

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	6		Josh Walker
Text:	Ephesians 3:14-21		
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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

INTRODUCTION: Our son has a very cute habit of asking my wife and me if he is our baby. He will say, “Am I your baby?” He asks us this all the time – at least 10 times a day. It is very adorable. A few weeks back, I noticed that he would often ask, “Am I your baby?” right before he would ask for something. So he would say, “Am I your baby?” Then I would reply, “Yes, of course you are my baby.” Then he would say, “Can I have some more water?”

After reflecting on my son’s strategy for asking for something, I noticed something very profound. My son realized that as my son, he has a special place in my life and, as such, he has a status from which to ask me for things that no one else can ask. In other words, my son is brilliant in recognizing that as my son, I will listen to his requests in a very unique and special way.

In our text this morning, Paul illustrates this same point that my son has realized. Paul prays for the church in Ephesus, and he comes to God not as the creator, but as his Father. Just like Calvin, my son, Paul realizes that as a child of God, having God as his Father, he is able to ask for things of God that others cannot. He can come to God with his requests just like my son can come to me.

In light of this, we will see three things in our passage this morning: first, *The Address*; second, *The Request*; and third, *The Praise*. Again, this morning we will see *The Address*, *The Request*, and *The Praise*.

I. *The Address* (3:14-15)

3:14: “Here Paul’s language suggests that he may be echoing the words of Isaiah 45:23 (cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10), where the bowing of the knee was a sign of homage to the universal King. With an acute sense of need and head bowed down to the ground, he brings his earnest request to this powerful King. The one to whom he bows in homage is called *Father*, which in the ancient world was not only a term of intimacy but also one that had overtones of dignity and authority. A father not only sought the good of his family, but also ruled the clan or family unit. The God whom the apostle approaches in prayer is a powerful and loving heavenly father. Paul has already asserted that through Christ believers have access ‘in one Spirit to the *Father*’ (2:18 cf. 3:12); here he boldly and confidently avails himself of this access to make intercession for his readers in their need.”¹ Note the other references in Ephesians to “Father” at 1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23.

II. *The Request* (3:16-19)

3:16: “Whereas in the prayer of 1:15-23 Paul prays that the readers will gain an expanded awareness of God’s power, here he prays that God would actually strengthen them. He asks that this would be done through the agency of the spirit, and that it would touch the core of their being.”² “The source of the power that Paul asks the readers to be strengthened with is ‘the riches of his glory.’ The glory of God is a manifestation of who he is in his brilliance, majesty, holiness, and power. In this context, emphasis was more on the glory as a representation of God in all of his might. The super abundance of God’s power is heightened by the use of the term ‘riches’ in connection with glory. The genitive may best be interpreted as a genitive of content, that is, God’s wealth consists of his glory. The idea here is that God possesses extraordinary might, which he is able and willing to impart his people.”³

3:18: “the breadth and length and height and depth”: “Among most plausible suggestions are the following: 1) the vastness of God’s power; 2) the love of Christ; 3) the ‘mystery’ of God’s plan; 4) the manifold wisdom of God; 5) the new temple; 6) the heavenly inheritance, the new Jerusalem, thought of like a cube; and 7) the four arms of the cross of Christ, which embraced the world and all its dimensions. It is a difficult problem to resolve, and any solution to it must be held somewhat tentatively. Because of the influence of contemporary Bible translations, many people assume that the four dimensions are for the love of Christ. Yet there are some reasons to question whether that view best explains the evidence. I maintain the view that best accounts for all the relevant information is that Paul is praying for his readers to have an expanded awareness of God’s power available to them.”⁴

3:19: “When it comes to the meaning of this statement of Eph. 3:19 [that you may be filled with all the fullness of God], it is important to start by seeing that Paul is not asking that the audience be filled *with* the divine presence, but *to* all his fullness as a goal. In English we would say ‘filled to the brim’ as a very rough equivalent . . . Paul hopes that Ephesians will grow in that love that also fills God.”⁵

III. *The Praise* (3:20-21)

3:21: “The Son has brought and will continue to bring glory and honor to the father. But this is also the principle goal of the church – to bring glory to God for all that he is and all that he has done. A number of the doxologies in the NT speak of Jesus bringing glory to the Father, but this is the only doxology that explicitly refers to the church as the medium of his glory.”⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ O’Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999), 255.

² Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 209.

³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 209.

⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 215-16.

⁵ Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 278-79.

⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 220.