

Ephesians 3:14-21

Power

Image Church // Prayers for the Church: Week 4

Introduction

Good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

Hey, listen, in case you missed it the last few weeks, I shared some really exciting news...

We are in the process of moving forward on a permanent location for us as a church.

This is an incredible opportunity that God in His faithfulness has put in front of us... It's a space that allows us to do everything that we want to do, everything that we believe the church should be about... This space would serve as not only a gathering space, but also a missional hub!

And it's in a centralized location for all of you that call Image Church Home...

Nothing official yet, we will keep you updated as things continue to progress... We are hoping to have the paperwork signed this week to make it official so be praying!

- **Also**, I said this last week, but if you've been attending and sitting on the sidelines in your giving- now is a good time to jump in to help make this happen!

Alright well, we're going to be continuing our series that we kicked off last week called **Prayers for the church**...

Where we're looking specifically at prayers that Paul prayed for the church in the **NT**, and we're holding them up asking that the things that he prayed would be true for us at Image Church in 2021...

We're saying: *God we want to see the prayers that Paul prayed become a reality for us today!*

So, the goal is that as we look at these prayers, that they would serve as a framework for our prayers, pursuits and aspirations for today!

And this morning we're going to be looking at the second prayer that Paul prays for the church in **Ephesus**.

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to the book of Ephesians... We're going to be in Ephesians 3...

We'll be picking up in **verse 14**... As you're turning there let me give you some context...

What Paul's going to do here is pick back up on the prayer that he prayed in **Chapter 1** that we looked at last week...

Let me zoom out and give you a little more context... Paul's overall goal in these *first few chapters* of the book of **Ephesians** is to remind the church of who they are in Christ and what God's purpose is for them...

And so, Paul hammers that out in the first few chapters and it's in light of all that he's laid out that he's again compelled to pray for the church...

Which is why he's going to start here in **verse 14** by saying *for this reason*... In other words, he's saying it's in light of God's purpose for you that I am praying this for you...

Here we go, let's jump in...

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. **16** I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, **17** and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

OK, let's stop right here and look at the first thing that Paul prays... Here's the first thing that he prays... And like I have done before I am going to use **proactive language** here for the sake of **application**...

Paul asks that they would be **strengthened with power from the Holy Spirit**... (v. 16-17a)

Power for what?? Based on everything Paul's said up to this point in Ephesians, the power to be **transformed into who God wants them to be**...

So, here's the first aspirational truth that we want to be a reality for us in light of Paul's prayer...

1. Would we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us

Now, don't miss this, notice the source Paul's looking to for the strength and power to be transformed, he's looking to the riches and glory of God, because he knows that in order to experience true transformation, you have to be connected to the right power source... ***That's huge right there***...

And look at where Paul specifically asks for God's power to be directed at the ***inner being***.

Why?? Because ***true transformation has to start at the heart level***.

There has to be a change at the core of who we are.

Everyone wants to see change, but for that to happen there has to be a change on the inside. See, what's on the outside is only an overflow of what's on the inside!

And Paul's holding up the fact that you and your power aren't the answer for that internal change. There's not enough self-help in this world that can change a heart.

We have to stop thinking that **we're** the solution to our own problems- that the answer lies within...

Example: Pablo Sandoval (***The Panda***) Incredible major league baseball player: 3 Time World Series Champion, World Series MVP, and 2-time All-Star

- Attributes all of his success to a self-help book called *The Secret* (A NY Times best Seller over 30 million copies sold)
- It's all about unlocking the power of positive thinking in order to bring about life transformation.

Here is the problem with all that... the power of positive thinking is a behavior modification not a life transformation.

We don't need a new way of thinking, we need a new heart. It is no secret that we are imperfect and broken beings, and broken things can't fix themselves...

It takes a different kind of power than we possess to change who we are, and that's why Paul prays the way that he does- that the strength and power of the **Holy Spirit** would take up residence in us and change who we are from the inside out.

The transformation process that Paul is describing is NOT one that is done by us, but one that is done in us. It's not one done by your own efforts, but done through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit

*See, ***don't miss this*** when Paul says in **verse 17** that Christ may dwell in your heart- he doesn't mean ***a little Jesus physically in your heart***. He means that Christ would be the center of who you are- and it's through faith in Him that you receive the Holy Spirit- and it's the Spirit through **faith** that brings transformation.

Example: It's like when you buy a fixer upper home...

- You buy it knowing there's a lot that needs to be fixed (new roof, new windows, dated kitchen, re-landscape the yard) ... but gradually over time the longer you live there the more you do, and when you step back you can see the results of the time and effort you have put into the home.

When people take up long-term residence somewhere, their presence eventually characterizes the home.

In the same way, when you trust in the finished work of Jesus, the Spirit takes up residence in us, He finds a lot of things that are broken and need to be fixed, but overtime the longer He's there the more his presence begins to characterize who we are!

Some of y'all need to remember who is living in your house!! You need to stop relying on yourself and start resting in the Spirit inside of you! And you need to remember the gospel, and you need to pray just like Paul that the Spirit of God would provide the strength and power for transformation...

What happens is we take our eyes off of that power and onto our own... And when you do that, you never really get transformation, you get **temporary** changes that don't last...

For some of you the question is, is your heart home to the Holy Spirit? One of the ways that you can tell if this is true is by asking yourself: does Christ characterize who you are?? In other words, are there any attributes or qualities of Christ in your life?

See, the **Holy Spirit** is what enables you to be like Christ- the whole reason Jesus left is so that the Spirit could come and reside in those who have surrendered to Christ so that you can access the power of Christ, and walk in the ways of Christ...

It's important to remember, you can't separate these two things... if you've surrendered to Christ then the Spirit will begin to transform who you are to look more like him.

This is a gut check for us because if we take a step back, and there is no sign of transformation in our life then we have to ask the question, have you really surrendered to Christ, is He really the center of who you are??

For some of you, your heart looks a lot like an Airbnb... You hand over the keys but only for the weekends, at the end of the day you still own the house... and yet you're wondering why there are no transformations in your life!

You come here when it's convenient but you have never opened your heart up and surrendered it to Christ... some of you today need to stop going through the motions and you need to surrender and experience the life transforming power of the Spirit of God!

GG (a friend): I walked with him for 10 yrs and no change... Sharing the gospel with Him... He tried to change on his own- I am done drinking, I am going to stop sleeping around, I am going to pray, go to church and go to Bible study... And he did all of that....

But it wasn't until he **surrendered** that anything changed in his life... And man did he change, God's transforming power really works!! This isn't just something theoretical, it is something that is literal and I have witnessed this in His life and in my life and in the lives of so many others!

Some of you need to surrender to God's transformation process instead of trying to fix yourself on your own...

For others of you, this means opening your bible to remind you of who God is and what He has done, spending time praying asking for God to work in your life through his power...

It means committing to the church, getting in a Community Group, serving and being invested and involved all as an effort to reorient your heart and mind around who you are in Christ...

It means not just soaking up but pouring out in light of the power that's inside of you... **The transformation God is doing in you is to be used to build up and encourage those around you!**

Ok, let's keep reading and look at the second thing that we need to see here...

Verse 17, Paul says: I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, **18** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, **19** and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

So, here's the second aspirational truth that we want to be a reality for us in light of Paul's prayer...

2. Would we be rooted and established in the love of God: (v. 17b-19)

He uses some interesting wording here; he prays for the ability to comprehend and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

What does he mean by that? He means to **know** what is beyond knowledge. In other words, the love of Christ goes beyond the scope of intellect, and understanding.

Paul's hope **isn't** that we might become more able to articulate the greatness of God's love, or that we're better at describing who he is, he's not even praying that we would love God more...

Paul's asking for the power to **experience** the limitless dimensions of the love of God through Christ!

Example: Marriage isn't just knowing about someone, experiencing a relationship with someone (joy, happiness, laughter etc.)

The love of God through Christ isn't just something to know about it's something to experience!

Example: **DEER HUNTING**

- I love to deer hunt... like I absolutely love it. I can tell you all about it and how we... face paint, wear camo, have cool weapons...
- And you may think it is pretty cool, but it's not until I take you with me and you get to actually experience what it's like... putting on the face paint, being up in a tree, seeing deer...
- See, **once you have experienced it** you begin to love it even more.
- And the more you love it the more you start to go and read about it, and you find out there are different variations of camo, and doe pee, and then you have an incredible discovery that there are other types of hunting out there, **and then there's FISHING...** and you continue to go deeper and deeper into the life of the outdoors...

Gospel: See, when you experience the incredible nature of the gospel...

The fact that you and I are sinful, wicked and broken, we have done life our own way instead of God's way and because of that we are separated from a God that is perfect and Holy- And if that's not enough, because of our sinfulness not only are we separated from God but his wrath is aimed at us for all that we have done. There's no way out, and no escape, a perfectly righteous God has to execute justice...

BUT GOD... in the single greatest act of Love that the world has ever known sends his Son to come and live life on this earth that way we should have, but never could, a sinless and perfect life...

And at age 33 he was brutally killed on an old rugged cross and in that moment, God unleashes the wrath on him that we deserved. Jesus took my place and your place on that cross.

Then Christ raises from the dead and offers us a relationship with God through trusting that in the finished work he accomplished... Have you received the offer extended to you in Christ? God has offered you a love through Christ that is like no other...

And in the same way that hunting for the first time leads you down a lifelong pursuit to learn more about the sport and new ways to appreciate the outdoors... Once we experience the love of God, our hope, and Paul's prayer is that we begin a lifelong pursuit of his love!

That's why we say *that the Gospel isn't just the start of the Christian life, it's the essence of the Christian life*. Paul's praying for the power to dive deeper into the pool of God's love.

Listen, if you don't hear anything else, **the absolute greatest fulfillment is to experience the love of God over and over again!**

See, as the strength and Power of the spirit works in you to transform your heart, it gives you more opportunities to experience the fulfillment of God's love!

It is a fulfillment like no other, let me give you a glimpse into it, here's what you begin to see and understand:

- Total acceptance: you are fully known and fully loved
- Approval: God fully approves of you in Christ
- Hope: when everything around you seems to be failing, God's love isn't.
- Consistency: the love of God is the one consistent thing in an inconsistent world.
- Unconditional: there is no wavering in the way that God loves you
- Purpose: there is more to life than just you

That kind of love right there is powerful and empowering for us....

And yet we are so easily enticed away from this love...

- Let me ask you, what are the areas that are enticing you away from the love of God?
- Where is it that you are looking for fulfillment?
- What lies are you believing about those things?
 - Is it that you need the love of a BF or GF to find fulfillment?
 - Is it that you need to find a spouse to find fulfillment?
 - Do you need to find just the right job to be satisfied?
 - Landing the big client?
 - Maybe you think children are what you need for fulfillment?
 - Maybe it is more money or more material things??

Whatever it is, you have to recognize that none of those things will bring ultimate fulfillment in your life.

Let's say you get what you're looking for tomorrow, it wouldn't be long before you started looking for something else (Celeb's)!

- ***What promises are attached to those things?***

Nothing this world has to offer can even come close to what God is offering you through Christ! He offers you complete transformation and unlimited fulfillment...

But that is so easy to forget... Listen, let's call a spade a spade- nobody said this is easy... Looking to God to transform and fulfil you in the midst of a world that is holding up everything else is hard...

That's why Paul's asking for **the ability to comprehend the love of Christ!**

See, the more that we see and remember what Christ has done, the more that we lean into the strength and power that the Spirit offers us, and the deeper we will go into the limitless love of God, and the more that we begin to mature in our walk with him.

One other thing to notice is that Paul asks that this would happen **together with all of the saints...**

- You can't do this alone- you need the church, you need community... That's why it exists.

You can't complain about the lack of change in your life, and the lack of fulfillment that you're experiencing in your life if you're not connected to the very thing that God's established to facilitate those things in your life...

Some of you need to actually become part of a church so that you can experience the love of God with the rest of the saints!

Conclusion [VAMP]

I don't know where you are this morning spiritually, but **Let me ask you** this, are you willing to let go? Are you willing to surrender- giving up on your own efforts and resting in the efforts of Christ?

See, in order to experience the very things that you want and need the most, it starts with and comes back to surrender... And we don't like that- we are a people that like to be in control, we like to be the shot callers of our own lives...

But Jesus says in **Luke 9:23**: *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

He's literally saying to us, we have to give up complete control of who we are, we have to step off of the throne of our lives and surrender to him if we want to experience true transformation and ultimate fulfillment...

Example: MONKEY STORY- You know the way that they used to capture Monkeys deep in the jungle is that they would take a jar...

**For many of us we want the power of transformation in our lives, we're longing for fulfillment but we're not willing to open our hands and relinquish complete control of our lives.

And when we do that God guarantees us the promise at the close of Paul's prayer, look at **verse 20...** **Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

Here's the thing, we normally read this verse and assume that its application is toward our external circumstances, but the reality of this passage is Paul's declaration over God's power and ability to internally transform the hearts of people and showing them a fulfillment that's beyond what they could ask or imagine... Unto the glory of God!

- 1. Would we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us**
- 2. Would we be rooted and established in the love of God**

Pray

Father, I pray just as Paul prayed:

That according to the riches of your glory you would grant us strengthened with power through Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith—that we, would be rooted and grounded in love, and 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 we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to you who are able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.