

I. Intro

A. Text: **Eph. 3:14-21**

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

B. Series Theme: ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (**Matt. 16:24**)

C. Re-Cap

1. Biblical discipleship is based on a radically different focus than the world around us. Radically different point of view than the world around us.
 - a. Denial of self-focus, self-interests, etc.
 - b. Placing Kingdom interests above all others.
2. Biblical discipleship is predicated on taking up your own self-centered ambitions, desires, dreams and gratifications... only to nail them to the cross
 - a. Exchanging self-focus for a passionate focus on the Person of Jesus Christ.

D. **Cultural Dilemma:** *We live in a self-centered culture. You do you; and I'm gonna do me.*

1. Spend resources on learning to love ourselves.

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- a. You gotta learn how to love yourself, and then you will know how to love others.
 - 2. Truth: You're actually pretty good at loving you
 - a. **Eph 5:28-29**: *"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it"*
 - 3. Always Have Been a Self-Centered Culture
 - a. Technology Just Increased our self-centeredness
 - i. Polaroid Camera
 - ii. Polaroid Wall

E. Last Week:

- 1. Saul looked the part
 - a. The Requested One
 - b. He was tall and handsome (**1 Sam. 9:1-2**)
 - c. Did all that was within His strength to put a cosmetic fix on a deep-rooted sin problem (**1 Sam. 13**)
 - d. Did great things, but his focus was on how well he looked instead of how well Christ is looks in the earth.
 - i. The outcome was absolutely tragic!
- 2. Cosmetically, David didn't look the part at all.
 - a. Instead of the Requested One, he was the forgotten one.
 - i. Least of all of his brothers
 - b. He messed up, but his focus was not on how well he looked.
 - i. Didn't care about losing his personal image.
 - ii. Cared deeply about losing the Presence of God.

****This week, we are going to develop the proper perspective as it relates to the church.***

II. The Source and Reason for it all: Christ

A. It's all to Him

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph. 3:20)

1. All glory, honor, attention, credit, adoration, worship... belongs to God.
 - a. All things were created through Him (**Col. 1:16**)
 - i. All things were created for Him.
 - b. He is before all things. (**Col. 1:17**)
 - i. Through Him all things consist

B. He is Able to do it.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph. 3:20)

1. God doesn't need our instructions, permission or help
2. He's able: *dynamai*
 - a. Possesses explosive power by his own virtue
 - b. Well capable to do it!

C. Do what? Above our imaginations and ability to fathom would be great.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph. 3:20)

1. But God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we could muster in our mind or fix our mouths to request.
2. Super and duper, above and beyond our wildest dreams.
 - a. God is not limited to our ability to dream, or guess, or fantasize

III. The Location of His Doing: Where Does He do it?

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph. 3:20)

A. **In us!** The Church is the primary vehicle (vessel) by which Jesus acts and moves on the earth.

1. As Jesus moves in and through His church, it's inevitable that attention will come the church's way.
2. **Matt. 5:14**: *"We are the city that is set on the hill AND cannot be hidden!"*
 - a. If the exceedingly abundant power of God is at work in us and among us, eyes will inevitably be focused our way.
 - i. Kinda
 - ii. It seems like it's all eyes on us, but we'd be foolish to assume that we are the object of their gaze.
 - iii. Let us not forget that they're not searching for us. They are searching for a Savior.

B. What happens when the focus of the church becomes the church instead of Jesus?

1. A church-focused church becomes experts at doing church.
2. Promotes all the strengths of the itself.
 - a. Draw all men to the organization.
 - b. Draw all men to the events.
3. Spend all of our resources doing cosmetic stuff that hides our blemishes makes us the mostest.
 - a. Look the best
 - b. Sing the best
 - c. Most in the community
 - d. Give out the most bibles
 - e. Provide the most programs

*The church-centered church exhibits its strength before the world.

- C. **Problem:** The Creator of Heaven and earth doesn't need mankind's photoshopped, filtered selfies to do His work.
1. If (when we look at the church) we see a flawless collage of photos, then I propose that the images have been doctored.
 - a. God don't need our doctored images
 2. **1 Cor. 1:26-29:** *He (God) chose the weak things of the world to confound the wise.*
 - a. Tax collectors, fisherman, etc. (people who no one else wanted)
 3. **1 Cor. 12:8:** *[His] strength is made perfect in the middle of our weakness.*
- D. God is actually glorified most when our blemishes and weaknesses are visible, yet contrasted against His flawlessness and all-sufficient strength.

²¹ *to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

1. Acknowledge our frailties, but focus on His splendor
 2. Something powerful about standing as broken (earthen) vessels in the hands of the Almighty Potter.
 - a. Broken Pots
 3. But that's alright (as long as His glory is displayed in us)
 - a. *"To Him be glory in the church..." (Eph. 5:21a)*
 - i. **2 Cor. 4:7:** *"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency and the power may be of God and not of us."*
 - b. Cracked Pots with light emanating from it.
- E. When the church focuses on itself...
1. Radical Self-preservation and misdirected warfare
 - a. **Mk. 9:38-40:** ³⁸ *Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us*

casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.”³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me.⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side.”

i. John

b. **Num. 11:26-27:**

i. Moses gathered the 70 elders around the tabernacle.

ii. God placed the spirit that was on Moses upon the 70 elders (and they prophesied)

iii. 2 Men stayed back from the tabernacle (Eldad and Medad)

iv. Spirit rested on them too (and they began to prophesy)

c. **Num. 11:28:** *”²⁸ So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!”*

i. Joshua was jealous for Moses’ sake.

d. *²⁹ Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!”*

i. Moses was jealous for the Lord to be magnified, not himself.

IV. **Question:** *If we (the church) are to keep our focus on the Lord Jesus, then how can we expect to correct our errors and blemishes?*

A. **Answer:** *We can’t (unless He does it in us)*

²¹ to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:21)

1. He demands all the glory, all the credit, etc.

a. Jesus saves. Jesus transforms. Jesus heals and delivers.

2. It’s all to Him. It’s all from Him. It’s all for Him. It’s all His doing.

B. Looking at self (for a moment) is not a bad thing as long as our focus doesn't stay on self.

1. Looking at self will certainly reveal ugliness.
 - a. But we can't stay there.
 - b. It will never produce results.
 - c. We can't assume that we can pull out a mirror and some make up to straighten out our imperfections.
 - d. And we can't be so arrogant to believe that God is desires us to remain in our ugliness.
2. It's the passion of Jesus to remove our blemishes and imperfections.
 - a. He does the work. It's His doing.
 - b. Christ loves the church and gave Himself for the church.
 - i. **Eph. 5:26-27:** ²⁶ *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

C. The More we fix our gaze on the glory of Jesus, the more transformation that takes place in us.

1. **2 Cor. 3:18:** *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."*
 - a. Beholding His glory is heavy
 - b. It absolutely floors those who have been enclosed in it.
 - c. And it transforms our ugliness, into His attractiveness.
 - i. Before you know it, we look more and more like Him.
 - ii. It's His doing. It's His work in us... When the church simply fixes their gaze upon Him