

## PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER IN THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

### **TEXT: EPH. 3:13-21**

#### **Introduction:**

1. This is Paul's second prayer in this epistle (cf. 1:15-23).
2. Paul did not want his friends to be discouraged (3:13) when they heard about his sufferings (cf. Acts 9:10-16).
3. Paul was glad to endure tribulations in carrying out the ministry God gave him. He considered his tribulations their "glory" (3:13).
4. Oftentimes what the world considers a disgrace or a setback or a disappointment, God considers "glory."
5. Consider: Paul wrote four epistles while in prison (Ephesians, along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon).
6. All throughout the Bible, many of God's servants have been imprisoned – Joseph, Jeremiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, et al.
7. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* while in jail.

#### **I. PAUL PRAYED FOR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH**

1. Both of the prayers in this epistle, as well as Paul's other prison prayers (Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; Philemon 4-6), deal with the spiritual condition of the inner man, and not the material needs of the body. There is nothing wrong with praying for physical and material needs, but our emphasis ought to be on the spiritual.
2. Paul writes, "For this cause" (3:14; cf. 3:1) – he is referring to his deep interest in them and his desire that they should enter fully into their privileges in Christ.
3. Notice Paul's posture – "I bow my knees" (3:14).

4. Second Chronicles 6:13 and 14 says, King Solomon “kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, And said, O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts...”
5. Daniel 6:10 says, Daniel “kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.”
6. Acts 7:60 records Stephen’s last prayer – “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”
7. Acts 9:40 says Peter “kneeled down, and prayed.”
8. Acts 20:36 says Paul “kneeled down, and prayed.”
9. Luke says in Acts 21:5, “And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.”
10. But our greatest example is the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 22:41 says, “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.”
11. We are to pray to God the Father in Jesus’ name (3:14). Jesus said in John 14:14, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”
12. God is the “Father” (3:14, 15) of all mankind only in the sense that He is the Creator of all mankind (cf. Acts 17:22-30, esp. vs. 29).
13. Strictly speaking, God is only the Father of those who are born again (cf. Eph. 2:2, 3).
14. “According to the riches of His glory” (3:16) – not “out of the riches of His glory” (cf. 1:7; Phil. 4:19). A rich man can give away money but it may be only “out of his riches.” But if he gives “according to his riches” it is a different matter altogether.

15. Since God is infinitely rich in glory, we should expect tremendous blessings. “Thou art coming to a King,

Large petitions with thee bring;

For His grace and power are such,

None can ever ask too much” – John Newton.

9. A man asked Napoleon for a tremendous favor. It was immediately granted. When Napoleon was asked about it, he replied: “He honored me by the magnitude of his request.”
10. The request here is for spiritual power, i.e. the spiritual strength and vigor needed to serve the Lord.
11. This power comes from the Holy Spirit (3:16b). He gives us power as we read the Bible and pray and yield to Him and trust Him.
12. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
13. This power is experienced in “the inner man” (3:16), i.e. the spiritual part of our nature. The “inner man” is the spiritual part of man where God dwells and works. According to the Bible, the inner man of the unsaved person is dead (cf. Eph. 2:1).
14. It is “the inner man” that delights in the law of God (Rom. 7:22).
15. It is “the inner man” that is renewed day by day, even though the outward man is perishing” (II Cor. 4:16).
16. Someone has said, “You don’t have to work something up. Rather, the power has to be prayed down.”

## **II. PAUL PRAYED FOR SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT**

1. Paul prayed “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (3:17). At first this seems puzzling because Christ has already promised to indwell His followers.
2. “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).
3. But Paul is speaking here of something different. Here it is not a question of our Lord being in the believer, but rather of His feeling at home in the believer.
4. We enter into the full blessing of His indwelling “by faith” (3:17). This involves constant dependence upon the Lord and complete surrender to Him.
5. I remember asking a man why he had become an Episcopalian after being raised a Baptist. He said he did not like the emphasis on “full surrender” that he had heard growing up in the Baptist church. In my opinion, that man was very foolish to choose ritualism over surrender.
6. By the way, he may have heard much preaching on full surrender many years ago, but I do not think we emphasize full surrender enough today.
7. To be “rooted and grounded in love” is to be grounded in the faith. “Grounded” is an architectural term – it refers to the foundation on which we build. Our foundation is Christ (cf. 2:20-22).
8. A preacher was wondering why it took the workmen so long to pour the footings on his new church building, so he went and asked the architect. The architect said: “Pastor, the most important part of this building is the foundation. If you do not go deep, you cannot go high.”
9. “Grounded” speaks of stability; “rooted” speaks of nourishment. If there is to be power in the Christian life, then there must be depth – the roots must go deeper and deeper into the love of Christ.
10. God wants us to “comprehend” (3:18), i.e. to grasp all of this – the four dimensions of God’s love, which cannot be measured because God’s love “passeth understanding” (vs. 19; cf. “unsearchable riches,” 3:8).

11. BREADTH (or WIDTH) – wideness of God’s grace is infinite & unlimited (2:7b).
12. LENGTH – it extends from eternity to eternity (1:4; 2:7).
13. DEPTH – we have been saved from the depths of sin (2:1-3).
14. HEIGHT – up to the highest heaven (2:6).
15. Many years ago, Napoleon’s soldiers were cleaning out an old underground prison used by the Spaniards during the Inquisition. They found the skeleton of a prisoner, with a chain still attached to his ankle bone.
16. Next to this prisoner, they saw etched into the wall a cross. This cross had been cut into the rock wall with a sharp piece of metal.
17. Above the cross was the Spanish word for “height.” Below the cross was the Spanish word for “depth.” On the right side of the cross: the word for “length,” and on the left side, “breadth.”
18. HA Ironside said, “As that poor prisoner of so long ago was starving to death, his soul was contemplating the wonder of God’s purpose of grace, and to him the figure of the cross summed it all up – the length, the breadth, the depth, the height!” (*Ephesians*, p. 162).

### **III. PAUL PRAYED FOR THEM TO “BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD” (3:19b).**

1. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9). The more Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, the more we are “filled with all the fulness of God.”
2. God definitely wants us to experience this fullness (cf. Eph. 5:18).
3. Positionally we are already “complete in Him” (Col. 2:9, 10). But practically, we enjoy only the grace that we apprehend by faith.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Paul's doxology or benediction (3:20, 21): God is not only able to do all – He is able to do “above all,” and “abundantly above all,” and even “exceeding abundantly above all.” It is beyond our ability to ask or think.

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