

Title: A Prayer For ^{The} Power of Love

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21

Our text ^{Tonight} today is a call for power. And that power that is being described is the power of God's love. LOVE IS THE GREATEST ^{Power} THE BIBLE SAYS SO. There is nothing greater. Jesus said that all of his commandments can be summarized into two things: One..to love God with all of your heart and your ssoul and your mind. And the second, he said, is just like it. And that is to love your neighbor just like yourself.

There isn't anything as powerful as love. And I know that a lot of us right now really need it. We want love..We want to be loved..

This prayer is for the power of love in your life.

Take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 3....Ephesians chapter 3 beginning with Vs 14.....(READ V¹⁶ 14-21)

LET'S PRAYE

Father we thank you for your Word. And Father we know that you can speak to our hearts in a mighty way. And so we ask you, Lord, that you would speak to us. And Father, I pray that we might have faith enough to hear. That we might put the cares of the world aside for these moments so that we might hear your Word to us.....And we ask this in Jesus name...Amen..

++

There are two prayers that we have seen so far in our study of Ephesians. In Chapter 1 verses 15 and following ^{Paul} he prayed for wisdom and knowledge. But now he is praying for LOVE. THE POWER OF LOVE IN OUR LIVES.

And in Vs 14 when he says "For this reason" it reminds us of Vs 1. For in Vs 1 Paul started the chapter by saying "FOR THIS REASON"....Then there is the parenthesis down through Vs 13. Then he picks it back up again.."FOR THIS REASON".

FOR WHAT REASON?.....

Well, that takes you back to the whole discussion of chapter 1 and 2. About God bring together Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ. This beautiful wonderful thing that we call the ^{the} church of ~~Jesus Christ~~. And that is why he prays for the power of love....

Because there is only one way that you can experience and know that unity of the body of Christ. And that is by having God's love in our hearts for one another. That is why we need this power so very, very much.

~~There~~ ^{There} are some who ~~argue~~ ^{say} that the immediate concept of Vs 13 is why he said "FOR THIS REASON."

Let's take a look at that. He says in Vs 13.. "Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf. For this reason, I bow my knees."

It could be said that Paul is saying that we need the power of God's love because we have a tendency to lose heart during tribulations and trails. To give up...to quite. And I like that because love never fails according to I Cor 13. Everything else passes away, everything else does not last, but one thing will sustain us through ever trail..no matter how heavy it is.. no matter how great the pressure...God's love.

We are not talking, here, about sentimentality or the gushiness that we see in society today. We are ~~not~~ talking about God's love which is something far different than most of us see in our world. It is something that last when all the other stuff fades away.

And some of us are really on the wrong track in all of our impatiencness to see things happen the way that we want them to happen. Thus, we lose sight of what God's love is all about and how important it really is.

() Now, I want to look at Paul's response to God because it may be that the reason you and I are not experiencing God's love like He really wants, ~~and~~ is because our response to God is wrong. We are not coming to Him propaperly.

Paul says, "For this reason I bow my knees" He resensed with submission. You will never begin to experience God's power in your life, you will never exeprience His love like you really want, until you come to God with the right attitude. Certainly the ability to love is in the heart of every christian. The moment you come to Christ, the ability to love has been placed within ;you through that new nature of God, himself.

But, listen, we are not going to get to first base loving anybody if we don't recognize the attitude of submissiveness.....

Literally it says, "I continually bow my knees." ~~Do~~ You just don't do it once. And then say, "Man! I have arrived. I bowed my knees. WOW!..NO WAY!

Paul says that we ought to continually do this *when we pray*.

I would like to suggest to you that there are times when you ought not to bow your knees or close your eyes when you pray. Certainly, driving on the freeway ought to be one of those times....

But, I would ^{also} suggest to you that the normal time and position of prayer ought to be alone with God when you are bowing your knees....NOW, WHY?

I think the bodily attitude during prayer is ~~not~~ encouraging the soul's attitude toward God. Jesus ~~did~~ it. How much more should we do it. Luke 22:41 says "he knelt down in the garden." And it was on that occasion when he ~~said~~, "Not my will, but thine be done."

But why Paul Bowing the knees represents in all cultures submission to higher authority. ~~Paul~~ said, "I bow my knees before the Father." The preposition "before" is really the preposition "TOWARD". And it is actually used as a "face to face" encounter.

Let me illustrate. In John 1:1.."In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The phrase "the word was with God" is literally "toward God". Face to Face toward God representing quality.

The idea is submitting to God as though we were face to face with a holy and righteous God who deserves nothing less than absolute submission to Him.

How can we ever have power? How can we ever have God's love? When we go off half clogged with an attitude that somehow we can run things, we can manage things, we can love people without official means, and all that sort of thing. NO! We need to come to God with submission.

In another epistle Paul mentions the source of power. He said that "HE would grant you." You don't drum this up yourself. He don't by self desire all of a sudden drum up the Love. NO! It is coming from God. And until you recognize the source of what we need is God ^{rather} ~~rather~~ than others, we will never really experience His love.

And I believe that is one reason why a lot of us are hurt all the time. I think we are wearing our ~~hearts~~ ^{feelings} on our shirt sleeves. And when your christian friends don't respond to you like you think they should, all of a sudden you get hurt and you are disappointed. You see, a lot of us are looking toward our christian friends as the source of God's love.

Dear Friends, even though God's love can ~~force~~ ^{pour} through your friends, IT IS GOD WHO IS THE SOURCE.

Where are your eyes? Where is your vision? What is your perspective as to where this love is going to come from? IT IS COMING FROM GOD. And who is this God who is going to give it to you? Why, He is our heavenly Father, says Vs 14, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

He is the Father. A loving Father.

My the way, the phrase "every family". That suggest that there are different families in heaven and different families on earth.

Now, I don't believe that is correct. The same construction in several places in Paul's writings would give us the idea of "ALL"..

And I think that is a better translation. "FROM WHOM ALL THE FAMILY"... Meaning..that there is only one. There are not two families here. There is one. Some are in heaven. They are with the Lord. Absent from the body present with the Lord. And there are some here on earth. ONE FAMILY AND ONE HEAVENLY FATHER.

What he is saying is that that is the one we submit to and he will give us power in our lives. Because He is the loving Father.

Jesus taught us in Luke 11:11-13 that a Father, an earthly father, does not give when his son ask him for bread, does not give him a stone. And then he said, "How much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those of us who ask him."

I ask you...WHERE ARE YOU GOING FOR POWER?

Are you looking for God's love? WHERE ARE YOU LOOKING?

Paul responded with submission. And he realized the source of power.

(3) And third, Paul relied upon the supply from God. You know, the last I heard, God was not ~~broken~~ broke.....

Vs 16.."according to the riches of His glory." God never runs out.

But, I want to tell you something. Your christian friends will run out of God. Do you think they will consistently love you at all times? I hope they will. But, I know human nature. Some times "self" gets invovlved. And our friends will disappoint us. BUT, GOD NEVER WILL! His supply is without end.

Look back at chapter 1 and let me show you how many times Paul mentions "the riches of God"

In chapter 1 verse 7..He says our redemption and forgiveness are according to the riches of His grace." God is wealthy.

Down in Vs 17 he mentions His glory again. "HE IS THE FATHER OF GLORY." In the Greek it says "the riches of ^{The Father} his glory."

Look at chapter 2 verse 4...God being rich in mercy," "because of his great love." He is rich. He is not broke.

In Vs 7, "in order that He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

No wander Paul says, "when we pray we are coming to one who has riches." Riches of his glory. Meaning::: his character or his attributes or his love, God doesn't run out. And this love comes from Him. GOD IS LOVE. Not merely or only love. BUT HE IS LOVE. Therefore, let's come to Him in prayer.

Let's seek His face to the power of God's love in our lives.

() We come down to Paul's request in Vs 16. It is a very simple one. But it gets ~~of~~ complex in our experience. But it is a very simple one. He simpley says in Vs 16.."I am asking God to give you strength."

To be strengthened with power.....DO YOU WANT THAT? Hay! I want to be powerful. And according to Paul, God is able to give that power in our lives,

And the person who makes this possible according to Vs 16 is the Holy Spirit. It says , "He will make you powerful through His Spirit."

Now, that supports what we know in the Scriptures. Because Galations 5:22 says, "the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love."

Romans 5:5 says "this love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." It is the Spirit that produces that love in our heart. We must be controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to have spiritual power.

The power of God's love toward people. WHY?.....Because it is not natural to do it.

In writing about love, over the past several months, I have been examining human tendencies. And I have discovered that every place that God said something about love it was a direct opposite to my natural tendencies. It is not easy to love with God's love.

OH! I lot of us think we are loving. In fact we might evend tell folks hat we are very loving. "I am so sweet and kind." "No question about it. I am a very loving person." "In fact you are so lucky to have me."

Folks, listen, the tendecy of the human heart isnot to love with God's love. Sentementality...maybe.....Some ramance at times..YES! But with God's love, always? NO WAY..That is not your natural tendency.

As the song writer says.....

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prome to leave the God I love.

That is the way I am bent. And that is why I need the Holy Spirit to come in and control me. My flesh is waring against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh says Galatians 5:17. So that I can not do the things that I really want to do. I don't love with God's love as a natsral habit of my life. I need the h0ly Spirit of God to control me.

But, the thing that we must get into ~~four heads~~ is the place where this power is manifested. And in our culture we are really confused. Because it is not in the arean of the body . Man

Man is this ever the body age. God says that the strength is in the inner man. Inside of you. It is that immat~~ar~~ial area. Not the material and physical.

Now, what is the philosophy of the world. It is body strength. Look at the aids. We are all trying to look beautiful. Right? We are struggling ~~with~~ with it. You know, it would be refreshing at times if they would put normal people on the T.V...

You go to the spas...the health foods...the whole thing. This is the age of the body, as many sociologist have characterized it.

I read in Jeremiah 17:9 and 10 that the "heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, and test the mind."

Oh, listen, dear friends, a lot of us in this age are failing to understand that there is a war in the deep parts of our heart. I don't know myself anymore than you do. And I don't want to waste my time trying to figure out who I am. All I have to do is read the Bible, . And what I read there I don't like a whole lot, . Do you know what I mean?

But that is the truth. The truth is right here in this book. That is what I am really like. And without God's help or without God's power there is not a one of us here with the capacity to love each other, the way God says.

Oh, a lot of us think we can. In fact, some of you might leave this service and on your way home write down six or seven things that you might do to love your husband or wife better. You know, make this little list. And then fail as you start with number one. Because God's love isn't controlling. It is human effort to some how do what you think you ought to do. But it is not being controlled by God.

This is a very difficult problem. It is in the inner man. And I love 2 Corinthians 4:16 which says, "that the outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

You see, when this old body decays and goes to pieces, it doesn't mean that you stop loving. As a matter of fact, on the bases of 2 Corinthians 4:16 the longer you have been a christian the more loving you can become.

If you are an old grey haired person here today, and you have known the Lord for many, many years, you ought to be the best lover in this church. And God said it that way.

"Though the outer man is decaying, the inner man is constantly being renewed." The older we get in the Lord, the more loving we ought to become.

The Holy Spirit of God controlling our lives. (Results of Love

() But Paul says that there are certain results that you can expect if God's love is really controlling your life.

Look at Vs 17.. "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the ~~sai~~s what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which ~~sur~~ surpasses knowledge, that you maybe filled up to all the fulness of God."

I would like to share with you four results.

(1) One, the presences of Christ will become more real to you than ever before
When ~~Paul~~ ^{Vs 17} said "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith", he is not talking about becoming a Christian. He is writing ~~to~~ to christians. SO WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

The word "dwell" comes from ^{Two words} the word "house", and the word "down". As one ~~writer~~ ^{written} says "Christ becomes comfortable with you." I LIKE THAT. It is an "at homeness". It is when Jesus Christ becomes so much a part of you that it becomes hard to draw a line between Him and you. He just settles down. When you start loving the way God wants you to love ~~with~~ ^{with} spiritual power from the Holy Spirit, Christ is going to be more real to you, then ever before. His presence will be felt. And your relationship to Him will be fantastice. And it will grow and deepen. It will become very ~~intim~~ intimate.

Now, we know where the Holy Spirit dwells positional. But in our practice ~~How~~ ^{it} will become real to us.

"THROUGH FAITH"....Literally..."THE FAITH"..AS I received Christ by faith, so I am to walk in him. Continually I must put my faith in Him.

It remains me again of what Paul said, "I must bow my knee to the father. My whole attitude towards God is the secret to knowing His ~~power~~ ^{Love} in my life. And to know His love.

(2) And also there is a result which ~~we~~ call the prority of love.

Love will become major in your life. When His Spirit is controlling you, love will become a ~~major~~ major factor with you. Vs 17 says "being rooted and grounded in love." There is a prority.

You see..."rooted" like a tree.... ^{and "grounded" - a} ~~foundation~~ ^{foundation} like a building.

Two illustrations emphasizing sibility. No matter what pressures.. no matter what problems...no matter what conflicts..LOVE ENDURES. LOVE CAN TAKE IT. LOVES DOESN'T FOLD UNDER THE PRESSURES. *That is a result of God's love in you*

I have talked with many people who have gone through deep waters.. work..business...family. And the thing that has kept them going was the experience of God's love in their life.

You see, human love is so conditional.. You know...If you do this, then I will do that. But, that is not God's love. God's love is unconditional. It is as if he says, "I don't care what you do, I don't care how you respond, I LOVE YOU. God's love is there even when the pressure gets pretty heavy. Because God's love is "ROOTED". And it is "grounded". It comes from him.

You see, that is why I need to bow my knees unto him. The only one who is always there.

Actual result
(3) ~~And also, the priority~~ of love is seen in terms of its scope. Paul says, in Vs 18, it is "with all the saints " that we will understand Each of us... alone..does not know about the love of God in its fulness. You see, there are people within the body of Christ that know something about the love of God that we don't know. That is why he says in terms of the scope of this love, that it "maybe able to comprehend with all the saints."

And notice the dimensions.."the breadth and length and height and depth." You see, God's love is so high, it is so deep, it is so vast that I, as one person, could never understand it in all of its fulness. But, with all the saints, we can experience something of God's love.

Can you not understand something, now, about the importance of the church? And the importance of your place within the church? Can you not understand why it is important to pray for one another...support one another...be in fellowship with one another?....WHY? Because it is with all the "saints" that we comprehend the wonderful love of God. It is not just individually. It is within the body of Christ.....

You see God is working in all of our lives his perfect plan. And a lot of us are experiencing things about the love of God that others haven't. And that is why we all need each other within the church.

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY THIS PRAYER FOR POWER?....Because God has made this brain new thing called the church as a testimony. Because it is through the church as Paul said in the first part of chapter 3 that Christ will draw people unto himself.

I like what one person ask me the other day. She ask: "What are the rules for your church"? I said, "Well, I don't think we have any rules." She said, "Well, I mean, how do you become a member?"

And I said, "You have to know Jesus Christ as your personal saviour." She said, "Well, don't you write down a list of things you believe?"

"Yes, we have a list of beliefs" in the church, that we all believe."
"But, to be a member, we encourage you to know Christ as your Lord and Saviour."

And then I said, "Even if you don't know Christ, I would encourage you to attend. Because you need to hear what we have to say about the love of Christ. You see, a lot of people want rules and regulations.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? Doctrinal statements? Do you think that the average person in the world really cares about that?

Now, once we become a Christian...That is a different matter. We need to know the doctrine. We need to know what we stand on.

But, Jesus said that "all men will know that you are my disciples when you what?....(SAY IT)...WHEN YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

That is why this message is so important. You see, dear friends, love must be something more than a theology discussion. It must be practiced by you. () That is why in Vs 19, "to know the love of Christ." And this word "know" is the Greek word "to know by experience." It is more than just a mental attitude. You see, you can mentally list all the attributes of the meaning of love and yet never experience love. There is a difference.

So, Paul is say, here in Vs 19, "experiencing the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." OH, friends, to experience God's wonderful love ought to be the desire of every person in this room.

~~You see,~~ It is one thing to leave this service and say, "I know what God's love is." But, it is quite different to experience it and practice it this very day....

The Fault

() And another result deals with the pre-emenses of God, himself.

He says in Vs 19, "that"...the real purpose of experiecing God's love, is so "that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

God's very life and presence and character and attributes is primarily seen in His love flowing from the believer.

I heard this little statem~~ent~~ that I believe applies here. "Without the Spirit's power, our knowledge of love is only academic, not experiential."

You can know about love without having the H^Uly Spirit controlling you. But you cannot experience the Love of God without the Holy Spirit controlling you. God wants us to have love. *Now, what resources are available?*

() NOW, WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE? How am I going to get it? How do I know that this love is really available to me?

The main resource is found in Vs 20. "TO HIM WHO IS ABLE". The resources are based upon God himself. "HE IS ABLE".

Is there any doubt in your mind about that? Can you think, right now, of someone who is unloving and obnoxious? (YOU ARE SMILING)

People come to our minds, quickly, don't they?

You think of someone who is really unloving, do you really believe that that person can be totally changed and become a loving person? DO YOU?

"Now, to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly."

When I was taking Greek in Seminary, my professor pointed out that this is very bad English to put all these sub-pearl - a - tives together: EXCEEDING...ABUNDANTLY..BEYOND ALL...

Now, it maybe bad English....But it is great GREEK. Because it makes the point very powerful. He takes one word that means ~~more~~ "more than what is measured out."

What he is saying, ^{here, when} ~~here,~~ he says EXCEEDING, ABUNDANTLY, is whatever you think is the measure of God's love, GOD CAN DO FAR MORE THAN THAT.

He is infinite...And whatever you dreamed is possible...concerning God's love...it is only the tip of the iceberg.

Have you ever noticed that God does far more than we ask or expected?

I am glad that He just doesn't give me what I ask or think. HAY! there would be a lot of things that never get done.

God does much more than we could ever ask or think. God's wonderful ability is evident here. HE IS ABLE.

() And friends, it is also based on the availability of that power within us. The last phrase of Vs 20 says "according to the power that works"..Literally "is being worked". I don't work it. It is being worked in me, constantly. God is working it in me. His power.

You know, sometimes we don't even know that He did it. Sometimes we love, with God's love, and we didn't even know that we did it.

And then someone comes along and says, "Boy, God really used you to minister to that person." And you don't even know what happened. (IT IS GREAT)

And I like it that way. Because sometimes, I believe, if we really knew, our pride would get in the way.

God's love is being worked in us by the Holy Spirit.

And also, he does that at moments that we don't even know or anticipate. It just happens.

() And what is the main reason for all of this? Vs 21.."TO HIM BE THE GLORY." God is glorified when we love. Not when we win the argument..BUT WHEN WE LOVE Not when we get our own way....BUT WHEN WE LOVE. Not when people respond to us like we expected...WHEN WE LOVE. Not when everything goes the way we wanted it to go...BUT WHEN WE LOVE. ~~Not when there is a fight in the church...~~ **NO**, WHEN WE LOVED GOD IS GLORIFIED.

Jesus taught us that it is easy to love those who love us. The test that He wants to see in our lives, is whether we can love those who do not love us. TO HIM BE IN GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL GENERATIONS FOREVER AND EVER....AMEN.

Let us close in prayer