

**Paul explains how the Holy Spirit reveals the immensity of God's love when we give our hearts to Jesus**

Paul's prayer for the Ephesus church has submission, praise and adoration, vv.14-15 and 20-21 to sandwich his three appeals, vv.16-19. A good pattern for our prayer.

14-15 For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

*"I kneel" – most people stood to pray.*

*"Father... family" – related words in Greek where God is Father to angelic beings "in heaven" and also humanity "on earth".*

16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...

*"Inner being... hearts" – the same thing, centre of moral being and consciousness. Not the same as the "new self" Eph. 4:24 or "new creation" 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, but related.*

*"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" – or 'make His home in your*

**IN PRACTICE** This is one of the key Bible passages that explains the new birth and new awareness of God that comes through our conversion from a religious knowledge of God, to a heart-changing personal relationship in which God becomes real to us as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit. What is difficult to explain in words becomes disarmingly straightforward in experience, as we ask Christ to take up residence in our hearts. The power of the Holy Spirit is God's gift to those who are truly His, to live for Him and to become aware of the extent of His love which touches everyone and everything. With the Holy Spirit's eyes, we begin to see where heaven connected with earth, where we thought they were quite separate.

**QUESTION** *Is "being strengthened with power in your inner being" your aspiration, your story, or your ongoing experience of growing in faith and Christlikeness?*

**PRAYER** Lord, I realise that man's power corrupts but Your power provides and reveals and releases love. I am sorry for the times I have relied on my influence or ability, instead of turning to You. Help me to know You better, and trust You more as I grow in awareness of Your Holy Spirit in my life and world. Amen.

*hearts...' (NLT). What happens at conversion, an act of our will in which we invite Christ, by His Spirit, to come into our hearts. It is a decision and an event, but also as Paul sets out here, an ongoing process of growing in spiritual maturity.*

**For further study**, read also John 3:1-21 esp. vv. 5-8 and 14-17.

18-19 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

*Paul prays for his Ephesian friends to have spiritual power and revelation, Christlike sacrificial love, together with spiritual maturity, to show what God is like to others.*

20-21 Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

*God is glorified in Christ, whose sacrificial death brought the church into existence. God is glorified in the Church as it shows His power and compassion.*

# The Living Word

www.thelivingword.uk PRINT EDITION

The Bible readings for Sunday, July 29, 2018 with commentary notes

Church calendar readings for **Sunday, July 29**, in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – or read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

**Theme: Three sources of power, one bad and two good**

2 Samuel 11:1-15 – Folly: power from position

John 6:1-21 – Provision: power that comes by faith

Ephesians 3:14-21 – Revelation: the power of the Holy Spirit

## 2 Samuel 11:1-15 » Folly – power from position

### David falls into the trap of following his lust rather than God's word and order

*The story of David's multifaceted, serious sin: coveting another man's wife, adultery, cover-up and deceit and constructive murder – ultimately the sin of despising the word of the Lord, 2 Sam. 12:9-10. Later, 12:13, 16-17, David comes under conviction, admits his guilt and repents.*

1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

*"Rabbah" – in modern Amman. David is complacent in sending Joab to lead the army and take on the Ammonites.*

2-3 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

*"Beautiful" – it is rare for someone to be described this way in the Bible.*

*"From the roof" – a terraced structure several storeys high from this period has been excavated, on which perhaps David's palace was built to overlook the entire city.*

*"Eliam and... Uriah" – listed as among David's elite and most trusted warriors, 2 Samuel 23:34, 39.*

4-5 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

*This tells us that she could not have been pregnant already. We cannot tell how compliant she was in the adultery.*

6-7 So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.

*"David asked him" – a pretence. David would have received regular reports.*

*"Uriah" – meaning 'The Lord is my light'. He was from the kingdom to the north of*

Canaan, and had adopted the Israelite faith.

8-9 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. "Wash your feet" – go home and relax with your wife. Uriah understood what was implied, v.11.

10 David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

"Staying in tents" – the Ark was with the army to seek guidance in the war. This makes David's

dereliction, contrasted with Uriah's sense of duty, all the more damning.

"Such a thing" - to have had sexual relations would have gone against the rule of abstinence when on duty, 1 Samuel 21:5, Exodus 19:15.

12-13 Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

14-15 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

David failed to make it appear that Uriah was the father of Bathsheba's child, and plots Uriah's death so he could marry Bathsheba quickly and disguise his sin.

**IN PRACTICE** The story this week is about right and wrong sources of power, and it starts with an embarrassing human failure by a popular figurehead. Perhaps this highlights the danger of success. When we think 'we can do it', we are already moving away from trusting and obeying God. David's success had also given him a lot of power - if he sent for someone, they came, and he could do what he liked. Or so he thought. This was David's most serious mistake, and also his most profound lesson, in which he discovered another power - the power of repentance, and the power of God's love shown in undeserved forgiveness and grace.

**QUESTION** What do you take for granted, as being your area of decision in life, and how is God challenging that for you?

**John 6:1-15** » Provision – power that comes by faith

**Jesus tests His disciples, facing an immense crowd with nothing to eat**

1-4 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the signs He had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside

and sat down with His disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

"Some time after" – six months or more after the end of chapter 5. Jesus and His disciples have proclaimed the Good News throughout Galilee. Herod, having killed John the Baptist, is after them. They move their pitch.

"Far shore" – north-east shore, probably near

Philip's home area of Bethsaida, Luke 9:10.

"Jewish Passover...near" – tells us there were pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem in the crowd. The Passover remembrance gives deeper meaning to what happens next. At the first Passover they entered the desert relying on God for food and water, Exodus 15:22-16:3.

5-6 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do.

Jesus tests Philip's faith. The more we get to know the Lord, the more we understand His purpose for us: growing our faith.

7 Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

"Half a year's wages" – literally 200 denarii. A denarius was a labourer's daily rate.

8-9 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

"Loaves" – small, coarse pitta breads for one meal.

10-11 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to

those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

"Five thousand" – with women and children the crowd would have been much greater.

"Distributed" – Luke's gospel account brings out the food multiplying in the hands of the disciples as they gave it out, Luke 9:13,16.

12-13 When they had all had enough to eat, He said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

"Wasted" – it was taught that waste was immoral, but at a gathering food left over showed generous provision.

"Twelve baskets" – may symbolise meeting the needs of the 12 tribes of Israel.

14-15 After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself.

"The prophet" – like Elijah, or like Moses, as foretold in Deut. 18:15. The crowd knew the stories of the needy widow's oil multiplying in 2 Kings 4, and the manna in Exodus 16.

"King by force" – the people wrongly thought the promised Messiah would be a political saviour of the nation like King David.

**IN PRACTICE** The disciples were looking at a stadium-sized crowd and no doubt there were children crying and others showing their need of something to eat. And they were completely powerless to provide anything! Later on (vv.16-21) they were rowing hard against the wind and seemed powerless to reach the far shore. This is a better place to start than King David, who could snap his fingers for action without seeking God at all. The boy's pickled pilchards and pitta bread became the 'gift that goes on giving' in the astonished disciples' hands. There are well-attested stories of multiplication that have happened in our time. It takes a stretch of faith - but nothing is impossible for God.

**QUESTION** Do you have a story, or know someone with a story, of a 'desperate prayer' that resulted in a lack being turned into more than enough?