

Ephesians 3:14–15 | “What We Need, Part 1”

Preached on July 13, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 3, verses 14–15 this morning, for we are continuing in our study of Ephesians. *[pauseeee]*

As a pastor, I counsel people from time to time, and something that I find that’s an interesting question to ask them is: “What do you think that you need the most?” *[pause]*

I find it interesting, not so much because of the question itself, but more so due to the interesting answers that I get! *[pause]*

It actually gives me insight into how they are thinking, for it reveals what they are truly seeking after. *[pauseeee]*

They come into my office with some sort of problem, and so I’m asking them essentially, “So what do you believe will solve this mess?” *[pause]*

If I’m counseling a married couple, and they both answer with, “What I need is for my spouse to change,” then I already know that I have my work cut out for me. *[pauseeee]*

Yet you don’t find this kind of thing *only* in married couples, but in a vast array of other situations and dilemmas...

There are people who think that if only they had better health, then all of their problems would go away. *[pause]*

They think that if only they got that job, that promotion, that car, or that certain amount of money then everything would change for the better. *[pause]*

They feel as though their greatest need is some sort of new or better thing or situation.

So maybe they think, “If only I had a girlfriend or boyfriend,” or, “If only I had more freedom to do what I want.”

Or, “If only I lost this many pounds, or looked prettier.” *[pauseeee]*

Maybe it relates to others...

They think, “What I need is for that person to not annoy me anymore, or for my co-worker to no longer be my co-worker, and then my life would just be so peaceful.” *[pauseeee]*

Maybe for you, it’s that you think you just need a closer friend or for your family to just act right, and you think *that’s* your greatest need. *[pauseeee]*

What about you—what do you think that you need the most? *[pause]*

Really boil it down, what do you need the most?

Well it's interesting to see what Paul considers as something that he believes that he needs and well as what others need.

And what Paul shows us here in these verses is that *we need prayer*—for just listen to verses 14–15. *[READ]*

Next week we will get into Paul's prayer requests for the Ephesians, but this week we are going to focus on just the bare fact that Paul prays.

Yet this morning will be anything but bare, for these two verses will show us way more than you think...

For they will show us *that* Paul prays for them, *why* he prays for them, and *who* he prays to. *[pausee]*

So as we consider what Paul says here, what do we see about prayer?

First...

I. We pray because we are needy.

In our culture, being needy is often seen as a bad thing. *[pause]*

Now certainly we would say that being needy can cross a line into not being good, when your needs are supplied, yet you are still being needy for more.

Or if you are being needy, all the while you are being lazy—definitely not good.

But I'm talking about the bare, basic fact of just how we are needy people, and it's almost seen as something bad or negative. *[pause]*

Think about it this way—how would most people in our culture respond if you said, “I am not enough.”? *[pause]*

They would encourage you to disregard that thinking, and to believe that you *are* enough, and one of the reasons is because neediness is seen in a negative light.

And what's often seen in a positive light? Self-sufficiency. *[pauseeee]*

Self-reliance is lifted up so highly in our day, where people boast in being able to rely upon themselves...

Just think of how often you hear statements like: “I am enough,” or “I have all that I need within me.” *[pause]*

They are acting like being needy is a bad thing, but when you consider Scripture, you realize that *being needy is being human.* *[pause]*

God has created us to be dependent creatures—dependent on Him, that is. *[pause]*

He is totally self-reliant, self-existing, self-empowering, but we are reliant upon God, exist because of God, and empowered by God. [pause]

So I am not enough, but He is enough, and He gives me what I need. *[pause]*

I don't have all that I need within myself, but God gives me what I need.

See the radical difference? *[pause]*

One considers neediness a problem to be whisked away with some self-affirmation, but the other considers neediness an inherent human trait that is only ultimately met in God. [pauseeee]

So the bare fact of being needy is not sinful, for we are creatures, who were created by God, and also, why do you think we are commanded to pray? *[pause]*

Do you think it's just a nice little thing to do for fun?

Do you think it's just a rote, empty phrase that we have to say and it magically works to ward off bad things and invites good things? *[pause]*

Was it given to us to do so that we can simply feel good about ourselves, or look extra religious in front of others?

No, no, no, and no. *[pause]*

We pray because we are needy people, who are dependent on God to provide. [pause]

Put another way: why do Christians *need* to pray? Because we *need* prayer! *[pauseeee]*

There's this well-known quote by Martin Luther, where he says, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." [pause]

Now he may have been exaggerating, but it gets the point across—we need prayer. *[pauseeeee]*

I wonder if our lack of prayer goes back to that idea of seeing neediness at something wrong in us that we must solve.

For if you start out with this idea that you are an independent, self-sufficient person, who has all that you need in yourself, then why *would* you pray? *[pause]*

*You see yourself as a self-sufficient individual, meant to solve it all, so then *you* become the answer, and prayer becomes unnecessary.*

And so the only place for prayer for someone like that is as a last resort. *[pause]*

That's why many people will think, "Well I tried everything else, and so now I guess I'll go to God, for what other option do I have?" *[pause]*

And why do you think there are so many "foxhole prayers"? *[pause]*

No, we must keep reminding ourselves that we are dependent on God.

It's not just that some situations here and there make me dependent on God, but *all of life* is one of dependence on God. *[pauseeeee]*

We know that babies are inherently dependent, but when we grow up, we think that we grow out of our dependence, but it's not true. *[pause]*

Certainly, we aren't dependent on our parents as much, but we are always and forever dependent on God from birth all the way through to even Heaven, for we are told that...

In the New Jerusalem, "The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."¹ *[pause]*

So even in Heaven, we will be dependent on the Lord for light! *[pauseeee]*

We are dependent on God, and prayer is an acknowledgement and expression of that dependence. *[pauseeeee]*

So here was the great apostle Paul, and he constantly showed his reliance on prayer.

And if someone, who is probably one of the most mature Christians there ever was, saw the need for prayer, shouldn't we? *[pause]*

If Jesus prayed, don't you think we should? *[pauseeee]*

So we need prayer because we are inherently needy people, yet here's the thing, our neediness doesn't stop at the moment of salvation. *[pause]*

It's not that we need God to be saved, but then after conversion, we can disregard that prayer thing.

No, God's work in our life isn't over when you place your faith in Jesus, but we need Him to continue to work in our hearts, as we follow Him. *[pauseeee]*

You really see this in how Paul has structured his epistle so far...

In chapter 1, Paul recounted all of the amazing spiritual blessings that the Ephesian Christians had in Christ...

¹ Revelation 21:23.

And then right after that, he talks about how it's "for this reason..." that he prays for them.

[pause]

Then in chapter 2, Paul described how God brought them from death to life, from far off to near, and built them into this amazing temple, where God dwelt...

And now right after that in chapter 3, he says that it's, "For this reason," that he prays for them.

[pauseeee]

This shows us that our need for the Lord in prayer doesn't stop at salvation, but is ever more needed as we continue in the faith. *[pause]*

You don't graduate from the practice of prayer, when you meet a certain spiritual level, but you need it all along the way. *[pauseeee]*

For Paul, it was actually *because* God had done all of these amazing things in their lives that he prayed for them. *[pause]*

It's *because* God has a plan that He is working through Christ that he has confidence to pray.

[pause]

It's *because* they have so many blessings and privileges in Christ, that he prays for them to be rooted in those things and to deeply know them. *[pause]*

It's *because* they are a holy temple and dwelling place of God, that Paul prays for them to be able to live out that amazing reality. *[pauseeee]*

All that we have from God doesn't negate the need for prayer, but shows that we need Him all the more! *[pauseeee]*

We need to really grasp what we have, we need to live in light of it, and we need to persevere in the faith, not losing heart when times get tough. *[pauseeee]*

If you asked the ordinary Christian for some reasons why they should pray, it's not often that they would say, "Because I have so much in Christ that I need to really grasp it all, and live in light of it."

Yet that's really why Paul prays for them. *[pause]*

Therefore, the Christian's life is one where prayer is to be an ever-constant companion.

It's like it's a necessary piece of equipment in our travel bag of this life of faith, where no matter how far we progress, it's essential to our journey. *[pauseeeee]*

Paul saw prayer as a necessity, and therefore as important.

And the fact that he actually prayed and prayed regularly shows us that. *[pauseee]*

I wonder if we see prayer as a *necessity* for our lives. *[pause]*

This is very hypothetical, but let's say that someone said that you could only pick a few things that you could have to live your Christian life—would prayer be one of them? *[pause]*

Sadly, for many of us, prayer wouldn't be close to making that list.

Yet what if you woke up everyday with these things on your mind—how would it change your prayer life? *[pause]*

Imagine you woke up everyday remembering, "I need God for this day, or else I can't make it, so I'll go to Him." *[pause]*

Where, as you went through your day, you thought, "I'm going to pray right now, I need it." *[pause]*

And you even ended your day, contemplating, "I needed those prayers throughout the day, now let's pray for tomorrow." *[pauseeee]*

Sadly, both in our lives and in our churches, prayer has become either an "empty ritual" or a "filler." *[pause]*

For some, they think that, "As long as I just do it, then I'll be good with God," and so they pray as some sort of ritual to ward off bad and bring good.

Or they pray before meals because they just know that it's supposed to be done.

And so they are thinking, "We must say 'grace' or else our food won't be magically blessed." *[pauseeeee]*

When it comes to churches—some churches could do prayer out of routine, so that it simply becomes a weekly ritual, devoid of meaning...

It almost becomes something that has to be plugged into the service, so let's do it and then move onto something else. *[pause]*

Likewise, a church could use prayer as a mere filler of time in a service, or simply as a way to transition to something else, and that's it. *[pause]*

We need to be careful that we aren't treating prayer in those ways!

And I want to be more intentional here in our church so that we aren't being guilty of such treatment of prayer, but I want us to view prayer as *essential*. *[pause]*

It's essential, not as some magical formula, but as a necessity, where we think, "You know what, let's stop and pray right now," even if it isn't at a typical time when we pray in a service. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever done that in your own life, or has prayer been regulated to only certain “set times”? *[pause]*

Have you ever been talking to someone, who was so burdened with something and you just stopped and said, “Let me pray for you right now about this”? *[pause]*

I vividly remember a time at a church when an ambulance went zooming down the road past the church with its siren blaring.

And right then and there in the middle of the pastor’s sermon, he stopped and said, “Let’s pray for whoever that ambulance is going to help.” *[pause]*

That shows us someone who lives and breathes prayer as something absolutely indispensable.

And so may we as individual Christians and as a church start viewing prayer that way, *[pause]*

Let’s live on prayer, as if we couldn’t make it without going to the Lord. *[pause]*

Let’s say like that hymn, “I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain; come quickly and abide, or life is vain.”² *[pauseeee]*

In dependence and need, we go to the Lord in prayer for ourselves, but we also go in prayer for others. *[pause]*

Paul’s prayer here is for others, and he made sure to let them know about it. *[pause]*

This wasn’t to pridefully boast or show them how spiritual he was, but he wanted to genuinely let them know that they were prayed over.

Yet it also does something else, for it demonstrates that he wanted *others* to see prayer’s importance, too! *[pause]*

He wanted to encourage them that they were prayed over, and to encourage them on in prayer. *[pause]*

So don’t be shy about sharing with others that you are praying for them and what you are praying for...

It’s such an encouragement, and can stir them up in prayer, too. *[pauseeee]*

There’s something so uplifting when I hear someone pray for me, and it makes me think about how I can pray for others, as well. *[pauseeee]*

Do you pray for other people, or are your prayers filled to the brim with only personal requests?

See prayer as essential for yourself *and others*, for it is! *[pauseeee]*

² “I Need Thee Every Hour,” by Annie Sherwood Hawks, 1872.

Pray for yourself and others, remembering how needy and dependent you are on the Lord...

You are not enough in yourself, but guess what?

You have a God who has all that you need. *[pauseee]*

So we pray because we are needy, but secondly, these verses show us that...

II. We pray because of *who* we pray to.

Whenever my wife gets off the phone with someone, the kids instantly go to her and they always ask the same thing: “Who were you talking to?” *[pause]*

Well when it comes to your prayers, do you really ever consider who you are talking to? *[pause]*

Paul makes sure to mention who it is that he prays to, for he says that he bows his knees “before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” *[pause]*

So we see here that Paul prays with confidence because of who he prayed to. [pauseee]

Why do you pray? *[pause]*

Do you have reasons for your prayer?

Do you ever dwell upon them or consider them? *[pause]*

Is it just because you feel that you should?

Is it because you want to appear godly?

Is it to try to control or manipulate God, acting like He is a genie in a bottle, who must do as you wish? [pause]

Paul prayed because he knew who he was praying to, and so he knew that it was important and powerful. *[pauseeee]*

Now who does Paul know that he’s praying to? Well he calls him “the Father”. *[pause]*

It is God the Father, our Heavenly Father, who Paul prays to, and that’s who we pray to as well. *[pause]*

We don’t pray to nothing, we don’t pray to some imaginary being in the sky, we don’t pray to grandpa, or to angels, or to some mythical creature...

We pray to God the Father. *[pauseee]*

The fact that He is called ‘Father’ cascades down a plethora of comfort for our souls. [pause]

Since He is called ‘Father’ then that means that He’s approachable, loving, and close like a good father is, but even better. *[pause]*

We can go to Him at any time and know that we will be met with love and care, for He is not some distant grouch or unapproachable meanie. *[pause]*

He wants us to know Him as Father...

And so that means that we should view Him as our Father, who we can go to with anything and know that we will experience a tender Father, who truly knows us and loves us beyond measure. *[pauseeee]*

Is that how you view the Lord—as Father? *[pause]*

Do you remember that He is your Father, if you have trusted in Christ?

Wouldn’t it make a huge difference in our prayer lives, if we remembered that vital truth? *[pause]*

When you are downcast, struggling, or feeling needy, you can remember, “I have a loving, Heavenly Father, who I can go to!” *[pause]*

He is present and involved, tender and loving, encouraging and compassionate, but there’s more...

A good father is also a provider and protector. *[pauseeee]*

We go to our Heavenly Father, knowing that He not only cares about our needs, but He can provide for our needs. *[pause]*

He is not only compassionate in our dire straits, but He can protect us in those very difficulties. *[pause]*

As a loving and strong Father, He won’t let us flounder on our own, especially when we go to Him asking for help...

For as Jesus says in Matthew 7:11...

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” *[pauseeee]*

So we pray to the Father, but in order for us to not view our Heavenly Father in lowly, mere earthly terms, we must remember that He’s *more* than a mere father...

He is also the ultimate authority over all. *[pauseeee]*

It’s significant that Paul says that he bows his knees before the Father. *[pause]*

Have you ever bowed your knee before your earthly father to ask for something? I highly doubt it.

So this shows us that God is a Father, but He's more than a mere Father, for He's Lord. *[pause]*

This bowing is a posture of humility and submission before a Sovereign.

So God is Father, but He's really our *Heavenly* Father—He's Father and Lord, Father and King, Father and Sovereign. *[pause]*

We don't command Him around, twist His arm, manipulate Him, or pull the wool over His eyes—no, we bow the knee before Him in prayer.

He is the One over all, and so we must remember that when we go to Him. *[pause]*

We don't treat Him lightly, but we reverently approach Him, all the while knowing that He is a tender, loving Father. *[pause]*

Paul says that He is the Father, “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” *[pause]*

This is teaching us that God is the ultimate source of every family, even over every social grouping in the angelic world. *[pause]*

He is the Creator of each one, and has authority over each one, for He named them. *[pause]*

To name something in the Bible often showed authority over it, so He is the source and authority over every family. *[pause]*

There is no rival family, or family that came to be without His say, but He is the ultimate source of all beings and groups. *[pause]*

Really think about that—it's amazing to consider! This is who we go to in prayer! *[pause]*

We don't make our requests to some ineffective, incompetent, powerless person...

We make our requests to our Heavenly Father, who is the ultimate source and authority of every family in heaven and earth! *[pause]*

What if we truly and deeply considered *who* we were praying to everyday? *[pause]*

Wouldn't it give us so much more encouragement *when* we go to Him, and so much more motivation *to* go to Him? *[pause]*

When I pray, I'm not going to my friend, who can only listen, but is powerless to change a lot of things. *[pause]*

When I pray, I'm not going to a cruel king, who couldn't care less about me.

I go to “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named”—that’s who we pray to! *[pause]*

So will you remember who you pray to? *[pauseeee]*

Here in Ephesians 3:14–15, Paul begins recounting his prayer, and in so doing, he shows us that...

We need prayer!

We need prayer because we are so needy and dependent on God, and it’s He who we go to—the great Father, King, and Lord of all. *[pauseeee]*

Oh, if only we continually reminded ourselves of these things and *believed* them deep within our hearts—what a difference it would make in our prayer lives! *[pause]*

To really and truly remember that we are dependent and needy, and yet to know that we have a Father, who is independent and needs nothing, makes a world of a difference. *[pause]*

We *need* Him to work, and He can—that’s Paul’s understanding, so no wonder He bows the knee before the Father for these things. *[pauseeee]*

We need prayer—you need prayer, do you remember that?

And if you will begin to trust that more, how will that change your prayer life? *[pauseeee]*

I want to be a Christian of prayer, and I want to be a church of prayer, don’t you? *[pause]*

I want to see prayer as something absolutely necessary—I don’t want to see it as trivial, ineffective, or some hollow ritual that just has to be done.

Rather, may we see it as God’s ordained way for us to commune with Him, and approach Him with praise, thanks, confession, and supplication. *[pauseeee]*

This, our great Father and Lord, sent His Son to come to this earth, die on the cross for our sins, and then rise again.

So that in and through Christ, we could be given the right to become children of God.³ *[pause]*

In Him, we now have boldness and access with confidence to the Father through our faith in him,⁴ so that now we can “find grace to help in time of need.”⁵ *[pauseeee]*

You need prayer, for you are needy, and you have a God, who is more than able to supply your needs—so will you go to Him?

³ A reference to John 1:12.

⁴ Ephesians 3:12.

⁵ Hebrews 4:16.