

An Apostles Prayer

Ephesians 3:14-21

Week of March 1 – March 7

One of the things that stands out to me in this prayer is Paul's obvious view of the "richness" and "abundance" of God. It's a beautiful prayer, demonstrating an amazing understanding of God and desire to see others know God more fully.

The richness and depth found in just these few verses is nearly overwhelming. To help us take in all that Paul is saying here, we will read the entire prayer each day but look closely at smaller sections of verses.

Key Point: God's abundance lavished upon us.

Key Verse: I pray that, according to the riches of His glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

Ephesians 3:16, 17

Segment 1 – Christ Dwelling in Us

Open your time of study with prayer:

Heavenly Father – I have been taught that "Christ dwells in me", yet I don't think I know what that really means. Please expand my understanding and teach me to trust in your Spirit in me. Amen.

Read the entire prayer (Eph. 3:14-21), out loud if possible.

Then look closely at 3:14-17.

1. Paul prays for the believers to be strengthened. Look closely at what he says. What is the source of this strength? Where does this source need to exist in the life of a believer?

Pray:

Spend some time in prayer now, focusing on **Ephesians 3:14-21**. These verses are rich in meaning and knowledge of God. Allow them to be a form of prayer, a way for God to speak to you.

- Invite God to be with you. Ask Him to reveal what He would like for you to know in these verses.
- Read the verses completely through at least twice, out loud if possible.

- What word or phrase stands out to you?

- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/images/feelings/impressions:

- Repeat this process: Read the verses completely through at least twice, out loud if possible.
- Does a different word or phrase stand out to you?

- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/feelings/impressions:

2. How did you encounter God through this time of prayer? What did you learn? What did God reveal to you?

Segment 2 – Love that Surpasses Knowledge

Open your time of study with prayer:

Father, I am humbled by Paul's prayer for the believers. My prayers seem so small by comparison, so self-centered or problem-centered. Please teach my heart to pray God-centered prayers that are not limited by my faith or understanding, but only by your limitless power. Amen.

Read the entire prayer (Eph. 3:14-21), out loud if possible.

Then look closely at 3:18-19.

Paul begins by recognizing that, as believers, his listeners already have a basic knowledge of God's love. They are "rooted and established in love". Yet his desire for them to know the love of God doesn't stop there!

3. Why do you think Paul prays for the believers to grasp and know the love of God? How might this be different from simply their "basic" understanding?

4. In what ways might a deeper understanding of the vastness of God's love change a person's life?

Pray:

I am impressed by the "bigness" of Paul's prayer for these Ephesians believers. Often my prayers seem dry. I use common words or phrases – strength, presence, guidance – without fully understanding the depth of abundance God has to give in those and other areas! Paul seems to have an understanding of the abundant wealth of God and prays for others from the understanding.

Some of the phrases Paul uses here:

... out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...

... to know the love that surpasses knowledge...

... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God...

... Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...

Spend some time now, praying this kind of prayer for others. Keep in mind the abundance of God as you pray. Try to not just use words, but experiment with visualizing and imagining what you are asking of God.

Segment 3 – God’s Power At Work in Us

Open your time of study with prayer:

Lord, as I’m studying these great prayers of the Bible, please don’t let my study be wasted in only intellectual understanding. Please build my spirit so that in the future I will pray great prayers to you with all my heart. Amen.

Read the entire prayer (Eph. 3:14-21), out loud if possible.

Then look closely at 3:20-21.

7. What does it mean that God can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine? Why is this so?

8. What happens when we limit God by our own ability to understand? How can we get past this failure?

Pray:

It seems to me that many Christians understand prayer as primarily something we do for others. We pray for friends and relatives with health concerns. We pray for co-workers and their families when they are going through something difficult. These are certainly great prayers, yet they also leave something out – what about praying for ourselves?

As I read Paul’s prayer here, I kept thinking, “I want to be this kind of person too!” Do you want to be the kind of person Paul prays for here? Someone who is strengthened by God’s Spirit dwelling in your inner being? Someone who grasps the vast abundance of God’s love? This prayer is every bit as valid for us to pray for ourselves as it is to pray for others.

So spend some time in prayer for yourself. Tell God about the kind of relationship you want to have with Him. Tell God about the thoughts or fears that are holding you back. Ask God to show you what ideas you hold that are too small. Then use Paul’s prayer as a guide to pray for your own relationship with God.

9. What did you experience as you prayed this prayer for yourself?

10. Did you learn anything about yourself? Anything about the kind of relationship God would like to have with you?