

Ephesians 3:19-21, Part 3

0234

Cause my heart to desire nothing that doesn't bring you glory.

Yes, we glorify Him with our words, we glorify Him with our deeds. We glorify Him in lots of ways. But can we give him more glory than saying to him, “You and You alone are what I want”?

Now quite often, we have to say that from a position of faith, knowing that that's what your Word teaches us. And sometimes I really believe that, sometimes I struggle to believe that, but that's what your Word tells me and so by faith, you, Lord God, you are all that I desire in heaven on earth. I have tasted you and found you to be good. You are the delight of my heart. That is how we most glorify Him.

And so now let's look at just the beauty of how God works this into our life. Through his strengthening work through His Spirit, in our inner man, he causes us to rely more fully and completely upon him, seeing ourselves or any other earthly thing as a dead end, only he is our rock. And doing that we then experience this deeper fellowship, this more settling down indwelling. And that leads to this greater comprehension of His love for us, which, as John says, leads to greater love for him, which leads to more glory for him. And the whole thing is just built that way.

In such a way, that the maximum glory of our Maker and Creator is found in our maximum joy. And that's not just not philosophical words. That's what the Scriptures teach us. Our maximum joy is in him. And his maximum glory is in us finding our maximum joy in him. We have quite an eternity in store for us.

So this, this is—these two ultimate goals that Paul is holding out this this ultimate goal of the glorifying of God, and the ultimate goal of our greatest realization of God's love for us, in Christ Jesus—perfect happiness, and the glory of God are not in competition, perfect happiness and the glory of God are working in parallel.

So what a prayer to pray. When we pray for sustenance, and we pray for deliverance, when we pray for that doctor's report that wasn't very encouraging. When we pray for a better job, when we pray for a place to live. All those in the right context are honoring prayers to God that bring glory to Him. But to pray, as Paul prays, Lord, show me, show me the love of your people in Christ Jesus. So that I may see that and perceive that, and perceiving that give you greater glory and greater honor. Is that not a request that would delight God's heart to answer? And he does.

He answers that he's is answering it as we speak. This is tantamount to what Jesus tells us in Luke 11, verse 13, remember his words there? You know, you are evil people, you're following people, your hearts are evil, but even you evil people, you know how to give good gifts. Who among you has a child that asks for a fish and you give them a snake? Who has a child that asks for a piece of bread, and you give them a stone? Nobody does that. How much more will your heavenly Father give you here is—the Holy Spirit to those who asked, that is the

same prayer, is it not? When Jesus says How would it delight the heart of God for His people to cry out—God I want more of you. I have tasted and seen you to be good and I want more.

So now Paul transitions into this final two verses of praise—Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think—does all of this sound like something that's from another world? Like there's no way that God has designed this system, this following him that is so built upon our maximum happiness and joy. There's no way. But Paul says—way.

Because he is far more able to do far more abundantly than all you ask or even think, you know, when we pray, how rarely is it that this is in our hearts, that this is in our mind? When we pray, what are we praying for usually? We're praying for something right in front of our face. We're praying for this thing right here, this thing coming up tomorrow, this thing I'm struggling with over here.

Paul says, That's okay. Because he knows how to give far more abundantly than even what you may think. This is tantamount to what Paul says in Romans chapter eight, of how the Spirit knows what we should pray. And he lists the sanctified prayers up.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly, all power, all power, all power rests in our maker, to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask, or to think, according to the power at work within us. Now, I read that, and what you probably want to say to yourself is the same thing I want to say to myself—according to the power at work within us—I don't feel very powerful. I don't feel like there's a power work, do you feel like there's a power working in you? I don't usually feel that way.

I think Paul would answer that by saying—Good. Because, when you're strong, he's weak. That's the whole idea. He won't compete with your illusionary strength. Only when you realize your weakness is he strong. In our self-assured false strength, we are weak. In our self-assured false strength, that is when we take upon ourselves that which doesn't belong to us.

So Paul says to us, there is a power at work within us, and you don't perceive it. And it's a good thing that you don't perceive it. Because that opens the door to his power working in you.

According to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. You know, God does not fit into our limited expectations of him. Again, just like the wine and the wine—God just doesn't fit into our small expectations of him.

Back in 1961, JB Phillips, you may be familiar with JB Phillips, he wrote a paraphrase of the New Testament, he wrote a book called 'Your God Is Too Small.' Back in 2018, JD Greear wrote another book by the exact same title. And both of those books have the same premise. And the premise is this: all of your spiritual problems are rooted in your low view of God. Because you do not have a high enough view of God, you have a deficient view of God, you have a view of God that is too low. You say, 'Wait a minute, how do you know what my view of God is?' I don't, because I can't see your heart. You can't see my heart. But I know what Paul said—all of you have a low view of God, all of us have a view of God beneath what he really is.

In part, that's because we can't perceive him. In part, that's because he is infinite in all his ways. All of his attributes are infinite. And so in part, it's because we, it's impossible for us to see him rightly. But in big part is because of the sin in our heart. The remaining sin in our life that causes us to think low thoughts of God, that causes us to think deficient thoughts of God.

And so both Phillips and Greer are going to say to us, you know where spiritual progress is really found? Spiritual progress is really found in informing your view of who God is, and reminding yourself of just the greatness of your God, and how his greatness far exceeds all of your ideas of him.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. Isaiah says in Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9, from my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.

So God is not merely able to do what Paul is asking. Paul also says that God's already doing it.

To him who was able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power that's going to be at work in us? That I pray will be at work? —the power that is at work in us.

We might hear this and we might say, Wow, I just need to revolutionize my prayers. I need to pray like Paul's praying here. And yes, you do. And yes, I do. But nevertheless, this was already God's goals. This was already God's working in your life. Remember, a few Sundays ago, we said that God is working behind the scenes in your life, to take from you all those false idols and false crutches that are detracting from him. He's already at work to do this. Philippians one, verse six, I'm sure of this, that He who began a good work, and you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

What we need is not as some would say, a deeper experience of Christ. What we need is not sort of this ecstatic, encountering of Christ in which he just brings us to our knees with this realization of the love of God—if he wants to do that for me, then please. But what we need is the work of the Spirit in our hearts, using the word of God and the people of God, to bring us supernaturally to a greater and greater comprehension of the love of God for His people, that is poured out for us in Jesus Christ, like we talked about last Sunday. That is how transformation takes place.

And so this is why we need the Spirit, the necessity of the spirit to do this. Because we're not talking about knowing about God. We're not saying here that the more you know about God, the more you're transformed. What we're saying is what Paul is saying is, the more that we know God. Like he said to the Philippians, That I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

Now I can't tell you about God, I can't tell myself about God, I can tell you about God. In fact, if all we needed was to be told about God, then I could do all that for you. We just stand up here and just tell you about God. I can't tell you to know God. That's the work of the Spirit. We only know him by the spirit's work in our heart.

As Paul will say to the Corinthians, nobody knows another person's thought only the spirit of a person knows that person's thought. In the same way, who knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God, yet we have the Spirit of God. And that's the spirits were that we may know him, not know about him, not know facts about him, but to know Him. And that is only his work.

And so one of the last things that we'll see here is that God is worthy of our highest, highest praise. Now to Him, who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever, and ever. God is worthy of your highest praise.

DA Carson writes this, has God become so central to my thoughts and pursuits, and thus to my prayers, that I cannot easily imagine asking for anything without greatly desiring that answer would bring glory to God. Did you catch what he said? Have I been so transformed in my thoughts? Have been so transformed in my spirit, that it's reflected in my prayers, that everything that I pray for, I only pray for it, if God is glorified in it. That's quite a transformation.

How do we make that transformation? What's our part of that? What do we do for that transformation? I would suggest to us, here's a real key: understanding that the glory of God, and all of your requests in Jesus Christ are the same. All of your requests, which are ultimately the requests for your peace, your security, your happiness, your satisfaction, your pleasure in Christ—all of those things are the same as the glory of God.

And so he asks this question this right question, God, make my every request, make my every prayer grounded upon the glory of God, cause my heart to desire nothing that doesn't bring you glory.

May that be our prayers, make my prayers filled with nothing that's outside of the desire for your glory.

Now, just some final concluding thoughts here on the back of your notes: Ephesians one through three, as we finish up these three chapters, really is a lesson in worship and prayer. It's just a—Paul's just giving us, he's taking us to school, on what worship and prayer look like. And what we come away seeing here is that meaningful worship does not just happen. It results from intentionality, from purposefulness, from attention, from thought and from effort. And all of that is worked into our heart and into our lives by the enabling power of the Spirit.

So this worship that Paul is teaching us of is not something that we should just ever expect to just sort of spontaneously happen when we walk into the door of the church building on Sunday morning. Nor should we expect it to spontaneously happen when you are reading scripture in the morning.

In other words, it requires investment from us. It requires filling our thoughts with the truth of God, it requires being renewed in our mind—so that that transformational worship can take place, and Ephesians one through three is well worth our time, to just reflect upon, to memorize to commit it to memory, to teach us, to teach our hearts about worship and about prayer.

Next, our cognitive view of God often does not evoke devotion, contemplation, or obedience. Paul seeks to change that.

Our thoughts of God—have you ever noticed this about yourself that your thoughts of God sometimes just don't move you, don't evoke from you thoughts of worship, thoughts of devotion, thoughts of obedience, thoughts of loyalty. That's because the church has largely forgotten how to worship.

And by church, I mean big C, the universal church, all those believers in Jesus Christ worldwide, we have largely forgotten to worship. We have replaced genuine true worship, with preoccupation with music, and oratory skills of the speaker, all kinds of things. We've replaced true and genuine worship with all sorts of superficial, temporary earthly things. And the church has largely forgotten how to worship, and forgetting how to worship we've forgotten how to pray. And Paul seeks to change that. And he seeks to change it, as we saw in chapter one through the deepest theology that New Testament has for us, through Chapter Two through a full faced view upon what it was that we were when God reached to us, when he reached down into that miry pit for us what we were, and then this full open eye view of the church in chapter three.

And then lastly, our last point for the morning. And our last point for Ephesians. one through three is this, we do not seek to glorify the church. Instead, the church is to be the primary and the central glorifier of God. Of the many, many doxologies in the New Testament. This one is unique. It's unique, because it's one of the longest, it's also unique, because it's the only doxology in the church, or in the New Testament, that has the church in it. Every doxology of the New Testament is written to the church—only this one has the church in it.

Now Paul says, To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. Paul doesn't say, Paul doesn't say, Let there be glory to the church. Paul says, Let there be Glory to God in the church. We are the greatest manifestation on earth, of the transformative power of God. We are the display. As we said earlier, back in chapter two, we are the display of his wisdom. We are also the display of his transformative power, we as the church of Jesus Christ, we are the greatest illustration of how our God transforms, and not through outward pressure, but it transforms through inward love, through showing us increasingly, through increasing clarity and increasing perception, the love of God for His people in Jesus Christ.