

Ephesians 3:14-21 (& Rev 2.4)

September 26, 2021

Buena Vista CUCC

How do we NOT leave our first love?

Let's look at Paul as an individual, and then his prayer for the Ephesian church

Paul

looks back ("When I think of all this")

- On what God has done:
 - 2¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has *broken down the dividing wall*, that is, the hostility between us... (17) He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. ¹⁸ Now all of us can *come to the Father* through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.
 - Dividing wall- 3m barrier on the Temple Mount, dividing inner court from Court of the Gentiles... Now in Christ Jesus all such barriers are gone. In a world of barriers... followers of Jesus are to live such a gospel life that we help bring such walls crashing down.
 - Equal access- all of us can come to God (the Father, a relational term) through the HS because of what Christ has done for us...
 - Approachability: There is no one excluded from being able to approach God, not even Paul
 - But even Paul had to let Christ in... Jesus awaits our invitation to come in and bring us this empowering...
 - Anne Lamott

bows down ("I fall to my knees")

- To fall to one's knees before another, to bow down before another is to submit to that person, to surrender to that person...
If we are not to leave our first love, we need to live in trusting surrender to Jesus...
- GRM surrender
 - Story
 - What I was surrendering to was a life of discipleship
 - Willard: *a disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do.*
 - Why would we do this?...
 - One way to put it is, *the only scars in heaven are on the hand you are holding...*
 - Another way is this: Jesus says, "*Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*" Mt 11:28-30

Paul bows down to pray for them, that they would:

- **live empowered**
 - ¹⁶ *I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.* ¹⁷ *Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.*
 - Not leaving our first love is literally something that we cannot do in our own power. The Spirit empowering us by living in us is a necessity, not a luxury...
 - For example, GRM emotions, anger, irritation over current cultural climate...
 - I could do nothing about it
 - But what I could do was to strive to "pray the hours" (See *The Divine Hours, Volume II: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime* by Phyllis Tickle)
 - The Prayer Appointed for the Week
Grant that I, Lord, may not be anxious about earthly things, but love

things heavenly; and even now, while I am placed among things that are passing away, hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- The Concluding Prayer of the Church

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant me to so follow in faith where you have led the way, that I may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. Amen.

- Here's the secret of being empowered by the HS, of Christ making his home in our hearts, of our roots growing deep in God's love...
we need to create space for the Spirit of God in our hearts. It's not automatic...
 - The way we do that is through our spiritual habits, disciplines, practices...
 - Richard Foster: "Spiritual disciplines are the God-ordained means by which each of us is enabled to place the little, individualized power pack we all possess—the human body—before God as a "living sacrifice". It is the way we go about training in the spiritual life. By means of this process we become, through time and experience, the kind of persons who naturally and freely express "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.""
 - Need to be done proactively, so that we can be response-able, able to respond appropriately when life intrudes...
 - Essentially, we learn to do what we can do, so that God can have the space in our lives to do what we can't do: transform us into being more like Christ.
 - They help us to ask two questions: what's God up to? And how do I get in on it?

- **live amazed**

¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, *how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is...* ²⁰ Now all glory to God, *who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*

- What does this mean? William Barclay writes: "If we wish to work this out we might say that in the *breadth* of its sweep, the love of Christ includes every man of every kind in every age in every world; in the *length* to which it would go, the love of Christ accepted even the Cross; in its *depth* it descended to experience even death; in its *height*, he still loves us in heaven, where he ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). No man is outside the love of Christ; no place is out of its reach."
- If we are NOT to leave our first love, our lives need to be touched with wonder, amazement, awe... Not all the time, obviously, but we need to live with a great sense of how deeply we are loved. How? Pray 2 prayers:
 - "Almighty God, may I so live as your beloved child that all else shrinks small beside that love..."
 - "O Lord, thank you Jesus"
- If we live without wonder, amazement, awe then we will never live beyond, pray beyond the limits of our expectations...

Glory to him in the church

- That we can approach God, that his Spirit empowers us, that his love is beyond measure and his power can do more that we can even imagine:
this is all grace, so let us **live to the praise of his glory**...
- Live real lives that reveal the real God, the weightiness of God, the nature of God, the substance of God, the relevance of God
- We are back again at the basic idea of the letter. Paul paints a great picture of the Church. This world is a disintegrated chaos; there is division everywhere, between nation and nation, between

person and person, within a person's inner life. It is God's design that all the discordant elements should be brought into one in Jesus Christ. But that cannot be done unless the Church carries the message of Christ and of the love of God to every person. It is for that cause that Paul prays.

- As we stay in love with our first love, as we live together with Jesus, perhaps the most important thing we do is to share that love
 - Most say that the goal of loving Jesus is to get into heaven. But, really, heaven is a destination, not a goal. The goal of being loved by Jesus, rescued by Jesus, saved by Jesus is *to get heaven into us now*, to live lives as full of the fullness of God that we can now. To live with such a catching force that others are persuaded that there is something in our lives that they want.
 - Phil 2¹⁴⁻¹⁶ :
Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing.
 - CUCC children... Psalm 78:1-7
 - Hear my teaching, O my people;* incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable;* I will declare the mysteries of ancient times. That which we have heard and known, and what our forefathers have told us,* we will not hide from their children.
We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the LORD, and the wonderful works he has done.*
He gave his decrees to Jacob and established a law for Israel,* which he commanded them to teach their children;
That the generations to come might know, and the children yet unborn;* that they in their turn might tell it to their children;
So that they might put their trust in God,* and not forget the deeds of God, but keep his commandments. Psalm 78:1-7

To paraphrase a little bit, what Paul is really praying for is that the Ephesian church would be seized by the power of a great affection, seized by the power of Jesus' great affection and vast love for them... 18-21... La Pietà

How can we be such a congregation?

Approach God according to his riches

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, and I pray according to the riches of his glory

Don't do church on our own power

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened ... with power through his Spirit,¹⁷

Let Christ make his home in our hearts

I pray that ... Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

Let Jesus in

Let him have the run of the house

Glorify Christ every way

*v20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be **glory** in the church*

Approach God according to his riches

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- Father/ relationship, not male parent
- Center of the Christian life is the approachability of God, thru J, by the HS
- F acts according to his radiating love and power
- Riches: can bring peace where there is estrangement
- According to his riches, not out of his riches. \$10 gift would be out of a billionaire's riches, \$1m would be according to his riches.
- Pray beyond the limits of our expectations
- Look up, down, out and around: the love of Jesus is more vast as all that you see
- SBS: car \$\$
- Brooke's path

Don't do church on our own power

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened ... *with power through his Spirit,*¹⁷

- Ice in TN on way home 1st Christmas... stuck, nothing I could do in my own power
- Dallas Willard: Arrange your life so that you are experiencing deep contentment, joy and confidence in your everyday life with God...
- We're not passive
- Frozen gas cap
- Cop's Tesla down to 6m range
- It does little good to pray that the HS would empower us if we are not involved in the Spiritual practices that create space for the HS in our lives.
- Habitations of the Spirit.
- Spiritual disciplines are the God-ordained means by which each of us is enabled to place the little, individualized power pack we all possess—the human body—before God as a “living sacrifice”. It is the way we go about training in the spiritual life. By means of this process we become, through time and experience, the kind of persons who naturally and freely express “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- We need the Spirit's power b/c the Spirit can do what we cannot do. We can't on our own become humble, but we can serve others, which the Spirit can use to grow humility in us.
- A spiritual discipline is an intentionally directed action by which we do what we can do in order to receive from God the ability or power to do what we cannot do by direct effort.
- Their purpose is to create space for the Spirit in us, to place us before God

Let Christ make his home in our hearts

I pray that ... Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

Let Jesus in

- In order to become more like Jesus, which is essentially the only goal of the Christian life, one must first have let him in.
- Anne Lamott

Let him have the run of the house

- Then we should live as if we know that Jesus owns the whole house.
- A disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do.
- Let me put it this way: What's the goal of salvation? Most say that it is to get into heaven. But, really, heaven is a destination, not a goal. The goal of being rescued by Jesus, saved by Jesus is to get heaven into us now, to live lives as full of the fullness of God that we can now.

To live with such a catching force that others are persuaded that there is something in our lives that they want.

- Jesus: I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.
- Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Mt 11:28-30
- What one single choice can help us live freely and lightly?

Glorify Christ every way

v20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be **glory** in the church

- That our lives would reveal Jesus' goodness, beauty, truth, justice, love, freedom, power...
- For our lives to bring glory to him in the church, we must live as if God is real, has weight, substance...
- Nightbirde
- Let me put it this way: What's the goal of salvation? Most say that it is to get into heaven. But, really, heaven is a destination, not a goal. The goal of being rescued by Jesus, saved by Jesus is to get heaven into us now, to live lives as full of the fullness of God that we can now. To live with such a catching force that others are persuaded that there is something in our lives that they want.
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- What one single choice can help us live freely and lightly?
- Ruthlessly eliminate all hurry.
- Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.
- Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. (verses 12-16, The Message)
- All humans are like marionettes who,
Looking for a better way to dance,
Cut their strings,
Only to find they could not dance at all.¹

¹ There is no reference for this little saying. This author came across it in the early 1980's at which time its attribution was unknown.