

Matt Henry
Eph. 3:14-21
29 July 2018

“Root, Root, Root for the Home Team”

Grace and peace...

More than a century ago, in 1908, in New York City, a songwriter was riding the new subway and he saw a sign advertising a baseball game. He asked a woman if he could take her out to a movie, and she said yes as long as he also took her to that baseball game. Well, he never did take her, but her request inspired him and it became the lyrics for the song, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.” This man, Jack Norworth, wrote it and Albert Von Tilzer later composed it, although, it would be 32 and 20 years respectively before either the writer or composer of baseball’s unofficial anthem would go to a ballgame themselves. Today I’m using a line from the song, as my sermon title, just to give us something catchy. I chose it also because after preaching this sermon today on Ephesians 3, you’re probably going to need to stand up and do a seventh inning stretch of your own. So this is “Root, Root, Root for the Home Team” from Ephesians 3.

Paul writes this letter in the year 59 AD. He’s in captivity in Caesarea which is in Israel, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He is writing to new believers in Ephesus and places along the way that Tychicus will visit as he carries the

letter. Paul's writing to people he doesn't know but has heard about. So it's a general letter, but it's a basic letter. Paul is laying out the central, basic, important doctrines of the Christian faith—that's the first half of the letter. Our text today is right at that mark, wrapping it up. The second half, which we'll take on next week, is about implications of how to live.

For today, Paul is trying to get across the magnitude of God's love. How do you do that because God is off the charts, right? God is so good, He's infinitely good, He's overwhelming. God's love both surpasses knowledge and expectations. In order to experience the power of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God, that's not a head-only thing. It's a heart thing. We must have the infinite Christ dwelling in our finite hearts in order to experience this kind of love. That means the Triune God has to work in us. That's what we see in this text. Paul is kneeling before the Father and praying for the Father to grant strength and power through the Spirit that Christ may dwell in our hearts. So it's a good Trinitarian text because it shows in a basic, central way how God relates Himself and how God relates to us.

Paul says in v. 14, "I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." Let's talk about the family. It's not even his main point, patriarchy is a good thing! The father/child relationship is

this premise for all that's going to follow. "Every family in heaven and on earth" is a description of the family unit as God intended it with a father as the head of household. But we know for so many children, they don't have a good relationship with their father because in many cases, he's absent. In 1960, 5% of babies were born out of wedlock. In 2014, 40% of babies were born out of wedlock. We have 24.7 million children with fathers who are physically absent. And that doesn't even take into account the fathers who are emotionally absent and disconnected from their children. I don't know if you've seen the documentary that Focus on the Family put out a few years ago. It's called *Irreplaceable*. You should definitely watch it. Here's a clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeD90uQR9zA>

And it was documenting all of society's problems and it found the root cause for most of what plagues society was fatherlessness. Here are the statistics:

- 71% of high school dropouts came from fatherless homes
- 71% of pregnant teens came from fatherless homes
- 85% of youth with behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes
- 90% of homeless or runaway children come from fatherless homes
- 63% of youth suicides come from fatherless homes
- 85% of youth in prison come from fatherless homes

So when Paul says he bows the knee before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, it just goes to show you how far we have deviated from the design of what God wants for families, for children, for the home.

Ephesians is a useful letter because it not describes the Gospel in the first half, but it goes on to lay out the implications for the marriage, parenting, children because in God's eyes, the family is the home team. God is rooting for the home team. *If they don't win, it's a shame*. So many families aren't winning today.

These statistics should lay heavy on our hearts and prompt us to action. How do you take on an epidemic like this? One heart at a time.

What we have in our faith is a God who at his heart, in His deepest essence, is love. He is relationship. So if the root problem then is thinking of God as too small, the root solution is that God is much bigger than you made Him to be. If the root problem is that God is too distant, then the root solution is to realize He is as close to you as it gets for He dwells in our hearts. If the root problem is God seems too cold, then the root solution is to feel the depths of His desire for this world that He would give all that He had to make us His own.

Once the Spirit sets up shop and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, Paul prays in verse 17, "that you, being rooted and grounded in love may have

strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with the fullness of God.” See, we are called to be rooted and grounded in love. That’s the only way we can grow. If our hearts are rooted in love.

The heart is a fertile place. It’ll grow anything. Be careful what you let go to root. Anger can grow a root. Bitterness goes deep. Anxiety, pride, envy, all of those negative emotions. Hate has roots. And of course, it’s just like weeds, some roots don’t come out that easily. It’s almost like the roots are designed to stay in there.

This week, I was tending my lawn while Tyler was selling root beer floats on the corner. The kid is an entrepreneur, let me tell you. He’s been listening to Dave Ramsey. He’s selling root beers and I’m pulling out these little tiny maple trees that are growing in my yard. I have to pull them out one by one because of this prolific maple tree. I always tell my kids, “Get the root!” Why? Because I don’t want it growing back. Well, it’s the same way with those negative emotions. I don’t want them coming back. So the way we get some of the roots is to forgive. Another way is to just be content. You’d be amazed how that works. Or we choose to trust God. But we gotta get the root. And the Spirit is

really good at making that happen if we ask Him too. This for what we don't want to grow.

But for that which we want to see grow, everything else needs to be rooted in love. Whose love? Christ's love. The one whose love can't be measured in breadth, length, height or depth. What we want to see grow is marriage, so root it in love. We want families to grow, so root them in love. We want to see this church grow, so we'll root it in love. It's root, root, root for the home team. And if we can just cheer each other on in this way, Paul says in v. 19 that then we'll be filled with all the fullness of God. Think of that! **All the fullness of God!**

After my internship, but before my 4th year of seminary, I went through a crisis. The nature of it I'm not going to disclose because that's not the point, but I will tell you that it involved shame and secrecy. And the more I struggled, the more I kept it to myself, the bigger the sin became. It grew and grew. It eclipsed God's love, I couldn't really see God's love because this thing was looming large. And finally I said, "I've got to talk to someone." So I had a friend in town who knew a really good Christian therapist in Idaho Falls where I was living just for that summer. By the way, living at home with your parents at age 24—that's a good time. I went to see this therapist whom I had never met before and he said, "I knew that's what you'd want to talk about today." "You did? How?" "God told

me.” OK.... That began our Spirit-led conversation. I’ll tell you what came of it. He got to the root of the issue. I confessed my sin. And once that was out there, that sin which was once so large, shrunk down to size. And the love of God which was always there, I could feel shining again. Love was at its proper dimensions again—in its breadth and length and height and depth. And that was enough to bring me to tears in that moment because not only was God’s love so pure and comforting, but it was so big that I could not know the extent of it. But it overwhelmed me in that moment and I’ll never forget it. God had wooed me with His love.

God woos and God wows. That’s our relational Heavenly Father—in Christ, through the Spirit—deepening and growing relationships by rooting us in His love.

Before I left there, that therapist shared with me this insight to Ephesians 3:20-21. After we finished, he said, “Oh, I have just the thing for you. I just came across this!” It’s called the Pyramid of Power and it’s just one of those things I have tucked in my Bible that maybe will make into yours as well. The way it works is that you meditate on just the first line. “He is.” Just that. Just let that soak in as if it were “I Am.” It’s that profound. And then go on to “He is able.” Think on that. Pray in that aspect of faith. “He is able”

He is
He is **able**
He is able **to do**
He is able to do **that you ask**
He is able to do that you ask **or think**
He is able to do **all** that you ask or think
He is able to do **above** all that you ask or think
He is able to **abundantly** above all that you ask or think
He is able to do **exceedingly** abundantly above all that you ask or think

Like Paul, we bow the knee before our Father because that's who He is. No matter what our life circumstances, by His grace, that's the God we have. "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, Amen."