

Ephesians Sunday School
May 29, 2011
Eph 3:14-21 – *Paul's Magnificent Prayer*

vv. 14-15 – Fatherhood of God

- Continuation of Paul's train of thought in v. 1
- Τοῦτου χάριτι could point backwards to Eph 2, but seems to point forwards to the contents of the prayer (cf. Titus 1:5)
 - “I am praying for these things that I'm about to mention”
 - “I am praying because of these things that I just mentioned”
- “Father” and “family” play on words
 - NIV (1984), KJV translate, “whole family in heaven and earth”
 - Seems to indicate an “all the saints” kind of angle
 - No definite article, though
 - ESV, NASB, NIV (2011) render, “every family in heaven and earth”
 - Better translation
 - All human relationships, especially fathers
 - Families are not arbitrary ideas developed in the 1950s
 - They are patterned after God himself
 - “In heaven/on earth” could be a reference to angels and men, which would indicate that God is the Father of all living beings.

vv. 16-17a – First petition

- “According to the riches of his glory”
 - Resources are limitless
 - Riches of his glory are the source
 - cf. 1:7-8
 - Riches of his glory are also the standard
 - He gives as only he can
 - Phil 4:19
 - Whatever Paul is about to write, he compares it to the best standard possible
- “Strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being”
 - Strengthen with power
 - Lots of strength going on here
 - Paul is encouraging readers that their God is one who is able
 - Through his Spirit
 - Same Spirit of 1:17 – Spirit of wisdom and revelation
 - In your inner being
 - Not the new creation born of the Spirit
 - Better understood as the seat of the person, the heart.
- “That Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith”
 - This may sound like the Spirit needs to prepare a spot for Christ before he can dwell, but that should be rejected
 - The two are parallel and refer to different angles of the same event
 - “In your hearts” and “inner being” are essentially the same cf. 1:18
 - Note the Trinitarian aspect of Father, Son, and Spirit

- The Spirit's strengthening and Christ's dwelling happen at the same time
 - Why would he pray this if Christ already dwells within them?
 - Focus here is on Christ's continual presence, not the initial indwelling
- "Through faith"
 - This continual indwelling of Christ only happens by faith
 - Many of us seem to think that Christ gets us in and then we have to stay in
 - We stay in by faith, looking to Christ
 - In fact, all of our good works are out of faith alone
 - Greater transformation as time goes on
 - Possibly, even in heaven. Why not?

vv. 17b-19a – Second petition

- "That you may have the strength to comprehend"
 - Two words here are interesting
 - 1. "may have the strength" – "the ability to attain an objective"
 - 2. "to comprehend" – lit. "to grasp" – "a fight against a strong opponent or sacking an acropolis where strength was required to accomplish both tasks"
 - The sense, then, is that to understand these things is a really difficult task
 - This is abundantly clear that divine enabling is mandatory
 - This is a theme that runs throughout the whole first three chapters and is essential to understand
 - Everything that happens in chapters 1-3 is of divine origin and manifestation
- "The breadth, length, height, and depth"
 - Essentially, an exhaustive understanding, elaborated on by the next clause
 - Both point to the love of Christ
- "And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowing"
 - Paradox – know-knowing
 - Both the same word
 - Two options, both are good and both are probably true:
 - 1. We can't plumb the depths of Christ's love
 - 2. It's a love that goes to the whole person, not just the mind (cf. 1:18; 3:16)
 - Also good to note that this isn't a prayer for the readers to love Christ more (though Paul is on board with that)
 - It's that they would *know* his love more
 - What's very interesting about this is that this prayer ends the section that we'll call the "indicative" section
 - Brief indicative-imperative rundown (but save for next week with the "therefore" language. cf. Ridderbos VII.42
 - Basically, before Paul gives a single command, he prays that his readers would know Christ's love because that is what motivates and empowers

v. 19b – Third petition

- This is the pinnacle of the prayer
 - Summary statement, but more
 - As believers grow in these areas, they are being filled with the fulness of God
 - Reminiscent of 1:23: being "filled up" by Christ

- Filled according to the standard of God's perfection with his fullness
- 1:23 – aren't they already filled?
 - Already-not yet dynamic
 - Explain this
 - Especially since believers are still in the “already” stage, divine enabling is all the more essential. This divine enabling happens as the Spirit fills

vv. 20-21 – Doxology

- Completely appropriate given the previous prayer
- Maybe best rendered, “To the one who is able to do infinitely more than we ask or think”
- “According to the power at work within us”
 - cf. 1:19 – same power that resurrected Christ
- “Be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus”
 - His divine attributes are manifested in the church
 - Through it his plan unfolds
 - cf. 1:23; 3:10
- “Forever and ever. Amen.”
 - Throughout all of eternity (time without end)