



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

January 6/7, 2018 - Andy Steiger

Rooted and Established in Love - (Ephesians 4:13-21)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

One of the privileges that I have as the young adults pastor is that I get to do a lot of weddings. Perhaps some of you have been at a wedding I've officiated, or perhaps I've officiate your wedding. I've had the privilege of officiating weddings now for sixteen years. I remember when I first became a pastor and began uniting couples together in marriage. I remember thinking, "what verse in the Bible am I going to go to?" "What passage am I going to talk about to encourage this couple, to guide and direct them in this important step of marriage?" I began to first think about that when my wife and I got married. I'll never forget it. I don't know if you remember the sermon your pastor preached when you were married, but I do. Okay, I'm at the front of the church, I'm holding Nancy's hands, and I'm looking, you know, dreamily into her eyes. As the pastor opens up his Bible he turns to the book of Psalms and he begins to read these words: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [laughter] I will fear no evil." [Laughter.] I am not kidding you, church, that is the passage that he preached from. I remember thinking to myself, "Does this man think it's a funeral?" You know, but I'm standing there and I'm looking at Nancy, and she is looking gorgeous in that dress, and I'm like, no no no, he knows it's a wedding. But then I'm thinking to myself, he chose that passage, and then I'm thinking, maybe this whole marriage thing is a lot tougher than I thought it was. [Laughter] Walking through the valley of the shadow of death, well, he had a reason for sharing that passage, and I'll explain it more later. But as I began to think about where am I going to direct young people to in marriage, I have for the last sixteen years, every wedding that I have done, I have prayed over them the same prayer, Ephesians 3:14-21. It's an incredible piece of Scripture.

We're in a sermon series right now called "Let's Pray," and I want to talk about that prayer that the apostle Paul prays over the church in Ephesus, and I want to share with you why that passage is so significant to me. I want to explain to you why I've chosen to pray that prayer over our young people, over our young marrieds, over our church, over and over again. So if you have your Bible, turn with me to the book of Ephesians. It's significant to know that there are six chapters in Ephesians, and here we are in chapter 3, and the apostle Paul stops everything. He drops to his knees and he begins to praise God with this prayer. As I read it, I'm going to read it all the way through, but what I'm going to do is I'm going to mention to you a specific aspect of this prayer that I think is the crux, that I think is the main idea, that we're going to discuss this morning. It's worth noting that verses 14-19, that's one sentence in the Greek. Then we'll read the ending there. Here's what the apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 3:14-21,



“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 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. [That verse 17, this is the key here, specifically this, when he says] And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 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. 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! [And the church said] Amen.”

Now that’s a prayer, right church? It’s a significant prayer. A prayer that the apostle Paul breaks and stops everything, drops to his knees and he says, “For this reason I praise, and I pray to my heavenly Father.” And as I was reflecting on that, you know, what is it that stops Paul in the middle of this letter and just drops to his knees, and says “it’s for this reason”. Paul has been talking in chapters 1, 2, and leading up to 3, the same thing over and over again. The apostle Paul is talking about the gospel. He’s talking about the fact that you and I have the privilege to call God with the intimate term of “father”, because we are his children, through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Your God loves you so much that he saved you. He rescued you. He sent his Son, who went willingly, and died for us. I want you to think about that for a moment. Listen, God loves us so much that Paul says in chapter 2 that he broke the dividing wall between us and God, the wall of hostility. And he says that Jesus Christ came, and he preached peace to you who were far off. God came to you and said, “Listen, I love you.” He seeks to be in relationship with you. He seeks to break down those barriers that are keeping you from God. But listen, church, he wants to do more than that. There’s a lot of us that have gone to church for years, and we’ve grown accustomed to hearing these ideas, that you and I have a personal relationship with God. And listen, that is significant, and it’s amazing, and in our prayer life it should lead us to dropping to our knees and just praising God for the glorious truth of that. By the way, I remember, when I was in seminary, studying world religions. Also at the same time I was taking a course on new religious movements. So I’m studying world religions and cults at the same time. And as I began to study these, there was this moment in the semester, about midway, where I just dropped to my knees, and I just praised God going, “Oh, thank you God, not only that you love me, but that this is true.” Why? Because when I read this, and when I read about a God who loves me like that, I want this to be true, and I am so thankful that it is.

This is what we have in our heavenly Father. But what Paul’s getting at is more than that. He’s saying, “Yes, you have a personal relationship with God, yes it’s glorious and should lead you to your knees, he says, but...” Paul explains an important point that can be lost on us in the Greek, as Paul goes back and forth between the singular and the plural. But in this case, Paul does a play on words with the word “father” and “family.” That there is one Father whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. See, in the Greek the word for “father” is “patér.” Patér. That’s the root. And the word “family” comes from that Greek root word, which is “patria.” And so Paul is playing on words here, saying, in the same way that the Greek word “family” comes from the root word “father,” so in the same way, we come from one heavenly Father. This is particularly true of the Church. We have



been saved by our heavenly Father, not just into a personal relationship with God, but a corporate relationship with God as one family. This is something Paul continually preaches throughout this letter, that we are saved to both. And he says in chapter 2, not only has God broken down the wall of hostility that keeps you from God, he has broken down the wall of hostility that is keeping you from one another. That God has united the Jews and the Greeks under one heavenly Father, and that is the Church. And that is what we want to be. That's what we should be praying and seeking for, Northview.

And in light of that now, he continues in Ephesians 3:16, and he says,

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”

Now I just want to make one note about this that I think is interesting. This is an interesting prayer in which we see the Trinitarian theology of the apostle Paul come out. He's talked about our heavenly Father, and he talks about the Spirit and he talks about Christ. This is a triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a relational God that embodies love within his very essence. This God loves you, and wants to pour his glorious riches out on us. What does that glorious riches look like? What is this wealth that we have in Christ? Well, he explains it over and over again. I'll give you one example. Ephesians 1:7, you can look with me there,

“In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding.”

The riches that we have in Christ is the gospel. The riches that we have is God's grace that has been poured out on you, his mercy, his forgiveness. God loves you. He desperately, fully loves you. And then he says, so that what, so that this Spirit, the Spirit of God, may live in you. What is that power that he talks about, the power through his Spirit that lives in us? Again he talks about in the letter over and over again, Ephesians 1:19 we read,

“and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realms...”

That power of life over death lives in us. That Jesus Christ defeated death, in that in us we have the hope of eternal relationship with God. You see, what Paul's praying here isn't just some prayer, it is a prayer that directs the way that we're going to live our lives. It's a prayer that's going to direct the challenges that we're going to face in this life.

Last night I received a text from a friend of mine, Steve Kim, he works with me here at Northview, at Apologetics Canada. Steve's grandma passed away yesterday. We knew that she was sick for some time, and so he texted me because we had been praying for her. And said, “Andy,” he said, “My grandma went to be with the Lord yesterday.” But then he said this, and I love this. Steve said, “But this is the power of the gospel, Andy. The power of the gospel is that I know that my grandma is with



her heavenly Father, and there is a day coming that I will see her again, because that same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in me, and it lives in my grandma.” And listen, church, it lives in you. This changes the way that we go through life, and the challenges and the frustrations that you and I face.

For Paul this was all building, this was all leading to this main point here in Ephesians 3:17, as he prays this over the church. This is my prayer as well. That in light of this gospel, in light of defeating death, it is his hope that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Now listen, what does that mean, to dwell in your hearts through faith? I say that because some of you parents, I just want to speak to you for a moment here, there’s some of us parents here, that we’ve grown up, grown accustomed to telling our kids that we want Jesus to be invited to live in their hearts, you know? Just accept Jesus into your heart. And I just want to warn us, church, we need to be careful about the kind of catchphrases that we use, to make sure that we know what we’re saying. That those ideas have truth and meaning as we speak them, and that we can explain them. Because what Paul is saying here is significant. When he prays that Christ would dwell in us. In the Greek, Paul has a choice. He could use a Greek word that means “to dwell” in the sense that you’re just passing through, you know? You’ve got a hotel for the night and you stayed for the night, but you’re just moving on to the next city. Paul doesn’t use that word for dwell. He uses a Greek word for dwell that means “to take up permanent residence.” By the way, this is a word that is meaningful to me. As many of you know, I’m originally from Portland, Oregon. I came up to Canada to go to school, and I fell in love with a beautiful Canadian girl. And I tell you what, I wanted to take up permanent residence where that girl was, you know what I mean? [Laughter] Why? Because I love that girl. I love my wife Nancy. And where she is, I will be. I will take up permanent residence. And Paul is saying, “That’s my prayer for you, Church. My prayer is that you would fall in love with Jesus, and that he would take up permanent residence in your heart.”

The word “heart,” in the 1st century and the 21st century, has the same meaning. It’s the decision making part of your life. It’s where the decisions are made. It’s where the direction, the course of your life is set. Paul’s saying, “I pray, that Jesus Christ, through the power of the Spirit, would take up permanent residence in the decision making part of your life. That you would allow him to lead you. That you would trust him to guide your life.” This leads Paul to this main idea, when he says then, “How is that going to take place? In light of all of this, how is that going to lead you to allow Christ to be taking up permanent residence in your heart? That you would trust and follow him?” In this, Ephesians 3:17-18

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp [this love].”

Paul is praying for you and I, Paul is praying for the church, that we would be rooted and established in love. Because it’s only when that takes place, that we will allow Christ into our hearts to guide the direction of our lives. Paul’s using a mixed metaphor here, to be rooted and to be established. We understand the rooted, right? It’s like a tree that grows its roots in deep and it becomes stable. More



than that, it's an analogy that there are nutrients that can be gained, there is life that is had, as it continues to grow. That's Paul's prayer, that as we're established in God's love for us, we would continue to grow, we would continue to become evermore secure. And this word "established" is the word "foundation." It's a word that he uses previously. It's an idea that he uses in chapter two, with Christ being the cornerstone, the foundation, from which our lives are built. Paul's saying, that foundation, that rootedness, is going to be in our love for God and his love for us.

Now I just wanted to take a moment to explain what does that mean. What does it look like, church, for us to be individually and corporately established in God's love for us? And to do that, and as I was thinking about, you know, what would be the best way to explain this. I think the best way to explain this is to show, what does it look like *not* to be rooted and established in God's love? Because Paul, in this letter, he's talking about the Gospel, he's talking about the Good News, that's what the word "gospel" means. The Good News is found in Jesus. Well, what's the bad news? The bad news is what happens when we're not established in God's love. So turn with me to Genesis. I want to go to Genesis 2. The Hebrew word "genesis" means "beginning." We see that in the beginning that God created the heavens and the earth, that God created life, he created humanity, he created relationship. And he is there with his creation, with Adam and Eve, and he begins to parent them. We read in Genesis 2:16,

"And the LORD God commanded the man, [he said, 'Adam,] you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

God's saying, "Adam and Eve listen, here's a garden I've created for you, and you can go nuts, enjoy. There's all sorts of great food in there, but that tree right there, that one is poison. Don't eat from that." And they have a choice to make, of whether or not they will trust God or not, they will follow him or not.

As I think about that passage, and as I think about being rooted and established in love, I'm reminded of my kids, and what it's been like parenting them. When my little boys, I have an eight year old and a ten year old, but when they were just little boys (I'm talking diaper age, right) and they're just learning how to walk, they got into everything, church. Parents you know what I'm talking about. And I began to get concerned for their safety. So I went into my kitchen, and I collected up all of my cleaning supplies, and I put them into a cupboard, into the one right below our sink. And then I went and I got my drill, and I was, I was excited about this, alright [Laughter]. I got my drill, and I went over to the cupboard and I began to drill into it. Nancy was not excited about this. You know, and I put a lock on that cupboard. And I brought my little boys over and I said, "Listen boys." I go, "You boys, you are free to rummage through the cupboards." And they did, okay? You've never seen pots and pans ridden like they did, alright? You've never seen structures built out of Tupperware like they built. And I go, "You boys, you go nuts. You can play in the cupboards. You can eat from the cupboards. This is all good for you." But I said, "Listen, there is one cupboard, that one right there, that one will harm you. Just stay out of that cupboard."



I want you to think about something, church. When I explained that to my kids, and as my kids began to get older, they could have began to have this idea, and it's an idea that I think begins to develop in many of us. My dad is all about rules. He's all about his laws, and my dad doesn't want me to go into that cupboard. And so, to make Dad happy, I'm going to follow his rules and his laws and I won't go into that cupboard because Dad's a dad of rules. He's a dad of laws. I think that there are a lot of us that come to church and we have that kind of idea of who God is. He's a God of law. You follow that God. You follow that God's laws, and you do so to make him happy. Paul's saying, "Listen, that's not what it means to be rooted and established in love. That's what it is to be rooted and established in *law*." I want you to think about this though, church, if my little boys began to have that idea of who I am, would they have a correct view of their father? Absolutely not. Church, I do not love my rules. I don't love my laws. I love my little boys. And it's because I love my little boys that I have rules and laws for them, because I am seeking their flourishing. I want their good and I know what will harm them, and I want to keep them from those things. Church, your heavenly Father is not a God of rules, he's not a God of laws, he's a God of love. He's a God who loves you. And it's because he loves you that he has laws and rules to direct, to guide us, so that we can lead a life of flourishing.

But there's a temptation for us. There's a temptation for us to call into question God's love for us. There's a temptation in our sinfulness to begin to wonder, "Is God *really* a God of love? Is God *really* wise? Is God really good?" We see this played out as Adam and Eve become tempted by a serpent, Genesis 3:1,

He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Notice the temptation. By the way, I believe strongly this is a temptation every one of us experiences, because I'm convinced that there is always something going on inside of us. There's always that thing that we've got hidden away that we don't want anybody to know about. That thing that we would desire to justify. That thing that we're tempted to twist God's laws, so that I can do what I want to do, because it's very easy for us, in our brokenness, to want to root and establish ourselves in our love for ourselves. And not in God's love for us. Is God really wise?

Well, the woman now responds, Genesis 3:2,

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Notice what Eve has done here, she said, "No no no, you've got it wrong, it's that tree, but you can't touch it either," and begins to add to God's rules, to God's laws. Because again, for some of us, that's our view of who our heavenly Father is. There's some of us who aren't quite sure of whether or not God loves us so we try to do more. And listen, I believe that there are some of us that we'll even try to coming to church because we think that that will make God happy, if I come to church. So we come, to make sure that we're following what he wants, instead of realizing that he loves you and knows you need church. The church is good for you. The church will lead to your flourishing. So we add to God's



law, but here is the one that is the greatest temptation for us. This is the one that I see us falling into over and over again, and that is calling into question God's goodness. As the serpent comes to Eve and tempts her with this idea, Genesis 3:4:

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

There are going to be times in our lives that we are going to go through trials and suffering. There are times in our marriage that you are going to go through trials and suffering. There are times as a church that we are going to go through difficult times, and there is going to be a temptation in the midst of that to call into question God's goodness. And to ask ourselves, "Is God really a good God? Can I really trust him? Can I really follow him?"

One of the things that I have learned as a parent is you can't lock cupboards forever, church. And there came a day that I had to get the drill back out, I had to go back over those cupboards and I had to unlock those cupboards, and I brought my boys over. They were older now. I brought them over and I knelt down and I pulled out the bottles and I showed them to them, and I explained the symbol that was on it, of a skull and a crossbones, and I explained, "Listen boys, this is poison. This will harm you. Don't drink from this." And my boys now have a choice to make. Either they will trust me, or they won't. As a parent, one of my goals has been to root and establish my child in my love for them, so they will do what? Trust me. They'll trust that I am wise, that I know what I'm talking about. They'll trust that I truly do love them, and would not want to lead them into anything that's going to harm them. That they would trust that I am good, and desire their well being. Your heavenly Father is wise, he knows what will lead to your flourishing. Your heavenly Father is good and wants to lead you into that, and that's because your heavenly Father loves you. You and I have a choice to make. In the trials and temptation of this life, will I trust God or not?

You know my pastor, as he was leading us in the wedding with my wife, and Psalm 23, he explained that, in marriage you're going to go through difficult times. In fact, a seminary professor mine once put it this way, "The only thing that's going to stop you from seeing everyone you love and care for die is your own death." The truth is that we will experience suffering. The question though, is, how will you suffer? And who will you trust in the midst of it? David in this Psalm, he first sings this: "God guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." He ends by saying, "Surely your goodness, God, and your love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." That's our heavenly Father. Our God loves us, and wants us to be rooted and established in that love, so that we trust him. And that we allow him to take up permanent residence in our hearts, as he seeks to guide us, to be the kind of individual, and the kind of church, that he is desiring through the gospel. This is the kind of community that we want to invite people into.

As I close this morning, I just want to read for you something that one of our young adults wrote. She wrote this in an application to become a leader at NYA. Her name is Juwa, and she knows I'm reading this. Juwa was praying that she would be an individual rooted and established in love, but that she



could find a church rooted and established in love. A church that she could attend, that she could grow in. She said this:

Being at NYA last year was prayers answered. Before returning from YWAM, one of the things I really prayed for was to find a young adults community that was so in love with God and his Word. I started searching online and came across NYA. It did take me a year to build up the courage to attend an NYA event. But I have never looked back since. Which all brings me back to why I want to be involved with this ministry. The way my cousin and I were welcomed into this community blew my mind away. [she says] “We felt so loved and welcomed that the only explanation behind it, for me, was that God was at work.

As weeks and months went by, and as our community started growing at NYA, I realized that God has gone and above and beyond answering my little prayer request, of just a personal relationship with God. [And then she says this:] Therefore, what I want for the young adults who walk through those doors is to feel that same warmth, love, and care that I felt at NYA. I want them to get a sense of what a God-centred community looks like, and finally, I want them to be encouraged to dive into the Word, and get a greater understanding of who God is. [It’s one of the ways that we come to be rooted and established in love, God’s love, is in his Word.] All in all, I want to be involved with this ministry because it has poured so much into my life the past year or so, and I think I’m ready to pass it on through God’s strength and guidance.

This is what we were called to be, as a community, as one family, church. As we, together, and individually, are rooted and established in love. Amen? Let me pray for us.

Father, it’s for this reason that I kneel before you in worship of who you are. That you are a God that loves us so much, that you sent your Son to die for us, who came willingly, because you love us. And God, you have desired that we would be, not just that kind of individual, but that we would be that kind of a community, that kind of a church, that loves you and that loves one another, and invites people into that community. So God, I pray that you would continue to lead and direct us. God, that our prayer lives as a church, would continue to be and to ask, that you would root and establish us, individually and corporately, in your love. That we would be your church. That we would make an impact in this world for you, and to your glory. We pray, in your name, Jesus. Amen.