

## St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups June 7<sup>th</sup> 2009

### More love...More Power! Ephesians 3:14 -21



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

"For this reason I kneel before the Father" v14...Paul begins his prayer taking up the same words he began chapter 3 with. But what is the reason that this man locked in chains is so moved to pray? Essentially it is that the church may discover what it means to know God as all loving, all powerful Father; it is that the church might put roots down into that love; and it is that the church might be alive with the spiritual power that flows from such a love. What a prayer! I want Paul's prayer for our church! It is quite likely that Paul himself would have wanted his prayer for our church! Paul's letter was written as a circular letter with a blank to be filled in with the right name, a letter carried from one church to another by courier. His letter wasn't just written for the Ephesian Christians but for the various congregations of the emerging first century church. As Paul began to realise that Christ's coming again was not going to be an immediate event so he began to see the increasing importance of the church as Christ's continuing body through which God would work in the world; and it is this emerging church (a church that faced all the dangers of a world hostile to the gospel: dangers of compromise – Gnosticism, and dangers of racial and national division) that Paul gets down on his knees to pray for. He would no doubt pray the same prayer today for the Church here in the UK, for Dorking, for St Paul's as we face the dangers of an ever increasing hostility to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's prayer speaks into the heart of church, into the heart of what it means to be agents of God's love and power. In his book *Paul for Everyone* Tom Wright writes "Love and power, power and love: these are the themes of perhaps two thirds of the novels, plays and poems ever written. The love of power has laid waste continents and empires. The power of love has driven weak people to do powerful things – and not infrequently, powerful people to do foolish things. These are the forces which shape our lives, our homes, our countries, our politics, our world. And these are the themes that run through the great prayer that Paul prays" What is it that brings love and power together? As recent events bare testimony it's certainly not politics – there is often no love lost in a political arena with a surfeit of struggling with power. It is prayer that brings love and power together. As we discover the love of God and through prayer enter into relationship with him, so his love can flow to us and through us out into the world. Desmond Tutu exercised a powerful ministry in the transition of South Africa – a man of deep faith and love for God he began the day with several hours of prayer and was often witnessed praying at key moments throughout the day.

So Paul prays that we might be 'strengthened with power' 'through the Holy Spirit in our inner being' v16 - inner being refers to the real person, the centre of our psychological, emotional and spiritual existence – so that...'Christ may dwell in our hearts in love' v17 (The Revised English Version). Think for a moment on the intimacy of Jesus living in our hearts in love, that union of love with God 'rooted and established' v17 deep in our lives so that we might have 'power to grasp how wide and deep and high is the love of Christ' v18 and be 'filled with the fullness of God' v19. Love and power can move mountains – read v20.

We began our current preaching and teaching series 'More love...More Power' a month or so ago with the call for the renewal of our vision and life here in our church. At the heart of that call was that:

- + We recognised the primacy of God's call to be loved and to be his agents of love
- + We recognised that we have experienced much love and fellowship but need more reliance on God's Spirit
- + We recognised that there have been blockages to the flow of God's love and a need for his forgiveness
- + We recognised the need for God to renew and refresh our life together
- + We sensed that we are being challenged as a church and as individuals to change.

Six months ago we could only imagine a café here in church – now parents who used to pass by on the way to Nursery and School drop in to church

Six months ago we could only imagine how we might connect our older teens and twenties and those off at University – now someone has come forward with a real heart and vision to facilitate such a group

Six months ago we could only imagine how we might make faith come alive in our work places - now we have a new ministry 'Work Out' ready to run this autumn.

Six months ago we could only imagine a Children's and Young People's Worker – now we have several people applying to come and work here

Six months ago we could only imagine a vision for World Church that would give regular opportunity for 'Gap Year' Placements serving abroad – now we have the offer of a World Church Bursary to help make this happen

Six months ago we could only imagine an informal, intergenerational service - now we have café church!

Read verse 20 again! Think what God might do in you and through you as an individual and us as a church! God can double, treble, quadruple this and more...going beyond all we can expect or imagine...so much so that we will wonder how we could have been so short sighted! In the next few weeks and the months ahead there will be many opportunities for us to respond to God's call here to 'do immeasurably more according to his power at work within (us).' Let us pray that each of us would be filled with his love and power, hear his call and step out in faith into new areas of service for him



#### Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. What evidence today can you see of an ever increasing hostility to the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. 'It is prayer that brings love and power together.' Explore this statement together.
3. Reflect back on the five points + at the heart of the renewal of our vision here at St Paul's. Which of these resonates most with you/your group?
4. Read verse 20 again! Think what God might do in you and through you as an individual and us as a church! What can you imagine here at St Paul's? Share your thoughts and turn them into prayer.