

**18.03.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.**

***Filled with the Father***

Bible Readings = Eph. 3:14-21; 1 Cor. 8:1-6

**Introduction:**

- (1) Last Sunday, Wayne led us in considering some of the themes present in Ephesians 3:1-13, not least the fact that Paul's parenthesis is neither accidental nor irrelevant.
- (2) There is a mystery in the gospel: not just that the two once separated become one new man in the believing of it (through that faith thus participating in what Christ has already accomplished by abolishing the enmity), but that the means and context of the gospel's proclamation (e.g. Paul in prison) are just as much a function of God's grace as the message of the gospel itself.
  - a. We often rail against our circumstances (which is really to be angry against God himself), but the power of the gospel in and through us is not limited by our circumstances.
- (3) Now, Paul picks up the theme of his thanksgiving: "For this reason..."

***This week we will be speaking about the love of the Father as the great foundational truth for life and eternity, and that the Father himself is therefore our dwelling place and fullness.***

**1. The 'For this reason...' Connection**

- (1) The reading for this week begins with 'for this reason' (3:14).
  - This could relate to Paul's immediate circumstances (i.e. though in prison, the gospel is not hindered; therefore do not lose heart, so, for this reason...)
  - However the phrase seems to pick up where Paul started in Eph. 3:1.
    - This, in turn, is related to what has gone before. In particular, the focus seems to be on 2:18. This access to the Father is the goal of the work of the Cross and its removal of the barrier of the dividing wall. It is also the access to the Father that governs the last part of chapter 2. In v.19ff. we see the consequences of access... 'So then...'
- (2) The actions of God the Father are, in fact, the dominant theme of Ephesians.
  - We see the Father mentioned specifically in a number of verses (e.g. 1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). This list is impressive enough, particularly when we see the breadth of the statements, but in reality the Father appears in verse after verse.
    - See, for example, the pronouns 'he' and 'his' in Eph. 1, which almost always refer to God the Father (as contrasted to 'in him', 'with him' etc. which refer to the Son). And also see the simply noun 'God', which refers to the Father e.g. Eph. 1:1 compared with Eph. 1:2, 3; Eph. 2:4ff.
  - Thus, the Father has done all things: chose Paul to be an apostle of Christ; blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ; chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless before him; predestined us in love to be the adoption as sons; he has made known to us the mystery of his will; given us our inheritance; sealed us in the Spirit; raised Christ from the dead as head of all things; etc.

(3) *God the Father* has saved us. He sent forth his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; justifying us in him; redeeming us from the dead state of walking according to the prince of the power of the air; etc.

- Jesus does not save us from God, but *God the Father himself* saves us in and through Christ.
  - We cannot tell the depth of hatred and hostility in the human spirit to the *Father*, except as we see it in the Cross. The rejection of the Son is the rejection of the Father for he has shown himself to be the exact representation of the Father (e.g. John 12:44-45; 14:9). Our anger and rage against God himself is portrayed in the Cross. But this is also the place where God brings all evil to judgement.
- The pinnacle of our salvation (given that has three tenses: have been saved; are being saved; will be saved) is the sonship.
  - See the sequence in Gal. 4:4-6
- So, also, in Ephesians, the goal is that we would receive the adoption as sons (Eph. 1:5), which is granted to us in the redeeming act of the Cross, but culminates in our access to the Father (2:17-18). In this place we stand “holy and blameless before him, in love”.

(4) This is what is picked up in Eph. 3:14. The ‘for this reason...’ relates to the question of *access* to the *Father* (a view reinforced by the same phrase in Eph. 3:11-12).

- Both things are important: *access* that is bold and confident
  - Eph. 3:12 cf. 2:17f. where *Peace* has been declared...therefore no need to stay away from him, hide from him, or fear his wrath;
  - we are of God’s household, and his dwelling place in the Spirit 2:19, 22;
  - Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God Rom. 5:2
  - Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22; etc.
- But it is access to the *Father*. Not just ‘God’ in a transcendent, metaphysical sense; nor even simply to Yahweh, the name by which he revealed himself in the Old Testament, where access was on the basis of the covenantal worship and its cultus.
  - The access we have to the Father is in and through the blood of the New Covenant, which is not like the Old Testament sacrifices, which need to be offered year by year. Once and for all the blood of Christ has abolished sin, and removed the wrath of God from us.
  - The access that we have to God is of the same order that Christ has to God the Father! How so?
    - § We only come to God in Christ; and we have the same Spirit in us, teaching us to cry the same cry of the Son: Abba (Mark 14:36 cf. Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15).

(5) So it is for **this** reason that Paul bows his knees before the Father in prayer.

## 2. Paul's Prayer

(1) The normal attitude in prayer amongst the Jews was standing, sometimes with arms raised (e.g. Luke 18:11). However, at times of special importance, when emotions were deeply stirred, we see men kneeling with hands upraised (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 95:6; Dan. 6:10). It also signifies submission to the Father, as well as adoration of him and petition in prayer.

- In the New Testament this posture is more common (e.g. Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5).

(2) The one to whom we pray is the Father.

- Translation of 3:15 is varied: e.g. from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (NEB); from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name (NASB); from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (KJV); from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name (NIV); from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name (NJB); etc.
  - The point is, that the Father gives shape to all things: the very existence of any family/fatherhood is because he is firstly the Father; and the whole family which is his family takes its shape from him.

(3) The *content* of the prayer is a request for strength for the inner man (Eph. 3:16).

- 'inner man' is used also in Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16. Sometimes translated 'inner man'; 'inner person'; 'innermost being'; etc. It is the new life and heart we have as God's children.
  - The 'inner being' is being renewed, but *it will always be weak and dependent on God, as indeed is the rest of us*. Not just weak because of sin, but creationally we are weak. Our sin consists in this, that we do not want to be dependent. So we think that we are strong.
- This strengthening must come through the Spirit...i.e. it is the equivalent of being filled with the Spirit; of having the eyes of our hearts being enlightened; etc.
  - It is thus the increasing knowledge of Christ, dwelling in our hearts by faith; and thus, of us being rooted and grounded in love, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit.
    - § 'rooted' i.e. drawing life from and living on; 'grounded' i.e. established (cf. the living temple of 1 Peter 2). The idea is that there is nothing but love nourishing the heart and providing the foundation of life. All reactions, responses, actions and words are those of love...as it is in God the Father himself! Compare with the 'root of bitterness' of Heb. 12:15 and the anger of Eph. 4:25ff. about which we will see more at a later time.
- But the inner person is not to be strengthened, just so that it will be less weak! It is for a purpose...so that
  - Comprehend with all the saints the dimensions of God who is love
  - To understand the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge
  - To be filled unto all the fullness of God i.e. the Father!

(3) It is a prayer that we might know and possess what we already have. It is that we might see what has freely been given to us in Christ, and wrought in our hearts by the Spirit. It is to see things as they *really* are, not as they *seem* to be.

### **3. Paul's Doxology**

(1) All knowledge of the Father leads us to doxology: i.e. to praise.

- This is just as we have read in Eph. 1, that we might be to the praise of his glory, or the glory of his grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).
  - Also see the pattern of all history, as in Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

(2) But note the content of the doxology:

- Regarding his current work
- Regarding the fact that the power at work to do these things is power at work in us
- So that the praise will be to him, in Christ i.e. in the Church.