



LEADER'S GUIDE 6

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

Paul's Second Prayer in Ephesians

Before beginning this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

DAY 1

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 three times.

1. Note in verse 14 "For this reason" – this resumes the thought from verse 1 in chapter 3. Go back and read verse 1.

In view of the grace which has imparted new life to them, united them with Jewish believers into one body and built them into a living temple for God to dwell in. (from Charles Erdmann)

2. In Paul's day people usually stood to pray. Note in verse 14 how Paul prays – "I kneel before the Father" or "I bow my knees". See Ezra 9:3-5 and Matthew 26:39. What does Paul's position praying indicate about how Paul feels or Paul's attitude during this prayer?

It expresses deep emotion and reverence.

The kneeling position as used in these verses illustrates Paul's humility and dependency on God. Kneeling is a defenseless position. It is a position of surrender. When an individual is knighted by a monarch, he or she is always kneeling. Personal willfulness is put aside. Paul is seeking God's will and blessing. It is a position of acceptance, regardless of future events or consequences. In Christ's instruction on prayer, Matthew 6:5-9, the concluding sentence is "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

3. According to verse 15, from whom do all God's family on earth and in heaven get their name?
From the Father ((includes all who have believed in the past)

What does it mean to be called by someone's name?

It means that you belong to that family.

What does it mean to be called by God's name?

Being called by God's name identifies a believer as belonging to God's family. It acknowledges our relationship with God through his son, Jesus Christ.

One dictionary definition of a Christian is, "a person who exemplifies in his or her life the teaching of Christ". There are expectations and responsibilities in being a member of God's family. The final three chapters in Ephesians will enumerate some of these responsibilities. Also, to be called by God's name is to be put under His power and protection. In New Testament times to be named was to be given an identity and purpose i.e. Jesus son of Joseph the carpenter. In the Greek there is a play on words – "pater" (father) and "pateria" (fatherhood). God is the author of all family relationships. (from the Oxford Study Bible)

DAY 2

1. In verse 16 – what does Paul request that God the Father do for the readers?
That he strengthen them with His power.

Through whom will he do this? Through His Spirit
Out of what resources? Out of His glorious riches
In what part of the person? In their inner being.

2. The phrase “inner being” or “inner man” is also used by Paul in Romans 7:22. Read Romans 7:22-23.
Write what you understand “inner being” or “inner man” to mean.
It means the deepest part of a human being. Refers to his mind also.

Paul is acutely aware of the battle between his willfulness and the will of God. In Romans 7:22 he articulates this battles in the “inner man”. In Ephesians 3:16 he is appealing for spiritual strength through God’s Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer.

3. In verse 17 “so that” indicates a reason or end result for the request in verse 16. What is it?
That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

The result being sought is that by the grace of God the Ephesians (read “us” as believers) will be given the power and spiritual enlightenment to seek God’s will, not their own.

TO DIG DEEPER: Think about the word “dwell”. What does it mean? See John 14:23; Romans 8:9 & 11; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 2:22; 1Corinthians 3:16.

In John – make our home with; in Romans – live in; in 2 Corinthians – to be in; in Ephesians – lives in; in 1 Corinthians – lives in.

Who is the one dwelling? The Holy Spirit, the Father and Jesus
Where is He dwelling? In believers
Through what is He dwelling? Faith

Look up the word “dwell” in a Bible Dictionary or regular dictionary. “to abide as a permanent resident”
Now, putting this together, write out what “dwell” means.

The Greek word is katoikea – it means to settle down. An individual who is dwelling in a place is one who lives there. He or she is a permanent resident, not a transient. We are called to endure, remain faithful to Christ – not shut Him out of His dwelling, but let the Holy Spirit make Christ real in our lives.

DAY 3

1. From verses 17 and 18 “and” what else does Paul ask for the Ephesian readers?
That they may have the power to grasp the extent of Christ’s love and to know His love.

2. Here is the word “power” again. What 2 things does Paul want them to have this power for? (see verses 18 & 19 – to _____ and to _____).
To grasp and to know - the love of Christ fully

Paul wants them to have a knowledge of Christ’s love that is real – to know experientially and be spiritually strengthened so they may grow more and more. The phrase “with all the saints” indicates this is not just an individual understanding of Christ’s love, but also a corporate comprehension of His love.(from Walter Wright – Ephesians). It takes spiritual power for this to happen – power that comes through God’s Holy Spirit.

If you have trouble with these 2 questions – use the simplify the sentence technique. Get the subject, main verbs and the object.

DAY 4

1. In verse 17 the condition for this further request of Paul is that his readers are “rooted” and “established” or “grounded” in love. These are metaphors used to describe a Christian. See 1 Corinthians 3:6 and Colossians 2:6 & 7. Read also Psalm 1. What is the picture here?
That Christians will be like a seed that is planted, watered and grows.

The metaphors used in these verses are all botanical in origin. Perhaps the best known is Psalm 1 which poetically described a man of God who is faithful, vs.3 “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” Water and nutrients enter the root system of trees and plants. Botanically, this life giving material is known as ‘xylem’. It flows up the trunk of the tree providing life to the leaves and strength to the trunk of the tree. The psalmist, enlightened by God’s Holy Spirit, chose an incredibly accurate metaphor.

“rooted” means to be anchored firmly in the soil like a tree.

“established” means set solidly on a foundation

So then, a Christian whose roots are in Christ, continues to grow!

2. In verse 18 whose love are we to grasp? Christ’s
In verse 19 what else are we to do with His love? To know His love
Why? To be filled with all the fullness of God.

The two things Paul is seeking for the Ephesians are that, 1) they know the depth and breadth of Christ’s love, and 2) that they in knowing Christ’s love be ‘filled to the measure of all the fullness of God’. So, there is a double dwelling: the believers dwelling in God’s household and the Holy spirit dwelling in the believer.

Not only does the Christian need power to love, but also needs power even to comprehend the love of Christ!

3. We are to grasp or understand and know the love of Christ. Wow! Read Romans 8:35-39. Reflect on these two passages. Write down your thoughts.

This will vary as it is a personal response.

We can never be lost to God’s love!

TO DIG DEEPER: To help you further understand verse 18 “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ”, look at Job 11:7-9. Read again Romans 8:35-39. Also read Psalm 103:11 & 12. Now write out what you think is being described about Christ’s love with each of these 4 words.

Comment: Christ’s love is “wide” – enough to encompass all humankind; “long”- enough to last for eternity; “high” – enough to exalt us to heaven; “deep” – enough to reach the most degraded sinner (Frank Sells quoted from J. R. Stott)

ROMANS 8:35-39 is a description of the love of Christ which is beyond the space-time continuum. Christ’s love is non-dimensional and eternal. It cannot be measured. As God’s adopted children, we cannot be separated from His love. It is beyond our pre-existence, our existence, and our future.

DAY 5

1. In verse 19 the end result is that we “may be filled with all the fullness of God’. See Study Guide 2 and Day 5 question 3. It is the full expression of God.
Read Ephesians 1:23 - God fills everything in every way.
Ephesians 4:13 The fullness of Christ
Colossians 1:19 The totality of God with all of His powers in Christ
Colossians 2:9-10 Given fullness in Christ – completeness

Now describe “the fullness of God”

God the Father fills us with His fullness to make us complete – that is He fills us with Himself.

The “fullness of God” as described in verse 19 will always exceed our human knowledge. God’s grandeur and love are beyond our comprehension. Paul is praying that, although we can never fully understand God’s love, that through His Holy Spirit we may be filled with God’s love. Indeed, it is a gift.

2. Verses 20 and 21 are a Doxology – a prayer of praise to God. Again, break down the passage to the subject, main verb and object for the basic idea of this prayer. Write it out.

The subject - “to Him” Main verb – “be glory” Object – “in the church and in Christ”

Glory be to God the Father in the church and in Christ forever!

Pray with a passion for the glory of God which is the true goal of prayer.

3. According to verses 20 and 21, what is God able to do? Immeasurably or infinitely more than we can imagine.

What are we unable to do? Imagine what God can do

According to what does God do this? His power

In whom? That works in us

We cannot even pray for all that God can and will do for us!

The Doxology in verses 20 and 21 is a prayer of praise to God. It’s primary purpose is to glorify God, but the secondary object is to remind us that God through the power of His Holy Spirit in us can do far more, “immeasurably more” than we can imagine. These verses should encourage us here at CCPC, as it did those Christians in Ephesus.

DAY 6

APPLICATION: One principle to seal a Bible passage in your mind is to think of a hymn or Christian Chorus that expresses or encompasses the idea of the passage. Can you think of one that expresses the thoughts in verse 18: Write it down. Sing it.

As a group leader you will probably get many responses to this suggestion. One that may come up is “In Christ There is No East or West” which describes, at least on planet Earth, the immeasurable love and grace of Christ. Written in 1908 by William A. Dunkerley, a.k.a. John Oxenham – his pseudonym, and 43 years after the end of the American Civil War in which over 625,000 men were killed, it glorifies the healing power of Christ’s love for all mankind, regardless of race.

A Chorus sung by youth in years past:

“Wide, wide as the ocean, High as the heavens above, Deep, deep as the deepest sea is my Father’s love. I, though so unworthy, still am a child of His love; For His word teaches me that His love reaches me, everywhere.”

APPLICATION 2:

The Doxology in Ephesians 3:20 and 21 show us that the true goal of prayer is the glory of God. Think about your own prayers. Ask yourself, do I realize the answers to the requests I bring to God are to bring glory to Him? What can I do to help me focus more on God’s glory?

One suggestion is to start one’s prayer time by reading the verses from the TO DIG DEEPER part on day 4, as well as Ephesians 3:20-21. Reading verses that focus us on God and remind us of His glory will help us seek His glory through our prayers.