

• *Paul's prayer resumed*

• *Because of the unsearchable riches...*

Paul now resumes and concludes the prayer that he started in 1:15–19a, and almost restarted in 3:1. He picks up where he left off.

*'For this reason...* 'Words like these in 3:1 looked back to 1:1 9b–2:20. It meant: 'Because of the great privileges that you Ephesian Christians have in your complete access to God the Father'. Now as Paul repeats these words it means even more: 'Because of the greatness of the unsearchable riches which you may experience in the Lord Jesus Christ'.

*'For this reason I bend my knees before the Father <sup>□1</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth receives its name <sup>□2</sup>, that He will grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power, through His Spirit, in the inner man' <sup>□3</sup>.*

□1 3:14

□2 3:15

□3 3:16

**1. Paul bows reverently before God**

1. **We see the posture he adopts in prayer.** He bows down before the Father. Our posture in prayer is not the most important thing and we are not to be superstitious about it. People can pray when bowing <sup>□1</sup> or kneeling <sup>□2</sup> or prostrate on the ground <sup>□3</sup> or with bowed head <sup>□4</sup>. The important thing is to be not superstitious nor careless, but reverent.

□1 Genesis 24:52

□2 Acts 21:5

□3 Matthew

26:39

□4 2

Chronicles

29:29

**2. God – Father of one whole family**

2. We note **the way in which he thinks of God.** He is still thinking of what he said in Ephesians 2:18–22. Verse 14 picks up from 3:1, which itself picks up the thought from 2:18–22. At the end of chapter 2, he said that the gentile believers became 'fellow citizens with the saints'. Paul is still thinking of this matter, when he says God is 'the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth receives its name'. The entire people of God in heaven and on earth are one family. Paul is not thinking of angels at this point, because he is thinking of God's being Father–Redeemer of all His people. That relationship does not include the angels. Paul is specially praying for these **gentile** Ephesians. He wants them to realise that they are not in any inferior position just because they are gentiles. There are great spiritual blessings <sup>□1</sup> for all God's people and the Ephesians are in the **one** family of God just as much as anyone else. Paul wants to pray that they will enter into the treasures of the gospel but he reminds himself and them that God is their Father as well as Father to those 'who were the first to hope in Christ' <sup>□2</sup>. The whole family of God gets its 'name', its being and character, from the one Father.

□1 1:3

□2 1:12

• *One family with one Father*

**3. Prayer for strength from God**

3. So we come then to his **prayer for strength from God.** This is a preliminary request. He prays for them to have strength in order to receive certain **other** blessings that he goes on to pray for in verses 17–19. Before they can have Christ dwelling in them (in the way that he has in mind) they need strength from the Holy Spirit. Paul prays about one thing in order to move on and pray about another thing.

He prays that they might be strengthened in the inner man. Apparently they are not ready to experience the great blessing he mentions in verses 17–19. He must pray for something that gets them ready for the experience he is about to mention.

What does Paul mean by the 'inner man'? The New Testament has a whole list of terms that stress different aspects of man's personality: soul, spirit, flesh, body, heart, mind, conscience. Three places in the New Testament mention 'the inner man' <sup>□1</sup>. It means the inner personality. Man's body decays but the Christian has an 'inner man'

□1 Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; and Ephesians 3:16

• **The inner man**

that is not decaying. Peter speaks of ‘the hidden person of the heart’ <sup>□2</sup>. It is the centre of a person’s being, his personality, her personality, that aspect of our being which continues to exist when our body is buried beneath the ground or thrown to the elements. In the Christian this ‘inner man’ is alive unto God, yet it is weak and needs strengthening.

□2 1Peter 3:4

• **Strengthened**

What does this strengthening consist of?

(i) **Sensitivity**

(i) We need a strengthening of **sensitivity** to spiritual things. We need to be constantly aware of God and His presence and what He thinks of us.

(ii) **Mind**

(ii) We need a strengthening of **mind**, a clear realisation of what is available to us in the kingdom of God. We need ‘ointment to put in our eyes’ so that we can see, because we tend to be poor in the things of God and blind to what He wants to give us <sup>□1</sup>.

□1 Revelation 3:17

(iii) **Will**

(iii) We need a strengthening of **will**, a determined resolve to seek the presence of Jesus and find in a greater way than ever before.

(iv) **Spiritual appetite**

(iv) We need a strengthening of **spiritual appetite**, so that we desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

(v) **Inner endurance**

(v) We need a strengthening of inner **endurance** so that whatever we may have to work through in order to lay hold of Christ does not discourage us and cause us to leave off the pursuit of God’s will.

(vi) **Body**

(vi) Sometimes – when the love of God is overwhelming – we even need strengthening of the **body**.

• **The riches of His glory**

The strengthening is to be done, ‘according to the riches of His glory’. When Paul speaks of ‘riches’ it is the merciful and gracious side of God’s character that he has in mind. God is willing to richly shower His mercy upon us, in answer to Paul’s praying and the Ephesians own praying for themselves. The strengthening is to be done ‘through the Spirit’. It is part of His continuing ministry to us. As we ask God for strength, His Spirit comes to be the answer to our praying.

**4. The heart of Paul’s prayer**

4. The next step is the heart of Paul’s prayer. We are to be strengthened ready for the conscious indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ, ready for being rooted and grounded in love, ready for comprehending the massive dimensions of the love of Christ. Paul prays ‘that He will grant you ... to be strengthened... *in order that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, being rooted and grounded in love* <sup>□1</sup>, *in order that you may be strengthened so as to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height* <sup>□1</sup>, *and in order that you might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God* <sup>□1</sup>.

□1 3:17  
□2 3:18  
□3 3:19

• **The Conscious indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ**

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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