

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

Ephesians 3:16-17a

1. *Paul prays that God might strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being.*
 - This power comes *through* God's Spirit and *into* our inner being. Christ dwells in us through his Spirit (cf., Rom. 8:9). 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 (same expression 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 grows in Christlikeness. It is the stage upon which our character is played out.
 - So many of us long for better physical health, a stronger body, more hair, less fat, etc. Paul's focus in this prayer is for the display of God's power in our character, our "inner being." Imagine what measure of growth we may realized 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 [our] hearts through faith."
 - The idea of "dwell" here means more than to take up residence. It's possible to take up residence in our 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 and certainly renovates our inner being and makes our heart his home. His character becomes ours.
 - Note that it is "through faith" and by prayer that Christ makes my heart his home. The way I come to know Christ is the same way I grow in Christ.
 - The source of this power is God's "glorious riches;" the implication is that we do not have our own resources (Jn. 15:5). All that we bring to the table is faith; and that, too, is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9; Philip. 1:29; 1 Tim. 1:14; Heb. 12:2).

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. This is a Trinitarian prayer!

Ephesians 3:17b-19

2. *Paul prays that we may have power to grasp the limitless dimensions of Christ's love.*
 - "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 overwhelming and irresistible love that we begin a relationship with Christ and continue in it (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 1:4-5).
 - 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 2:1-5).
 - The dimensions of Christ's love are staggering!

Prayer for Power

Week 6

- 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. Using a metaphorical way of saying Christ's love permeates everything that comes into contact with it, Paul prays in effect that we comprehend ("grasp") the comprehensive love of Christ! This is love "surpasses knowledge" and moves well beyond mere creedal confession; it is profoundly personal (Gal. 2:20).
- The appreciation for Christ's love is not just a private, personal endeavor, but is to be enjoyed and expressed "together with all the saints" (3:18).
- 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 this divine love is to experience a new life where forgiveness becomes natural not contrived, fellowship becomes precious not merely artificial, testimonies are alive and vibrant not stale and merely correct, and all our attitudes and actions become compelled by sacrifice and service to others *because Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:8).

Ephesians 3:20-21

After praying for God's power to strengthen us and for Christ's love to grip us, Paul turns to praise.

- 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 goal of God's optimum grandeur and glory (see Eph 1:3, 6, 14). And, it is primarily "in the church" (that's you and that's me) where God chooses to bring himself glory. We ARE the temple of the living God (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16)!

So What?

- Begin praying that God would strengthen one person with power through his Spirit in their inner being.
- Is God's glory the target and goal of your prayers or are you focused most on what you ask of God?
- Pray that the Trinitarian God would make his presence real in the character of your spiritual brothers and sisters, as well as your own.
- How has Christ's love for you impacted your life since becoming a Christian? Memorize and meditate upon Gal 2:20 or Rom 5:5.

Next week: Prayer for Ministry (Romans 15:30-33)