

Sermon Series: **Prayer Reformation** (This series is inspired by a message preached by Dr. D.A. Carson at Moody Pastors' Conference, Chicago, IL)

# For This Reason

Ephesians 3:14-21

## The love and grace of our Father...

Ruth Graham is the third of Billy and Ruth Bell Graham's five children...

Steve Brown: "Children will run from law and they'll run from grace. The ones who run from law rarely come back [to a system of legalism]. But the ones who run from grace always come back. Grace \_\_\_\_\_ its own back home." If you have or are running from grace, know that it's God the Father's grace that will draw you back home.

Even if you're at your rebellious worst, the Father loves you supremely and longs to welcome you home! I hope you know that it was His grace that drew or draws you home to Him. And out of love and grace, your Father says, "Welcome Home!"

And that's **the twofold reason** for this prayer. As we close out this **prayer reformation** series, bring into full remembrance **the reason** you are saved, what drew you home to your Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul writes in verse 14, "*For this reason* I bow my knees before the Father..." To discover the "reason" we have to go back in the context of the prayer and look at what he has already written. "For this reason" goes back in chapter 3 to verse 1, where he starts a sentence but doesn't finish it. "*For this reason* I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—" Paul doesn't finish his thought. Then in verses 2-13, he goes into this glorious digression into "the mystery of Christ." But, in verse 14, he picks up what he left hanging in verse 1. So to find out what is "this reason," we have to read chapters 1 and 2. And Ephesians 1 and 2 display the first reason he prays this prayer, namely...

## The twofold reason for this prayer:

### 1. God's Sovereign \_\_\_\_\_ (14).

**Ephesians 1:4-14**, in summary: "God the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, *so that* we would be holy and

blameless before Him. *In love* He adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...to the praise of the glory of *His grace*. And He redeemed us through His blood...according to the riches of *His grace*...and He sealed us in Him with the Holy Spirit.”

**Ephesians 2:1-5**, in summary: “We were dead our trespasses and sins... But God, being *rich in mercy*, because of *His great love* with which He loved us...[He] made us alive together with Christ! For *by grace* [the undeserved favor of God] you have been saved!” And He is saving, not just individuals, but He’s bringing together two irreconcilable people groups, the Jews and the Gentiles, and making the two *one*, transforming us into a one new humanity.

**Ephesians 2:14-22**: “Christ Himself is our peace, who made the two groups into one, and destroyed the wall of hostility that kept them apart, namely the Law, that He might make the two into one new man... So then, we non-Jews [Gentiles] are no longer strangers but are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole spiritual building is being fitted together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom we are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” And it was all by \_\_\_\_\_!

It’s in that context, in the next verse, **3:1**, “For this reason [because of such amazing, magnanimous grace!], I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—” Then he drops his thought and picks it up again in **3:14**, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...” And then you get the prayer.

**Verses 16-19**: Paul is praying in line with God’s sovereign will *because of His sovereign grace*. In understanding grace, you then pray in line with grace, and in line with the way grace works in us, His Church, in this vision of a vast unified family, under the Father, in Christ Jesus, according to His wonderful grace! That’s the passion of Paul’s praying here. “**For this reason [because of God’s grace]** I bow my knees and I pray...”

## **2. God’s Fatherhood \_\_\_\_\_ (14-15).**

In other words, God is the Father is the Father of all created humanity, both in heaven and on earth. And as the Father, He’s the ultimate

\_\_\_\_\_ Father. We often project our defective earthly fathers back on our perfectly loving heavenly Father. But that's not fair to God, and it's not how we should ever view Him. That's viewing God in reverse.

Begin with our ultimate model Father, not with our own fathers who are badly flawed by sin. Therefore, every valid concept and notion of fatherhood is first of all patterned after \_\_\_\_\_, the great Father of us all, especially those of us who belong to His household of faith. So if you have a godly father who loves you with depths too deep to plumb, know that his love is rooted in the limitless dimensions of the Father's love.

That's **the twofold reason** for this prayer. And it's like the front bookend of the prayer. The back bookend of the prayer is **the twofold doxology**. Because of the Father's grace that drew you home and His unconditional love that you couldn't shake, you have good cause to worship Him just as Paul did in this doxology.

## The twofold doxology of this prayer:

### 1. God's incomprehensible \_\_\_\_\_ (20).

**He is able** *because* for Almighty God with Almighty Power, there are \_\_\_\_\_ degrees of difficulty when our prayers are God-centered *and* taken in context. Question: What's the context of verse 20? Verses 16-19.

Do you believe that if we, through united prayer, seek the full knowledge of God's love, that it's possible for us to experience an outpouring of our Father's loving presence and power *so that* we are filled up with all of the fullness of God? It's possible for individuals and it's possible for an entire church. In olden days, it was called Revival.

### 2. God's ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ (21).

Has God become so central to all our thoughts, pursuits, and prayers for spiritual power, that we cannot imagine asking for anything without longing that the answer will bring Him nothing but \_\_\_\_\_? That's Paul's vision in this concluding word of worship.

Do you see it? This **reformation of our prayer lives** is all for the glory of God. These prayers for power are not so we will look good. But, as Elder

Dave Shelly says, they're so that God will look \_\_\_\_\_. We pray for power *so that* our lives are so full of comprehending His love and grace, that we will make Him look good! Here's our ultimate, profound God-centeredness in everything: "To God the Father be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

### **"Bend us, bend us, O Lord!"**

Like many great Revivals in the past, the great Welsh Revival of 1904-05 began in prayer. A preacher named Seth Joshua prayed in an evangelistic meeting, "Bend us, bend us, O Lord!" Many believe that this prayer gave birth to the Revival. For at that moment, a young man rolled off his seat into the aisle. An eyewitness of the Revival, David Matthews, writes, "Nothing seemed more certain but that he would die on the spot. Well, he did die spiritually. But he rose again in newness of life in Christ, to lead thousands through a similar experience."

The young man's name was Evan Roberts, who became a key figure *in* and the face *of* the Revival. That was the beginning of an outpouring of God's loving presence as suddenly the saved in Wales were totally revived and the lost were totally saved, drawn home by the love and grace of God the Father in Christ Jesus the Lord.

In the Welsh Revival, through prayer for power to be bent by God, He did far more abundantly beyond all that they could ask or think, according to the power working within them, for this ultimate purpose: to God the Father be the glory!