

Ephesians Chapter 3 verses 13 thru 21

Verse 13

Therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. Paul does not want the Ephesians to be disheartened by the imprisonment, persecutions, and sufferings that he experienced preaching the gospel for their sake. In another letter written to those who were anxious about his imprisonment and tribulations, he had written that the things that happened to him had turned out for the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12). Knowing his labor for them and their spiritual blessings they have in connection with Jesus Christ, this great apostle to the Gentiles wants them to be both *bold* and *confident*.

Question...why should Paul's suffering make the Ephesians feel honored?

Verse 14

For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knows what belongs to us in Christ, and his prayer is that we appropriate all that is ours by faith. He does not want us to go through life thinking that we must add something to Christ's finished work to be acceptable by the Father, or that we must wait to receive these amazing spiritual blessings. Paul's prayer is that we understand who we are in Christ NOW that we believe this word and that we reckon on its truth. Paul directed his prayer to the Father, who is presented as the "planner" among the members of the Trinity. In the Bible, prayer is usually directed to the Father, through the Son, by the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit.

It's not the posture of the body but the attitude of the heart that counts when **we pray**. The Bible speaks of bowing in **prayer**, kneeling on **one's** face before God, standing, sitting, and walking. The most important thing isn't the position of the body but the condition of the soul. The Bible has enough prayer *not* on the knees to show us that it isn't required, but it also has enough prayer *on* the knees to show us that it is good.

Question...what is the importance of Paul praying on his knees?

The basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose. This means he confidently prayed according to God's will. We can't pray effectively if we do not have insight into God's purpose and will.

Question...should we know God's purpose and will for a situation before we pray?

Verse 15

From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. It appears that Paul was signifying God as the great Creator and singular Maker of all things. Paul saw God the Father as the Designer, Mastermind, Engineer... the Composer and Completer of all things that are named, in heaven and on earth. Paul was here acknowledging the Fatherhood of God as both the Creator of angelic beings and the Maker of humankind - for all living things in heaven and on earth owe their existence and life to Him - and upon whom everything residing in heaven or on earth is named.

The family of God includes all who have believed in Him in the past, all who believe in the present, and all who will believe in the future. We are a family because we have the same Father. If we want to receive God's blessings, it is important that we stay in contact with other believers in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves from God's family and try to go it alone cut themselves off from God's power.

Question...how do we respond to "family members" who do not attend church or fellowship with other Christians?

Verse 16

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. Paul was praying that out of the wealth of His glory, God would strengthen them with power *through or in connection with* the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them *individually and collectively* to be strong in the inner man as they comprehend the promises the Father has made to them in Christ. It is this inner man that has been made alive in Christ Jesus and all this in our connection with the Holy Spirit. What we need is not a change in our situation, but an internal change. Example: when my cell phone is out of power, no external alterations will make a difference. The problem is an uncharged battery.

Paul is not praying for an outward show of miraculous miracles or declaring supernatural signs in the life of Christians. Paul is not naming and

claiming economic prosperity, a powerful position, or a good job, but an inner spiritual vigor that steadies and secures the believer in the truth of God's Word and secures and strengthens an unshakable trust in His precepts and promises. Paul knows the importance of seeking first the kingdom of God.

Question...is it okay for us to pray for outward demonstrations of God's power?

Verse 17

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. This is not another gift. It is a continuation of what is mentioned in verse 16. As we are strengthened with power in connection with the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells in our hearts through or *in connection with* faith. Faith, of course, comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), which, in turn, is the "sword of the Spirit" (6:17). It seems Paul is here speaking of that process that has to do with growing in "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:14-18). Increased spiritual strength requires increased spiritual intimacy.

Paul wants the Ephesians to be rooted and firmly established in love. He wants them to be like plants with deep roots, like a building with a solid foundation. He wants them to have increased comprehension, increased understanding of God's love

That Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, is a prayer Paul prayed for each of us and a promise that we can claim. And as we personally claim that promise, Paul's prayer will be answered. We are also commanded to abide in Him, trust His Word, and become rooted and grounded in love. And it is as we immerse ourselves in His Word, walk in spirit and truth, submit our lives to Him, and seek to do His will, that we discover that we are being rooted and grounded in Christ's supernatural love.

Question...how do we allow God to dwell in our hearts in our everyday lives?

Verse 18

May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height. The immediate purpose of all that Paul has prayed for on their behalf is now stated. He wanted the Ephesians (and all Christians) to grasp or understand the width, length, depth, and height (i.e., *all aspects*) of Christ's love. God's great love reaches to the extremity of the earth and embraces every man, every woman - every child. It includes every color, and race, every creed and clime, without partiality and without favoritism.

His love stretches from eternity past, where the interactive, mutual love of each member of the Trinity united to formulate God's amazing plan of redemption - and it stretches on into the eternal ages to come, for God's love is everlasting and remains forever.

The depth of God's love is expressed in Christ's death on the cross... for God loved the world so dearly, that He gave His only begotten Son, to be the sacrifice for the sin of the whole world - in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us... and His love reaches into the heights of heaven above, where we have an inheritance kept for us, by the power of the living God.

More personally, God's love is wide covering the breadth of our own experiences and reaches out to the whole world; God's love is long continuing through the length of our lives; it is high rising to the heights of our celebration and elation; it is deep reaching to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death.

- God's love is wide enough to include every person.
- God's love is long enough to last through all eternity.
- God's love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner.
- God's love is high enough to take us to heaven.

Verse 19

To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Just as our hearts and minds are guarded by a faith in God that produces a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7), there is a knowledge that comes from our experience of Christ's love for us that surpasses the knowledge we have of Him intellectually. **That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.** We have now reached the climax of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and, by extension, all saints everywhere. He wants Christians to be filled with all the fullness (blessings, grace, etc.) that is ours "of," *with respect to*, God. This all derives from God because He is who He is.

Question...we are mandated to get a high school diploma equally 12 years of education; when we want more knowledge, we move on to college. This verse talks about knowledge of Christ and understanding. Should believers have a mandated biblical education?

Verse 20

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. In his prayer, Paul has asked much for the Ephesians. Nevertheless, he is firmly persuaded that God can do much more than we ask or ever think or conceive in our minds. This power has no limits in that it is “above all.” In association with this omnipotence, God's grace, which is actually “the power that works in us,” saves us from our past sins (2:8) and makes us spiritually “alive” (2:1) through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16.)

Verses 20 and 21 are defined as a doxology-- a liturgical formula of praise to God.

This doxology does not only belong to the prayer that precedes it, but also to every glorious privilege and blessing spoken of in the first three chapters. Who **can** bring such things to pass? Only God can do this because He can do far beyond our ability to think or ask.

Paul says that God can do above all that *we* ask or think. The *we* included Paul and the other Apostles, and they certainly knew that Jesus could do great things.

- You can ask for every good thing you have ever experienced - God can do **above** that.
- You can think of or imagine things beyond your experience - God can do **above** that.
- You can imagine good things that are beyond your ability to name - God can do **above** that.

He can do *superabundantly above the greatest abundance*.

According to the power that works in us: God can do this in our life now, not beginning with heaven. This **power... works in us** now.

The things Paul prayed for in the previous verses (spiritual strength, the indwelling Jesus, experiential knowledge of God's love, and the fullness of God) belong to us as children of God. However, they must be received by believing prayer and can be furthered in the lives of others by our prayers for them.

Verse 21

To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus: The only fitting response to this great God is to give Him glory - especially in the church, the company of His redeemed, and that He receive that glory **throughout all ages, world without end** - Amen!

When the church understands and walks in God's eternal purpose, God will be glorified, and the church will fulfill its important duty of simply glorifying God. The greatest manifestation of God's glory is through the church, which is why it is critical for every believer to be an active part of a solid church family.

We are to live and work for HIS glory. We are to listen to HIS voice and obey HIS word. We are to do His will and glorify His name and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of us evermore... so that in the ages to come we may show forth His glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, to all generations - forevermore. AMEN.

End Ephesians Chapter Three