

Coach House Church

BEACONS

INFINITELY MORE

26TH JULY 2021

There are some bible passages that are just so uplifting and encouraging. One of these is Ephesians chapter 3. To put it in context: It is part of a letter written by the apostle Paul who had the dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Prior to this, Paul had been at the stoning of a follower called Stephen, who had been martyred for his belief in Jesus as the Messiah, God's Son. While not actively involved, he had held the coats of the guilty ones thereby being culpable as if he had held the stone itself. Paul, on his journey to Damascus, had been on his way to track and trace other followers of Jesus, so-called Christians. As a Pharisee, a Jewish leader, he was more than sceptical about the claims Jesus and his followers had made and wanted to wipe out what he and many others considered to be blasphemy against the one true God of Israel. Yet, following the encounter where Jesus spoke directly to him in a blinding light, Paul's mission was transformed.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 9.

So this is the same person who is now writing to the churches with a letter of encouragement: a far cry from his former life where he persecuted Christians. What is even more surprising is that Paul wrote the letters while he was imprisoned. He had been arrested for telling others about Jesus. What a turn around!

Yet, Paul is not moaning about the injustice of imprisonment for his beliefs, or protesting at his importance in society as a former Pharisee, highly educated and with status. No, his whole mind set has changed and now his mission is one of telling as many as possible about how he has experienced the life changing power through his belief and trust in Jesus, in the acceptance of Jesus as the son of God, the one who points the way to heaven, the one who gives direct access to Almighty God through forgiveness of sins.

In Ephesians 3, verse 12 it says:

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him,[d] we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. 13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honoured.

Paul acknowledges the power of God as he references him as the creator of the universe. God who has the power to create the heavens and the earth also has the power to change lives, such as his. It's the same power source also that brought Jesus back to life and the same power that God has available through his holy spirit to live inside Christians.

In verse 14, Paul says:

14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,^[e] 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.^[f] 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

Paul knew the strength of God's power and love and forgiveness because he knew how his life had dramatically changed from persecutor to promoter of Jesus Christ. In reality this was an impossible situation. How could someone change their attitude, behaviour and belief in a total 'about turn'? Yet it had happened and Paul knew for certain that he now had a totally different focus.

Moreover he wanted everyone to know, as it says in verse 18:

18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Paul didn't choose an insignificant place to teach and talk to Jews and Gentiles. At that time, the city of Ephesus, in what we now call Turkey, was the fourth largest city of the Roman empire. He wasn't doing anything low key, in the background, keeping a low profile. Rather, his convictions were so strong that he was willing to risk jail in order to speak the truth. Paul knew that with the power of God's holy spirit to guide and support him, he could do so much more than in his own strength. He wanted to share this good news.

Paul continues and in Verse 20 the words which stand out are 'infinitely more':

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

As Paul travelled the road to Damascus, he didn't expect an encounter with Jesus to transform his future actions. As we travel through life there are times when we ask God for something, when we pray for a particular event or action. Although it may be something really important to us, we often don't actually expect God to answer our prayers in the way he does.

Here is one example. Many people have experienced holidays at Bassenfell Manor in the Lake District, which is run by a group of Christian Trustees and has been going strong in a great location just north of Keswick for over 30 years. Yet when the venture began as a camp for teenagers, the humble beginnings were a field and tents. Sometimes the rain which often pours in that area (hence lake being in the title) caused the camp to be a wash out. So, the trustees began to pray for a field of their own where they could set up a barn, a structure where they could at least shelter and have a more permanent camp. When their prayers were answered they got much more than they bargained for-infinitely more. Instead of a barn, they were provided with a manor house with 19 bedrooms. The trustees trusted in God's provision, pledged money to buy the manor and now it is an amazing place to meet and enjoy great holidays with other Christians.

Another example is from our own church history. Joe Bailey, the founder pastor prayed for a building to start a boys' club. He was loaned a building rent and rates

free if he could make some use of it. It was an unused Coach House situated down a road behind the big houses on the A6. Later on, when the land was needed to build a high school Joe prayed for a new building by a bus stop so that anyone could travel easily to church even if they didn't own a car. Nearly seventy years later, we are still enjoying the answer to those prayers with our extended building on the main bus route between Manchester and Stockport on the busy A6, with a bus stop directly outside.

So, watch out when you pray, when you put your trust in God to provide infinitely more than we can ever even comprehend. Then, we can echo Paul's final words in Ephesians chapter 3:

21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.



Coach House Church

222 Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 2QN
leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604
Registered charity in England and Wales - 1194822



Melanie Jackson

Events Coordinator // Trustee
melaniej@coachhousechurch.org