

Ephesians: Good News of the Church

Ephesians 3:14-21

"Strength for Weak Saints"—October 9, 2022



Introduction

As we have been working our way through the book of Ephesians, you will remember that in [Ephesians 2:11-22](#), Paul laid out God's amazing plan for the church. Not only has God accomplished a vertical reconciliation between Himself and sinful people ([Ephesians 2:1-10](#)), but He has accomplished a horizontal reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles who were once hostile to each other. Christ's death broke down the dividing wall of hostility between differing groups or tribes to create in Himself one new man – one body – one family – one church.

The need for competition, envy, rivalry, or distrust would vanish under the love of God in making us one. Jew and Gentile, man and woman, rich and poor, people from every tribe and tongue can now come together in love under the authority of God's word, built on the foundation of God's word, working together for a common goal. God's goal was to make the church a display of His manifold wisdom – a foretaste of how God in Christ would unite all things to Himself – all things in heaven and in earth. A plan, that when the angels look at it, they gasp in awe.

This plan sounds wonderful, yet when we realize how hard it can be to live together like this, when we don't act like a united, harmonious body, we can very easily grow weary. We can lose heart. It sounds amazing, but it can feel impossible. Because Paul knew that God's plan for the church is glorious and difficult, he prays. His prayer that God's plan for the church is that this is not just a mere idea, theory, or possibility. He prays that it will become a living reality not just for the church in Ephesus, but for our church today.

Sermon Outline

1. Pray with confidence. Vs. 14-15
2. Pray for God to strengthen us. Vs. 16-17
3. Pray that we comprehend God's love for us. Vs. 17-19
4. Pray with hope. Vs. 20-21

Read & Discuss

1) Read vs. 14-15

Here Paul begins by reminding us to whom we are praying - God, who created all things, named all things, and by Him all things exist. All things are under His rule. Everything answers to the King. You are the King's child. Because of Jesus, we have access to the Father!

If we don't see God as the accessible Father, we will not pray. Do you view God as the King of kings who is also your Father? How do you think that He views you? What do you think is His countenance toward you? We have a warm, Fatherly reception because of Jesus. We can come boldly!!

Do you ever pray and wonder if God is listening or if He will answer? We can pray with confidence, just like Paul, when our prayers align with and are guided by God's word. Reading the Bible and prayer go together. We can pray God's word back to Him. When our prayers are guided by God's word, our prayers will lead us out of despair and into confident hope.

Additional reading: Psalm 40:1-2

2) Read vs. 16 – 17

Paul's prayer is a prayer for strength. God strengthens us through His Spirit in your "inner being." ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)) In this fallen world, our outer self is wasting away. Your inner self is what's left of you when your outer self has wasted away completely. Over and over, scripture gets us to look at the aging process causing us to ask, "What will be left when your physical body deteriorates?" "What are you investing your time, energy, and passions in?" There are countless reasons to want and pray for strength.

Why does Paul pray for strength? "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts" (vs. 17). The word "dwell" in verse 17 means to take up a permanent residence. If Jesus owns your house - He gets free reign to do what He wants. Does the idea of Jesus coming in and "remodeling and renovating" your life make you nervous? The Gospel is for every day. We must engage in a life of repentance – turning away from the enemy who wants to deceive, kill and destroy you. Jesus wants to give you abundant life ([John 10:10](#)).

The church is made of sinners. The pain of being let down is real and may leave you discouraged and weary. We are tempted to keep to ourselves protecting what is left of our heart. If we do that, we are not able to do what God has called us to do anymore - to display His manifold wisdom. God sees and can heal your hurt. Is there something tempting you to disengage from the church, keep to yourself and protect your heart?

Additional Reading: 1 Peter 3:4; 1 Timothy 4:8; Luke 15; Romans 10:17

3) Read vs. 17-19

God's love is the foundation to build on. Paul wanted them not only to know God's love, but to experience it.

If we go back to chapter 1 and 2, we are reminded that we were dead in our sins, but God being rich in mercy and by His great love saved us by His grace. God's love is shown to be His gracious and joyful commitment to us at the cost of His only Son. ([Romans 5:8](#)) This love is beyond measure and surpasses knowledge. You will never reach the depths of it here on earth or in eternity. Do you want to know God's love for you like that?

Left to ourselves, the truths about God's love in scripture are just words. The Spirit of God must ignite the word of God and turn them into a roaring fire in our hearts ([Ephesians 1:18](#)). We must read God's word AND pray, asking God to enlighten us. We pray to comprehend with all the saints - the church. As we seek to do this, it will be difficult, but relational friction helps us see our need for God. We need to lean into God. Often God uses the friction to help us turn to Him and help us grow. We need the people of God to understand the love of God.

Why does Paul pray for the church to know God's love? So, that we will grow in Christian maturity. ([Eph. 4:13](#)). We glorify God together. Are you beginning to see the importance of the church in your life?

4) Read vs. 20-21

As Paul ends his prayer, he has the church in mind. His prayer is for those who are weary, discouraged and ready to throw in the towel. So Paul says to look up and see what God is capable of.

God is able, but He is able to do far more - abundantly - beyond what we can ask or think. The power at work is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. He is able!! We labor. We love. We forgive, and we pray with hope.

It is to the glory of God alone. We are made to be little mirrors to reflect the glory, truth, justice of God to a watching world. Sin has distorted that. When we come to Christ, we are being reshaped into the image of Jesus. God's remodeling project is about a group of Christians. Some attributes of God - His love, grace, justice - require us to be in a relationship to reflect those things. "To Him be glory – in the church." Where and how have you seen God's attributes displayed in the church?

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Ephesians 4:1-16 "A Body Working Together"
