

PRAY FOR A DIVINE EXPERIENCE

*3 For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
...¹⁴for this reason, [I say,] I kneel before the Father—¹⁵from whom every “family” in
heaven and on earth derives its name—¹⁶[and pray] that he would grant you, in
accordance with the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his
Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. [And
I pray that you,] being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may be fully able, [together]
with all the saints, to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and
depth—¹⁹indeed, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may
be filled to all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more
than all we could ask or imagine, by means of the power that is at work in us, ²¹to him
be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and
ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:1, 14-21)*

Introduction

One day a girlfriend dropped by the office where Sara worked. She related to Sara how her father had died the day before. In his dying moment, her father had smiled, opened his eyes, and said, “He is beautiful!” He had seen the Lord Jesus.

Those words, “He is beautiful,” stayed with Sara the rest of the day. As she thought of those words, she was gradually filled with a glorious and awesome feeling. It seemed that the Lord Jesus was saying to her, “I am beautiful.” (*POWER*, 11/1/92, p. 8)

Sara’s girlfriend’s father had the divine experience of seeing Christ face to face as he departed this life and entered into glory. Sara herself had the divine experience of Christ’s presence as she continued to live and work in this present world.

Early one morning Ruth climbed into the back seat of the limousine that would take her to the airport. As she rode through the streets of suburban Chicago, the Lord spoke to her through the music of a Christian radio station. The Lord used the words of the song to communicate to her the wonder of His love in a very special way. Ruth leaned her head back on the seat and closed her eyes in prayer, “Thank You, Lord, for the love that reaches down to me.” (*POWER*, 7/26/92, p. 8)

These are just two examples of the divine experience of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:14-21. The message of this passage, as conveyed through the apostle’s prayer, is that we as Christians should have a divine experience of Christ in our lives: more than knowing doctrine, more than keeping commandments, that we should know Christ Himself in an ever deeper way.

Because the Lord desires for us to dwell with Him and He to dwell with us—just as we are being made into a living temple for His presence (Eph. 2:19-21), let us pray that we may experience an ever greater measure of His divine presence and being.

I. Pray that You May Experience Christ's Presence Your Heart (3:14-17a)

The apostle's prayer is that *"Christ may dwell in your heart"* (vs. 17a.) With Christians in mind, Paul's prayer is that the Christian would have a communion and fellowship with Christ that is experienced in the very center of our being—our heart: a deep, personal, intimate communion with Christ our Savior. The apostles' desire is for us to experience the same intimacy they themselves had with Christ, note how the Apostle John expresses this desire in his first epistle: *"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ"* (1 Jn. 1:3.) This, indeed, is God's own desire for us.

Unto this end and for this purpose, Paul prays that God the Father would grant *"you be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being,"* (literally, *"in the inner man."*) The apostle's desire and prayer is that God would strengthen us by infusing His divine power into us by His Holy Spirit, so that we may be strengthened in order to handle the presence of Christ. Note Revelation 1:10,12-13,17-18, a passage that describes the Apostle John's reaction to the presence of Christ,

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ... ¹²I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, ¹³and in the midst of the lamp stands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest ... ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Rev. 1:10,12-13,17-18)

The apostle's prayer is that God would strengthen us by infusing His divine power into us by His Holy Spirit, so that we may be strengthened in order to prepare us for Christ's presence. Luke 1:80 informs us that John the Baptist grew and became *"strong in spirit;"* (i.e.; his capacity for spiritual communion with God was deepened and enlarged.) This is what the Apostle Paul desires for each Christian.

The apostle's prayer is that God would strengthen us by infusing His divine power into us by His Holy Spirit, so that we may be strengthened to purify ourselves as the LORD's sanctuary so that we may entertain Christ's holy presence in a worthy manner, note 2 Corinthians 6:16b, 7:1,

... we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people ... ¹Since we have these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness by the fear of God. (2 Cor. 6:16b, 7:1)

Finally, the apostle's prayer is that God would strengthen us by infusing His divine power into us by His Holy Spirit, so that we may be strengthened in order that we might desire Christ's presence, note the Psalmist's prayer: *"Revive us, and we will call on your name. ¹⁹Turn us again, O Jehovah God of hosts"* (Psl. 80:18b-19a.) This is also the prayer expressed by the hymn writer, Thomas Benson Pollock,

We have not loved you as we ought,
Nor cared that we are loved by thee;
Your presence we have coldly sought,
And feebly longed your face to see.
Lord, give a pure and loving heart
To feel and own the love you are.

In his prayer, Paul is expressing God's own desire, namely, that *"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."* Simply receiving the Lord Jesus as He reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures, we experience this spiritual communion and fellowship with Him. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, Peter writes, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls"* (1 Pet. 1:8-9.)

God desires for us as Christians to experience Christ's presence in our hearts. Following the example of the Apostle Paul, this ought to be our prayer for ourselves and for one another:

... for this reason, [I say,] I kneel before the Father—¹⁵from whom every "family" in heaven and on earth derives its name—¹⁶[and pray] that he would grant you, in accordance with the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph. 3:14-17a)

II. Pray that You May Experience Christ's Love in Your Life (3:17b-19)

The Apostle Paul continues his prayer by requesting of God the Father that we would be enabled to comprehend the dimensions of Christ's great love. His desire is that we may have a true estimation and appreciation of Christ's love for us—that we might comprehend something of the wonder of the truth expressed in such passages as the following:

"Him who knew no sin he [God the Father] made to be sin on our behalf; so that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

... you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." (Gal. 3:13)

Rather than becoming "familiar" and indifferent to the love of Christ, we should become **overwhelmed** and **overawed** by His great love.

The apostle's prayer—indeed, God's desire—is not only that we should comprehend the love of Christ, but that we should **know** His love. By way of illustration, it is one thing to hear about the splendor of the Grand Canyon, but it is quite another thing to see it for yourself and to experience it. God's desire is that we should personally experience the love of Christ in an increasingly deep and personal way. God desires that every Christian may experience the love of Christ to the same degree as that expressed by the hymn writer, Samuel Trevor Francis, when he writes,

O the deep, deep of love Jesus! Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free;
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me, is the current of your love;
Leading onward, leading homeward, to your glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus! Spread his praise from shore to shore;
How he loves, ever loves, changes never, nevermore;
How he watches over his loved ones, died to call them all his own;
How for them he intercedes, watches over them from the throne.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus! Love of every love the best;
It's an ocean vast of blessing, it's a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus! It is a heaven of heavens to me;
And it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to thee.

As we comprehend (and appreciate) and know (and experience) the love of Christ, we shall *"be filled to all the fullness of God."* One of God's great attributes is His desire to share Himself with us and to receive us into His fellowship. The more we grow in our relationship with Christ—the more we become *"strong in spirit"* (Lk. 1:80)—the more we will come to experience the life of God.

Notice that Paul prays that we may experience the love of Christ together with *"all the saints."* In our communion with Christ there should be times and there will be times when the veil between heaven and earth is drawn back and we experience a portion of what awaits us in eternity, note again 1 Peter 1:8-9, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

God desires for us as Christians to experience Christ's love in our lives. Again, following the example of the Apostle Paul, may this be our prayer for ourselves and for one another:

[I pray that you,] being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may be fully able, [together] with all the saints, to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth—¹⁹[indeed,] to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:17b-19)

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul concludes his prayer with a doxology of praise to God:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine, by means of the power that is at work in us, ²¹to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20-21)

The theme of verses 20-21 is praise to God for His infinite ability to bestow spiritual blessing upon His people. God is more than able to answer the prayer the apostle has offered up in verses 14-19.

The Apostle James must write to the church in these terms: *"You ask, but do not receive, because you ask amiss—you ask for the wrong things"* (Jas. 4:3.) But when we bring our prayers into accord with God's desires, we can expect Him *"to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine."*

May our prayer—for ourselves and for one another—be the same as that of the Apostle Paul: Let us pray for a divine experience! Let us pray that we may experience an ever greater measure of Christ, that we *"may be filled to all the fullness of God."*