

Sermon Series: Priceless: Finding Your Value in God
To be used with: Session Four: Strengthened by God's Power
Sermon Title Possibilities: The Power of Prayer
Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Priceless: Finding Your Value in God* these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: Paul's prayer is one of the greatest prayers in the entire Bible. One writer called it "the Holy of Holies in the Christian life." Another writer called it "a prayer for the impossible." This prayer is for enablement, for power.

1. What is the request?

This is a prayer for spiritual strength in the inner being (literally in Greek, the "inner man"). Paul prays for one thing and one thing only in this prayer. He asks God to strengthen the Ephesians by the Holy Spirit on the inside so that they can fulfill God's will for them. Though this prayer has many parts and builds to a big climax, there is only one basic request.

This is a prayer for something most of us desperately need every day—spiritual strength. When we feel weak, prayer can be difficult or almost impossible. In those moments, here is a prayer that is always appropriate. It is a prayer to pray before you faint. If you are on the verge of giving up, take this prayer to heart before you throw in the towel.

2. Why do we make this request?

Because our greatest need is for spiritual power on the inside. No believer ever advances so far that he doesn't need God's power.

So the prayer is not, "Lord, take away my burdens," but rather "Lord, give me stronger shoulders to carry the load." It is a prayer for spiritual strength to do the work God gives us to do.

3. Where are the results seen?

This prayer reveals where we are strengthened, by the Spirit on the inside.

A. *You will have Christ in your heart. (v. 17a)*

The prayer is that Christ might be "down home" in our heart. It's the picture of a man at home in his own house. We know the difference between a house and a home. A house is a building; a home is a dwelling place. It is very possible for Christ to be "in" your heart but not "at home" there.

Many years ago Robert Boyd Munger wrote a little booklet called *My Heart, Christ's Home*. In it he imagines the believer's heart as a home with many rooms. The heart has a living room, a dining room, a bedroom, a kitchen, a computer room, a TV room, many closets, and an attic. Too many believers keep Christ in the entryway, as if to say, "Jesus, I've got you in the door. Now stay there and don't bother the rest of my life." But the Lord wants to enter every room. He wants to enter your kitchen, your bedroom, your library, your TV room, your computer room, and he wants access to every closet and even to the "attic" of your heart. As long as you keep the doors locked, he can never be "at home" in your heart. And you will never be happy as a Christian.

The question is not, "How much of the Lord do I have?" but rather, "How much of me does the Lord have?" This, then, is a prayer for a deeper experience between Christ and the believer. Call it what you will—sanctification, the "second blessing," total surrender, dedication, or even the filling of the Spirit. In reality, it is "what we desperately need that most of us lack." Until Christ is at home in your heart, he will always seem like a stranger to you even though he lives in you.

He's not just watching me, he's with me.

He's not just with me, he's in me.

He's not just a visitor; he's at home in my heart.

B. You will have a growing comprehension of the love of Christ. (vv. 17b-19a)

There is a sense in which all Christians experience the love of Christ. But love itself has many dimensions. Paul is saying, "I pray that you may grow in your daily experience of the love of Jesus." He even says, "I pray that you will come to know (in a personal way) this love that surpasses knowledge." No matter how far you go in your knowledge of Christ's love, you will never come to the end of it.

Christ's love is broader than the universe, longer than time, higher than hope, deeper than death. As we are strengthened by the Spirit on the inside, we will come to a new comprehension of his love for us.

C. You will have the fullness of God in your life. (v. 19b)

This is the whole goal of the Christian life. The word for "filled" has the idea of being dominated by something. If you are filled with rage, then rage will dominate your life. If you are filled with love, then love dominates your life. If you are filled with joy, then joy dominates your life. When you are filled with God, then God himself will dominate your life. It pictures the total transformation of the human personality by virtue of the presence of God in your life. This is an amazing thought—to be filled up with all the fullness of God. Don't shy away from the implications of this truth. As believers we have been created to be the containers of God. He desires to pour his life into ours and to fill us until we're full.

4. How can we know God will achieve these results?

The answer to this prayer is not up to us; it's up to God! That brings us to the magnificent doxology that concludes this prayer (vv. 20-21). This prayer can be answered because God is able to answer it. We have this magnificent statement that God is able to do whatever it takes to answer this prayer.

We stand at the end of this prayer and marvel at its richness. An amazing prayer tied to an amazing promise. It is an impossible prayer made possible because “God is able” to do “exceedingly abundantly” beyond all we can ask or think.

It only waits for us to pray. God wants us to pray, he invites us to pray, he waits for us to call upon him. He is able to hear us and to answer us. If we do our part, God cannot fail to do his.

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