

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 3:14-21, PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

A. Paul's Prayer Resumed (14-19)

1. Concerning Paul's prayer
 - a. It is one sentence in the Greek as was the first prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23.
 - b. Warren Wiersbe, *In the first prayer [1:15-23], the emphasis is on enlightenment; but in this prayer, the emphasis is on enablement. It is not so much a matter of knowing as being—laying our hands on what God has for us and by faith making it a vital part of our lives.*
 - c. This prayer is a transition from knowing to doing because it reminds us that the power to do comes from God.
2. The reason for his prayer (14-15), ***For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,***
 - a. Paul began a prayer for his readers but interrupted it until verse 14.
 - 1) He had more to tell them about the church.
 - 2) He stopped to explain the mystery and his responsibility to proclaim it.
 - b. *For this reason* points back to Ephesians 3:1 which looks back to Ephesians 2:11-22.
 - 1) He is referring to the blessings possessed by Jewish and Gentile believers which comes through the work of Jesus Christ.
 - 2) Christians are part of a new living organism, the church which is now the dwelling place of God.
 - 3) He continues the prayer in verses 14-21, praying that his readers would comprehend God's love for them which is not just emotion but empowerment.
 - c. His prayer was especially fervent.
 - 1) People usually stood when they prayed, Mark 11:25, *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*
 - 2) Kneeling was not common and signified extreme passion as seen in Stephen, Acts 7:60, *And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*
 - d. His prayer was addressed to God, the preeminent Father.
 - 1) The term *Father* is derived from God, not man.
 - 2) Harold Hoehner, *He is the first Father, the only One with "underived" fatherhood. Thus every human family derives its name, that is, exists as a family with a father, because of Him. It is to this Father that Paul prayed.*
 - 3) Max Anders, *Certainly such a powerful, creative Father can hear and answer the prayers about to be uttered.*
3. His request was based on the riches of God's glory (16-19)
 - a. He prayed that they would possess spiritual power enabled by the Holy Spirit (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,***
 - 1) Paul was confident in his request because of *the riches of his glory*
 - a) He trusted God's ability to supply Paul's request from God's glorious riches.
 - 1] It may be understood to refer to the abundance of His power or resources.
 - 2] Ephesians 1:18, *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*
 - 3] Colossians 1:11, *being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;*
 - b) Also, it looks to God's grace as seen in Ephesians 1:6, *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*
 - c) Stephen Fowl, *The economy of God's giving is ruled by excess rather than lack, by grace rather than reciprocity and indebtedness.*
 - 2) Paul requested that God would strengthen believers in the inner man by means of His Spirit.
 - a) It was a request for spiritual strength.
 - 1] Ephesians 6:10, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*
 - 2] Philippians 4:13, *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

- b) It is strength primarily for our spiritual not our physical beings.
 - 1] 2 Corinthians 4:16, *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.*
 - 2] 1 Peter 3:4, *but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*
 - c) It is strength which comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - 1] Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9, *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
 - 2] Not every Christian is controlled by the Holy Spirit which is a personal choice.
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *It is only when we yield to the Spirit and let Him control the inner man that we succeed in living to the glory of God. This means feeding the inner man the Word of God, praying and worshiping, keeping clean, and exercising the senses by loving obedience.*
- b. He listed the results of such spiritual power (17-19)
- 1) That they would be in fellowship with Christ (17a), ***so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-***
 - a) The word for *dwell* means *to be at home*.
 - b) Paul states that when a Christian is strengthened with spiritual power, Christ will be at home in his heart.
 - 1] Christ permanently lives in all believers in the Person of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:19, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,*
 - 2] Here, Paul is dealing with fellowship with Christ which is a walk of faith.
 - a] Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - b] Revelation 3:20, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*
 - c] H. D. M. Spence, *This (fellowship) is to be secured by their faith, opening the door, receiving Christ in all his fulness, resting and living on him, believing his promises, and longing for his appearing the second time.*
 - 2) That they would know the love of Christ (17b-19a), ***that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,***
 - a) Christians were rooted as a plant and grounded as a building in God's love.
 - 1] These participles are in the perfect tense, indicating a past action with continuing results.
 - 2] John Stott, *Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built.*
 - 3] It was God's love for us that sent His Son to the cross and it was Jesus' love for the Father that caused Him to go.
 - 4] It is deepening love that needs to control and strengthen believers.
 - a] John 14:21, *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*
 - b] John 14:23, *Jesus answered him, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*
 - c] John 15:10, *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
 - b) Christians are empowered to experience the love of Christ which is beyond knowledge.
 - 1] The power to experience Christ's love is available to every believer, Romans 8:35, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*
 - 2] John Stott, *...the love of Christ is 'broad' enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jews and Gentiles, the theme of these chapters), 'long' enough to last for eternity, 'deep' enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and 'high' enough to exalt him to heaven.*
 - 3] The love of Christ is not to be quantified because it surpasses knowledge but instead, it must be experienced.

- 3) That they would be filled with all of God's fullness (19b), *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*
 - a) Colossians 2:10, *and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*
 - b) Ephesians 4:13, *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *The ultimate goal of Paul's request was that his readers might be so full of knowledge and appreciation for God that they might allow Christ to control them fully.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *We like to measure ourselves by the weakest Christians that we know, and then boast, "Well, I'm better than they are." Paul tells us that the measure is Christ, and that we cannot boast about anything (nor should we). When we have reached His fullness, then we have reached the limit.*
 - e) Max Anders, *If we pray for him to strengthen us with power by his spirit by the inner man, Christ will be at home in each room of our heart. If Christ occupies our heart, we will have a confidence and security in his love for us. If we have such confidence and security, we are able to love others. This ability to know God's love and thus love others, leads to the fullness of God in us.*

B. A Doxology (20-21)

1. In recognition of God's sovereignty (20a), *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,*
 - a. *Now*
 - 1) Our sovereign God brought Jews and Gentiles together in one body which was beyond comprehension.
 - 2) Harold Hoehner, *No human or angel would ever think that Jews and Gentiles could function together in one body. But with God's power of love in each believer's life, Paul was confident that Jewish and Gentile believers can function and love one another.*
 - b. *far more abundantly*
 - 1) It means to an extra-ordinary degree.
 - 2) John Stott, *English equivalents which have been proposed are 'immeasurably more' or 'vastly more than more,' but perhaps the feel of it is best conveyed by 'infinitely more.' It states simply that there are no limits to what God can do.*
2. In recognition of God's omnipotence (20b), *according to the power at work within us,*
 - a. It is the power that raised Christ from the dead, Ephesians 1:19-20, *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*
 - b. John Stott, *It is the power of the resurrection, the power which raised Christ from the dead, enthroned him in the heavenlies, and then raised and enthroned us there with him. That is the power which is at work within the Christian and the church.*
 - c. Warren Wiersbe, *Unbelief, unconfessed sin, careless living, worldliness in action or attitude—all of these can rob us of power... "Without Me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).*
3. In recognition of His eternal glory (21), *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
 - a. Glory must go to God for now and forever.
 - 1) Romans 11:36, *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*
 - 2) John Stott, *The power comes from him; the glory must go to him.*
 - b. God is to be glorified not only for Who He is but for what He does in the church and through Christ Jesus.
 - 1) John Stott, *For he (Paul) is convinced, as we must be, that only divine power can generate divine love in the divine society.*
 - 2) Max Anders, *As we see and recognize God's work in the church and in Christ, we respond in praise and worship, giving God glory.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Christians are empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- B. Such power enables fellowship with Christ, comprehending the love of Christ, and experiencing the fullness of God.
- C. The Christian's response to Who God is and What He does is to give Him glory.