

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Fullness of God, Part 1**

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-16

Code: 1915

1978

This morning we're going to study the third chapter of Ephesians together in our continuing study of this tremendous epistle of Paul. You know, over the ten years that I've been at Grace Church I have preached, I think, about 800 messages. And that's a lot of talking. I want you to know that. And that's a lot of patience on your part. But covering a lot of different passages, many different subjects and many different themes in the Word of God. And there's something about every passage that I've ever taught that is special, that is rich and wonderful, keeps it in my memory. But as I have occasion to go beyond the ministry of Grace and to speak here there and everywhere around the country and some other parts of the world, there are certain passages of the Scripture that have special meaning to me. They're what I call locus-crucious, key points. If you're a German they're herr-punct, high points. Just sort of like the peaks in the Alps of the Scripture. And I find myself going back to these very often. And Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14 to 21 is a passage that I've only preached on at Grace Church one time in our study of Ephesians, about nine years ago. But I have preached on this passage probably a hundred times in different places around the country because this passage is so rich and so marvelous and so full and so abundant with truth that-it is unavoidable. It is a basic passage to the implementation of all spiritual truth to the life of the believer. And so I come to this passage with a great sense of joy, in fact, from the time we began our study of Ephesians months ago I was sort of anticipating getting to chapter 3 verse 14. It is a tremendous portion of the Word of God. I want to read it to you and then have a word of prayer and then just introduce it this morning and we're going to get into it in detail in days to come.

Verse 14:For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; in order that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; in order that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, in order that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, generations without end. Amen.

Let's pray: Father, we want to come to You because we feel the need to ask You to help us to get a grasp on this portion. Father, I realize the infirmity of my own mind and the infirmity of my own

vocabulary to conceive and to communicate the grandeur and the magnificence that is here. And so, Father, I am dependent totally upon the Holy Spirit that the Spirit of God may take the words and give them wings to fly, to nest in the minds and the hearts of those who are here. Father, I pray that we might feel that when we are done we have heard the voice of God. That we have literally been taught of Him the majesties of this text. And, Father, we pray that we would apply the things we learn else we have not learned them at all. So speak to us, we pray, in the name of Christ. Amen.

Now you'll notice as I read the passage, maybe it didn't read exactly the way you were looking at your Bible and seeing it. I interjected the phrase 'in order that' three times. Because in the Greek that is what is there. This is a sequence of progressions, one built upon the other. Something happens which leads to something else happening which leads to something else happening which leads to something else happening. It is a sequence. It is a progression. And the ultimate end of it all is that God, verse 21, would be glorified. That is the ultimate end of Paul's prayer, and by the way, as we shall see when we get there, that is the reason for everything. That is the ultimate aim of everything, that God would be glorified. Paul, in essence, is calling for God to glorify Himself through what He does in the believer. The great climax for us comes in verse 20 when we begin to see exceeding abundantly above all we could ask or think actually happening in our lives. And then that is what glorifies God.

Now Christian experience is a matter of applying God's power to everyday life. If you just hear it and never apply it you've never learned it. One of the things we discussed yesterday with our elders was the fact that we have a lot of people coming to Grace Church that really are not involved, they come and they listen and that's great, we're so happy to have you. And I know a lot of you are new, you just haven't really gotten involved, made a commitment. But we are frustrated so very often because we're saying we want you to really know all there is that God can do in your life. We want you to really get moving for Him. We want to see the power. We want to see exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think: according to the power that works in you happening. And we know that there are so many people who are here and maybe it's happening but if it is we don't know that because we don't know you. And we have all of our elders and all of those who are called to shepherd you and they have shepherd's hearts and they see you as sheep but they can't get their arms around you quite yet cause you haven't really settled in the flock. And it's their great desire that all of you be functional. Can you imagine what would happen if all the five or six thousand people that come here on Sunday morning were actually living examples of Ephesians 3:20? If all of us were walking out of here and seeing exceeding abundantly above all we could even dream actually happening in our lives? Can you imagine the impact? If you think this church is growing fast now imagine what it would ... what it would be like if all of us was functioning in accord with Ephesians 3:20--it would double about every month. But this is the thing we agonize for in our hearts. That God's people be experiencing all that God has that He would be glorified in them.

You know, I love to talk about this passage because it just brings me back to where it all happens. And I always think of this passage like a car. I don't know anything about a car. I mean, I know where to put the key in, you know, turn the lights on. But if I knew everything about a car, if I was like my father-in-law, he takes them apart and puts them together again, if I was like him and knew everything about a car and I knew every little function - I knew the electrical system, and the fuel system and the power train and all that stuff. See, I know a few words but I don't know much about a car. But if I knew all that kind of stuff and I had it all down pat and I could design it all I could walk up to my car and say - Car, I understand you I comprehend you. Now take me to the church. That car is not going to take me to the church. I can be a literal ignoramus, walk up to that car and say - I don't understand anything about you. And put the key in and it will take me where it wants me to go. Or where I want it to go. Now the point is this; it doesn't do you any good to know everything unless you put the key in. Now in the first three chapters of Ephesians you've got the power plant described. That's the point. Do you realize that for three chapters now we've been studying who you are in Christ? The description of you, a full functioning, 8-cylinder Christian. A literal Belch-Fire eight, that's you, that's me. We've got enough power to do the job. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly. We are in Christ Jesus. We have within us all the power that enables God to do what God does, Christ to do what Christ does and the Spirit to do what the Spirit does. All of the things that are true of us in chapters 1 to 3 are a description of the power, the plant that makes it move, the resources, the energy system, the dynamite.

Now when you get to chapter four it is a road map that says now with all this power here's where you go. Here's the behavior, here's where you drive that machine. But, folks, you can know all about the engine, chapter 1 to 3 through verse 13, you can know all about where you're to go but you're never going to do it until you turn the key on and that's chapter 3 verses 14 to 21. I call it the Christian's ignition. This is where you get turned on. And unfortunately it is very possible for some of the sanctified saints to soak it up constantly. To understand their engine, to have a tank loaded with fuel, to understand the map, to know what the race requires, to see the whole route but never move the will to turn it on. To me that is the greatest anxiety of the ministry. And I've said this for years. People who know it all but they never really function according to the power of Ephesians 3:20.

They say - Well, I...I've been around for a long time. I certainly know all these great truths but I am not very dynamic. Well, you're like a lot of other people. You know, we say you should be exploding for Christ. And you say - Well, I think I'm a dud. I don't fizzle well let alone explode. Well, the reason is not because you don't have the power and the reason is not because you don't know where the race is the reason is you never stuck the key in and turned on the ignition. And that's what is going on in Ephesians 3:14 to 21. This is where you get it moving, the race begins in chapter 4, folks, but we've got to get turned on. Now I'm going to spend a few weeks in this ... the end of chapter 3 because there is no sense starting to race unless everybody's got their engine going. You know, like they say at Indianapolis - the guy gets up there and he says "Gentlemen, start your engines." It wouldn't do any good if they didn't. They know that. Well you know it too, but isn't it amazing how many people try

to run the race without ever starting the engine? And so that's what this passage is talking about.

Now, it is a progression that is involved in starting the engine. There is a progression here moving all the way from where Paul begins his prayer to where he climaxes it--by the time you get to 3:20 you are really moving. In fact, this race has a running start. You'll hit chapter four going full blast if you get turned on at the end of chapter 3. And so the fantastic truth of how the Christian flips his will to get the ignition rolling is right here. And I really believe that God is going to do some dramatic things in our lives as we study this.

Now it comes in the form of a prayer. It comes in the form of a prayer. This is the second prayer in the book of Ephesians. The first prayer was in chapter 1 verses 15 and following and Paul prayed for enlightenment. Here he prays for enablement. In chapter one he prayed - I want you to know your power. Here he prays God; I want them to use their power. And really those are the two things. Those are the two things that any man of God has to be concerned about. He has to try to tell his people who they are and then he has to try to get them to act like it. He wants them to understand the power and then he wants them to use the power. So the first prayer was - Oh, God, that You would fill them with the spirit of revelation and knowledge and the understanding, they might understand their inheritance. That they may know their resources. They might know they have resurrection power, this was chapter 1 and now he says - Oh, God, I pray that they might begin to do what that power enables them to do. So this is a vital prayer. Paul wants to bring the believer to the place of maximum power output. He wants full functioning Christians. And there's nothing as tragic as those who aren't. Those who indifferently limp in and out. Who know the truth but never ever get it turned on. They even know the race course but they never get the engine going. And it's an act of the will. And we'll see how that moves in progression as we look at the passage.

Now as I said it's a prayer. Very like the apostle Paul to pray. That's a great part of his life and here he knows that the source of this is God. He believes that God is sovereign. And, you see, in one sense he pleads with people to respond but in the other sense he pleads with God because he knows God is the motivator. God is the initiator. God is the force. And I've often felt that if you don't get your engine turned on by yourself, God may do some things that will force you to turn it on and you'll wish you had turned it on by yourself.

But here Paul calls on God to activate the believer's power so that God gets the glory, verse 21. Now let's look at verse 14 and we'll just introduce the thought this morning. Verse 14; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father." Paul is praying here. That's obvious. But when he says for this cause that takes us backwards. For what cause? What is the thing that makes Paul pray this prayer? What is the thing that causes him to cry out to God that this power begin to function? Well interestingly enough you have to go all the way back to verse 1 to find out. Because as I told you last time verses 2 through 13 is a what? A parenthesis. Do you notice that verse 1 begins exactly the way verse 14 does? For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentile - and he starts there to pray -

For this cause I, Paul, and he would have said bow the knees but you remember I told you he stopped and said - wait a minute. Before I pray for your enablement I think I better teach you just once more some basic truths. In other words, he stops and in a parenthesis he goes back over some truth that he feels is essential. Then when he's finished his parenthesis he comes right back to his prayer again. For this cause I bow... I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles bow my knees. So he's right back where he was going to be in verse 1. So we go back to verse 1 then and we see for this cause.

For what cause? Go back to verse 22 of chapter 2 and you'll find out. In chapter 2 he is describing the identity of a Christian. Tremendous passage, it says we're alive in Jesus Christ. It says we are His workmanship. It says that we are no longer aliens. But we have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. It talks about the fact that we are one new man. We are one body. We are no more strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens of the saints in the household of God. We are building the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. We are a building fitly framed together, growing to be a holy temple in the Lord. Now you come to it, verse 22, in whom? That is in Christ.

"Ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Now watch this, it is because you as a Christian are the habitation of God, the habitation of the Spirit, the habitation of Christ that he says - God, for that reason I pray that they would get the power turned on. You see, it is because God is there and His power is there and His Spirit is there that he says - Oh God, enable them to see the fullness of that. See. So it is the definition of the believer as the very habitation of the God of the universe that causes Paul to say there is so much power there, there is so much resource there. Oh, God, may it be made manifest. That's the cause upon which he prays. For this cause, I bow my knee. For this reason that you are the habitation of God and that you see at the end of verse 19 he climaxes his great prayer by saying - Oh, since you're the habitation of God that you might be filled with all the what? The fullness of God, that you as His habitation might know His fullness. And that since you are also the habitation of Christ - look at verse 17 - that Christ may dwell in your life and fill it with His love. And that since you are the habitation of the Holy Spirit that you - verse 16 - would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. You see? In other words, the whole prayer is predicated on the indwelling triune God. And on the basis of the reality that God is there comes the prayer for enablement that God the Son would settle there and be at home, that God the Spirit would enable and strengthen that God, the very God the Father Himself, would fill you with all of His fullness, the result being that you would do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think. The result of that that God would be glorified. See. Tremendous passage. And it's all for the cause of who you are and who dwells in you.

And what Paul is saying is this, it is incredulous, it is inconceivable, it is unacceptable that some Christian who has in him God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit should exist in impotence. You understand that? Incredulous, unacceptable, Paul won't tolerate it. We should know the manifestation of the triune God in us. You have Christ in verse 22 of chapter 2, in whom. You have

God the habitation of God. You have the Spirit through the Spirit. They're all there. In fact the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ in some passages, Romans 8, the Spirit of God in others. God is there, Christ is there, the Spirit is there.

You know, you stop to think about it - that's pretty amazing stuff. Right? To think that you and I, a little piece of clay, have dwelling within us the eternal triune God of the universe. That's ... that's fantastic. And there's really no sense in just kind of putting around on one cylinder when God is there. So it is that that is the solid theological biblical doctrinal foundation of his prayer. And by the way, you ought to always to pray, you are always to pray off of a theological foundation based on what you know to be true in the word of God you offer your prayer to God.

Now notice further, he says for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father. The Father...let me just say a word about this and I'll say more later. You know, this is such a majestic passage. It's so grandiose, it's so thrilling, it's so exultant and elevated that you would have thought that he would say - I bow my knees unto the eternal King of glory. That's probably what I would have said. You know, really grandiose. But he says to the Father. And there's a reason why. And it's this. The use of the term Father emphasizes the acceptance of God when we come to Him in prayer. We do not come to God in prayer fearing that He is some kind of indifferent cold, unloving distant deity. We don't come to God as some being to be appeased as the pagans do. We come to a tender, loving, concerned, compassionate, accepting Father. Who literally waits with anticipation in His heart for the moment that we enter His presence and eagerly embraces us. That's why the word Father is used. Because Father conveys acceptance. Father conveys compassion. Father conveys tenderness. Father conveys concern. Think of it this way; imagine humanly speaking the best father that there could ever be of human kind. The finest father conceivable. Would that father accept his children into his presence? Why of course the most loving, generous, compassionate, tender father that you could ever imagine - would he accept his children? Yes well when you have imagined that father and you have imagined his acceptance of his children you have touched the one-millionth of how God accepts us. That's the kind of Father He is. And when Paul goes into God's presence he goes into God's presence because he sees God as a Father. There is where his boldness is, you see. There is where his eagerness is. Because he's not coming fearfully, he's charging knowing that the Father all the while has been waiting with a heart filled with anticipation that he would come.

Do you ever think of your prayer life that way? Do you ever think of your prayer life as the opportunity for you to fulfill the desire that God has had all the while waiting for you to come rushing into His presence? That's the way you should look at it. He wants that. He has defined Himself as a Father, a loving Father. It is He who allowed the Spirit of God to use the diminutive and to say that we have a right, Galatians 4, Romans 8, to cry "Abba Father," which means daddy. Personal, endearing, tender terminology.

So, Paul comes to pray not to some cosmic indifference but to one who is a father in an infinite sense, accepting and forgiving and loving and desirous of fulfilling needs and wants. And he comes to pray. And of what is he going to pray? Well, he's going to pray about what Paul always prayed about when he showed up in the Father's presence. He always came with the same stuff on his mind. You want to know something interesting? You never find Paul with the exception of the exercise of the gift of healing praying for anybody's physical needs. Interesting isn't it? But when Paul comes rushing into the presence of God what is on his heart is not the physical thing, the physical doesn't really matter. What's the difference what happens to this body? "For to me to live is Christ and to die is," what? "Is gain." We don't want to be too preoccupied with that stuff. That stuff is incidental.

When Paul rushes into the presence of the Father it's .... it's with the spiritual that he's concerned. Every prayer that Paul prayed while a prisoner was a prayer for somebody else's spiritual welfare. If ever there was a time when a guy could have prayed for his own situation it would have been then but you don't hear him doing that. You don't hear him doing that.

For example, Philippians chapter 1, he comes into God's presence there to pray and what does he pray about? Philippians 1:9; "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment. That you may test things that are excellent. That you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Colossians chapter 1 he prays, verse 9; "For this cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you." And what do you pray, Paul? "That you might be filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, increasing by the knowledge of God, strengthened with might, all might, according to His glorious power. And to all patience, long-suffering with joyfulness giving thanks to the Father who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It's all spiritual stuff. Praying for understanding, for wisdom, for insight, for the fruit of righteousness, for joy.

Paul was preoccupied with people's spiritual lives. You see, Paul knew that the major issue is not the outer man. The outer man is dying all the time, he said. But what do we care, for the inner man is renewed every day. And Paul's prayer was directed at the inner man. God has spoken in my heart, recently, about my need to pray more for you. And so I've been examining the word of God to see how it was that men of God prayed for the people of God. And all I can ever find is that they were totally consumed with praying for their spiritual development, for their spiritual needs.

Now it's not wrong to pray about physical things. But the preoccupation must be the spiritual. And you know, beloved, in the church of Jesus Christ for years we have bogged down in praying for the physical, the outer man which perishes. It's nice that the Lord would heal my broken leg but that is totally inconsequential in the light of eternity. Do you understand that? That is not the issue. Only in

so far as it affects my spirit, my inner man.

Paul made it a habit to pray. He prayed ... we find him praying constantly. We find him talking about it constantly. In Ephesians 6:18 he said; "Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints. And pray for me (he said) that utterance may be given to me that I may speak with boldness."

In Acts 6 they prayed. Philippians 1 Paul makes the statement; "I thank my God on every remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy." He prayed for them all the time.

First Thessalonians he did the same thing in verse 2, "We give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers, remembering," what did you remember in your prayer? Not your physical problems but I remembered your labor of love and your patience and your faith. Spiritual things. And I really believe, beloved, if we want to see God work we've got to get on to that. We've got to get on to praying always for all saints. And we've got to get on to praying about their spiritual things. Are you sensitive to the spiritual needs of your wife? Are you sensitive to the spiritual needs of your husband? Ladies, are you sensitive to the spiritual needs of your children, your neighbors, the people you rub elbows with, people in your Bible study, people in your prayer group, the people who are your leaders, your teachers, your friends? Do you pray for their spiritual needs? Listen, don't you ever for a minute think that we've all got the battle licked. That's not true. Do you realize that in Ephesians chapter 6, after all that armor is said and done, you put on the whole armor of God and you're able to withstand in the evil day and having then all to stand and you get on this and this and this and you get all armored up to beat the band and when it's all said and done he says - By the way, even with all that stuff on, one last word - praying always for all saints. You have to realize that the divine resource is still the necessary element. We need to be holding each other in prayer.\*

You know, in Colossians chapter 4 verse 2 it says - "Continue in prayer." It says - Continue in prayer. Now there are other verses that say that. Jesus said in, I think it's Luke 21:36, - Pray always. The apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians - Pray without ceasing. Romans 12:12; "Continue diligently in prayer." Philippians 4:6; "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication let your request be made known unto God." There's a lot of things in the Bible that talk about it but I was thinking about Colossians 4:2 and the term - Continue in prayer. Basically the word that is the root for continue, *kartereo*, is a word that simply means to be steadfast. For example, it's used in Hebrews 11:27 of Moses where it says he endured. He endured. It means, means to be strong, be strong in prayer. But there the word is not *kartereo* it is *pros-kartereo*, and as I've been telling you all along when you add a preposition to the beginning of a Greek word it intensifies. And what he is saying there is - Hang in there with endurance in your prayer. Be strengthened in your prayer. Not just an easy come, easy go God consciousness but strong enduring persevering prayer.



There's two great parables in the book of Luke that discuss this and I think you probably remember them. One is in chapter 11 when He said unto them; "Which of you shall have a friend who shall go to him at midnight and say to him - Friend lend me 3 loaves. For a friend of mine is in journey to come to me and I have nothing to set before him and he from within shall answer and say - Don't bother me, the door is now shut, my children are now with me in bed." We've had that problem all our lives. In those days it was for heat purposes but we've always had our kids, I don't know... that's another thing. "I cannot rise and help you." Anyway. "I say unto you thou he will not rise and give him because he is his friend yet because of his importunity," that is his consistent persistence, "he will rise and give him as much as he needs." So in other words, he says the guy won't get out of bed the first time he asks but the guy just keeps pounding the door long enough he's going to give him the bread to get rid of him in a sense. And then he says, "Ask and it shall be given you." Not that God is finally bugged and gives you what you wants but he says even if a guy is ... even if a guy who doesn't care that much and who is bugged will give you what you want if you're persistent imagine what God will give you who loves you if you're persistent. See. That's the point.

Go over to Luke 18 and there's another interesting one there. And it says; "He spoke a parable to them (verse one) to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Keep it up, don't get weary, just keep at it. "Saying there was in a city a judge who feared not God, didn't regard man. There was a widow in that city and she came to him saying avenge me of mine adversary. And he wouldn't for a while but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her lest by her continual coming she wear me out." I've got to get rid of this woman. And the point is this; if an unjust judge is going to do that for somebody he doesn't like what do you think God is going to do who loves you if you're persistent in your prayer? Prayer is to be a persistent struggle.

Virginia Stem Owens wrote; "This is not a cosmic Teddy-bear we are cuddling up to."

C. S. Lewis said in one of his writings of CHRONICLES OF NARNIA, "He is not a tame lion."

Elowe is convinced that prayer for persons living in the technological age must be "combat. And not just combat with the evil one, with one's society or even one's divided self though it is all of these, it is combat with God." He says, "We must struggle with Him just as Jacob did at Peniel where he earned his name Israel, he who strives with God." That's what Israel means. "We too must be prepared to say - I will not let you go till you bless me."

Consider Moses again and again intervening between the Israelites and God's wrath. Consider Abraham praying for Sodom. The widow demanding justice. This is combat

Jacob's thigh was put out of joint, he paid in the combat. He went away lame. Whoever wrestles with God in prayer puts his whole life at stake.

Owen says, "How tempting to up the stakes making prayer merely another consumer product. How embarrassing to have to admit not only that prayer may get you into a prison as it did Jeremiah but also that while you are moldering away in a miry pit there you may have a long list of lamentations and unanswered questions to present."

When you wrestle with God there's a price to pay. But that's the essence of persistent prayer.

I love the story that Beterwolf used to tell about taking heaven by storm. He said God honors heroic faith. And he tells this Greek thing. He says, "One day Hercules was out on a ship on the ocean and the sun was oppressively hot. In fact it was so hot that it was just unbearable. And the sun was scorching everything. And Apollo was the sun god. And so Hercules finally got so mad at Apollo that he drew his mighty bow at the sun to shoot the sun. Well that seems like a stupid thing to try. And Apollo thought that was so interesting. Apollo said he is...he's actually ... he's actually crazy heroic." But he was so taken, according to the legend. It's a stupid story but I'm telling it anyway cause it (laughter) makes my point. But Apollo was so overwhelmed with the heroics of Hercules who would attempt to take an arrow and shoot out the sun that he pacified the heat, granted to Hercules all that he needed, got the ship going and sent him on his journey.

I think there's a sense in which Beterwolf says - you've got to storm heaven, continue in prayer, with strong endurance and perseverance. That was Paul. He prayed. He bowed his knee and he prayed. And he prayed about spiritual things. And he went busting right into God's presence because he knew God was a loving Father who was just waiting for him to come and embraced him when he arrived.

There's another thing that hit me in verse 14. He says I bow my knees unto the Father. And I thought - I wonder why he did that? It doesn't tell us that always when he prayed he bowed his knees. That's not the only posture for prayer. The Scripture talks about a lot of different way to pray.

In Genesis 18:22 Abraham stood before the Lord it says and prayed. He stood and prayed. That was a typical Jewish way to stand with your hands up as if offering a prayer, ready to receive the answer. Abraham, Genesis 18, stood and prayed to the Lord over Sodom.

First Chronicles chapter 17, David sat before the Lord and prayed. Sometimes in the Old Testament it says they bent the knee and prayed. Sometimes it says they stood. In Matthew chapter 26 verse 39 it says Jesus was prostrate, on His face, before God. The one way that I don't recommend is lying on your back in bed. That's ... you know, you fall asleep in some of the best prayers. I've done that to my wife ... no offense to her prayers, they're good prayers. But I'm very tired sometimes and that doesn't help me stay awake.

By the way, we can't argue about which is the right way. There were some Christians I read about this week who were arguing about which was the right way to pray. Well, I think God hears you when you stand with your arms lifted up ... Well, I think we just kneel and bow... No. In fact, this one Christian was in on the argument and he said - You know, the truth of the matter is one time I fell into a well backwards, head first and my foot caught in the rope. And he said with my foot in the rope, my head straight down and I prayed the most effective prayer I prayed in my entire life. (laughter) So actually you can be dangling by one foot with your head in a hole and pray a very effective prayer. So we're not ... we don't want to make a case, you see, out of bowing the knee. But I do feel there are some reasons for such kinds of prayer.

As I began to look over the Old Testament and the New Testament I found that the bowing of the knee at least signified a couple of things. Number one was the concept of worship. That when a man of God would go before God and see God as King, when he was beholding God in his mind as majestic, when he was seeing God as high and lifted up, he would be on his knees very often. And that word is given to us in the 95 Psalm in a very beautiful and magnificent expression. This is what the psalmist says; "O come let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, make a joyful noise." Now watch this, "For the Lord is a great God. A great King above all gods." Now the frame of reference is that of majesty, a great God and a great King. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth. The strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His. And He made it and His hands formed the dry land." You get the majesty of God. And the next verse says; "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel." The concept of kneeling was tied to a king, a monarch. When you went before a king you knelt. And so you see that in terms of a prayer that is directed at the majesty of God. And I think in a sense perhaps Paul had this in his heart. As he bowed his knee because of the concept of the majestic power of God, the grandeur, the magnificence, the glory of God. And he uses the word glory twice in this brief passage. He is speaking of God in His glory and just maybe that was part of the reason he bowed his knee.

There's a second thing. We see in the Bible the bowing of the knee in a time of real intense passion and emotion. Let me show you. Ezra chapter 9, Ezra chapter 9, you don't need to turn to it, I'll just share with you. Ezra is coming to God to confess sin. And he is a broken man. He has a contrite and a broken heart, as the psalmist David called it. And he comes in the evening sacrifice in verse 5 of Ezra 9. "I rose up from my heaviness, having torn my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God and said - Oh, my God, I am ashamed, I blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God. You see, this is confession, contrition, overwhelming iniquity; the man couldn't stand up under the weight of sin. I don't know if you've ever experienced that but I have. I've experienced times when I've gone to the Lord with such a brokenness in my heart that I...I find myself literally unable to get up, falling on my knees. Bow down on my knees. And with your hands just spread out and unable to even hold the head up. That's been my experience.

And I see in Daniel also not the confession of sin but prayer in the midst of a dire circumstance. And it seems that the passion of his heart in this circumstance may have contributed to his kneeling. They made a decree in Daniel 6 that anybody who worshipped any other god would be thrown in the lion's den. When Daniel knew the writing was signed, he knew how serious it was. He knew the consequence. He went right to his room, threw his window open and he got on his knees three times a day. I think it tells me about a man who really had a compassionate heart. Who really bowed before the Lord. And this circumstance must have heighten the intensity.

Another illustration of it is in the twentieth chapter of Acts and in the twentieth chapter of Acts you have Paul and the group of elders from Ephesus at Miletus there and they're getting ready to say good-bye and they love Paul so much that when he...when they want to pray they all fall on their knees and they embrace each other and they cry and they pray. And it says they were so broken hearted because they were losing Paul. That's another time of deep emotion, the loss of someone you love. Just a heartbreak. Whether it's the heartbreak of sin or the heartbreak of circumstance or the heartbreak of a lost love, whatever it is it seems as though falling on the knees sometimes in the Bible marks the one who is very passionate, very intense, very emotional.

And I really believe Paul was that kind of a person. I believe Paul was emotional about the church. I believe he was emotional about praying for people's needs. In fact he described it in a way that is just really amazing. In Galatians chapter 4 he described it this way. "My little children," he's pleading for the Galatians to shape up, he says, "Of whom I have labor pains until Christ be formed in you." You see, the guy wanted so much to see people like Jesus Christ, "Until Christ be formed in you I suffer labor pains."

I saw in the paper the other day some dumb new movie came out, "The First Pregnant Man." First man ever to have labor pains. I thought to myself, he's not the first man to ever have labor pains. Paul had them. And his were pains that Christ would be formed in his people. He had that emotion, that intensity. Perhaps that's why it says in Ephesians chapter 3 "For this cause I bow my knees." The sense of majesty, a sense of intense compassion and emotion that he felt as he prayed.

And again look at verse 14, he says, "I pray to the Father in whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named." Now some say that means that the Father is the prototype of all fathers. That he's the father of all of fatherhood. That the patria is the chief of all patera, that he is the Father of all fathers, the Aristotelian father, if you will, the prototype. I don't really think... I don't feel comfortable with that interpretation.

You know, when I was in college I remember there was a big deal going on in liberalism. They used to be saying all the time that God was everybody's father, remember that? The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. That was the big deal of liberalism. That God is everybody's father. And

I remember the guy who was in charge of evangelism for the American Baptist Denomination, the head of their evangelism department said that he was not going around the world telling people they needed Jesus Christ but simply announcing to everybody that they were already saved. And that that was the mission of the church, to proclaim that God was everybody's father and everybody was a brother; the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Well I don't think verse 14 is saying God the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named - that is everybody alive and dead, everybody whose ever lived is--got God for their Father. Because it doesn't say hell here, it just says heaven. So whatever family this is it's a family on earth and heaven. And whatever family it is it's the family of whom He's the Father. And Jesus said in John 8:44 to the Jewish leaders, "You are of your father," whom? "The devil." And in I John chapter 3 John says, there are two families; the family of God and the family of the devil. His children and God's children- are different.

So he says I pray that the Father, our Father, all of our Father, whether we're living saints or dead saints, it's one family. You see, we're one with the Father, one with the Son, one with the Spirit, one with everybody else in the family; Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, all of them. There's just one family. In fact we're more citizens of heaven than we are citizens of earth. Right? We just happen to have not have died yet. We already possess the same eternal life they do. We already have the guarantee of our inheritance. We already have the salvation they have. We already have the home that they have there; it's just that we haven't occupied it yet. And so there is one family, he says. He goes to the Father ... it's just a great thought...he goes to the Father knowing that he is a part of the family. And that the same God who has lifted up the other saints to heaven to glory, the same God who has blessed the saints around the world, the same loving Father who cares for his whole family is going to receive him and care for him and so he goes charging into the presence of the Father of whom the whole family, whether they are alive or dead, has been named. And you can compare Hebrews 12:22 and 23, the one family, the one family of God, the church of the first-born whether it's alive on the earth or whether the just made perfect in heaven. It's all one family.

It has its distinct parts, the church and Israel, but it's one family. All the children of God. We are no more or less the sons of God than Israel, believing Israel, true Israel. And so Paul emphasizes the family father idea because that gives him the boldness, he comes in and he says; All of us are named for you. I'm coming because I'm named for You. I'm Paul the son of the living God. Just like every other child of God. I'm named for You. I come into Your presence, that's my right to enter Your presence.

So he comes to pray, he bows his knee because he sees the majesty of God and he bows the knee, I believe, because of the passion of his heart. And he prays not for physical things but as always for spiritual things. And he sees God as a loving Father to accept him. And because he sees God as a loving Father who gives the best things to His family, he asks with an amazing boldness. Look at verse 16, this is amazing. He says,--"God, I'm asking that You would grant according the riches of Your glory." Now what I'm going to ask God I want a full load of it, is what he is saying. You know,

sometimes a Christian might be a little reluctant, you go to the Lord and you say - Lord, it's me again. I don't want much just ... a couple of drops of grace and goodness; this will be fine, just a little bit. Well listen, folks, you'd better storm the gates a little. When the apostle Paul arrives there because he knows the magnanimous Father that he has who has blessed the saints living and dead who are in the family, He doesn't piddle around with puny requests. He says I want God to grant you that you would receive according to the riches of His glory.

Now you remember our little discussion of that in verse 1... verse 7 of chapter 1? According to the riches of His grace? Here it's according to the riches of His glory. That's different than out of. Remember that little discussion? For example, if I go to a rich man and I say - Ah, I am poor and destitute, naked and blind, I can't feed my family, I can't support my children, I have nothing. I know you love the Lord and I know you're ... you have ten million dollars, could you help me? And the rich man says - Oh yes, and writes me a check for \$25.00. I say - Thank you, rich man; you gave me out of your riches. Then I find another rich man who has ten million dollars or whatever and I tell him the same story and he says - Oh yes, how much do you need? And I say - Well, five thousand would do everything; provide a place for us to stay... that would do it all. He says -Wonderful, and he writes a check for \$25,000. I would say - Oh, you didn't give out of you gave, what? According to. As rich as you are that's how much rich as we want.

Now Paul goes to God and he says - God, how much grace you got? That's how much you should give them. How much mercy do you have? I want them to have that much. How much love? That much love. How much forgiveness? That much forgiveness. How much kindness? That much kindness. How much goodness? That much goodness. God, give them according to. You see. Now that's the essence of boldness in prayer. And Paul is praying here an incredible prayer. He is praying that ultimately we would see a full manifestation of divine power in us that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. And that he's going right in there saying - I want it all for their behalf. Tremendous thought. According to all that You are, God, so hear this prayer.

Well, the specific things that he prays for become the key to the Christian getting the ignition switch turned on and the power plant running. And we'll see what those are next time. Let's pray together.

Thank You, Father, for the fellowship we've share this morning. And it's been so good. We pray that You will refresh our spirits in the Word of God that You'll make demands on us, firm hard, binding ones from what we've learned that will change our life. Make us people of prayer. Help us to go boldly to a loving Father because we bear His name and we're in His family knowing that He waits to accept us anxiously to meet our need. Help us to ask for those things that are in measure according to what He has and be bold. Help us to bow the knee to One who is majestic, to bow the knee because our hearts are really passionate as we pray. Help us to pray for things that are spiritual for the needs of the saints. That they may grow to be all that You want them to be. Make Your concerns our concerns. May we pray in the Spirit as he prays. Father, help us in the days to come as we begin to see the

unfolding of this tremendous passage, to see dramatic changes in our lives for Your glory in Jesus name. Amen

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