

Ephesians 3:14-19

The disciples famously asked Jesus how to pray (Luke 11). At first glance, this might seem like an odd request but, as I walk more and more with Christ, I realize that my prayers are nowhere near as full as I would like them to be. In Luke 11, Jesus graciously answered the disciples by providing them with a template for faithful prayer. I would argue that Christ's answer did not end with that singular interaction however. Instead, prayers like the one recorded in Ephesians 3 continue to serve as guides for believers today. Let's take some time to study some of the components of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.

1. The occasion

- a. Notice that this prayer does not happen in a vacuum. Instead, Paul offers this prayer for the saints AFTER his teaching on faithful Gospel proclamation
- b. Recall Paul's admonition in verse 13 where he implores the Ephesians not to lose heart
- c. Remember that just prior the Apostle had exhorted them to boldness and confidence
- d. These are marvelous instructions but they require something of us don't they?
 - i. Some of you might read these kinds of admonitions and wonder how anyone could ever be faithful
 - ii. Does Paul know what boldness and confidence gets you in a dark world? Would the instructions be the same in all circumstances? What about moments of failure and difficulty?
 - iii. I am sure that Paul would continue to instruct us to press on, but he would do so with a further understanding... namely that it is God who works in us, empowering us to the task
 - iv. This is why verses 14-19 are so precious
 1. Paul is not telling Christians to be faithful in their own strength, he is telling Christians to follow Christ knowing that it is God who provides all their needs

2. A brief interlude

- a. Before we get into the particulars, I do want to point out the Trinitarian language in these verses
- b. We have allusions to:
 - i. The Holy Spirit (v. 16)
 - ii. Jesus Christ (v. 17 & 19)
 - iii. God the Father (v. 19)

- c. Evidently, the work of sustaining and empowering concerns every member of the Godhead!
- 3. The Apostle's requests
 - a. Strength
 - i. The first thing that Paul prays for is for the people to be strengthened in their "inner being"
 - 1. This little phrase is interesting and instructive
 - 2. The point is that they will need some soul-empowering vitality if they are going to accomplish the task
 - 3. This is why the Spirit's name is attached to this request
 - ii. The strength to do the Lord's work does not come from physical energy nor is it derived from merely natural means, instead the strength to do the Lord's work is given to us by the indwelling Spirit
 - iii. The implication of this teaching is clear and at least twofold:
 - 1. First, we must be Christians if we are going to experience this power
 - a. The Spirit of God only indwells those who are believers, which means only those who believe have any hope of enduring
 - 2. Second, we must humbly acknowledge our need of the Lord's power in our lives
 - a. We simply cannot do what God commands us to do through our own abilities
 - b. Love
 - i. The effect of the Spirit's strengthening is that Christ may "dwell" in our hearts through faith
 - 1. The word is in the active infinitive case. This might not seem to matter but it does! This tense denotes something that is currently happening and will continue to happen... forever!
 - 2. The point is that the Spirit of God leads us to the Son of God and, through the Spirit's ministry of teaching and illuminating, Christ dwells with us in ever increasing joy and communion
 - 3. This is the very catalyst of our endeavors
 - a. If you don't know Christ and dwell with Him, you will not be faithful for long
 - ii. Notice here the effect is that we are rooted and grounded in love
 - 1. The point of this terminology is that Christ causes us to stand firm in our tasks and this is the effect of love

iii. We stand firm because we love Jesus

1. Like a mother who will advocate for her child through thick and thin, a true believer who loves Christ is rooted in the cause precisely because of their affection for Jesus
2. If you love Jesus, you will serve Jesus and this love is born in our hearts through faith by the Spirit

iv. We stand firm because of what we know

1. Notice here that Paul prays for “strength to comprehend”
2. This might sound like an odd thing to say but it is very intelligible!
3. The goal of the Christian life is to know and love God but this is a mighty task!
4. God is infinite and we are finite
5. God is glorious and weighty, we need strength if we are going to bear the weight of the glory of God!