

October 27, 2014

Ephesians 3:14-16 (NASB), ***“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”***

I am always greatly challenged by the Apostle Paul’s prayers. It astounds me and humbles me when I read what he was praying about and then I consider my own prayers in comparison. Far too often my prayers are consumed with trite thoughts and with the temporal needs that others and myself have. I remember years ago when I was in my first semester as a student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary one of my professors gave us the assignment of reading all of Paul’s prayers from the New Testament. After this assignment I began to notice what my prayers were consumed with and let’s just say they were not consumed with having ***“the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”***

Paul did not ***“bow”*** his knees to prayer about gout, bursitis, or someone’s sick dog. Paul’s prayers consistently are consumed with the salvation and the spiritual growth of those whom he was writing to.

In today’s passage Paul starts this brief prayer by reminding us who exactly it is we are praying to. This is part of the problem often times, we think we are praying to our good buddy Jesus and we forget who He really is. Paul says that he bows his knee ***“before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name...”*** In Philippians it says ***“that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.”*** We have the awesome privilege of bringing our prayers before the God of all the universe who is the creator of all things and of all beings. We are made in His image and we are in a sense given His name.

In verse 16 Paul writes, ***“that He would grant you...”*** This is a reminder to us that not only are we praying to the God of all creation but that He is the one who grants all blessings and He is the one who answers prayers according to His will. Some teach and therefore some believe that the more fervently we pray or the more “faith” we have, or if we just say the right words, somehow God is obligated then to answer our prayers? What is striking about Paul’s prayers is that they almost always are for the spiritual growth and welfare of others.

Paul then says, ***“according to the riches of His glory.”*** God does not define riches as you and I do, God’s riches are limitless and therefore are not limited just to material things. In Ephesians 1:18 Paul says, ***“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”*** If you have repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord then you have been given an inheritance that will not tarnish, disappear or fade away.

Then Paul prays that his readers ***“be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”*** Spiritual power is the mark of every Christian who humbly submits to God’s Word and to His Spirit. Spiritual power is not reserved for the elite few who are part of a special class of Christians. Rather Spiritual power is for all of those who discipline their minds and spirits through the faithful study of His Word; they understand it, and they live by it. Although our outer shell, our physical bodies become weaker the older we get our inner, spiritual self should grow in maturity and strength in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The more we draw closer to Him the more He will energize us, revitalize us, and this will empower the obedient and committed Christian. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, ***“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”***

My challenge for us in consideration of this passage is to change our prayers from the self-centered prayers that so many of us have, to prayers of true self-sacrifice and genuine concern for others Spiritual growth. God does indeed care about all that encompasses our life but there is nothing more important to Him than our salvation and our pursuit of righteousness following that salvation.