

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

Now is the time to bow before your Maker! At least if you look at our Epistle reading from Ephesians, now is the time to bow before your Maker. Or if you take the Apostle Paul as your example, now is the time to bow before your Maker. If now is the time, then all of you should be bowing your knees before the Father. Are you bowing, literally? Are you bowing, spiritually? What does the Apostle Paul even mean by bowing?

[Verse 14 & 15]

Paul starts out our epistle reading today by saying, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father” (Eph 3:14). He is referring to his act of prayer on behalf of the Ephesians, but he is also providing us with a model of what it means to be a Christian.

Likewise, Luther says, “A Christian without prayer is just as impossible as a living person without a pulse. The pulse is never motionless; it moves and beats constantly, whether one is asleep or something else keeps one from being aware of it” (LW Vol 24.89).

Prayer is an essential part of the Christian life. Whether you are bowing spiritually or literally, the act of submissively going to your knees and bowing before your maker carries a lot of connotations to what you believe your God and Father is capable of.

Paul then continues his prayer by emphasizing that he is bowing “before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph 3:15).

As your Vicar, this past year, you have placed your name upon me. You have placed me into your church family. Just like our baptism placed the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit upon us. We all have been joined together before the Father.

[Verse 16 & 17a]

Therefore, since we all have been joined together. And since we all have approached the Father in a spiritual bowing of our knees. Let me give my sermon to you today as a prayer. A sermon of petitions from me to our Father on your behalf.

I pray, to our Father that “according to the riches of his glory” (Eph 3:16) He may grant you strength.

Strength by the power of His Spirit in your inner being.

Strength by God’s plan of salvation that was put in place before the creation of the world.

Strength enough that Christ may dwell in your will, in your works, and in your ways.

Strength enough to cause your faith to grow.

Because it is only through faith that you receive the benefits of this strength.

May God grant you strength to believe that he is more powerful than we act like he is.

You see, so often our actions and our in-actions show the world that we think God is too weak to make a difference in our lives. But by the act of bowing our knees to God. We begin to change that. We humbly submit to God’s power in our lives. God’s ability to control even the smallest detail to bring us closer to him.

I know this is true because by God’s action of sending me to Our Redeemer for Vicarage he has provided for me in so many little ways. Things like being close enough to walk my daughters to Preschool and to Hoover Elementary each day. And things like being able to be here in support of my family at the death of Hope’s grandmother in Williamsburg, this past year.

I pray that God’s action of sending me to Our Redeemer has also blessed you in the small details. God has worked through me to impact you in some way. I don’t pretend to know how God’s actions through me have strengthened you, but by faith, I know it to be true.

[Verse 17b & 19a]

Because as Paul points out in verse 17, you have been “rooted and grounded in love.”

And so, having been rooted and grounded in love, I pray that you may have strength.

Strength “to comprehend... the breadth and length and height and depth” (Eph 3:18) of Christ’s love for you.

Strength “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19).

Of course, you might say to yourself, that you already comprehend Christ's love. In fact, you might even be singing to yourself, "Jesus loves me this I know." You've been singing it since you were a little kid.

But have you been acting like it?

Have you dropped to your knees in a bow and in humility realized the crushing guilt and weight of your sin? Or have you thought to yourself, "God will forgive me, why does it matter?" After all, that particular sin is just a small thing, just a little guilty pleasure that doesn't hurt anyone.

I wouldn't be surprised if Adam and Eve had a similar thought as they ate from the forbidden tree and cursed themselves and us to die.

Therefore, I pray that you "may have strength to comprehend with all the saints" (Eph 3:18) the love of Christ for you.

Because you are among the saints of God. Having been baptized by God you have been sainted by God. You have been given the strength to bow your knees in repentance. To say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Lk 18:13).

In repentance, you finally have the strength to truthfully say, "Jesus loves me this I know." In repentance, you have the strength to comprehend "and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." (Eph 3:19).

[*Verse 19b*]

Having been "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17) and "according to the riches of his glory" (Eph 3:16), I pray "that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19). Because, if Christ is living in you, then the fullness of God is in you.

As I pray this petition on your behalf, I'm reminded of the fullness of supplies you blessed my family with when we started Vicarage. When we arrived at the Vicarage house, we walked into a house with all of the kitchen counters and some of the kitchen floor covered with boxes of pantry items. What a blessing to walk into! As we sorted and organized all the food and supplies, you gave to us, it became quickly apparent that we couldn't fit it all in the kitchen. So, we ended up moving it to a bookshelf on the landing of the lower level. As we filled this bookshelf it became quickly apparent to us again, that we couldn't fit it on the bookshelf either. So, we ended up moving the remainder of it to several of the shelves in the basement.

You demonstrated the fullness of God to us on that day and I pray that you would continually and repeatedly be filled with all the fullness of God.

Granted, a pantry is a poor comparison to the fullness of God, but many times it is in the small things that we get glimpses of God. You showed in your actions that you know how to bow before your maker. You showed the strength and the love of Christ dwelling in your inner being. You showed that you have comprehended the love of Christ.

[Verse 20 & 21]

You showed that my prayer for you this day has already been answered by God. Because God is able to strengthen us far more abundantly than our wildest dreams!

Now is the time for you to bow before your maker! Whether you bow your knees literally or spiritually, my prayer is that you would bow in awe and thanksgiving to your Father.

Through baptism, you became members of our Father's heavenly family.

A Father whose riches are granted to you by the power of His Spirit.

A Father whose Spirit enables Christ to dwell in your Heart.

A Father who has rooted and grounded you in His love.

A Father who filled you with the fullness of his power.

“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. (Eph 3:20–21)

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do His will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)
