something. I pray that you'll grasp something. That your mind will get hold of something. Something which is unknowable.

And what Paul is saying is. I want you to grasp that which is ungraspable. I want you to know that which is beyond knowledge. And what is Paul saying here.

Especially in verses 18 and 19. Think of a group of explorers. They go to the ocean. And they set out to find how wide the ocean is. And then they set out to find how long the ocean is.

And how deep. And then the picture breaks down. Because the love of Christ is greater than any ocean. Some explorers go that way.

[21 : 42] Others go that way. Others go that way. And others go that way. And eventually when they come together. Each of them knows something about the ocean. Each one knows something that the others don't. They're in a different position aren't they?

They're able to tell the rest something else about the ocean. But not one of them knows all of the ocean. And when you put them together. Even then they don't understand everything there is to know about the ocean.

And yet each one of them knows something about the greatness of the ocean. And Paul is praying that the church. That we would know something of the greatness of Christ's love. Knowing full well. That you can never fully discover how great Christ's love is.

He says I want you to explore the breadth of Christ's love. And the breadth of Christ's love is marvellous. That it embraces not only Jew. But Gentile as well.

Not only religious but irreligious. It's a wide invitation isn't it? To come to Christ. We never realise. How broad.

[22 : 42] Christ's love is. Even if we could gather all the Church of London together today. And there's a length to Christ's love isn't it? He loves us from eternity. And he will love us to eternity.

And millions of years pass by. And there's no end of his love. And how long Christ's love is we don't know. And how deep it is. Well we know don't we. That he left the glory of heaven.

And he came and he sat with tax collectors. And scum. And sinners. He sank right down to the depths. And he ransomed and he rescued. And yet it is deeper, deeper still.

Who knows how deep a person might go. And yet Christ can still save them. There's some people who know more about the breadth. Some who know more about the depth.

Who knows how high Christ's love is. Look at the height to which he's lifted us. He's adopted us into his family. The Apostle John says. Now we are the children of God.

[23 : 39] And yet it doesn't appear what we shall be. Who knows what we will be lifted to yet. No mind is seen. No eye is conceived. What heights and glories we will yet experience.

Who knows the length and the height and the breadth of Christ's love. We all know a little something of it. But if we all get together. We all speak about it. We've still not discovered the whole. And Paul says.

I am praying that you will explore the love of Christ. And you will have that limitless experience. Of strengthening of your will. And that limitless experience.

Of Christ dwelling in your heart. Limitless experience of Christ's love. That you will receive and receive. And receive and receive. Until the fullness of God. And what you learn.

On the first day of this year. Is that no Christian has yet arrived. And every single one of us. Has got further to go. You might have been a Christian all your life.

[24 : 40] You might have read all the great theological books. And you've got a long way to go. And so this week. Let's pray for each other like this. Do we see our own need.

Of spiritual growth. Paul's approach. Paul's petition. And thirdly and lastly. Paul's doxology. Paul's doxology. In verses 20 to 21. He has such high thoughts of God.

Look at how he praises God. And in the doxology. There's four things. Verse 20. There's an attribute of God. Isn't it? Now to him who is able. To do far more abundantly.

Than all we ask or think. According to the power at work within us. There is no limit. To what God can do. No limit. You think about how Paul could have phrased this sentence.

How he wrote it. And he could have said. Now unto him who is able to do all that we ask. And that would have been quite good. Wouldn't it? If you can grasp that much. That he's able to do all that we ask.

[25 : 41] But now he says. I must put down. Able to do more than we ask or think. No, no. That's not good enough either. That above all that we ask or think.

No, abundantly, exceedingly, abundantly above what we can ask or think. No limits to his power. I wonder have you limited God this morning.

Have you sat down. And thought there's nothing God can do for me. Away with such thoughts. Banish them. Look what God is able to do.

Let me just break from it on that. Those of you who are not visitors.

You will know that we have a building project. We have a building project to raise 2.2. 3 million pounds. And it's been quite hard work. To raise the money.

[26 : 37] And there's a man in this congregation. Called Chris Bannock. Chris Bannock. He's an elderly gentleman. Um. Uh. Who died. I think in February last year.

And uh. We received a note from Chris Bannock. Estate. In November. That said that he'd left something at his will. And Chris Bannock. By all accounts and purposes. Was not a very wealthy man.

I received a text from Daffy. To say this week. That we received. 80,000 pound. From Chris Bannock's estate. For the building project. It's an amazing thing.

We have prayed. And prayed. And prayed. And. If you'd said to me. Chris Bannock's estate. Would give you 80,000 pounds. For a man.

That you thought. Didn't have very much. Well you'd be amazed. Because let me tell you. God is able to do far abundantly. All that we ask or think.

[27 : 33] And so have you limited God this morning? Away with such thoughts. And then he has a desire.

You see the desire. The desire is there in verse 21. It says. Unto him be glory. Paul wants all sorts of things to the Ephesians. But there's something he wants more than anything else.

He wants God to be glorified. And he wants God to be worshipped. And he wants God to be praised. And he wants all the credit to go to God. And he wants all creatures everywhere.

To think high thoughts of God. So again. With the building project. Why are we doing it? Well it must be isn't it? Unto him be glory.

A desire. Then thirdly a place. Look at verse 21. Where's the place? To him be glory in the church. Where should praise to God first be given? In the church.

[28 : 31] What is God about? He is building his church. What is the church? Is it a building? Of course it's not. It's the company of men and women. And boys and girls. Who are in Christ Jesus. In the church.

In Christ Jesus. And so it tells us. What's the first task of the IPC. The church this year. It's obvious isn't it? It's not to be a fellowship. To be a friendly group.

Although it should be. It's not primarily intended. To be a kind of evangelism. Telling others agency. Although it should be that too. The church is primarily intended. To be a people. Who prostrate themselves.

And who bow before the great God. And seek his glory on the earth. And after we're to desire a time. A place and a time.

Look at verse 21. He desires. That the all powerful. Limitless God. Should be glorified. In the church. Forever. And ever.

[29 : 26] And ever. And ever. And he could not want anything else. Because how long is the love of Christ? Do you remember? And if Christ's love is so long.

And deep. And wide. And high. How could Paul wish for anything less. Than the great God. Who sent this saviour. Should be glorified. And praised. Throughout all ages. In world without end.

And so this week. As we try feebly. Don't we. To devote ourselves to prayer. We must make doxology. And praise. A part of our prayer. To have high thoughts of God.

And when we read this. Sublime prayer. And I look at my heart. We are spiritual babes. And we see. The urgent needs.

To pray this. For one another. To I to him. Who is able to do far more abundantly. Than all we ask. Or think. According to the power. At work within us. To him.

[30 : 26] Be glory in the church. And in Christ Jesus. Throughout all ages. Forever and ever. Amen. Amen.