

Building the Church: Prelude 12.31.17

A Study of Ephesians 4 Series

Tomorrow, people all around the world are going to start an adventure to find happiness in 2018 in a New Year's Resolution. **While all these endeavors are worth trying, the greatest adventure in life is DISCOVERING your life's purpose.**

TODAY'S PASSAGE: Ephesians 3:14-21

- When Paul writes this prayer, he is in prison in Rome around AD 62, most likely **chained to a soldier**. He is not praying for God to get him out of prison, but he is praying for the Ephesians to know the love of Christ. (see **Ephesians 2:4-5, 10**)
- Most Christians follow Christ for a "get out of hell" pass, but according to Paul, we need to be living for so much more than that. **My prayer for you today is that Holy Spirit reveals how much God loves you today and how much God wants to use you in 2018.**

¹⁴ *For this reason I kneel before the Father"*

- In order to pray effectively, it doesn't matter if you are kneeling, sitting, standing or laying prostrate on the floor. **The ATTITUDE of your heart is more important than you POSTURE.** (see **Hebrews 11:6**)
- Bowing down can signify **SUBMISSION to a higher authority** or an intense **PASSION** or desperation. Here, Paul is submitting to God and passionately praying for the Ephesians and **God honors PASSIONATE prayers!** (see **Matthew 6:33**)

¹⁵ *from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

- God has only one family and you can be a part of that family today **ONLY** by letting Christ lead your life. (see **Ephesians 2:19**)

¹⁶ *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...*

- In the physical world, we might lift weights to strengthen ourselves, but in the spiritual world, our job is to **SUBMIT** ourselves to God's Spirit in order that He can strengthen us.

Why does our inner man need to be strengthened every day?

- #1 Because we were designed to **GROW**.
- #2 Because our inner man is **WEAK**.
- #3 Because we need **POWER** against the devil. (see **Ephesians 6:10-17**).
- #4 So that God can **GUIDE** us through the Holy Spirit.
- You have everything you need when you accept Christ into your life. The problem is that most of the time we try to live life on our own apart from God and because of this, we are **POWERLESS** in our lives. (see **2 Timothy 3:5**)
- God wants to strengthen us in our inner being through His Word, through worship, through prayer, through gathering together with other Christians to challenge each other and dig deeper, etc.

¹⁷ *so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.*

- God doesn't want us to call on Him sometimes, but wants to dwell in our hearts.

¹⁷ *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,*

- Paul prayed that the believers might have a deeper experience with Christ by being rooted and established in love, because only a deep experience could sustain us during the trials of life. (see **Psalms 1:1-3, Proverbs 10:25** and **Matthew 7:24-25**)
- **Paul's point is simple – in order to grow strong in Christ, you have to go deep.**
- **Do not pray for a life free from trouble, but pray for TRIUMPH over trouble.**

¹⁷ *And I pray that you... ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,*

- Paul is praying that **all Christians together** can comprehend the vastness of the love of Christ. God's love for us is incomprehensible. (see **John 3:16** and **Romans 5:8**)
- **And God wants everyone to know this love so that they can be filled with everything good.**

¹⁹ *and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- In order to be filled with God, it requires that you are empty of self. If you are too full of yourself or things of this world, God will never have room to fill you with all that He desires for you.
- **We determine how much GOD we want to have!**

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

- God can use anything you give Him, but **IMAGINE** how much God could use you if you were an empty vessel ready to be used by God.

Actually, according to this passage, the sky is the limit with God, but the only thing that can limit God is US.

- The limitless power of God is limited by our unwillingness to let Him work through us or the unbelief that He can use us.

What is it going to take for us as a church to bind together and make a difference in Chesterland beyond our imaginations?

#1 In 2018, PRAY more than you complain.

#2 In 2018, go DEEPER with God.

#3 In 2018, pray GOD-SIZED prayers!

- **Craig Groeschel** said, "I'd rather fail God by thinking too big than insult Him by thinking too small".

#4 In 2018, TRUST THE PROCESS by trusting God.

- Imagine what God can do through you this year. **What are you going to do about it in 2018?**

Look Ahead to Next week: Ephesians 4:1-2