

## Ephesians 3:14–21 (NIV) Are my prayers too small?

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<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

With the privilege of being able to spend some time alone with these words of the Apostle Paul, words that describe his prayer for the Ephesian Christians, came the realization, “My prayers are too small.”

I set it before you as a question to ask yourself, “**Are my prayers too small?**” but, I must confess, it didn't stay that for me for very long.

My point is not to take you through the things you've prayed for in the past few days or the things you've prayed for often, to pick them apart and point out something small about them. There is nothing wrong with little prayers that set the needs of the moment before the Father in heaven. [healing, good weather, success, physical and spiritual blessings for myself and for others...]

No, it's not to criticize them as small, as much as it is to be humbled by the recognition of how big this prayer is.

What did the Apostle Paul want for the Ephesian Christians? What did he want for them that led him to kneel before the Father's throne of grace?

<sup>16</sup> **I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

He wanted the Father to strengthen them through his Spirit. This is the gift he had in mind: **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

Why doesn't he just jump right to “I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”? For what reason is this strength needed? He is speaking to people who, like him, **were dead in trespasses and sin.** To people like him, who had a fallen dead nature that continually wants to push Christ out. To people whom he would shortly encourage to put on the full armor of God so that they could stand against the devil's schemes. To encourage them never to become complacent.

He wanted them to enjoy the priceless blessing of having Christ continually dwelling in their hearts. Understand that where Christ dwells in a human heart the word of Christ will be found richly dwelling.

In contrast to that so many of our prayers can't help but seem small by comparison.

He wants still more for the Ephesians. **And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...**

Again, this is a request for power, the power to grasp something that is beyond grasping. Look up into the heavens on a clear night and try to take in the majesty of it all. Try to take it in! How wide? Long? High? Deep? Then look to the cross and know that before you is something that is infinitely more, the Incarnate Son of God stretching out his arms to carry our guilt, the holy, innocent, spotless one willingly taking up our guilt.

This is a prayer for the Spirit's power and for something far more than that: **to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

What did Paul want for the Ephesians? He didn't want them to be empty. Fragile, hollow shells. He wanted them to be full in a way that only God, the God who loves us, can fill.

On its face, this is Paul's prayer for somebody else, 1<sup>st</sup> century Ephesian Christians. Go ahead, take it as that. This is what Paul wanted for them. He's thinking big and with good reason. Take it in.

Tell me. Hasn't your heart already moved on to another prayer? I want that for me. I am empty in ways that are more than I want to consider.

- I want Christ to dwell in my heart. I want that knowing fully that his presence, his living in me will change the way I live, taking me into some scary territory, places like where his love took him.
- I want to know how wide and long and high and deep his love is. There is a hole in me that only his love can fill. I know what it is to pursue things that seem big to me at the time, but consistently disappoint, things that leave people empty.
- I want to live with a calm and confidence that belongs only to those who know they are loved.

What Paul wanted for the Ephesian Christians, I want for me.

When you take up such big prayers, do so with the confidence that these are first and foremost what Christ wants for you. That's why he came down. That's why he made himself known.

Christ wants these things for you. He is your reason to pray big prayers.

What is he capable of doing? More than we ask or imagine! His power is already at work within us.

There are bigger prayers for you to pray. Keep them big by starting with this:

- O Christ, dwell in my heart.
- Fill my emptiness with a growing grasp and knowledge of how wide and long, how high and deep your love is.
- Let me live to honor you.

Whether my prayers of the moment are big or small, let them be to your glory.

Can our prayers stay small? Not if we remember to whom we speak them.

**To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**