

A PASTOR'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

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Pastor Cynthia L. Hale

Ephesians 3

Have you ever been in a time of prayer only to find that in the midst of prayer you were distracted? It can happen to any of us because we have a thousand things on our minds at any time. You were praying for your father or mother and your mind has a flashback to some event that happened in your childhood. It's alright because we are in good company. Paul obviously got caught up in his prayer. Look at verses 1 and 14.

Though some of us take the church for granted, in the first century the church was God's new creation. The fact that the Jews and Gentiles were all going to be in one body was a big deal. God had not revealed this plan to anyone; not even the angels. Paul was overwhelmed that God would call him as the apostle to the Gentiles to bring this thing to pass. He was the least of all God's people, in his estimation. Paul was overwhelmed that God would choose him to explain the mystery and to preach the gospel.

I know how Paul must have felt. I am still amazed that God would use me to preach his unsearchable riches; to preach for 30 years and pastor this church for 22 years. The song I love to sing about it is Amazing Grace. I know some of you feel the same way when you look over your life and realize where God has brought you. It is amazing. You can see how Paul was carried away. After 13 verses, he came back to himself and prayed for God's masterpiece. Paul prayed with passion for the church.

He said, for this reason, I kneel before the father. Jews traditionally stood in prayer. In this prayer, Paul breaks with tradition and kneels. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he came down from the platform and knelt. It doesn't matter if you are standing up or sitting down, but every time you go to God in prayer, you ought to be on your face in your heart.

Paul's heart was in this prayer, no doubt because he had a vested interest in these people and this church. He knew what God had in store for them and he didn't want them to miss any of it. He asked God for 4 things on our behalf. That our inner man would have spiritual strength, a deeper experience of Christ, and this deeper experience will allow us not only to comprehend, but to apprehend, resulting in our being filled to the full measure of God.

A pastor wants his or her people to have everything that God wants to have for them. Paul prayed that the people would have the capacity to receive it.

Strength v.16 He prayed that out of his glorious riches He would strengthen them. When we think of all that God has for us, all of us are aware of how inadequate we are to receive them. Opportunities come all of the time but we are not always ready and able to receive them. Life is rough. Some of us

are trying to make ends meet. We need to be inwardly strengthened. It is the Holy Spirit that will give you power to live the Christian life. It's the kind of power that will cause you to overflow with hope. He will keep you, protect you, and shield you. It will allow you to resist Satan and serve God when you feel like it and when you don't.

Power is God's standard. Power is what he used to raise Jesus from the dead and raise us up as well. It is power that allows us to succeed in life. When the Holy Ghost comes to live in you, you are controlled by him. If God doesn't give us direction, then we won't know what to do. When the Holy Spirit comes to live in you, you do things differently. We are talking about capacity.

His strength gives us the power to go deeper in our relationship with him: **Depth**. Your relationship has no depth. If the light of the world is living in you, some light ought to shine through you. You wonder why you have no power. It is because you have no depth. Nothing saddens me more as a pastor than to see that you are not growing. You are living without hope. You could be living the abundant life. You have no power because you have no depth. Paul prayed for the saints to have spiritual depth. He used 3 metaphors to convey that meaning:

Dwell: that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I am clear that Christ is living in you, but is he at home. When God comes in, he wants to stay around. If Jesus is Lord, that means he is master and if he is master, he ought to be able to sit down and dwell.

Rooted: an agricultural term. Like a tree whose roots go deep, your spiritual roots have to go deep into the love of God. Ps. 1. You have to drink from a fountain that never runs dry. If you will go deep in the Lord, you will have fruit that will last. That is prosperity. Jer.17:5-8

Established: an architectural term. It refers to the foundation on which you build your life. Matthew 7:24-29 Jesus tells a parable about a wise and a foolish builder. The wise builder built his house on a solid rock. When the winds blew, that house stood firm. If your foundation is shaky, you are like the person who built his house on sand. You are trying to survive on a word you got from a magazine. Casual reading of the word is not enough. We have to study. Deeper depths lead to higher heights.

Paul prayed that we might know the love that surpasses knowledge; the incomprehensible love of God. It is this kind of Love that Paul says we ought to be able to grasp. The grasp means to comprehend or apprehend. Just because you understand something does not mean that you have apprehended it. How is it possible to know the love that surpasses knowledge? You have to go after it every day. The more you know the love of God the more amazed you will be that He loves you. Then you will be filled to the full measure. Is this really possible? He has already filled us, but there is more.

You want the inner strength so that your capacity can be increased. God wants to continually fill you with himself. If you go to the beach this summer and fill a bottle from the Atlantic Ocean, you can say you have the ocean in the bottle, but you don't have the entire ocean. It is progressive. When will we be full? 1 John 3:1-3

Peace

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Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor