

Ephesians 3 (Part 3): 14-21 • Paul's Prayer for the Church

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We're going to be picking it up in the 14th verse and then reading through the end of the chapter. Goes like this.

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (amen, amen)—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (ESV)

Let's pray.

Lord, speak to us now through your Word as we go through these verses and begin to talk about them and unpack them. We pray that our hearts would be tuned to your voice. That you would speak words of wisdom and insight and grace, and that we would walk out that word in our daily lives. We ask it in Jesus name, amen.

With the conclusion of Ephesians chapter 3, we're coming really to the end of the first part of the Book of Ephesians, which is separated into 2 parts actually, here at the end of chapter 3.

The first 3 chapters of Ephesians are all about the church. Paul has been talking about the church. He's been talking about what a miracle it is. He's been talking about the majesty of the church. He's been talking about the mystery of the church.

We talked last week how the church doesn't appear in the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophets speak nothing of this period of time that you and I are in called the church age.

And we think so weirdly about the church. To us, church is something we go to. I'm going to go to church. There's the church over there. I wonder if the doors are open to the church. It's so weird because, see, we're the church. The church isn't a building. It's not something we go to. The church is something we are. We are the church. Capital C. Body of Christ.

And Paul has been talking about this mystery of the church, which in this age is this amalgamation of Jews and Gentiles, who have come together as the body of Christ and are the, literally the body of Christ to the world. In other words, the heart, the voice, the ears, the hands, the feet, and so forth to the world in which you know, we live.

And as we look at this last section of Ephesians chapter 3, Paul, in light of his speaking about the church, he's now going to begin to pray for the church. And we're going to actually get some insights on how Paul prayed. And I think that whenever we come to a section of scripture that deals with prayer, we should probably take note and try to learn what we can from it because let's just face it, we struggle with prayer.

And I think that's fairly universal, except for those of you in the body of Christ who have a gift of prayer. We're all called to pray, but there are some of you who have a special gift and I love you guys. I mean, I really do. Those of you who just, for whom praying comes easy, oh, we need you so bad to encourage and help the rest of us stay on task.

But praying is hard. It's hard work, isn't it? If I were to put a date on the calendar and say, we're going to get together and we're going to have a prayer meeting, I would have one of the smallest groups ever. And I know that because I've tried it. We don't come together very easily for prayer. And when people are going to a Bible study, they'll want to know whether or not there's prayer during that Bible study, because if there is, they probably won't come.

We've had people tell us that they are not going to come to a Bible study because of prayer. Let's face it, it's hard. It's hard for all of us. Right? We struggle. We're intimidated praying in front of other people. We don't want anybody to hear us praying. And we find it difficult to pray ourselves, and to hold on to prayer, and to persevere in prayer. It's a challenge. Paul begins

speaking to us about prayer, his prayer for the body of Christ and we can learn some important things from this.

Paul begins here by saying, *“For this reason”* which is what he's been saying previously all about the church. *“For this reason,”* because in other words, because of God's purpose in creating this thing called the church, he says, *“I bow my knees before the Father.”*

People ask me from time to time, is there a preferred biblical posture? Well it's interesting. You can get legalistic about it. But you see pretty much every posture in the Bible. We see people kneeling lots of times. We see people standing. We see people walking and praying. Prayer is not something we're limited to a one particular bodily posture.

But kneeling is a powerful posture for prayer because kneeling puts us in an attitude of surrender and humility before the Lord. And Paul says, *“I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (and that inner being is what is being renewed in the image of Christ) ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith— ...”*

Well for the very first thing I want you to see here in this passage that really has nothing, well, I shouldn't say that's nothing to do with prayer, it does have something to do with prayer. But the first thing we see is the Trinity. I want you to notice here that Paul says I kneel before the Father. Paul says, I'm asking that you might be strengthened by the Spirit. And then he says, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith So you see all 3 persons of the trinity right there: Father, Spirit and Son.

And not only does Paul reference all 3 persons of the trinity, but he also gives us some insight into the organization and function of the individual members of the godhead.

Notice that Paul begins by saying, *“I bow my knees before the Father,”* I come to the Father. In other words, he addresses the Father in prayer. And again, this is not a legalistic thing. Again, people often ask the question, who should I pray to? I know there's the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit so who do I pray to? Well, got to remember guys, there's only one God. There aren't 2 gods or 3 gods or 5 gods. There's only one God so when you say, dear God, you're addressing all the persons of the Trinity. But the point is, there is some insight from the Word of God related to this as Paul is giving us here. Addressing the Father, in

the power of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, and so forth. But that doesn't mean that if you address Jesus you're wrong, or if you even pray and speak to the Holy Spirit that you're wrong, or that God isn't going to listen, or you didn't get the formula right.

God is not so much concerned about protocol as He is about relationship. Okay? So, don't worry about it. But we see what we see here in the Word so we often begin our prayers, Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit and there's nothing wrong with that. This is what Paul has laid down for us here, but again, it's not a legalistic sort of a thing.

But I want you to see here what Paul is saying about, this reference to the indwelling presence of the Spirit, because you'll notice that he says here. Look at verse 16 with me again, please, in your Bible.

Paul prays that, *“according to the riches of”* the glory of God, that the Lord may grant them to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner being. Look at verse 17, *“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—...”*

Now that's an interesting statement, but it almost sounds when you read it superficially or casually, like he's praying that you'd be strong enough to have Christ living in your heart. It almost sounds that way. It sounds like he's saying, I'm just praying for you guys that you're strong enough to be able to have Christ dwell in your hearts by faith. But that's not what he's praying about.

The issue here is not a question of having Jesus in your heart. It's a question of making sure He feels at home in your heart. You see, when we come to know Christ as our Savior, when we accept what He did for us on the cross, Jesus comes to live in our hearts. He comes to live in our lives. That happens, okay?

What Paul is making reference here to, is having Christ live there or dwell there, if you will, without any grieving or any issues or feeling unwelcome. And of course, that begs the question of, what might make Jesus feel unwelcome in my heart?

Well, you need to understand first a couple of things here, first of all. In the Greek, in the original Greek language, there were two different words that were used to describe, living in something. And one of those words described living in a community, or a house, or a family, where I am a guest or a stranger, okay? The other Greek word speaks of living in a house or a town or a country or wherever you're, what you're living in and living there as a permanent resident.

It's interesting that Paul is using that second definition here when he speaks of the Holy Spirit or Jesus living in you through the Holy Spirit.

He's talking about Him living in you as a permanent resident and so he's saying, I'm praying for you that you you'd be able to let Jesus live in your life, in your heart as a permanent resident without issues. All right.

Now, what are some of those issues in my life that might make Jesus feel unwelcome? Wow. How much time do you have? I mean, there's all kinds of things. But what Paul is really encouraging us to do, is to take inventory of our lives and to ask myself the question, is my heart an environment where Jesus feels welcome? Or is my heart an environment that is constantly putting Him at odds with my behavior, my thoughts, my actions, and that sort of thing.

Probably one of the most beautiful prayers that we find regarding this thought process of, is my life one that is a blessing to you God, comes from David in the Old Testament, and it's found in the 139th Psalm. Let me put this on the screen for you so we can see it together. David said,

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Search me, O God, and know my heart! (and then he said) *Try me* (and that word, try, means test. Test me) *and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Do you understand what David is praying here? He's asking the Lord, is there anything going on in my life that is grieving you? Is there anything going on in my life that is grieving you in any way or causing any discomfort to you related to you living in my life?

Isn't it interesting that when we think about the Holy Spirit coming to live in our life, we just assume that He has a very happy habitation. It's like, oh, Jesus lives in my heart. Hallelujah! Now let's go watch that R-rated film. But is that the habitation that you want to create where Jesus feels at home? Does Jesus feel at home living in your life, with your life? You want to know what's interesting about David's prayer? The prayer that we just got done reading from Psalm 139? David was living during a time when the Holy Spirit had never yet come in to live inside of a human being. You may not realize this, but in the Old Testament, God's Spirit did not indwell people, not like in the New.

God's Spirit was with people and at times when they needed His power, He came upon them. But He never came within until the New Testament took place and Jesus first breathed on His disciples and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" (John 20:22) David didn't even have the indwelling of the Spirit and yet his heart was so tender toward not wanting to grieve the presence of the Lord.

He was daring enough to pray that kind of a prayer. Lord turn on the spotlight, the searchlight of your presence, and see if there's anything going on in my life that you wouldn't approve of, or that might in any way be grievous to you.

Let me ask the question, do we have the guts to pray that prayer? Or are we afraid of the things He's going to find? Or make us aware of? I think that's one of the things that made David such a man after God's own heart. And he was not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. David had issues in his life, believe me and they're in the Bible for you and I to read. Thank God your issues aren't in the Bible for people to read.

The point is, he still had the courage to come before God and say, "*Search me, O God,*" test me, try me, and see if there's anything in my life that is grievous to you in any way, and then lead me in the way that's right, good, and everlasting. Because if there's all this stuff going in here that shouldn't be there, that's the opposite of what's good, right, and everlasting.

And that's what Paul is really encouraging us to do here when he says, I'm praying for you that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith. I'm praying, in other words that you're going to live your lives in such a way, that the presence of the Holy Spirit in your heart is a welcoming one for Him. And what that means is, I'm praying that the Lordship of Jesus Christ would extend into every aspect of your life. Yeah, even those websites that you visit when no one else is watching.

I'm talking even about the thoughts that you and I think when our minds are free to think what they want. I'm talking about the way we treat one another when there's nobody else around to see how we're treating those people who are closest to us. I'm talking about the way we spend our money and the words we choose to speak to others. Are we creating an environment that is welcoming and welcoming to the presence of God's Holy Spirit living in our life?

Now, if you're feeling condemned, I want you to know that's not my intention but it is the intention of the enemy, however. If what I've been saying to you has been making you feel a little bit condemned, like, yeah, I don't think I measure up at all, join the group. None of us do. And the fact of the matter is, creating a

welcoming environment for the Holy Spirit isn't always so much the issue of living this pristine life. It's responding quickly when the Holy Spirit convicts us of something in our life that isn't right.

I mean, you saw what David did in Psalm 139. He said, Lord, search me, and test me, and try me, and see if there's a problem. What do you think David's response was when God showed him about the issues in his heart? What was he going to do then? He was going to repent. He was going to confess. He was going to agree with the Lord and say, yeah, boom, busted, you got me. I confess that.

Do you know that confession, just saying to the Lord, yeah, that one's not good, is so welcoming to His presence. When you agree with Him, when you say, Lord, this is me, this is me, and the sin that you've revealed in my life, this is me. I confess to you these things and I need your forgiveness. You have just created an environment where He is welcome in your life.

You see, it's not about living this perfect life, but it is about learning to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when He reveals those areas. And by the way, this is not an easy thing to do. And that's why Paul prays in here that you and I would be strengthened with power through His Spirit so that Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith. Do you get that?

He didn't just say I'm just, I'm praying for you guys that you'll have the inner strength. He didn't say that. He's saying, I'm praying that you will have the power through the Spirit to do this. Because listen, it's got to be through the Spirit. The power that we have to live this Christian life, even the power to recognize our sin and confess it before God, comes through the Spirit as we yield to Him.

When I think about my relationship with God and I think about my relationship with my kids, speaking of Father's day again here today, I wish I would... I look back on my past Christian life, I wish I would have been faster to say I'm sorry. Both to God and my kids. I mean, I did say I'm sorry quite a bit to my kids, but I wish I would have been faster to do it and I wish I would have been faster to do it with the Lord. I'm trying to get faster as I grow up in Him. When He reveals something to me, just to say, Lord, I'm so sorry, forgive me. Forgive me for these areas, these wrong attitudes, these wrong thoughts, forgive me. Because I want..., and I'm guessing you do too. I want to have an environment in my heart that He's welcome to be there in.

Let's take a look at the rest of Paul's prayer here. I'm in the middle of verse 17. Paul says, "*that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.*" He's talking about the love of God but he's using 2 word pictures here.

One of them is the language of you gardeners or botanists, I guess, if you're into that sort of a thing. I can't grow anything, but we do know that from the plant world, trees and that sort of stuff, that the root of a plant is vitally important because it provides nourishment. It also provides stability.

We've had so much windy conditions here this spring and early summer, sometimes I'm afraid that my trees are going to topple over, but I know that they've got a root structure that goes down into the ground and it anchors them to the ground so when the wind comes, they can stay strong and so forth.

Paul says, I pray for you that you would be rooted in the love of Christ. How far do your roots go down in the love of Christ so that when the wind and waves come around, you're not constantly doubting His love. Boy, after all the things going on in my life, I'm wondering if God even loves me. That's a sign that your roots don't go down far enough and you need to be rooted more in that understanding of His love.

He also talks, he uses another word picture. He says, I pray also that you would be, "*grounded in love.*" And that word, grounded, is borrowed from building construction and it speaks of a foundation. I pray that you would have a foundation of understanding. Because you see, you can build on a foundation and you know that your structure is going to be stable.

If your foundation, if you're founded on the love of God, there's a stability and a strength to your understanding and so Paul is praying these things and so forth for the body of Christ.

And of that love, Paul prays, look at verse 19, very interesting verse. Paul says, and he says, I pray for you guys "*... to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, ...*"

Now, I want you to stop there for a moment, and I want you to think about how potentially ridiculous what he just said is. I want you to know that which surpasses knowing, that's what he said. See, that's the way I used to feel about mathematics when I was in grade school. I felt like they were asking me to know something that surpassed knowledge, at least my knowledge. It sounds kind of an interesting statement, doesn't it? But I want you to know what Paul is

talking about here because when he says I want you to know that which surpasses knowledge when he speaks of the love of Christ. He's not talking about an intellectual knowing. The word, know, here speaks of experiential knowledge so what Paul is praying for you and I, is that we would experientially know, the love of Christ.

He's praying, I want you to come to a place in your life where you experience the life changing power of Christ's love. How you like that? Not just knowing it here. (Pastor Paul points to his head) I want you to know it here. (Pastor Paul points to his heart)

And you know why Paul's praying that prayer? Because he knows that once we come face to face with the love of Christ, and we know it experientially, it changes our lives. It literally changes our lives. And if you're sitting where you are right now, here, today, and you're thinking to yourself, you know what? I'm not really sure I've ever experienced, experienced, the love of Christ. I've heard a lot about it. I've read a lot about it. The Bible talks a lot about his love.

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, for God so loved the world. We run into that L word all over the place in the Bible. But maybe you're sitting there today and you're thinking, I'm not positive that I've really truly experienced that love in a life changing sort of a way. Well, I want you to know something. I want you to know something that the enemy doesn't want you to know.

It's not because God doesn't love you. See, that's the first thing the enemy comes to suggest to people. When they hear about the love of Christ and they begin to ponder it and think to themselves I don't think I've ever really experienced that. The enemy is very quick to say, well, it's just simple it's because he doesn't love you. He loves other people, but not you. I mean, other people are fairly easy to love, but you are way out there. And you are actually fundamentally beyond His ability to love. And the enemy would love nothing more than to sow the seeds of that lie in your heart. But I want you to know it is a lie.

God loves you, but many of us have not experienced that life changing love and there are a lot of reasons for it. I couldn't even get into them all today. But can I encourage you, for those of you who are troubled about this, can I encourage you to make part of your regular prayer time with the Lord? Let me experience your love. Just simple as that. Lord, I want to experience your love. I want to experience what it is to be loved by you. And don't give up on that prayer, and don't get frustrated, and don't let the enemy whisper in your ear.

You keep praying, you keep pressing in, and you wait on the Lord to reveal His love to you. And I'm telling you, when He does, you will be changed. It will change your entire outlook on everything.

Paul ends this prayer with this beautiful doxology and he says, “²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

And I think this passage, particularly verse 20, has been a huge blessing and encouragement to a lot of people throughout the years, because it tells you and I, in this verse, that God is able to do even more than we could ask or think.

And when you take a look at what Paul is saying here in verse 20, you begin to see this progression of expansion. And what I mean by that is, Paul starts with a very simple thought, and that is that God is able. But he builds on that thought to the point where he keeps going outward, farther and farther. And this is basically referred to as the pyramid of the promise of this thing and what God can do.

Let me put this on the screen so you can visualize it.

<p style="text-align: center;">He is able He is able to do He is able to do what we ask He is able to do what we think He is able to do ALL that we ask or think He is able to do more abundantly than all we ask or think He is able to do FAR more abundantly than we ask or think</p>

It begins by simply saying, **He is able**. And that's where we often begin in our walk with the Lord. He's able. And then we realize, **He is able to do**. Okay, He can do all kinds of things. Well, like what? Well, **He is able to do what we ask**. Next, we have this further progression. **He is able to do what we think**.

And then Paul goes a little bit further and he says, **He is able to do ALL that we ask or think**. And then he adds to that, **He is able to do more abundantly than all we ask or think**. And then finally, **He is able to do FAR more abundantly than we ask or think**. Do you see the progression? And do you see what Paul is trying to communicate to you and I? He's trying to enlarge our understanding of the power, the grace, and the goodness of God as it relates to prayer. And when we come to Him in prayer, so that we would not hinder that

work of the Lord by our faith being so small that we're not even sure if God's even listening. Let alone that He's able to do abundantly far more abundantly than all that we could ever ask or think.

When you begin to get that idea in your heart and you begin to really, it begins to consume you it changes the way you pray and the things you pray about, it's pretty amazing. But I think that even so, there might be some people who read a verse like verse 20. God is able to do far more abundantly than all we could ask or think. And they might be thinking to themselves God doesn't seem to be doing more than I could ask or think.

And I want to just address that for just a moment because I think there might be 2 reasons for what appears to be a discrepancy between what God's Word has to say and your life. Because sometimes that happens, doesn't it?

And I think the first reason for that possible discrepancy is because you and I haven't truly learned to come before the throne of grace. And what I mean by that is that, and you've heard me talk about this before, we live in this culture of convenience where we're just so accustomed to walking up to a vending machine and putting our coins in the machine, hitting the button, and out comes what we want.

And we apply that same principle to God, and we have learned to be impatient and we've learned to, well, we've forgotten the whole idea of just process. Learning that there's a process to things even to prayer. We don't really want to think about the process of prayer and waiting on the Lord, tarrying before the Lord. I want to just say my prayer and get what I want. I think about the process of life that biblical characters had to deal with.

You and I we're hungry we go home and we're looking in the refrigerator we do, we stand there and we're looking, and it's totally empty and I don't know why we're still looking, but we're just looking. Just wasting electricity, and then we close it and say, oh, there's nothing there and so what do we do? Well, we hop in the car, we go to a restaurant, and we either sit down and have somebody serve us. I'd like the hamburger with cheese and bacon, please. Or we go to the grocery store and just pick up something quick and even if we don't want to fix it, they've got a deli there so we can just get it ready made and we can be eating before we hit the car, that's our life. That's the world in which we live.

Do you guys remember how the Bible talks about... Remember when those 3 visitors came to Abraham? It was actually the Lord and a couple of angels, which I think he probably wasn't totally aware of at first. But anyway, he invited

these people to stay and cool themselves under the tree of Mamre there and he began to talk to them. And finally, he went to Sarah, his wife, and he said, Sarah, quick, go pick out a goat and slaughter it, and knead some bread and bake it, because we're going to have a meal with these guys. Can you imagine?

She's got to go to the flock with, I'm assuming one of the servants, picking up that one right there, catch that one. All right, get it over here. And then we have to slaughter the thing. I'm not going to get into all the detail there. And then you've got to, you've got to clean that meat, and then you've got to get it, start preparing it, and while that's going on, you're making bread, and this thing, and flour, and stuff and you're putting this whole meal together, and it's a process.

You see, the people in the Bible understood process. They didn't live in an instantaneous world. They understood that when you start here and you want to get here, there's a process to get there, you see? And so when it came to prayer, they applied that same understanding of life. There's a process, it's not instantaneous. There's a tarrying.

There's a coming before the throne of grace and waiting there. And the process of waiting, and the process of faith, and the process of petition. And all the things that go along with it.

Jesus gave us an example of this in His life. We're told in the gospels that He often withdrew into lonely places where He would pray. Isn't that what you read in your Bible? We're also told that when He had big decisions to make, like picking the 12 closest disciples, who would then be apostles, He stayed up all night long and prayed. All night long.

You ever tried to do that? Stay up all night long and pray? I won't tell you my story. But boy, what a process that is. A lengthy process that takes, it's challenging, it's physically challenging. To stay in it, to stay in the game, to persevere through the difficulties of that sort of thing. And then Jesus, of course, gave us parable after parable during His teaching of persevering in prayer. You can read those parables for yourself.

Listen to this statement about prayer from the Book of Deuteronomy. This is very interesting.

Deuteronomy 4:29 (ESV)

But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

This is actually repeated as a promise by the prophet Jeremiah Who says roughly the same thing. Jeremiah chapter 29.

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me, when you seek me with all your heart.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me, when you seek me with all your heart.

That's a process. That's a time-involved process. That's not a quickie. That doesn't mean put your coins in the vending machine. I need that one, good, I got it.

That's the way we look at approaching God many times and that's one of the reasons why we look at some of these promises in God's Word. God is able to do abundantly more than all you could ask or think. And we think, well, it doesn't really match up to my life. Let me show you a passage from Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 6. It says,

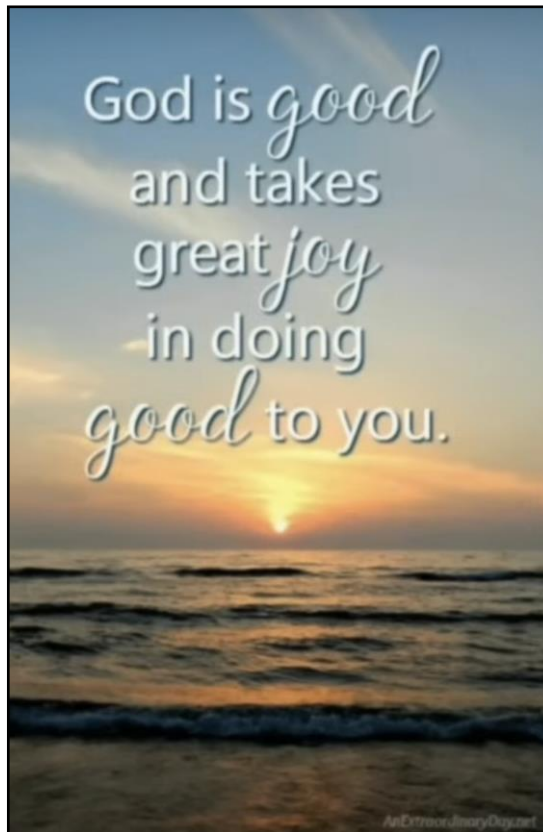
Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

...without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who seek him.

...without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who seek him.

I honestly think that one of the reasons we struggle to get people to pray is because we're not really convinced there's a reward at the end of that seeking time and praying time. We pray because it says we should in the Bible, but we're not really convinced about that reward.

And I think the second reason that may appear a discrepancy to walking out the promise of God that's here in Ephesians chapter 3 between what it says and what's going on in our lives is because we're applying our understanding to what God is doing and that's always a recipe for futility. We lack so much understanding. I want to show you, give you an example of this. I found something on the internet this last week. It was a little meme that went like this.



God is good and takes great joy in doing good to you.

That's a nice thing to say. I mean, and fundamentally, I think it's probably true. The problem arises when God and I disagree on the definition of good and that happens quite frequently in my life. He promises me that He will work all things together for good in my life. Right? I just disagree with Him on what good means because He's working good and it looks to me like it's anything but.

In fact, it looks to me that it's actually bad and so what you see I'm trying to do, is I'm trying to interpret the purposes and the will of God and the goodness of God through my own understanding. And my understanding falls so incredibly short. And then there's that troubling passage in Isaiah 55. Man, I run into this every so often. And I'm reminded that God tells me that,

Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, (He says) neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

And I read that, and I'm reminded again. Oh yeah. And you see, here's the problem, I'm not taking that into consideration and I'm judging what God is doing in my life according to my thoughts, and my understanding. And so what I end up doing is I end up judging Him according to my understanding, which is incredibly limited. I found another, and this is an amazing statement that's in that same chapter of Isaiah. Check this out. This is a Word from the Lord. He says,

Isaiah 55:3 (ESV)

Incline your ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live;

Incline your ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live;

And the reason I think that's significant is because what the Lord is telling you and I to do in that passage, is to incline our ear to His voice. You see, because when I come into the place of prayer and I start asking things from God, my ear is inclined to my voice, or even possibly the voice of the world. And that's going to be an exercise in futility almost every time I go to pray.

So the Lord speaks to me and says, here's what I want you to do. I want you to incline your ear to my voice and then begin to hear, and you're going to find that it's going to be life to your soul. Because when we come to God with our ears tuned to our own voice, then basically it's my demands that are on the table. It's my will that is on the table. It's my desire that I'm laying before the Lord. God, here's what I want you to do. And the Lord says, when you come to me, incline your ear to my voice.

Wouldn't it be something? If we began our prayers without asking a single solitary thing of God, but simply coming to Him and saying, Lord, incline my ear, tune my ear to your voice. And I'm not going to ask one single thing of you until I know that my ear and your voice are in sync and I'm hearing you. Because then I'm going to be able to have a conversation with you without frustration.