



Praying with Purpose

Prayer for Strength, Ephesians 3:14-21

Schedule/Topics

Apr 15 – God’s Providence, Our Prayers (Part 1)

Apr 22 – God’s Providence, Our Prayers (Part 2)

Apr 29 – Prayer for Maturity, Ephesians 1:15-20

May 6 – Prayer for Strength, Ephesians 3:14-21

After expounding upon the mystery of God’s “eternal purpose” in creating one new family known as the Church (Eph. 2:11-3:13), Paul bursts into prayer. Essentially, there are two petitions here, and then one expression of praise.

Two Petitions

1) Paul prays that God strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being (Eph. 3:16-17a).

This power is in us but not from us. It comes from God’s Spirit and enters into our inner being. The presence and person of Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit (cf., Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:22; Col 1:27). So, what does Paul mean by our “inner being?”

- Whatever our “inner being” means it must mean the same thing as our “hearts” in v. 17 (the same expression is found in 2 Cor. 4:16). Our “inner being” is the place of renewal and regeneration. It is that immaterial part of us that is born again and gradually grows in Christlikeness. It is the stage on which our character is played out and the source from which our lives are lived.
- So many of us long for financial security, better physical health, a stronger body, more hair, less fat, etc. Paul’s focus in this prayer is for God’s power to be on display in our character, our “inner being.” Imagine the growth we might realize if we paid half the attention to our interior lives as we do to our exterior!

The aim of Paul’s prayer is that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

- The idea of “dwell” here means more than to take up residence. It’s possible to take up residence in a house without making it our home. Over time as we add our personal touch (paint, wallpaper, curtains, landscape, etc.), our home eventually reflects our character, our tastes. So too, Christ gradually but certainly renovates our inner being and makes our heart his home. His character becomes ours as he dwells in us by his Spirit (see esp. Eph. 2:19-22).
- Note that it is “through faith” and by prayer that Christ makes my heart his home. The way I come to know Christ (by faith) is the same way I grow in Christ.
- The source of this power is God’s “glorious riches;” the implication being that we do not have our own resources (Jn. 15:5). All that we bring to the table is faith; and that, too, is God’s gift to us (Eph. 2:8-9; Philip. 1:29; 1 Tim. 1:14; Heb. 12:2).

*Note: This is a Trinitarian prayer! Paul prays that **God the Father** would strengthen our inner being through **God the Spirit** so that **God the Son** would manifest his character in our lives.*

2) Paul prays that we have power to grasp the limitless dimensions of Christ’s love (Eph. 3:17b-19).

- “Rooted and established in love” involves the initial love poured out to us at salvation (Rom 5:5) and is the basis for our growth in Christ (2 Cor 5:14). After all, it is because of God’s eternal, overwhelming, and irresistible love that we not only begin a relationship with Christ but continue in it (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:4-5).



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- This is not a prayer for us to love Christ more, but that we would better grasp or comprehend his love for us. It's possible the Ephesians have not fully appreciated Christ's love for them (sadly, history bears this out; see Rev 2:1-4).
- The dimensions of Christ's love are staggering! Although the terms Paul uses for Christ's love involve measurement ("wide and long and high and deep"), they are comprehensive in scope and scale. This a metaphorical way of saying Christ's love permeates everything coming into contact with it. Paul prays in effect that we comprehend ("grasp") the comprehensive love of Christ! This love "surpasses knowledge" and moves well beyond mere creedal confession!
- Although the love of Christ is profoundly personal (Gal. 2:20) and is sweeping in the full range of every conceivable dimension of time and space, it is not just a private, personal endeavor, but is to be enjoyed and expressed "together with all the saints" (Eph. 3:18), which comprise the Church.
- Why is it important to grasp the limitless dimensions of Christ's love? "That you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Essentially, that you may be mature in your faith; that you may increasingly become all God intends. This is God's personal and corporate goal for his people (see Eph. 4:12-13). *To experience Christ's love is to experience a new life where forgiveness is natural not contrived, fellowship is precious not merely artificial, testimonies are alive and vibrant not stale and simply correct, and all our attitudes and actions are inspired by Christ's sacrificial love.*

One Praise

Reflecting on Christ's love causes Paul to turn from beseeching God to bestowing praise on him (Eph. 3:20-21).

- God is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine, not only because he's omnipotent (all-powerful), but more importantly because he's all good and generous. The implicit assumption here is not only that God is *able* but also *willing* to give us more than we ask. Jesus teaches that God longs to give good gifts to his children (Mt. 7:11). This is a tremendous incentive to pray!
- The ultimate goal toward which everything in this universe is moving is God's glory. Put differently, the universe does not revolve around us, but around the purpose of God's optimum grandeur and glory (see Eph. 1:3, 6, 14). And, it is "in the church" as the Body of Christ where God chooses to bring himself glory. We ARE the temple of the living God and the place where his fullness dwells and radiates his magnificence (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16)!

So What?

- Is God's glory the target and goal of your prayers?
- In one sitting, read through Paul's prayers and take note of the things he emphasized. See Rom. 1:8-10; 10:1; 15:5-6; 2 Cor. 13:7-9; Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Philippians 1:3-11; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; 2 Thess. 1:11-12. How do your prayers compare?
- How has Christ's love for you impacted your life since becoming a Christian? Consider memorizing and meditating upon Gal. 2:20 or Rom. 5:1-8.