

# The Riches of God's Glory - Part 2

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[ 0 : 00 ] I must apologize. I don't really know how to really go about explaining this, but I think I did mention last week that some of you may even remember a couple of years ago, give or take.

I thought through this particular prayer that we're looking at in Ephesians chapter 3. And so when I got to this place in my preparation for our study here on Wednesday night, I naturally got those sermons out.

And because of the way all that came together, I just launched right out into the four petitions that appear in this portion of Ephesians chapter 3.

The four petitions of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. And just kind of skipped over Paul's introduction to those petitions.

And so I'm going to digress here tonight. And go back and have us look at more specifically in more detail verses 14, 15, and 16, or the first part of verse 16.

[ 1 : 29 ] Which is Paul's kind of introduction to then his description. And it really is a description. Paul's not actually praying here, but he's describing the substance of his prayers for the Ephesian believers.

Who were, by and large, mostly. I'm not sure if they were completely Gentile, but they were mostly Gentile. All right. So I want to then look at the introduction.

And so that's what your notes are going to reflect. And as I started doing that, preparing in that direction, I don't know how long this will take, but I thought, well, I don't think I can get to the second petition.

We covered the first petition last week. And I had every intention of trying to get all the remaining three in one study tonight. And then we would be done with that and move on to chapter 4.

But it's just not possible. I want to just focus our attention tonight on Paul's introduction to this prayer, his prayer.

[ 2 : 43 ] Let me go ahead and read the text. I think I put that in there for you. I mean, I encourage you to even look in your own Bibles. You don't have to read the passage or look at it as I read it.

Just on your notes, you can look in your own. In your own Bibles, you'll find some differences, of course, in other versions. And one particular difference I'm going to comment on here tonight.

And it may not even seem like much of a difference. But, well, we'll get to that a little bit later. Let me go ahead and read. And actually, I'm going to start reading. And I'll explain why.

Start reading with verse 1 of chapter 3. Verse 1. And here is how Paul begins verse of this chapter, chapter 3.

For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. And then there's this, you know, it's kind of like the end of a, not really the end of the sentence because it's not a complete thought.

[ 3 : 48 ] It's not even a complete sentence. And then he goes on with some other things. I'll explain what he's doing there. Now we'll skip down to verse 14. And you have the same words.

For this reason, by the way, that should clue you in. That, you know, for this reason he starts and he doesn't even finish the sentence. And then many verses later he starts exactly the same way.

That will clue you in that there's a reason for that. And that maybe what comes between for this reason the first time and for this reason the second time is maybe a parenthesis.

And we'll get to that here in just a minute. All right, so let me go on. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory.

Now stop right there. But then he launches right out into these four petitions. And we looked at the first one last week. Now, I want to take this introduction and point out just a few pertinent facts that

not only apply to Paul and his praying for the Ephesians as he kind of outlines it for us in the text, but also pertain to our own prayer.

[ 5 : 11 ] And here they are. Here's number one. The position from which he prays. The position from which Paul prays. He said, for this reason, and we're going all the way back to verse 1 of chapter 3, for this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles.

That's his position. The position from which he prays. Now, you know, and we've already covered this in our study, that what I said a moment ago, Paul actually introduces his prayer in verse 1 of this chapter.

Verse 1 is an incomplete sentence. It's incomplete. It doesn't even qualify as a sentence. It's incomplete. And so it's an unfinished sentence.

And so then what follows after that, after verse 1, is a lengthy parentheses. From verses 2 all the way to verse 13. It's a huge parenthetical portion of Scripture.

All right. So he begins, for this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles. It's like he just kind of stops there. In fact, let me, I didn't put it in your notes, but let me show you how it looks in Scripture.

[ 6 : 32 ] Just point it out to you. Chapter 3, for this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. And just kind of, it's kind of like walking down the steps.

And you think there's another one, but you're not. It just kind of, it's an abrupt. And then he says, if indeed. So there you can put in your Bibles.

And I'm not sure if some translations do it. I didn't go back and look. But you could put in your Bibles a parenthesis there. And then everything that is said from verse 2 all the way down to verse 13 to the end of verse 13 is in a parenthesis.

Close it off with another parenthesis at the end of that. And then he gets back to what he had started to say. Getting back to what he wanted them to know about his prayer life for them.

All right, so it's a parenthesis, a lengthy one. And then you also know that Paul was in a Roman prison. Maybe at this time under house arrest.

[ 7 : 40 ] A little difficult to put the chronology together. But he was certainly a prisoner during this time when he was writing this letter. The Jews, and you can go back and look at this some other time.

But the Jews had put him there, really, under a false accusation. And you can read about that in Acts chapter 21. Starting verse 27, kind of following along there.

A false accusation shows the Jews that initiated this whole act of putting Paul into prison. Now, it was the Roman authority, of course, that imprisoned him.

He was imprisoned under the authority of Rome. While in prison, he appealed to Caesar, who, of course, was the king of Rome. But the point is that Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of the Jews or of the Romans or even of Caesar.

Paul always considered himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Always. So, you know, that way no matter what happens in his life, even if he's in the darkest of dungeons, he's not going to be in despair because he's a prisoner of Christ.

[ 8 : 56 ] Wherever Christ wants to put him. That's a little difficult for us to think in that way. Of course, you know, most of us, really all of us, have never really had the occasion to consider thinking in that way.

I mean, our lives have been relatively easy compared to what Paul faced throughout his ministry. But it gets to Paul's commitment and really his outlook on life, that he was completely at Christ's disposal.

Whatever he wanted to do with him. And so, he didn't have to begrudge the Jews or the Romans or Caesar. You know, you terrible, awful people put me in prison.

Because they were not his jail keepers. He was a prisoner of Christ. I think I put MacArthur's quote in there, and I like this.

Paul was a minister of Jesus Christ, bought with a price, and given the special mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. And we know that, Bill. He was, therefore, the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

[ 10 : 03 ] Whatever he did and wherever he went were under Christ's control. Without his Lord's consent, he was not subject to the plans, power, punishment, or imprisonment of any man or governor.

And that's, I think he's captured right. That's the way Paul was thinking. He was a prisoner. That was the position from which he prays. And it begs the question, I think if we were in prison, if you were in prison, what do you think you'd be praying about?  
Well, I know what I'd be praying about. I'd be praying, Lord, get me out of here. That's what I want. Or maybe I might be praying, God, why did you put me here?  
And we would be so, tend to be, and I can't speak for you. I can speak for myself, what I think I would be, how I would be feeling and thinking and praying at that time.  
You know, we just tend to be more self-focused, more self-consumed. And we look at our circumstances through the wrong lens.  
[ 11 : 18 ] You know, oh, woe is me, and how could God let this happen to me? And when Paul never did consider that. He was in prison, yes, but he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ first and foremost.

And so, you know, of course, I think I would add this caveat to it. Not one of us knows, really, how we would be thinking and feeling if we found ourselves in prison.  
God would, I would hope, and would give me the grace to see my situation like Paul saw his situation. All right, so, Paul, though, did not want release from his imprisonment, since he always saw his jailkeeper as Christ Jesus.  
So, the person, excuse me, the position from which he prays, he was a prisoner. Not a prisoner of Rome, but a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, the purpose for which he prays.  
The purpose for which he prays. He said, for this reason, I bow my knees. Well, actually, he said, for this reason, he said that in verse 1.  
[ 12 : 33 ] And then he described who he was as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. And then when he gets back to his introducing this prayer, he says the very same words. For this reason, I bow my knees.  
That is, for this reason, I'm praying these specific things for you, is basically the idea here. But what does it mean for this reason? Well, obviously, for this reason, you know, just in a literary sense, causes the reader to look backward because he must have given the reason before.  
And indeed, he did. And so, the reason Paul prayed is found in chapter 2. Chapter 2. And then somewhat reviewed, at least on some of the points, is reviewed in the parentheses that we find there in chapter 3.  
And, you know, we can name some of them here. You can jot these down. I don't think I put them in your notes. For example, in Christ, we're made brand new. We're made new. That's chapter 2, verse 16.  
For this reason, I'm praying for you, these specific things. Or the Gentiles were far off, but now in Christ are brought near. That's what he said in verse 17 of chapter 2.  
[ 13 : 48 ] And kind of reiterated that in chapter 3, verse 6. Or also this. All believers, Jews, and Gentiles are equal citizens of God's kingdom and members of his family.

That's verse 19. See, all these are mentioned in the second chapter. And then in chapter 3, For this reason, I bow my knees as I pray to the Father.  
Or all believers are being built into God's holy temple in the Lord and are a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. That's verses 21 and 22. I mean, you can go back and look at chapter 2 as he unfolds all of these things.  
And we've already studied this chapter, so you can look back at your notes if you want to. And so this is the reason. For this reason, I'm praying these very deep, very profound petitions for you. But the point is this. The basis of Paul's prayer. And if you could say this in a general sense. I mean, there are specific things that he's mentioned in chapter 2 that lead him to pray in the way he's praying.

[ 15 : 00 ] But in a general sense, we could make this conclusion. And that is that the basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose. That should be the basis for our prayers as well.  
The knowledge of God's purpose. You see, through divine revelation, God disclosed to Paul his eternal purpose for the Gentiles. That speaks of Paul specifically in his instance.  
God disclosed his purpose for the Gentiles to Paul. So in prayer, Paul asked him to do it. See, he's just praying according to God's revealed purpose.  
So all this prayer was focused on the fulfillment of that purpose, the purpose of God for the Gentiles. You understand? Now, through God's complete, completed word, that's what we have today, he has disclosed to us his eternal purpose for us, for the world, for many, many things.

He's disclosed those things to us through his word, through his revealed word. And so it is in prayer that we ask him to do that. All of our prayers are focused in that way.

[16:16] And you'd be surprised how it would affect every object of prayer. The way you pray for people, for your family, for your nation, for your president, for your world.

All those prayers are guided by what God has revealed, what he has disclosed in his word about this world. And about families, and so on and so forth.

So our prayer should never be, obviously would never be in contradiction to God's revealed word. That makes it important to study his word. And it probably also makes it important to combine Bible study, Bible reading with prayer.

They shouldn't be two separate disciplines in your life. If you do Bible study and then you also do prayer, they really go together. Because the more God reveals his purposes in his word, that have great ramifications for all things in our lives, the more he reveals those things, the better able we are to pray.

And we never have the permission or authority to pray for something that is outside of God's disclosed will to us in his revealed word.

[17:33] All right, so then we have the position from which he prayed, the purpose for which he prays. And then third, the posture, the posture in which he prays.

He said, I bow my knees to the Father. Now that doesn't sound strange to us, but you might be interested in knowing that the normal posture of prayer for the Jews was to stand.

Was to stand. And you have several examples of that in Scripture, but here's one good one. You remember Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke chapter 18, 11 to 13.

We kind of remember the prayer of the Pharisee and how self-righteous it was. And then we remember the prayer of the publican and he's beating his chest.

You know, he's just in such conviction and he's just so worthless before God. And yet, in the parable, both men are standing when they pray. But we also know from other writings that the standard position for prayer, even in the formal sense of prayer, was to stand, stand and pray.

[18:52] The exceptional posture was to bow the knees. And bowing the knees really involved a number of different kind of postures.

But bowing of the knees was the exceptional posture. And this posture was taken when the situation calling for prayer was serious and dire.

And the person would either fall to the knees, sometimes even get on all fours, that's how we would say it, kind of colloquialism, kind of like an animal would.

Knees and hands, you know. Or even fall flat on your face, prostrate on the ground. And there are several examples in Scripture.

When Ezra prayed a prayer for the, kind of a prayer of confession for Israel's sins, which was a huge prayer. Pray for the sins of the nation.

[19:53] He said, Ezra described this prayer, he said, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord. My God, we can kind of picture that.

You know, on your knees and the hands out on the ground. Now, I'm not completely prostrate, but that was his position and that was a very common position for praying for very serious things.

We have another example, and this example is of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Bible says in Matthew 26, 39, that he fell on his face and prayed. Now, that's all the way on the ground, prostrate on the ground.

After they stoned Stephen, here's another example. They stoned Stephen. He's not quite dead yet. Before he died, he prayed a prayer of intercession for those who were his murderers, ultimately his murderers.

And the Bible says, then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice. So he just got on his knees. Cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not charge them with this sin.

[21:01] You see all three examples here are some very serious points of prayer, needs or occasions for prayer.

And in those occasions, they did not stand, but they got down before the Lord. And so I think Paul evidently believed that his prayer for the Gentiles required a posture that revealed his earnestness as he prayed for them.

And really revealed the depth of his petitions, the spiritual depth of his petitions. And so that was a, it just went together.

He couldn't pray these kind of prayers for the Ephesian believers while he was standing. All right, but the fact is, and this is really what it all comes down to for us, the Bible does not give us any kind of rules concerning the posture of prayer.

It doesn't give us a rule about that. Now, you know, we can pray in any posture. I did read one kind of old preacher.

[ 22 : 15 ] He maintained the same thing. The Bible doesn't specify the posture, but he said, you should never pray while you're slouching. So if you're slouching, you know, don't pray.

Of course, slouching kind of, kind of indicates a certain demeanor, you know, and so it's kind of a casual prayer. And I think there might be something wrong with that.

But posture is important to God, and we wouldn't have some of these examples. And it's not that your posture is going to make God, you know, pay more attention to you and answer your prayers. But your posture should, you know, be commensurate to the deep feeling and emotion of your heart. And, again, the seriousness of the prayer that you're praying, the petition that you're offering up.

All right, so the posture. And then four, the person to whom he prays. And this is a no-brainer, isn't it? I mean, who else would we pray to?

[ 23 : 20 ] He said, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, for us, that's not unusual. I mean, we're not surprised by that.

We always pray to the Father, don't we? And from our perspective, and based upon our upbringing and understanding of the persons of the Godhead, we understand God to be God the Father, and we pray to the Father, and we understand what that means to us in a sense of relationship and so forth.

And that's exactly, I think, what Paul is alluding to here. He prays to the Father. And so the implication is, based upon all that Paul has been saying thus far, and this had great meaning to the Gentiles, because, remember, they were strangers, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

They didn't see themselves as having the same part with God as the Jews did. They even didn't think it was even appropriate to hope for such things.

And Paul is, you know, dispelling that notion. And so he uses this, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for a reason. And so the implication is, since he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and since all believers, Gentile and Jew alike, are in Christ, that is Jesus, is our Lord, then he is our Father.

[ 24 : 49 ] God is our Father. We have him as our Father mutually, Gentile and Jew alike. And this harkens back to chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, where Paul writes, grace to you and peace from God, our Father.

And remember, he's writing to Gentiles. And he's our Father. That's right, you Gentiles. He's your Father too. Gentile believers, rather.

And so he says, peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

And he's not saying this to Jews, he's saying this to Gentiles. And this is a great, great encouragement to them. And so he prays to the Father, because both Jews and Gentiles have equal share to God as their Father.

Chapter 2, verses 18 and 19, For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father, who is, we both, Jew and Gentile, we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

[ 26 : 04 ] Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Now, it's difficult for us where we are today, you know, several thousand years after, difficult for us to see any kind of wow in that.

But believe me, to the Gentile believers that Paul was writing to, this was tremendous news. It wasn't that they, you know, they weren't excluded.

It wasn't even a matter of being, having maybe a lesser status with God. They were equal with Jews as believers, because they were all part of the family of God.

Number five, the people for whom he prays. And that, you know, number four leads us directly to, in fact, these two really go together. The people for whom he prays, I bow my knees to the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

And this is, again, it's fortifying, this understanding of equality between Gentile and Jew, Gentile believers and Jewish believers.

[ 27 : 23 ] Now, here's where we have a bit of a difference in the versions. The NASV and ESV translate this every family, the idea of being plural.

All right, so that, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named. And it tends to, and can even, and has, led some scholars to make some misinterpretations here.

But it's not many families. It's just one family. So the better translation is whole family, as it is in the New King James and King James.

And in the NIV, too, by the way, if you have the NIV. Translated whole family, not every family, but whole family, as in one family and not multiple families.

The Greek is *pasa patria*. And *pasa* could be translated each. It can be translated any, every, or it can also be translated whole family.

[ 28 : 27 ] It's difficult for us to see how the same word could mean, you know, every as well as whole. But it can mean that. It's used that way. For example, and, you know, translating it the whole family, I think is consistent with Paul's writings elsewhere in the Bible, but also in this very letter.

For example, in chapter 4, verse 6, the one God and Father of us all that Paul mentions in that verse, clearly reveals that God has only one family or household to which Jewish and Gentile believers equally belong.

So, it's the whole family. From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. What about heaven and earth? Well, the whole family of God through Jesus Christ exists, at least for the time being, in two realms or two places.

Heaven and on earth. John R.W. Stott, I think I gave you this quote too, he said that the addition of the words in heaven and on earth indicate that the church militant on earth, that doesn't mean that we're militarized.

It means we're active and moving with the gospel and we are confronting the forces of Satan. We're the militant church.

[ 29 : 55 ] That's existing here on this earth. Alright, so he says indicate that the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven those are dead and they've already gone to heaven they're triumphant.

The victory is already won. Alright, so the militant church, the triumphant church in heaven though separated by death are nevertheless only two parts of the one great family of God.

And one day we'll all be united together at the end of this age. Alright, finally the plenty out of which he prays. The plenty and that's really a pitiful word but it started with a P and I couldn't find one.

I'm sorry, I'm just slave. It's a slave alliteration. He said portion. Huh? He said portion. The portion? Maybe. But I'll explain. We'll get plenty here.

He said that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory. Not just the portion of it but the plenty of it, okay? Alright, now, but putting the poor alliteration aside, there is a difference between according to and out of.

[ 31 : 14 ] Wouldn't you agree? And, for example, to give \$50 or \$100 when you have millions is to give out of your riches.

But to give \$50,000 or \$100,000 when you have millions is to give according to your riches. Anybody want to give \$50,000 or \$100,000?

The greater wealth, here's the idea, the greater wealth, the greater your gift must be if you desire to give according to your wealth rather than just out of your wealth. Alright, just logical, makes sense.

And so, Paul's choosing his words here because apply that to the wealth of God. I mean, my goodness, God's riches are limitless. His wealth, his riches are limitless and for him to grant anything according to his riches would be to grant something of inestimable value.

And this then gets us to the petitions that Paul is going to offer up, does offer up to the Lord for the Ephesians. See, this reality, the reality of the greatness of God's wealth, and that he gives according to it, that reality indicates the great worth of those petitions that Paul offers up to God on behalf of the Gentile believers.

[ 32 : 38 ] Thank you.