**Ephesians 3:14-21 14For this reason I kneel before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15from whom the entire family in heaven and on earth receives its name. 16I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner self, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then, being rooted and grounded in love, 18I pray that you would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints, how wide and long and high and deep his love is, 19and that you would be able to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. 20Now to him, who is able, according to the power that is at work within us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, 21to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.**

Delight Uncovered

Is following God also missing out on earthly joy? That is a question that most Christians will ask themselves from time to time. They see what they appear to be giving up and wonder if it would be better to leave God behind. They focus on the battle against their sinful natures that carries a pride of knowing what’s best. That pride thinks God is holding back from giving all that he could give and taking away what would be beneficial. Does that sound familiar? Our sinful natures laugh at God.

Today, we are going to consider how the sinful laughs at God and also meditate on how God gives more than we ask for. As we do, we will consider prayer which is a delight pleasure for believers.

It seems that to many prayer is a joke. After all you can’t see God to whom you are speaking. Often prayer seems to be someone just talking to themselves or talking to someone who isn’t there. Prayer for many is wishful thinking on the part of those who pray. However, if we are so certain that God hears and answers our prayers, why aren’t we more active in our prayer life? Why is prayer often an afterthought or last resort?

 What kind of posture do you take when you pray? Do you fold your hands, close your eyes, and bow your head? That seems to be the most common practice. Listen to what the lesson says: **For this reason I kneel before the Father.** Doesn’t sound like a delightful position, does it? Being on your knees doesn’t take long before it starts to ache and that even if you can kneel anymore. Although it’s not the only posture when we pray, we should at least consider what is meant by the kneeling. By kneeling what is being said about the God to whom prayers ascend? Isn’t that like saying you are a servant to God?

Is that our attitude when we approach God in prayer or do you treat him like a waitress who we expect to do our bidding? Take care of my need at the moment and then be gone so I can enjoy what I ordered? Do we expect him to keep his nose out of our business? God is not our waitress whose sole purpose is to do our bidding. Instead, he is the one **to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!**

God is the one that every person of every generation is to glorify and serve. Sounds a bit odd to our sinful natures. To give such reverence. Even if we can’t physically get down on our knees, we certainly can mentally do that when we approach God in prayer. We will want to do this, for we are not God’s equal. His is our Lord. He is our Savior. He is the one we are to serve with all our lives. It’s fitting to kneel before him.

That almost makes it odd that the place and time when we most likely are to pray, it at bedtime right before we fall asleep. In the drowsy last moments of our days in our PJ’s, we think or say a few words, and maybe we don’t even make it through them. While we want to be humble in the way that we approach God because he is our Lord, we see more than just a Lord. He is our Father. We can approach him without fear, confident that it’s OK to fall asleep in his arms, as we do when we fall asleep in the middle of our bedtime’s prayers.

There is no better place to be than in the arms of our Savior and our heavenly Father. He **is able, according to the power that is at work within us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.** What do you imagine that God can do? What is your wildest thought you think he can accomplish? No matter how good your imagination, no matter how ridiculous your prayer requests may seem, God has the power to deliver and do even more than we ask. But if that’s true, who doesn’t God answer more prayers that way we ask? That’s because not everything we ask for is what’s best for us. Just as here on earth you don’t get everything you ask for from others, even those who love you the most, so our heavenly Father doesn’t say “yes” to every request we make of him because he knows the things that we ask for aren’t always for the best. He doesn’t want to turn us into brats that sinfully kneel to the desires, wants, and cries of our sinful natures.

This truth gets us to think about what should we be asking. These are the same things that bring delight to light, delight that your sinful nature wants to keep from you. **I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner self, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then, being rooted and grounded in love, I pray that you would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints, how wide and long and high and deep his love is, and that you would be able to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.**

Notice, delight doesn’t come from outside but from inside you. When the Apostle Paul first prayed this prayer, he didn’t pray that all his friends would be kept from physical harm, or that their children would get good grades, and that every Christian would earn enough money to but the latest and greatest. Those are often what we pray for first as we are led along by our sinful natures. Instead, Paul prayed for spiritual blessings.

God isn’t about attracting you through earthly delight to get you to something spiritual. God is all about the other way around. God is about uncovering his goodness to you so that your earthly existence gets to be overshadowed with his blessings. His glory shining in your life isn’t about curing every ailment but about shining as the source of joy in life.

Let’s consider Paul’s prayer a little deeper to recognize how God does that. Paul first prayed that God would send the Holy Spirit so that they would be strengthened in their inner being. He wanted God to strengthen them as Christians so that they would not just call themselves Christians, but also act like Christians.

Christians are clearly seen as different. What a prayer to be praying now! What a strength to be living now. We too be to praying, “Lord, help me live as your child, not a child of the sinful world throwing a tantrum when I don’t get my way or sighing in exasperation at other people’s stubbornness. Help me be completely humble, gentle, and patient—bearing with others in love.”

How does the Holy Spirit strengthen a Christian to display these? He does that when we sink ourselves in God’s love. As he uncovers how vast his love is, **to comprehend, along with all the saints, how wide and long and high and deep his love is.** Have you every grasped these dimensions of Jesus’ love for you? There ain’t no ocean wide enough. There ain’t no valley low enough to find the end of God’s love for you. It goes deeper than any mess you have gotten yourself into. No matter how low you have sunk into sin, God never gives up on calling you back to repentance and into his loving embrace. There is no sin which Jesus’ love does not cover with forgiveness.

Jesus’ love outranks any success you might achieve in this life. It’s better than acing a test or landing your dream job or making billions. All those blessings are fleeting, but God’s love is eternal and it will one day bring us to heaven which will be way better than anything the rich and famous enjoy now.

Jesus’ love far-reaches to bring together people from different cultures, ages, and ideas. It also brings together sinners who have every reason, humanly speaking, to hate each other and to hold a grudge. Jesus’ love dissolves the wall of hostility because those who know and appreciate how Jesus dissolved the wall of hostility that should have existed between God and them realize that they can no longer keep building wall between themselves and other sinners.

When God’s love is uncovered, it is delightful to discover that it just keeps going. These dimensions of God’s love seem to form the shape of the cross. For through the cross Jesus has joined heaven and earth once again. Through the cross, he reaches out to people on the other side to bring peace. Jesus came to undo everything that is wrong with our world as a result of sin and its curse. The truth uncovered is that life with Jesus is not a life with less delight, but infinitely more. Pray for spiritual strengthening. Pray that God continues to fill us all with his presence because if we have him, we have all the delight this life can offer. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* How might we treat prayer as a joke?
* Come up with three ways considering your posture while praying can help your prayer life.
* Explain the comfort to the statement: Prayer is not a conversation between equals.
* Compare the prayer requests made by the Apostle Paul with the ones you often make.
* Come up with two ways remembering the dimensions of God’s love for us will help you better live as a Christian this week?
* “Prayer is one of the actions of a Christian that shows the amount of delight that comes from God.” Formulate a comparison that explains that statement.