



RESIDENCE: Christ in Us

Ephesians 3:14-21

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FIRST THOUGHTS

What reveals a person's priorities?

Credit card statements, calendars, interactions, and interruptions all provide a glimpse into what's important to people. Prayers reveal priorities. The content, frequency, and intensity of prayers indicate what matters most to us. We learn a great deal about Paul's priorities, and consequently God's priorities, from his prayer in [Ephesians 3:14-21](#).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PETITIONED

[Ephesians 3:14–15](#) (ESV)

¹⁴ *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,* ¹⁵ *from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,*

Paul is continuing the prayer that he began in [Eph 3:1](#). Paul wanted the readers to understand the seriousness of this prayer. He says he fell to his knees before God. The prominent posture of prayer for a Jewish man would have been standing. Here we see Paul praying on his knees in an attitude of submission, reverence and intense passion.

As Paul began his prayer for strength for all Christians, Jew and Gentile, he acknowledged that God was the Father of every family in heaven and on earth. This could be a reference to all families in the past and present, or it could be a reference to all created beings—earthly and angelic. Either way, the emphasis is on the dominion of God over every created being as well as every social institution. No person or family exists outside of the role of God's dominion. He has authority over the Jews and over the Gentiles. As God brought them into one new family, He continued to have authority over them.

As Paul addressed his prayer to the Father, he spoke to the One who was not merely the Father of the Jews, but the Father of every family He had created. Surely this God would hear Paul's petition and strengthen His children.

INDWELLING

[Ephesians 3:16–19](#) (ESV)

¹⁶ *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* ¹⁷ *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,* ¹⁸ *may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,* ¹⁹ *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

There are four definite petitions here which Paul makes on behalf of the Ephesian believers.

The **first** petition is that the believers might ***“be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man.”*** ([Eph 3:16](#)) This is not the *“when the going gets tough the tough get going”* kind of power. This is not self-discipline

or the power of positive thinking. This is not mental renewing, or self-talk, or getting a grip on yourself, or turning over a new leaf. This is a fundamental work of God from his Spirit to our spirit. It is the believer allowing the Holy Spirit to have residence inside their heart.

In the **second** petition Paul prays that ***“Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”*** The Greek word *Katoikeō* translated “dwell” literally means “*settle down and be at home.*” Is Christ at home in your heart? Paul says, “*My prayer is that Christ would be comfortable in you. And where He is comfortable, where He’s at home, you will be happy and blessed.*”

The **third** petition is a request that the believers may know the dimensions of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ. He prays that they may be ***“rooted and grounded in love.”*** He prays that they may be “rooted and grounded in love.” “*Rooted*” refers to botany, to life. “*Grounded*” refers to architecture, to stability. This is for all the saints.

Paul wants them to ***“know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”*** The vast expanse of the love of Christ is the love of God Himself. From this launching pad we can begin to measure that which is immeasurable and to know that which passes knowledge. This is one of the many paradoxes of the believer’s life. Only the Holy Spirit can lead a believer into this vast experience of the love of Christ. Since it is infinite, it is beyond human comprehension.

The **fourth** petition is a final outburst of an all-consuming fervor that believers ***“might be filled up to all the fulness of God.”*** The inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God's fullness in us.

J. Wilbur Chapman often told of the testimony given by a certain man in one of his meetings:

I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Hey, mister, can you give me a dime?" As soon as I saw his face, I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, "Father, Father, do you know me?" Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Oh my son, at last I've found you! I have found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours." Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had. That is a small picture of what God wants to do for His children. His supreme goal in bringing us to Himself is to make us like Himself by filling us with Himself, with all that He is and has. (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 111.)

That is a small picture of what God wants to do for His children. His supreme goal in bringing us to Himself is to make us like Himself by filling us with Himself, with all that He is and has.

HONORED

[Ephesians 3:20–21](#) (ESV)

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,* ²¹ *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul ends his discussion of the mystery of the church and his prayer for power with a spontaneous burst of praise to God. His prayer forms a great doxology to the Lord for his power and glory. We see three things emerging from this doxology.

First, we see the sovereignty of God. God in his sovereignty may choose to do whatever he wills. What he can do far exceeds anything we can dream or imagine, much less ask for. God's sovereignty means our prayers can be answered far beyond even what we ask.

Second, we see the omnipotence of God. God manifests his great power in many ways. Most obviously, he manifested it when he created the world. He used that kind of power to bring Jews and Gentiles together and form them into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The power we see in creation and in the church is the power of God that works in us in the love relationship of prayer.

Finally, we see his glory. The power God has manifested and continues to display has a purpose—bringing glory to him. All that God has done is to resound to his glory forever. God has done things in the church among his people and in Christ Jesus where his people now abide and where God completed his plan of salvation. As we see and recognize God's work in the church and in Christ, we respond in praise and worship, giving God glory.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What valuable lessons can we learn and apply about our prayers and priorities from Paul's prayer for believers?

- The top priority in our lives and prayers should be honoring God rather than indulging ourselves.
- When Jesus resides and reigns in believers, we glorify God in our lives and in His church. We need to make it a priority to pray for spiritual transformation for ourselves and others.
- Boldly ask God to do far more in our lives, families, and churches than we can begin to imagine.
- Scripture is a powerful way to pray according to God's will. Regularly pray [Ephesians 3:14-21](#) for yourself and others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Evaluate your prayers and priorities. Is your focus on helping yourself or honoring God? What can you do in your prayers to focus more on God's glory? What priorities might you need to rearrange so Jesus resides and reigns in your inner being?

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