

The Utmost Glorious Pastoral Prayer and Benediction!**Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21(vv. 20-21)****Facilitator: Rev. Alice Tamrie****I. Historical Background and Biblical Context**

This is a call to know God's plan. Historically and theologically, Paul has spent three years in Ephesus as a prisoner and clearly wants everyone to know what he knows. Clearly from what we have studied so far the city of Ephesus cherished his ministry among them. We also need to see his thinking here in the Book of Ephesians and historically we see it was written to folks that were estranged from the citizenship in the kingdom of God and he espouses without a doubt, that, for this purpose God has a **plan** that is inclusive for everyone. Thanks be to the gracious gift of God; everyone will enjoy the spiritual blessings that comes from Christ. This was dangerous because everybody is not going to like this. Did you know that everyone (regardless of race, creed, color, denomination, male/female, man, woman, boy, girl/church) are equal in the eyesight of God. 1 Cor. 3:16-17 affirms this: "Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy and you are that temple".

The Biblically context is saying to us all, "for this reason", God has a great **plan** for the church to be joined and unified as one. He is doing this through Paul, in prison, but as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, that through such rocks (i.e. disciples/preachers/teachers), saying (Mt. 16:17-18) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. That prison cell was the perfect place for him to hear the Lord. He has revealed it through Jesus Christ, the Father of our Lord and now Paul. It is now being revealed to us, which is a mystery, it is true and lasting as we are reconciled in the blood to become a holy temple; it is the hidden mystery being gloriously revealed to us today.

We, as believers-as God's people, are experiencing this in the deepest and richest experience of God's presence in the utmost glorious personal, pastoral, prayerful way. In essence, God Himself is carrying out His

purposeful and meaningful plan in a power that is more glorious and superabundantly more than our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams. It is at work in us all, see it for what it is – a power that has been revealed in Christ Jesus, and as his heirs, he has filled us with His Spirit. For this reason, and now to Him who is able to carry out His purpose. What a doxology!

Oh, how privileged we are to hear this being revealed with all the attacks upon all of us trying to live a godly life and be filled with his Spirit (physical/mental/social/emotions/spiritual) and all the projects he has assigned to us all, this revelation is astounding! God got you/us! O, glory be to God, his church and in Christ Jesus. We would not know this if it wasn't for the church and growing in the revelations that He fills us with - prayers, hopes, dreams according to His power that is at work within us. Amen.

II. The Lesson: “The Utmost Glorious Pastoral Prayer and Benediction!” Ephesians 3:14-21(vv.20-21)

1. vv. 14. For this reason, I kneel before the Father.

This is a prolonged prayer Paul is praying to us. Repeatedly, we see “for this reason” (1:15; 3:1) reminding us that God/His plan is for every knee to bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! We must kneel before the Father. For us to grasp how holy and reverential our God is, we must grasp the greatness of this plan He has for us to be joined together in Christ. We must bow, as He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other we must bow down to. The plan is for a godly lifestyle in the plan of God as this is a prayer given to us displaying how Paul's mission even as he is literally in prison and is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He is bound to enlighten everyone about this mystery of God's grace in Christ, which was not revealed and understood in previous times but now it is clear in Christ Jesus. The secret is out! What is your response-- to get down on your knees before the Father! He made the heavens and the earth (Job 38-42). God has a good **plan** laid out for each of us long before we made our appearance on this earth (Psalm 139).

“It is for this reason”—Jeremiah 29:11: “For I now the **plans** and thoughts that I have for you;” says the Lord, ‘**plans** for peace and well-being and not

for disaster/failure to give you a future and a hope.” In John 10:10: “The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life and have it more abundantly/overflows. In 3 John 2: “beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed and prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers spiritually.”

He has **plans** for us, good **plans**, we must be firmly committed and devoted to understanding this. God is on our side, the Bible says so! God has a formable enemy that tells you otherwise, anything that is negative, disputable, and confusing. God’s got us! Every family on earth belongs to God the Father, the Creator. “It is for this reason” that there is something we need to really grasp that he has a **plan**. For this reason, we see it like no other time, but now we are privileged to know about the mystery revelation that is for everyone, the whole world, so bowing at this knowledge is significant. Some willingly bow in the presence of God, and we should do this, but all will be forced to do it in due time.

2. vv. 15. The God from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” We have learned as we have matured and know that in an overview, he has blessed, chosen, predestinated, made acceptable, redeemed, abounded toward, made know, and given to us an inheritance and sealed in Christ. Since he made us all, his whole family (believers) in heaven and on earth must bow on our knees, must; in reverence before Him. This is the **plan** that is chosen for all believers, not the individual conformity of any one personal plan. **His plan is our plan**. Standing was the most normal posture, but bowing is the familiar custom of Christians. It symbolizes submissiveness, solemnity and adoration. Being in the presence of God is a face-to-face preposition applicable to an intimate relationship. What we are doing is addressing God as Father through Christ as an act of access is only made possible through the Spirit. We are all to know him is the purpose God had since the beginning of time. So, the practice of bowing down or bending the knee, a more pronounced posture is prostration, the practice of falling upon the knees, gradually inclining the body, and touching the

forehead to the ground. In biblical terms, this is to convey an attitude of reverence, respect, humility, and homage toward others.

3. vv. 16-19. 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, may have power, together with all the saints, 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 the fullness of God.

Still praying, Paul continues with sturdy confident stance say “I pray” and affirms it with “may”-which is an auxiliary verb that gives us the ability, a sense of opportunity, a contingency of purpose, to be incorporated into the body of Christ and thus be strengthened by the fullness of the Holy Spirit, having the depth of the Spirit penetrate all making us a family...i.e. like the opening of a door and inviting him in. He ‘dwells’ in us settling in us is like being at home residing in a believer’s heart. As the heart is the focus of mind, feeling and will-the whole personality is likened to the deep roots in the soil of love. You are planted with both feet firmly on love. You beam so strongly you experience the width/length/height and deepness of God’s love; your life is full in the fullness of God! You experience his glory so wide, so high, so deep, so long!

4. vv. 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 with us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.!

This is **doxology** and **benediction** is like no other. Believe this, the power of the Holy Spirit can make you empowered, equipped to soar in the assigned plan He has for you. It becomes so deep enough to rescue people from degradation, despondency, depression and even from the grip of Satan himself. God can do anything, far more than you can imagine, guess, in your wildest dreams. Neither God’s love nor His power is limited by human imagination. **This, indeed, is the utmost glorious prayer and benediction! Amen!**