

The Family and Friends of God

Ephesians 3:14-21, "...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, 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. 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"

The apostle Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians (the first can be found in **Ephesians 1:15-23**) is directed at God the **Father**. However, Paul refers to God in a very specific way. He first confirms that He is the Almighty God who is the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ and that he is in complete submission to Him ("*I bow my knees*"). Then, Paul makes this incredible statement, "*From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*" Implying that every family, whether in heaven or on earth, has one **Father** - the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! And that God the **Father** is the only One who may grant ("*according to the riches of His glory*") the answer to Paul's prayer.

With gratitude in his heart for God's grace toward the Gentiles, Paul prays on their behalf. The prayer itself is divided into three parts, and is like a staircase with three steps, each step leading to the next.

- (1) The first step is: "*To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.*" The purpose of such strengthening is twofold; (a) that, "*Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith,*" and (b) that we they be "*rooted and grounded in love.*"
- (2) The second step is: "*To comprehend the love of Christ.*" This section of Paul's prayer literally says, "*that you may be especially able to understand and grasp the love of Christ.*" He wants them to know everything about this wonderful love ("*width and length...*"). But this love is something which "passes knowledge!" So how is it possible to know such love? Only in the sense that no matter how much we learn about Christ's love, even with the "strength" God's Spirit provides, there is always much more to grasp!
- (3) The third step is: "*To be filled with all the fullness of God.*" The Greek says, "*To be flooded with the fullness of God.*" This is the main objective, the goal, of all that was said previously. That they begin to be flooded with "*all the fullness of God*" (a) as they are strengthened by God the Father; (b) which is through His Spirit; (c) whereby Christ may dwell in their hearts (*Father, Son and Holy Spirit*). Notice, with the help of the three members of the Godhead, we can be flooded with ALL the fullness of God. Therefore, the more we begin to comprehend the wonderful "love of Christ", the more of His 'fullness' we are able to receive.

The question is this: "*Is God able to fulfil Paul's request?*" There is no doubt in Paul's mind, as we can see from the way he closes the prayer... "*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.*" Paul sees "the church" (you and me) as the means by which much "glory" can be given to God.

Miss the church and you will miss God's sanctioned tool for promoting His glory. The church is God's wonderfully diverse, living body. It is where His divine power is at work! What's more, God heals His family through His family. We all need each other. No one member is any more important than the other. The Father (from whom the whole family is named) cares for each one of us equally, and He wants each of us to be flooded with "all" His fullness. That is, everything that He is and everything that He has!

Back to the opening two verses... *"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."* The Godhead represents true family and God the Father is building a permanent family here on earth. He offers us a "family of friends" - friends who are family - His church. *"Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"* (Ephesians 1:5). The word "family" far exceeds any other biblical term to describe the Church. The words "brothers" or "brothers and sisters", and their variations, appear 148 times between the Book of Acts and Revelation.

Common belief identifies the members of God's family and common affection unites them. But it is only God the **Father** who **is able** to do *exceedingly abundantly above anything that we can ask or think - according to the power that is at work in us*. Like all good fathers, God desires for His Spirit to be manifest in and through us. Why? Because this is evidence that we are sons and daughters of His. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (**Romans 8:14**). *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (verse 16). However, the preceding verse brings it all together... *"But you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry 'Abba, Father'"* (verse 15).

Notice that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of "family."

- (a) He leads us as children of God,
- (b) He speaks to us regarding our assignment in the family,
- (c) He provides us with the revelation of God as "Daddy."

One of the greatest revelations you can ever have is simply this... "God loves you as your Daddy!" And He knows exactly how you should be raised. He's been raising sons and daughters for thousands of years! He is fully acquainted with your needs and struggles. He is able to bring you from spiritual infancy, through your spiritually formative years, and on to adult "sonship." He has a plan and purpose for your life.

Our **Father** is great! He makes no mistakes. We can be truly thankful for His purpose for us - to be born into the life of a particular nation, race and culture, as well as for the unique set of parents He has given us. He has a sovereign plan for our long-term well-being. God doesn't just place us in a certain family setting and then disappear from the scene! He does not wait until we have grown up before He interacts with us. He would like to engage with us intimately every day of our lives, whether we begin to know Him at age 6 or 60. God has no "respect for persons." He has no favourites, but He has many intimates! Are you one of them?

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God" (**1 John 3:1**). When we begin

the Christian life we all start out as "little children" in the family of God. We soon begin to grow by feeding on the Word of God. We then move towards what the Bible calls "young men" (both sexes are implied). Finally God wants us to reach the stature, stability and spiritual depth of "fathers." He wants us to be stable, mature, well rounded and wise. After we come to know the Lord Jesus in a personal way, it is very important that we respond to God's grace so that we may grow up to become "whole" men and women. God wants spiritual maturity for all His children.

Now, I would like to end by building a bridge between these two thoughts. That is, the "family" that takes its name directly from God the Father, and the spiritually mature children that God desires to use. The last passage of our opening scripture says, *"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."* The apostle Paul is praying that God the Father be glorified in the Church (by Christ Jesus) to all generations forever and ever! So how can this be achieved? Firstly, it can only be achieved through spiritually mature children. Children that are constantly being led by the Holy Spirit; children who can clearly hear the voice of the Holy Spirit; children that are not afraid of intimacy (are prepared to cry "Abba, Father").

Now, the body of Paul's prayer makes perfect sense... *"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 knew in his heart that God the **Father** wanted every child of His to be flooded with all His divine goodness. This way He could be glorified in the church from generation to generation, forever and ever! Amen. On Father's Day let's make up our minds to be *"strengthened with God's might in our inner man (through His Spirit), that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. So that, being rooted and grounded in love, together we may fully comprehend the unfathomable love of Christ, in order to be flooded with all the fulness of God the Father."*