

**Ephesians 3: 12-15; “I Bow My Knees”, Message # 22 in a series entitled –  
“The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

We are told here that the reason that Paul bowed his knees to the Father, the reason that he was praying for these Ephesian believers was so that they would not lose heart at his tribulations; that is, the things that he, Paul, was going through on account of his preaching the gospel. These tribulations, he says, were for their glory. In other words, these tribulations that Paul was going through were actually intended by God to help establish their greater exercise of their faith in God. These trials and tribulations which Paul went through were intended by God to help them to persevere in their faith, so that they would become stronger Christians; better able to glorify God in the way that they would live their lives to Him, based upon what they saw Paul going through.

We should understand from this that we who are stronger in the faith, more mature in our faith, able to suffer for our faith, are intended by God, to be an example, a help, and an encouragement to other Christians around us who are not as strong in faith. How can we do this? 1<sup>st</sup> – By reminding them specifically of the access that they have to Christ, by faith. (verses 12 & 13) And 2<sup>nd</sup> – By reminding them specifically of the Father’s adoptive love. (verses 14 & 15) Then, in my next message to you, I will speak to you of the importance of Christ’s dwelling in your heart by faith, and of your coming to understand how great His love is for you, the Christian.

**But 1<sup>st</sup> of all – If you are a strong Christian, you will remind others of the access that they personally have, to Christ, by faith.**

Verse 12 says – “In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart (King James – that ye faint not) at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Paul is saying that it is because we have boldness and access to Christ Himself in prayer, that we, by exercising faith in Him, during those times that you see your pastor or others going through tribulations, you will not lose heart; that you will not become discouraged at such times. Why? Because of Your bold access to Christ. The words “boldness” and “access” have reference to being bold to approach God to bring up the concerns that you have. You are bold to bring them up in prayer to God, believing that He is there for you, for Christ’s sake, to hear you in regard to your sadness, your discouragement, your disappointment, your fears that something awful is happening to that person who you love in Christ.

First let’s look at the reality of this access to God, by having faith in Christ, in all of our trials. Look over at Romans chapter 5, verses 1-5. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith in to this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” I hope that you can see here that it is because you have been justified by faith in Christ, that you have access to God. You can boldly avail yourself of that access, because you know that you have His ear. You are confident that He will hear every concern that you bring to Him in prayer because He having died for you, and for them, and you can be confident that He will bring grace sufficient to sustain your loved one in whatever great trial that they are going through.

You can even glory in tribulation, yours or other Christians suffering for Christ’s name’s sake, because you realize that God has a good purpose in it. The good purpose that that the

experience of the various pressures, stresses, frustrations and disappointments, by His grace, causes you to repeatedly seek for wisdom and strength from Christ to be sustained in your soul and spirit. Your perseverance in seeking and finding Christ's help, and your learning to seek God's will and His ways to know how to do what is right, over time, will produce proven character in you. Part of your proven character is that you now see that all trials and tribulations which come to you are ordained for your good.

You understand that trials have been ordained for this purpose; that you will be caused to see that all of your strength to do what is right and to glorify God in whatever situation that you are in, comes to you from what Christ Himself being grants to you by His Holy Spirit. In Philippians 1: 29 Paul says that it has been granted to you, not only to believe but also to suffer for His name's sake. You stand in Christ's grace, and you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; that is being able to perceive the excellent ability that God has, to sustain your soul and renew your strength, and to satisfy you continually with and by His word and Spirit in the midst of these difficulties, knowing that God is building faith and many good qualities of His Spirit, into your heart.

Being bold to bring up all matters of concern to you, in prayer, and then having faith in Christ that He is there for you to hear your prayers, and to intercede on your behalf and on their behalf, this is the right thing to do. It glorifies God. When you are troubled about what another Christian is going through for Christ's sake, and you bring it to Jesus, you remind yourself that He went through many sufferings on your behalf and on their behalf too. He is working all things together for their good, and yours as well, and His purpose of conforming us both the image of Christ is being realized. And so, when you see and hear what wicked people are saying and doing to the Christian person or leader that you love, remember that you have access to Christ by faith.

Turn with me over to Acts chapter 19, and you will see one of the tribulations that Paul was going through, that the Ephesian believers might be tempted to lose heart at. Acts chapter 19, verses 8-10 – "And Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God." "But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, Paul departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus." "And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

You can see here that Paul was very diligent in his calling, of preaching and teaching concerning the kingdom of God to both Jews and Greeks. However, it says that even though he spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading some, there were others who were hardened under the preaching and they did not believe, and they even spoke evil of the Way of being a Christian before the multitude, so that Paul had to withdraw the disciples from them and set up a school for them in the school of Tyrannus. This is the kind of thing that is discouraging to disciples sometimes; the Way of being a Christian being spoken evil of. And there are many people who do this because their hearts are hard to the truth. They are insensitive, dull, and critical of both God's word, and His people. And there may therefore be a temptation to question God's leading and His providential care over the life of your beloved pastor or dear sainted friend or loved one.

But this should not be the case, and it will not be the case if you will bring all to Christ in prayer. Paul knew that all of his trials related to his ministry had been ordained by God and therefore the last time that he saw his dear Ephesian brethren, he gave them the same kind of counsel as is written here in our text. Acts chapter 20: 22-25 – "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me." "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

“And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” What an unusual phrase that is – I am going bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem”. Paul knew the Holy Spirit’s working in such a powerful way, leading him to go to Jerusalem to preach there, that it was something that he was looking forward to; to finish his race with joy. In other words, whether by life or death I will glorify God in my body. That’s the thing that we need to pursue with our prayers for other people. We want all our brethren to testify of the grace of God; not only to save, but also it will be sufficient for his people in difficult times.

And verses 32-38 – “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” This is what we should be praying for and encouraging in others; their testimony to the grace of God, for the grace of God is sufficient for His saints. “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.” “Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.” “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak.” “And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.” “Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more.” “And they accompanied him to the ship.”

So Paul sees the reality of what’s taking place with him. This was the last time that he would see the elders of Ephesus. He tells them that the grace of God would be sufficient to build them up and give them an inheritance among those being sanctified. Paul knew that the word of God’s grace would be enough for them, even if he would not be with them. And he knelt down and prayed with them all. You can see here that Paul is commending them to God knowing that God and the word of His grace are all that the Christian will need so that they will not lose heart. He was showing them that they should remember that they had boldness of access to God through faith in Christ. We must learn to commit to God in prayer, those things which are too difficult for us. It is enough, dear Christian, that you have boldness of access, that you have God’s ear, and that He will receive all of your requests for help for yourself and for those who are your leaders.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – If you are a strong Christian, you will remind other believers specifically of the Father’s Adoptive Love.** (verses 14 and 15)

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Paul will now seal the knowledge that he has given to them, with his own prayer for them. Even though we do not have enough time to go through the whole prayer, yet I would have you think with me about Paul’s reference here to God’s adoptive love. He bows his knees to the Father. Paul poses this not only as knowledge but as a prayer. Your understanding of knowledge and theology should lead you to prayer, not only for yourself, but for your dear brethren that you know and love. You ought to regularly be praying for the other saints in your church. Your prayer will be that God will equip them in the way of difficulties, trials and temptations, and still have the strength and moral courage to go on. Let’s think about God’s adoptive love. He bows his knees to the Father so that God’s people will understand their need to pray for other saints around them.

A Christian ought often to think of God as their Father; to meditate upon the great truth that when they became a Christian, they were adopted into the family of God. Yes, it is true that God is the Father of all men in terms of their having been created by Him. Malachi 2: 10 – “Have we not all one Father?” “Has not one God created us?” But in the verse of our text, Paul is speaking of God being the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Since this is the case we can only conclude that he is speaking of believers, since not all men who have died

have gone to heaven. What does this phrase mean then, that the whole family in heaven and earth is named from the Father? It means that since we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and since we have born from above, born again, and have a new nature, that we are spiritually the Father's children. Since the Father is holy, through the Lord Jesus Christ we are called His holy children, His holy ones. He has adopted us into His family, and sees us and knows us to be His own children because of our faith in His dear Son. Now, this whole family of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are found in heaven and earth. All of us have been adopted into His family, and all of us ought to rejoice greatly that we all have the privileges of firstborn sons. Ephesians 1: 5 – "Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

"Adoption is a legal action by which a person takes into his family a child not his own, with the purpose of treating him as his own, and giving him all the privileges of his own natural born son." (Cruden) In our case, God the Father has purposed to adopt us according the good pleasure of His will, and not for anything in us that He sees in us as desirable, as to why He should make us His son or daughter spiritually speaking. It is simply because He has loved us with an everlasting love and He has sovereignly chosen to have saving mercy upon you; but again, He does this for Jesus' sake alone. We are predestined to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. And it will be the glory, the excellence and beauty and power of His grace that He will receive all the glory; all the praise from us His people.

Turn over to John chapter 16, verses 23-33 – "And in that day you will ask Me nothing." "Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you." "Until now you have asked nothing in My name." "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father." "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father and have come into the world." "Again I leave the world and go to the Father."

"His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!" "Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You." "By this we believe that You came forth from God." "Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe?'" "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone." "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

When Jesus says – In that day, He is speaking to His apostles of the day following His ascension to heaven, the time when the Father and He would send the Spirit to be their Helper in ministry. They were to understand that this was to be a very special time in prayer both leading up to Day of Pentecost and following it, when the Spirit would be given in greater measure than ever before. The apostles were going to need great wisdom and great power in laying the foundation of the New Testament Church of Christ, in both their doctrine and the outworking of their being appointed to be those who would be undershepherds in their ministry to Christ and to His people. He told them to pray for all of things that they would need to fulfill their ministry and to walk closely to Him.

Jesus wanted them to know that in this coming day when He would not be with them that they could pray directly to the Father in His name and the Father would grant their requests. They were to ask and they would receive, and their joy would be full. No figurative language was necessary to convey this blessed truth. Jesus was speaking of the literal spiritual reality of their praying directly to the Father as their Father, and the Father who Himself loved them would

answer them because He knew that they loved the Lord Jesus, and believed that He came forth from God. This same blessed reality in prayer is true for us. Whatever we ask the Father in Jesus' name which is in accordance with His word, in submission to what the Father's eternal purposes are, shall be answered favorably that we might have real spiritual joy.

Let me ask you whether you see the Father as your Father who loves you for Jesus' sake? Because He truly does. Are you asking for things which are according to His will? As you pray, do you think of the Father as well able to give good gifts to His children? Think about Luke 11: 9 – “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?” “Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.”

In Matthew 7: 11 it says – “Your Father who is in heaven will give good things to those who ask.” Remember, dear Christian that in Christ Jesus your Lord, you have boldness and access with confidence, as you trust in Him. And remember that the Father Himself loves you. And He is intending on giving you many good gifts, in terms of the things that He orders for your life. This will include sufferings. But the apostle could say in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 10 – “Therefore I take pleasure (I am well content) with infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.” “For when I am weak, I am strong.” Let us learn by Christ's grace to in this way fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, and to find the joy that Christ will bring to us, in doing so.