

SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

RESIDENCE

Ephesians 3:14-21

INTRODUCTION

Too often we can fall into a trap of the enemy by being indifferent to the ongoing experience of the Father by way of the Holy Spirit. Paul's prayer is not only instructive in this way but also corrective. It is necessary that we live in the continual and abiding presence of all that God is for us in Christ, by way of the Spirit of God. The power of God in our lives and in our local churches is intimately connected to our individual pursuit of the Lord in our daily lives. As we reflect on these words of Paul it is my hope that we are overwhelmed by the incredible and unsearchable love of the Savior expressed in his prayer.

PETITIONED (Ephesians 3:14-15)

Paul now resumes the prayer he started in verse 1 which was paused as he considered the wonder of the mystery of God (Ephesians 3:8-11). He says *for this reason I kneel before the Father* (Ephesians 3:14). All along, Paul's heart and passion has been captivated by the wonder of God's grace in Christ in overcoming the wall of division and the hostilities, uniting Jew and Gentile as one in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22). This reality causes Paul to kneel representing a posture of humility and reverence before the Father who has brought saving grace to sinners. This Father to whom Paul bows on behalf of the church is also Father of all mankind (Ephesians 3:15). This does not mean that all in the world are sons of God as we are who are in Christ. Paul's language communicates the truth that God's dominion extends to all of humanity in that each is *named* by Him. To name something demonstrates authority over that which is named. Paul's prayer is to this Father – the one to whom all heaven and earth must bow!

INDWELLED (Ephesians 3:16-19)

Paul now moves to the heart of his prayer for the Ephesians. At the heart of his prayer is that God, by way of the Spirit, would continually indwell the saints so that they experience the ongoing spiritual power to live for the honor of the Lord in a secular society. There are four requests Paul seeks from the Father on their behalf. The first is that they may experience inner strength (Ephesians 3:16). This inner strength is the ability to stand even when it is difficult and dangerous to do so. This comes not by human grit, but *through the Spirit* (Ephesians 3:16). The second request is that they would have a faith that is continually energized by the abiding presence of Christ (Ephesians 3:17; John 15:5,7). Christians are to live in a constant engagement with the living Christ, trusting in and being guarded by His promises (see 2 Peter 1:3-4). A third request is that the saints would be assured of the multi directional extent of the love of God for them in Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). To know this love means to experience it as a continual reality in our daily life. The reason for this is not for selfish, but sacrificial reasons. As children of the Father we must mirror His love to one-another and to the world. This can only take place when we are ourselves grounded (settled) in His love for us in the ministry of Christ. A final plea is that the church would be *filled with all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:19b). When believers begin to experience the power of this prayer and to evidence the love of the Father we, as a body, are experiencing the *fullness of God*. Paul is teaching us through this prayer a principle we must fight to remember: *experiencing the fullness of God takes place only when a community of saints, saturated with the Spirit well as rooted in and modeling the love of the Father.*

HONORED (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Paul has prayed a deep and powerful prayer. He has prayed for realities that demand the divine hand of the Lord if they would come to pass. Perhaps Paul knows that such a prayer would boggle the minds of the readers so he concludes with a remarkable comfort: *Now to Him who is able* (Ephesians 3:20) The Father Paul is praying to is the Father who is able to bring these grand petitions to pass. What Paul is asking of the Father no man can achieve. But God is able not only to not answer this prayer, but to do exceedingly more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Amazing! God can not only do what we ask but He can do beyond all that we can even think. When our minds fail and we have no words to communicate our burdens God knows what I cannot think and God can do that and much more! Yet, Paul says more. God is able to do this *according to the power that works in us* (Ephesians 3:20). The power of God that comes in answered prayer is connected to the indwelling power of the Spirit in us. As we yield ourselves to the Lord, He can use us in ways that are unimaginable! The reason He answers prayer and uses us in the kingdom is for the visible expression of His glory – not ours (Ephesians 3:21).