

**A Series on Ephesians**  
**“A Prayer for the Inner Being” (Ephesians 3:14-21)**  
**May 2, 2010**  
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**I. Introduction**

Good morning! Welcome to New City!

We are in the middle of a series on Ephesians, a letter Apostle Paul wrote about 2,000 years ago to the church in Ephesus. We are literally at the middle of the book today. There are 6 chapters in the letter and we are finishing chapter 3 today. The first half of the letter is about the gospel. We are now at the climax of the first half.

Let's read Ephesians 3:14-21.

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom his whole family<sup>a</sup> in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

In this passage, we learn (1) what Paul prays for; (2) why he prays for what he prays for; and (3) how that gives us inner power for living.

**II. What Paul Prays for.**

Paul didn't pray for the material blessings of the Ephesian Christians.

Paul didn't pray that they will experience less pain and suffering.

Paul didn't pray that they will be physically healthier.

Paul didn't pray that they will be psychologically or emotionally healthier.

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<sup>a</sup>Or *whom all fatherhood*

He doesn't even pray that they will live a moral life, that they will do the right thing, that they will do ministry with diligence, do good. He doesn't pray for what we are doing. He does not pray for anything we can see with our eyes.

Paul does not pray for the outer being. Paul prays for the inner being.

- In verse 16, Paul prays that “out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”
- In verse 17, he prays that “Christ may dwell in our heart”, in other words, in our inner being.
- In verses 18-19, he prays that “you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

He prays that we would know, really, really know God's love and power. He wants us to be filled to the measure of all fullness of God. Where does this happen? In our inner being. Is this something that happens by ourselves? No, Paul says “together with all the saints” (saints mean Christians). The focus of the prayer is for deepening of our inner being. Our inner sense of being in the presence of God. Our inner sense of the power of the Holy Spirit. Our inner sense of the love of God.

#### **IV. Why does he pray for the inner being? Why is this so important?**

Because it is out of this inner being, that outer being is lived. Being comes before doing. The first three chapters were about being. It says nothing about what we ought to do or how we ought to live. That's not the focus at all. It is all about what God has done for us. Let's review the first three chapters.

The first chapter started out with a bang. After the greeting, he went into a rampage of praise: he praised God for choosing us, adopting us, redeeming us, making known to us the mystery of his will, giving us the Holy Spirit, then he says in 1:15: “for this reason... I have not stopped praying for you...” Everything is about what God has done for us, and the response to what God has done for us: thanksgiving and prayer for understanding of what God has done and the power we have in him.

Then in chapter 2, he wrote about how we were dead but Christ made us alive; how we were in bondage to sin but Christ made us free; how we were justly under condemnation but Christ died for us to justify us. Then, he says that it is not by works we are saved but by grace through faith and then it leads to work of grace. Again, the focus is all about what he has done. It's not about what we have done or are doing.

And in chapter 2, he went one step further in the gospel, that this gospel is not just about us being alive, free, justified individually. God is building an inclusive community, a church, that brings people who are extremely different together in Christ; it is about enemies coming together; it is about races who hate each other coming together; it is about the poor and the rich coming together. God is building a new kind of community, a community of reconciliation. Again, this passage is about what God is doing, not what we are doing. The focus is on how inclusive God is. The focus is on the mystery of God that is being revealed to us.

Now in response to all these things, in chapter 3, Paul starts to break out into a prayer. But, he goes into a detour because he wants to emphasize the importance of this ministry of reconciliation of the church. Then, in chapter 3:14, he finally gets to the prayer again. This is the climax of everything he has been talking about. And he prays that we would really really get what God has done, how much he loves us, how he lives in us, the power of the Holy Spirit—ALL IN THE INNER BEING.

THEN, if you go on to chapter 4 to 6, it is all about how our outer being—our lives, what we do in our lives. In 4:1, it starts out by the phrase: **“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”** The rest of the letter is devoted to how to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. The point that Paul wants to strike deep into our being is that unless we build a foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ deep in our inner being, we cannot live a life worthy of the calling we have received.

Why the separation? **Because being comes before doing.**

We are called to be his children. We are called to be redeemed. We are called to be forgiven. We are called to be with God. We are called to be loved by God more than we can ever imagine. He wants us to rest in him first, before we do anything. Just live in his presence. Live in the power of the Spirit. Live in His love for you. Just soak in Him.

**IV. HOW does focusing on being before doing, which is another way to say focus on the inner being before the outer being, gives us power.**

**A. First, it gives us power to sustain our works/ministry.**

Sometimes, we are trying so hard to do do and do the work that we believe God wants us to do, that we focus on doing even before we can just be and rest in the Lord. You see, being is a state of rest. It is being in Sabbath. The first three chapters of Ephesians are about being. It is about who we are. We are adopted children of God. We are loved deeper, wider, higher, longer than we can ever imagine. It's not about getting our act together. That's the doing. It's about soaking in God's love, his grace, his inheritance, the hope we have in him, his amazing plans. We need to rest in them. We need to have a Sabbath just soaking in his love. That's one of the things that I learned yesterday at the leadership development seminar. That's how we get power. That's how we get charged. You see, when we run around doing stuff, ministry or good works or changed life, we have to give, give and give. If our tank is running low, we are going to burn out. We've got to be focused on refilling the tank with God's grace, God's identity, the gospel, the love and presence of God. If you feel like you are burning out, I pray that you will pray this prayer and soak in his love, and rest in his love. You don't have to do do and do. You have to be and out of being in Him, you go out and do.

If we don't burn out, it's because we learned how to get get and get from the ministry and people. We focus on what others can give to us even though we are trying to do good.

You see, when you get life from Jesus, when you get charged up by Jesus, you don't have to approach other people to give you the charge. You can just serve them out of pure love for them.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to a conference for church planters with Mark and Eunice. We had a great time. I love going to this conference because I get to see friends who are planting church around the United States. We went through boot camp together or church planter assessment together. People would ask me about how the church is going, and I found myself spinning a little. It's not like I lie for the most part. Frances Chan was one of the speakers there. And I saw him at the airport, and I was sharing with him about New City, how diverse we are and stuff, and in the middle of the sentence, I

saw myself say: “we are growing like wild flower.” We are NOT growing like wild flower. As I said that, I can hear myself say: what? Why did you just say that? Why did you just lie?

You know what I realized? There is more darkness in me than I thought. I was trying to get life from doing, instead of being. I was digging for approval. I was trying to get life from other people, instead of from God in my inner being. That’s why I exaggerated. I need to rest in the Lord, knowing that my value, my standing, my worth is not based on what I have done, but on what Jesus has done for me on the cross, and my life is a response and worship to what he has done.

**B. Second reason being must come before doing is that you can’t do it unless your inner being is changed. Your outer being will not change unless your inner being changes.**

We talk a lot about inside-out transformation. Unless we change in the inside, we can’t change our outer lives, how we live. You see, that is the problem with our lives. We have been trying to change ourselves by trying really hard to change, just focusing on our outer being. But, unless you focus on the inner being, you cannot change your life.

**(1) Instead of focusing on our inner being, we just try to change by will power.**

Try it. Focus on your outer being. Focus really hard on what you have to do. Try really hard to do it. Does human effort really work to change us? In Galatians 3:3, Paul says: “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” When you rely on your will power to change you, you generally end up in a vicious cycle. You know what the right thing to do is, but you end up doing the thing you don’t want to do or don’t do the thing that you want to you. You feel completely defeated and powerless. Or you feel like you are better than others and become judgmental or prideful.

**(2) Instead of focusing on our inner being, we are often motivated to change by fear.**

Romans 8:15 says: “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.”

A lot of people try to do the right thing because they fear the consequences of doing the wrong thing.

There was a couple having marital difficulties. They decided to go to see a pastor for counseling. The pastor asks what the problem is. The wife spills the bean and lays out all of the things that the husband does that bothers her. I don't like the way he flirts with other women; I don't like his long hours; I don't like the way he talks to me; I don't like his attitude towards me; he is not as loving as he used to be; he doesn't help out in the home as much as he should. She says that she can't live with him anymore. She can't take it anymore. She says that unless he changes, she will leave. The husband gets scared and commits to change. In fact, fear drives him to change. He stops doing whatever he was doing. He'll stop for a while but when the crisis is gone, when he no longer fears that she will leave, he will go back to the same routine that bothered her. If he does not go back, he will resent his wife for making him do all these things.

It would be miserable to live a moral life motivated by fear.

**(3) Instead of focusing on the inner being, we sometimes are motivated by our pride.** I am going to be the best husband. I am going to be the best mother. I'll be the nicest person in church. This sounds good in the surface, but at its core, you're being motivated by the belief that you are better than others. If you are motivated by pride and you fail, and you will, you won't have anything to stand on. And before you fail, you will be that arrogant self righteous person who feels morally superior and look down upon all the people who can't seem to get their lives together. This too is not the right way.

**(4) Instead of focusing on the inner being, we try to change motivated by good things in life--so that we will have a healthier life and have more friends and enjoy financially secured life.** What if helping someone left you less financially secure? What if following God put you at risk, in prison? What if your friends will reject you if you follow Jesus? You see, we can't change based on these kinds of motivations. If we do, we will end up being self-focused and limited in how and when we will help others.

But all of these ways of changing does not work. What Paul is going to talk about in chapters 4-6 is not going to work unless you are rooted and established in the gospel of Jesus Christ as laid out in chapters 1-3.

He talks about pursuing a pure life, a holy life. He is going to talk about being authentic to one another. He's going to talk about not lying. He is going to talk about avoiding sexual immorality, about getting rid of all sorts of greed, about getting rid of obscenity, about not getting drunk, about being good husbands and wives, being good children and parents, employees and employers. He's going to talk about spiritual warfare. These are amazing things, full of wisdom.

But, all of these things work IF and ONLY IF you are doing these things out of being rooted and established in God's love. The key to sanctification is to focus on our justification. It is the foundation of sanctification.

The last part of the chapter ends with a doxology, a glory statement (in verse 20-21):

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.