

Bible Studies for Life: August 2

by Clay Anthony

We Pray for One Another • Ephesians 3:14-21



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Chances are you learned to pray like I did: short, innocent words used prior to meals and bedtime. As we grew in our life and faith those prayers turned to other topics such as health, money, or grades. If we are honest, most of our prayer life centers around our life and not the needs of those around us. The Apostle Paul sets out to correct this line of praying in Ephesians, chapter three. His audience had become accustomed to reaching out to God in prayer for their needs. Paul wanted the church to understand that prayer was a bigger tool than that. It was to be used to pray for others as well. Paul spends the first 13 verses explaining the goodness he has found in Christ. He spends the rest of the chapter detailing how he prays that the same would be experienced by those in the church.

Prayer for inner power. Paul specifically prays that his readers will find a strength in their inner being. (v. 16) This is a prayer for their hearts. Paul is covering the inner thoughts and intentions of his readers in prayer. Whatever decisions they must make, whatever inclinations their hearts are leaning toward, Paul desires for all directions to be taken under the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul would not be

one to tell the Ephesians to simply follow their hearts. He knew that human hearts can never be totally trustworthy (Jer. 17:9). The power for which Paul was praying was an injection of power from above – a power that God alone can grant. This is a guarantee that all human endeavors will be in line with the desires of God Himself.

Prayer for mental power. Paul was not satisfied to simply pray for his readers to have power-filled hearts, but also power in how their minds operate as well. This is not a plea for New Age ideals but a call for meditation on the goodness of God. His prayer in verse 18 is pointedly for his readers to have strength to comprehend. This is a word that simply means *to understand*. What a great prayer for others, that they will be able to understand the greatness of our God (v. 18.) Yet, to go a little further, Paul prays that they would know the love of Christ that *surpasses* knowledge. For Paul, to experience the love of Jesus was grander than just knowing facts about Jesus.

Prayer for working power. Paul ends his prayer by turning the focus to God Himself (v. 20), who is capable of doing more than our voices or minds can conceive. Paul's hope is that the power his readers experience is a working power within them. He understands the hurts and trials faced by this church are going to bring moments of doubt and weakness. The church cannot survive, serve, or grow on its own. Any work that will be done to grow the church toward its mission will have to come from God. This is true not just for the church of Ephesus in Paul's day, but true for all subsequent churches down through history (v. 21), even the church of which you and I are a part today.

Live It Out. So I ask you, my reader, to follow Paul's words to the Ephesians and pray for me. Pray that my heart will be drawn into a deeper love for Jesus. Pray also that my thoughts will center on Him more than the stuff of earth. Pray that I will be consistent in my working to build His kingdom through

service to others, more so than building one of my own that is sure to fail. My promise to you is to pray the same over you. We need each other.