

## Prayer for Spiritual Enlightenment

**Text:** Ephesians 1:15-23

### Introduction:

1. Review: Paul has outlined the golden links in the salvation chain in Vs. 3-14 – we have been chosen, adopted, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, enlightened, enriched, saved and sealed.
2. Now we come to Paul's first recorded prayer for the Ephesian Church. The second is recorded in 3:14-21. He prays that they might know the spiritual wealth they have in Christ. "Too many Christians have never "read the bank book" to find out the vast spiritual wealth that God has put to their account through Jesus Christ." (Wiersbe)
3. Harold Hoehner: "Having completed the magnificent eulogy, Paul prays for the Ephesians. It could be called the prayer for those who have everything because the believers have every spiritual benefit for their spiritual welfare...Paul's desire is for the Ephesian Christians to deepen their relationship with the God who has enriched them with every spiritual benefit and to experience those benefits in a deeper way."
4. There is much to learn from Paul's recorded prayers. In those prayers we discover the priorities Paul had in prayer for the believers. In Paul's prison prayers you will note that he does not request material things. He is concerned about their growth and development in spiritual things. Far too often our prayers do not reflect spiritual priorities. They tend to be dominated with matters relating to health and wealth. Why not wrong to pray about such matters, we must take care that our prayers don't become too heavily weighted on the side of the material rather than the spiritual.
5. For our study, we will study the prayer in 3 sections.

### I. THE PROMPTING OF PAUL'S PRAYER (VS. 15-16)

#### A. The Report Paul Heard (Vs. 15)

Paul had heard two things about the Ephesian believers which prompted him to pray for them. He had heard of their...

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus – they had exercised saving faith in Christ and were continuing in that faith. Note that Christian faith has Christ in view. Faith is not a vague feeling with no object in view.
2. Love unto all the saints – because they were saved, they had a love for the brethren. This is a good sign of the new birth. 1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because **we love the brethren**. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death." Observe that their love was not reserved for just some of the brethren but 'all' the brethren. To love all our brothers and sisters in Christ is not natural but it is something produced in us by the Holy Spirit.
3. Note: Reports of believers in other places can help motivate us to pray. That is why we read prayer letters on a Wed night.

#### B. The Response Paul Had (Vs. 16)

1. He prayed consistently – "cease not". Paul knew what it was to continue in prayer.

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2. He prayed thankfully – “give thanks”. Paul had much to praise the Lord for in relation to the Ephesian church. God had done a mighty work in saving them as detailed in Vs. 3-14.
3. He prayed simply – “making mention of you”. The word ‘mention’ has the sense of ‘remembrance’. So, Paul brought the believers at Ephesus up in remembrance before the Lord. You might say, how do I pray for other Christians? Bring them before the Lord in prayer, mention them before the throne of grace.

### II. THE POINT OF PAUL’S PRAYER (VS. 17-18A)

Paul prays they will receive...

#### A. Revelation (Vs. 17)

1. The Source of It – “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”. Note the two titles of God the Father:
  - a. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ – The Father is the God of the Son incarnate.
  - b. The Father of glory – glory is “the reflection of the essence of one’s being, the summation of all of one’s attributes.” (Hoehner)
2. The Specifics of it - “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him”
  - a. “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” = the inner workings of the Holy Spirit in the renewed human spirit, imparting knowledge of Divine things.
  - b. “in the knowledge of him” = The word ‘knowledge’ refers to a knowledge that is “true, accurate, thorough; a full knowledge.” (Wuest) Paul’s desire is that they would know God. That through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the believers would have an intimate relationship with God. They knew God in salvation as the previous verses clearly show, but he wanted them to go on from there and progress in their walk with Him.

#### B. Illumination (Vs. 18)

1. ‘understanding’ = reference to the mind.
2. ‘enlightened’ = means to give light, to light up, illuminate, to enlighten (Hoehner). Paul is praying for their illumination.
3. B.H. Carrol: “There are three terms — revelation, inspiration, and illumination. Revelation discloses that which we could not otherwise know. Inspiration infallibly records it. Illumination causes us to understand it. Illumination, then, is that work of the Holy Spirit which causes one to get the real spiritual meanings of the Bible.”
4. 1 Cor. 2:9-10 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

### III. THE PARTICULARS OF PAUL’S PRAYER (VS. 18b-23)

Paul prays for their illumination with a view to them entering into a deeper knowledge of three truths. It has been referred to as the prayer of three “whats”. He prays that they might know...

#### A. The Hope of God (Vs. 18b)

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1. 'hope' = not wishful thinking as the word is used in the world but "the absolute certainty that God will make true what He has promised." (Hoehner) Hope is a confident expectation for the future. It is faith directed to the future.
2. "of his calling" = We have hope in truths such as the rapture of the church (Titus 2:13) but the hope here is the "hope of his calling". We have a glorious future by virtue of the fact we are in Christ. We need the ministry of the Spirit to keep these truths alive and real in our lives. A hope for the future changes my life in the present. How we need our hearts fixed on the glorious things that lie ahead for us as God's children and that we might live differently in the light of that truth.

### B. The Inheritance of God (Vs. 18c)

1. "his inheritance" = observe that it is not our inheritance in view but rather God's inheritance. God wants us to know that not only do we have an inheritance in Christ, but that Christ also has an inheritance in us.
2. "in the saints" = God's inheritance is located in the saints. "Because of his choosing, redeeming, adopting, and sealing us, we are his possession. Thus, his possession is located in the saints. He will fully gain his inheritance when the saints are removed from this earth and come into his presence. Therefore, not only do we have an inheritance (Vs. 14) but he also has an inheritance (Vs. 18) It shows that the believers are valuable to God because he purchased them in order to inherit them." Paul prays that we might know how precious the saints are in God's eyes as His inheritance. Eph. 5:27 "The he might present it **to himself** a glorious church..."
3. Psalm 2:8 "Ask of me, and I shall give thee **the heathen for thine inheritance**, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

### C. The Power of God (Vs. 19-23)

#### 1. The Direction of this power (Vs. 19)

- a. Look at the words that describe God's power in these verses:
  - i. "exceeding greatness" = the word 'exceeding' means "Great in extent, quantity or duration; very extensive." It means "surpassing, extraordinary, exceeding." This is power in abundant supply.
  - ii. 'power' (dunamis) = means natural ability, general and inherent.
  - iii. 'working' (energia) = our word energy comes from this word. It speaks of "energy put forth in operation." (Wuest) "It is supernatural power that is in actual operation. It is the active exercise of supernatural power." (Hoehner)
  - iv. 'mighty' (kratos) = manifested strength
  - v. 'power' (ischuos) = strength, power as an endowment
  - vi. "Paul heaps one word on another to express the greatness of God's power that is available to the believer." (Hoehner)
- b. "to us-ward who believe" = this power is directed towards us as believers. We experienced God's power in salvation but Paul is

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now praying that as saved individuals, they would know God's power working in their lives. God's power is available to the believer to live the Christian life.

### 2. The Description of this power (Vs. 20-23)

This power is illustrated in the Person of Christ. "Paul now shows how this power operates. God has directed toward the believers that same power that he exercised in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand, that subjected all things under his feet, and that gave him to the church as head." (Hoehner) It is...

- a. Resurrection power (Vs. 20)
  - i. 'wrought' = also comes from the word 'energia'. Christ was raised from the dead by Supernatural, Divine power.
  - ii. Think of the power unleashed in the resurrection of Christ. The most powerful element man has harnessed can't compare. The combined power of all the world's nuclear energy would be insufficient to raise one body from the grave. But God's power can raise the dead!
- b. Ascension power (Vs. 20b-22a) Not only was Christ raised by Divine power, He was seated in the heavenlies by Divine power.
  - i. Christ is exalted above all the angelic hosts, good and evil – "far above **all** principality and power..." This truth is so important to know when it comes to spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12). Christ is seated in victory about all the legions of hell and if you are saved, you are seated with Him (Eph. 2:6).
  - ii. Christ is exalted above every name – "every name that is named." "Let any name be uttered, whatever it is, Christ is above it." (Wuest) Philippians 2:9-11 "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name..." He is higher than any name both in the present and in the future world.
  - iii. Christ is exalted above all things – "And hath put all things under his feet..." The term "put under" is a military term meaning "to put in subjection under one." (Wuest)
- c. Headship power (Vs. 22b-23)
  - i. The scope of his headship – "over all things to the church". Col. 1:18 "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things he might have the preeminence.**"
  - ii. The body of His headship – "which is his body". Appears to look beyond the local church to the church glorified, the great assembled body of the redeemed who will form the Lamb's bride. As our Divine Head, Christ ministers His life and leadership to the body.
  - iii. The fulness of His headship – "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The fulness of Christ abides and dwells in the church which is His body.

Conclusion: Are you praying for others? Are you relying on God's power for life?