

25 July 2021 Ephesians 3:14-21

Do you write many letters? When I was at school, it was one of the skills we practised. After a school trip, (I remember one to the Jeffries Museum, which I loved. Social history AND dressing up! Fabulous!) We all had to write a thank you letter.

(Text box to go into powerpoint please)

*Waverley School,
Ravenswood Avenue,
Crowthorne,
Berkshire.*

15 June 1961

Dear Mrs Brown,

Thank you very much for telling us about everything at the museum. I had a wonderful time. I particularly liked the dressing up!

Hoping you are well,

Yours sincerely,

Fleur Proctor.

My message, and then something about the addressee, Mrs Brown, correctly topped and tailed.

Another question: have you ever been prayed for? Not the general prayers which are part of the service, (the intercessions), but a personal prayer, just for you? Perhaps you've been worrying about something, and you've shared your worry with the person who was going to pray for you. And have you ever prayed for someone else? Maybe in the same sort of situation or maybe in your own personal prayer time, on your own. How did that feel?

Now I'd like to read you another version of the reading. (Thank you, Richard!). This is from the Passion Translation.

(Also in powerpoint, please)

Paul Prays for Love to Overflow

¹⁴ So I kneel humbly in awe before the Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, ¹⁵ the perfect Father of every father and child in heaven and on the earth. ¹⁶ And I pray that he would unveil within you the unlimited riches of his glory and favour until supernatural strength floods your innermost being with his divine might and explosive power.

¹⁷ Then, by constantly using your faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside you, and the resting place of his love will become the very source and root of your life.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Then you will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God!

²⁰ *Never doubt* God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you.

²¹ Now we offer up to God all the glorious praise that rises from every church in every generation through Jesus Christ—and all that will yet be manifest through time and eternity. Amen!

This is how Paul finishes one of his letters. It says a bit more than the letter I wrote as a little girl, (!!!) but essentially it is expressing 'hoping you are well' in a wonderful, complete and Godly way.

And, when we pray for one another, in our own small way, we are doing just the same as Paul. Asking God to bless us. Doesn't it feel great when you do it? Isn't there a great release of emotion? What a privilege and a joy both to ask for prayer, and to pray for another person.

Now let's look at some detail. Firstly, Paul puts his hands together in prayer. He kneels and praises our Lord and declares his faith.

Then he makes his first request for the people he is writing to. (I do wonder if the group of Christians in Ephesus had asked for these prayers in particular.) Ephesus was an important trading and cultural centre on the Turkish coast. The religious focus there at the time was on Artemis, or Diana, goddess of wild animals and hunting, often pictured with a bow and arrow. Paul prays for supernatural strength.

(If possible can this picture go into the powerpoint?)

[0_1750.jpg \(821x1061\) \(coloringtop.com\)](#)



(Red dumbbells) These weigh 4 kilos each. What could I do with supernatural strength? But what he is praying for is inner strength. An infusion of God's power to take action in his name. That's a big ask.

(Heart cushion if I can find it) The second prayer is for faith, constant, growing, daily-refreshed faith. And with faith comes a filling up with God's love. Not just filling, overflowing. And this love enabling us to live a Christ-like life. Life and love, working together, fused. Love flowing through us like water and nutrients drawn up through the roots of a tree and spreading through trunk and branches to every branch and twig and leaf and flower. And that might mean opening up some dusty corners to God; letting him clear out some bits of our lives that we'd rather not think about. But it is definitely worth it!

(Tape measure) And then we may come to understand the full dimensions of God's love. With this excellent tape measure, borrowed from Richard's tool box, I can measure quite a number of things, but not even the height of the roof or the length of the aisle, Christ's love is infinitely bigger, wider, greater.

Finally, Paul reassures the Christians he's writing to: strengthened with the love of God, things that seemed impossible will be attainable. They will be filled with miraculous power. What a promise! Well, a reminder, because Jesus has already talked about this, in

(In the powerpoint as well please)

John 14:13-14

¹³ For I will do whatever you ask me to do when you ask me in my name. And that is how the Son will show what the Father is really like and bring glory to him. ¹⁴ Ask me anything in my name, and I will do it for you!"

(This is from the Passion translation as well.) An amazing thought.

Paul finishes by praising God for his magnificence, now and forever, in a traditional 'doxology', an expression of love and praise to God.

Well, this is a lovely ending to a letter, full of wonderful sentiments and prayers. But it was written to people in Ephesus in the middle of the first century. Does it mean anything to us?

It certainly does! Don't we need to praise God? Don't we need God's supernatural strength and power? Don't we need to pray to be filled up with God's love, rooted in his love, until it flows through us like the water and nutrients through a tree? Until his love overflows? Don't we need to clear out some corners of our lives, apologise to someone perhaps, and tell God about it? and ask for forgiveness. Don't we long to understand the length and breadth and height of his love and power? And very humbly, don't we long to live God's love every day?

Well, imagine that this letter has just arrived through the letter box of Holy Trinity Sunningdale. Addressed to us. We are all part of God's family.

This is what I suggest. Paul doesn't hesitate to ask God for anything, does he? Let's pray for ourselves then. Let's pray for his strength and power, working in each other and in our church community. Let's pray for growing faith. Let's pray for an explosion of God's love here in Sunningdale. Let's study the Bible together. Let's share our own experiences of knowing God because that way we can broaden our understanding. We can learn from one another. We can ask for God's blessing and God's grace for each other. And let's praise and thank God together. Consider with what enormous affection and respect we could sign off a letter to one another, (or email, or watsapp,) or finish a conversation, with what supernatural power we may face the world and its challenges, with what humility we may praise God for the vastness of his love for us.

Because we can ask him for anything, and without him we would be nothing.

Amen.

Fleur Pelly