

What do you ask of the Lord when you pray? Paul sets us an example of how to pray for each other, and for ourselves, as we come into the presence of our Father. You see, our “outer man” is decaying, wasting away, and we will die someday. But our inner man is being renewed daily by the power of the Holy Spirit and the promises of His Word. In which man should we invest our greater portion of time in prayer?

## 1. Pray for the Strength of His Presence

- a. Petition: The Holy Spirit would strengthen our inner person
  - i. Inner person: the seat of our being, as opposed to our body and its impulses
  - ii. Our outer person is wasting away, but our inner person is being renewed day by day.
  - iii. Paul prays that the Holy Spirit would “strengthen with power”
    - 1. Why does our inner person need strengthened with power?
- b. Purpose: in order for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith
  - i. Doesn’t Christ already dwell in our hearts through faith?
  - ii. Intimacy with Christ Himself
    - 1. Dwelling (permanently) in our hearts through faith
    - 2. JC “settles down” as the Spirit strengthens our inner person...that is, we center our entire lives (thoughts, feelings, experiences) on Him. He is our all in all, the fullness of God now.
    - 3. This is the Spirit’s powerful strengthening of our hearts: we depend more fully, completely, and confidently in Jesus
  - iii. How can Paul ask that the Lord will give us what Paul has already said that God has given us?
    - 1. Mystery revealed (1:18) – that we would know in wisdom and knowledge
    - 2. We who hope in Christ(1:12) – that we would know the hope (1:18)
    - 3. Obtained an inheritance (1:11) – know the riches of that inheritance (1:18)
    - 4. Christ is in you (Col 1:27) – may Christ dwell in you (v17)
    - 5. To know what is unknowable? (v19)
- c. We have these blessings, but we live as if we don't
  - i. We know in our heads, but we don't experience the intimacy with Christ or the hope that is given to us by God
  - ii. Who are we really? Do we identify with Christ in reality, in experience?
    - Illustration of rich, penny-pinching widow

## 2. Seize the Promise of His Love with the Heart

- a. Our foundation is the love of Christ
  - i. The love of God shown in Jesus Christ is the central theme to, not only our salvation, but to the very experience of life on this earth!
  - ii. By grasping how great his love is for us, we become more like Christ!
  - iii. Knowing the Gospel from the heart is like breathing in life: it is a life-giving, constant exercise of repentance, faith, and joy.
- b. His Spirit gives us the strength to seize as our own how complete and super-sufficient is His love for us
  - i. It is the Holy Spirit’s powerful enablement, given as a gift by the Father, that strengthens our souls to believe in Jesus, to comprehend His love toward us with our hearts in faith, to fill us up to the fullness of God
  - ii. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability “may be able” to see *how much* Christ loves us

- iii. “comprehend” comes from the word “to lay hold of as one’s own, to seize”
  - 1. We need strengthened to completely seize onto this truth from the depths of our souls. To cling to it as our own: Jesus loves me completely.
  - 2. To know what is unknowable
- c. To know, experience, and glory in the love of Christ is what it means to be filled up to all the fullness of God.
  - i. It goes beyond mere head knowledge (although that must be there, for we do “know”) to the soul’s seizing of that truth
  - ii. How great is the love of Christ?
    - 1. How severe is your sin in the eyes of God?
      - a) Death, Wrath, Hell
    - 2. What did Jesus do to remove your sin and its consequences?
      - a) Incarnation, suffering, death, bore His wrath
      - b) Mercy, Grace, because of Love
- d. The fullness of God comes with the deep heart understanding of the Gospel and the consequent deep appreciation of the soul is worship.
  - i. He is giving us a foretaste of the inheritance, the joy of being in His presence.
    - 1. No one can see God’s glory on this earth, but that is what we’re in for and we’ve been given a foretaste now
    - 2. It’s incomplete, but it’s real, full, and powerful
    - 3. Do we *know* His presence? Do we taste this fullness? Do we feel and live as sons and daughters of God or are we content to live as orphans: with a peace and satiation beyond imagination, but slowly dying because we live as spiritual paupers? Are we praying to this end?

### 3. How do We Experience This Fullness?

- a. Look at him when you long for something else
  - i. Keep in step with the Spirit
    - 1. v16, the Spirit provides the power to believe and seize onto the Truth with your heart, transforming your innermost desires to Christ
    - 2. This power, from the Spirit, comes with all the supply of God’s wealth in glory, it is immeasurable and never falls short
      - a) It has begun with the Church, the Redeemed
      - b) It will be complete when we finally experience the rest of glory, either through His return or our resurrection.
    - 3. John 16:14, The Counselor will glorify Christ
  - ii. Look to Jesus constantly
    - 1. 1 John 3:2, We will be like Him for we will see Him like He is.
    - 2. Seeing Him like He is is what changes us on that day
    - 3. Our complete redemption (sinlessness) is accomplished *because* we see Him as He is
    - 4. We are only as loving to the degree that we see Him as He truly is
      - a) We forget Him daily, being distracted by our flesh, the world, and Satan
      - b) We make unconscious assumptions that He is not who He claims to be
      - c) So we follow our flesh and its overdesires
      - d) We get more loving when we seize more of whom He really is

- More patient from seizing His patience toward me
  - More loving from seizing His love toward me
  - More righteous from seizing His righteousness for me
- b. When you feel yourself longing in the flesh, catch yourself and look at Him as you're longing.
- i. Whatever we feel that we "must" have, outside of God Himself, will rule us.
    1. Since we have to have it, our minds and emotions will be controlled by how we relate, or are kept from whatever our heart is functionally seizing as it's own (an idol, something that I functionally depend upon to give me joy and fulfillment outside of or in addition to Jesus)
      - a) **ANGER:** If somebody or something gets in the way of my success with my idol, I get angry.
      - b) **FEAR:** If I fail to live up to, or perform well enough, to achieve for my idol, I feel fearful and depressed, anxious and worthless.
      - c) Rebecca Pipert: "Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lords of our lives."
    - ii. Whatever we see as the "*functional ultimate good*" in our lives is what we offer ourselves to.
      1. Whatever becomes the "bottom line" of my significance and happiness, that which defines and validates everything else, it is this that we will be driven to do. We have to have it to be happy and we must obey its laws to be righteous
      2. We tend to seize onto promises from things or persons other than God to fulfill us
        - a) The Scriptures call these "idols of the heart" (Ezek. 14:3)
    - iii. Trying to achieve the standard for success of these idols leads to the surface sins that we usually think of when we think of sin (lying, stealing, fits of rage, unkindness, not loving others, etc., etc., etc.)
      1. We really do these surface sins because our reputation has been threatened or we have failed our idol, and we must protect our righteousness.
      2. James 4:1-10
        - a) Fishing
        - b) Golf
        - c) Family
    - iv. Where do I derive my joy? Where do I find my acceptance? Where am I completely loved?
      1. Let the Holy Spirit convince you once again that you are loved completely by God in Jesus Christ: the Gospel, through the evidence of the Spirit, will give you hope once again the grace of God has given me all that I need.
        - a) My sin goes deeper than I have ever imagined, and God loves more deeply than I ever dared to hope. It's about the grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ! His choice, His redemption, His Spirit, His seal, His child.

#### 4. What does it look like to seize Christ's love as your own?

- a. A person that lives this kind of faith is way off of the map of what we're used to and what the world can even fathom. It doesn't make sense to the world.
  - i. This person's confidence is not based upon his performance, or lack of performance, but upon JC's performance upon the cross and His present presence upon the throne over all of the Universe.

- ii. Confidence is in Jesus and His work so she PRAISES JESUS and HIS WORK
- b. This person is never hurt badly by criticism (doesn't bother him, isn't devastated, doesn't keep him up late)
- i. Putting too much stock in what other people think and we're not trusting in the work and the reign of Jesus *right now*.
    - 1. The world may not care what others think, but they answer criticism by saying "I know what I think and that's what's important." (They fit Reality into their souls' desires).
    - 2. So, you have either a person devastated by criticism (thinking too much of what others think) or a person who can't accept criticism (thinking too much of what they think)
  - ii. We don't know how to heal a lack of confidence except with self-righteous pride, and they are both horrible nuisances to us
- c. A boldly humble person accepts criticism and is not devastated by it
- i. My personal and particular sins are *so great that Jesus had to die* to remove them
    - 1. I am honest and completely transparent in my weakness and need for Jesus *presently and for eternity*
  - ii. Jesus loves me enough that *He did die* to remove them
    - 2. I am at rest and confident in Jesus' provision for my complete redemption *presently and for eternity*
- d. This person steps out and takes risks for Jesus, because even if she should fail, her performance does not determine her acceptance before God, for Christ loves her unfathomably
- i. When she is successful, she is not proud or harsh, but rather humble and gentle, seeing that Jesus is the one who is performing any real and lasting change within others, not her.
    - 1. All that she is called to do is proclaim the gospel and to humbly live out the gospel.
  - ii. When he fails, he knows that his performance does not determine God's possession or acceptance of Him, so he can leave his self-reliance behind and to simply depend on his Savior's work and deep, deep love. His verdict is still secure in His redeemer, and God's plan is never squelched by our failures. So he take another great risk for the Lord humbly.

**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.**

**Amen.**

**Ephesians 3:20-21**