

Series: The Weath of Christ the Walk of the Christian

PAUL'S PETITIONS IN PRAYER

EPHESIANS 3:16-19

Text:

Introduction:

The verses reveal a man in prayer. Beginning in verse 14, Paul turned his heart toward the Lord to pray for the believers in Ephesus.

As Paul prayed for the Ephesians believers, he made some very specific requests on their behalf. It is interesting to note what he did not ask for when he prayed. He did not pray for anything physical, material or financial. He did not pray for the healing of their sick. He did not pray that they would be delivered from persecution. He did not pray about the economy in Asia Minor. Paul did not occupy his prayer with so many of the things that seem to mark our own prayer lives.

If we were to be honest, I think we would all have to admit that most of our praying is selfish. Far too often we pray about things that are physical in nature. We pray for material needs. We pray for healing for the sick. We pray about our burdens and our problems. We pray for an easier life. We pray for more money. We pray about all kinds of things like that.

Many of the things we pray about will not be issues in a year, or a month, or a week, or even a day. On the other hand, spiritual matters are eternal in nature. We can become so consumed with the issues that occupy our minds today that we fail to even consider the matters of eternity.

Notice Paul's Petition In Prayer:

1. HE PRAYS FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL POWER (VS. 16)

Ephesians 3:16

¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

The first petition Paul makes regards their spiritual power, or strength.

Note a few thoughts about this prayer for spiritual power.

A. The Arena of this Power

Paul prays that this power might be revealed in the "inner man."

He is speaking about the very source of all the problems we have in our lives.

The soul is the center of our will, our emotions, our thought process, and our motives.

Everything we do in life results from the decisions we make within the “inner man.”

When the “inner man” is weak, we are subject to being controlled by the power of our flesh.

It is the weakness in the “inner man” that causes us to react in anger, to gossip about others, to curse, to steal, to lie, to commit sin, or to engage in any of the countless other sins we commit.

Again, it is Paul’s desire that the Ephesian believers be changed in the “inner man,” or on a spiritual level.

Note also:

B. The Abundance of the Power

Paul prays that their spiritual power may be, “according to the riches of His glory.” He is praying that God will bless them “according” to His spiritual wealth. That is an amazing request.

Paul is praying that God will give believers spiritual power that flows from the vast, limitless resources of God Himself. Those very resources became ours when we trusted Christ as Savior.

Paul prays for their spiritual power. If there is one thing every believer needs is spiritual power.

Note not only does he pray for the spiritual power, but also:

2. HE PRAYS FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL PASSION (VS. 17-19)

Ephesians 3:17-19

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Paul now turns from praying for their spiritual power to praying for their spiritual passion. His prayer is for these believers to be filled with the love of God that manifests itself in love for God and for others. Notice with me the ways Paul prayed for their spiritual love lives.

Note:

A. The Root of this Passion (vs. 17a)

Ephesians 3:17

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

He prayed that “Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” He is not praying that they would be saved; they already were.

Think of it this way: imagine that you have to move in with a new family. This family opens their home to you and invites you to come in, so you enter and take up residence. But, these people are pigs! They never throw out the trash or pick up their used dishes. They never bath or change the baby’s diapers. They leave food to rot on the cabinets and in the refrigerator. They never sweep, mop or dust. The house is full of all kinds of critters and creeping things. It is a deplorable mess. Now, you might live there, but you would never feel at home until the place was cleaned up.

The same is true with us. This verse is not about salvation, but it is about sanctification. The Lord dwells in our hearts by faith, but He is not at home in our hearts until we are under the control of the Spirit. When the Spirit of God controls us, He cleans up our lives creating a comfortable home for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider the house of your heart today. Christ may live there, but is He at home in your heart? Your heart may be His house, His Temple, but is it His home?

Note also:

B. The Reality of the Passion (vs. 17b)

Ephesians 3:17

¹⁷ *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

As Paul continues His prayer, he asks that they be “rooted and grounded in love.” These words speak of “putting down roots to give a strong foundation” and of being “stable or established.” He is praying for their maturity in Christ.

God wants His people to be rooted in His love and built up through loving others and by being loved by others. That is Paul’s prayer for the church then, and it is still the Lord’s will for the church now.

Note also:

C. The Results of This Passion (vs. 18-19)

Ephesians 3:18-19

¹⁸ *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;* ¹⁹ *And*

to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

When Paul mentions “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” he is not talking about four kinds of love. He is talking about the fullness or the vastness of God’s love.

- A Love Which is Wide Enough to Embrace the World (John 3:16)

John 3:16

¹⁶ For God so loved **the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- A Love Which is Long Enough to Last Forever (1 Corinthians 13:8)

1 Corinthians 13:8

⁸ Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

- A Love Which is High Enough to Take Sinners the Heaven (1 John 3:1-2)

1 John 3:1-2

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath

bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

- A Love Which is Deep Enough to Take Christ to the Very Depths to Reach the Lowest Sinner (Philippians 2:8)

Philippians 2:8

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Notice not only did he pray for their spiritual power, and their spiritual passion but also:

3. HE PRAYS FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY (VS. 19)

Ephesians 3:19

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Paul's final petition for the Ephesian believers is that they "might be filled with all the fulness of God." This is a remarkable request. How can the finite hold the

infinite? How can something so small contain Someone Who fills all things?

Illustration:

Imagine, if you will, that we are standing beside a great ocean. Before us stretches out an unending body of water. We are nothing but a speck on the seashore compared to that vast ocean. Now imagine that we dip a gallon bucket into the ocean. That bucket would immediately be filled with the power and fullness of that ocean. Our bucket could not contain all the fullness of that ocean, but it would still be filled with it.

So it is with Christ and His church. We dip the puny buckets of our lives into the vast ocean of His glory and we are instantly filled with Him. However, these finite vessels cannot contain all that He is. Yet, we find that being open to His power, His glory and His fullness enables us to hold even more of Him.

Paul is praying that the people of God might know all they can of the fullness of the Lord. He wants them to be vessels filled with the Lord's power, presence, love and glory. That is only possible as we yield our vessels to Him and allow Him to flow into us until we are filled with nothing but Him. By the way, to be filled with Him implies that we become empty of self.

Close:

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is amazing! He asks for spiritual gifts that can only come from the Lord. Paul steps away from the usual formula for prayer, which goes, "bless me and mine and make us happy," to "Lord, do whatever it takes to make us holy."

What does this passage have to say to us about our own prayer life?

When we look at our own lives are we filled more with self than with the Savior?