

**Call to Obedience #221**  
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Once we know what Paul prayed for, we know what we need.

## **What Paul Prayed For**

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"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ep. 3:14).

Paul says, "I bow my knees..." We also read of Jesus that he bowed his knees, such as in the Garden of Gethsemane. There is a prayer-on-the-run practice, but there must also be a praying-on-the-knees practice.

We will never get a deep spiritual relationship with God unless we have scheduled times for praying on our knees; times when we go nowhere; times when we are shut in with God.

The scheduled things of our life get done with certainty. We schedule a doctor's appointment and it gets done; we schedule the time we go to work, or to school, and it gets done. We schedule to be at a birthday party or a wedding, and we arrive there. Whatever we schedule is usually accomplished--whatever we don't schedule ends up on the bottom of things to be done, and most often these unscheduled things do not get done at all.

If we mean serious business with God, we will schedule our daily prayer-time with the same seriousness that we schedule our doctor's appointment. Now, if we are not doing that, our prayer life will be off and on, and off and on, and mostly off! And, dear ones, if we are not faithful to God in prayer, God has no obligation to be faithful to us when we get ourselves into trouble.

Now continuing from this point on, Paul takes us up a stairway by virtue of four different steps. He tells us what he is praying for on his knees.

First of all, he prays for the step we call "prayer for the inner man." Secondly, he prays for the step called "faith in Christ." Third, he prays for the step called "being rooted in love." And fourth, he takes us to the very platform of the highest of Christian living, and that is called "being filled with all the fullness of God." My friend, there is no bypassing any of these steps in order to come to a life filled with the fullness of God. There is no such thing as starting halfway up the ladder. Each step is necessary.

There is the story of a cartoonist who sketched a log cabin at the base of a tremendous cliff. Above the log cabin, he wrote "Abraham Lincoln." Then, as high up as he could reach, he sketched another picture, that of the White House. Next, he drew a ladder between Abe Lincoln's cabin and the White House. Then on the bottom of this whole work of art, he wrote, "The ladder is still there."

There is a ladder for every believer that leads to a life of the fullness of God, and the Holy Spirit, my friend, bids us "come up." We can come from the most miserable point of Christian living unto the highest place God has appointed for us if we will just take heart and take one step at a time. There are no escalators taking us there; neither elevators nor chair-lifts lifting us there. We must take one step at a time.

Now, we want to observe in Paul's apostolic prayer, before he takes us upward in this journey, that there are tremendous resources at our disposal to take these steps up the ladder. Therefore, he says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father... That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (vv. 14,16).

Before this wonderful journey of ascent begins, Paul reminds us of the unsearchable riches of the glory of God. Before we can succeed, we must realize how much we have in Christ Jesus. We must have a picture of the immense greatness of our Lord. And we get this picture ever more clearly into our hearts as we shut ourselves in to be alone with God.

God has an unlimited reservoir of the riches of his glory that contains everything for every person to be filled with all the fullness of God, but the reservoir will not be discovered by an on-the-run prayer life.

Now, let us look at Paul's first petition for the Christians. He bows his knees unto the Father that the Christians might "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

We live in an age where the outer man gets most all of the attention, and the inner man gets leftover crumbs of time and energy. My friend, it is the outer man that will perish; it is the inner man that will live forever. What a shame it is that we give most of our time and energy to the outer man.

Consider clothing: oh, how we fret over how we look! How we run all over the country to buy the right style of clothing. We give much attention to food, to exercise, to sports, to entertainment, to fellowship, to coming and going, to pampering the outer man over and over again. The outer man, my friend, is perishing! Nothing can prevent it! Things can never renew the inner man, only the Holy Spirit can! This is why Paul prayed that we might "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." His plea is that we would put the inner man above the outer man.

Now, the second step of this ladder, the second part of Paul's prayer, also begins with a "that." All four petitions, in fact, begin with a "that," signifying purpose. Paul is praying with the purpose in mind that we might receive something from God: "I bow my knees to the Father... That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (v. 17).

We need to have faith! All our relationships with God are based on faith. As our inner man is strengthened, our faith, our capacity to believe, is greatly enlarged. All of our life is to be a life of faith, for Paul says, "The just shall live by faith" (Ga. 3:11). Believe that what God has started, my friend, he is also able to finish within you (see Ps. 138:8 and Ph. 1:6).

For Christians, this means that we leave the limitations of human reason in order to enter the infinite world of faith. Why do we want to be stuck in the world of reason and science for the next 20, 30, or 60 years where most things are impossible?! Why don't we go into faith where **all** things are possible? Science and reason cannot turn water into wine; they cannot heal cancer by just a prayer; they cannot make the Jordan River divide so a nation can walk through on dry ground; they cannot stop the mouths of lions; they cannot sustain three men in a fiery furnace, nor move mountains and cast them into the uttermost parts of the sea.

Hear Paul's prayer: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." God wants us to have faith! God wants us to live by faith--every single day. Whatever problem we have, Jesus wants us to have faith to overcome it. He wants us to come to him by faith for everything, and I mean everything!

The ladder's third step to the fullness of God is, "that ye, being rooted and grounded in love..." (v. 17). From a petition in prayer for strength in the inner man, we move up to a petition for faith, and then we step up to a petition for love.

If Jesus abides in us, love abides in us. There is no evil in love as there is no darkness in light. Love is the fertile soil of the soul; love is the foundation stone of our spiritual structure; love is an enabling and a qualifying force. Apart from love, our spiritual hands are paralyzed. Anything you or I do that does not have love in it, better not be done at all!

A minister may preach a good sermon: biblically correct, homiletically beautiful and logical. He may use wonderful illustrations and a lot of scriptures, but if the sermon is not delivered in love, it is no good; it is like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Our sacrifices, if not done in love, will not create treasures in heaven. When people help others only out of a sense of duty or obligation, and there is no love, there is no blessing in it for them.

Yes, God is love! But what needs to be said more these days than perhaps in many a day is that God is more than love. We must rise above even love to step number four as Paul continued in his prayer: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height..." (vv. 17,18).

What is this thing that we should be able to comprehend? What is this thing of four dimensions--breadth, length, height, and depth--that is above love? Oh, my friend, God is love, but beyond God's love is God's fullness. Paul is praying that we "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Oh, Paul, Paul, Paul! How dare you pray such mighty prayers that the Christians would be filled with **all** the fullness of God?! Yes, Paul, thank you for daring such a thing, "for with God all things are possible" (Mk. 10:27).

Is it not true, dear ones, that the Word says of Jesus that in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? Let me ask this question: if we have Jesus in our heart, and we have let him be the uncontested Lord of every day of our life, shouldn't we think that Jesus will live in our heart with all the fullness of God? And, since he no longer has a physical earthly body, he will manifest that fullness in our surrendered body. Yes, this is possible, and it is this very thing that Paul is praying for all of us to receive. This is what we need, and what we should pray for also.

So, when we, by faith and with God's assistance, take these four steps, we come to that point where we will see with the eye of God, we will hear with the ear of God, we will speak with the authority of God, and we will think with the mind of God. If we are faithful in these steps, we then will love with the love of God, we will move by the power of God, we will know by the knowledge of God, and we will act by the will of God because he dwells in us in his fullness.

What a marvelous prayer of the apostle in Ephesians 3! Once again, the four petitions, the four steps of this prayer: "That...you...be **strengthened with might in the inner man...** That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye **being rooted and grounded in love**," and "that ye might **be filled with all the fullness of God.**" Hallelujah!!!