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**14–16 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,**

As noted above, at the beginning of this chapter (v. 1), Paul has it in his mind to encourage his readers by letting them know that he regularly has them in his prayers. He begins this chapter with the words: “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Messiah Yeshua for the sake of you Gentiles...,” but then interrupts his primary topic to give an explanation of why he was imprisoned and to further explain the specific revelation given to him and to his fellow apostles, that the divinely ordained time had arrived for the ingathering of the elect from the nations. And further, that the elect from the nations, those Gentiles who would come to faith in the Messiah Yeshua, were to be joined together with the believing remnant of Israel to be one body of believers. Contrary to the long-established separation between Jew and non-Jew that had long been put into place by Jewish teachers for centuries, those who were brought to faith in Yeshua were to realize that Jewish and non-Jewish believers were one “new man” in the Messiah, for the Gentile believers are “fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Messiah Yeshua through the Gospel” (3:6). Thus, both Jewish and Gentile believers are equal recipients of the blessings attached to the covenant promise given to Abraham, that in his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Paul knew firsthand that this wonderful, divinely given revelation would be difficult for some believing Jews as the Gentile believers were welcomed into their communities. But he also knew that in order to forge the unity that God had ordained to be a reality within the *ekklesia* Yeshua promised to build, the Gentile believers would need to know the truth of this divine revelation and to espouse it as the gift of God’s grace given to them and to the community of Jewish believers. Such revelation, that God would bless all the nations, was not something new, for it had been revealed to Abraham and written about by Moses in the Torah itself. What was newly revealed to the Apostles was not the “what” but the “how,” the method that such unity would come to be a reality. It was in the very body of Messiah, the gathering together of believers within local communities where they, as the *ekklesia* of Yeshua, would worship together, know and practice the truth of the Scriptures together, bear each others burdens, love one another, and essentially form a community which would give witness to the

faithfulness of God to keep and bring to reality His covenant promises. It was the need to reiterate this essential work of God, hidden from former generations but now divinely revealed to Paul and the other Apostles, that caused Paul to interrupt his initial desire to make known to his readers his constant praying on their behalf. Now, in our current verse, Paul returns to his initial thought, seeking to encourage his readers with regard to his prayers for them.

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...* – That Paul is returning to his initial thought begun in v. 1 of the chapter is signaled with the repetition of the phrase “For this reason” (τουτου χάριν) with which our chapter begins. And what is the reason that Paul is fervent in his prayers on their behalf? It is what we have just previously discussed, namely, that the divinely appointed time in earth’s history had arrived in which the promise of blessing to all the nations would begin in earnest, and with the blessing and power of God would bring His promise to fruition. The ingathering of the elect from among the Gentiles would not only require the Jewish believers to fully receive their Gentile brothers and sisters in the Lord, but would also require the Gentile believers to know and accept their own vital place in the body of the Messiah.

In our verse Paul does not employ the common Greek terms for prayer or praying (εὐχόμεαι or προσεύχόμεαι, *euxomai* or *proseuxomai*) but rather uses a specified posture of praying as a way of describing prayer itself. Though in the Tanach and Gospels we find it common for people to stand while praying,<sup>1</sup> we see that kneeling was also a common posture for those engaging in prayer.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb בָּרַךְ (*bāraq*), “to bless, adore, give praise” is cognate to the Hebrew word for knee בֶּרֶךְ (*bereq*) and its associated verb בָּרַךְ (*bāraq*), “to kneel,” found three times in the Tanach.<sup>3</sup>

The expression used by Paul in our verse, “to bow the knees,” is also found in Paul’s use of Is 45:23 which he quotes in Rom 14:11 and Phil 2:10f.

For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” (Rom14:11)

so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yeshua Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:10–11)

1 1Sam 1:26; 1Ki 8:22; Matt 6:5; Mk 11:25; Lk 18:11, 13.

2 1Chron 29:20; 2Chron 29:29; Ps 95:6; Ezra 9:5; Dan 6:10; Lk 5:8; 22:41; Acts 7:60; 20:36; 21:5.

3 Gen. 24:11; Psalms. 95:6; 2 Chr. 6:13. See Scharbert, “בָּרַךְ” in *TDOT*, 2.279ff.

But it is only here in our text that Paul uses the phrase “to bow the knee” to describe his own praying. It seems very possible to me that he used this phrase with Is 45:23 in mind, for his use of it in two other of his epistles might seem to indicate that he saw in this text the eschatological picture of all people, Jew and Gentile alike, bowing before Yeshua as the Sovereign Lord over all.

Moreover, that Paul specifically states that he bows his knees “before the Father,” when having Is 45:23 in mind, he likewise is emphasizing the eternal and infinite oneness that the Son, the Father, and the Spirit have. To bow before the Son is likewise to give equal worship and honor to the Father and the Spirit.

When Paul refers to “bowing before the Father,” we are reminded that he frequently refers to God as “Father” in Ephesians,<sup>1</sup> no doubt to emphasize the intimacy that exists between God and those He has saved. We are adopted children (1:5) and therefore sons and daughters in His household (2:19)

*from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name...* – The revelation of God to us as “Father” also speaks of His sovereignty, for He is the Creator of all and thus owner and sovereign of all. God is described in this way when Melchizedek blesses Abram as he returns from his victory over the armies which had taken Lot and his family away.

He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”  
(Gen 14:19–20)

The phrase “Possessor of heaven and earth” (קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ) could just as correctly be understood as “Owner of heaven and earth,” for the verb קָנָה (*qānah*) has as one of its primary meanings “to buy” or “to acquire” and thus to have ownership of that which is rightfully acquired.

Paul emphasizes this aspect of God’s sovereignty in Rom 11:36 as well:

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:36)

The phrase “in heaven and on earth” is used to indicate “the whole

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1 1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23.

universe,” and thus to all families universally.<sup>1</sup> Here, as often in the Scriptures, God is seen as the Creator of all and thus as the sovereign over all.

That Paul teaches us here that every family “derives its name” from God, is yet a further expression of God as the One from Whom all people, in all ages, derive their life and by Whom their lives are sustained. As Paul expressed to the philosophers in the Areopagus: “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). In a biblical sense, one’s name encompasses one’s essential attributes. For God to be the One from whom every family “derives its name” simply emphasizes God as the sovereign Creator and as the rightful Lord of all creation.

...when Paul speaks of the Father as naming the families of earth and heaven he means that God created them and demonstrated his authority over them by naming them....<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the God Who is the Creator, the One from Whom every family derives its life and being, is likewise the God Who is “Father” and has redeemed sinners and brought them into His family and Who has power and authority over all. He, therefore, is able to bring about all that is necessary for the eternal salvation He has ordained for all of His children who represent every family and nation of the earth.

The God who created every social group, even the evil enemy powers that have such a stranglehold on “the course of this world” (2:2), is the Father whom Paul addresses in prayer. God, then, is not only the Father to whom believers can speak freely and confidently in prayer but the Creator and the powerful authority over all social groups, including the inimical spiritual powers ranged against them.<sup>3</sup>

*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man...* – We now are given the substance of Paul’s prayer on behalf of those to whom he sends this letter. He begins by reminding them that all that comes from God is a matter of His pure grace and nothing that can be earned or bought. Paul prays that God “would grant” (δῶ ὑμῖν, *dō humin*) His blessings upon

1 This literary device is called a “merism,” which uses two contrasting words to refer to an entirety.

2 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 228.

3 Ibid.

them, indicating that God’s blessings are a “gift” freely given and not earned.

The wealth of God’s gifts of grace is “according to the riches of His glory” which is limitless, for He is infinitely glorious. This means that whatever He gives as a imparting of His grace is perfect and right for the person to whom He gives it. What is more, the Greek lying behind the English translation “according to the riches of His glory” (κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης) could also be translated “in proportion to the riches of His glory,” for the preposition *κατὰ* (*kata*) can carry that idea as well. Thus, He is, as it were, the “heavenly Fort Knox of blessing” Whose supply will never be exhausted and never diminished. It seems very likely that this is precisely what Paul has in mind, for throughout the Scriptures, the glory of God is clearly seen to be beyond measure, whether demonstrated at Sinai, in the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, or as seen in the words of Habakkuk:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of  
Adonai, as the waters cover the sea. (Hab 2:14)

Moreover, Paul speaks of that which God gives to His children as derived from “the riches of His glory.” Nothing of which His children have needs is beyond His supply, for His riches are in proportion to His glory, and are therefore infinite.

Paul’s first request for the believers to whom he sends this epistle is that they would be “strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.” The first phrase, “strengthened with power” utilizes the Greek verb *κραταιόω* (*krataiōō*) which is often used in the Lxx to describe “having courage” and “determination.”<sup>1</sup> Note also Paul’s use of this word in 1Cor 16:13.

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong  
(κραταιοῦσθε). (1Cor 16:13)

To “be strengthened with power” surely means to have the courage and spiritual strength to persevere in one’s faith regardless of what foes or difficulties one may face in life. This is granted by God in His grace to all who are truly His. And such strength is supplied “through His Spirit.” For as Calvin notes:

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1 1 Sam. 4:9; 2 Sam. 10:12; Ps. 26:14 [27:14 Hebrew, Eng.]; 30:25 [31:25 Hebrew, Eng.].

The increase, as well as the commencement, of everything good in us, comes from the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

As Paul has already taught us, it is through the work of the Spirit that believing Jew and Gentile are brought together into one body (2:18, 22) and thus Paul prays that this same sovereign and gracious work of the Spirit would be evident in the lives of his readers and that they would recognize His gracious abiding and working in them, always giving God the glory for their being strengthened and thus enabled to persevere in their life of faith in Yeshua.

Paul prays that they would be strengthened with divine power “in the inner man” (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) or “the inner being.” Paul uses similar language in 2Cor 4:16, where he contrasts the “outer man” with the “inner man.”

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man (ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) is decaying, yet our inner man (ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν) is being renewed day by day. (2Cor 4:16)

Here, the “outer man” is that which grows old and decays, while the “inner man” is the eternal soul or spirit which does not grow old and decay. One partakes of death while the other lives on.

The other place Paul uses this terminology is in Rom 7:22–23.

For I joyfully concur with the Torah of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:22–23)

Here, Paul seems to parallel “inner man” with “law of my mind.” And this is obviously how we should understand his use of “inner man” in our text as well. The heart is the place of one’s thoughts and volition, the place where belief and faith reside and are strengthened.<sup>2</sup> And it is from the heart that one’s faith is made visible through one’s actions and words. For one confesses with one’s mouth what one believes in one’s heart (Rom 10:9). Thus, to be strengthened in the inner man/person” is to be strengthened in one’s own resolve to know the truth and to live in it.

Saving faith is based upon truth revealed to the child of God through

1 Calvin, *Ephesians*, p. 261.

2 Cf. Luke. 8:12; 24:25; John. 14:1; Rom. 10:9.

the Scriptures via the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, opening the “eyes of the heart” (1:18) which were previously blind (cf. Rom 2:19), and enabling the “inner man” to believe the truth and to claim it for oneself. Saving faith is not a “blind leap into the dark” but a personal confession of faith in what one has come to know to be true.

Surely we grow and mature in our faith, and this is likewise in the mind of Paul as he intercedes for those to whom his letter will go. Such growth and maturity comes about as we grow in our understanding and application of who God is and what He has and will accomplish for us in our eternal salvation. The means for such growth is the word of God, the indwelling Spirit of God, a life of prayer, and regular fellowship with other believers as together we encourage each other in the community of faith.

**17–19 that Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and thus to know the love of Messiah that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

It seems best to understand the phrase “that Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith,” not as something additional to “being strengthened in the inner man” but rather expresses in different words what Paul means by being “strengthened in the inner man.” To be strengthened in the inner man means to recognize the abiding presence of Yeshua the Messiah in all of one’s life.

What Paul is requesting in his prayer for these believers to whom he writes is that their lives would be governed by the reality that through the indwelling Spirit, Messiah Yeshua Himself also dwells with them. He therefore prays that values and virtues of Messiah Himself would fully effect their thoughts and actions so that their lives would show forth His glory. What Paul is requesting for them is what he has experienced in his own life of faith, as he writes to the Galatians:

I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

Surely Paul still lives! But he desires continually people would see in his life the very person of Yeshua lived out in word and deed.