

March

Week 1

Paul's prayer for the people of Ephesus seems ready-made for the people of all churches throughout history to this very moment:

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. 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 – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 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, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”
(Eph. 3:14-21)

Monday. “...the whole family...derives its name...”

Jesus, wherever all of us are today, let us feel joined together as one family. Because that is what we are. We derive our identity in this world both as individuals and as a group from you. We are yours first. Whatever else we are in our varied natures and differing lives – all that comes in as a remote second. We have a lot of trouble remembering that sometimes, so give us ways every day to remind us of who we really are. This gift of our identity is but one of the glorious riches you give us. Thank you! How great is your love for us that you came to die and live again. What a demonstration of so glorious and marvelous a love! That same love fills each of us and brings us all together as one. Keep us keenly aware of it! And now, other prayers of my heart...

Tuesday. "...out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

Father, within the abundance of your rich gifts lies the strength to live and grow. Help me to see that better today. Let your Holy Spirit invade my inner being. As it floods into my life, cause that Spirit to empower me in all I do and am – power to be your child. Then as your child, direct my actions and words so they will translate into witnessing to all whom I meet today: family, friends, those I see often, new acquaintances, strangers, everybody. I want to dwell in Christ and have him dwell within me. Let this be a special day today, O God. I now bring you these prayers...

Wednesday. "...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..."

Dear Lord, on my own I can't begin to imagine the hugeness of your love so I need your help to understand, to absorb it. I have been rooted and established in love, it's true, but I must have the power of the Holy Spirit so I can join with other Christians to take it all in – all this great love and what it means in our lives. Without your help, none of us will get it, because it truly does surpass our human knowledge. You have told us that the more we understand your love, the more we will grow and the more our lives will have meaning as your sons and daughters. I want to be in on all that, but I just won't know how unless you give me the power to see it all. I wait upon you, most loving Lord. Here, also, are my other prayers...

Thursday. "...that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God..."

To be filled to the fullest measure with the rich treasures of a life in you, O God? That needs to be my deepest desire, my strongest yearning. I confess that I don't have that kind of longing often enough. Give me the desire to know you more fully this very day, and extend that over into all my tomorrows. I ask that as you make all this happen for me, you will do the same for my family

and friends, especially those in our church family. If we're to continue to grow as disciples and messengers of the Gospel, we all need to have your fullness within us individually and as a congregation. Instill the yearning in us all, Father. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. I also pray for...

Friday. "...Now to him who is able to do immeasurably (*"exceeding abundantly,"* KJV) more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..."

It's clear, dear Lord, that Paul knew so much more than I do about your power which is ready to work in us – in me. I seem to put my own measurement on your power, boundaries which I set. What a waste of your love and power – forgive me for that! I have such a finite imagination so I ask that you release me from it and let me see the vision and dream the dream you have for me. Guide my heart and mind so I will grow into the Christian whose life truly shines with the bright Gospel of your love for us all. There is so much for me to learn and become. I wait for your direction, O God. I pray too for...

Saturday. "...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

I praise you, Father, and I thank you for your rich gifts to me and to all in your church in this world. I thank you specifically for what you have done and are doing in our own local church. Your glory among us becomes increasingly clear. And we know that has been going on for a long, long time here in this place – all those generations. If there have been times when we didn't pause to see and acknowledge it, forgive us. Keep us focused on it today and in our future, especially tomorrow when we gather for our worship services. Guide us so that they *are* worship services in every sense – times when your glory, your power, your love are strongly emphasized in our words, our music and our fellowship. I now pray for...

Week 2

Monday. The Bible tells us to be “righteous” (amazing commandment!), but that we can’t do it on our own. Many scriptures say that the only way to get righteous is to seek forgiveness for our sins, then to accept that we have been absolved, vindicated, freed! That puts us in touch with the Lord on a fulltime basis. We become **“slaves of righteousness”** (Romans 6:18-23). And that, in turn, sets us up to be perfect. What?! Who said so? Jesus said it: **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** (Matt. 5:48). Perfect behavior, perfect thoughts, perfectly everything? Of course not. It means we’re to fulfill the purposes for which we have been created: to imitate the way God loves without condition or restraint. A life fully centered in that kind of love will demonstrate all Godly characteristics: we will forgive, forbear, honor others more than ourselves, and on and on just like God... Possible? Indeed so. Because it all begins when God loves us first which leads us to righteousness which leads us to a limitless power to love.

O God, open my heart and my mind so that I will just keep on imitating your righteousness, keep on growing in my understanding of your power of limitless love – the answer to every question, the source of real joy, the reason for my living. As you love, so I too want to love. As you are righteous, so I want to be – I dare to pray it! – righteous. I pray it urgently and I also pray for...

Tuesday. Scripture says that wise and skillful persons must not take pride in their abilities, **“but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.”** (from Jer. 9:24)

Father, I am grateful to you for my abilities, for who I am; you are the God who created me and the God who leads me. I didn’t invent myself. You did. Forgive me when I take the credit for

whatever my strengths are. I think that happens when I get too wrapped up in the busyness of living, and I see successes from what I do. But in an oddly similar way, I go another direction and deplore my failings at tasks and in relationships. When that happens, I think I may be expecting to be perfect on my own. I don't want to be guilty of boasting and I don't want to get confused by blasting myself with blame. Help me to stay on an even track, swaying neither left nor right, aiming instead toward your righteousness. Therein lies my hope for the kind of perfection you have said I can achieve through knowing and living your love. I pray also for...

Wednesday. "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16) **"...for we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"** (from 2 Cor. 6:16)

O God, to be your temple – what a gift! What a promise – that your Spirit lives within me, that you walk with me, *that you are my God, and I am one of your people!* Who am I to merit this? I am as nothing on my own. But you have created me, fashioned me to be as no other from the beginning to the end of time. And it is that creation of *yours* which merits your love, the indwelling of your Spirit, the establishment of your temple. I am overcome with gratitude, my Lord God. From this temple you have made of me, let come a lasting demonstration of your love for all others with whom I come in contact. I pray now for them and for these other things...

Thursday. "Therefore, be imitators of God...walk in love, just as Christ also loved you..." (from Eph. 5:1)

"...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (from Col. 1:10)

"...walk in newness of life." (from Rom. 6:4)

Father, I know that I can be righteous only because you love me, forgive me, sustain me, and lead me to behave as though I am walking in the actual footsteps of Jesus. But I do stray. Forgive me yet again, I pray, and restore me yet again. I will imitate

Godliness, I will bear fruit, I will awaken to newness with you each day – but only to the extent that I walk in your love. Within the knowledge of that love, I now pray for...

Friday. **“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger... The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life... A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel... A man finds joy in giving an apt reply – and how good is a timely word!”** (from Prov. 15:)

O God, when have I given in to anger and said mean and hurtful things? Where have I spoken sharply while lost in my own bad mood? How often have I ruined someone’s day and created a bad memory because I reacted from resentment, from impatience? I am embarrassed before your holiness. I cannot erase those sins, but I know you have promised to forgive. I long to be restored to your righteousness. So I beg your forgiveness now and ask that you ease the pain of my failings. Thank you for the reassurance your endless love gives me. Within the comfort of your forgiveness, I pray for...

Saturday. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his followers to deliver an important message, **“...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.”** (from Acts. 1:8)

Dear Lord, I thank you for the abundant blessings in my life. I’d fail miserably if I tried to make a comprehensive list or even estimate the number. And the evidence is clear: because I am loved, I shall continue to be blessed. Here, your word requires me to pass it on, to portray that evidence to others. My witnessing abilities are not good so I’ll never do well at that on my own. But I see I must do it anyhow. I must demonstrate your love and your righteousness in convincing ways. So I need you to provide the opportunities, then to guide me in the ways I am to witness. Your word tells me that I will receive power to do it and that it will come through the Holy Spirit. I pray for that power. I pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in all of my life so that at any and every opportunity, I will stand as a ready witness of your love for us all. Guide me, great Jehovah. I also pray for...

Week 3

Monday. Togetherness is a hallmark of God's plan for us. **"...not forsaking our own assembling together...but encouraging one another..."** (from Heb. 10:25).

"It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord..." (from Acts 15:25).

In the words of Jesus, **"How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..."** (from Matt. 23:37)

O God, as I so often seek you and your holiness in my life, I must also be joined with my brothers and sisters in Christ. We must be together – not just in Sunday worship or in the other ways we meet in groups – but we must be bound together through the Holy Spirit, even when absent from one another. Let the variations in who we are fade in the light of your love for our church family. In that light, lead us as one well-ordered entity as we move into the paths you have waiting for us. I pray also for...

Tuesday. The early Christian church **"...continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."** (from Acts 2:46,47)

Father, help our church family not only to continue the loving fellowship which so clearly defines who we are, but help us find new ways to have unity of purpose. When we are together and, indeed, when apart, let our hearts be glad as we see your blessings among us. From those gladdened hearts, we will praise you and lift your name up for all to see the wonder of your love. Then will the glorious Good News of Jesus Christ be sounded aloud, trumpeting the invitation for others to come to you. O God, we would be such a body of people always. I pray also for...

Wednesday. **"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone..."** (from 1 Tim. 2:1).

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy..." (from Philip. 1:3,4).

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God." (Philip. 1:9-11).

Lord God, as your word has instructed, I want to spend time in communion with you about myself and the things that concern me. But, as Paul prayed for others, so I, too, pray. In joy, I thank you for all your children, especially for those in our church family. I intercede on their behalf. May your joy be complete for all of us as you draw each and all closer into your loving embrace. I pray also for...

Thursday. "Give us today our daily bread." (Matt. 6:11). "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid...' " (from Heb. 13:5,6).

Jesus said not to worry about possessions, but **"seek first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** (from Matt.6:33)

Dear Lord, you know how hard it is always to see the line between avarice and the kind of ambition that is acceptable to your plan for us. Our world applauds success and achievement and the pursuit of wealth, so we sometimes don't look for the line beyond which we should not go. Stop us when we stray past it. We like to collect things and have status and be lauded. Forgive us. Help us to seek you first, to center our life purposes in your love so that we can see and do and have the really important things in life. Show us your priorities so that ours just sink out of sight. I pray also for...

Friday. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (from Matt. 6:27).

"...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself..." (from Matt. 6:34).

"Rejoice in the Lord always...rejoice!...the Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything..." (from Philip. 4:4-6).

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Pet. 5:7)

Father, your word is replete with admonitions and reassurances about the kind of anxieties I have sometimes. Indeed, worry makes no sense and accomplishes nothing. Why do I do it? I think it is because I rely too much on me and forget about you. I center on me and the small stuff of my life. How blind, how insensitive of me not to see that you are near – you are God! And yet I do it. Forgive me and restore me and lead me to a fuller awareness of you, of your care and love for me, of your readiness to guide my life. And teach me to rejoice in that grand knowledge. Always to rejoice. I pray also for...

Saturday. "Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet...with the harp and lyre...with tambourine and dancing...with the strings and flute...with the clash of cymbals... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. *Praise the Lord.*" (from Ps. 150)

Mighty God, I do praise your name today, and I thank you for what you are doing in my life and the life of our church. How glorious are your works among us! Be present with us in tomorrow's worship services and study groups and youth gatherings. Make your presence clearly perceptible to all of us, I pray. Let the Holy Spirit work in our togetherness in ways that will thrill and encourage us all. Then we will be lifted as one body to new joy and fresh hope for what you have yet to accomplish within us and within our church. And then will we be able to demonstrate to others who haven't yet come to you just what the rewards of life in you are all about. I pray also for...

Week 4

"Our Lord Jesus Christ has three 'spiritual commodities' that can be secured from nobody else: righteousness, grace, and peace. When you trust him as your Savior, his righteousness becomes your righteousness... Grace is God's favor to the undeserving... The result of this experience is peace, peace *with* God and the peace *of* God." (from *Be Alert* by Warren W. Wiersbe)

Monday. "...I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you..." (from Deut. 30:16)

O God, as this week begins, we hear your commandments to your people of old and know they are for us as well. Support us in all we do and think and say throughout this week so that we will walk in your ways. Help us to keep learning that the first desire of our hearts must be to follow you. Without your blessing, our lives will be of little meaning except maybe in our own eyes or the occasional plaudit. Paudits, I think, may well be part of your plan for us as we sustain and encourage one another. But they can get dangerous if we make too much of them. But with *your* blessing, we shall shine in the undimmed light of *your* love and you will bless us. Nothing can compare to that! I pray now for...

Tuesday. "Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life..." (from Deut. 30:19b,20a)

Father, I can see that most of what happens in my life and the lives of my family and friends is really just about choices. I have made wrong choices too often and for all those I must always seek your forgiveness. There have been bad choices in both the big and little things and the results have borne out the truth of your wisdom: I must choose life in and through you. You are my life, O Lord. Guide me so that I live it in the fullest way, bearing fruit so that others may see and come to learn of you. I pray also for...

Wednesday. “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above...set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (from Col. 3:1,2)

Lord, it is more than difficult to avoid being lost in the details of our lives – work, play, school, relationships, finances, health, hobbies, and all the rest. There is so much to do and think about that we get captured by it all. Time goes by, sometimes many days at a time, and we discover that we’ve given no thought to “things above” – to you and how we can soar far beyond the mundane when we set our hearts and minds on you. We have been raised with Christ! That’s such a glorious fact, and here we are getting lost in what, by comparison, is just trivia. Help us, Lord. There’s no way we’ll rise above the ordinary on our own. Sustain us, support us, provide the wind beneath our wings. This I ask in the name of Jesus, in whose name I also pray for...

Thursday. “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...you used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander...lying...” (from Col. 3:5-9a)

Father, somehow I only want to think that these are things other people do, not I. But am I guilty without knowing it or, maybe, without admitting it? If so, make it clear to me, then let me acknowledge it so I can be forgiven. Such behavior, I think, could sneak up in little ways to become too much of what we all are. Forbid that it should happen to me! Guide me so that it never will, I pray. And I pray for others to whom this has happened. Deal with them in ways that you know about so they may walk in new paths with you. I pray too for...

Friday. “Therefore, as God’s people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (Col. 3:12-14)

O God, there is absolutely no way I can ever describe myself like that. But could you ever describe me so? What a grand gift, to

be one of God's people who are defined this way – it's being like you! You make it quite clear here: love is the key, the driving force, the binding element. And it's not a love I have to conjure up. It's your love, your constant gift. I accept it now. Help me to accept it and live within it *every day*. I pray too for...

Saturday. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you are called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:15-17)

Father, thank you for these majestic words. The "peace of Christ" – that it is the rule of my heart is a concept I can fathom only as you empower me, so I ask that of you right now. That your word might dwell in me "richly" is something I yearn for and look forward to as you reveal it to me – help me not to forget to read it. And this instruction to teach and admonish others "with all wisdom" is way, way beyond where I am. So I ask you to impart your wisdom to me and lead me to those to whom you want me to demonstrate this great Gospel of peace. Getting together to worship is what we will do tomorrow. Help us to worship *really* – not just routine liturgy, but *real worship*. Help us to do it in the way you say here, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Make it happen in all our togetherness – in Sunday School classes, worship services, youth groups, and even in the hellos and handshakes. I pray also for...