

Eph 3:14–19 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ⁽¹⁵⁾ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ⁽¹⁶⁾ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ⁽¹⁷⁾ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1. Going to slow down and wring all we can out of this great prayer

- A. There are some interesting things here I want to look into more deeply
 - 1). Being empowered by the Spirit in our inner being
 - 2). What does it really mean for Christ to dwell in our hearts – how does faith affect that
 - 3). Look at the love that is beyond our understanding – how to understand that more
 - 4). How can we be filled with all the fullness of God?
- B. But today we'll look at some thoughts on prayer in general from v. 14-15

2. The context as usual is important

- A. The chapter begins with “For this cause” and picks that up again in v. 14 “For this cause”
 - 1). It seems that Paul prayed a bit like us – started out – got distracted – then picks it up again
 - 2). Starts to pray – then talks about the mystery then - then “Oh yeah... for this cause”
- B. What cause? Need to know this to know why he prays like he does
 - 1). It is the cause he spoke of in chapter 2 – the new exalted position the Gentiles enjoyed
 - a). In Christ they are members of God’s household – partakers of the promises of God
They are part of that living temple that the Spirit resides in
 - 2). So Paul stops to pray they will be able to grasp this incredible truth

4. Outline

- A. The **place** of prayer
- B. The **posture** of prayer
- C. The **priority** of prayer
- D. The **precision** of prayer

I. THE PLACE (OR LOCATION) OF PRAYER

Eph 3:14 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

1. Paul was a prisoner when he writes this – chained to a Roman soldier

- A. What I love is - That didn't stop Paul from being effective in the kingdom
 - 1). If Paul couldn't minister in person he would minister in prison – from his knees
 - 2). He knew he could still advance the kingdom and affect people's lives

2. The importance of this example

- A. We are so quick to let circumstances dictate how effective we will be
 - 1). If only I wasn't working for a secular company I could really minister
 - 2). If only I didn't have this sickness – or these circumstances
- B. The history of the church is filled with those who didn't let anything stop them
 - 1). Who trusted that their circumstances were allowed by God
 - a). And chose to serve God in them
 - b). Prisons – sickbeds – didn't stop their ministry – it only moved the location
 - 2). I think of Corrie Ten Boom – put into a concentration camp for protecting the Jews
 - a). That didn't stop her – she started a bible study
And praised God for the fleas that infested the bunks – the Germans wouldn't come it

- b). She was eventually freed and began to travel the world telling of God's grace
 "If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest."
 "There is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still."
 - c). At 88 she had a stroke that stopped her traveling – But it didn't stop her ministry
 - 1a). Her ministry just moved to that sickbed – she reached the world through prayer
 - 3). Here we have that example with Paul
 - a). He's a church planter – loved being on the front lines of the war
 - b). Now chained to a Roman soldier – what are you going to do Paul?
 - 1a). He embraced God's will – and moved the ministry into that prison through prayer
 - C. Paul shows us that it doesn't matter what your circumstances are – you can affect the world
 - 1). You can stand with those who are being persecuted in the church
 You can call back those who have wandered from the church
 You can advance the kingdom of God amongst those who have never been in the church
- Transition:** The place of prayer is anywhere – this is one ministry nothing can stop
- A. Let's take care of some error in the next one

II. THE POSTURE OF PRAYER

Eph 3:14 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

1. Does this mean Paul was on his knees at this moment – I don't know

- A. Might be a figure of speech - saying he was approaching God with reverence

2. Problem – some have taken this verse as a requirement of prayer

- A. You're only praying if you're on your knees

Question: But can this stand up to what the rest of the Bible teaches – weighing scripture with scripture

- A. We see in the Bible people praying in many postures – kneeling – standing - lying prostrate on ground
 - 1). Hands raised in the air – and hands chained to a Roman guard

Thought: I believe Paul being chained to a soldier is probably talking about an attitude of reverence here

- A. Not a posture of the body but the posture of the heart – reverential – worshipful - submissive

Transition: We see that reverential attitude in v. 14 – necessary because of what Paul had already taught

3. Paul teaches a beautiful balance of prayer in chapter 3

- A. Two verses earlier he taught that through the work of Christ we can approach God with confidence

Turn to: Eph 3:12 (ESV) in whom (Jesus) we have boldness and access (To God the Father) with confidence through our faith in him.

- 1). Christ has gained access to the Father for us by wiping out our record of guilt on the cross
- 2). Now we can run confidently into God's presence knowing he has nothing against us
 - a). We are running to the throne of grace where we are viewed through the perfection of Christ
- 3). But that doesn't mean we run into God's presence treating him as if he's just one of the boys

- B. So Paul teaches in v. 14 the reverential attitude that should accompany our prayer life

Eph 3:14 (ESV) For this reason *I bow my knees* before the Father,

- 1). The word "before" or KJV "unto" = facing – face-to-face
 - a). In prayer we are coming face-to-face with God – that should cause reverence
- 2). Amazing – this is the same God Isaiah had the vision of – (Isaiah 6)
 He saw God and cried out "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips"
 - a). This is the same God whose presence made the temple quake

- b). So when you go confidently also remember who you're going to = go reverently
 - C. Jesus taught this same balance in the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6
 - 1). One day his disciples approach him and ask him to teach them how to pray
Mt 6:9 (ESV) Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
 - a). Our Father = sets the tone of prayer – you go to one who loves you = intimacy
 - b). But your Father is in heaven – Your Father is God!
 - 1a). Therefore "hallowed be your name" = reverence
 - D. The balance: Great intimacy blended with great reverence
 - 1). Verse 12 – He is your Father - run to him confidently
 - 2). Verse 14 - When you approach confidently make sure there is reverence
 - a). The one who is your Father is God!
- Transition:** What have we seen so far?
- A. We've seen the **Place of Prayer** – circumstances may change the way you minister
 - 1). But they can't stop you from advancing the kingdom of God and changing lives
 - B. We've seen the **Posture of Prayer** – there is no requirements for body posture
 - 1). It is the posture of the heart – reverential – worshipful – adoring and submissive
 - 2). We saw how Paul teaches a beautiful balance of confidence and reverence

III. THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER IN ANY KIND OF MINISTRY

Eph 3:14 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

1. For this reason – because I've taught you this truth of who you are

- A. For that reason I am praying that you can understand the truth
 - 1). He understands this principle – ministry has no affect unless the Spirit gets involved
- B. The example for anybody who teaches – you must see prayer as essential
 - 1). Fundamental NOT supplemental
 - 2). Some just study then teach without prayer – and you can tell – no life in the teaching
 - a). It is just a lecture – that never hits your heart with any impact
 - 3). Some just pray the teach without study – you can tell – no order in the teaching - chaos
 - a). If somebody asked you afterwards what the message was about – "Beats me"
- C. The teacher must study hard and pray well if his ministry is going to be effective

2. This is an example for anybody in ministry

- A. For the worship leaders – the right songs and practice aren't enough
 - 1). You must add prayer for those who you're ministering too – calling down God's blessings
If not you're just a musician and you're just playing music
- B. For the evangelists – you can know all the clever techniques – Ray Comfort
 - 1). If you're not praying for those you'll speak with – just words that don't hit the heart
John Blanchard: The secret of reaching men is to know the secret of reaching God.
- C. For those who go out on the streets to try to rescue the girls being trafficked
 - 1). Your words will never have enough power to give them the courage necessary
Unless you've covered that in prayer
 - 2). But when we truly pray – we are storming the gates of hell with the power of heaven
"To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the spirit of the world."
 - a). The beginning of rescuing those from the world and delivering them to God
- D. Greeters – are you praying the visitor will sense Christ in that first touch?

E. We can go down the line – everybody that ministers in any way **MUST** pray

Transition: Prayer is necessary for those we minister too – but what does it do for us

3. Prayer focuses our dependence upon God

A. Prayer is an admittance we can't what we are praying about – we are dependent upon God's help

Al Martin: For what is prayer in the last analysis? It is a conscious spreading out of my helplessness before God.

1). It is my weakness leaning on his omnipotence

B. When we lean on his omnipotence – great things can happen

1). Our prayers can do anything that God can do – because they link to his power

2). History of Israel encourages us - When God's people gather in prayer - God **WILL MOVE**

C. That is why next Wednesday night is so important – Pizza and Prayer

1). That's why the devil is going to attempt to keep you away

E. M. Bounds: The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, he mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.

2). We are going to meet Wednesday night and pray – then the next month we will do it again

a). Because expectant – persistent prayer is powerful

1a). I say expectant because God promises answers when we pray according to his will

1 John 5:14-15 (NIV) This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (15) And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.

2a). Therefore we gather and we pray with faith

C. H. Spurgeon: Believing supplications are forecasts of the future.

3). But persistence will be necessary

CHS: Never cease your prayers. No time is wrong for prayer. The glare of daylight should not tempt you to cease, and the gloom of midnight should not make you stop your cries. One of Satan's chief objects is to get the believer to put away the weapon of all-prayer. As long as we continue to cry to the Most High, Satan knows he cannot devour the very weakest lamb of the flock. Prayer, mighty prayer, will yet prevail if it has but time.

Let your faith be still more resolved to give up all dependence anywhere but upon God, and let your cry grow more and more vehement. It is not every knock at mercy's door that will open it. He who would prevail must handle the knocker well, and dash it down again, and again, and again. As the old Puritan says, "Cold prayers ask for a denial, but it is red-hot prayers which prevail." Bring your prayers as some ancient battering ram against the gate of heaven and force it open with a sacred violence. The whole army of your soul must come into the conflict, and you must besiege the mercy seat, determined to win the day, and then you shall prevail. If there are delays, take them as good and sound advice to be more firm in your faith and more fervent in your cry.

4). I can't tell you how excited I am to see what God is going to do

I am grateful he has worked circumstances that calls us to pray

Matthew Henry: When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is set them a-praying.

C. H. Spurgeon: Anything is a blessing which makes us pray.

a). Nothing more exciting than watching God move!

Transition: A couple more thoughts before we move on

3. Praying for our loved ones

A. We all have those we care so much about – we may witness – instruct – lay tracts around the house

B. But are you adding prayer into that mix?

1). You can talk until your blue in the face – give them literature

Hint – Hmmm another earthquake... do you know what the Bible says about the end times...

- 2). Listen – your reasoning alone will never convince anybody to become a Christian
 - a). The Spirit must move the heart – open up the truth

4. Praying for your Pastor

- A. I've said this before – I'm taking the opportunity to say it again
 - 1). If you want Christ-exalting – Spirit-anointed – life-changing teaching here
Then pray for me regularly – call down God's blessings upon my study time – my teaching
- B. Paul plead for his readers to pray for him
 - 1). He knew his ministry would be affected greatly by the prayers of the people
 - 2). If he needed it how much more do I need it!

5. Pray for this church

- A. Be a part of the solution – be a missionary in this area – pray this church would have a great impact here
 - 1). If we will join together in prayer – God's power will propel us
E. M. Bounds: Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, make an ocean which defies resistance.

Transition: We've seen

- A. The place of prayer – anywhere – nothing can stop somebody who wants to make a difference
- B. The posture of prayer – there is no one posture the body must be in – it is the posture of the heart
- C. The priority of prayer – no ministry will succeed without prayer
 - 1). Spurgeon credited the “boiler room” for the success of his ministry
 - a). A group of people who prayed while he was preaching
 - b). I believe that is why his sermons were so powerful – still are – alive off the page

Transition: That brings me to the next “P” in our look at prayer

- A. Because I couldn't think of anything else I used “Precision”
 - 1). What I mean by that is who can pray to the Father –

The Precision of Prayer

Eph 3:14–15 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ⁽⁴⁵⁾ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

1. Here we need to find some balance again – scripture against scripture

- A. There are those who use this verse to teach the “Universal Fatherhood of God”
 - 1). He is the Father in whom every family in heaven and earth is named
EVERY FAMILY – we are all children of God

Question: Again we have to ask “Does the Bible teach that?”

- A. If it does we will accept that – if it doesn't we will reject that

2. The Bible teaches there are two spiritual fathers not one

Jesus teaches us in John 8 that the devil is also a spiritual father

- A. In John 8 Jesus is contending with the Jewish leaders who think they are alright with God
 - 1). They are basing their confidence on being Abraham's descendants

Pick it up: Jn 8:39 (ESV) They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, **“If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,**

- a). His point is – if you were Abraham's children there would be a family likeness

Jn 8:40–41 (ESV) but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁽⁴¹⁾ You are doing the works your father did.”

- 1a). Your actions prove you are not the children of Abraham – you have a different father
Jn 8:41 (ESV) ...They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”
- a). Cheap shot – we weren’t born of sexual immorality – like you
- 1a). That whole Mary being a virgin – yeah right
- 2a). We know who our father is – Do you Jesus?
- b). We are descendants of Abraham and God is our Father
- B. Now Jesus says something that is shocking
Jn 8:42–43 (ESV) Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁽⁴³⁾ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.
Jn 8:44 (ESV) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- 1). Argues again from the truth of family likeness – if God were your Father you’d act like him
- a). He loves me – but you want to kill me
- 1a). That proves your father is the devil who was a murderer from the beginning
- b). He sent me – you reject me – just like he does
- c). You are lying just like he does – he is the father of lies and he is your father
- C. You can tell by the fruit of the life who the Father is
Point: The Bible clearly teaches that God is not the Father of everybody
- A. The believer’s father is God
The Christ rejecters father is Satan! That is radical
Question: So what is Paul saying here? The father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named
- A. It is talking about the believing Jew and Gentile - context – what Paul has already said helps us
Eph 2:18 (ESV) For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the *Father*.
- 1). There Paul speaks of the Jew and the Gentile (both) having access to the Father
- a). But see the condition – that only happens through Christ
- B. One verse later
Eph 2:19 (ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and *members of the household of God*,
- 1). So those who have placed their faith in Christ have access to God who is their father
Therefore they are members of the family of God
Question: Who is the family of God – work your way backwards through Eph. 2
- A. They are those who have God as their Father
They have God as their Father and have been brought into his family
because they have placed their faith in Christ
- B. So the members of the family that derives its name from God are the household of God = believers
- 3. Why does Paul put it this way?**
- A. He is reminding the Gentiles that they are now a part of God’s family – He is their Father
- 1). They had heard from the Jews for so long that they were not acceptable to God
That he had created them just to keep the fires of hell burning hot
- B. Paul says “Don’t think of yourself like that any longer. You are now Children of God.”
- 1). You now have a heavenly Father who loves you as much as the Jew
Who has chosen you in the same way he chose the Jew
- C. You are members of the same family as those who are already in heaven

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- 1). Abraham – Sarah – Moses – David – Ruth – Esther – Joshua...
 - D. Let me read you the words of D. Martyn Lloyd Jones
 Nothing we can ever learn is more precious for us than to realize this glorious truth. You may be unknown by the world, you may be insignificant, or you may feel that you are forgotten, that no one knows anything about you; and that may be true. But if you are 'in Christ', if you are a Christian, you belong to God, you are in His family, and your Father has His eye upon you. Nothing can happen to you apart from Him and without His permission; 'the hairs of your head are all numbered'. You are as much His child as the greatest saint, the mightiest apostle, that has ever lived.
 - E. This is such incredible – life-changing truth – to understand the riches of your relationship with God
 - 1). Paul says he is going to the Father to ask him to give them this understanding
 - a). So that they will know how much they are loved
 So that they will know how secure they are in his grip
 So they will rest in the truth they have a heavenly father
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CONCLUSION

1. We see the place of prayer – anywhere – take advantage of that

- A. Walking through a mall – in a restaurant – take some time to pray
 - 1). God I pray for these people – that you would reach them – send somebody into their life
 - 2). I loved riding the trains in England – looking out green fields – praying and worshipping

2. We see the posture of prayer – not only on your knees

- A. We see it is a posture of the heart - reverence
- B. Balance – come boldly he is your Father – go reverently – your father is God

3. We see the priority of prayer

- A. Nothing happens in the spiritual realm apart from prayer
- B. Why the devil works so hard to keep us from being people of prayer
Samuel Chadwick: The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, he mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.

4. We see the precision of prayer

- A. Prayer is for God's children – it is communing with their father
- B. Does God hear the prayers of unbelievers – He hears this one "I have sinned, forgive me, save me"
 - 1). Then his ears are opened to all the rest
Is 59:2 (ESV) but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.
Jn 9:31 (ESV) We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.