

I Pray To God (Part 5) – Eph 3:14-21

Let's turn in our Bibles to [Eph 3:14-21](#). This is the 5th and last message in this series on prayer. Based on the prayer of Paul in this passage. And I trust that you're applying it. That you're praying these things for yourself, and especially for our church.

[14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (ESV)

It's a prayer . . .

For our heart-felt [unity](#) (v14)

That you pray [fervently](#) (v14)

That you [trust](#) his sovereignty (v15)

For your spiritual [strength](#) (v16)

That you are [influenced](#) by Jesus more and more (v17a)

That you [understand](#) the love of Christ (v17b-18)

That you [experience](#) the love of Christ (v19a)

That your [cup](#) runs over (v19b)

With the goodness and greatness of God.

➤ Which brings us to [v20-21](#) and the benediction of Paul's prayer (**Outline**). The closing blessing.

[20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Amen, meaning “let it be so.” Or “truly.” It's a transliteration of a Hebrew word. Not a translation, but a trans-*literation*. A little language lesson here.

Amen is not an English word but a Hebrew word. A Hebrew word expressed in English letters but using the same sounds. Like “hallelujah.” A transliteration of “hallelu,” meaning praise; and “yah” meaning Yahweh. Praise God.

So too, *amen*. Used at the end of our prayers to convey a strong affirmation of what has just been said. Like saying, “God, do it. Please do it.” And this prayer is no different.

➤ But before that, Paul expresses two final thoughts, that lead us to two more prayers. Starting with this: I pray to God . . .

For your [confident hope](#) (v20)

That's the idea of v20. That our expectation and desire, our anticipation and longing, for God's provision in our lives, would be accompanied by the utmost *confidence*. The utmost certainty. And assurance. Because we pray *to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*.

If you ask your 3 year-old to keep food and water in the dog's bowl, there's a fair chance

that you're going to be checking it yourself. Otherwise the dog might starve.

But if you ask your 17 year-old to do it, chances are you don't have to worry. At least most of the time. Because their ability and memory not only far exceeds that of your 3 year-old, but the requirements of the task as well. They're able to do *far* more than feed the dog. They might even *wash* it every now and then without you asking. In which case there's a *reason* for your confident hope.

➤ How much more with God? With *his ability to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*. It gives us confidence. Confident hope. That if we pray, he will respond. If we ask, he will answer. Maybe not the way we want, but certainly the best way.

I received an email recently, saying:

“Over the years . . . I have known God's goodness, blessing, and profound peace . . . as v20-21 keep me centered on the [hope](#) I have in Christ Jesus . . . He does more than I can even begin to process.” Centered on *hope*, because of what he does.

I pray to God for that in every single one of you. Your confident hope. Because . . .

• **He can do [more](#) than you can imagine**

More than you can even *ask or think*. Far more. I pray Paul says, *to him who is able to do [far more abundantly than all that we ask or think](#)*. Far more than we can imagine.

We don't pray to a god who *struggles* to answer our prayers. We pray to a God whose capacity to answer and bless is beyond our capacity to ask. Literally. If you can imagine it, God can exceed it. And not just barely, but abundantly.

Does that mean he will every time? No. But he *can*. And that should not only increase your confidence to ask, but your confident hope in his answer. That it may very well be something exceeding your wildest dreams. Like this church. I had high hopes, but nothing like this.

➤ How about you? Have you ever experienced an over-the-top answer to your prayers? Like Moses prayed for the Israelites? Or Naomi prayed for Ruth? Or Nehemiah prayed for favor? Has your family experienced the blessing of God beyond what you thought was normal?

If not, maybe it's because you've settled for the status quo in life and stopped asking. When James 4:2 says – *You do not have, because you do not ask*. One of the keys to God's abundance is asking for it. Having a vision for your life and praying for it. Not that he's a genie, but a loving father.

➤ I pray every week that God would shine on my daughters and sons-in-law. And show them favor disproportionate to their abilities. Disproportionate. That's the word I use.

I pray every week that he would use them in his kingdom and give them a vision for ministry. I pray every week that he would stir their passion for Christ and his kingdom. And grant them awesome marriages. Special homes. Godly offspring. That their kids would love and follow Jesus too. And their grandkids. I pray to God.

And for Becky, my wife, I pray every week that God would bless her immensely. That's

the word I use for her. And that he would give her great joy. And fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith in her.

And for you (church), I pray for more prayer, more faith, more discipleship, more impact, more maturity, more giving, and more worship. More prayer to change the world and be changed. More faith to step out and trust. More discipleship to grow in your walk. More impact in our neighborhoods and community. More giving so that we don't just survive, but thrive. And more worship of the One who can do far *more* than that.

Get a vision, and start praying with a confident hope. Because God can do more than we can imagine, and often times will, if we only ask.

Second here, I pray to God for your confident hope, because . . .

- **He's always at work**

We pray *to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.* At work. Present tense. He's always there and always busy.

And not just barely, but powerfully. He can do far more than we can imagine, because with his presence comes his *power*. His omnipotence. His greatness.

That's why we can have confident *hope* in life. And confident hope in *death*. Confident hope in prayer. And ministry. And work. Because he's always at work *within* us, with all the power in the universe at his fingertips.

Do we always see it? Do we always see his work? No. But it's there. Just like the propeller on an **aircraft carrier** is there. Just below the waterline. You can't see it, but you know it's there, because you can feel the hum and see the wake. The path you've taken when you look back. Still churning and bubbling. Giving evidence that you've been moving all along, under the awesome power and work of a massive propeller.*****

We don't always see God's work, but he's at it. And all it takes is a glance back with the eyes of *faith* to confirm it.

➤ Unfortunately, we sometimes create a drag on his work, don't we? In our sin. Like the pontoon boat we rented one year on vacation. The girls were little and all was well, except for the time we dropped anchor to swim, and forgot to pull it when we were done. And then, couldn't figure out why we were going so slow; and sitting so low in the water. Hello.

And yet that's what we do with the work of *God* sometimes. We don't stop him, but we sure do create a drag.

How much better to skim the surface and *walk* on water? How much better to go through life *confident* in his work? *Experiencing* his power. *Full* of hope (**Summary**). Let's pray to that end.

Prayer – Lord, will you impress these truths on our hearts? Will you convince us of your power and work, and open our eyes to see it? Increase our confident hope. That you *able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.* We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

That's the first request from these last two verses. I pray to God for your confident hope.

The second, from v21, is I pray to God . . .

That you would glorify him (v21)

That you would exalt him. Magnify him. Lift him high. That's the idea in v21 of saying, *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.* It's an expression of worship, for the purpose of spurring us on. An expression of words that ought to be replicated in our actions.

Fall is here, and with it, **bonfires**. The glory of which, is the light they spread and the warmth they offer. So that when we see a bonfire, it's glorified. It's exalted. We sit around it on a cool night and talk about how good it feels; how bright it is; how "cool" it looks. Sometimes staring into it without a word, and other times singing around it in worship.

Same with God. As light and heat is to a fire, so *glory* is to God. It's the radiance of his being. The outward display of his divinity. Often beautiful, and sometimes terrifying. Often warm, and sometimes consuming. Just like fire.*****

So when Paul says *to him be glory*, he's both glorifying God himself, in an expression of worship, and praying that we would do the same.

➤ In 4 ways. He gives us 4 ways to glorify God. First . . .

- **In your fellowship with one another**

That's the phrase "in the church." *To him be glory in the church.* Paul's praying that we would glorify God in our interactions with one another. Our connections. Our communication. Our friendships. He's praying that we would cultivate and experience "koinonia." That Greek New Testament word and concept, that means belonging together in mutual partnership. I pray to God for that. I do.

The question is, is it happening? With *you*. Would you say that God is glorified by how you *think* of others in our church? Or is he grieved? Glorified or grieved? Would you say that he's glorified in how you *serve* with others? How about your involvement in ministry: to worship, learn, encourage, and grow together?

Is he glorified or grieved? Exalted or diminished? I pray to God it's the former.

Second, I pray that he would be glorified . . .

- **In your relationship with Jesus**

I think that's the idea of saying – *To him be glory . . . in Christ Jesus.* It's not that God *isn't* glorified in Jesus. Or that he could be glorified *more*. He's the perfect *picture* of the unseen God. The one in whom the fullness of God *dwells*. The one who was obedient unto death.

Rather, he's praying that God would be glorified in our *relationship* with Jesus. Hence the word, *in* Christ Jesus. Which as we've seen before, refers to our union with him. Our connection to him.

It's like a **bride** on her wedding day. Is there any doubt that she's the glory of her husband? That she's a picture of perfection who makes him look good? I think not. She's everything he hoped for and then some. That he would be glorified in her goes without

saying. She *is* his glory. He couldn't look any *better* with her at his side.

But to him be glory in his *relationship* with her, his marriage to her, is another story. That takes effort. And diligence. And love.*****

So too in our relationship with Jesus as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7-8). When Paul prays, *to [God] be glory . . . in Christ Jesus*, he's praying that we would exalt him and make him look good in our *walk* with Jesus. Our devotion to him. That instead of bringing him *shame*, we would bring him *fame*.

I pray to God for that. In me, in you, in all of us.

Third, I pray to God that you would glorify him . . .

• **In your discipleship of the next generation**

That's the only way that God will be glorified, *throughout all generations* as it says. Discipleship. Helping others grow and learn as followers of Christ.

If those who come behind us are going to glorify God like us, and more, we have to disciple them. We have to pass on what we know, what we do, and what we love. Intentionally.

And not just to our families, but to our church. We have to extend our discipleship to those in our church. Influencing the next generation in Coram Deo Kids. And Students. And College. Teaching *them* just like we teach our own.

That's why we're investing in our facilities with our **One To The Next** capital campaign. We want to glorify God by discipling the next generation the best we possibly can. Loving them, and teaching them, and leading them to set *their* hope in God just like we do.

It starts with your family, and extends to our church.*****

➤ So let me encourage you to do 3 things:

1. Get a plan and run with it. Whether you download the **New City Catechism** as I've mentioned before, or use an age appropriate Bible study. *Dedicate* times for the discipleship of your kids. Get a plan and make *every* moment a teaching moment.*****
2. Get your kids to church every week. Where they benefit from the discipleship of others. And others benefit from you; from *your* involvement and discipleship of the next generation. Get them to church and get involved.
3. Give toward the build-out. If you haven't yet pledged or participated, please do. Go online and check it out. We not only need you, but it's a tangible way to glorify God in your discipleship of the next generation.

I pray to God for that for that.

And last, I pray to God that you would glorify him . . .

• **For all eternity**

To him be glory . . . forever and ever. It's something to pray for and long for even now. Because the more you do, the better it will be. The more you long for something, the more

you'll appreciate it. That favorite bike at Christmas. That favorite food at cookouts. That favorite hobby at retirement. We cherish what we long for.

But it's not as though glorifying God needs to wait. Eternity starts now. Worship starts now. Tuning our hearts to sing his praise, and living our lives to bring him fame. The sooner we get started, the longer forever lasts. I pray to God for that. And hope you do to.

Prayer – Lord, will you do that? Will you tune our heart to sing your praise? Will you conform our desires to glorify you in our lives? Will you use our fellowship and discipleship to magnify your work? Increase our anticipation to worship you forever. With a thousand tongues and more. For your glory and our joy, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.