

Studies in Ephesians: Paul's Second Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21

Introduction:

1. In recent weeks we have been examining the sacred contents of Paul's six-chapter letter to the saints at Ephesus.
2. Our last lesson was entitled "the Mystery Revealed," and it was based upon Ephesians 3:1-13. Regarding this "mystery," we noted that it:
 - a. Was motivated by the grace of God, Eph. 3:2,7-8.
 - b. Was revealed unto the apostles and prophets, Eph. 3:5.
 - c. Was revealed "by the Spirit," Eph. 3:5.
 - d. It can be understood, Eph. 3:3-4.
 - e. It involved the Gentiles and the church, Eph. 3:6.
3. This lesson is entitled "Paul's Second Prayer for the Ephesians."
 - a. His first recorded prayer is set forth in Eph. 1:15-23 (which we examined in a previous study).
 - b. This prayer is recorded in Eph. 3:14-21 (read).
4. Observe:
 - a. Paul began this prayer with the words "for this cause," v. 14, the same words with which he began the chapter in verse one. Thus it would seem that he was about to begin the prayer in verse one, but interrupted himself, probably to encourage the saints at Ephesus lest they became discouraged by the realization that he was "a prisoner of Jesus Christ" for the Gentiles; he let them know that his being able to preach to them was due to "the grace of God," Eph. 3:2,8.
 - b. Hence, the words "for this cause" contextually takes us back to the latter part of chapter two wherein he set forth the before conversion and after conversion condition of Gentile Christians.
 - c. Out of praise and gratitude to God, he therefore said "for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. 3:14.

Discussion:

I. The Verses Outlined:

- A. Introduction to Paul's Prayer, Eph. 3:14-15.
- B. The Petitions Contained in the Prayer, Eph. 3:16-19.
- C. The Doxology, Eph. 3:20-21.

II. Introduction to Paul's prayer, Eph. 3:14-15.

- A. "For this cause," Eph. 3:14.
 1. The "cause" already alluded to in verse one.
- B. "I Bow My Knees...." Eph. 3:14
 1. Note: He is not binding a particular posture in prayer.
 - a. Examples of bowing the knees in prayer: I Kings 8:54; Ps. 95:6; Dan. 6:10; Luke 22:41-42; Acts 7:60; 20:36.
 - b. Examples of standing in prayer: Matt. 6:5; Luke 18:11-13.
 - c. Bowing the head: Gen. 24:26; Exodus 4:31; Num. 22:31.
 - d. Sitting and praying, Luke 22:14.
 - e. Falling prostrate upon one's face, Luke 17:16.
 2. What counts is one's spiritual attitude; not his physical posture.
- C. "Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. 3:14.
 1. Some state that prayer may be directed unto Jesus Christ, based upon such verses as Acts 7:59; Rev. 22:20.
 2. However, Jesus taught us to pray to the Father in His name. Matt. 6:9; John 14:13-14; 15:16.
 3. Note also Heb. 13:15; I Tim. 2:5; I Peter 2:5; Heb. 7:25.
- D. "Of Whom the Whole family in heaven and earth is named," Eph. 3:15.
 1. "The whole" spiritual family. Cf. Heb. 2:22-24.

III. The Petitions Contained in this Prayer, Eph. 3:16-19.

- A. "To be Strengthened With Might by His Spirit in the inner man," Eph. 3:16.
 1. Modified by "according to the riches of His glory," Eph. 3:16.
 - a. God gives in accordance with His ability to give; His ability is unlimited! Cf. Eph. 1:7,19; 2:4,7.

2. The *"inner man"* is indwelt by *"His Spirit,"* I Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:11-13.
 - a. That a Christian is indwelt by *"His Spirit"* is not to be questioned for those who believe the Bible; the question, however, is how, or through what means. Does the Holy Spirit indwell the Christian literally, personally, and physically, or is this indwelling accomplished through medium?
- B. *"That Christ May Dwell in your Hearts by Faith,"* Eph. 3:17.
 1. **Note:** All three persons of the Godhead dwell in the Christian!
 - a. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian, v. 16.
 - b. Christ dwells in the Christian, v. 17.
 - c. God the Father dwells in the Christian, I John 4:12-16.
 2. Christ dwells *"in your hearts by faith,"* Eph. 3:17.
 - a. How does faith come? Romans 10:17.
 - b. It stands to reason that the means whereby one Person of the Godhead indwells the Christian would be the same means by which the other Persons of the Godhead indwell the Christian.
 3. Now Note two Parallel Verses.
 - a. Eph. 5:38-19 – *"be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and..."*
 - b. Col. 3:16 – *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms.."*
- C. *That ye be "rooted and grounded in love..."*, Eph. 3:17.
 1. *"Rooted"* and *"grounded"* are metaphors taken from agriculture and architecture. Roots give plants stability; buildings must be built upon solid foundations. What roots do for plants love does for the Christian!
- D. That you might be able to *"Comprehend (apprehend, ASV) ...the love of Christ,"* Eph. 3:18-19.
 1. Love surpasses knowledge, v. 19.
 - a. Breadth – wide enough for the whole human race! John 3:16.
 - b. Length – reaches from eternity to eternity!
 - c. Depth – reaches down to those caught in the muck and mire of sin.
 - d. Height –reaches up to heaven itself!
 2. It was Paul's desire that these brethren would come to know what it really means to love Christ, and what it really means for Christ to love us!
- E. That *"ye might be filled with all the fullness of God,"* Eph. 3:19.
 1. He has given us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness,"* 2 Peter 1:4.
 2. We should strive to be like God, Matt. 5:48.
 3. God has given us the pattern whereby we can become more and more like Him, 2 Peter 1:5-9.
 4. Gradually, as we grow, we are *"changed from glory to glory,"* 2 Cor. 3:18!
 5. *"The more He is allowed to occupy His home in our hearts, the more of the fullness of God we will receive."*

IV. The Doxology, Eph. 3:20-21.

- A. *"Glory" to God!*
 1. He is able to *"do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!"*
 2. *"According to the power that worketh in us,"* Eph. 3:20. Cf. Eph. 1:19-20; 2:1.
- B. *"Unto Him be glory,"* Eph. 3:21.
 1. The sphere – *"In the church."*
 2. The medium – *"by Christ Jesus."*
 3. The duration – *"throughout all ages, world without end."*

Conclusion:

1. Ephesians was not written **to** us, but it was written **for** us! Hence, by way of application, what Paul prayed for as it related to the saints at Ephesus, is that same as it relates to the saints at Seffner! It behooves you and me to so pattern our lives according to the divine will that all the petitions of Paul in these verses will be fulfilled in our own hearts and lives!
2. All of this is possible because of God's power, but on a personal basis it begins with one's obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ!

--Bobby Witherington, January 11, 2014