

Why Paul Prayed For The Ephesians

"For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:15f). *"For this cause ..."* Is Paul looking backward or forward when he says, *"For this cause?"* If forward, he would be thanking God for their faith and love; if backward, it would be because of the hope they had in Christ. It is possible that either direction might be correct although commentaries generally favor the "backward cause": that he thanked God for the heritage of the Ephesians. That WAS reason for him to give thanks for them.

The expression, *"having heard of the love which ye have shown toward all the saints,"* has led some to conclude that Paul had never been to the home of those to whom the letter was sent because he wrote he *"had heard."* These insist that the letter was not addressed really to the Ephesians (for since Paul had spent three years there he would not have said, *"I have heard of your faith;"* he would have had firsthand knowledge of it) but rather is a circular letter or the letter to the Laodiceans somehow came to be called *"to the Ephesians."* Paul does mention a Laodicean letter Colossians: *"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea"* (Col. 4:16). It is true some manuscripts omit the phrase *"to the Ephesians"* in 1:1. However, to conclude that the letter was not really sent to the Ephesians is an unnecessary conclusion. Ephesians is one of Paul's prison letters which means it had been several years since Paul had bade a tearful farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17-38). Now, after a long silence with no contact from them, from some source he hears of their steadfastness and love toward saints. What would be more natural for him to respond, upon receiving such news, *"having heard of your faith"*? The criticism some offered against accepted things sometimes is a very flimsy one. Certainly it is in this instance.

It is encouraging that Ephesians were manifesting a noteworthy faith and reflecting a love for the saints. Although not specifically mentioned as among those who provided relief for the Jerusalem saints (Paul mentions those of Macedonia, Achaia and Galatia as those who sent), what would be more natural than to suppose that since Trophimus, who was admittedly an Ephesian and who was one of Paul's companions to Jerusalem (Acts 21:29) was also the Ephesians' messenger to Jerusalem elders, carrying their gifts to the needy saints, along with the others with whom they complained? Were this true, how encouraging it would be to Paul to hear that their *"love for the saints"* had not flagged, but was a continuing one!

Paul was both thankful for the prospective heritage the Ephesians had and for their demonstration of the practical virtues he had taught them. They were frequently mentioned in his prayers. His petitions to God for them will be the next subject of study.

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