

PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

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Introduction:

1. We have much to learn from examples of prayer in the New Testament.
2. Paul's prayers are especially moving because of their personal nature – he had spent his time and energy with the ones he prays for, and knows them and their needs intimately.
3. After hearing of their faith and love, Paul had already given thanks for them and prayed for their spiritual understanding (Ephesians 1:15-23).
4. Now he prays for the Ephesians' spiritual strength.

Discussion:

I. Paul addresses his prayer (3:14-15)

- A. "Bowling" the knees in submission to the powerful, glorious God he is petitioning
- B. To the "Father"
 1. Of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. He is the same one that Jesus looked to for strength
 - b. He is the same one who planned our salvation in Christ
 2. From whom the *whole family* is named (celestial and earthly, Jew and Gentile)

II. Paul makes his requests (3:16-19)

- A. That God would grant them strength
 1. According to the riches of His glory – there is no higher measure
 2. Through His spirit –
 3. In their "inner man" – this is *not* physical strength, but spiritual
- B. That Christ might dwell in their hearts
 1. Through faith
 2. This "indwelling" is based on their keeping His word [see Rom. 10:17; John 14:23]
- C. That they might "comprehend" the love of Christ
 1. Comes with being rooted and grounded in love
 2. Is something accessible to all the saints (both Jew and Gentile)
 3. Is multi-dimensional – width, length, depth, height; all-encompassing
 4. "Passes knowledge"
 - a. "Comprehend" is more than just "know" or "understand"
 - b. Is more experiential than theoretical
- D. That they might be filled with "all the fullness of God"
 1. Lacking in nothing
 2. Completely confirmed as His children

III. Paul expresses his confidence in God (3:20-21)**A. God *is able***

1. Paul thinks, speaks and acts in assurance of the “Almighty God” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
2. God does “exceedingly abundantly” above our requests
 - a. Does more than we ask
 - b. Does more than we even think to ask or imagine possible – [cp. Rom. 8:26-27]
 - c. He does this through “the power that works in us”

B. To Him be glory

1. In the church – [cp. 3:10; 5:24-27]
2. By Christ Jesus – [cp. John 17:1-5]
3. To all generations, forever and ever

Conclusion:

1. Paul’s prayer was not empty or general, but specific and confident
2. In writing them this letter, Paul even tells them (1) that he is praying for them, and (2) what he is praying for.
3. Even with all of Paul’s teaching and prayer, we know this church later “left their first love” [cp. Rev. 2:1-7]

Discussion Questions
Ephesians 3:14-21

1. Paul begins this section of his letter with “For this reason...” (3:14). What is the reason(s) Paul addresses God in prayer on behalf of the Ephesians?

2. What is God’s relationship to the “whole family” in heaven and earth, including Jesus? (3:14-15)

3. What does it mean to be a “father”? (3:14)

4. What does it mean to be “named from” someone? (3:15)

5. By what “measure” does Paul expect God to strengthen these disciples? (3:16)

6. What are the four things that Paul specifically requests in his prayer? (3:16-19)
 - a. [3:16]
 - b. [3:17]
 - c. [3:17-18]
 - d. [3:19]

7. What is the “dimension” of the love of Christ? [3:18-19]

8. What is Paul’s confidence that these things will be taken care of? [3:20]

9. What appears to be Paul’s desire through all of this? [3:21]