



Selah: Encouragements and Prayers for Spiritual Strength

October 3, 2021

On Friday, we lost (and heaven gained) a beloved church member. We are deeply impacted. That loss, in combination with so much happening for so long (fear, uncertainty, facing life and death, concerns over our children, political turmoil around the world, the loss of church fellowship, etc.), set our hearts to prayer. We believe the Holy Spirit has given us leave for this “Selah” or pause in our Matthew series. The goals today are two-fold: 1) your encouragement and 2) a corporate time in prayer.

Holy Text:

Ephesians 3:14-21 (KJV) *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **16** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; **17** That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **19** And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. **20** Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, **21** Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Ephesians 3:14-21 (NLT) *When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **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. **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. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. **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. **21** Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.*

Thoughts on this Text:

1. Some of you might recall from previous study that this humble and heartfelt prayer from the Apostle Paul is placed at the end of some of the most theologically rich statements concerning the truth of Christ in the entire Bible.
2. Indeed, please know that this apostolic prayer is uttered with such truths in mind, truths we desperately need to be reminded of in these difficult days.
3. Remember our proposition that Ephesians is divided between **indicatives** (or things that are) and **imperatives** (things that must be done). In other words, the first three chapters give us the motivation to obey the last three chapters. Remember, because of what Christ has done:
 - We are “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” (Eph 1:3)
 - We were “chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (Eph 1:4)
 - We have been “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” (Eph 1:5)

- We have been given “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace! (Eph 1:7)
 - “We have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory!” (Eph 1:11-12)
4. Let us bask in the mercy of love of Paul’s declaration in Ephesians 2:4-10:
 - **Eph 2:4-10** *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*
 5. Hallelujah! *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!” (Rev 7:10) “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 7:12)*
 6. As we look at verse 14 in our Text, Paul says, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For what reason? The sublime and glorious statements concerning Christ continued in the early part of chapter three!
 - God has made known, by His Spirit, the mystery of Christ, which was not known in other ages. (Eph 3:5)
 - This mystery is that God would save both Jew and Gentile! (Eph 3:6)
 - Paul was graced to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ!” (Eph 3:8, “Endless treasures,” NLT)
 - Though the church, the manifold wisdom of God would even be made known to principalities and powers! (Eph 3:10)
 - This was the Father’s plan in the Son! (Eph 3:11)
 - Because of this redemption, “we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him!” (Eph 3:12)
 - Paul then says to the Ephesians concerning his trials (Paul was in prison), **“So please don’t lose heart” (Eph 3:13) and prays for them!**
 7. **Friends, it would be so easy to “lose heart” right now. But faint not! Let us receive strength from this inspired prayer!**
 - (V14) The “cause” or reason for Paul’s prayer was the Gospel...all that had been given to us in Jesus Christ. Jew and Gentile had become one! **Forgiveness of sins and eternal life** would be given to all who would repent and believe in Jesus Christ! Rejoice! Christ is yours and you are His! Your soul is anchored in God in Christ! Your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!
 - (V15) We are one family in God, in heaven and on earth. You are NOT alone! You are surrounded by family, spiritual family, and a “cloud of witnesses!” (Heb 12:1)

- (V16) Paul prayed for their inner strength...spiritual strength...to be granted to this church according to the riches of His glory. We need the same now! Oh LORD, grant us such strength to face the days ahead!
- (V17) Oh LORD, dwell in our hearts by faith! Let us not turn to the left nor to the right, but unto Thee. Root and ground us in Thy love! Keep us anchored unto Thee...our sure foundation! (2 Tim 2:19)
- (V18) Help us to increasingly understand, together, the breath, length, depth and height of Thy love for us!
- (V19) LORD, help us to know and experience Thy love, love which is too great for us to fully comprehend.
- (V20) Help us to remember that You are able. Help us to trust that despite all going on around us, You can do exceeding abundant above all we can ask or think! Help us recall that Thy mighty power is still at work in us!
- (V21) And Father, help our lives give Thee glory. In our living and dying, times of prosperity and loss, joys and pains...be glorified in Thy church by Jesus Christ forever and ever.

Seven more Encouragements and Prayers

With so much going on, it can be very hard mentally to [Row in Contrary Winds](#) and remember to "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." (Matthew 14:17)

Here are seven words that came to our mind as we looked at our current cultural situation. May we resolve to live out such and similar encouragements and pray for God's power and mercy in the doing. In the days ahead, let us "**Love, Cling, Obey, Sing, Live, Serve, and Share.**"

1. Love!

- In these uncertain days, resolve to love God. Resolve to love one another. Don't ever stop!
- **Matthew 22:36-40 (KJV)** *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*
- Love deeply and sacrificially. Love with and actions. Love with repentance and forgiveness.

2. Cling!

- Cling to Christ! In loss, cling to Christ. In trial, cling to Christ. In fears, cling to Christ. In joys, cling to Christ! In confusion, cling to Christ! In everything, cling to Christ!
- **Hebrews 10:23 (KJV)** *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*
- CRC, hold fast to the unsearchable riches of Christ!

3. Obey!

- Do not allow the calamities of the day to make you soft on sin or conscience. Do not allow the devil to convince you that the drama coming from obedience isn't worth it. Discomfort is NOT an excuse for disobedience. Indeed...
- **1 Peter 3:14-15 (KJV)** *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*
- Give attention to holy orders! Study and pray through the Scriptures! Obey them!

4. Sing!

- Sing to God. Sing to one another. Fill your days with songs of praise and honor! Fill your home with beauty!
- **Colossians 3:16-17 (KJV)** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*
- The joy of the LORD is your strength!

5. Live!

- Seize the day! Squeeze every bit of holiness and divine purpose from each day filled with new mercies! Live like tomorrow may not come! Be intentional!
- **James 4:13-15 (KJV)** *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*
- The truth is this: we live out what we truly believe; we make provision and time for what truly matters to us. Please remember, we do not know what tomorrow will bring!

6. Serve!

- Calamity makes us focus on self. Resist the temptation to back away and stop giving of your time, talents, and treasures! Bring your gifts to God!
- **1 Peter 4:8-10 (KJV)** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

7. Share!

- Share the Gospel! Preach the Gospel! Live the Gospel! Make disciples! Give your life to what truly matters!
- **Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV)** *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Oh LORD, we so desperately need Thee. You know our frame, that we are but dust. Please heal our homes and hearts, our bodies and our minds.

Help us to love like we've never loved, clinging unto Thee and Thy Word with a hearts aflame for obedience and holiness. LORD, fill our days with Thy songs of praise that we might be reminded of Thy tender mercies towards us. Help us to face each day with faith and zeal, serving You and those around us, and preaching the Gospel at every opportunity!

Help us to have compassion on the hurting and give Thy law to the rebellious. Forgive us of our sins, and renew us from the inside out.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.