

Sermon 12: Longing for Spiritual Maturity Ephesians 3:14-21

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen..."

Summary: God's people should long for spiritual maturity and embrace His work in that process.

Introduction:

- **Growth involves four components**
 - Life
 - Time
 - Experience
 - Response
- **Paul's prayer will bring out each of these components as they work together in God's hands to shape us into Christ's image.**

Part 1: The object of our prayer: We to pray to our Father: 3:14-16

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man..."

- **Fact 1: A desire to grow and see others grow should be natural:**
- **Fact 2: Growth comes through a process:**
 - **Dead men do not grow: 2:1-2:10**
 - **2:1** "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins..."
 - **2:2** "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world,
 - **2:3** "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh..."
 - **2:5** "When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ..."
 - **2:7** "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus..."

- **2:10** "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..."
 - **Growth comes through cultivation:** "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might..."
- **Fact 3: The Father works in our lives to shape us: James 1:4-5**
"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing... If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God..."
- **Fact 4: His work on us:**
 - **John 15:1-2** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit..."
 - **Hebrews 12:5-7, 11** "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons... no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby..."

Part 2: The confidence of our prayer: We rest in the Spirit: 3:16 "To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man..."

- **Fact 1: The Spirit who indwells us works in our hearts to stimulate growth and cultivate fruitfulness:** "Strengthened with might in the inner man..."
 - **He personally strengthens us:**
 - **John the Baptist: Luke 1:80** "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit..."
 - **Christ: Luke 2:40** "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him..."
- **Fact 2: He works in us: John 14:17** "The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive...dwelleth with you, and shall be in you..."
- **Fact 3: He does it through the Scriptures:**
 - **James 1:21** "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls..."
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18** "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord..."
 - **Ephesians 6:17** "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

- **Fact 4: When we pray, we need to take our responsibility seriously:**
 - Trust the Father to listen and work.
 - Trust the Spirit to work through the Word.
 - Get into the Word, since that is what He promises to use.

Part 3: The focus of our prayer: We are shaped into the image of Christ: 3:17-19 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God..."

- **Fact 1: God's love nourishes and stabilizes our souls so we can grow** (This is a description of our condition)
 - **Nourishment:** "Being rooted in love..."
 - **Stability:** "Being grounded in love..."
- **Fact 2: Spiritual maturity has four components that are reflected in Paul's prayer:** (This is a description of the end result)
 - **Component 1: A radical reshaping of our character:** "That Christ may dwell in your hearts..."
 - His character is formed in us.
 - The Spirit's influence touches every area of our lives.
 - **Component 2: A dynamic comprehension of God's love:** "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height..."
 - Our understanding of God's love expands.
 - We will never fully grasp the depths of His love for us.
 - **Component 3: A vibrant experiential sense of God's love:** "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge..."
 - Our knowledge needs to be coupled with experience and conviction.
 - As we live our lives and walk with Him, He uses everything to develop a deeper personal sense of this reality.
 - **Component 4: A complete transformation of identity:** "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God..."
 - Who we are is not who we were.
 - Our identity is lost in Him.

Part 4: End of our prayer: It all brings glory to God: 3:20-21 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen..."

- **Fact 1: God's redemptive purposes for us are far bigger than we can comprehend with our shortsighted, limited perspectives.**
 - **3:20** "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think..."
- **Fact 2: The transformation addressed in these verses is all accomplished by God's power not ours.**
 - **3:20** "According to the power that worketh in us..."
- **Fact 3: As God transforms lives, He gets all the glory.**
 - **3:21** "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen..."

Applying the passage:

- **Application 1: We need this longing.**
 - Ask God to give you a deeper hunger to know and grow in Him.
 - Get back to the basics of your Christians life.
 - Take time reflecting on the gospel and what Christ has done for you.
 - Prioritize your time in His Word.
- **Application 2: We need to understand what He is doing.**
 - The foremost goal of the Christian life is to shape us into the image of Christ.
 - In that process, God wants to reveal Himself to us in a very practical way.
 - As we grow, He will work through us for His glory.
- **Application 3: We need to understand how He is doing it.**
 - The Father uses all circumstances to shape us.
 - The Spirit who indwells us use the Word to strengthen us and shape us from within.
- **Application 4: We need to embrace what He is doing.**
 - Growth only happens when we respond properly to God in circumstances.
 - Pain can make us bitter and disillusioned or strong and compassionate.
 - Do not accept a victim's mentality, grow, learn, and rise above your circumstances with God's strength.
- **Summary: Romans 8:28-29** "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..."