

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS, PT. 1; EPH. 3:14-17 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

NOW FINISHED . . . ~ AND TODAY, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT SECTION OF EPH., ~ 3:14-21.

▶▶ As noted, ~ in 3:1, ~ Paul began to pray for the Ephesian believers, ~ then abruptly digressed through [verse 13](#). ~~ And now, ~ he resumes his prayer.

▶▶ This section, ~ 3:14-21, ~ includes Paul's second prayer. ~~ Recall that Paul has already prayed for believers back in [1:15-23](#).

▶▶ In [3:14-21](#), ~ Paul prays for six things for believers and then closes with a doxology.

TODAY, ~ WE WILL COVER VERSES 14-17, ~ THE INTRODUCTION TO PAUL'S PRAYER AND his first three prayer requests.

VERSES 14-15 FORM PAUL'S INTRODUCTION TO HIS PRAYER.

IN VERSE 14, ~ PAUL WRITES, ~ "FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE Father."

THE PHRASE "FOR THIS REASON" REPEATS THE SAME EXPRESSION IN 3:1.

▶▶ The prayer flows out of Paul's comments in [2:11-22](#). ~~ When Paul considered all of the blessings that have come to the Gentiles, ~ it prompted him to pray for them.

PAUL SAYS, ~ "FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE FATHER."

▶▶ I would like to call our attention to Paul's physical posture. ~~ He kneels before the Father. ~~ This must have been quite an experience for the Roman soldier chained to Paul!

▶▶ I call attention to this to say that we must not assume that there is any one special physical posture for prayer, ~ or that Paul is teaching the correct physical posture.

▶▶ The Bible nowhere commands any special physical posture for prayer.

▷▷ Abraham stood before the Lord when he prayed for Sodom. ~~ [Gen. 18](#).

▷▷ Solomon began by standing and then kneeling with his hands outstretched toward heaven when he prayed to dedicate the temple. ~~ [1 Kings 8](#). ↴ 1/9

▷▷ David "sat before the Lord" when he prayed about the future of his kingdom. ~~ 1 Chron. 17.

▷▷ Jesus "fell on His face" when He prayed in Gethsemane. ~~ Matt. 26:39.

▷▷ In my own life

▶▶ Our physical posture for prayer is not the important thing. ~~ Our spiritual posture for prayer is the important thing.

▷▷ TPID, ~ That we bow our hearts and wills to the Lord when we pray is the important thing.

↳↳ And of course, ~ our Savior provides the perfect example as He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. ~~ Lk. 22:42, ~ "Father, ~ if you are willing, ~ remove this cup from me. ~~ Nevertheless, ~ not my will, ~ but yours, ~ be done."

▶▶ And to approach God with a pure heart is equally as important as bowing our hearts and wills.

▷▷ In Ps. 24:3-4, ~ David writes, ~ "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? ~~ And who shall stand in his holy place? ~~ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, ~ who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully."

▷▷ And in Ps. 66:18, ~ the psalmist writes, ~ NET ~ "If I had harbored sin in my heart, ~ the Lord would not have listened."

▶▶ No, ~ physical posture means nothing in prayer. ~~ The correct spiritual posture means everything in prayer.

IN VERSE 15, ~ PAUL ADDS, ~ "FROM WHOM EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND ON earth is named."

TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, ~ WHAT PAUL SAYS HERE IS DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER. ~~ However, ~ the point he was making can be deciphered.

▶▶ In noting that God named something, ~ Paul is emphasizing God's might and sovereignty.

▷▷ As the one who created humanity and the powers in heaven, ~ God is shown to be supreme.

▶▶ Paul's wording suggests some of the OT connotations of naming in terms of exercising dominion over ~ or even bringing into existence. ↴ 2/9

▷▷ This is illustrated in **Is. 40:26**. ~ Speaking of the stars, ~ Isaiah says, ~ "Lift up your eyes on high and see: ~ who created these? ~ He who brings out their host by number, ~ calling them all by name, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ by the greatness of his might, ~ and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

▷▷ It is also illustrated in **Ps. 147:4**. ~ **NASB**, ~ "He counts the number of the stars; ~ He gives names to all of them."

▷▷ To humans, ~ the stars are innumerable. ~ But God knows their number. ~ He has called them into being by His powerful word in whatever number He has determined.

▷▷ He names them, ~ which reveals his authority and command over them.

▷▷ And because of his great power and incomparable strength, ~ not a single one is missing. ~ **Heb. 1:3b** tells us that Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power."

▶▶ So, ~ Paul begins his prayer here, ~ in **3:14**, ~ by emphasizing the sovereignty of God, ~ who is supreme over all of his creation, ~ including Satan and his demons, ~ who oppose God, ~ His plan, ~ and His people.

▷▷ There is absolutely no force in the earthly realm or the spiritual realm that can sever our line of communication that we have with our almighty God.

↳↳ Nor can any enemy, ~ spiritual or human, ~ prevent God from answering our prayers.

→→ Can hinder

▷▷ So when we pray, ~ we can rest assured that we are addressing the one true God, ~ the sovereign creator of both the visible and invisible realms and all they contain, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ who, ~ because of who He is, ~ is more than able to answer our prayers.

▷▷ In **Jer. 32:17**, ~ Jeremiah declares, ~ 'Ah, ~ Lord God! ~ It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Nothing is too hard for you. ~ So, ~ when we pray . . . ~ remember

PAUL'S PRAYER FOLLOWS IN VERSES 16-19. ~ AGAIN, ~ 1st 3 REQUESTS TODAY.

NOW, ~ IT'S HARD TO UNDERSTAND THE BREAKDOWN OF THIS PASSAGE. ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶ This is due to the fact that the Greek text of verses 14-19 consists of one unwieldy sentence with many dependent clauses.

▷▷ So it is difficult to know which ones might indicate main ideas. ~ ~ Translations

▷▷ A contextually valid and perhaps the simplest way to look at this prayer is that Paul has six prayer requests. ~ ~ And that is how we will approach it.

↳↳ Although, ~ I'm quite sure that no matter how it's broken down, ~ if one is treating the text accurately, ~ we will all pretty much draw many of the same conclusions.

WHAT PAUL PRAYS HERE IN THIS PARAGRAPH FOR THE BELIEVERS IN EPHESUS IS needed in every believer's life.

▶▶ So it is vital that we explore these requests to see what exactly it is that we need; ~ ~ and then subsequently ~ to continually pray this prayer for our fellow believers and for ourselves.

PAUL BEGINS HIS PRAYER REQUESTS BY SAYING IN VERSE 16a, ~ "THAT according to the riches of his glory."

SIMPLY PUT, ~ PAUL BEGINS BY SAYING HE PRAYS THAT FROM GOD'S GLORIOUS, ~ unlimited resources, ~ God will give believers the following six things.

▶▶ Paul could have just jumped into the requests, ~ but He goes out of his way to note that God has glorious, ~ unlimited resources.

▷▷ Paul is emphatically implying that God has way more than enough resources to give His people what they need to live the Christian life victoriously and to prosper spiritually.

↳↳ And in fact, ~ Paul alludes to this in his doxology in verses 20-21, ~ where he says that God "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think."

IN VERSE 16b, ~ 1st REQUEST, ~ WE SEE A REQUEST FOR DIVINE strengthening.

PAUL PRAYS FOR BELIEVERS "TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH POWER THROUGH HIS Spirit in your inner being."

▶▶ "strengthened with power" could be translated as "mightily empowered." ~ ~ Paul is praying that believers would be "mightily empowered through the Holy Spirit in [our] inner being."

▶▶ By "inner being," ~ Paul means the soul, ~ and whatever relates to the spiritual life of the soul. 📌 4/9

PAUL'S IMPLICATION IS THAT BELIEVERS NEED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH FROM GOD FOR living the Christian life victoriously.

▶▶ Our human strength is no match for the trials and persecutions we go through. ~ We need empowerment from on High to withstand them.

▶▶ We face many temptations, ~ which no human power is able to successfully resist. ~ We need to be mightily empowered by the Holy Spirit to resist Satan and his temptations.

▷▷ In Eph. 6:10-11, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Finally, ~ be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ~ Put on the whole armor of God, ~ that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ~ Implication

▶▶ We have many duties and ministries to carry out, ~ which cannot be accomplished by our human strength. ~ We need to be mightily empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry them out.

▶▶ To walk by faith and not by sight, ~ we need empowerment from on High.

▶▶ And we need to be mightily empowered by the Holy Spirit to hang on, ~ to persevere, ~ to fight the good fight, ~ to stay in the race, ~ and to keep the faith ~ until Jesus returns or calls us home. ~ We can't do it in our own strength.

▶▶ While I was writing this, ~ two passages come to mind that illustrate what Paul is praying for here.

▷▷ In Is. 40:28-31, ~ Isaiah writes, ~ "Have you not known? ~ Have you not heard? ~ The Lord is the everlasting God, ~ the Creator of the ends of the earth. ~ He does not faint or grow weary; ~ his understanding is unsearchable. ~ He gives power to the faint, ~ and to him who has no might he increases strength. ~ ¶

↳↳ Even youths shall faint and be weary, ~ and young men shall fall exhausted; ~ ¶

→→ but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; ~ ¶

↳↳ they shall mount up with wings like eagles ~ [i.e., ~ they will soar on wings like eagles]; ~ they shall run and not be weary; ~ they shall walk and not faint."

▷▷ And in Zech. 4:6, ~ we read, ~ "Then he said to me, ~ 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ~ Not by might, ~ nor by power, [i.e., ~ You will not succeed by your own strength or by your own power] ~ ¶

↳↳ but by my Spirit, ~ says the Lord of hosts.'" ¶ 5/9

→→In the very next verse, ~ God says that by His Spirit, ~ nothing, ~ not even a mighty mountain, ~ *will stand in Zerubbabel's way; ~ it will become a level plain before him God says.*

▶▶My fellow blood-bought believers, ~ we cannot possibly live the Christian life victoriously without being mightily empowered by the Holy Spirit.

▷▷Jesus said, ~ in Jn. 15:5, ~ "I am the vine; ~ you are the branches. ~ Whoever abides in me and I in him, ~ he it is that bears much fruit, ~ for apart from me you can do nothing."

↪↪So we need to make Paul's prayer our prayer.

→→And continually pray that our brothers and sisters in Christ ~ and ourselves ~ will be mightily empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

▷▷As long as we think that we can handle the Christian life on our own, ~ we will fail miserably. ~ We cannot succeed spiritually by our own strength or by our own power.

▷▷But when we wait on the Lord, ~ when we seek empowerment from above, ~ "where Christ is, ~ seated at the right hand of God," ~ ¶¶

↪↪we "shall renew [our] strength; ~ [we shall soar] like eagles; ~ [we] shall run and not be weary; ~ [we] shall walk and not faint," ~ and not even a mighty mountain

PAUL'S 2nd PRAYER REQUEST IS IN VERSE 17a.

HE PRAYS "FOR CHRIST TO DWELL THROUGH FAITH IN YOUR HEARTS."

▶▶Paul is writing to believers. ~ Paul has made it clear that the original recipients of this letter are believers. ~ So we must not think that Paul is praying for their salvation here.

▶▶He's not talking about salvation. ~ He's talking about sanctification. ~ I.e., ~ the process by which believers mature spiritually and grow more and more Christ-like.

IT'S A REQUEST FOR CHRIST TO INDWELL BELIEVERS' LIVES IN DEEPER MEASURE.

▶▶He's praying that Jesus would become the very center of believers' lives, ~ that He would exercise His lordship and reign over every area of our lives.

▶▶In order for disciples of Jesus to grow and prosper spiritually, ~ to grow more and more Christ-like, ~ *and to live a victorious Christian life, ~ Jesus must become the controlling factor in our minds, ~ our attitudes, ~ and our conduct.* ¶¶ 6/9

▷▷ To experience true joy and the fullness of His love, ~ Jesus must be at the very center of our lives.

▶▶ The hymn we sang earlier packs a lot of truth.

▷▷ But we never can prove The delights of His love Until all on the altar we lay; ~~ For the favor He shows And the joy He bestows ~ Are for them who will trust and obey.

↪↪ Trust and obey, ~ for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, ~ But to trust and obey.

▷▷ Then in fellowship sweet We will sit at His feet Or we'll walk by His side in the way; ~~ What He says we will do, ~ *Where He sends we will go; ~ Never fear, ~ only trust and obey.*

↪↪ Trust and obey, ~ for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, ~ But to trust and obey.

NOW, ~ JESUS IS NOT SOME COSMIC KILLJOY, ~ THREATENING US TO OBEY OR ELSE He'll take it out on us by making us miserable.

▶▶ Jesus loves us beyond measure ~ and wants what's best for us.

▷▷ And what's best for us is to make Him the very center of our lives, ~ the controlling factor in our minds, ~ our attitudes, ~ and our conduct.

▶▶ And that's why Paul prayed for Jesus to dwell in their hearts.

▶▶ And that's why we need to make Paul's prayer our prayer, ~ and continually pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ and for ourselves ~ *that we would put Jesus on the throne of our lives.*

IT'S INTERESTING HERE THAT THE WORD PAUL USES WHEN HE SAYS "DWELL," ~ ¶¶

▶▶ signifies to set up one's house or make one's home in a place, ~ by way of contrast with a temporary and uncertain sojourn.

▶▶ My fellow blood-bought believers, ~ our lives should not be marked by occasional visits or influences from Jesus in our lives, ~ *but should be marked by daily inviting Him to sit on the throne of our lives.*

IN VERSE 17b, ~ WE FIND PAUL'S THIRD PRAYER REQUEST. ¶¶ 7/9

HE PRAYS FOR BELIEVERS "TO BE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE."

▶▶ More than likely, ~ Paul is talking about God's abundant love for us.

▶▶ And he's praying that believers would be "rooted and grounded" in the fact of God's abundant love for us, ~ which is spelled out in Scripture.

▷▷ For instance, ~ making us alive with Christ, ~ raising us up and seating us with Jesus, ~ incorporating us into the body of Christ, ~ the church, ~ forgiving our sins based on Christ's loving sacrifice, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and choosing us in love before the foundation of the world ~ are all examples of God's extraordinary love for us that Scripture reveals to us.

▶▶ And Paul wants us to be "rooted and grounded" in this truth of God's abundant love for us.

PAUL USES BOTH A METAPHOR FROM AGRICULTURE ~ AND A METAPHOR FROM building construction.

▶▶ In his parable of the sower, Jesus spoke about the dangers of not being rooted:

▷▷ In Lk. 8:13 He said, ~ "And the ones on the rock are those who, ~ when they hear the word, ~ receive it with joy. ~ But these have no root; ~ they believe for a while, ~ and in time of testing fall away."

▷▷ By contrast, ~ Paul prays that the Ephesian believers will have their roots sunk deep in the truth of God's abundant love for us.

▶▶ The second metaphor is an appeal to God that the foundations of the lives of these believers be established in the truth of God's abundant love for us.

▷▷ Jesus gave a parable in which he contrasted wise and foolish builders, ~ recorded in Matt. 7:24-27.

↳↳ The foolish man built his house on sand, ~ but the wise man's house's "foundation was laid on the rock" (LEB).

▶▶ The use of both these metaphors combine to emphasize Paul's concern that believers be sufficiently well established in the knowledge of God's extraordinary love for us.

▷▷ So that when the storms of trials and testing come, ~ believers would not be, ~ as Paul puts it in Eph. 4:14, ~ "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." ¶¶ 8/9

▶▶ When a believer is sufficiently well established in the knowledge of God's abundant love for us, ~ in the assurance that God loves us, ~ has accepted us, ~ and that we are precious to Him, ~ then nothing will be able to shake us.

▷▷ We will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock. ~~ As Jesus said in [Matt. 7:25](#), ~ "And the rain fell, ~ and the floods came, ~ and the winds blew and beat on that house, ~ but it did not fall, ~ because it had been founded on the rock.

▶▶ And that's why we need to make Paul's prayer our prayer, ~ and continually pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ ~ and for ourselves that, ~ as we study the Scriptures, ~ 77

▷▷ the Holy Spirit will cause us to be sufficiently well established in the knowledge of God's abundant love for us.

▷▷ Notice, ~ I said, ~ as we study the Scriptures. ~~ Since Paul is talking about being sufficiently well established in the knowledge of God's abundant love for us, ~ 77

→ → and this knowledge is spelled out for us in Scripture, ~ we can look at this request as a joint operation between us and the Holy Spirit.

→ → Our responsibility is to study the Scriptures. ~~ And as we do so, ~ the Holy Spirit will firmly establish us in the knowledge of God's abundant love for us.

CONCLUSION.

OUR SOVEREIGN LORD, ~ WHOSE RESOURCES ARE UNLIMITED, ~ KNOWS WHAT HIS people need in order to live the Christian life victoriously and to prosper spiritually, ~ 77

▶▶ and is more than ready, ~ willing, ~ and able to give us what we need.

▷▷ To Him be the glory forever and ever!

LET'S PRAY 9/9