



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Ephesians 3.14-21

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our fall series “Welcome Home” with Paul getting on his knees and praying, then rising up and praising! He prays to the Father for what He has begun in the widely diverse fellowship that was the church at Ephesus. He praises the Father with an assurance that He will see the work through to a glorious completion!

II. Connecting with One Another

When you pray, what are the things you typically pray about? Try to summarize the typical content of your prayers. Where did you learn to pray like that and for those things?

III. Study the Text

a. Reread last week’s passage, Ephesians 3:1-13.

Paul begins (3:1) by referring back to the remarkable work of God reconciling people to himself and to one another – breaking down all the walls that divide and extending the grace of God to the Gentiles (!) – as the focus of Paul’s calling, life and ministry. Pastor Paul pointed out that this “mystery” is good news of an inheritance that is no longer hidden but openly proclaimed. He also helped us see that the bringing together of different people and groups reconciled into one church gives the church an unusual ministry. By being together and staying together in Christ, we announce to the spiritual powers arrayed against us that the game is over, their lies and attempts to divide and destroy us are unmasked, and that in and through the diverse complexion of the church God has triumphed over them (vv. 9-11)!

The Apostle Paul shares this so the Ephesians will see his sufferings to be to their advantage as the gospel spreads (v. 13). His sufferings will be in the service of God’s “glory” revealed in the increase and maturing of the church!

b. Now read Ephesians 3:14-21.

There are basically two parts to this section: Part I is a prayer (vv. 14-19), part II is a doxology (vv. 20-21).

“Doxology” is an English word composed of two Greek words: *doxa* (“glory”) + *logos* (“word”). A doxology is a “word of glory” or “glory word” offered in praise to God. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow, etc . . .” You know the song!

c. “Glory” – as in God’s glory – is an important word in Ephesians. It is to be the focus of our lives in response to all God has done . . . living for the “praise of his glory” (1:13). Locate all the places “glory” occurs so far in Ephesians (chs. 1–3) and discuss the use of the term in each place.

d. In the sermon we note that there are two kinds of glory: 1) “based-on-what-you-have-done, earned glory;” and 2) a “just-by-being-who-you-are glory.” God possesses both kinds of glory. He enjoys a double glory.

The entire work of salvation in chs 1–2 flows out of God’s double glory, and then leads us back toward that glory as his completed work in us further glorifies the glorious God we worship!

- e. Paul prays. Last week Pastor Paul noted that the apostle begins in 3:1 and then abruptly interrupts himself. Now in 3:14 he gets back to what he was starting to say in 3:1. “For this reason” refers to the entire work of salvation in chs. 1–2, evident in the Ephesian Christians. Paul prays for that work. In what posture does he pray? What is the posture you usually use to pray? Why? To whom does he pray? How is the recipient of his prayer described? What is being communicated by the description of the recipient and why is that important for the prayer that follows?
- f. Last week Pastor Paul communicated that a diverse body of Christ has as one of its ministries the sending of a clear message to all the spiritual powers that would divide us. Just by being and staying together we tell such powers that we know what they are up to and that they are defeated. And yet, we are always vulnerable to division and factional fighting within the church. Keep this in mind as one of the reasons Paul now prays.
- g. What are the three things Paul prays for? Take time now discussing them AND exploring what the relationship might be between these three things.
- h. Discuss what would be the effect of such prayers upon our relationship with God and our relationships with each other?
- i. Paul sees the Ephesians as being “rooted” and “grounded” in love (v. 17). What do those images communicate and what “love” (what is the source, who is the active subject in, who are the objects of?) is he talking about.
- j. What does Paul mean by desiring the Ephesians to “comprehend” (v. 18) and “know” (v. 19) the love of Christ? What effect would this produce in them? (See next question!)
- k. The object of all three petitions in his prayer is that they would be “filled with all the fullness of God.” What does that mean and what would that result in . . . that is, what would this look like in their “everyday-walk-around” lives?
- l. Vv. 20-21 are a vote of confidence in the one who can bring Paul’s prayers to pass. Please, read 3:20-21 again. Draw as many lines of connection as you can between the doxology in vv. 20-21 and the prayer in vv. 14-19.
- m. As Paul directs all things back around to the glory which in the end belongs to God alone, what are the two places that glory is visible? And what visible realities in those two places will bring glory to God?
- n. Take some time and assess the places in which the Good Shepherd congregation needs Paul’s prayer the most.

IV. Pray

- a. For yourself and the person sitting next to you the same prayer Paul prays for the Ephesians (vv.16-19)
- b. Pray Paul’s prayer – but now in your own words – for the Good Shepherd congregation at large.
- c. Turn the doxology of vv. 20-21 into prayers of confidence and hope that God is able to answer the prayers you have just offered above.

V. On Your Own

Compare the prayer and affirmations of Paul in 1:15-23 with the passage we just studied!