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A PRAYER THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 30
EPHESIANS 3:14-15

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EPHESIANS 3:14-15 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"

Heigel said, "We learn from history that we learn nothing from history. However, it does not take a prophet to realize that we are in a very critical condition in this nation. The conditions we find in our nation today are very similar to the conditions that prevailed in Paul's day in the Roman Empire.

When Paul wrote this Ephesian Epistle, he was in Rome, a prisoner of Nero. Nero was a very poor musician and a horrible actor and no poet at all. However, Nero came to a time in his life when he had an attack of egomania and he declared himself to be God. About this time there was a great fire in Rome, and this didn't help Nero any. (Nero didn't "fiddle" when Rome burned. He didn't play a fiddle, he played a flute. This story is just about as authentic as the story about George Washington cutting down the cherry tree.)

About this time in Rome there was also a breakdown in socialism and there were great hungry mobs in the streets of Rome. As things began to fall apart in the nation, Nero began to blame the Christians. He had to find someone to blame for the horrible conditions in the empire and he blamed the Christians. He developed a satanic hatred for Christians. This is always a neat little way for an incompetent ruler to get out of his troubles and this same thing pops up often in the pages of history.

We have this same thing in our day. There are those people who try to blame the Jews for all the trouble in the world. But remember, in Genesis 12 God said, "He who curses the Jew, I will curse." God knows how to handle the Jews and he doesn't need any help from us. You remember that the Third Reich went down in Germany when they tried to eliminate the Jews. The Germans of the Third Reich were almost a super-genius type people, but their attitude toward the Jews led to their destruction. They had jet aircraft long before we did and they had fantastic weapons and had a jump on the rest of the world in military preparation. They had the best trained pilots in the world and the best tanks. But no one can try to exterminate the Jews and survive, and that is what the Germans tried to do. Because of this, they went down in defeat. Yet we have people today who say, "The Jews are to blame for all of our problems." But you can't take any race of people in the world and say they are to blame for our problems.

What is the real reason for our problems? Every person of every race has something down deep inside and that something is the sum and substance of all of our problems--we call that something the OLD SIN NATURE. And akin to that and the other great problem in the human race is the fact that "THE DEVIL IS THE RULER OF THIS WORLD." These are the two factors at the heart of the problem of the whole human race.

So Paul was a prisoner in Rome at the time Rome was facing her greatest test and was led by a raving maniac, and we know him as Nero. In his garden parties he had to have street lights so he would dip Christians in tar and set them afire in order to have street lights. Once the mother of Nero warned him not to do things like that, so he had her taken out in a barge and had the barge sunk while the sailors swam to shore. But his mother was quite a swimmer herself, so she swam two miles back to shore and when Nero found her still alive he gave her arsenic and poisoned her to death. Things were falling apart in the Roman empire and a little bit after Paul wrote this Ephesian letter, he stood face to face with Nero, and wonder of wonders, Nero set Paul free for a short time. Paul went out from Rome to save the world with Bible doctrine. But before Nero died, Paul was brought face to face with him again and Nero sentenced him to death and had his head cut off outside of Rome. A bit later when the assassins were coming to kill Nero he took his own sword and said, "What a great tragedy that I am the world's greatest musician and actor and yet I have to die in this fashion" and he fell on his own sword and committed suicide before the assassins could reach him. He was a real "ham" right to the end!

Paul died in Roman style, his head was chopped off on the guillotine. He was a Jew by birth, a Roman citizen, and without doubt the greatest Roman citizen that ever lived. Because of the Bible doctrine he planted in the empire he made it possible for Rome to rise to her greatest power. The doctrine Paul wrote and spread throughout the empire stabilized the empire for several hundreds of years.

When Paul had finished his work, a bit later the Antonine Caesars came to the throne and Rome enjoyed her greatest era from 96 A.D. to 192 A. D. During that era the world had the greatest era of human history and historians like Edward Gibbon testify to the fact that if they could pick a day in which they would rather have lived than any other in all history, they would pick the era of the Antonine Caesars.

EPHESIANS 3:14 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul began this third chapter of Ephesians with those words, "For this cause." Now he reverts to those words, after the thirteenth verse interruption, and comes back to the words, "For this cause." In that thirteenth verse interruption he gave us the doctrine of the mystery and the divine interpretation of history. He introduced the idea of dispensations and the mystery and showed how God was presiding over the events of history. Paul explained that the solution to problems does not lie in socialism or ideas like Communism or social action. Paul literally turned the Roman empire upside down, and he did it with Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. As this doctrine sank into the minds of people it changed everything. The rise of churches and the spread of evangelism saved Rome and gave her stability in her darkest hour.

Strangely enough, it began right here with this phrase, "I bow my knee. Prayer changes everything. When we talk about prayer we are not talking about the posture in which we pray, but we are talking about an attitude, an activity, a spirit, a commitment. Prayer is the greatest weapon God has put in our hands and we are to use that weapon every day

Prayer meeting isn't just the time when we meet here at the church and pray. Prayer includes every person in the church who looks up to God every day and asks for guidance. The prayer life of the church is our lifeline. I, as pastor, would not be sustained thirty days without your prayers. Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, prayer is taking hold of God's eager willingness. Your spiritual life rises or falls on your prayers. Paul could say, "I bow my knee" and as a result the Roman empire changed. And if we ever change this nation it will be because, "I bow my knee." Here was one man, Paul, who bowed his knee and all over the Gentile world things happened and lives were brought to God.

This phrase, "I bow my knee" was a personal experience of Paul, the world's greatest Christian of that time, and his prayers stabilized a nation. This phrase "I bow my knee" is the center of this book and in the next verses Paul outlined those forces that change individuals and families and nations. In verse one he started off "For this cause," then he interrupted his own prayer, but now in this fourteenth verse he comes back to the prayer and says, "For this cause I bow my knee." But before he prayed he outlined some very important doctrine--

1. The beginning of the Church Age.
2. The new dispensation.
3. The intensification of the angelic conflict.
4. The believer priest and his relationship to his God.
5. The believer priest and his relationship to his country.
6. The believer priest and his relationship to history.

All of this is now pulled together and he returns to his prayer and says, "For this cause I bow my knee."

The Communist says that he is going to change the course of history. But we bow our knees to the living God and pray and we can truthfully say, "God is going to change the course of history through our prayers. When Satan gets in control of people, he can change history. And when believer priests bow their knees and pray to God the Father, they too can change history. So Paul says here, "I keep on bowing my knee."

This says, "Pros" plus the accusative and it means "face to face with the Father." When you and I pray we are face to face with the God of this universe. Ultimately, the final outcome will not be brought about by presidents and kings and legislatures, but by God the Father.

We remind you that you should vote, and that's important. Under certain conditions you should write your senator or congressman. But far, far more important, as far as the outcome of the nation is concerned, is this--I BOW MY KNEE AND KEEP ON BOWING IT EVERY DAY AND I PRAY TO THE FATHER. This is grace living and grace operation and when we depart from grace we are through. Bible teaching and prayer are the two things that will sustain this church if it is to be sustained.

A personal note.

When you pray for me I cannot put into words how much I appreciate it. I covet your prayers every day. No minister in a strategic place like this can carry his load alone. So lest I pass this opportunity by, let me make it just as personal as I can make it, and remind you that I deeply appreciate your prayers for me. And I would rather have you pray for me than anything else you can do for me.

Bible study and prayer are so vitally important that everything else is way down the line in importance. Paul gave these people Bible doctrine and then he bowed his knee in prayer to God for them, and with these two things he changed the Roman empire.

Pray To The Father

Please notice that prayer is always to be addressed to God the Father. We are never to pray to "Dear Jesus" or to "O Holy Ghost."

MATTHEW 6:9 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

1 PETER 1:17 "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

Even Jesus always prayed to God the Father.

HEBREWS 7:25 "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Even the Holy Spirit addressed prayers to God the Father.

ROMANS 8:26-27 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

It is very important that you get this straight. We approach through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we pray "In Jesus' name" for we always approach God through Jesus Christ. But never forget--we address our prayers to the first person of the trinity.

EPHESIANS 3:15 "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," This verse should read "FROM whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The whole family refers to every believer. Are you in the family? It is either yes or no.

JOHN 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

GALATIANS 3:26 "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The whole family is the family of believers. And remember, we can't exist one day apart from grace.