

"I Bow My Knees ..." #1

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19).

Paul's expression "bow my knees" is essentially the same thing as to say "I pray." He used his most frequent posture in prayer to indicate prayer, itself. Were one to take a quick glance of Paul's habit in prayer (as Luke records it), he would see Paul kneeling in prayer with Ephesian elders as well as with saints from Tyre (Acts 20:36; 21:5). Ephesian brethren would understand that when he wrote "I bow my knees" he was saying "I pray." Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in the third chapter is the second time in the epistle he told them he prayed for them. The first instance is recorded in 1:15-19.

There are similarities in both these petitions. In the first, Paul prayed they may have the eyes of their heart enlightened; in the second his request was that they might apprehend with all the saints (1:18; 3:18). In his first prayer he requests that they might "know ... what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward;" in his second the petition is that they might "be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man" (1:19; 3:16).

Essentially the prayer in chapter three has five requests: 1) they might be strengthened with power through his Spirit; 2) Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; 3) they might be able to apprehend with all the saints; 4) they might know the love of Christ; and 5) they might be filled unto all the fullness of God. Paul was thoroughly aware that the requests he made would, if granted to these Ephesians, be given through the riches of God's glory, God's grace. Consider each of these requests:

"That ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man." When Paul mentions the inner man being strengthened, it is evident that his request is not for physical strength but for spiritual strength. When Jesus was in the throes of Gethsemane and prayed, "Father if thou be willing remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done," to this prayer is recorded, "And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven strengthening him" (Lk. 2:42f). Will an angel appear to us to "strengthen" us? While it is true that angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to do serv-

ice for the sake of them that inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14); strength with power through His Spirit will not come in a miraculous way. There are two avenues through which His Spirit may strengthen us: 1) by our calling to remembrance the promises God has given His own for it is through such promises that we "*become partakers of the divine nature and escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust*" and which strength may also come from the comfort and support of brethren who urge us on and comfort us in our afflictions (2 Pet. 1:4). In the last leg of Paul's vexing and trying journey to Rome during which he had experienced shipwreck and deprivation, he drew near to Rome with apprehension that surely would be in the mind of any who was conscious that his very fate lay in the hands of a capricious and unpredictable Caesar named Nero. In such a trying circumstance, brethren came all the way from Rome to greet him at "*the Market of Appies and The three Taverns, whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage*" (Acts 28:15). From that Roman prison Paul wrote Philippians that "*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13). The Psalmist wrote, "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth*" (Psa. 121:1f). That help from God, for the Christian, is through God's promises in His living Word and through comfort and strength dear brethren give. Therefore let us take care that we offer to those who are distressed and in despair, comfort which only Christians can give to one another! (Continued next week).

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