

Ephesians 3: 14-21

Introduction

I. What is at your core?

If we could peel away all the externals (physical attraction, busyness, accomplishments, righteous behavior) what would we see in your heart of hearts?

II. Paul's prayer is for power, fullness, and love in that inner place (inner being, heart)

The Passage

I. Paul's lead-up to the prayer

A. "For this reason"

Points back to the radical role of the church community

2:19: the church as a holy temple

3:10: the church displays God's wisdom

So Paul prays a radical prayer

B. "I bow my knees": he's really pleading with God for this

C. "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name"

He is the ultimate father of all families

His Power: creator and Lord of all families

His Love: Loving Father who knows how to give good gifts

D. "according to the riches of his glory"

=a prayer that God would bless in proportion to all the riches He has

II. A Prayer for Christ to dwell in our hearts (v. 16-17)

A. the two parts of this prayer are the two sides of the same coin

1. Christ dwells in our hearts through the presence of the Spirit

2. The "inner being" and "heart" are the same thing: the "core"

= "the seat of the whole person's thinking, feeling, and willing"

B. "dwell" = to make his home in our hearts, to really be at home in our hearts

1. Analogy: Moving into a house

It takes a while to fully move into a house and make it your home

2. This happens "through faith"

a. As we trust in Christ and yield more and more of ourselves

b. As God strengthens us with power through His Spirit

3. "My Heart; Christ's Home", Robert Boyd Munger

4. The result of all this is Christ is fully at home in our lives and we begin to look more and more like him (just like a home reflects the tastes of its owners)

See Galatians 2:20

C. It's possible for the opposite of this to happen

1. Revelation 3:15-20: an entire church community that had gradually pushed Jesus outside of their lives through their own sense of self-sufficiency and wealth

2. Are we like that?

We accept Jesus but then we get busy, don't give him control, and over time he is not at the center but at the edges of our lives

3. If so, we need this prayer

III. A prayer that we would know Christ's love in deeper ways (v. 17-19)

A. "rooted and grounded in love"

Began at their conversion and has continued relevance today

"rooted": a plant: Christ's love is the soil from which we grow

"grounded": a building: Christ's love is the foundation from which we build

B. v. 18: "strength to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth"

1. "comprehend": an intellectual word: grasp, get your mind around

2. But Christ's love is something we can't fully get our minds around

a. breadth and length and height and depth (so vast!)

b. "surpasses knowledge": we will never fully get our mind around it

3. Two words to describe Christ's love

a. Unconditional

His love is not based on our moral performance or worthiness

His love is based on his own decision to love us without condition

b. Sacrificial

His love does not just mean he feels warm feelings about us

He was willing to become man and then go to the cross for us

C. "together with all the saints"

This is not a private love that we discover on our own

It takes the whole community together to discover the vastness of Christ's love

D. "to know"

1. = not just an intellectual knowledge; a relational/experiential knowledge

To experience his love it in our "core," heart, gut, etc

Example: Good Will Hunting: "it's not your fault"

2. Many Christians know Christ's love in their heads but not their hearts

a. Our heads say God's love is unconditional and sacrificial

b. Our hearts say God loves us when we're good

or God is secretly out to get me, isn't for me

3. The culture at large has a sense of insecurity, loneliness, inadequacy at the core

And so they seek to cover that with busyness, success, stuff, etc

D. "filled to all the fullness of God"

1. Paul may mean he wants us to be totally "drenched" in God (and his love)

2. Or Paul may mean he wants us to grow in maturity

"fullness" is used for maturity in another place (Eph 4:13)

3. Either way, this happens as Christ dwells in our hearts because in him the fullness of deity dwells, and we receive fullness as he dwells in us (see Col 2:9)

E. Tracy Page's Story

Conclusion

I. God often uses the hard times to do his deepest work

Life is not a continued upward growth from fullness to fullness, victory to victory

Rather, it's a series peaks and troughs, and the troughs are where God does deep work

--Paul's own life: thorn in the flesh: power in weakness (2 Cor 12: 1-10)

II. Let's pray this prayer for ourselves and for each other

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. What is at your core? If you had 2 hours alone in silence to stop long enough and take a look at what's going on in your "inner being", what would be the most dominant emotions/realities you'd find there?
3. Paul's first prayer is a prayer for Christ to really dwell (make his home) in the hearts of the Ephesians. Thinking of the image of a person making their home in a house, and thinking of Christ's dwelling in your own heart, what is the biggest barrier keeping Christ from dwelling more fully and deeply in your own life?
4. Thinking of Paul's phrase, "rooted and grounded in love," what have been the key experiences that have rooted you in Christ's love or that have helped you really come to terms with his love for you?
5. What do you think Paul means when he prays that the Ephesians would be "filled with all the fullness of God?" What might that look like practically? Is that prayer something we can expect to be fulfilled in our own lives?