

Trinity 9, Sunday 28 July, 2024

Ephesians 3. 14 - end

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Rooted and grounded in love (Eph 3) *May I speak in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen*

How has your week been? How is next week looking? You may remember from our sermons on Ephesians that Paul is writing from prison (not a good place to be) and writing to encourage a church under pressure.

These are Paul's last words, final, important things. If you have read it (about 20mins) you will see that Paul reminds them of their spiritual promises in God - but also gives them practical tips for Christian living.

In Ch1, he called them blessed; they have the Holy Spirit; power for living, the power that raised Jesus. In Ch2, Alison highlighted Paul's revolutionary message: *Christ is our peace, Christ is our cornerstone.*

Now in Ch3, Paul continues to reinforce their **identity** in Christ, and in later chapters, practical advice for living: *to make every effort* for unity v4:3, to develop spiritual minds v23, to talk truthfully v29.

So Ephesians is has spiritual truths & practical advice. Today's verses provide a foundation for this new way of living. In 3:17 we read: '*may Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, **rooted and grounded in love***'.

Love is the foundation upon which this early Church can secure its life and its future. *If there is one thing I want you to hear today* it is that *you are loved by God*. And by being **rooted and grounded** in God's love, you can face not only next week, but the future.

Paul talks of 3 ways we can be **rooted and grounded** in God's love.

First, being rooted and grounded in your emotions

In my day job I line-manage 2 people, we meet monthly to ask 3 questions: *how are you?; what are you doing?; and what do you need from me?* I've used these Q's for years and I've noticed some people don't know how to answer Q1, while others don't know how to stop! For me *it's less about what you do, but how you are doing*, in yourself, in your inner being.

Paul says v16 *'I pray that you may be strengthened in **your inner being**, with power through his Spirit, that Christ may **dwell in your hearts through faith, rooted and grounded in love.***

This is deep stuff - your inner being; your heart; the centre of your being. The real you, the emotional you, *who you are when you are alone*. It is about God's Spirit reaching into your inner 'emotional' self to ensure it is rooted and grounded in God's love.

John Wesley talked of his *heart strangely warmed* by God's Spirit. Some say you shouldn't get emotional in Church, but that would be like leaving part of you at the door. I say, do get emotional, answer the question: *how are **you** doing?* And receive Paul's prayer for you to be **rooted and grounded emotionally** in God's love.

So a first way Paul says we should be rooted and grounded in love, is emotionally, in our inner beings.

A 2nd way Paul says we should be rooted and grounded in God's love, is in our minds *I pray you have the power to **comprehend**, with all the saints, the breadth and length and height and depth, and to **know** the love of Christ that surpasses **knowledge**. V18*

Time to think is an expression we use when facing new challenges. I need '*time to think*', when people want immediate answers. Others talk before thinking. One of my teachers had this advice written on his blackboard: '*engage brain before opening your mouth*'.

Paul and most leaders recommend *thinking* about faith. As you should not leave your emotions at the door, you should not leave your mind either. Thinking about faith is what we do when we practice a daily quiet time, when we read the Bible, or reflect on the breadth, depth, length and height of God's love.

If being **rooted and grounded** in love emotionally is personal, Paul hints that being **rooted and grounded** in our minds, is corporate, something we do together. He prays that you will have the power to comprehend, *with all the saints*. This echoes v10 '*through **the Church**, the wisdom of God in its rich variety is made known*'.

Faithful thinking less a solo affair - and when we do it together, the wisdom of God in its rich variety is made known. Have you ever been in a Bible study with others when someone says something (often not the leader) that is a revelation, a real insight, and encouragement.

*So a 2nd way Paul says we should be **rooted and grounded** in love, is intellectually, in your mind.*

A 3rd way Paul says we should be rooted and grounded in love, is imaginatively.

Remember this is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. He is in prison, and they are under pressure – constrained in many ways but not contained – not in their emotions, not in their minds - and not in their imaginations.

Paul teasingly says (v19) *'to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**'*. *Filled with all the fullness of God.*

Imagine if I were able to pray that prayer for you – well I can – you can pray it for me. *God, fill Graham with your fullness.* Yes, please!

Paul continues: *'now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church'*.

So if we are not to leave our emotions at the door, and not to leave our minds either, Paul is urging them and us not to leave our imaginations at the Church door either. He reminds them of *'him who is able to do much more than all we can ask or imagine'*?

So my question to you is how imaginative are you? for yourself? for this Church? for our children, for our music, for our community – what are you imagining and what are you asking God for.

*So a 3rd way we can be **rooted and grounded** in God's love, is imaginatively, in our creativity.*

In conclusion

As I said at the beginning – if there is one thing I want you to take from this sermon – it is Paul’s prayer for us *to be **rooted and grounded** in God’s love*. This is not the same as God loves you, *which is true*, but more our response to God’s love – a conscious decision to be **rooted and grounded** in God’s love.

We saw how this can be done emotionally – by allowing our emotions, our deepest selves to be shaped by God’s love. Allowing God to shape our hopes and fears.

We saw how being **rooted and grounded** *intellectually* allows us not only to understand the *depth, height, width and breadth of God’s love* – but as we do this together, to see *the wisdom of God in its rich variety* made known.

Finally, we saw how allowing God’s love to take root in on our imagination and creatively we can transform our lives and communities in new ways. By letting God’s love shape us *emotionally, intellectually and imaginatively* – we can literally change our worlds.

Please know that you are loved by God today – and as Paul prays for the Ephesians - I pray for you - that your life next week is **rooted and grounded** in God’s love - *emotionally, intellectually and imaginatively*.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.