

RICH *in* GRACE

Sermon Series in Ephesians

Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
 - (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
 - (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
 - (4) What does God want me to know?
 - (5) What does God want me to do?
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“Worth Praying For”

Ephesians 3:14-21

Main Point: Pray for each other.

Priorities in praying for each other:

Pray to our Father (14-15, 20):

- *Who is the Creator of everyone (15); and*
- *Who is able to do more than you can imagine (20).*

In thinking about all that God had done for the Jew and the Gentile in Christ Jesus, Paul couldn't think of anything more appropriate to do than to pray for the believers in Ephesus. The “for this reason” in Eph. 3:14 refers back to all that Paul said in chapters 1 and 2, specifically responding to the great work of God's grace in chapter 2. In thinking about God's gift of life in Jesus through faith in Jesus, Paul bows in prayer before his Heavenly Father, who is truly the Father — Creator — of all life. Paul's perspective of God as the Father of all seems simple, but it's profound in its implications for prayer. God was Paul's Father, and God was the Creator who knows every family in heaven and on earth. What a beautiful reality that should fuel confident prayer in the children of God! In verse 20, Paul pointed to another fundamental truth about his Heavenly Father, which was that God was the One who was able to do more than he could imagine. Paul recognized and reminded the Ephesian believers that God's response to their prayers wasn't limited by their limitations. What we can't think of or fail to ask for, God can do!

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 the implications of this verse in relationship to 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? Be specific in your discussion and application.
3. Read verse 20. Spend time discussing what Paul said about God in this verse. What does he mean when he said “that we ask or think?” How does this truth impact prayer? Why? Do you see evidence of that impact in Paul's prayer? If so, how?

Pray for what matters most (16-19):

- *For the power of God to empower us (16);*
- *For faith that fills us with Jesus (17); and*
- *For strength to see the love of Jesus (18-19).*

Paul's prayer for the believers in verses 16-18 focused on things in the believers' lives that would impact everything and anything in life. He prayed for what mattered most, which was their life in Jesus through their faith in Jesus. Paul started by asking for the power of God to empower the lives of the believers. In their inner most being — or at the essence and heart of who they were — Paul asked for strength in their lives through the Spirit. Building on this fundamental request for strengthening, Paul went on to request God's strengthening in some specific ways. In verse 17, he 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! Paul's desire was that the life of Jesus would live more-and-more in the lives of the believers in Ephesus. Secondly, in a beautiful and poetic way, Paul also requested strength through the love of God in Christ Jesus. 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. God's love is also the greatest of strength to the believer who is blasted with the hurts and hates of sinfulness in the world. Paul's desire was strength in the lives of the believers that would come from growing in knowing God's love for them and for others in the world!

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 foundational for praying for others today?
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?

Pray for the glory of God (21):

- *In the church and*
- *In Jesus.*

The closing of Paul's prayer is so important. Paul prayed to God in response to God's grace in the gospel, and Paul prayed to God for His continued grace in the lives of His children. However, Paul asked God for all of these things for one overarching purpose, which was the glory of God. As is the case in prayer throughout Scripture, Paul's motivation was ultimately focused on the glory of God. Paul asked for God's work in strengthening His children in their lives in Christ not only for the individual good of each believer but also for the glory of God in His church! Moreover, Paul knew that God would be most glorified through the glory brought to His Son, so Paul proclaimed eternal glory to God through all that God had done in Christ and all that God was doing through Christ in His church. What a great reminder today of the proper motivation of our prayer. May we always pray for the work of God for the glory of God in all generations.

1. Discuss Paul's motivation for the glory of God in this verse. 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 our faith family brings God glory. What affect do individual members in the church have on the glory of God through the church? What's important for growing and protecting God's glory in the church?
3. Close your small group time in prayer, using this prayer of Paul as a model or guide for your prayer for each other and for our church. Commit to pray this daily in the coming week!