

The Epistle to the Ephesians

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PAUL'S SECOND GREAT PRAYER IN EPHESIANS

Ephesians 3:14-21

INTRODUCTION

We are immeasurably blessed to have two remarkable prayers by the Apostle Paul in one short Epistle. Since all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), we must conclude that Paul was divinely led to include these two prayers for our learning and admonition.

In this lesson we will examine the truths contained in Paul's second prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. In lesson 4 we considered Paul's first prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23. This prayer was addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:17), the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Paul prayed that we might have wisdom concerning three things:

3. that we might know what is the hope of God's calling.
4. what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.
5. what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe.

In this lesson we will be examining the truths contained in Paul's second prayer. This prayer is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:14), who is the source of all affections, including family affections. Paul emphasizes our need to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17), so that we might be able to comprehend the love of God (Ephesians 3:19).

IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON

- As in Lesson 4, we are again taught how to pray and what to pray for. It is important that we should pray one for another to have wisdom and understanding concerning Christ, the hope of His calling, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
- It is important also that we should also pray one for another that we be so grounded in love that we might be able to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of God.
- It is also of great importance to realize that Paul, in both prayers, has in mind the fulfillment of God's glorious eternal purpose for all who put their faith in Christ (Ephesians 1:11; 3:14).

THE LESSON

I. Ephesians 3:14 – "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

A. For this cause

1. For what did Paul pray? What was his burden?

In Paul's first prayer, Ephesians 1:17-19, his burden is represented by three "whats."

- a. What is the hope of God's calling?
- b. What are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints?
- a. What is the exceeding greatness of His power?

1. In this second prayer, which we are now studying, Paul's great burden is represented by four "thats."

- a. That God would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16).
- b. That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17).
- c. That you might be able to comprehend what is the breadth, length, depth, and height and to know the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18-19).
- d. That you might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

B. *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. While there is no specific command in the Bible that we must kneel to pray, there are numerous accounts of kneeling to pray and to worship God. Illustrations:
 - a. Jesus kneeled down and prayed (Luke 22:41).
 - b. Daniel kneeled to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10).
 - c. Stephen kneeled and cried with a loud voice (Acts 7:60).
 - d. The Psalmist cried, "let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psalm 95:6).
 - e. Peter kneeled down and prayed (Acts 9:40).
 - f. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Philippians 2:10).
2. Kneeling is an act of adoration and worship, and appears to be the proper mode of praying.
3. We are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), requiring that we pray in many positions throughout the day, but when deeply burdened and intensely concerned, we usually drop to our knees.

A. *Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*

1. Remember always that the God of the Bible is a triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all working in perfect harmony with each other.
2. God the Father sent His Son Jesus into the world (John 20:21), that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17).
3. Christ was miraculously conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18, 20). When Christ was found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:7-8).
4. Since Christ was the obedient Son of God, it was perfectly proper for Paul to address God as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. Ephesians 3:15 – "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"

It is just as correct to say "every" family. Since Heaven is included, the family of God probably includes the numberless angelic beings who do His bidding.

Every family would include:

- The antediluvian family – those who lived before the great flood.
- Patriarchal families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- The believing family of Israel.
- The multitudes that have made up the church since Pentecost.
- Those who will yet be saved during the Kingdom age of the reign of Christ.

All have received or will receive life from the Father and all will share in that glorious future God has planned.

I. Ephesians 3:16 – "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

A. Here we have the first of the four "thats":

1. Paul does not say, "out of the riches," but "according to the riches."
2. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul writes of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." Christ's riches are beyond measure or comprehension.
3. The strength needed by the Ephesians, and for which Paul prays, comes from a fathomless, unlimited source of supply, the riches of God's glory, wherefore we should not hesitate to ask anything of the Lord. His resources are unlimited.
4. The power or might the Ephesian Christians needed was to be given by the Holy Spirit.
5. It is in the "inner man" where this power is needed.

- A. The “inner man” is the regenerate man every believer in Christ possesses. It is that which was born in us by the Holy Spirit when we repented of our sins and received Christ (John 3:5). It is that new man we are to put on (Colossians 3:10). It is that man which was newly created in us when we believed (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is this new man, this new creation, this regenerate man, this new life we have in Christ that Paul calls the “inner man.” It is in this “inner man” that Paul prays we might be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit according to the riches of His glory. Those riches are inexhaustible. The power to live the Christian life is not in us. The power is from the Holy Spirit.

II. **Ephesians 3:17 – “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...”**

This is the second “that.”

- A. What a remarkable thing it is to realize that Christ, the creator of all things (Colossians 1:16), the risen, glorified, Son of the living God, actually lives in the believer’s heart (Galatians 2:20).
- B. Christ is not someone who drops by now and then to see how well you are getting along. He is more than an honored guest. When you receive him:
1. He comes in to stay. He comes to abide in us eternally (John 14:23). He becomes our life (Colossians 3:4). God gives us eternal life and that life is Christ (1 John 5:11). He becomes “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).
 2. Paul’s prayer is that we might have the faith to claim this glorious reality, “Christ liveth in me.” Praise God, salvation is obtained by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8).

A. **Ephesians 3:17-19 – “...that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge....”**

Here is the third “that.”

A. *rooted and grounded in love*

- What did Paul mean? He meant that our love for Christ should be like a great tree with roots running deep into the earth and drawing on the wells of living water (John 4:10, 7:38; Psalm 1:3). He meant also that our love should be solidly grounded like a mighty wall or a great building, like the house of which Christ spoke that was founded upon a rock (Luke 6:48).
- B. Ephesians 3:18-19 – Paul’s desire for us was that our love be so real, so deep, so strong, that we might “be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge....”
1. The four dimensions named here are not at all controversial but they have stirred up a wide variety of opinions among the finest conservative scholars. I will share three of the positions and then will give my own concept of what these dimensions mean.
 - a. Some feel that the dimensions relate entirely to the unknowable love of Christ. His love knows no limits. His love is eternal. It reaches down to the lowliest sinner, embraces the entire world, and reaches to the heights of glory.
 - b. Some believe the dimensions are a reference to the cross of Christ. One can readily see the breadth of Calvary – Christ died for all mankind. The length of Calvary – Christ paid, for all eternity, the debt that we owed. The depth of Calvary – what Christ did included the worst of sinners. The height of Calvary – because of it we have been raised up and made to sit together with him “in the heavenlies” (Ephesians 2:6).
 - c. Similarly but with minor differences is the view of another scholar. He believes that the “breadth” refers to the arms of Christ, which reach around the world. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37); “I am the door...if any man enter in...” (John 10:9). He believes that the “length” begins with the “Lamb slain from (before) the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), and proceeds to the endless ages of eternity. For Him the “depth” is a reference to the cross. Christ was “obedient unto death...” (Philippians 2:8). The “height” refers to the throne of God to which Christ ascended (Revelation 3:21).

- ◆ *All three concepts are the best opinions of fine, godly men. If you wish to accept one of these views as being correct, you are privileged to do so. Your grade will not suffer.*
- 2. I have chosen to accept the opinion of other fine scholars who hold an entirely different view of these dimensions – and for these reasons:
 - a. By the word “and” in Ephesians 3:19 the love of Christ is made a completely different matter, separating it from the dimensions and limiting it to the word “know.”
Throughout Ephesians, one thing is uppermost in the mind and in the heart of Paul. It is God’s eternal purpose for both Christ and the Church. Read again Ephesians 1:9-14. Then look again closely at Ephesians 3:8-12, especially verse 11.
 - b. You will quickly note that God’s eternal purpose for Christ and the Church is mentioned just before Paul’s two wonderful prayers.
- 3. What Paul had in mind in the four dimensions was God’s eternal purpose. (**Learn the meaning of each word for the exam.**)
 - a. *The breadth*
As revealed in Ephesians, God’s eternal purpose now embraces Jews as well as Gentiles. Paul is concerned that “all saints” (Ephesians 3:18) might be able to comprehend the breadth of God’s purpose for the Church “in Christ” (Ephesians 3:10-11).
 - b. *The length*
God’s purpose in Christ extends from the beginning of the ages (Ephesians 3:9), even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:19-20), and reaches to the dispensation of the “fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10). This distance was never revealed about any other people but the body of Christ – the Church.
 - c. *The depth*
This refers to the awful sinful condition from which both Jews and Gentiles were taken by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:1-5,8,10). In Ephesians is revealed both the depth of human depravity and the heights of God’s glory and divine purpose.
 - d. *The height*
From breadth, length, and depth, Paul now refers us to the supreme glory of Ephesians. The height is the “heavenly places” or “heavenlies,” the sphere and place to which every believer is called and in which we shall be displayed (Ephesians 1:3,20; 2:6)
- ◆ *Paul expects us to comprehend these measurements (Ephesians 3:18). I believe since God’s love cannot be comprehended (Ephesians 3:19), these measurements must, in my opinion, refer to God’s eternal purpose for Christ and His Church.*

II. Ephesians 3:19 – “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

This is the fourth “that.”

- V. Here we have a biblical paradox, a seeming contradiction. We are being asked to know the unknowable. No man can completely grasp the full measure of God’s infinite, boundless love, we nevertheless can enjoy, experience, and know that God’s love is real. Why? How?
1. God’s love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).
 2. God so loved us He gave us “His only begotten Son” (John 3:16) and sent Him to become “the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10), that is to satisfy the claims of God against us.
 3. Galatians 5:22-23 lists nine things which constitute the “fruit of the Spirit.” The first of these is love. Some teachers believe that the other eight things are but various manifestations of that love, which of course, is God’s love.

B. *...that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*

To understand this amazing prayer request by the Apostle Paul we must become aware of and understand certain truths.

1. When anyone receives Christ as Savior and Lord, that person is regenerated or born again (John 1:12-13; 3:5-6; 1 Peter 1:23). The power that makes this transaction a reality is the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6). The Holy Spirit then lives permanently in our hearts bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). In addition He makes Christ a reality to us (John 16:14-15) and empowers us for service (Acts 1:8).
2. This last statement reveals another truth we must understand in order to grasp what Paul meant by the fullness of God. This truth is that when you are saved Christ Himself comes to live in your heart (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27; 3:4; 1 John 5:11-12).
3. The third perhaps the most important truth to understand is that God, the true and living God, the God of the Bible is a triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible does not teach that there are three Gods. It teaches that there is but one God manifested in three ways, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three members of this triune God work together in perfect harmony each having multiple responsibilities to fulfill. Concerning Christ, Colossians 2:9 says "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In other words, Christ is the only member of the Godhead who has a human form. Since all the fullness of God dwells in Christ and He dwells in us then the fullness of God is in us.
4. We must never try to separate the Trinity. All three work together as one wonderful God. If we are indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit then we are indwelt and filled by all the fullness of God. If we are indwelt by any member of the Godhead then all the Godhead lives in us and John correctly says "of his fulness have we all received" (John 1:16).

CONCLUSION

O, how humble and grateful we should be for this glorious overwhelming truth that if we are born again believers, the fullness of God dwells in us. May God help us to appropriate the unsearchable riches of His power, grace and wisdom available to us.

Ephesians
Exam – Lesson 9

Name _____

Address _____

Multiple Choice – Circle the letter in front of the correct answer. Only one answer is correct unless otherwise stated.

1. What did Paul have in mind in both prayers in the book of Ephesians? (Value 5 points)
 - a. God's blessing on every believer
 - b. The fulfillment of God's eternal purpose for every believer
 - c. The spiritual growth of every believer

2. The four "that's" for which Paul prayed are: (**Mark four** statements) (Value 16 points)
 - a. that God will give Ephesian believers strength in the inner man.
 - b. that Ephesian believers might grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord.
 - c. that Christ might dwell in Ephesian believers' hearts by faith.
 - d. that Ephesian believers might experience the love of Christ.
 - e. that Ephesian believers might experience the peace and joy of God.
 - f. that Ephesian believers might walk in truth.
 - g. that Ephesian believers might be filled with the fullness of God.

3. Which of the following references indicate that kneeling is a proper position for prayer? (**Mark the two** correct references – Open Bible) (Value 8 points)
 - a. Luke 22:41
 - b. Luke 18:11
 - c. Daniel 6:10
 - d. Luke 18:13

4. It is proper for Paul to address God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because: (Value 5 points)
 - a. Christ was born as a human being.
 - b. Christ was the obedient Son of God.
 - c. God turned away from Christ at the cross.

5. The families included in the statement of Ephesians 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" are: (**Mark three**) (Value 12 points)
 - a. believing families before the flood.
 - b. all families since Adam.
 - c. all the families that will yet be born in the future.
 - d. the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - e. the multitude of believers since Pentecost.

6. That the believer will be granted strength "according to the riches of His glory" means: (Value 5 points)
 - a. that the believer's strength comes from the inner man.
 - b. that the believer's strength comes from an unlimited supply.
 - c. that the believer will receive the glory of God.

7. The believer is actually given the strength he needs by: (Value 5 points)
 - a. the Bible.
 - b. prayer.
 - c. the Holy Spirit.

8. When Paul refers to “the inner man” in Ephesians 3:16 he is speaking of: (Open Bible) (Value 5 points)
 - a. the believer’s soul.
 - b. the believer’s spirit.
 - c. the “new man” in the believer.

9. The meaning of “unsearchable riches of Christ” in Ephesians 3:8 is: (Open Bible) (Value 5 points)
 - a. that the riches of Christ cannot be found.
 - b. that Christ’s riches are beyond measure or understanding.
 - c. that Christ’s riches belong to the believer.

10. Christ associates Himself with the believer by: (Value 5 points)
 - a. dropping by now and then.
 - b. coming into the believers heart only when needed.
 - c. coming to live in the believer’s heart permanently.

11. A person receives salvation by: (Value 4 points)
 - a. faith in Christ.
 - b. water baptism.
 - c. living a good life.

12. By “rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:17) Paul meant: (Value 5 points)
 - a. that we should love everybody the way God does.
 - b. that the main characteristic of the believer is love.
 - c. that our love should be solid like a house built on a rock.

13. By the “breadth” of Christ’s love (Ephesians 3:18) Paul meant: (Value 4 points)
 - a. that God’s eternal purpose extends through the ages.
 - b. that God’s purpose extends from the foundation of the world to the fullness of time.
 - c. that God’s eternal purpose now embraces both Jews and Gentiles.

14. By the “length” of Christ’s love (Ephesians 3:18) Paul meant: (Value 4 points)
 - c. that God’s eternal purpose extends from the beginning of the church age to its end.
 - d. that God’s purpose extends from the foundation of the world to the fullness of time.
 - e. that God’s eternal purpose now embraces both Jews and Gentiles.

15. A believer can know the reality of God’s love by: (Value 4 points)
 - a. giving control of his life to God.
 - b. practicing the fruit of the Spirit.
 - c. Knowing God’s purpose for his life.

16. “Filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19) means that: (Value 4 points)
 - c. a believer can be full of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. through Christ the whole Trinity dwells in the believer’s heart.
 - e. God lives only in the believer who loves all sinners.

17. The verse that states as a fact that every believer has received the fullness of God is: (Open Bible)
(Value 4 points)
- a. John 1:12-13.
 - b. John 1:16.
 - c. John 16:14-15.

Decision Time

In this lesson you have studied another one of Paul's great prayers. Paul was faithful in prayer. Have you been faithful in praying every day? Praying is really talking to God. It is good to tell you that you love Him, confess your sins, pray for both believers and unbelievers. It is good to thank God for watching over you and blessing you with all spiritual blessings each day etc.. Every believer should spend some time talking to God every day. I invite you to make that decision today. Set a time and place right now.

I _____ make a promise to God on this _____ day of the
month of _____ in the year _____ that I will talk to God at a special
time and in a special place.