

When Glory Fills the House

Blueprint: God's Design for the Church

Ephesians 3:14-21

I appreciate you being here this morning on this first day of a brand new week. Wasn't it good to get up early this morning and just wait for church to start? I don't know about you but it seems like it took forever to get here. Praise the Lord for technology! Do you remember when we used to have to get up at 2:00 in the morning and set our clock back to 1:00 so that we wouldn't miss church on Sunday morning? Now we have electronic devices that just do that for us. I checked all of my electronic devices this morning to make sure they were all telling me the right time. Thank you so much for being here. We've got a couple of 10:40 service people that are here at 9:15 because they said they just couldn't wait any longer to be at church, so they are not actually guests, they are just part of our family that normally eats at 10:40. What a week it has been! You realize that this week marked the five hundredth anniversary of the reformation. On October 31st, 1517, Martin Luther went to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and nailed his ninety-five grievances against the Church, just hoping that the next morning, All Saint' Day, when all the saints attended church that he would get an audience and with the church leaders, he could discuss the state of the Church. You and I know that never happened. Wow. Martin Luther is known for a lot of things, but perhaps the greatest thing he ever did was while he was being hunted, he hid in a castle, and he actually took the Bible and translated it into the language of the German people. Thus, a reformation was started. What some people don't realize about Martin Luther is that he was not only a great scholar, a great theologian, he was a great man of faith, and he was a great man of prayer. One of my favorite stories about Martin Luther was the year 1540 when he got word from one of his best friends, Fredrich Myconius. He got a short letter from him because Fredrich was on his deathbed. He hadn't

eat, nor drank, for days because he couldn't. He was about ready to die and knew he was going to go meet Jesus, and he wanted to send one final farewell letter to his brother. So Martin received that letter and he immediately fell on his knees and began to pray, and then he sent a message in word of his prayer to Fredrich. Here is what he said to Fredrich: "I command you in the name of God to live because I still need your help in reforming the church. The Lord will never let me hear of your death, but will permit you to survive me. For this, I am praying. This is my will and may my will be done because I am only seeking God's glory." Wow. How would you like to be on your deathbed and get a letter like that from a man of the stature of Martin Luther? I don't know if you know the rest of the story, but Fredrich, upon hearing that prayer, drank his first sip of water in days, and he began to eat. He lived six more years. He died two months after Martin Luther died. I hope you believe in prayer.

Please stand out of reverence for God's Word as we read another prayer this morning, one not penned by Martin Luther to his friend, Fredrich, but a prayer penned by the Apostle Paul for the church at Ephesus. What is neat about this is this prayer he prayed was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, and God had a greater audience than just the audience at Ephesus, for He knew this prayer would be taken, written down, and recorded in His written Word. So I just believe this is a prayer prayed not only for the church at Ephesus, but it was actually a prayer that was prayed by Paul under the leadership of the Holy Spirit for the entire church of God, which includes Hardin Baptist. I really believe with all of my heart, after saturating myself this week in this prayer, that God is going to answer it this morning in many, many people's lives here at Hardin Baptist Church. If you haven't had a prayer answered in a while, get ready. You are getting ready to have one answered this morning in your life. Listen to what the Word of God says in Ephesians 3:14-21.

Scripture

" For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may

dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength 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, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

(Prayer)

Father, one more time, we ask for a fresh anointing of Your Spirit, Your presence in our lives this morning. Father, I don't know how it was everywhere else, but on the front row where I was sitting, it was evident You are here. I just sensed Your presence all around. Father, what a joy it was to follow this worship team and just take songs and give them back to You as acts of worship. Father, to now sit, be able to take notes, physically, mentally, spiritually, we are excited to know there has been a prayer prayed for us a long, long time ago. Father, Your Word is just as alive today as it was when Paul penned it. Thank you Father for the church at Ephesus. Thank You that You being You from Your eternal perspective could know there was another church in Hardin, KY that was in need of this prayer too. Thank You Father for our study of Ephesians. We submit ourselves now to the leadership of Your Spirit to speak and to hear, and above all, to not be a speaker only or a hearer only, but a doer of Your Word. Father, I'm going to trust now, because we talked about this a long time ago, since you called me to do this and I didn't volunteer to do this, I surrendered to do this, but I'm sure glad You called me now, but You have never forsaken me when I stood before Your people with my heart's desire was to do what You wanted to do and just deliver Your Word to them. Father, You know that to be my heart this morning, so don't let this be the Sunday that You let this church see what Ricky would be like in the flesh, but please Father, one more time, just let take place what only You can let take place, and that is that anointing that takes place between a pastor and his people, and how You translate it and You make it meet each and

every need that is here this morning. I stand so amazed at that Father. In Your precious Son's name, I preach now with confidence, amen.

"For this reason..." We know that Paul is fixing to pray because after he finished doing what he did in chapter 1, telling us about what God has done for us as the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit, based on that truth, he offered a prayer of enlightenment for our eyes to be opened. Then once again, he dove right into theology, telling us how God had set us free from sin, how He was working in our life, how we are actually a trophy of His grace, how He is taking us as believer bricks, and He is building us together because He is building a new temple where His Holy Spirit is going to live. Then immediately in chapter 3:1, Paul begins to pray and says again, "For this reason," yet he never prays. Now pastors and scholars who study the Bible on a regular basis believe he really meant to pray this prayer in verse 2, but he got distracted. He remembered something else he wanted to tell the Ephesian church before he actually broke out into praying for them. I don't know about you, but that brings me great comfort. Has there ever been a time when you started to pray, thought of something else and couldn't pray, and then felt bad because you got distracted? Guess what...we're in good company. Paul did that too. Now what he's going to do is pray a prayer, not for enlightenment, but a prayer for enablement. But you've got to see this. 'For this reason' ties verse 14 of chapter 3 back to chapter 2, and reminds us of what God is doing. God is building a temple, a new temple. When I studied chapter 2, I couldn't help think about the first temple God allowed His people to build. It was a tabernacle and it was built by Moses. Do you remember when they got all the skins hung and they got the last piece in? The glory cloud of God filled the tabernacle, and that cloud that had led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, through the wilderness to Mount Sanai, when it took residence in the house of God, it was such a holy moment that everybody fled the tabernacle. Years later the children of Israel finally got to the Promise Land and God allowed them to build a permanent house for Him, not of skins, but of stone. As David started that project and Solomon finished the project, you'll remember

when the last stone was laid and last piece of furniture was placed from the tabernacle into that temple of Solomon, again, the glory cloud filled the temple. When it filled the temple, the people ran. Now we have God building a new temple, a temple where His presence is going to live. When His presence takes up residence in this temple, instead of people running from the presence of God, people actually run to the presence of God. What Paul is trying to tell the Ephesian church is the presence of the Holy Spirit is the flag God flies to let people know He is in His house. Now he is praying, specifically for these believer bricks that they be filled with the glory of God. So what we will study this morning and next Sunday morning is a prayer. I've had a lot of time this week because I've been on the couch a lot more than usual. I've read this and reread this, and tried to the best of my ability, but I've read it with a cold. So if this isn't good, it is the cold's fault, not mine. Sometimes when you have a cold, you just don't think straight, but I want us to not lose sight of that Paul is praying a prayer, and as I see this, there are three points to Paul's prayer, three aspects in verses 14-16.

1. The base of Paul's prayer
2. The point of Paul's prayer
3. The goal of Paul's prayer

There will be a base to his prayer, there will be a point to it, and then ultimately you will see the goal of why he is prayer this prayer for the Ephesian church. Now let's dig in.

The Base

Paul says for this reason, since God is building this new temple; and I know this is hard in our society because we live in a country now where many people believe there should be walls of separation, let's just get that out; God says I'm actually building a society where there are no walls. There aren't any walls to separate racists, genders, or socio-economic classes of people. This society that I'm building is a temple, a temple where Jews and Gentiles will no longer look at each other as they used to look at each other, but they will know that middle wall of division that had separated them their whole lifetimes has been done away with because on a cross,

my Son died for all. He says for this reason, because God wants His glory to be known, I'm going to bow my knees to the Father from whom every family member is named, whether they are in Heaven or still on the Earth. He is talking about the church in its entirety here. You realize that in the Jewish world most Jews stood when they prayed. They stood out of reverence to God, and they lifted up their hands to Him. Other times the Bible tells us about men who were so concerned about the things of God that they would go into God's presence and would actually sit down and begin to pray to God. We know of examples like Jesus where in the Garden of Gethsemane He got so overwhelmed by the circumstances that faced Him that He fell on His face and began to pour His heart out to God. Yet here is Paul, not standing, not sitting, not lying on his face, but bending the knee before God. Now you see Paul, right. This great apostle of the Lord is actually submitting himself to God wanting God's will to be done in prayer. The first thing he tells us is the base by which he's praying. He says I am bowing my knee that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant to you, whoa. Did everybody get that? What Paul is fixing to ask God for is going to be a gift to us, and the gift is going to come according to the riches of His glory. This is important. Sometimes as a pastor, I get to raise money for certain things that the Lord is leading us to do and sometimes I get to personally call people up and ask if they will give to this. I want to be totally honest with you, most of the time when I call people I just say would you give a gift out of what you have. Therefore, a person is totally free to give whatever they want to give. Does that make sense? So if a guy has got a million dollars and he wants to give me ten dollars, he gave out of his wealth. Notice Paul isn't praying for God to grant us this gift out of the riches of His glory, but the base of his prayer is according to the riches of His glory. Did you catch that? Get this picture. I approach Scott and I know Scott's net assets, I know Scott is worth a lot of money. So when I call Scott and say I don't want you to give out of your wealth, I want you to give according to your wealth, do you see the difference? I'm not asking Scott to just give out of what he's got, I'm asking Scott to reflect on your wealth and give in a way that what you give reflects how rich you are. I'm going to get a big check from Scott, amen! Yes! Do you hear this? The basis of Paul's prayer is the riches of God's

glory. Paul is praying for you and I, that this gift that we receive will reflect the riches of who God is. You had better get ready; we're not getting nickels and dimes, quarters and dollars. We're getting something really, really life changing. We're getting ready to get a gift that's going to reflect the riches of His glory, and you know then in the Bible, the glory is always used to talk about the manifested presence of God.

Can I take you back to Ephesians 1 quickly? Do you remember when we saw the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit? At the end of each of those works, Paul said this was to the praise of His glory. So now, here is what Paul is praying. He is praying out of that base of the riches of God's glory, so he's praying to the God expecting Him to answer in a way that reflects who He is. This is the God who chose you before Christ, in Christ before the foundation of the world. This is the God who in love predestined you to be adopted into the family. This is the God who redeemed you and forgave you through the sacrifice of His Son on a cross. This is the God who sealed you with the presence of His Holy Spirit. This is the God who is taking you as a believer brick and melding you into a temple of His where He is going to display His glory in you and in us. Wow!

The Point

Now what's the point? What's the point of this prayer? What's the point of this gift? It's going to reflect on who God is. It's that we would be strengthened with power through His Spirit in our inner being. Whoa. Can I just cut to the chase? Here's what Paul is praying for the church...that they grow up. How are you doing? The Bible presents the Christian life like starting out as a little baby. We actually can't feed ourselves; we need somebody else to feed us. Some of us get so used to being fed that Paul had to write to the church at times and say I'm still having to feed you like a little baby. You can't even eat bologna yet, much less filet mignon. See, he wants them to go from being a baby, an infant, to a teenager, to a young adult, to one day being a spiritual father, a spiritual mother in Christ. Paul prayed for you to grow up. Are you growing up? Why does Paul want the church to grow up? It is because he knows in being the believer brick that we're supposed to be in the temple. We cannot be the

person we're supposed to be and the church can't be who they are supposed to be if we're a spiritual weakling. I know I have to be careful because we live in a politically correct society, but some of us have got to quit being a spiritual wimp. Get some muscle, get some meat on our skeleton, spiritually. Notice where this is taking place; it is taking place in my inner being. Paul was praying for me to be strengthened physically in my outer being; I get it. I need to go to the gym. I need to get Celisa to let me buy some more workout equipment at home. Do some more bench presses, some more bicep curls, do some more squats. Notice that he isn't worried about the outer man; he is worried about the inner man. Can I just ask you this question? When you stand in front of mirror and you flex your muscles, inwardly, what do you see? We know how consumed we are with eating, growing, and being strong. As a matter of fact, we are so tickled Kory and Katie is in Nicaragua, as grandparents. That means we have three boys this whole week. Do you know what we've learned in our household? We've learned that we have to motivate our boys to eat. I don't know why they just don't come to the table motivated to eat. They are distracted. So one of the motivations we do at our house all the time is when one of the boys aren't eating, we'll look at the boys and I'll say, "Boys, don't you want to grow up and be big and strong like Papaw?" Of course, you know what that does, right. That just causes them to clean their plate, ask for seconds, and want more. I've got some boys that, (I don't know why they think this) want to wrestle Papaw. As a matter of fact, they don't know this, but Memish no longer lets us wrestle in the house. She has this excuse that there is not any room in the house that's big enough now for all three boys to wrestle with Papaw. But what Memish is really trying to do is save the honor of her boys. Those boys want to wrestle Papaw and they think they can't whip Papaw, but they can't whip Papaw. You and I know they can't, and we also know that when they finally get old enough to whip Papaw, they won't want to whip Papaw.

You realize that Paul will tell us at the end of this letter that there is someone who wants to wrestle with you, and it is rulers in heavenly places, rulers who rule over spiritual darkness. They want to wrestle with you. So what Paul is telling us in the early part of this letter, where he's interrupting his doctrinal discourse to pray for us, is that he wants God to

grant to us the ability to get spiritually strong in our inner man. Why? So that ultimately, you can be who you're supposed to be. How many of you claim Hardin as your church, even if you aren't members, but you claim Hardin? I don't know if this has dawned on you yet, but we will never be who we're supposed to be until you are who you're supposed to be. Are you who you're supposed to be? Satan is going to wrestle against this church, and he isn't just wrestling against the pastor, the Sunday school teacher, or the deacons; he's wrestling against every one of us. So Paul is praying that we grow up and we get strong in our inner being! You and I know that in places in the New Testament, Paul spoke of us believers as a trichotomous being, body, soul, spirit, but many times he just combined spirit and soul and called us a dichotomous being, outer and inner. Do you remember that famous passage in 2 Corinthians where he's talking about the outer man perishing? Some of you don't realize that yet, but trust me, when you get my age, you know the outer man is perishing. I feel terrible to tell you, I was down three days this week, not because of cancer, not because of a heart attack, but a head cold. Are you kidding me? There's no way a head cold could ever taken me out in my younger days, but this old man, he's perishing. You ought to see me try to bend over and pick something up now. Can I say this to you? Every day that I realize this older man is perishing and getting weaker and weaker and is decaying, I'm telling you the inner man inside me, I don't know that I've ever been as strong as I am today. You don't just need to hear your pastor say that, we need to hear every person in this church say that who calls this church their church. That's what Paul is praying for, that we be granted this gift to be strengthened in our inner man, our soul/spirit, through His Spirit, not through hitting the gym, but through walking with God and His Spirit. When you hang with Him for a lifetime, the next thing you know you are no longer a spiritual baby, you're no longer a teenager, and suddenly you become a spiritual father or spiritual mother. The next thing you know, you realize and you look back and you go, "You know, if what was happening to me now happened to me twenty years ago, I wouldn't have made it, but I can make it today because for the first time in my life, I am strong."

Now let me just give you a test. We've got some guys in this service who lifts weights, and if we were to go down to the gym, we could easily do the

bench press and determine what we could lift, but generally, you lift until you can't lift. If I can do 220 (not that I can), I am going to fail at 225 in order to know I can lift 220. Let me just ask you this question. Spiritually, what fails you? The same thing that failed you thirty years ago? The same thing that failed you twenty years ago? The same thing that failed you ten years ago? Are you kidding me? You're still letting that defeat you? Can I be nice? You spiritual wimp! What are you doing? The next time you fail spiritually, God is letting you know just what spiritual strength you really have. Set that as a mark that next year I am not going to be where I am this morning. I need an amen.

Now, it's through the Spirit. We were designed to operate under the influence of the Spirit. If you were to come home with me and I took you down to the shop, we have some tools that were designed to work by hand, we have some tools that were designed to work by electricity, we have some tools that were designed to work off battery, and we have some tools that are designed to work off air. As a matter of fact, on the farm we call them air wrenches. Sometimes, when the hand wrench won't work, and the batter wrench won't work, we get the air wrench out. We plug in the big compressor, and it has a big air tank on it. A few years ago, I was doing some research and I ran across the first tires, when the tires went from solid rubber tires to tires that have air in them. If I can be honest with you, I was shocked when I read the advertisement. Do you know what they were advertising? Pneumatic tires. Do any of you go to town to buy a tire and ask for a tire with air in it? No, air just comes with the tire. But in the beginning days, no, you had solid tires or you had these new tires that had air put in them, and they were called pneumatic tires. It revolutionized travel. Can I say this? You were designed to run on air because the same word for air is the same word for Spirit. God called us to be pneumatic bricks, pneumatic believers, pneumatic Christians. Our strength does not come from ourselves; our strength comes from the Holy Spirit of God releasing Himself in us in our daily lives. Tell me you've got it. That's what Paul is praying for.

The Goal

Now, I've got two minutes to just touch this, "...so that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength 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, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." That is the goal. The basis of Paul's prayer is the riches of His glory. The point of Paul's prayer is that we might be spiritually strengthened in our inner man as we have a relationship with God's Holy Spirit. But what's the goal of his prayer? It is that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith. I want to be clear here; I do not like to use the terminology to sinners of receiving Jesus in your heart. I'm not telling you that if you received Jesus in your heart, you didn't get saved. But I like us to teach salvation from the perspective that salvation comes to a person when they repent of being a sinner and put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. When you hear Paul pray that we receive Christ, that Christ dwell in our hearts through faith, he's not talking about sinners; he is talking about Christians. Did you hear that? The moment you repent of sin, put your faith, and trust in Jesus Christ, Christ moves into you. Here is what Paul is praying. He is praying that you don't make Him a guest in your heart, but you let Him be resident in your heart. Does everybody get that? You're looking at me kind of confused...are you with me here? I want to submit that too many of us have made Jesus the guest in our home instead of the resident in our home.

This word, dwell, is an intensive word for dwell. It's got a preposition added on it that intensifies it, and it means you let Christ make Himself at home in your heart. Now, 'heart' was not the seat of emotions in the biblical world. The seat of emotions was the gut, the bowels. So if we had been young men in that society and we fell in love with a young girl and wanted to show her our feelings, we wouldn't say I love you with all of my heart. We would say I love you with all of my small intestines. ☺ Then if it got really serious and we really wanted to show how much we loved her, we would pull out the biggie--I love you with my large intestines. Let's not make fun of that; how many of you have ever had a 'gut feeling' and you followed your gut feeling? It came from way down here, didn't it? In the

biblical world, the heart was the seat of the personality; it was the seat of the will. The Bible is saying to let Christ make Himself at home in your heart where you make all your decisions.

Whoa! Let's just get this picture. Let's just imagine our heart as a home. I've said many times that you never want to say to me to make yourself at home if I come to your house because if you say that to me, I'm going to make myself at home and you won't like the results. I'm just going to be honest with you. So, I say to Christ, "Christ, make Yourself at home in my heart." That's what Paul is praying for us as a believer. Now, can I tell you the first place He is going in my house? He's going to my bookshelf and my magazine rack and He will check out what I'm reading. There's probably going to be some stuff there that He doesn't approve of, not that it's sinful, but it's just a distraction. He's going to replace that with better reading material than what I've been reading because Christ understands the mind controls the body. Does that make sense at all to anybody in here? Do you know where He's going next? He's going to the kitchen, the dining room, and He will see what my desires are, what I'm really hungry for. He's probably going to rearrange some things in my life and let me know that I don't really need to be pursuing this, but I need to be pursuing that. He will bring me more in line with a spiritual diet. Then, if I really let Him make Himself at home in my heart, He is going to the living room. If I can be totally honest with you, I don't use the living room the way it is supposed to be used. As a matter of fact, last week I got my heart broke when I came home. Celisa was in the living room and I was doing something and she said, "Hon, sit down." I said, "I can't." I had things I had to do. Do you know what she had to do? She had to make my sit down. Do you know what I did? I sat down and discovered her afresh. Do you know what I think some of you have done? I think some of you have let Jesus Christ live in your living room, but you never go into the living room. Honestly, when is the last time you stopped what you were doing and really fellowshiped with Jesus, just for the sake of fellowshiping with Jesus? Christ is going to let some of us know we are way too busy. Can I be totally honest with you? He's going to the bathroom. Yeah, and He's going to pull the drain in some of our sinks. I don't want to be crude here, but He's going to push that little handle on the commode and He's going to flush some stuff.

Because here is what He knows, there are many of us who say we have forgiven, and we haven't. Oh yes, we say we have, but we've never flushed it, we've never let it get out of our sight, and we've never let it go where it really ought to go, and that is out in the sewer system. Do you know what I'm talking about? Have you ever taken that bath and when you got out, you realized how dirty you were because you saw all the film. Be honest. What did you have to do? You had to clean the bathtub, right. Why won't we do that? Why do we keep living in what happened to us twenty, fifteen, ten, five, and a year ago? It is stinking up your life! Now, if you're a bachelor, go for it. Bachelor pads usually stink. You used to be a bachelor, a sinner, on your own, selfish; it was all about you. Decorate the place anyway you want to, but when you accepted Christ, you married Him, and He wants to rearrange your home. He wants to rearrange your life, and He is going to the closet. Yeah, you know what's in your closet. Nobody knows but you. He's going to the closet and He is going to clean the closet, and that's why so many of us let Him into the foyer and we have Him trapped there and we think we're safe. We feel good. He's in the foyer, and we've got the other rooms of our heart blocked off.

Here's what I'm going to ask you to do this morning. Would you reach into your pocket and pull out the key to the closet, the key to the bathroom, the key to the living room, the key to the dining room, the key to your library, and the key is faith. It is faith. Quit living in fear and quit living in doubt, and finally give Him control of your heart. Do you know what He desires for you? He desires for you to be who you're supposed to be so that we can be who you're supposed to be. Until you become who you're supposed to be, we'll never be who we're supposed to be. I can only say this if you're a Christian, so if you're a Christian, you had better figure this out real quick; life is not about you. It is about Him, and it's about us.