

1832a - PAUL'S EPHESIAN PRAYER - Eph 3:14-19

PRELIMS. We have an example here of a prayer from an **Apostle**! It is **helpful** for us to have this **model** of a prayer. As a minister, I am obviously very interested in **how** to pray properly for a **congregation** so we have one here. It is a **small** congregation with children! But I am **amazed** that we do **not find** any prayers in the Bible for the **conversion** of an **individual**, not even of a **child**! They were all baptised as **families** [see Acts 19:5]. There is **no example in the Bible** of a person, who had a family, being baptised, and his family **not being baptised**! All those with families had the families baptised also! They were all baptised into the covenant family of God.

What we **do find** is prayers for the **covenant** people's **repentance** and **spiritual growth**! We know that **all** covenant people are **not** ultimately **saved**! Some **defect** and **abandon** the faith they were brought up to believe was true. So, we pray for the **covenant** people **because** they have the **special ear** of God, which **the world** do not have! God makes great and precious promises to His covenant people - but not to the world. *I have surely seen the affliction of **My people** who are in Egypt and have heard **their** cry [Ex3:7] the **people of Israel** groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery **came up** to God. And God heard **their** groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob [Ex 2:23cf]. God looked upon **their** distress, when He heard **their** cry. For their sake He remembered His covenant [Psa 106:44]* So Paul prays for their **spiritual growth**!

The **Enlightenment** with its emphasis on human **reason** and **individualism** ran counter to this and is in complete **opposition** to covenant thinking! Paul here **includes** the **whole** congregation of the Ephesian Church without singling out any that may need special prayer for conversion - it is **assumed** they were in the covenant!

Now Paul begins by saying *For this reason* - **what** reason? Well we need to go back to [v1] where he **began** his prayer and was **diverted**! Without going into the exegesis of [vv2-13], the reason is that these Ephesians were **partakers** of **Christ Jesus through the gospel** which Paul preached [6]! Because they were **converts** of his **gospel** [7]. *I*

*have heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus and your **love** to all the saints* [1:15] Paul believed they were Xns by faith and love to X!

Now it is clear that what Paul prays for here is entirely **spiritual**! No mention whatever about healing or material concerns or such things - no reference at all to social problems - just spiritual **growth**! (Of course we all know that we must pray for each other's problems - for God is the God of **all** the earth and **everything** under the sun!

Notice his **reverence** - *I bows my knees before the Father* - what a **challenge** to us! Do you/I reverence God in such ways? Paul is **serious** about being reverent before God! So should we!!

Paul is really **building on** their **initial** faith. He is saying now that you are Xns, you need to be **strengthened**...*through His Spirit in your **inner** being*, you need to be **rooted and grounded in love** and you need **strength to comprehend**...*the breadth and length and height and depth* of Christ's love to you. Although this is something that **surpasses knowledge**, nevertheless you can still be **filled with all the fullness of God**. I don't know were they **thrilled** at such a possibility or were they hoping for something more **secular** in his prayers! **APP** we might well ask ourselves, How thrilled are **we** at the thought of being **filled with all the fullness of God**? Have **we** prayed for it?

Paul first reminds them of how **full** the **storehouse** of God's riches are! **Rangers Football Board** wanted to know how much was in the **Craig Whyte's storehouse** before he bought over their Club! Had he enough to **invest** in more players **after** paying off the debts! They did a **search** to find out! They wanted to know about his **resources**! Do you know what Paul said about **God's resources**? He said they are '**unsearchable riches**' [8] meaning there is **so much** it **cannot** be calculated - not even by **computer**! Because it knows **no bounds** - it **cannot** be **diminished**! **Inexhaustible**! It is **not** only riches in **monetary** terms (all silver/gold **are** His too) but riches in **true** and **real** terms, ie, **eternal** and **spiritual values** and **worth**! The unseen!

And so Paul refers to the **riches of God's glory** [16] as the storehouse from which God is going to provide **strength** by His *Spirit* to their **inner being** [16]! A man can have a **large physique** and yet be a

pygmy in achievement. A man can have a small physique and yet be a **giant** in success! We are, actually, what are what we are on the **‘inside’**! Every achievement **includes ‘inside’** greatness! You see in the Olympics that all the successful athletes have **mental, emotional and psychological convictions and beliefs**! It is the same spiritually! Paul writes elsewhere about the **inner being** *Though our **outer self** is wasting away, our **inner self** is being **renewed** day by day* [2Cor 4:16] *I **delight** in the law of God in my **inner being*** [Rom 7:22] So it is **vital** that these Xns be strengthened in their inner beings - **souls**!

Some Xns do not realise that their souls, their ‘inner beings’ **need strengthening** just as much as our bodies need strengthening - **every day**! That is why **daily** reading and prayer are part of the Xn life. We just **cannot** compete and **defeat** the evil one unless we are **prepared** and have the **energy** and **‘equipment’** to do the job! Paul speaks about all the armour, etc for the Xn battle of life in Chapter 6!

Paul’s desires here are **so different** from many Xns today. As long as we are sure we are sure we are not going to **hell**, we are not much troubled about becoming **more** Xlike & being *filled with the fullness of God*. Ie, we are extremely **selfish** and unconcerned about the **glory of God**! Paul desire here is that Xns will be **stronger** in their faith.

Paul is also desiring that Christ would ***dwell in their hearts*** [17]. He means that X would **constantly** dwell on the **throne** of their hearts! You see, a man can be a Xn, yet X does not always **rule/reign** in his life! While X may be there, He is not always on the throne **ruling**! But Paul’s prayer is that X would take up **permanent** residence in their hearts. 2xGr **paroikeo**=dwell temporary, **katoikeo**=dwell permanently, **inhabit, settle**. It is **katoikeo, permanent** here! There is such a thing as a Xn who **allows himself** to become ruled by his lusts - but only **temporary**! Because if it is **constantly** he will die! Paul **confirms**! *Do you not know that **if you present yourselves** to anyone as obedient slaves, **you are slaves** of the one whom you **obey**, either of **sin**, which leads to **death**, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* [Rom 6:16] Christ must dwell!

Paul is also concerned about their being ***rooted and grounded*** [17] If there is anything that is **lacking** today in large sections of evangeli-

calism it is Xns being **grounded** and **rooted** in the **fundamentals** of the faith. As soon as someone comes to faith, they are very often given 'evangelistic work' to do - **before** they **know all** the **basics** of Xn theology! **Doctrine** is neglected in large areas of evangelicalism. Correct doctrine is **vital** - **near** correct doctrine is **dangerous**!

Paul says rooted/grounded **in love**! In love to God/Christ! What is love? It is **not** a **fuzzy feeling** of warmth and excitement! That's **Hollywood** stuff! Love is **commitment**! Love is **sharing**! Love is **sacrifice**! Love is epitomized in the famous verse *God so loved the world that **He gave His one and only Son** - He **gave/sacrificed**!* X said we have to **learn** to love - how else can we love our enemies?

Yes, we have to love X! But however, here, Paul is actually talking about our **knowing** of X's **love to us**! We have to **comprehend** *with all the saints what is the **breadth** and **length** and **height** and **depth** of the love of Christ to us!* **That** Paul believes is **important** for spiritual **growth**! If comprehended aright, it **ought** to **motivate** us! We Xns **need** to **know** the love of Christ towards us [19] Do you know how long that will take you? Well, you will never know it all - because it **surpasses knowledge** [19] ***Young Xns do not know the love of X because** they haven't lived long enough to **experience** how forgiving and merciful and **persevering** and **good** God's love to us is!

***Breadth=X's love is broad** as the ocean - from **east to west**! *as far as the **east** is from the **west**, so far does **He remove** our transgressions from us* [Psa 103:12]!

***Length=X's love is long** - it **lasts for ever**, right into eternity where there is **no end**!

***Height=X's love is as high as the heavens up** to God's right hand!

***Depth=X's love is deep** *Oh, the **depth** of the **riches** and wisdom and knowledge of God!* [Rom 11:33] It is one thing to dip your toe in the sea - it is another thing to dive into the depths of the ocean. 'Spiritually' you **can do that** with X's love! You can **dive** into the **depths of His love**.

When you do that - I dare say, then you **will** be **filled with all the fullness of God**! Friends - we are **missing out** on a lot of blessings!