Our Ultimate Prayer

Ephesians 3:14-19

Objective: Encourage each to pray for growth-blessings from the Father.
Reading: Ephesians 3:14-19
Introduction:

1. I believe in a God that can do anything! He speaks and the world comes into being. Created all from nothing. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows people's hearts. He sees all and knows all and has all power and authority. He directs the affairs of men. He appoints and deposes kings.
2. I believe I have a relationship with Him through Christ. I believe He knows me personally and loves me beyond imagination.
3. What do I fear and worry about? So why do I get depressed and discouraged? Why do I get in a quandary about what I should do at times? Why am I so often inadequate and feeble in following Him? Why am I so unstable in my Christian walk when such vast help is so readily available?
4. Because I rely too much on ME! I don't ask for help when I need it.
5. As a church, as individuals, we have such incredible opportunity, such incredible potential…

We need to ask God for blessings that will enable us to grow spiritually!

In Ephesians 3 (verses 14-21), The Apostle shares his prayers for the church in Ephesus. His requests are based on his own realization and understanding of God's awesomeness. He knows that God is so great that he can raise people from the dead, save sinners, make the Jews and the Gentiles into one family. God has an incredible overall plan and purpose for us. The Apostle also sees the deep needs of the Christians; that they are struggling, discouraged, and perhaps some are ready to fall away from the faith. It's appropriate to ask God for the help that He is so capable and ready to give. The Apostle knows *what to ask for that will enable us to be more effective in our Christianity.*

When we are so lacking in strength, it is appropriate to ask the One Who has all power for:

I. Strength: Ephesians 3:14-16, ***"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15]from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, [16]that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"***

A. He can easily supply this.
   1. He can enable you to stand in any situation.
   2. He can enable you to endure any trial or hardship.
   3. He has demonstrated this repeatedly throughout Scripture. With individuals like David against Goliath, to armies and nations against incredible odds.
   4. Surely He can do this with individuals today. Or nations when He favors them.

B. Strength "in the inner man."
   1. Not really talking about Physical strength to lift huge rocks or leap bldgs. with a single bound.
   2. Strength to run 25 miles does not help you resist temptations to ungodly behavior!
   3. 1 Timothy 4:8, ***"…for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."***
   4. Talking of strength in love, in faith, in conviction to work, in doing what's right; in following truth.
   5. Strength in influence, in patience, ability to endure, stress and discouragements.
   6. Strength that enables one to confront another who is in sin, (even an authority figure.)
   7. So often, those of tiny physical stature are much stronger than those with big muscles!
   8. 2 Corinthians 4:16, ***"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."***

C. Strength that glorifies God.
   1. How does Paul keep going and going and going and going ...? It is obvious that he relies on God.
   2. 2 Corinthians 4:7, ***"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;"***

3. When Christians endure persecutions and afflictions that are beyond human capability, the world can see that Something more than human strength is involved – and God is credited & glorified!

So often, I fumble around with how to handle a given situation. I don't want it to be like that. I want it to be my very nature to respond to things just as Jesus would to know and to do the right things at all times by my very nature. S, it makes sense that he Apostle would pray that….

II. Christ to dwell within our hearts: Ephesians 3:17a, ***"…that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; …"***

A. So our response will be Christ's response.
   1. So it is not the worldly person that's responding to a situation, but the very heart and Spirit of Christ. Derived from Godly wisdom and godly motivation.
   2. When I am irritated at my spouse, When I am misused or offended by some crowding ahead of me in a store, When someone is rude to me in traffic, They will not receive bitter, angry words or worldly reactions. They will see and feel a response that comes from the very heart of Christ which is dwelling in me!
   3. I want His spirit to dwell in me and govern my responses! For my very nature to be Christ!

B. An indwelling that comes ***"through faith."***
   1. This happens when we trust Him, trust His way and His power. When we dwell and meditate on His Word and grow in the Spirit, transformed in Christ-likeness!
   2. When we yield completely to Him because we trust that things will work even when they appear impossible.
      a. How could death on cross be victory? Does your heart have the faith out of which to respond?
      b. We say, "That person will never change ..." "Situation is hopeless..." ""never work this out ..."
   3. With Christ abiding in our hearts we will always trust His way and respond His way, not ours.

God is love. I need for my every response to every life situation to be love. I need to understand and see everything through love. I need to pray to God to be ...

III. Rooted and established in love: Ephesians 3:17b, ***"… and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,…"***

A. Such love is a deep, solid anchor.
   1. Ever try to pull a dandelion out? Something so rooted and grounded? I want to be so established in the love of God – knowing it, feeling it, sharing it, - I can never be pulled out!
   2. Some are plants poorly nourished because their roots don't go deep. To be so rooted and established, we need to feed daily on love! Talk about it, share it. Experience it Ask for it!
   3. Rooted to very depth of soul where every gut-level response is out of love.

B. Such love is needed for us to obtain a valid understanding.
   1. Can know all principles, doctrines, programs, but unless operating out of love it misses point.
   2. Mechanical obedience without love motive just doesn't work. A robot can do the right things, but never can grow spiritually, can never be transformed to the nature of God.
   3. LOVE is *not* the same as tolerance or acceptance of all things. Love is truthful and protective. If you love your child you don't let them stick a fork into a light socket!
   4. We must confront sinners out love, not just because you are supposed to. Do it in a way that people see the very heart of Christ in you.
   5. God is love, and a true knowledge of God is unattainable without love. (*Repeat and emphasize*)
   6. Memorizing facts and quoting Scripture doesn't get the job done! Operate on love that God has.

What strength, courage we could gain if we really understood the extent of God's love for us. Pray...

IV. To know the love Christ has for us: (Ephesians 3:18-19, (*"…and I pray that you …*) ***"… may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19]and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,…"***

A. Often we don't trust love.
   1. We may have trusted human love and been burned too often by inadequacy or unfaithfulness.
   2. Human love can fail, but God's never does!
   3. Know His love by what He did out of love for us. By what He continues to do out of love for us.

4. Romans 8:32, ***"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"*** Beyond imagination.
5. So, can have confidence that He will help us NOW! We are not alone and destitute.

B. Here is love beyond knowledge.
1. Beyond what I can understand. It leaves me in awe. Greater than the imagination.
2. Some things must be experienced, felt. (cf. ***"more blessed to give than receive"***)
3. This knowledge somehow comes in context of congregation.
   a. ***"with all the saints."*** Probably = *"in context of"* rather that *"along with".*
   b. Experienced in practice. Outgrowth of working together. Conflicts, cooperation, etc.

Finally Paul goes way beyond and boldly prays that through knowing this love, they would be ***"filled up to all the fullness of God."***. *Have you ever thought to pray so boldly? Indeed though, we should. We should pray to have ...*

V. The "fullness of God": Ephesians 3:19b, ***"…- that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."***

A. Not just one attribute of God, but all of them!
1. "God living in us". Complete god-likeness. The power of God at work within us.
2. People say, "I'm not a saint you know!" or "I'm not a very good Christian". You are probably right if you are saying that, but that is not a good or satisfactory place to be. Pray and Grow!
3. Why be satisfied with a tenth of what God had provided specifically for you?
4. Why be satisfied with giving God a tiny portion of the glory He has enabled you to give Him?
5. Why be satisfied with crumbs when abundance is provided by your Father?

B. What fullness might you have?
1. He wants you to have fullness in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; and things like these.
2. Put with that, knowledge, understanding, strength and all things noble and admirable.
3. He wants to supply these. We need to be serious about asking.
4. Ephesians 3:20-21, ***"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, [21]to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."***

So What?:

God is able to do all this and way beyond this! Why do we ask so little of One Whom we know can do so much? The things we are asking for are like smiles. God never runs out. The more given, the more there is. Here is the point; *God* ***wants*** *us to have these things.* He wants us to be able to bring Him glory. *Ask for His help.*

Closing Prayer:

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What to ask for that will enable us to be more effective in our Christianity.

I. Strength: Ephesians 3:14-16

A. He can easily supply this.

B. Strength "in the inner man." 1 Timothy 4:8 2 Corinthians 4:16

C. Strength that glorifies God. 2 Corinthians 4:7

II. Christ to dwell within our hearts: Ephesians 3:17a

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B. Here is love beyond knowledge.

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B. What fullness might you have? Ephesians 3:20-21

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