

Sermon Outline March 17, 2013

“BIG Prayer”

Ephesians 3:14-21

In Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul prays an Apostle Size prayer, not only for the Ephesians, but as it is Biblical, for the entire church! It is a prayer for the Family of God, for the Temple of God; it is a prayer for us!

I. Note the reason behind Paul's prayer –

¹⁴ For this reason (Ephesian 3:14 NKJ)

1. It is a reason connected with his calling as Apostle to the Gentiles –

^{NKJ} Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-- (Ephesian 3:1 NKJ) see Ephesians 3:1-13

2. Yet beyond THAT Paul's prayer is connected to what Jesus Christ did, bringing the Gentiles into the family of God in the first place –

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so as to create in Himself one new man *from the two*, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:13-18 NKJ)

A. His obvious FOCUS is on what Christ Jesus did - :13

B. This was always His focus, and should be ours too –

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2 NKJ)

C. We have been brought near by Christ's blood - :13

D. It is His cross that “reconciles” puts to death the “enmity” - :16

E. He has made us one - :14; even one new man - :15

F. He (Christ) is our “peace” :14, He, Jesus preached “peace” - :17

G. He brought those who were “afar off” “near” - :17

H. Though Him, we have access, through the Spirit to the Father - :18

It is because of what Christ has gained for us on the cross, by His blood, we PRAY for the realization, the actualization of those

blessings in our lives!

II. Note the posture and the direction of Paul's prayer –
I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 3:14 NKJ)

1. Bowed knees –

A. A rare posture

B. Solomon's posture –

⁵⁴ And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. (1Kings 8:54 NKJ)

²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! (1Ki 8:27 NKJ)

Solomon was dedicating, praying for a physical temple, Paul as spiritual temple –

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NKJ)

C. Paul takes the same posture as Solomon because he knows he is praying for something similar, yet something BIGGER, Greater than what Solomon prayed!

2. To the Father, *πρός*, TOWARD the Father –

O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: ²⁹ "that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place.

³⁰ "And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive. (1Kings 8:28-30 NKJ)

A. Toward as in direction, no longer toward a Temple or place on earth but through Christ directly to “Our Father, Who art in Heaven”

B. Toward in determination, focused, not distracted!

III. Note the beneficiaries of Paul's prayer –

from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (Ephesians 3:15 NKJ)

πατριά

1. *We the Family of God are named after our Father*

2. *There should be a family resemblance –*

⁴⁸ "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48 NKJ)

3. *The "whole" family means Jews and Gentiles, all of us in Heaven and earth!*

IV. *Note the benefits, blessings Paul seeks in this prayer –*

1st *Strength, Might in the inner man, that we might be fit for Christ's indwelling –*

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; (Ephesians 3:16-17a NKJ)

How does Paul pray we would be strengthened?

1. *According to the riches of God's glory - :16*

2. *With might through His Spirit - :16*

3. *In the inner man - :16*

What does this strengthening involve?

1. *Certainly cleansing –*

A. *Christ was passionate about cleansing the Temple –John 2:13-18*

B. *He is even more zealous to CLEAN US –*

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (Revelation 1:5 NKJ)

C. *Surely Christ's blood is accounted part of God's riches –*

¹⁸ **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,**

¹⁹ **but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1Peter 1:18-19 NKJ)**

2. *Yet, after cleaning Might is given to walk right, live right, do right, even be right, God's Holy Spirit empowers us to be Holy, even fit for Christ's indwelling*

2nd *Christ's indwelling is in order that we might be rooted and grounded in love –*

that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (Ephesians 3:17 NKJ)

1. *Rooted, a botanic, agricultural term as the church, we are a living organism*

2. *Grounded, because we are a spiritual building*

3. *Both terms speak to the idea of stability, Love, even Christ's Love is the fruit of the Spirit upon which our stability as a church, as THE CHURCH depends!*

3rd *This rooting and grounding in love is in order that we might KNOW, grow in KNOWLEDGE of Christ's LOVE –*

... that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge ... (Ephesians 3:17-19a NKJ)

We are called to KNOW God –

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3 NKJ)

We are called to measure the IMMEASURABLE –

¹⁸ **may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-**

¹⁹ **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge**

This is the great spiritual adventure! It is why we come to church, it is why we observe the Lord's Supper, it is even WHY Christ died to save us, that we might KNOW God, that He might dwell in us –

4th *this Knowledge is in order to full indwelling –*

to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:19 NKJ)

V. *Paul prays this BIG PRAYER confidently because He is trusting in God's ability to answer it –*

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, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21 NKJ)

Arnold A. Brevick