

# EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

So far in our Ephesians study, we've learned that we're chosen by God and adopted into His family. We've learned what it looks like to have a firm faith and a deep love for one another. We've learned about salvation from A to Z, namely that we start dead in our sins, then God makes us alive and new through faith in Jesus which sets us on a course for a life of good works. Last week we learned that through the power of the gospel, Jews and Gentiles have the opportunity to join together into one spiritually unified family through Jesus Christ. Today we'll look at Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church and find compelling reasons to grow in prayer.

**Scripture:** Ephesians 3:14-21

## Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. What motivated Paul to pray? Do you view prayer as an opportunity or obligation? What can we do to see prayer as a delightful invitation rather than something we "ought to do"?

In Ephesians 3:14, we see Paul moved to pray because of awe. In the first thirteen verses of chapter 3, his heart is stirred by the wonder of God's grace at work in his life and the wonder of God's grace at work in the world through Christ. He's moved by the unsearchable riches of God's mercy and the unifying power of the gospel to bring Gentiles and Jews together into one spiritual family. For these reasons, he is delighted to pray.

3. What does Ephesians 3:14-15 reveal about the nature of God? How does recognizing God as Father impact your identity and sense of relationship with Him?

Depending on your family of origin, Paul's use of the word Father in today's passage may or may not bring up fond childhood memories. As difficult as it may be to see past the father you grew up with (or didn't grow up with), it's important to see God for who He is as He's revealed to us on the pages of Scripture rather than through the lens of our personal histories.

When it comes to prayer and seeing God as our Father, my mind goes to Luke 11:11-13 where Jesus says, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" God, our Father, delights to see His children smile. He is a good Father who loves to give gifts to His children.

4. In Ephesians 3:16-17, Paul prays for God to strengthen the inner being of the Ephesian believers with power through the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be strengthened in your inner being? How does the Holy Spirit empower our lives? See Romans 8:16.

Notice what Paul asks God to give “according to the riches of His glory” – the Holy Spirit. Paul prays for the Ephesian believers to be given strength in the inner being “with power through His Spirit.” Paul doesn’t pray for God to make their way smooth; he asks for His presence to fill them – the same power and presence that filled Jesus.

How does the Holy Spirit help us? Let’s turn to Paul for the answer: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:15-17).

The still, small voice of the Spirit whispers, “You’re the beloved of God.” You only need to tune your ears to His voice through prayer and by continually setting your mind before the truth of God. When you do this daily, you’ll live in quiet trust, believing what He says about you – which matters most.

5. In Ephesians 3:18-19, Paul describes the scope of God’s love. Why do you think it was important for Paul to paint this picture of God’s love? What does it mean when he prays that believers would be filled with the fullness of God? What impact can a genuine experience of God’s love have on us?

Paul says as Christ begins to dwell in our hearts through deeper trust, we will be rooted and grounded in love. Paul prays for God to give the Ephesian believers strength to comprehend the scope of His love for them – beyond mere knowledge – an understanding and experience of the heart – their inner being. In other words, when we’re convinced in our hearts, through the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit, that we’re God’s beloved – we’ll have a storehouse of strength that no other gift or circumstance could ever provide, nor any negative self-talk can steal.

6. In Ephesians, 3:20-21 Paul says that God can do far more than we can ask or think. Do you ever find that you limit your expectations of what God can do in a situation? How should these verses influence the way we pray and thus glorify God?

When was the last time you took time to contemplate the wonder of God? Often, in our hurried lives, our attention is dominated by the tasks or challenging circumstances in front of us, leading us to lower our eyes and somehow lose our wonder of the scope of God’s love and power. Sadly, we aren’t taking the time to tune our attention to God and allow the Spirit to bring our hearts alive to wonder. The next time you bend your knee to pray, focus on the fact that the One who flung the stars across the sky is with you, delights to hear your voice, and desires to speak to you as a friend (John 15:15).

7. What’s one personal takeaway from today’s study you can focus on applying in your life this week?