

# Prayer for Spiritual Strength and Knowledge

(Ephesians 3:14-21)<sup>i</sup>

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 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, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [Eph. 3:14]. What was the cause? It was because of Paul's deep interest in these Ephesian believers whom he had taught for more than 2 years. He wanted them to enter into the great truth of that great era—the era of the Church and this new Gospel economy in which they were living. He wanted them to experience all the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus. That was the background for his prayer.

There is another point which I think is rather important to note.

We have here that Paul prayed to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will also notice that back in chapter 1, verse 17, he prayed to the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ." We find that this was his formula, and I think it is a rather tight formula to address all prayers to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Someone may say, "Aren't you splitting hairs?" Listen to the Lord Jesus: "*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*" (John 16:23). Jesus Christ is our great Intercessor. To pray in Jesus' name means we go to God the Father with a prayer that the Lord Jesus Himself can lift to the Father for you and me.

Paul was a man of prayer and this is his second great prayer in this epistle. Because he viewed the church as the poem of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of the ages he went to God in prayer that these great truths might become realities in the lives of the Ephesian believers... and I might add in the lives of all those who might pray like this and those that we would pray for. The three years that Paul spent in Ephesus teaching, his epistle to the Church, and his prayers were no doubt the foundation for the gospel penetrating into every urban center of the province of Asia Minor. Many Bible teachers note that the greatest ministry the gospel has ever had was in what is today modern Turkey. In that day there were an estimated 25 million people living there. In Acts 19:10 it says... "*all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*" What a difference it makes when we get the Word of God out!!

Paul's prayer is brief and to the point:

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

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

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, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God [Eph. 3:16-19].

Notice again that he prays according to the riches of His glory, not out of the riches of His glory. If He would take it out of His riches, He would be like Mr. Rockefeller who used to give his caddy a dime.

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

1. The petition is that the believers might "*be strengthened with might [power] by his Spirit in the inner man.*" The spiritual nature of the believer needs prayer as well as does the physical. How often the spiritual is neglected while all the attention is given to the physical side. Paul prays for the inner man because he realizes that the outward man is passing away. Power is needed to live the Christian life, to grow in grace, and to develop into full maturity -- which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

We tend to pray a great deal for the outward man. It is a marvelous way to pray, praying for the physical needs of folk. Paul did, and he prayed for himself. Three times he asked God to remove the thorn in his flesh. It is wonderful to know that God does hear and does answer prayer, but we need to remember that the spiritual nature of the believer needs prayer as well as the physical. Only the Holy Spirit can supply power, living, and growth for the full maturity of the believer.

2. In the second petition Paul prays that "*Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*" This is to think the Lord's thoughts after Him. "*Ye in me and I in you.*" Paul could exclaim, ". . . *Christ liveth in me . . .*" (Gal. 2:20). In Christ is the high word of this epistle. The wonderful counterpart of it is that Christ is in us. In Christ -- that is our position. Christ in us -- that is our possession. That is the practical side of it. "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" (2Cor. 13:5).

Christ has not come as a temporary visitor. He has come as a permanent tenant by means of the Spirit to live in our lives. "*I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

3. 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." "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.

The breadth... the arms of Christ reach around the world. "*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved . . .*" (John 10:9). ". . . *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37).

The length... the length of it begins with the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world and proceeds unto the endless ages of eternity.

The depth... the depth goes all the way to Christ's death on the cross. "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2:8).

The height... the height reaches to the throne of God. "*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*" (Phil. 2:6).

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.

4. The fourth petition is a final outburst of an all-consuming fervor that believers "*might be filled up to all the fullness of God.*" Christ was thus filled. In proportion to our comprehension of the love of Christ, we shall be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen [[Eph. 3:20-21](#)].

This is both a doxology and a benediction which concludes the prayer of Paul. This is a mighty outburst of spiritual praise, which any comment would only tarnish. We are not able to so much as touch the hem of the garment of the spiritual gifts that God is prepared to give to His own. How wonderful this is! He wants to give to us super-abundantly. How good He is, and how small we are. We cannot even contain all of His blessings.

#### **Pray for yourself:**

Because you have saved me, by faith I bow my knee unto you the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of your glory you would strengthen me with power through your Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith—that I, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to you who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

#### **Pray for someone else:**

In you Lord Jesus, in whom I have boldness and access with confidence through my faith in you I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of your glory you may grant that \_\_\_\_\_ be strengthened with power through the Spirit in his/her inner being, so that Christ may dwell in his/her heart through faith—, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that he/she may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to you who is able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask or think, according to the power at work within me, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Based on J. Vernon McGee's Thru the Bible commentary; [www.ttb.org](http://www.ttb.org)