

“Prayer Before the Father”  
Ephesians 3:14-15  
(Preached at Trinity, August 31, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, **Chapter 3** opens with prayer but Paul quickly digresses until we come to **Verses 14-21**. Without the digression it would read:  
"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— <sup>14</sup> . . . I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"
2. The digression, however, is really the primary matter of the chapter. It deals with Paul's special call as Apostle to the Gentiles to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.  
Now as we come to **Verse 14** Paul continues his prayer.  
**Ephesians 3:14-15 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"
3. Paul has revealed his heart regarding the church. He cared for the saints of God. This is one of the chief characteristics of a pastor. Paul prayed for them continually.
4. This was the model of the Apostles – they were men of prayer.
  1. The division and complaint among the widows in Acts 6  
**Acts 6:3-4 NAU** - "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. <sup>4</sup> "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
  2. Paul continually demonstrated this in his own ministry. He wrote in **Chapter 1:16** – "I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers"
  3. This must continue as a pastoral priority today—a heart for God's people and a commitment to hold them before the Father continually.
5. In **Verse 14** we find Paul once again bowing in prayer.  
**Ephesians 3:14-15 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"
  - A. What does Paul mean by these opening words, "For this reason?"  
What is it that is driving Paul to prayer? We have to remember that Paul actually began this prayer with **Verse 1**. This means it is necessary to search back in **Chapter 2** to see the reason for Paul's prayer. The answer is clear. Paul's heart was for the church and in **Chapter 2** he is marveling over the unity of the church. Jews and Gentiles are one body in Christ—one Holy Temple.  
**Ephesians 2:21-22 NAU** - "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

- B. Paul had two great passions: Christ and the Church. We can also see this as Paul brings his prayer to a close.  
**Ephesians 3:21 NAU** - "to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever."
6. As we come to Paul's prayer we find his words rich in content. They teach us much about the nature of prayer.  
 Paul sets three things before us:  
 The pattern of prayer  
 The privilege of prayer  
 The proper posture for prayer
- I. First of all, we find the pattern for prayer. It is wonderfully Trinitarian. Paul recognizes the proper economy of the Godhead—that prayer should be offered up to the Father. At the end of **Chapter 1** I pointed out some truths about the nature of our triune God.
- A. God is one.
1. At the heart of the Bible is monotheism – that there is but only one God  
**Deuteronomy 6:4 KJV** - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD"
  2. Scripture continually affirms that God is the only God who reigns supreme and who will not share His glory with another.
    - a. The first commandment – "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."
    - b. God declares in **Isa. 48:11** - "My glory I will not give to another."
- B. This one God is a person –
1. God is one and He is a person but God is also Triune.  
 He has tri-unity. God is a person but He consists of three persons – not three beings. Each person of the godhead possesses personhood, each possesses personality - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
  2. These three persons are one God. Each of the persons of the Godhead possesses all of the attributes of God, not each one possesses 1/3 of the Divine essence.  
 They are the same in being, identical in nature. They are co-equal, co-eternal, of one essence, of one action, of one will.
  3. These three persons of the Godhead have always existed in perfect harmony and communion with each other
- C. While there is unity in the Divine being of God there is difference in function.
1. Difference in function does not imply difference in nature.
  2. Being fully God and fully equal does not mean the persons of the Godhead do everything exactly the same way. They can have different functions and still be fully equal and fully God.
  3. Difference in function does not imply inferiority of nature  
 While there was subordination to the Father in the incarnation of Christ it did not mean there was an eternal subordination between the Father and the Son. The Bible only speaks of an earthly, temporal subordination tied to His human nature.

- D. Each Person of the Godhead has a particular role and function in our salvation but with unity of will and unity of purpose
1. In God's redemptive purpose there is a certain priority given to the Father
    - a. The Father elected us unto salvation – He is the Author of our salvation  
**Ephesians 1:4-6 NAU** - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."
    - b. The Father gave these elect people to His Son
  2. Jesus Christ came as the only begotten of the Father, in obedience to the Father and became a man, but never ceased being God  
 He offered up Himself as a sacrifice upon the cross as our substitute  
**Ephesians 1:7 NAU** - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"
  3. He was raised on the third day to sit at the right hand of the Father where He continues as our Mediator  
 Until all is accomplished, the Father continues to have priority. Finally at the end when all has been accomplished the Son will deliver all things over to the Father so that God will be all in all.  
**1 Corinthians 15:24-25 KJV** - "Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."
  4. In this age prayer is to be lifted up to the Father.
    - a. Jesus taught His disciples:  
**Matthew 6:9 NAU** - "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
    - b. Jesus is our Mediator through whom we approach the Father  
**John 14:6 NAU** - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
    - c. And the Holy Spirit continually bears witness within us that we are the children of God—that God is our Father.  
**Romans 8:15-16 NAU** - "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God"
  5. So, Paul here in **Verse 14** is displaying the proper pattern for us to pray  
**Eph. 3:14** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father"
  6. For most Christians, however, the problem isn't that we pray improperly but that we don't pray at all. The great wonder is that we are able to approach God as our Father.

- II. Second, we find the privilege of prayer
- A. Paul presents the ultimate problem
1. Prayer is offered to the Father but who can claim God as their Father
  2. Sin has resulted in alienation from God. Most presume that God is Father of all. This is a fatal presumption.
  3. Only a child can claim a relationship with his father. God is only Father to His children.
- B. It is a unique privilege to be a child of God
1. God is only the Father of those who are in Christ. We are only adopted through Christ.  
**Ephesians 1:5 NAU** - "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will"
  2. Paul uses a unique expression in **Verse 15**  
**Ephesians 3:15 NAU** - "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"
    - a. The word translated "every" is the Greek word  $\pi\alpha\tilde{\nu}\varsigma$   
 It is most often translated "all"
    - b. A less common translation of the word is the word "whole" meaning "entire"  
**Romans 8:22 NAU** - "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."  
 Paul used it this way in **Chapter 2**  
**Ephesians 2:21 NAU** - "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,"
    - d. I believe this is the best way to understand it here.  
 The KJV translates it this way.  
**Ephesians 3:15 KJV** - "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"
    - e. In other words Paul is speaking of the whole family of God, the whole company of the redeemed in heaven and on earth. God is the Father of them all—and them alone.
  3. Paul described people of God as God's household in **Chapter 2**  
**Ephesians 2:19 NAU** - "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household"
  4. This is the greatest of all families. For this cause Paul is bowing before the Father in prayer for those in Ephesus who are a part of this family.
- C. It is no small thing that God is our Father
1. It is the greatest of all blessings to be able to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven."
  2. There is an infinite distance between God and man. That He would receive us as children is beyond amazing.
  3. Paul's great intention in this prayer is that God's people might fully comprehend this blessing. God has loved us so much that He has adopted us as His children. He loves us, cares for us, provides for us.  
**1 John 3:1 NAU** - "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God"

4. As God's children we have boldness to approach His throne  
**Ephesians 3:12 NAU** - " in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him."
5. As God's children we have a duty to pray for one another. Notice the corporate nature of the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father which art in Heaven." It is a family prayer.

III. Finally, Paul sets before us the proper posture for prayer

A. Paul prayed before God with high reverence

**Ephesians 3:14 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father"

1. The customary posture for Jewish prayer was standing. We often sit while we pray. We have no way of knowing if Paul was saying he literally got on his knees. I don't think Paul is seeking to make a statement regarding our physical posture in prayer. He is describing the condition of the heart.
  2. Bowing the knee describes a position of total reverence and submission.
    - a. When Pharaoh promoted Joseph all the people were commanded to bow  
**Genesis 41:42-43 NAU** - "Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt."
    - b. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt they also bowed  
**Genesis 42:6 NAU** - " Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with *their* faces to the ground."
    - c. It is the position every man will take when Christ sits upon His throne in judgment.  
**Philippians 2:10-11 NAS** - "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
- B. We approach God as children approach their father.
1. In this sense there is a degree of familiarity.  
On the other hand there is an infinite distance between God and man. He is infinitely glorious.  
**1 Timothy 6:16 NAU** - " who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! "
  2. Jesus taught this in the Lord's Prayer  
"Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name"

- C. Our position before Jesus also reflects this
1. On one hand He is referred to as our Friend. He is our elder brother. But He is infinitely holy
  2. John trembled before Him.  
**Revelation 1:14-17 NAU** - "His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup> In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup> When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man."
  3. He is our Master and our Lord. We are to approach our God with holy fear and reverence.

#### Conclusion:

1. Paul begins his prayer by bowing upon his knees to the Father in holy reverence. He approached the throne of God with humility.
2. We must come before God with a sense of our own insignificance and our own sinfulness.  
**Luke 18:13 NAU** - "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"
3. But Paul gloried in his adoption and wanted these Ephesian Christians to understand the greatness of God's love in bringing them into His family.
4. We too must understand the greatness of our privilege. God is our Father. He looks upon us with love and pity and graciousness.
5. The important issue for us is that we pray, that we pray to our Father with holy reverence. The question you must consider this morning is how is your prayer life? Do you recognize the great privilege?