

Another Prayer for the Ephesians

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul prays again for the Ephesians, that they might be fully impacted by the gospel
2. aim – to cause us to be profoundly impacted by what God is doing as we come to understand it more
3. passage – Ephesians 3:14-19

b. outline

1. The Reason for This Prayer (Ephesians 3:14)
2. The Receiver of This Prayer (Ephesians 3:15)
3. The Request in This Prayer (Ephesians 3:16)
4. The Results of This Prayer (Ephesians 3:17-19)

c. opening

1. the **desired impact** of theology
 - a. my own “impact” when first encountering the sovereignty of God in salvation
 - b. my own “impact” when first hearing about the great cosmic drama recounted in **Eph. 3:1-13**
 - c. **principle: theology properly understood should impact us – it should cause a great sense of awe in us and it should cause us to think and act very differently as a result**
2. the **desired impact** of the cosmic drama
 - a. in **Eph. 3:1-13**, Paul outlines a great mystery – something previous unknown, but now revealed
 1. that, in the gospel, the fullness of God’s purpose in time and space is fully revealed
 2. firstly, that God is saving people from every ethnicity, thus Gentile believers should consider themselves full members of the living temple being built as the eternal abode of God
 3. more importantly, that God is playing out a great cosmic drama in time and space to reveal the fullness of his wisdom through the church by the gospel unto a heavenly audience
 4. **LOW:** all of human history is the outworking of God’s plans to glorify himself, now revealed *specifically* through the preaching of the gospel and the indrawing of a wide variety of peoples
 5. **question: how does the revelation of this great cosmic drama motivate (impact) you?**
 - b. in **Eph. 3:12-21 (now)**, Paul relates his response to this great mystery – **how it impacts him**
 1. specifically, his response comes in a) the form of another prayer, and b) a great doxology
 2. **note:** this is the *second* of Paul’s great prayers in Ephesians – the first was in **1:15-23**
 - a. which reminds of how important Paul considered prayer as a function of the church

I. The Reason for This Prayer (Ephesians 3:14)

Content

a. the reason for the prayer

1. “for this reason” = various clues provided from the previous text (**i.e.** what reason?):
 - a. that Paul is referring to his desire to continue the “*ministry*” he is now prevented from (**v. 7**)
 1. but, the prayer is filled with second person pronouns (“*you*”), thus the prayer is not for himself
 - b. that Paul is referring to his desire for them not to “*lose heart*” over his “*suffering*” (**v. 13**)
 1. specifically, his imprisonment might cause them to shrink back in the face of opposition
 2. but, the phrase “*in your inner being*” suggests something other than an “external” strengthening
 3. or, it seems he desires them to have a greater **understanding** rather than outward discipline
 - a. **note:** Paul’s theology is geared *first* to the mind and to the heart (control center) and then to outward acts of obedience – understanding first, then action based on that understanding
 - b. **note:** which is where the church often goes wrong – teaching **morality** as its fundamental theology, hoping that it will lead to greater understanding of God
 - c. that Paul is referring to his desire for them to be impacted by understanding the mystery (**v. 10**)
 1. specifically, his desire for their **motivation** as a church to be drawn entirely from a deeply held understanding of this mystery, at their very core, as their very substance
 - a. motivation = that which causes us to act; that inward sense of compulsion that makes our actions *predictable* in the face of what we believe

- b. motivation on the stage = the underlying *reason* why a character would act a particular way at any given moment of the dialogue or action as it unfolds (i.e. why would the character cry, laugh, walk, etc. at this moment – what is *driving* him)
 1. **IOW:** to get “into” the character being portrayed – to think like he would think here
 2. the phrase “*to comprehend ...*” (v. 18) implies that Paul wanted the Ephesians to “get it”
 - a. to be so “aware” of this mystery, to be so *confident* in it, that they would be fully motivated to do all that God would have them to do as a part of this cosmic drama (i.e. to say the lines)
 3. **principle: the motivation to go out with the gospel is not just raw obedience, but an absolute confidence in what God is doing in every detail of life to fulfill his plans (impact)**

b. the posture of the prayer

1. “*bow my knees*” (*kampto*) = to bend the knee; lit. to worship; to prostrate oneself before God
 - a. the same word in **Philippians 2:10** – that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall “bow”
 1. **note:** Paul (clearly) assumed that prayer is an act of *worship*, not just an act of obedience
 2. **note:** the “lost” art of kneeling before God in prayer – posture speaks volumes (body language)
 - a. I do commend Catholicism for (and little else): architecture, kneeling in prayer
 - b. the mention of this posture *strongly suggests* that Paul considered this *most important* (to “get it”)

II. The Receiver of This Prayer (Ephesians 3:15)

Content

a. the receiver of the prayer

1. “*the Father*” = the one who is **orchestrating** this great cosmic drama; the one with a divine decree
 - a. the phrase in v. 15 is a *qualifier* – it “names” who this Father is (specifically)
 - b. the phrase in v. 15 is an *identifier* – it clarifies the specific aspect of the Father in focus here
2. “... *from whom every family is named ...*” = i.e. the one who has issued the divine decree
 - a. “*family*” (*patria*) = nation; people; lineage; lit. fatherhood (see **pater as “Father” in v. 14**)
 1. a word-play similarly used in God’s promise to Abraham of **Genesis 12:3b**
 “... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
 - b. not: every single human being as a part of the “fatherhood” of God in creation
 - c. rather: every single human being included in the “family” of God in election
3. to be “named” in the fatherhood of the Father is to be included in the divine decree, as a part of the unfolding cosmic drama, as those who *belong* to him (i.e. adopted by him)
 - a. **IOW:** this can only be a prayer for those who are truly saved

III. The Request in This Prayer (Ephesians 3:16)

Content

a. the request of the prayer

1. **why:** “*according to the riches of his glory*” = because God desires to make his glory known
 - a. i.e. out of his purposes within the cosmic drama – to accomplish his divine decree in them
2. **how:** “*through his Spirit*” = by the director of the cosmic drama, the one sent to “make it happen”
 - a. i.e. through a divine power sent by the Father into the existence of his own
3. **where:** “*in your inner being*” = at the very heart of who you are; at your “control center”
 - a. i.e. in the most fundamental part of ourselves (head → heart)
4. **what:** “*strengthened with power*” = to be granted a greater sense of **motivation**
 - a. i.e. a power within us that flows out of us at our core (heart → hand)
5. **Paul prays that the Ephesians would be strengthened internally to understand the fullness of the mystery of the gospel – to really “get it” – to be utterly changed inwardly by this revelation**

IV. The Results of This Prayer (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Content

a. the results of the prayer

1. that “*Christ may dwell in your heart*” = that the fullness of Christ’s person and work would permeate how you think and act (i.e. from your heart)
 - a. **note:** the *evangelical* notion of “asking Jesus into your heart” is nothing more than a false piety, whereby one can claim to “know” Jesus as Savior, though not roundly *affected* by it
2. that you are “*rooted and grounded in love*” = that out of a *genuine* love would come the motivation for all that we think and do (i.e. having a true sense of what others *need*)

- a. **note:** the *evangelical* notion of “love” is nothing more than an irrational set of emotions; it is not built on the foundation of *truth* (i.e. men are sinners), but entirely on the *subjective*
- 3. that you “*comprehend ...*” = that the believer would be able to understand and embrace the massive scope of all that comprises the wisdom of God now made manifest to us
 - a. **note:** the word “of” is not included here (contra NIV) – the “*breadth and length and height and depth*” may be referring specifically to the love of Christ, but *might* be referring (more likely) to the fullness of what God has revealed (**i.e.** the mystery, in this context)
 - b. that the decree of God to save is “‘broad’ enough to encompass all mankind, ‘long’ enough to last for eternity, ‘deep’ enough to reach to the most degraded sinner, and ‘high’ enough to exalt him to heaven” (John Stott)
- 4. that you “*know the love of Christ*” = that the believer grasps the fullness of Christ’s love for him, which cannot be understood by the rest of the world (“*surpasses knowledge*”)
 - a. **i.e.** a love that causes us to fall on our knees in absolute allegiance before the Lord?
- 5. that you are “*filled with all the fullness of God*” = that the fullest sense of God’s nature, person, plans, and purposes would permeate every aspect of our head, heart, and hands
 - a. **IMO:** a summary statement of the entirety of this prayer
- 6. **question: how does the revelation of this great cosmic drama motivate (impact) you?**
 - a. is Christ what you focus your attention on, do you act solely out of a genuine love for others because of his love for you, are you pursuing a greater comprehension of the scope of God’s wisdom and revelation, and does the love of Christ drive you to your knees before him?
 - b. **Paul’s prayer is for the church to be so filled with awe at what God has done (and is doing) that they have a deep motivation to go out and take their part in the drama**