

“Paul’s prayer to the Father”: Ephesians 3:14-15

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“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:14-19)

Exposition

“For this reason”

- For what reason? The reason is given in chapter two

“I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named.”

- **“bow my knees”** – “metonymy of adjunct” where ones knees represent the posture of the entire body. The Jews had three main postures for prayer: standing, kneeling, prostrating. Raises question: Is posture important in praying?
- **“before the Father”** - He is kneeling “before (pros = towards, in the presence of) the Father” (Eph 1:4; Eph 2:18).
- Who is this Father and how are we related to him? Paul describes this relationship in a really intriguing way.

“from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named”

- The family of God is connected to the Father through “name”.

1. There is a morphological connection between the Father and his family. The Greek word for Father is *pater*; family is *patria*.
2. There is a relational connection between the Father and his family involving trust, love and mutual respect. It's captured in this idea of "naming". The Father names us; knows us by name and establishes our name. Our part is to accept the name he gives us; to seek to know him in return; and to trust His provision. The nations rebelled against God in Genesis 11, saying: "Let us make a name for ourselves. When God called Abram Genesis 12, he said: "I will make your name great". Abraham responded in faith. Every human being faces that decision: Are you going to trust God to make your name great? Or are you going to try to make a name for yourself?
3. There is a genotypical connection between the Father and his family. The bible teaches there is an actual kinship bond that God created between himself and humans based on common identity. God created the human family in the "image" and "likeness" of Himself. When the human family turned from God, that image was marred but not obliterated. Jesus took on human form and merged Deity with humanity, purging the destructive, foreign DNA from our genome. The Holy Spirit creates, then re-creates the image of God in us: regeneration, rebirth, born again, born of the Spirit, renewed in the image of God, participating in the divine nature. One of the clearest texts is 1 John 3:1, 9. God is our Father not merely through adoption. He is our Father through this kinship tie established in our creation and re-creation: we have his Spirit, his DNA, in us. He is our "Abba" just as truly as he is the Abba of Jesus. That's why Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's prayer: "Our Abba in heaven."

"the whole family in heaven and on earth".

- Part of God's diverse family populates the unseen heavenly realm (spiritual beings called angels, cherubim, seraphim, watchers, principalities, dominions, authorities, powers, etc.) and called "Sons of God" in the OT.
- Another part of God's family populates the earth: redeemed human beings. The two parts are separated now but will be reunited forever after Jesus comes again.
- So what does Paul pray for?

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the width and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.”

- To summarize, Paul is saying:

“I’m praying that God gives you guys strength to hold on to his immense and incomprehensible love”

- This begs two important questions which we will pursue in the coming weeks:

1. What is the nature of this love?

2. Why do we need “strength” to hold on to it?

Resources

- For memorization: Ephesians 3:14-19

“¹⁶ I pray that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the width and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.”

- For meditation (poetic adaptation of Ignatius of Loyola's *First Principle and Foundation* by Jacqueline Bergan and Sr. Marie Schwan)

Lord, my God,
When your love spilled over into creation,
You thought of me.
I am from Love, of Love, for Love.
Let my heart, O God, always recognize, cherish and enjoy Your goodness in all of
creation.

Direct all that is me toward your praise.
Teach me reverence for every person, all things.
Energize me in your service.

Lord God, may nothing ever distract me from your love,
Neither health nor sickness,
wealth nor poverty,
honor nor dishonor,
long life or short life.

May I never seek, nor choose to be other than you intend or wish. Amen.