

Ephesians: Grace Changes Everything

Part 7 - Paul's Prayer

In the final verses of Ephesians 3, Paul prays for the church to be strengthened with power, to grasp the depth of Christ's love, and to be filled with the fullness of God. This prayer reveals Paul's deep pastoral care and his desire for the spiritual maturity and empowerment of all believers.

Ephesians 3:14-21 *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."*

This passage can be divided into three main sections: Paul's posture in prayer (verses 14-15), the content of Paul's prayer (verses 16-19), and the doxology of praise (verses 20-21). Each section provides us with profound insights into the nature of prayer, the power of God's love, and the glory of God.

Paul's Posture in Prayer (3:14-15)

Paul begins by describing his posture in prayer and his approach to God as Father.

Kneeling Before the Father: "For this reason I kneel before the Father." Paul's posture of kneeling indicates his deep reverence and humility before God. Kneeling is a physical expression of submission, worship, and dependence on God. It reflects Paul's recognition of God's sovereignty and his own need for divine intervention. This posture of kneeling can inspire us to approach God with the same attitude of humility and reverence. It reminds us that prayer is not just a routine activity but a profound encounter with the Almighty God.

The Father of All: Paul addresses God as the Father "... from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." This emphasizes God's role as the Creator and Sustainer of all life. It highlights the universal fatherhood of God and the unity of all creation under His loving care. Recognizing God as our Father gives us a sense of belonging and identity. It assures us that we are part of His family and that He cares for us deeply.

The Content of Paul's Prayer (3:16-19)

Paul's prayer is rich with requests for spiritual strength, deeper understanding of Christ's love, and fullness in God.

Strengthened with Power: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being." This strength is not physical but spiritual, affecting the inner being - the core of who we are. The source of this strength is God's glorious riches, emphasizing His abundant and limitless resources. The Holy Spirit empowers us from within, enabling us to live out our faith with resilience and boldness.

Christ Dwelling in Our Hearts: "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." This dwelling goes beyond a temporary visit; it signifies a permanent residence. Christ's presence in our hearts is foundational to our Christian life and growth. Faith is the means by which Christ dwells in us. It involves trusting in Him, relying on His promises, and allowing Him to shape our thoughts, desires, and actions.

Rooted and Established in Love: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love." Paul uses the metaphors of being rooted and established to describe the believers' foundation in love. Just as roots provide stability and nourishment to a plant, being rooted in love provides stability and growth in our spiritual lives. Love is the soil in which our faith grows. It is the foundation of our relationship with God and with others. Being established in love means that love is the guiding principle and driving force of our lives.

Grasping the Love of Christ: "May have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." Paul want all believers to have the power to comprehend the vast dimensions of Christ's love. This love is described as wide, long, high, and deep, indicating its immeasurable and boundless nature. Understanding the depth of Christ's love requires divine revelation and spiritual insight. It is a love that surpasses human understanding and is experienced in community with other believers.

Knowing the Love that Surpasses Knowledge: "And to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Paul prays for the believers to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. This knowledge is not merely intellectual but experiential. It involves a deep, personal encounter with the love of Christ. Being filled with the fullness of God means experiencing His presence and power in every aspect of our lives. It is the culmination of Paul's prayer, indicating a life that is fully saturated with God's love and grace.

The Doxology of Praise (3:20-21)

Paul concludes his prayer with a doxology of praise, acknowledging God's power and glory.

God's Immeasurable Power: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Paul praises God for His immeasurable power. God's ability to exceed our requests and imagination highlights His greatness and sovereignty. His power is not limited by our understanding or expectations. This power is at work within us through the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live out our faith and accomplish God's purposes. It assures us that God is actively involved in our lives and is able to do far more than we can comprehend.

Glory to God in the Church and in Christ Jesus: "To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Paul concludes with a declaration of glory to God. The church and Christ Jesus are the primary arenas where God's glory is displayed.

The church, as the body of Christ, reflects His glory through its unity, love, and mission. This declaration of glory spans all generations, indicating the eternal and unchanging nature of God's glory. It reminds us that our lives are part of a larger, eternal story that brings glory to God.

Practical Applications:

Cultivate a Posture of Reverence in Prayer: Emulate Paul's posture of kneeling in prayer. Approach God with humility, reverence, and dependence. Recognize that prayer is a sacred encounter with the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

Set aside dedicated times for prayer and create a space where you can kneel or sit quietly before God. Allow your physical posture to reflect the attitude of your heart as you seek God's presence and guidance. Experiment with different physical postures, such as kneeling, standing, or even lying flat on the floor, to express your reverence before God. You may even consider going on a prayer retreat where you can spend extended time in prayer and reflection. Use this time to deepen your relationship with God and to cultivate a posture of reverence in your prayer life.

Find a prayer partner or join a prayer group where you can pray together and encourage one another. Sharing your prayer experiences with others can help you grow in your understanding and practice of prayer.

Embrace Your Identity as God's Child: Remember that you are a beloved child of God, part of His family. Let this identity shape your sense of belonging, purpose, and security. Trust in God's love and care for you. Reflect on Scriptures that affirm your identity as God's child, such as Romans 8:14-17 and 1 John 3:1-2. Meditate on these truths and let them sink deeply into your heart.

Surround yourself with a community of believers who can affirm and encourage your identity in Christ. Participate in small groups, Bible studies, and fellowship activities that foster a sense of belonging and support.

Seek Spiritual Strength: Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in your inner being. Recognize that true strength comes from God's glorious riches and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Depend on His power to sustain and empower you. Incorporate prayers for spiritual strength into your daily routine. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit and to empower you to live out your faith with resilience and boldness. Pray for strength in specific areas of your life where you feel weak or challenged. Study Scriptures that speak of God's strength and power, such as Isaiah 40:29-31 and Philippians 4:13. Reflect on these verses and allow them to strengthen and encourage you.

Invite Christ to Dwell in Your Heart: Invite Christ to dwell in your heart more fully through faith. Allow Him to shape your thoughts, desires, and actions. Trust in His presence and guidance.

Spend time in prayer and reflection, inviting Christ to be the centre of your life. Surrender your fears, worries, and desires to Him, and allow His love and peace to fill your heart. Keep a journal where you record your prayers and reflections on inviting Christ to dwell in your heart. Write down the ways you see Him working in your life and the changes you experience as you surrender to Him.

Engage in practices that help you grow in faith and trust in Christ. These may include regular Bible reading, prayer, worship, and fellowship with other believers. Allow these practices to strengthen your relationship with Christ.

Root Yourself in Love: Cultivate a life that is rooted and established in love. Let love be the guiding principle and driving force in your relationships and actions. Seek to reflect Christ's love in all that you do.

Practice acts of love and kindness in your daily interactions. Look for opportunities to serve others and to demonstrate the love of Christ through your words and actions. Reflect on how you can be a conduit of God's love to those around you. Participate in community service projects or volunteer opportunities that allow you to put your love into action.

Grasp the true depth of Christ's love: Pray for the power to comprehend the vast dimensions of Christ's love. Seek to understand and experience His love in deeper and more profound ways.

Recognize that this love surpasses human understanding. Engage in regular Bible study and meditation on passages that speak of Christ's love, such as Romans 8:35-39 and John 15:9-17. Reflect on these Scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the depth of Christ's love to you.

Consider going on a spiritual retreat where you can focus on experiencing the love of Christ. Use this time to deepen your understanding and appreciation of His love.

Participate in small group discussions or Bible studies that focus on the theme of Christ's love. Share your insights and experiences with others and learn from their perspectives.

Experience the Fullness of God: Seek to be filled with the fullness of God. Invite His presence and power to permeate every aspect of your life. Allow His love, grace, and truth to transform you from the inside out. Spend time in worship and prayer, inviting God to fill you with His presence. Seek to align your life with His will and to live in a way that reflects His character and glory.

Make worship a regular part of your daily routine. Practice spiritual disciplines that help you grow in your experience of God's fullness. These may include fasting, meditation, and silence. Seek to cultivate a deeper relationship with God through these disciplines. Spend time reflecting on what it means to be filled with the fullness of God. Consider how you can invite His presence and power to permeate every aspect of your life. Write down your reflections and seek to live out these truths.

Living Ephesians 3:14-21 in daily life:

To fully internalize and live out the truths of Ephesians 3:14-21, we must integrate these principles into our daily lives. Here are some practical ways to do that:

Daily Reminders of God's Love: Start each day by reminding yourself of God's love and presence in your life. This could be through a morning devotion, prayer, or reading Scripture. Let the truth of God's love shape your mindset and actions throughout the day.

Practicing Gratitude: Cultivate a habit of gratitude by regularly thanking God for His love and the new life you have in Christ. Keep a gratitude journal where you write down specific ways God has blessed you.

Extending Love to Others: Make a conscious effort to extend love to others in your interactions. This means being patient, forgiving, and kind, even when it's difficult. Let the love you have received from God overflow into your relationships.

Seeking God's Guidance: Regularly seek God's guidance in discovering and walking in the good works He has prepared for you. Pray for clarity, wisdom, and opportunities to serve. Be open to where God leads you and be willing to step out in faith.

Building Community: Surround yourself with a community of believers who can encourage and support you in your walk with Christ. Participate in small groups, Bible studies, and church activities that foster spiritual growth and accountability.

Reflecting on Your Testimony: Reflect regularly on your testimony and the ways God has transformed your life. Share your story with others as a way to encourage and inspire them. Let your life be a living testimony of God's love.

Conclusion:

In Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul prays for the believers to be strengthened with power, to grasp the depth of Christ's love, and to be filled with the fullness of God. His prayer reveals the profound nature of our relationship with God and the transformative power of His love.

As we reflect on these truths, let us more fully embrace our identity as God's children, seeking spiritual strength, invite Christ to dwell more fully in our hearts, as we root ourselves in love, grasping the depth of Christ's love, and experience the fullness of God.

May we carry these truths in our hearts and live out our faith boldly and joyfully. It is my prayer that we would all continue to grow in our understanding of God's love and live out the truths of this powerful prayer with confidence and grace.