



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Appreciation of the Mystery

JULY 13, 2011

Tom McCullough/PO Box 503, Granville, Ohio 43023/tom.mccullough@capitolcom.org /www.capitolcom.org/ohio

**The setting is a Roman prison** (60-62 A.D.) and Paul is addressing the established Christian (mostly Gentile) church in Ephesus where he was a pastor for several years. In this letter, Paul counters the false teachings that had started to plague the church and additionally provides encouragement and instruction in sound doctrine. Paul shares that the church is one body of believers in Christ Jesus and is His temple. In this third chapter of Ephesians, Paul describes the mystery of the church including the knowledge, timing, nature and reason of this mystery and in the study today, prays to the Father in appreciation (Eph. 3:14-21).

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, (Eph. 3:14-15 NASB)*

**What was the reason Paul was praying to the Father?** Paul prayed out of appreciation and thankfulness for the provisions of God for all believers, Jew and Gentile. Because as believers, they (we) have a new identity in Christ, once spiritually dead and now spiritually alive (2:4-5). As believers, we are fellow members of God's family/household (2:19). As believers and as the church, we are the dwelling place/temple of God. (2:22) Paul says that he 'bows my knees before the father' (v14) suggesting an act of humility and submission before God. Additionally, Paul prays for God's family in heaven and on earth. Those in heaven would include angels and those believers who are dead and those on the earth are the believers still alive.

What did Paul ask God to grant the believers?

*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.(vv 16-19)*

**Paul asked God to provide inward spiritual growth to the Ephesian believers through the Holy Spirit.** Paul makes 4 petitions. The first petition is that the believer may receive spiritual strength and power in the inner man through the Holy

Spirit. While our outer shell is wearing out, getting sick or injured and will at sometime passing away, Paul understands that the inner man needs Spiritual growth which will last in this world and the next and can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit growing in us. (v16) The second petition is asked that Christ may dwell in our hearts. (v17) We need to be one with Christ. As Paul shares in a letter to the Galatians, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ 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) The third petition is that we, all the saints, begin to know the vastness and immeasurable dimensions of breadth, length, height and depth of the love of Christ. Again, we can only begin to know this vast love of Christ, one that surpasses all human understanding, with the leading of the Holy Spirit. (vv18-19) The fourth petition is that our inner man may experience spiritual growth and be filled with God. All four petition focus on the believer's inner spiritual growth through the Holy Spirit. (v19) Paul closes the prayer with a doxology and benediction.

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (vv20-21)*

**God is able to do abundantly more than we can ask, think and/or comprehend.** Paul provides adoration and praise to God, understanding that we exist to glorify Him.

### For Your Consideration:

- Do you thank God for His grace in providing us through Christ with a new living eternal identity, a relationship as a fellow member in His family and the honor to be the dwelling place/temple of God?
- Do you pray for your and other believer's spiritual growth as much as you do for physical health?
- Do your prayers include adoration and praise to God for who He is?

### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (SESSION OR HEARING DAYS) AT 7:30AM, STATEHOUSE ROOM 44

STATE STAFF AND LOBBYIST: WEDNESDAYS AT 12:10PM, STATEHOUSE ROOM 44