


Ephesians

Prayer for Spiritual Application
Ephesians 3:14-21

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

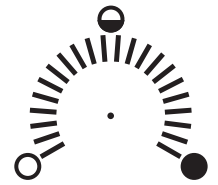
- What did you think about Jesus' teaching that all people are **not** "God's children"—that until one is born again, he actually is a child of the devil (John 8:39-44)?

Was that truth **new** to you? Do you agree or disagree with it—and **why**?

- Read Ephesians 3:14-21, noting Paul's four requests (see the [Sermon Summary](#)).

Paul's first request for believers is that our "inner man" would be strengthened for obedience (v. 16). As a group, brainstorm some biblical commands you know you ought to be obeying.

How "empowered" is your "inner man" for obedience? Mark the following gauge.



According to Romans 8:5-6, another measure of "living according to the Spirit" is the amount of "life and peace" we experience. By those criteria, would you mark the gauge any differently?

Paul's second request boiled down to how "at home" Christ feels in your life. Where would that needle be?

So, according to Paul's first two requests, what do you conclude about your own spiritual growth?

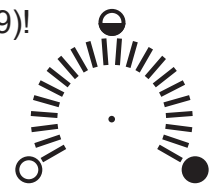
- Paul's third request was that we would experience and evidence God's incomprehensible love (v. 18-19). Read the description of God's love found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. Which features most challenge you?

According to Galatians 5:16-23, what is the secret to experiencing a life full of the fruit of God's love?

- Paul's final prayer request is that we would be "filled up to all the 'trinitarian' fullness of God"—filled with the Father (3:19), filled with the Son (4:13), and filled with the Holy Spirit (5:19)!

Again, mark on this gauge how "full" of God you think your Christian experience is.

From all that we've considered, what must you do to "move the needle" more toward full?



Sermon Summary

Paul's first prayer for the Ephesian church (1:15-23) is a prayer for **enlightenment**; now Paul prays for **enablement** (3:14-21). Because of the great mystery of Gentile inclusion (with full status and privileges) in the Family of God, the church, Paul "bows the knee before the Father" (14). Paul is not content that we merely know about all the blessings that flow from the cross, he wants us to experience them—to actually live them out. Like Paul, as your pastor I have two great concerns: first to convey truth, and then to urge you to live it out. The distance between knowledge and application is best bridged through prayer. **Paul makes four requests:**

I. That God may strengthen us in the inner man. (3:16) Paul first expands our view of God's family beyond our own little church. The family of God includes believers from every age and every community. We have brothers and sisters all across this city, this nation and beyond. They are found across denominational lines. Everyone who has embraced Jesus as Savior is part of one vast spiritual family. (However the Bible does **not** expand our view of God's family to include all humanity. Non-believers actually are children of the devil! See John 8:39-44 and 1 John 3:10.) Paul prayed that God would strengthen his children **according to** the riches of his glory. God doesn't just give us a little power **out of** vast riches; he empowers us proportionately to his vast riches! I find it interesting that most of our prayers are for material things or for health, but Paul almost never prayed for those things (even though he experienced great deprivation and danger). He didn't pray for release from prison or relief from persecution, but for boldness in gospel witness (6:19). Let's be more like Paul! The first step in living like God's children is to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. Yet most Christians never seem to get to this first step. The church suffers, and the world suffers, because the inner man of most believers is never strengthened with power through His Spirit. Our physical bodies grow weaker with age but our inner, spiritual man, empowered by the Holy Spirit, grows stronger (2 Corinthians 4:16). Romans 7:22-23 shows that we're willing to obey God, but lack the power to carry it through. But Romans 8:5-6 and Galatians 5:16 show that those who live according to the Spirit do not carry out the desire of the flesh. This is why we need to be strengthened in our inner man.

II. That Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. (3:17) This refers to the same experience as the first request, namely that we be "strengthened by the Spirit in our inner man". They both refer to the Christian's innermost being—one request focuses on the Spirit's operation on our inner man, and the others on Christ's operation on our hearts. Every true Christian is **indwelt** by Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19), but here Paul prays that Christ will "settle down" and feel "at home" in you. When our inner person submits to the strengthening of God's Spirit, when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, Jesus "settles down and is comfortable". Think of your Christian life as a house—is Christ "at home" in the various "rooms" of your Christian life? Does Christ have unencumbered access to the "library" of your mind, to the "dining room" of your appetites, to the "living room" of your relaxation, to the "workshop" of your work-life...to that dark "closet" in which you try to hide your sins from him? Only when Christ has cleansed every corner can he settle down and be at home.

III. That we might be able to comprehend God's incomprehensible love. (3:18-19) When Christ settles down in our lives he displays his love through us, producing the unity between Jew and Gentile, men and women, blacks and whites, rich and poor which Jesus purchased at the cross (John 13:34; 1 Peter 1:22; Galatians 5:22-23). We only love this way when Christ has free reign in our hearts.

IV. That we might be filled up to all the fullness of God. (3:19b) Finally, Paul prayed that as we apprehend and live out God's love, it will lead us to reach our full Christian maturity, being conformed to the fullness of Christ's image (Colossians 1:18-19)—which actually is "Trinitarian" fullness: the fullness of God the Father (3:19), of Christ (4:13), and of the Holy Spirit (5:19)! Later in Ephesians Paul will tell us not to be filled (ie, controlled) by alcohol, but by God's Spirit (5:18). When we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, Jesus feels at home in our lives and we experience and express God's love in tangible ways, living-out the fullness of God the Father, the fullness of God the Son, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But this won't happen until and unless we surrender to Christ's lordship (Romans 12:1-2). Climb up on God's altar and surrender to him!

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. John teaches us about "Trinitarian fullness" (Ephesians 3:19b). Let's dig into it!

Monday—Study John 15:11.

Tuesday—Study John 16:20 & 24.

Wednesday—Study John 17:13.

Thursday—Study 1 John 1:4.

Friday—Study 2 John 12.

Saturday—Study 3 John 4.

Need blank copies for doing more
"Five Question Bible Study"?
e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]