

## 6. The Biblical Foundation for Praying for Our Children

In 1 Samuel 1:10-11, Hannah prayed for a son and vowed that if the Lord gave her a son that she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life. After Samuel was born, Hannah returned to the place where she had prayed and said in 1 Samuel 1:27-28, “For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.’ So they worshiped the Lord there.” Here, we see that Hannah prayed for a child and promised the Lord that she would lend that child to the Lord as long as he lived. This gives us a great example of the first thing that we pray for our children. We pray for their salvation so that they can then serve the Lord as long as they live.

Once our children become Christians, we need to begin to pray for their spiritual growth and development. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul, Silas and Timothy were writing to their spiritual children. The book begins with these men expressing their thanksgiving to God for certain things in the lives of their spiritual children. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 says, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” The first thing we see is that the foundation for prayer is thanksgiving to God for our children whether they are physical children or spiritual children.

Here, we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy were thankful for three things. They gave thanks for the Thessalonians work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. Here, we see that the foundation of prayer for our children includes prayer for their growth in faith, growth in hope and growth in love. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Since these are the three things that abide, these are three things we should pray for in the spiritual development of our children. These same three things show up in nearly all of the letters that Paul wrote.

In Ephesians 1:15-18, we read, “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” In these verses, we see that Paul gave thanks for their strong faith and love but could not give thanks for their hope. As a result, in his prayer to God for them, Paul prayed that God would give them, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Here, we see his prayer was that their hope would also grow strong.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, they were lacking all three things that abide: faith, hope and love. However, Paul still gave thanks for them in his prayer. 1 Corinthians 1:4 says, “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.” Since Paul could not give thanks for their faith, hope or love, he still gave thanks that God had showed

His grace to them. Then, he wrote chapter three to help them grow and mature in their faith, instead of remain as spiritual young children (toddlers). He wrote chapter thirteen to help them grow and mature in their love, instead of trying to use their spiritual gifts for self-glory. Then, he wrote chapter fifteen to help them grow and mature in their hope by reminding them of the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ as those are the two things that will strengthen hope. We want to help our children by praying that they will mature in their faith, hope and love.

Paul also focuses on five things he prayed for spiritual children, in his prayer for the Ephesians, in Ephesians 3. We need to pray for these same five things as we pray for our physical and spiritual children. Ephesians 3:14-19 says, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” In these verses, we see five things for which to pray for our children.

1. That they would be strengthened with might in the inner man.
2. That Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith.
3. That they would be rooted and grounded in love.
4. That they would know the love of Christ that passes knowledge.
5. That they would be filled will all the fullness of God.

Once our children become Christians, we need to pray that they will be strengthened with might in the inner man. The word that is translated “might” is the same word that is translated “power” in Acts 1:8 where we read, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit is the One that strengthens them with might as they learn to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we are actually praying that our children will learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. They will learn best how to yield to the Holy Spirit as they see in our lives that we are yielding to the Holy Spirit. That means that we need to learn to provide our children an example of yielding to the Holy Spirit as we pray for them.

Second, we see that we need to be praying for our children that Christ will dwell in their hearts by faith. The word “dwell” means *to inhabit or to live within a person*. In Matthew 12:45, it is used to talk about demons living within a person. In Colossians 2:9-10, it says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” In these verses, we see that the entire Godhead dwells or lives in Christ. In fact, that also means we are complete because Christ dwells in us. John 14:23 tells us that as we are obedient to Christ and our hearts are cleansed from sin, both Christ and the Father are at home in our lives. We want to pray that this will happen in the lives of each of our children.

Third, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will become rooted and grounded in love. There are four roots which can develop in the lives of people that are mentioned in the New Testament. Two are negative and two are positive. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “For the love

of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Then, Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” In these verses, we see that either a root of the love of money or a root of bitterness will be very destructive in the life of a person.

Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Then, our verse here in Ephesians 3:17 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” In these two verses, we see two very positive roots that we desire for our children and should pray that they will develop in the lives of our children. We need to pray daily that our children will be rooted and built up in Christ and rooted and grounded in His love. As children take root in Christ and His love, their lives will be transformed.

Fourth, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will grow to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. In addition to praying that our children will take root in Christ and His love, Ephesians 3:18-19 says that we need to pray that they will grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them. These verses say, “May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” The word “comprehend” means *to lay hold of or make it our own*. As our children are rooted and grounded in love, we want them to lay hold of the fullness of the love of Christ. We see that this love passes human knowledge and so it will only be experienced by those who are the children of God.

Fifth, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will be filled with all the fullness of God. To be filled with all the fullness of God means that we are yielding the control of our life to the Father so that He fills our lives. In fact, we need to pray both for ourselves and for our children that the entire Godhead will fill our lives. Ephesians 4:13 says, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Then, Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” As we model this fullness of the Godhead in our lives and pray that it will develop in the lives of our children, we will see the Lord work mightily both in our lives and in theirs.

In fact, we see the results of such prayer in Ephesians 3:20-21 where we read, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” May the Lord richly bless you and your children as you pray for their spiritual development.