

### <Series Slide> Review & Introduction:

- Dave Sattler here, one of the pastors at NSAC today continuing our series on "Identity in Christ."
- [ This is such a great graphic ... go to our website to download it for yourself ... screen-saver. ]
- Truly, the Christian life is "rooted" (17) in our understanding of our identity in Christ.
- Discovering our true identity begins and ends with a look to the ONE Who made us ... for only God can tell us who we really are.
- Problems arise when we begin to believe half-truths ("I'm messed up") or outright lies ("I'm never good enough") ... these obstruct our view of our true identity in Christ.
- A GQ to ask: Who we gonna listen to? There are many 'voices' shouting out for our attention.
- Our prayer for this series = "Lord, speak Your truth, burn in our hearts ... not just in theory but in real-time our incredible **identity in Christ.**"
- Two weeks back we learned how, in Christ we are a 'new creation' (2 Cor.5:17); with Jesus, we have the hope of transformation; our Creator makes us new again! And it's been so cool for me to have 'front-row seats' to watch God making so many of you new ... over the years.
- And we learned last week, in Christ we are 'adopted'.
- God chose us to be His sons & daughters according to His "pleasure and will" (Eph.1).
- We are at home with Him - what's His is now ours to enjoy!
- I loved MP's ILL the other week: Next time someone asks, "Where do you live?" Say, "In Christ."
  - Try that one out! In my experience, this is the best place to make your home!
  - We need to get back to our 'Spiritual Address': "in Christ."
- **< Slide >** So today we come to Paul's great prayer in Ephesians 3.14-21; please turn to it on your electronic device or pg. 1820 in the blue Bibles in the seat rack in front of you.
- These verses form a masterpiece reminding us of the infinite resources available to us in Christ.
- I preached my first sermon ever on this passage back in 1989 at Bible College in Preaching Class.
- I dug it out of the vault and cringed as I read it this week; not as bad as I thought though.
- I have preached this passage many times since, most recently in my charges to couples on their wedding day. Ephesians 3 contains the vital reminder that in Christ we are "loved by God."
- **< Slide >** ILL - When I was 14, I scored the winning goal in a massive soccer match.
  - It was a profound moment in my life.
  - Nil-nil with minutes left on the referee's watch ...
  - Defending at the top of our box ... my man wound up for a shot, I reached out with my foot to block it (a 'no-no' for any good defender), but I wasn't close enough to stop his shot and the ball ricocheted off my shin-pad right into my own goal!
  - Minutes later, the game ended and I collapsed to the field.
  - I had scored the winning goal ... for the other team!
  - Our season was over and it was my fault.
  - Not one of my teammates or coaches consoled me; I was devastated. Alone.
  - You'll have to wait till the end of the sermon to hear what happened next.
- **< Slide >** Let's read Ephesians 3.14-21 - pg. 1820 ... many people's favourite verses in all of Scripture; I believe this prayer of Paul's is as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago when it was written. **< READ >** Prayer: "Lord, please move me out of the way."

### Passage Outline:

- In humility, Paul "kneels" (14) and with great passion, prays an enormous prayer.
- One commentator said Q: "Paul prayed big prayers because Paul had a big God." - Johnson, p.92.
- With each phrase, his prayer gathers momentum till it crescendos into glorious worship in v 20-21.
- One of the first things Paul prayed was "that Christ may dwell in your hearts" (17a).

### 1. **< Slide >** This is a profound wonder: we are **God's House (3:14-17a).**

- Earlier, in v 15 Paul reminded the Ephesians they were all made, created, built by the same Father.
- ILL - Makes me think of Yankee Stadium, aka. "The House That Ruth Built!"
  - With clutch baseball performances & charismatic personality, the great Babe Ruth 'built' Yankee Stadium into the place to be in New York City in the 1920's & 30's and even today.
  - And I believe that's a good name for us too ... you and I are "the house that God built!"
- ILL - I am also reminded of my late grandmother, born in Jolly Old England!
  - Grandma always dressed well and always seemed to be fussing around in the kitchen.
  - At her house we had about six meals a day ... including morning and afternoon tea.
  - She adored the monarchy & I remember her saying to me when working in the kitchen:
    - Q: "You never know when the Queen might show up to tea!" - Grandma Sattler
- **< Slide >** You see, our lives are meant to host the King!
- Every one of us was made to house the glory of God.
- We are God's "dwelling" place; yes, we are in Christ, but in a very real sense, Christ is also in us.
- When we put our "faith" (17) in Jesus, God lives here! Christ 'takes up residence' in us.
- Perhaps you're in church today and you feel far away from God - off His radar, either by your own venturing or perhaps by a traumatic life-event that has triggered your running ... or maybe you've just simply drifted away from the Father.
- Q: "I've spent my life feeling second best." - Sarah Powell Well, Ephesians 3 declares, "God hasn't written anyone out of His script. The Father's welcome-arms are always open wide to all; no one is beyond His presence; God longs to live in anyone who puts their faith in Jesus." Know this today.
- Second, there's nothing more fathomably unfathomable than ...

## 2. **< Slide >** Knowing how much we are **Loved by God (3:17b-19a).**

- Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be "rooted and established in love" (17b).
- We are all 'love-seekers'; we crave it and are always on the lookout for a love to attach ourselves to; it's in our DNA; it's how we've been wired; this is how God made us.
- Since we all build our lives on love, the BQ becomes: what or whose love will it be?
- Trouble comes when I become 'needy' for my love-needs to be met in places other than God and His love for me ... in things of this world; I become a danger to myself & others when I grasp for love or try to suck 'reasonable facsimiles' of love from the people and things all around me.
- Making sure our lives are oriented to the 'right love' is absolutely critical.
- All of life's actions and reactions are based on / influenced by this foundation upon which we stand.
- ILL - This is why my biggest prayer for my children, my friends, & people I pray with is this:
  - That they would "know" the love of God that's theirs in Christ.
  - So much rides on this; all of life is fed from here - the fact that we are 'loved by God.'
- The love of God is meant to be "grasped together with all the saints" (18).
- It is most powerfully experienced in community.
- To isolate, to go it alone, to say "I don't need church or church people, it's just me & my personal Jesus", is to cut oneself off from God & His love.
- When God's people, the church together embrace and model the love of God in Christ, it's magnetic - people are drawn to it and transformed in its midst; this is our heart-cry for NSAC.
- In a great play on words, Paul prays we might "know this love that surpasses knowledge" (19a).
- When we recall Paul's story we see why he likely used such high language here (Acts 9):
  - Paul had hated Christians and "persecuted" Jesus; in his former job, he was a 'hitman' and went from town-to-town acting out "murderous threats" against the Lord's disciples.
  - Then, Jesus met Paul on the Road.
  - And, instead of exacting revenge and killing Paul on the spot in that moment, Jesus began to change his heart and transform his life: Paul became a missionary.
  - And Paul never forgot where he'd come from; that's why he often referred to himself as "the least of all God's people" (8). He'd been touched by God's grace and encountered God's amazing love ... in Christ, he'd come to know a love beyond knowing (19)!

- What a miracle! God steps down to love us, Holy God touches unholy us, Unknowable God makes Himself known; Boundless Love touches incredible brokenness.
- "For God so loved the world." - Cf. John 3:16a and Cf. 1 John 3:1: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"
- This is the Christian Story! Because of Jesus' redemptive work on the cross, God invites us broken people back into intimate relationship with Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.
- Thirdly, this prayer talks of another grandiose reality ...

### 3. < Slide > Being **Filled with God's Fullness (3:19b-21).**

- Q: We were made to be "creatures (filled) pulsating with the Presence of the Creator." - Johnson, p.102
- ILL - Over the years I have often tried to fix or fill things around our house.
  - Our back door was binding, so I took it off and planed that sucker down! 2-inch gap!
  - My son's reading lamp tore the drywall so I filled that thing with filler - the wrong filler!
  - My daughter's light burned out so I replaced it with her Easy-Bake oven bulb! House-fire!
    - Trying to fill things with my own solutions has led to near-tragic results.
- BQ: With what are you filling your life? Or better yet, what actually fills you?
- It's tough if we 'gorge on Halloween candy when only green vegetables satisfy' [trust me!]
- The presence of God in all God's fullness is the only thing that truly fills.
- And this incredible "filling" takes place over a lifetime; like Paul says a few chapters along "... be filled with the Spirit" and keep on being "filled." - cf. Ephesians 5:18.
- What a joy! As we continue to surrender to Christ, we are filled more and more with God's fullness.

#### Application:

- Three points of application to conclude today's message ...

### 1. < Slide > In Christ, we are **Loved by God ... all of us.**

- "Jesus loves me this I know" seems so elementary, yet there is much pain surrounding this topic.
- Reality is when it comes to the simple truth that we are loved by God, many of us feel 'unloveable.'
- Some of you have deep father-wounds that have left you 'guttled' ... and you have tried to stuff those feelings deep inside to protect yourself ... so you don't have to feel them.
- Others of you have been so burned by the 'supposed' love of a loved one in your past, you're not sure you will ever allow yourself to love or be loved again and you're living in deep insecurity & fear.
- This morning I want to remind us of who we really are: you & I are the precious focus of God's love.
- For those who may be struggling with crippling fear around this topic of love, hear this:
  - "There is no **fear** in **love**. But **perfect love** (God's love) drives **out fear**, because **fear** has to do with punishment (and that's not what God is primarily about)." - cf. 1 John 4:18.
- God's loves us with a love that is completely un-failing!
- I believe many of you here this morning need a fresh touch of the "Spirit in your inner being" (16b).
- The deeper work of the Spirit is not just what He does through you out to others.
- Do you know that one of the Holy Spirit's main jobs is to make God's love real in your life?
- 'O Come, Holy Spirit ... make the Father's love real to my friends today ... especially to those rocked by fear around the topic of love today ... may they know - truly know today anew and afresh that they - every one of them - are sons & daughters of the King!

### 2. < Slide > Second, in Christ we are **Loved by God ... in every season.**

- God's love stretches in all directions, it is "wide and long and high and deep" (18).
- It's important we "grasp" (18) its infinite dimensions; God's love is:
  - "Wide" - offered to every tribe, tongue, and nation; in Christ love is available to all peoples.
  - "Long" - unlike the love of others, it endures for a lifetime and remains on through eternity.
  - "High" - it touches our highest victories and has such leverage it can lift us out of anything.
  - "Deep" - it's there in every downward spiral and reaches our lowest journeys of despair - even death.
- One can never be out of its touch - lost from God's love.
- ILL - In two of life's seasons in particular it's easy to lose sight of the fact we are loved by God.

- 'Summer' ... when we are experiencing a season of abundance, when things are going well, when we are on a run of great success, it can be easy to 'pat ourselves on the back', to run to 'other loves', to enjoy - to indulge in the 'spoils' of our life's victories.
- [In Summer] When life feels good we tend to forget our need for God's love.
- And this to our peril.
- Also 'Winter' ... when we are experiencing a season of loss, when things aren't going our way, when success is elusive, when tragedy strikes, it can be easy to give up on God, to try harder to fix things on our own, to indulge - to find things to 'fill the hole'.
- [In Winter] When life feels bad we tend to think God doesn't love us anymore and we run.
- And this to our peril.
- Our posture with God in all the seasons of life is vital; the only correct posture is to 'open up', to be an 'open vessel' - to live with "hands wide open to receive from God."
- Problems come when we close up and choose to live life refusing to embrace the love God freely offers and the love we so desperately need.
- God's "love is better than life" - cf. Psalm 63:3a.
- Why? Because it's the only thing that lasts beyond the grave!
- Truth is: this world and the things in it will never satisfy.
- Amidst all of this, one thing remains: **God's love for us** in every season of life.
- Cool thing is we can never be done knowing or experiencing God's awesome love; it's entirely inexhaustible for it flows from a Father-source that never runs dry.

### 3. < Slide > Finally, we are **Loved by God ... unconditionally.**

- This is a difficult thing to accept for many; some of you would say today: "Sattler, God's love's not for me, I haven't lived up to it. If you only knew me, I don't deserve it."
- ILL - I too've have struggled with this; I would do well to listen to that first sermon in 1989:
  - Q: "An intimate relationship with Christ comes not from going to church or good deeds, but only by personal faith and continuous trust in Jesus." - Dave Sattler, March 14, 1989, CBC Regina, SK.
  - Honestly, I am super-critical of myself; deep inside God's grace and the fact that God loves me unconditionally is really hard for me to accept most days.
  - I'd rather earn God's love, but when I try to prove myself to God, it only makes things worse!
- Maybe you grew up in a home where there were huge expectations put on you; you meant so much to your parents (too much) that you felt horrible whenever you let them down.
- And so you hid your failures, you lied about them, or you just tried harder to please.
- So much pain living that way.
- < Slide > ILL - Back to the soccer pitch: I'd just scored the winning goal ... for the other team.
  - Our season was over and the whole thing was my fault.
  - Not one of my teammates or coaches consoled me; I was devastated. Alone.
  - After what seemed like an eternity, I felt a touch on my neck & hand; I heard a voice.
    - It was my dad. He helped me up, he told me he loved me, and he took me home.
- The Father's love is the 'game-changer.'
- There's nothing like it; no substitute for it; it "establishes" us (17); it takes us to our real home.
- His Love is something we all must truly "know" (19) or we cease to truly live.
- < Slide > Cf. Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us." He knows all our stuff more than anyone and yet still chooses to love us more than we could ever imagine.
- Hear this: because of God's love, you're worth so much more than you think.
- Today, if you've been living saddled under some false performance expectation, consider this:
  - cf. 2 Cor 4: "We have this treasure (Christ) in jars of clay (us) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." God doesn't offer His presence just to 'perfect' people.
- No, God is simply looking for humble 'hosts' ... willing (& even broken) vessels / pots to house (& display) the glorious treasure of Jesus. Amen. Stand and sing as we embrace the Father's Love.