

Series Title: A Closer Look: The Purpose and Power of Prayer

Sermon Title: Week 3: Praying the Impossible

Date: 01-19-20

✠ Knowing the unknowable

- **Mental task... think of the grand canyon. Now, think of, hold in your mind, the entirety of every aspect, viewpoint, vista, perspective of the grand canyon. You can't do it. The only way you can begin to approach it is by spending a lifetime IN IT, exploring it, experiencing it. Even then, in its entirety... the grand canyon is beyond knowing.**
- **NOW... think of the concept of an eternal God, who is the creator of this universe. Would it be possible to KNOW, to grasp, fully comprehend, any element of this God, much less the defining character of this God?**
- **In our scripture today, we see Paul, inspired by the Spirit, praying we would do just this. Know the unknowable.**
- **THIS PRAYER, if you really consider it, IS MINDBENDING. It is hard to grapple with in its implications. But it also is essential to understanding nature of God's relationship to us, why he created us, and the life he calls us to.**
- **Paul begins prayer with "For this reason". SO... we must set some context. Ephesians 2-3:13... Paul describes, gloriously, God's work of reconciliation and redemption. How, In Christ, God has bridged the great divide between Himself and His creation...**

Eph 2:4-5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

- **If you read through this context, you will see a series of very different words that describe two very different realities... THEN and NOW.**

✠ Then and Now Ephesians 2:1-3:13

- **HOMEWORK! This week, read chapters two and three, and write down everything you find that was true of our life BEFORE CHRIST, and then what is true NOW of our life IN CHRIST. Graphic in program..**
- **I'll share a few to get you started.**
- **Life before Christ**
 - **Wrath. Unknown. Hidden. Mystery. Separate.**
- **Life IN Christ**
 - **Revealed. Made plain. Alive. Accomplished. Free**
- **Then Paul tells us that God's work, His intent, is moving people from Column A (separation) to Column B (reality of Life in Christ)**
- **And so, with this in mind, Paul goes to his knees and prays that we would be recipients of God's GLORIOUS RICHES... and these riches are far more profound than what we might first expect...**

✠ Glorious Riches

Ephesians 3:14-17a *For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (Our 'name'... our very life, is from Him) ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

- **POWER. KEY WORD. Occurs three times in this prayer. Greek is DUNAMIS.. DYNAMIC. Living power. From last week- power of resurrection.**
 - **Source of that power? HIS SPIRIT, in our INNER BEING. What is PURPOSE of God's power in us- for what purpose is he strengthening us?**
- "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"*

- Two ways we can see this. First thought is the reality that it is the Holy Spirit that opens our hearts to first hear, believe, and receive Christ as our life – to dwell in our hearts- by faith- when we first become a believer.
- However, Paul is speaking here to Christians, and he is pointing us to a deeper and continuous work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to EXPERIENCE – by faith- the continuous presence of God in our lives. That we would KNOW, NOW, reality of our union with Christ.
- CONSIDER! We pray for God, with His power, to do a lot of different things. We tend to focus our prayer lives on telling God the things that we need. But greatest thing, the fulfillment of His glorious riches- the most powerful thing God ever or ever will accomplish in our lives is bringing us into UNION with Him in Christ. FOR IN HIM we ALREADY have everything we need for life and godliness- for hope, peace, contentment, joy, and love.
- THIS is the power of God- not that he will accomplish our plans on our terms, but that we will come to know the fullness of HIS LIFE as we come to trust in HIS PLAN, on HIS TERMS.
- AND CHURCH! The essential nature of God’s plans, of HIS TERMS for our lives....IS LOVE.

† Rooted and Established

Ephesians 3:17b *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,*

- Two terms to describe nature of our connection to God. ROOTED... biological. Ever try to remove a tree stump? ESTABLISHED. Architectural. What is most important part of any building? FOUNDATION.
- IN CHRIST, the foundation of who we are... the roots of our identity, that which holds us, sustains us, and gives us life, is the LOVE OF CHRIST
- AND NOW, with that thought in mind, PAUL PRAYS FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE. Paul prays here for a miracle that only God can do, and it is a miracle that God wants to answer in the life of every believer, whatever our wherever our circumstance may be...
- AND I PRAY THAT YOU, being rooted and....

† Praying for the impossible

Ephesians 3:18-19a *may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge*

- There it is. The Grand Canyon. This is the great equipping the HS inspired Paul to pray for us to possess. That we would know the unknowable. The fullness, the full extent, of God’s love.
- The word KNOW here is not just knowledge. It is experience. Grand canyon.. I can’t describe it, you have to EXPERIENCE IT. The more you experience it, the greater it becomes, the more amazed you are.
- Paul prays that the EXPERIENCE of our life may be one of continually, increasingly, grasping the magnitude of God’s glory, his nature, His LOVE.
- THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE- except by the divine partnership between God’s spirit and our FAITH.
- IN MIDST OF LIFE AS IT REALLY IS... God is coming to us and saying “I love you. I created you. You are mine, my precious possession. And I am going to use you to reveal my wisdom, my kingdom purpose, to the world- as you walk with me in your everyday life. AND, for us to do this together, I am going to equip you with the greatest resource you will need... the knowledge and experience of the full extent of my LOVE. BECAUSE WHEN YOU BEGIN TO GRASP HOW BIG MY LOVE IS, you will begin to see and experience FULLNESS OF LIFE, IN ME.

† Fullness in Christ... THIS IS FULLNESS IN CHRIST... “to know this love that surpasses knowledge...”

Ephesians 3:19b *that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- **Mindblowing. To know that we are complete. Whole.**
- **There are so many things we look to, to ‘fill ourselves’, to try to be content, to try to have peace, joy, hope, and purpose. Things. Relationships. Activities. Knowledge. But all of these, as wonderful as they may be, are ultimately temporary. They will fail us. They will not make us complete.**
- **MIRACLE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE... when we truly know that our fullness is in Christ, we can receive and enjoy these temporary gifts in this life, as God intends us to.**
- **Relationships. With our fullness in Christ, No longer burdened by the weight of performance based acceptance, but free to love and serve one another**
- **Activities. We can engage with the world around us, appreciate it, express the joy and creativity of how God has shaped us, knowing it is FROM HIM.**
- **Things. We can give thanks and enjoy the temporary possessions of this life, being able to hold them loosely, and to be generous with them.**
- **But perhaps most importantly, because we know that our fullness- security-identity is of God, we can live lives that express HIM.. joyfully obedient to him, that desire to be actively engaged in his Kingdom, well, because He is everything.**
- **Paul ends with worship- confession that God’s power, his love, is beyond our ability to imagine...**

✠ **Beyond imagination**

Ephesians 3:20-21 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

- **Scene in first starwars- Luke trying to convince Hans to try and rescue Leia- promises reward- Hans: “How much”- “More than you can imagine”... “I don’t know, I can imagine quite a bit”**
- **Our problem is that too often, in our relationship with God and in our prayer, we try to direct God by what we can imagine. What we can imagine almost always is defined by what we see as our needs, from our perspective.**
- **As we’ve seen, God knows our needs, he does invite us to bring everything to him in spirit of gratitude and trust. BUT FAR, FAR, MORE...**
- **God calls us to seek him first, and let him change the focus of our prayer- of our relationship with him- to HIS perspective, to what ONLY HE CAN IMAGINE.**
- **Old Michael Card song lyric “disciples learned their wildest dreams just weren’t wild enough.”**
- **What God can imagine is that you and I- as his disciples- will know him, his love, his fullness, as our LIFE, as our hope, contentment, courage, peace, identity- and EXPRESSED through obedience to him- right now, and not contingent upon anything but our faith, and trust, of him.**
- **We may sincerely answer... but I struggle in my faith! That’s why he calls us to pray that by the POWER OF HIS SPIRIT IN OUR INNER BEING , he would give us that faith.**

✠ **A prayer God wants to answer: *That we...***

- **May know our life, our IDENTITY, is from God.**
- **Would be strengthened by God’s power to experience our UNION with Christ**
- **Would be rooted and established in LOVE**

- May have power to fully know and experience the LOVE of Christ
- May be FULLY FILLED with the FULLNESS of God
- Would bring GLORY to God by His power at work in and through US.

– *This is Paul's prayer! And as we yield to God's teaching and the work of the spirit, this will increasingly be our prayer.*