

Paul's Prayer and the Call to Responsible Christian Living

Ephesians 3:13-4:32

PAUL NOW STARTS THE PRAYER WE SHOULD REMEMBER & REMIND OURSELVES OF OUR GREAT RICHES FOUND IN JESUS CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER!

Ephesians 3:13-15, "Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named…"

- *Paul was being used in a greater way than he could have ever imagined.*
- *In the same manner, each of us has a place in the service of God's eternal plan.*
- *Paul prayed in the posture of bowing his knees. This position of utmost humility was in contrast to the more normal posture of prayer in that culture, to pray standing with hands raised up.*
- *Solomon prayed on his knees (1 Kings 8:54). Ezra prayed on his knees (Ezra 9:5). The Psalmist called us to kneel (Psalm 95:6). Daniel prayed on his knees (Daniel 6:10). People came to Jesus kneeling (Matthew 17:14, Matthew 20:20, and Mark 1:40). Stephen prayed on his knees (Acts 7:60). Peter prayed on his knees (Acts 9:40). Paul prayed on his knees (Acts 20:36), and other early Christians prayed on their knees (Acts 21:5). Most importantly, Jesus prayed on His knees (Luke 22:41).*

To the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- *Paul directed his prayer to the **Father**, who is presented as the "planner" among the members of the Trinity.*
- *In the Bible, prayer is usually directed to **the Father**, through the Son, by the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit.*

HERE IN THIS PRAYER…WE SEE THE PURPOSE, POWER, AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THE TRINITY.

- Scripture: **From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named**: In remembering that all God's family is called after His name, Paul showed that his mind was rather taken with this idea of the essential unity of the Body of Christ. God is Father of both Jew and Gentile.

Ephesians 3:16-19, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

- Paul prayed that the strength of the church would come **through the Holy Spirit** and that it would be put into their **inner man**.
    - ✓ There is an **inner man** just as real as our physical body.
- Paul prayed as a request and to assure that saints that Jesus would live in them (the believers), even as Jesus promised in John 14:23: "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*."

"Two expressions are used: 'rooted,' like a living tree which lays hold upon the soil, twists itself round the rocks, and cannot be upturned: 'grounded,' like a building which has been settled, as a whole, and will never show any cracks or flaws in the future through failures in the foundation." (Spurgeon)

Ephesians 3:20-21, "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, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."
God is able to do above all that *we* ask or think.

- *You can ask for every good thing you have ever experienced – God can do **above** that.*
- *You can think of or imagine things beyond your experience – God can do **above** that.*
- *You can imagine good things that are beyond your ability to name – God can do **above** that.*

GOD CAN DO ANYTHING BUT FAIL!!
When the church understands and walks in God's eternal purpose, God will be glorified and the church will fulfill its important duty of simply glorifying God.

Analysis of Ephesians Chapter 4

The 4th chapter of Ephesians marks a transition from the theological explanations of Paul's meaning and intent of the earlier chapters to a practical exhortation, guiding believers on how to live out their faith in unity, maturity, and love. The Apostle Paul meticulously lays out instructions for:

- *The new expectations of the new convert's personal conduct, as well as*
- *The conduct expected as they (we) communicate and live with others.*

The Three (3) key sections in this chapter are the call to unity, the diversity of gifts, and the exhortation to live a new life.

1. *A Call for Unity in the Body of Christ*

Ephesians 4:1-6, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

- Paul appeals to the church—to live in a manner worthy of their divine calling. emphasizing that their conduct should reflect their high calling.
- He lists virtues essential for maintaining unity: humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

- Each of these virtues counteracts the natural human tendencies that lead to division. Humility counters pride, gentleness counters harshness, patience counters impatience, and love, which brings all of the virtues together…is the bond that perfects unity.

2. Diversity of Gifts—

Ephesians 4:7-13, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

- **Paul has stressed the necessity for unity in the body of Christ (the Church),**
- **He also acknowledges the diversity within the body of Christ through the distribution of spiritual gifts.**
    - ✓ *Our benefit as one of God's children (the saved congregants)… "grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."*
    - ✓ *Every believer has received a unique portion of Christ's grace.*
    - ✓ *The manifestations of the various spiritual gifts are intended for the common good of the church.*
    - ✓ *The gifts within the church body are given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ."*
    - ✓ *This equips believers for service and contributes to the edification of the whole community. The ultimate goal of these ministries is "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God," leading to spiritual maturity and fullness in Christ.*

3. The New Life in Christ

Ephesians 4:14-24, "So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Paul stresses the need for doctrinal stability and maturity. This comes from "speaking the truth in love."

- Spiritual Balance ensures that truth is not harshly imposed. It should always be communicated in a manner that edifies.
- The mature Christian should not have a problem with the waves of a diverse environment.
- Paul urges believers to abandon their former way of life and embrace their new identity in Christ.
- The root cause of the Gentiles (unsaved/undisciplined) condition is "the hardness of heart," leading to moral and spiritual degradation.
- Believers are called to a radical transformation: to "put off your old self" and "be renewed in the spirit of your minds."

Practical Instructions for Christian Living (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Ephesians 4:25-32, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

- *Paul instructs the believers to "put away falsehood" and speak the truth as the ethical responsibility of ALL believers. Truth-telling fosters trust and cohesion within the body of Christ.*
- *Paul's advice to "be angry and do not sin" suggests that anger is not necessarily sinful…but can lead to sin if not properly managed.*
- *The exhortation against stealing and laziness and the encouragement to do honest work underscores the value of diligence and generosity.*
- *Believers are encouraged to avoid "corrupting talk (including gossip)" and instead use their words to edify and impart grace to the listeners...*

Paul warns against grieving the Holy Spirit.

- ***The Holy Spirit, who seals believers for the day of redemption, is affected by the actions of born-again, spirit-led believers.***
- *Behaviors such as bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice are detrimental to their relationship with the Holy Spirit and the community.*