



AUGUST 29, 2021 | REV. MINHO SONG

## “Paul’s Prayer for All of Us” (Ephesians 3:14-21)

<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.

Dear brothers and sister,

Finally, the day has arrived. Today is the last Sunday for all CoaH members worshipping together. It will not be the same next week. Some will have moved on to start a new church and others will be here to rebuild the congregation. It is a season of transition and changes. We have much mixed emotions, including the sad feeling that close friends and family members will not be worshipping together anymore.

Whether moving on or staying, we all must promise to do one thing: we will be more committed to know Christ and make Him known, and that for this end, we will pray for one another. At the end of the day, when the curtain rolls down so to speak, what really matters is NOT what I feel or want, but how Christ’s cause has been better served and His Kingdom further advanced because of our obedience to Him.

So, we may have unresolved feelings for what has transpired. We may have regrets that things could have turned out better. But we must cling to Romans 8:28, where Paul reminds us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

When we look back ten years or twenty years from now, we ought to be able to say, “it was a difficult choice then, but it was worthwhile. We have come to know Christ deeper and made Him known more.”

With that in mind, let us commit to praying for one another. Let there be genuine prayers between two communities of brothers and sisters. Today’s text is a written portion of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers. We can learn so much from his example as we pray for one another.

There is nothing more precious than praying for someone. I have a friend who lives in out in the West. He comes to Toronto several times a year because he has his aging parents. Every time he comes, we get together for breakfast. He tells me, “Minho, you are on my Wednesday prayer list. I always pray for you and for your ministry.” I know he means it because he has been saying it for years. We went to seminary together and we have remained close friends ever since.



Praying for someone on a regular basis is a real act of love. Paul did that for the churches he helped to start. Here in the book of Ephesians, Paul's prayer follows an important theological point he makes that in Christ the wall of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles was removed. Christ put away all sorts of hatred and hostilities that existed between the two groups through his death on the cross.

Yes, just as in Christ there should be no division between the Gentiles and the Jewish believers, we, too, must recognize that in Christ we are all brothers and sisters. We have the common Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit.

For through him (Christ) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (**Ephesians 2:18**)

So, Christ is our common bond. It is Christ who brought us together. Paul wants to emphasize the unity of the church, whether the members come from the Jewish background or the Gentile background. This unity is only possible through Christ, and we have the same end goal of going to the Father. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to do so.

Christ is our foundation (for unity). The Father is our destination, and the Spirit is the source of our power.

Now, let us examine Paul's prayer in depth.

### **First, Paul prays for the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.**

In vv. 16 and 17, Paul says, 'I pray that ... he (the Father) may strengthen you by the power of the Spirit so that Christ may dwell in your hearts.'

We need power in our Christian walk because we are in a spiritual battle. Paul talks about this later in chapter 6, "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (6:12).

We must recognize the fact that the evil one is very much alive and is bent on destroying people. When we look at what is going on in Afghanistan, we can't help but realize that Satan is deeply involved there. Satan has blinded the minds of people and made people follow religious extremism. We thought the Taliban was bad enough, but there is a worse group known as ISIS-K, which claimed responsibility for the recent suicide bombing at the Kabul airport. No human in their right mind could carry out this kind of act unless the person was blinded by the evil schemes of Satan.

Satan is attacking people today. Some have fallen to alcoholism, to domestic violence, abuse, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts and so on. These are real because there is a spiritually dark world.

Satan is alive and is bent on destroying the work of God. We must guard ourselves.

Paul is praying that God's people be equipped with the power of the Spirit. That ought to be the prayer for one another. Let us pray that our friends will not succumb to temptation, be that anger, pride, bitterness, self-righteousness, critical spirit, greed, or impure thoughts and instead that they will be more like Jesus Christ in all humility, purity, servant attitude, and godliness.

Paul prays that 'the Father may strengthen you by the power of the Spirit so that Christ may dwell in your hearts.' Paul then mentions the end (see the purpose clause) objective of his prayer: 'so that Christ may dwell in your heart.' The end goal of the intercessory prayer here is that the Gentile believers may experience the powerful indwelling of Christ in their lives.



Let us genuinely pray for one another that whether leaving or staying, this 'shake-up' or 'change' will result in trusting Christ more, honoring Christ more, and experiencing Christ more. Just as Paul prayed for the real, powerful Christ experience for the Ephesian believers, let us also pray for one another the same.

I hope your decision to leave, or to stay has less to do with who you are close with, and more to do with how closer you want to be with Christ. This 'shake-up' would have been worthwhile if everyone walked closer to Jesus.

The foremost goal in the believer's life ought to be knowing Christ. Notice it is not knowing about Christ or knowing who Christ is and what he has done. It is knowing Christ, that is, intimately walking with him and conversing with him, and obeying his commands.

Some time ago, the YouTube algorithm introduced me to a young woman's channel where she honestly shares about her spiritual walk with her subscribers. I have never heard this sister before. I don't remember her name. She is not a well-known pastor or theologian. But when she speaks, she speaks with the authority that only comes from her intimate walk with Christ.

She bemoans the fact that our passion for Christ is waning these days. We do not love Christ like we did before. She wonders why. She honestly shares her personal struggles to obey Christ at each moment in her life. There are moments of weakness. It boils down to whether I am going to obey Christ or follow my own desire. I can relate to what she is saying, as I am sure many other Christians can.

She uploaded ten to twenty-minute segments, and they get easily 100K clicks. Some have been seen over half a million times! She is not a flamboyant preacher by any imagination. But one thing is certain. she experiences the love of Christ regularly. She knows her Saviour. She has a real, powerful Christ experience.

## **Second, Paul prays for the love of Christ in their lives.**

It is Paul's desire that the Ephesian believers experience all-surpassing love of Christ in the deepest way possible.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge ... (vv. 17b-19a)

We start with the love of Christ (rooted and established in love), but then we continue and grow into the wonderful discovery of the vastness of love of Christ.

Anything we do for Christ and for His Kingdom must begin out of our love for Christ and must continue out of our love for Christ. In other words, the love of Christ gives us the basis and sustaining power in ministry.

Amy Carmichael discovered that. She was heavily influenced by Hudson Taylor when he came to her hometown and spoke about the love of Christ and how it compelled him to go to China and share the gospel to millions of lost souls.

Amy felt called to overseas mission for life. She first went to Japan (because she was rejected for China for health reasons), then after a few years she had to come home to take care of her ill health. Then, she set out to India, which would become her home until the day she died. She went to south India and saw how young girls were sold to Hindu temples.



She sat up a rescue mission, which eventually turned into a community of believers known as the Dohnavur Fellowship. For the next 53 years, without a single furlough back in Ireland, she dedicated her life to the cause of Christ.

Her story inspired so many people, among whom were Jim and Elizabeth Elliot. Her poem titled, 'Hast Thou No Scar' was their favorite.

Hast thou no scar?  
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;  
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.  
Hast thou no scar?  
Hast thou no wound?  
Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,  
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent  
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.  
Hast thou no wound?  
No wound? No scar?  
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,  
And pierced are the feet that follow Me.  
But thine are whole; can he have followed far  
Who hast no wound or scar?

Jim Elliot learned early on in his life that it is the love of Christ that propels people to God's work. Without the love of Christ, anything we do is out of pride or self-righteousness.

Paul made it clear that it was Christ's love that compelled him to preach the gospel. No wonder then that he really prayed for the love of Christ to indwell in the believers' lives. We, too, ought to reflect on how wide and long and high deep is the love of Christ.

Paul ends the prayer section with a benediction. It is a hopeful one. Let us look at vv. 20-21. He believes that God is more than able to do anything we imagined or thought possible. Why? Because he is God! Just as we dwell on Christ and rely on the power of the Spirit, God will do great things through us.

Here, then, is our prayer for one another as we part. Some of us will move on to plant a new church. It will be challenging as you start from ground zero. Some of us will stay and rebuild the congregation. It, too, will be a challenge in many ways.

Let us remember one another in prayer. Let us remind ourselves that we are one family of God, serving the same Christ, and drawing the same power from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let's pray.