

Eph 3.14-21 – 4 things to pray for that matter

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Pray for power to keep trusting Christ, knowing his huge love, being filled with godliness, all for his glory. (Pray for faith, love, godliness and glory)

Two years ago I was deeply blessed by attending a conference in the US, called Together for the Gospel, T4G.

With over 12,000 people, Kirsti and I sang praise to our Saviour, with a sound in that stadium that brought me to tears.

We heard great Gospel preaching, and every day they handed out free books.

One of those I read on the plane coming home:

‘Living the Cross Centred life – Keeping the Gospel the main thing.(SLIDE)

In it, **CJ Mahaney** says,

Have you ever considered how thoroughly most of us live by our feelings? – How feelings-focused we are?-----

In a typical day, how often do you make decisions...based primarily on your emotions?

And we let our feelings tell us what’s true, instead of letting the truth transform our feelings.--

We’re conditioned to this approach not only by our sin but also by our culture, which incessantly entices us to, “follow your heart”; and do whatever makes us feel good.---

I add that this is true when it comes to us being sure that God loves us.

Do you let your circumstances and feelings dictate whether you know God loves you?---

If life is going well, I know God loves me.

But when I don’t get what I seek, when I don’t get what I long for, what I pray for, maybe I begin to doubt God’s love?-----

Do you ever doubt that Jesus loves you?-----

We need the love of Christ.

And if we’re believers, we have Christ’s love.-----

So I pray that God’s word today will assure every Christian, that Christ loves us more than we know.-----

Back in **ch1** Andy helped us to see that Paul prayed for the Ephesians to Know God better, and God’s hope, and God’s power.

And if you remember, God’s great power was seen in raising Christ from the dead, to rule over everything.

And God’s power is working for us who believe, 1 v19.-----

And the theme of God’s power continues in our passage.-----

Then last week in the first half of **ch3** Andrew Wort explained how huge the good news of Jesus is – it’s abundant riches that Paul & we, have the privilege to speak of.-----

Paul was an apostle sent to preach the riches of Christ to the Gentiles, 3v1 and v8. In prison he can’t do that in person, yet he prays for them.-----

And what motivates him to pray is in **3v12** – in Christ, ‘and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence’.

So Christ opening the way to God, motivates him to pray, and say in **v14** ‘For this reason I kneel before the Father’.-----

Christ has brought us into relationship with God as Father.-----

So all Christians, all Christian families, in all churches, in all the world, have one Father.

We are His children.-----

And our Good Father gives his children good gifts.-----

And Paul’s model gives us things to pray that matter-----

The things he prays for the Ephesians, are great things for us to pray for ourselves and one another, and other believers we may have never met.-----

Paul essentially **prays for 4 things**, highlighted with the word ‘that’.

So as we move through the text look out for the word ‘that’.-----

And we’ll see Paul prays for power for faith, love, godliness, and God’s glory.

First point, Paul prays for Power to Keep trusting Christ, to endure in faith.(SLIDE)

'I 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.'
Paul prays that out of God's abundance, he will strengthen his people by his Spirit, so Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith.

Christ already dwells in their hearts by faith. They're already trusting in Christ.

So Paul is praying that they will keep on trusting in him.-----

He's praying that God will strengthen them to trust him more and more.-----

And it's not only the Ephesians who needed God's strength to keep trusting Christ.

We do too.----- We need to keep trusting Jesus too.-----

When life is hard, when we face opposition, temptation, sickness, suffering;
we can wonder if it's worth it.

Is it worth keeping on with Christ?-----

When your prayers aren't answered, when you endure pain or loneliness or loss.

When the wait goes on, when the hardship doesn't end, we need God's power to persevere.-

We need the strength of God's Spirit to help us keep trusting Jesus.-----

Do you need that?-----

I know I do.-----

Faith is not just an initial reliance on Christ for salvation.

It continues as a daily personal relationship of confidence in Christ.

As our Saviour we believe that He keeps us safe.

As our Lord, we believe that he guides and provides for us, each day.---

The HS loves to strengthen this personal faith through God's word.-----

So when you pray for one another and for believers going through hard times, don't just pray for healing or the hardship to end, pray for their faith to persevere, and grow and be proved genuine.-----

One of the best ways to discover what someone's worried about is to look at what they pray for, and with what passion.-----

Our prayers express our desires

To be honest, before coming to Bundy us **trying to sell our home** to move house, was something that made me a quite anxious and exhausted for months.

I found it Really hard, esp being so out of our control, fearing we'd be left with a debt we could never repay.----- I prayed for a buyer over a *hundred times*.

And I know many of you are enduring harder things right now: you or loved ones dealing with illness, mental illness, relationship stress, or facing death.

And like me, I wonder if many of our prayers are for physical or material things?---

And *that's ok*, pray for those.

But Paul's prayer encourages us to lay our hands on riches for our deeper inner needs.-----

So Pray for faith to endure and grow, in you, and in others.-----

Secondly Paul prays for Power to know Christ's huge Love.(SLIDE)-----

'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people (or saints), to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge'.-----

Can you see we need God's power to grasp and know Christ's love?-----

We need to know how great Christ's love was and is for us.-----

Christ's love is **wide** – it can embrace you whatever you've done, however bad or immoral or proud you've been, however dysfunctional you are.

And it's wide enough to embrace the world.-----

Christ's love is **long** – he loved you before the world was made, when God predestined you Christian to be adopted as his child.-----

Perhaps we worry God's love will give up on us?

Perhaps like our earthly father did?-----

But God's love is permanent, and it will go on, and on, and on.-----

It's long enough to last forever.-----

Do you know that?-----

We're also told in **v18** Christ's love is **high**.

Christ's love doesn't just save us from hell but lifts us to heaven.

Maybe you wonder if it's worth being a Christian?

And whether the benefits will outweigh the costs?-----

Remember how much God has in store for us in eternity.

Christ has lifted us from the gutter to the palace.

And from hell to heaven.-----

And Christ's love is **deep** – our deepest sin, can be forgiven in Christ because of the deepest agony he went through on the cross.-----

Christ endured the depths of torment, for you, and for all his people.-----

Perhaps some of us think of what we've done, repeatedly done, with that person or to that person; on the internet, or in our minds, and feel too terrible to be forgiven.---

We need to know that Christ knows the filthy things we've thought n' done, but he suffered the punishment we deserved, because of his deep sacrificial love.-----

Don't we all underestimate the scale, of the love of Christ?-----

And Oh how quickly we forget how huge it is, when life is hard.

In our trial, our problems-or-pain seem long and deep, and his love seems distant and shallow.-----

Tell yourself Christian that the opposite is true.-----

His love is long and deep, and our problems are shallow and temporary.-----

And while we may not be able to understand the depths of Christ's love, God wants us dwell prayerfully on its vastness.-----

God wants us to rest every day in the reassurance of it.-----

If you've relied on Christ, every day God wants you to remember you are loved.---

Even while we don't deserve it, we are loved.-----

God's love is wide enough to embrace you, it's high enough to bring you to heaven, it's long enough to love you forever, and deep enough to forgive every sin in your heart.-----

So despite the shame of our sins, the suffering in the world and the lies of the devil, remain confident in the Gospel, trust in Jesus, and swim in the boundless ocean of His love.-----

Remember CJ Mahaney's comment at the start, that so often we make choices based on our **feelings**, and let our feelings determine what we believe?-----

He says,

The starting place is choosing to believe the truth regardless of how we feel.

As you read and meditate and think seriously about what's in your Bible and believe and accept it, then ultimately you will indeed experience it, and you'll feel the effect of it. There's heart transforming truth in the Scriptures.

But if you trust your feelings first and foremost,... they'll deposit you on the emotional rollercoaster which so often characterises our lives.

For Jesus the cross will bring the incomparable and unprecedented suffering...

His downward path into those unspeakable depths begins to plunge steeply in the Garden called Gethsemane.

As Jesus lies prostrate on the ground we overhear him praying: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.--- Yet not what I will, but what you will."

The cup contains the full fierceness of God's holy wrath poured out against sin, and we discover that it is intended for all sinful humanity to drink. It's your cup... and mine.

So in the Garden Jesus is brought face to face with bearing our sin and becoming the object of God's full and furious wrath.-----

As we watch Jesus pray in agony, he has every right to turn his tearful eyes toward you and me and shout,

"This is your cup. You're responsible for this. It's your sin! You drink it!"-----

Instead Jesus freely takes it himself... so that from the cross He can look down at you and me and whisper our names, and say, "I drank this cup for you".-----
Behold him... Behold his suffering... and recognise his love.'-----

An older godly woman, from my last church at Donvale, a prayer warrior, who's known much suffering, wrote this **poem**.**(SLIDE)**

The lavish love of Calvary
Has swamped my sinful heart;
For God has slain His Son for me,
A rebel from the start.

A rebel and an enemy,
I spurned the God above;
Until He brought me to the Cross
And drenched me with His love.

(SLIDE)

I saw my sins on Jesus,
I saw God's wrath transferred
From me, a lifelong sinner,
To Him Who never erred.

I said, He is my Saviour,
He paid for all my sin.
And there I found God's favour-
He came and dwelt within.

(SLIDE)

Now when the Tempter troubles
And floods me with despair,
I go at once to Calvary
And point to Jesus there.

For on the Cross, expressed in blood,
God's love is plain to see;
To Satan's snarl, I state the fact:
THIS MUCH-MY GOD LOVES ME!

(SLIDE)

Though on life's path come slander, loss,
Or failure, grief or pain,
The love revealed at Calvary's Cross
Still works for my soul's gain.-----

He promised He will work all things,
For blessing and for good;
And so my trusting heart still sings
Of love, and Calvary's blood.-----

© Norma Stephenson 2016.

Pray, that you, and those you pray for, will grasp the deep love of Christ.-----
That's what we really need.-----

Pray that you will be sure that nothing 'in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'-----

For when you know and have grasped the huge love of Jesus for you, you'll be able to love others.

The self-sacrificial love of God in Christ, seen clearly in the cross, is like the soil in which a beautiful plant can grow.

It's the nutrient our faith needs to flourish and bloom, so it can bear fruit in love.-----

This brings us to the **third brief prayer point, for Godliness.(SLIDE)**-----

Paul prays they'll know more of Christ's love **v19**, 'that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'

It's a prayer that we'd grow more like God – righteous and holy, as in 4.19.

Really Paul is praying for Christlike maturity; godliness.-----

And as we pray we'll grow more like God, isn't our God a God of love?----

God IS LOVE!

So as Paul prays and we should pray for other Christians to grow more like God, it will have love at the centre.

So for that missionary you support, for your brothers and sisters at Bundy, for your Christian family members, and yourself pray they love like God loves.-----

Then the **six year old** will ask another student who is looking sad, "Are you ok?" and be kind.

The 13 year old will think before posting something that puts someone else down.

The 18 year old will message their church friends to ask how they're going, and if there's anything they can pray for them.

The 22 year old will look out for their work colleagues and take an interest in their lives.

The 28 year old will love God and choose purity over immorality, and not watch screens in their bedroom.-----

The 35 year old parent will pray for strength to be patient with their challenging child.

The 40 year old will turn up to Growth Group even when they're tired, to love others.

The 60 year old will talk to their neighbour to find out what they believe about Jesus, because they know God loves the lost, and wants us to as well.

The 78 year old will be patient with others and not grumble or fret, because they're confident in God's love for them.-----

How does God want you to be godly?-----

And are you praying for this?----- For growing godliness, godly love?-----

You'll have power to love others when you're so sure of and filled with Christ's love for you.--

That's good to pray for.-----

Finally and briefly, **4th thing to pray for is, for God's Glory.(SLIDE)**

Paul's been praying the Ephesians will be strengthened in their faith, know Christ's love and be filled with godliness.

And Paul is really confident that God can and will do this; and do it for his glory.

Look at **v20**.

'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, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.'-----

So be confident that God can do more, immeasurably more than we can ask or think about, or even imagine.-----

Have confidence in the power of God to answer prayer.-----

And Paul wants God to get the glory with all the ways he answers prayer.-----

So pray that God's GREATNESS would shine out in His answers to your prayers.---

Pray God's greatness will shine out from your life and from this church, and in what you pray for.

We read Psalm 57 earlier, when David was running for his life from King Saul, and he described his feelings and attitudes as he hides in a cave.

He felt trapped and surrounded by lions. He's crying out to God to help him.

But he still prays for God to be exalted,(**SLIDE**) God to be glorified, v5, v11.-----

And he says and sings, 'great is your love, reaching to the heavens.'(v10)

His example is worth reflecting on, for it can encourage us.-----

Pray God will give you strength to believe he is loving, he loves you, even when life is hard, or scary.-----

So trust his word more than your feelings; for his glory.-----

May God give you, and those you pray for, power to persevere in faith, to know his huge love, and be more like him; all for his glory.-----

How about we pray for that now?