

Tapped In To What's Inside

Ephesians 3:14-21

September 3, 2017

Main Point:

This is Paul's prayer for the church to grasp what is unknowable apart from prayer. We cannot know the love of Christ the way that God means for us to know it without tapping in to the resource of the mystery of prayer. God longs for us to receive and to know His love for His people. Because this is so difficult for us to grasp, Paul taps in to the power of prayer so that God will do what is impossible for mere humans to do.

SI: Why this passage?

You may remember the story... of a man who found a hidden treasure in a field, but covered it back over so that no one else would find it. Then he went and got his affairs together and sold everything he had. Everyone thought he was crazy, but he went through with it – why? So that he could buy that field, b/c it had a hidden treasure in it that was worth far more than anything he had previously owned.

We come to this passage – a prayer. Paul is praying that the church, that we, would have an experiential knowledge affecting our hearts, our imaginations, our inner being, so that we would know that we have a hidden treasure. That it is ours, that we are united with it, that we have been given it.

And it is very important that you see that it is a prayer- it is a request, it's actually a report of Paul's prayer for them – it's a double prayer – Paul tells them that he is praying for them and he gives them the content of his prayer.

Paul knows, that nothing can happen in the inner man, in your heart, unless the Holy Spirit does it. And so God loves it when people pray and cry out to Him for Him to do what only He can do.

So you have this field with this hidden treasure in it. Let's say it is an underground ocean of oil. Black gold. You know it is supremely valuable. You are now the owner of it. But instead of tapping into it, you let it sit there. You've sold your house and all your possessions in order to buy this land, but you live in a trailer on a corner of the property. You're not enjoying the benefits of the treasure that you own.

It is likely that some of you may be living this way. You have a treasure within you but enjoying it? Not really. You at times feel more dominated by fear and guilt, shame and loss than by the fact that you own a treasure.

So Paul prays. Read and pray.

“For this reason...”:

2 reasons:

1: Writing to Gentiles who before their faith in Christ were strangers to the promise and without hope in the world. Now have been brought in by being in Christ. No more divisions based on race or culture or background.

2: Paul is in prison – they are tempted to be discouraged.

Paul prays.

Power for Strength

Knowledge to Grasp

Loved By Christ

Filled to Fullness

1 Power for Strength

Pours out these words of the power of the Father:

Father, source of all humanity, riches of His glory, He may grant... He prays to the Power for the church to receive that Power

Power from outside of yourself injected inside of yourself. Like a shot given via needle into your bloodstream that travels your whole body to infect you with the vaccine to inoculate you from the disease.

Power comes through His Spirit living in us in our inner being –

The power comes from the **inside**, from what is unseen.

Tap in by faith – believing, expectant faith.

Power makes you strong

We all want power, we all want strength, no one likes to feel weak

Texas Hurricane Harvey: The wonderful stories of people using what God has given them to serve and love the weak, the broken, the hurting, the lost and drowning.

Paul's prayer for power that would make us strong so that we would have knowledge:

2 Knowledge to Grasp

So that we would know something that Paul is praying is the most important thing to know in all the universe, for all eternity.

But first,

What kind of knowledge is this? A grasping, an understanding.

A knowledge that is the result of a struggle... that eventually breaks through to realizing it, to getting it.

ILLUS of I hear you, but I don't understand. - Amy and I had this, this past week...

Paul is asking that there be no faking... no bare acknowledgement, but a deep, abiding, realizing, applying, manifesting knowledge that makes a landscape changing difference. A life changing difference.

How do you get this knowledge? With v. 18> “all the saints!” – in context of community – key phrase to keep us from that American tendency towards me, myself, and God. You need the saints, you need each other in all the weirdness and difficulty that that brings...

To know what surpasses knowledge:

3 Loved By Christ

To know that Christ dwells in you - union with Christ -
Not just to grasp “the love of Christ!” But that you are loved by Christ! Loved by God.

He Prays to the God of all knowledge who reveals whatever He chooses to reveal, that He would give His people knowledge of Him, of His love and of His power. And this is knowledge that surpasses knowledge. Not that we don't understand His love, but that we are so overwhelmed by it that we are in awe of it and tapped into it. It is electricity. I don't understand it, but I do understand that when I plug this in, it gives power to the thing that would otherwise be dead.

So Paul goes to where it really matters - your **roots** and **foundations**.

Rooted > like a firmly grounded tree... ever tried to go pull one up? deeply rooted

Grounded> foundation of a building poured into the earth, attached to the ground

Deep roots and firm foundations - “rooted and grounded” - and in both cases this is **unseen!** but the unseen causes the seen... the foundation holds up the building, the roots hold up and enliven the tree

Or consider **marriage**:

– a woman's heart longs to rest in the strength of her husband. He is strong so it is ok for her to be weak. And he loves her weakness b/c it magnifies his strength and shows him that he needs to use his strength on her behalf. >

The Bible speaks of marriage as a sign pointing to our union with Christ. This is what Paul is getting at. And we say, what? And Paul says it is a mystery that surpasses knowledge... but look at what it does! It fills us with all the fullness of God! In the power of the Trinity...

So see, then, back to marriage... your oneness, your unity in marriage has an expiration date. It will end at your death. But this, this unity, this strength, power, and knowledge in your inner being by faith, through the work of the Spirit – this will not end.

So this means that the greatest ecstatic experience of intimacy I can have in marriage or in any human, earthly experience is nothing in comparison with having/receiving/enjoying/comprehending the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

This is why Paul erupts into this doxology of believing the unbelievable in vs. 20-21. He is overcome by what He prays knowing that it is so utterly powerful that it is beyond belief until you have it. And He has it.

How do you get it? How do you get this? How do you pray like this, believe that you can pray like this, have this kind of expectant faith? Tap in. Tap in to the promises.

Appeal for faith in Christ. Not just attachment to the church, but faith in Christ. Oh God, give me this faith, this belief that You have this power and are alone able to run it down into my heart and soul.

It is not easy to know this love, to really know it... see, how he says in v. 18 - "to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth..." ...>

See the cross of Christ here?

The breadth: it's wide enough to cover every sin you can imagine

The length: it's long enough to cover sins long since past

The height - it goes to Heaven into the courtroom of eternal justice

The depth - the cross goes to Hell to annihilate the Accuser of the brethren who says you're not good enough to deserve the love of Christ.

So that the whole of your life is dependent upon the love of Christ for His people. The Love of Christ for YOU. Why is this so important for him to pray for this?

*App: To those wondering, thinking about, vacillating > Is God's heart good towards me? Do you see why Paul prays this way? So passionately, so strongly, so deeply? That you would know the love of Christ in your inner being, not just in your head, but deep in your hearts?

B/c this is the core of the battle. This is where the enemy attacks... "Did God really say?" The enemy's effort is to cast doubt on the believability of God's love. To cause you to disbelieve that God's way is not the loving way but the unloving way. To make God malevolent instead of benevolent.

But again, not just a prayer for individual Christians, but for the whole Ephesian Church — why? To fend off the disunity and dissolution of the church — to prevent the divide and conquer strategy of the enemy and political camp-ization of the church body.

So not just prayers for us individually, but for us together: A plug for more corporate prayer

Paul prays then, for God to grant us power for strength, that we would know what surpasses knowledge: the indescribable love of Christ for His people, for us, so that we would be filled with the fullness of God

4 Filled to Fullness

In professional baseball, the race is on. The race is on to weaponize team chemistry.

“Chemistry is absolutely critical, but very few teams or managers or general managers know how to create it or even have any idea how to create it,” said Houston Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow. “You know it’s important, but you don’t know what the levers are to change it.”

But what if they did? Corporate managers and armies of consultants have wrestled with this question for decades, and now baseball is tackling it head-on: Can something as nebulous as “chemistry” be quantified like on-base percentage or ERA, and if so, can it be weaponized? Increasingly, forward-thinking franchises think it’s possible not only to measure the impact of chemistry, but to cultivate positive chemistry in an intentional and systematic fashion. That belief has sparked an information arms race in an area often discussed but rarely analyzed in a scientific way.

God wants to weaponize what He has given us. He intends for it to be used to further His kingdom – to bring unity to the body of Christ, to demonstrate to the watching world what God does to annihilate barriers such as race and class and social status.

While the baseball geniuses work on figuring that out, we pray. We know it can’t be figured out! We pray, we pray with confident expectation and awe in God’s power to fill us with His fullness because we are loved by Christ. >