

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Provoked Prayer"

Ephesians 3:14-17a

Introduction

1. Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ so that they are fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partners (2:19). This is all a work of God through Christ (2:13).

2. It was "for this cause" concerning Jews and Gentiles (3:1) which provoked Paul to prayer. But his prayer was interrupted by an extended discourse on the dispensation of grace (vv 2-13). Hence, the second "for this cause" (v. 14) is introduced to commence the prayer.

3. Paul's prayer has certain plain ingredients. Mark them carefully:-

1. APPROACH IN PRAYER vv 14, 15.

a. Its cause v. 14.

It was the glorious grace dispensation which called forth this prayer. Paul prayed because God had brought Gentiles and Jews together. What a prayer of merit! Spiritual triumphs are no time for prayer negligence.

b. Its Posture v. 14

No specific posture is commanded by God. Some knelt (Dan. 6:10), others stood (Mark 11:25). Some lift their hearts to God in bed (Psa. 63:6). Of most importance is the heart (Psa. 66:18). Here Paul bowed in humility and urgency (Luke 22:41) with the Roman guard at his side (cf. 3:1).

c. Its Address vv. 14, 15.

The words "of our Lord Jesus Christ" may not be in the original text. If they are, it is a reminder who the Father is in relation to the Son of God. If omitted, then the "Father" is emphasized in relation to the redeemed family. Moreover, it is the entire company of the redeemed who have God as Father (cf. Heb. 12:22-24). Incidentally, the singular "whole" could be rendered "every" in which case "every family" would mean that every group of beings, whether in heaven or on earth, gets the name "family" from one father, the Greek word for "family" and "father" have the same root. Hence, the idea is: "I bow my knees to the Father of whom all (every) fatherhood is named (i.e. derives its name and nature). Thus God is the fountain of fatherhood and all fatherliness.

He is the archetype of all fatherhood. The human is a reflection of the divine which is the reality. What a meaning for Jews and Gentiles in one blessed family. The reference is also to the "whole" family - saints and angels - under the "Father of Spirits." Rabbis used to call the angels "the upper family" and Israel "the lower." The thought here is very similar.

2. BOLDNESS IN PRAYER v. 16 a.

The benefits of the prayer are sought from the abounding resources of God and according to their standard "glory" speaks of God's infinite perfections. With "riches" attached to it, the surpassing heights of divine perfection are indicated. Paul, therefore, prayed without thinking he could strain the resources of God. Moreover, when God gives, he does so ungrudgingly and not meagerly. God's portion cannot be exhausted. He gives proportionate to his infiniteness.

3. REQUEST IN PRAYER v. 16.

Every believer has the spirit at the moment of his new birth (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6). God knows it is an impossibility to live the Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit. So the strengthening is done by the resident Holy Spirit. "His" shows He is God's Spirit and thus Divine.

a. What?

The verb "strengthen" is aorist tense. It suggests decision and crisis. Paul prayed for a dramatic display of God's strengthening. He adds the word "might" which is the dynamic word "power" used frequently in the N.T. (Rom. 1:16). This is not a request for ordinary enablement!

c. Where?

The "inner man" is the seat of intellectual and spiritual life. It is in contrast with the "outward man" (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:22). Specifically it refers to the divine nature imparted at the time of salvation--the new nature (Rom. 7:15-25; 2 Pet. 1:4). Hence, here is a prayer for divine quickening within.

Conclusion The ultimate of this specific request is for Christ "to be at home" in our hearts (v. 17a). In some, Christ is present, in others He is prominent, in others He is pre-eminent. His presence has degrees and advances--less and more, outer and inner. We are indwelt at salvation. This prayer hopes for Christ to be both real and regnant. May it be true for us too. Amen.