

Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Ephesus

Ephesians 3: 14-21

To say that the Apostle Paul was used greatly of the Lord would be an understatement. There can be no doubt that Paul surrendered his life in service to the Lord and because of that, God used Paul to establish and encourage many churches on his missionary journeys.

Even though he was called away to other areas and needs, Paul's love for the churches never diminished. He was committed to doing all that he could to ensure their continued progress, even in his absence. Paul well understood and embraced a fundamental truth: prayer is needful as well as powerful. While away from them, Paul continued to pray for the churches. He knew the value of lifting them up in prayer to the Lord.

We believe in the power and importance of prayer. I'm sure that we have all experienced the power of God through prayer. But I wonder if we really pray as we should. Is prayer a priority for us? Do we pray for each other and the church as a whole as we should?

The Epistles record several prayers that Paul prayed for the churches. I want to take a few weeks and look at these prayers, and I hope that we will be instructed and challenged in our prayers for Fellowship. Tonight let's consider the elements of: [Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Ephesus](#).

I. He Prayed for Their Development (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;](#) Paul was concerned about the spiritual development of the believers at Ephesus. He knew if the church was to continue and prosper, there had to be continual growth.

- That is likely one of the greatest hindrances to the church in our day. Few churches are seeing much spiritual growth. We need to pray that God will develop Fellowship and mature us in Him.
- There are a couple of things we need to consider about our development.

A. The Source – Paul had prayed that the church would be strengthened by the power of God. He did not look to the political, social, or economic systems of the world to provide strength for the church. He called upon the Lord to provide through the richness of His glory.

- Many churches are stagnant and dead spiritually because they are depending upon the wrong things. Their focus is not where it should be. Many place more emphasis on the numbers than they do the necessities, on presentation rather than power, and on works rather than worship. Paul wanted the church at Ephesus to experience an outpouring of God's glory!
- Would you like to see our church grow and prosper in the Lord? If so, make it a priority to pray for God's power to be poured out upon us.

B. The Struggle – Paul had not prayed this prayer just to have something to say. This was not a prayer of vain repetition. Paul sensed a great need among the church. He was concerned about the struggles of the inner man.

- Life in Ephesus was not easy for the church. They were not surrounded by multitudes who sought to serve the Lord. If they were to survive spiritually, they had to become strong in the inner man. They needed the Holy Spirit controlling their lives instead of the desires of the flesh.
- We too face a hostile environment spiritually. This world does not embrace or encourage our faith. They are not concerned with our spiritual well being or our relationship with the Lord. If we are to survive and prosper spiritually, our only hope is to be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit.
- As you pray for the church and individuals, pray that God would develop us through the outpouring of His power and that we might be strengthened by the blessed Holy Spirit.

I. He Prayed for Their Development (16)

II. He Prayed for Their Dwelling (17a) – [That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith](#). Paul was concerned with what they allowed to abide within their hearts. The term [dwell](#) speaks of a permanent dwelling, not just a brief visit. He desired the church to allow the Lord to have preeminence in their lives at all times.

- There is an application for salvation concerning Christ dwelling in our hearts, but I believe Paul is dealing with the saved. He wanted them to rid their hearts of the cares and lusts of the flesh and make room for the Lord. This was not just for Sunday, but every day.
- For all who are born again, Christ dwells within their hearts. We are indwelt by Him and that will never change. However, if we aren't careful over time we bring some things in and place them within the heart. At first they may be laid down and forgotten, but before we know it we have brought in so much that we hardly have room for the Lord. We need to be aware of the Lord's presence every day. Our hearts need to be consumed with the presence and power of Christ.
- Before we leave this thought, it is important to note the way to achieve a heart that welcomes the Lord and enjoys His presence. This will only be achieved through faith. [Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me](#). We need to pray for the church's development and our dwelling!

III. He Prayed for Their Devotion (17b) – Paul reveals a desire that they be [rooted and grounded in love](#). This is speaking of God's love, Agape love.

- It is love that is not dictated by circumstances or situations. It is not prejudice or restrained. It is love that is constant and pure, never changing. We desperately need the love of God within our hearts for each other.
- He also revealed an important truth. They were to be **rooted and grounded in love**; they were to literally build their lives and the church upon that foundation. This was an essential element that had to exist if the church was to prosper and continue. Without love in the foundation, the church would eventually crumble and fall when the storms of life began to rage.
- Would you not agree that our churches need more love? We can do pretty well with those whom we choose to associate, our close friends and family, but God has called upon us to love all as He loves them. **Mat.22:37-39 – Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** Pray that we will be rooted and grounded in love. Pray that we will love others as Christ loved us. Where would any of us be had someone not loved us?
- A church that is built upon love for Christ and each other is settled upon a firm foundation. It is much easier to overlook the faults of those we love.

I. He Prayed for Their Development (16)

II. He Prayed for Their Dwelling (17a)

III. He Prayed for Their Devotion (17b)

IV. He Prayed for Their Discernment (18-19a) – **May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.** Paul was concerned with the discernment of the Ephesians. This could be applied to wisdom in general, and we certainly need wisdom, but the focus here is the love of God. **Paul wanted them to fully comprehend and embrace the love of God for humanity.** He wanted them to see and understand it from every angle.

- The love of God is greater than our feeble minds can comprehend. Its **breadth** reaches beyond the secular and social boundaries than we often put up. The **length** of God's love is never ending. There is not a soul so far away that God's love cannot reach. There is not a one who has gone so far that God's love cannot draw them unto salvation. The **depth** of God's love permeates even the hardest of hearts and brings about new life. It reaches to the lowest depths and calls out to those in need. The **height** of God's love could never be measured. It extends beyond the highest heights. There is no where that we could go to escape the love of God.

- We as God's people need a better understanding of such love. We need wisdom concerning the love of God so that we might show and share that love with the world around us. I am convinced that the average Christian hasn't even scratched the surface of the abundance of God. Pray that the church would possess the wisdom of God. Pray that we might better understand so that we might be challenged and encouraged as well.

I. He Prayed for Their Development (16)

II. He Prayed for Their Dwelling (17a)

III. He Prayed for Their Devotion (17b)

IV. He Prayed for Their Discernment (18-19a)

V. He Prayed for Their Depth (19b) – *that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.* Paul had experienced the fullness of God. He knew what it was to abound in the Lord. He genuinely desires the saints at Ephesus to experience that fullness as well. **Fullness** has the idea of “*a ship that has been filled with all its cargo and completely manned for the journey with sailors, rowers, and soldiers.*” Paul didn't want them to make the trip without all they needed. He didn't want them to struggle and just barely survive. He wanted them to enjoy the fullness of the trip. He wanted them to experience the fullness of God's grace and power!

- We desperately need that fullness in our day. There are too many who are just floating along. They are going through the motions, making their way through life, but there is a lack of joy and power. We can have the fullness of God in our lives. **Jn.10:10 – The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**
- Let us pray that Fellowship might know and enjoy the fullness of God. We don't have to just barely survive. We don't have to live in defeat. We don't have to come and endure the services, never experiencing the power and presence of God. We can have His fullness.
- We need to pray that each and every one of us would experience that wonderful fullness. Wouldn't it be great to leave here filled to the brim with God? Wouldn't it be great to look forward to another opportunity to serve the Lord? That is possible when we are full of Him.

We have looked at one of the prayers that Paul prayed for the church. As a part of the church, you are obligated to pray for the church. It will benefit us all if we all decided to make that commitment to pray for one another.

How is your prayer life concerning the church? I know that prayer is an area that I need to improve upon. Are you concerned about the needs of our church and its future? If so, the best thing you can do is learn to pray for the church and continue to do so daily.