



## **The Heart Healthy Prayer Plan**

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

**Main Idea:** With much discouragement in this world, pray for spiritual strength in Christ.

### **Pray in humble dependence to our Father (14-15).**

- *Look to the God who created and knows everyone (15).*

While Paul considered God's amazing grace through Christ that extended to the Jews and the Gentiles to be an encouragement to the church, he also knew that his present state – in chains for the gospel – might be a discouragement to the church. That's often the case. When hardships and injustices come in this life, it's easy to question God or question faith. Why would God allow Paul to be in prison? Why would the Lord permit the injustice and hardship in the life of his faithful servant? Paul knew that some of the Ephesian believers would likely ask these questions, so he encouraged them to not lose heart (13), and then he prayed for them to be given supernatural, spiritual strength in Christ. His prayer is deep and timeless, and it starts appropriately positioned before the Lord. Paul said that he bowed his knee before the Father. What a beautiful posture of humility. The kneeling servant before his King. The submissive son at the feet of his Father. Paul's position reminds us of where our hearts should be as we approach our Father. He's not just your Father. He's the Father who created everyone and the one from every family owes its existence.

1. In viewing God as his Father, what were the implications of that relationship in Paul's approach to prayer? How does this still apply to God's children today? What are the implications for your approach to prayer?
2. Read verse 15, and discuss how this verse impacts Paul's view of all people. How does this affect your view? How did this truth affect Paul's prayer? How should it affect your prayer?
3. How do you approach God in humility? It's more than just kneeling in prayer, right? What does kneeling have to do with humble dependence on the Lord? Why is this important?

### **Pray for strength in the power of the Spirit (16-19).**

- *Ask for Christ's presence to fill us through faith (17).*
- *Ask for Christ's love to grow us in his love (18-19a).*
- *Ask for the fullness of the Lord to fill us (19b).*

Paul started his prayer by asking for the power of God to empower the lives of the believers in their innermost being — at the essence or heart of who they were — asking for strength in their lives through the Spirit. This strength was to overcome the losing heart that he warned them against in verse 13. He knew that hardships in this life can discourage and damage faith, so he prayed for the power of God in their lives to overcome discouragement with strength. Building on this fundamental request for strengthening, Paul went on to request

God's strengthening in some specific ways. First, Paul focused on the very life of Christ dwelling in the life of the believer through faith. What an incredible gift from God! This is the very heart of the resurrected life, which is Christ in us: The hope of glory! Paul's desire was that the life of Jesus would be evident, more-and-more, in the lives of the Ephesian believers. Secondly, in a beautiful and poetic way, Paul also requested strength through the love of God in Christ Jesus. Like a plant whose roots find nourishment for growth in rich soil, the life of a believer must be rooted in the love of Christ to find nourishment for growth in Christ. The indescribable depth of God's love to us in Jesus is the deepest of mines that can never be fully searched out and exhausted. Third, Paul asked for the believers to be filled with the fullness of the Lord in their lives. He wanted them to have and to share all the blessings of God's presence in their lives. If God's ultimate plan in salvation is glorification in Christ, Paul wanted the lives of the believers growing in that direction right now in this life!

1. Read verse 16. Discuss this foundational request from Paul. What is "power through His Spirit?" What is "your inner being?" Why is this prayer still so important to pray?
2. Read verse 17. The result of God's strengthening is connected to the presence and life of Jesus in the life of a believer. What does this mean? What is the point of Christ dwelling in a believer? Why is this important, and what affect does this have in a believer's life?
3. Read verses 18-19. How has God allowed you to know his love more-and-more through the years? Share testimonies. How does knowing and being grounded in God's love affect life? Are you growing in his love? Why, or why not?

**Pray with assurance that God can do more than we can ask or think (20-21).**

- *Trust in his power (20b).*
- *Long for his glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (21).*

What a closing to his prayer! Paul knew that God was the God who can and often does far more than we can ask or think. As he looked to God to answer his prayer for the Ephesian believers, he looked with full assurance that God could do even more. What a relief to know that we don't have to even ask perfectly in our prayer because we have a God that can do far more abundantly than we can request or imagine. Paul trusted in God's power. While he and the believers may be powerless to accomplish any of these things in their own lives, God had the power to do it. Paul also prayed for the glory of God. There are a lot of reasons people pray, but there's one reason that should stand out above and before every other: The glory of God! Paul asked the Lord to do these things in the lives of his people because he knew that their lives were a reflection of him in the world. The church is what the world sees in connection to their understanding of God and his work in this world. Believers are the light of the world that continue to shine the light of Christ into the darkness. Paul prayed, longing for God's glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, knowing that the two are connected by God's design and for his glory in the world.

1. Discuss Paul's motivation for God's glory. Where do you see a similar motivation in other prayers in Scripture? Why is this significant?
2. How does the church bring glory to God? Discuss specific ways that your church brings God glory. Do individual members in the church have an effect on the glory of God through the church? Are you concerned about God's glory in the church? What's important for growing and protecting God's glory in the church?
3. Why does Paul connect God's glory to the church and to Christ Jesus?