

Ephesians 1:15-23 Answers Paul's Prayer for the Saints

Overview:

The letter to the saints in Ephesus has six chapters and can be divided into two parts:

Chapters 1-3 are **theological** (doctrine/belief); chapters 4-6 are **practical** (duty/behavior)

Chapters 1-3 concern the *Wealth* of the Believer; chapters 4-6 concern the *Walk* of the Believer.

Chapters 1-3 concern the Blessings of the Believer; chapters 4-6 concern the Behavior of the Believer.

******What prayer request did Paul have for the saints in Ephesus (1:15-23)?** (*Write on board*).

Paul prayed that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God so they would know **a)** the hope to which they had been called, **b)** the riches of God's inheritance and **c)** the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us.

Monster Sentences: 1:15-23 is one, long, run-on idea in the Greek. As such, it is the second of two monster sentences (the first was the blessing of 1:3-14).

1. According to 1:15-16, what motivated Paul to give thanks for the saints in Ephesus? Paul was thankful for **1)** their faith in Jesus and **2)** their love for other believers. Paul founded this church and stayed there two years. He wrote this letter about four years after he left. When word reached him that they were still in the faith and loving other believers, he was thankful to God for them (Hendriksen, p. 95).

Note: Paul began by writing, "for this reason" (1:15a). The "reason" is stated in the same verse: "because" Paul heard of their faith and love.

Priorities: *What types of things cause you to give thanks to God?* Paul really got excited and gave thanks to God when he heard that the saints in Ephesus were walking in faith and showing love toward others (1:16). If we fail to get as excited as Paul about other Christians having faith and showing love, then maybe we have our priorities wrong.

2. What is the connection between faith in Jesus and love for the saints (1:15)? *See Romans 5:5, 1 John 3:14, 1 Corinthians 13:2.* Those who truly have faith in Jesus will also have love for other believers.

ESV **John 15:12** This is my commandment, that you love one another . . .

ESV **Romans 5:5** . . . God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

ESV **1 John 3:14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

James said that faith without works is dead; so also is faith without love.

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:2 . . . if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing

Example: As the spokes on a wheel get closer to the hub they get closer to each other (Hendriksen, p. 96).

3. What warning can we derive from comparing 1:15-16 to Revelation 2:2-5? The book of Revelation was written several years after Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Over time the Ephesian church kept the faith but lost some aspect of their love. They remained straight as a gun barrel theologically had grown almost as empty. We must take care to be sure that our faith is coupled with love for others and is not simply a cold orthodoxy. We don't want to be God's frozen chosen!

ESV Revelation 2:4 . . . I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Thankfully, there was hope for the Ephesians (and for us) because Jesus went on to say to them:

ESV Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.

What prayer request does 1:17-18a contain? Paul asked God to give them a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him so that the eyes of their hearts were enlightened. Unless God pulls back the curtain, He remains hidden from us. The created order (natural revelation) shows that God exists and that He is intelligent and powerful, but beyond that we are clueless unless God chooses to reveal Himself to us. Apart from divine revelation, it is like being placed in a room without windows. We would have no idea what was on the outside of the room.

4. If God grants you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (1:17), what is it that you will know about God that you did not know before? See 1:18-20 and 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. The knowledge prayed for in 1:17 is explained in 1:18-20. You will have an understanding of our hope, our inheritance and God's power that enables the hope and inheritance to become reality (Hendriksen, p. 106).

Related Passage: Flip back to and read **1 Corinthians 2:6-16**.

We spend time acquiring knowledge about football or guns or computers or construction or cars or our careers or the best places to shop, etc. Such knowledge is fine in its place, but what should really matter to us (top priority) is this information right here!

5. Why did Paul write "hearts" rather than "minds" (1:18)? See *Luke 24:31-32*. Although in Greek "heart" is a virtual synonym for "mind", the heart is the figurative core and center of man's being, man's inmost self (Hendriksen, p. 98). A person may know facts in his mind, but to know it in one's heart is to *really* take it in. The Ephesians saints needed a supernatural revelation of God in their innermost beings.

ESV **Luke 24:31-32** . . . their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

— Our Hope —

How would you define hope (1:18)? More than mere wishful thinking, biblical hope is more of a confident expectation. It is being as sure as you could be of something that has not happened yet.

Example: "I hope the sun comes up tomorrow." The sun will come up tomorrow; it just has not happened yet.

6. What is the hope to which has God called us (1:18)? See *1 Thessalonians 2:12*. God has called us to have a confident expectation of good things in the future, such as resurrection from the dead and eternity in heaven with Christ.

ESV **1 Thessalonians 2:12** . . . walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Two Calls: In his blessing (1:3-14), Paul talked about election and predestination. Now, in his prayer, Paul says the saints in Ephesus had been "called". Jesus said, "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14). Whenever the Gospel is preached, men are called to salvation. This is an outward call. However, there is also an inner call. Those who have been chosen and predestined by God will also hear an inner call to salvation, an effectual call, and they will respond to it. It is like the tractor beam on Star Trek.

— Our Inheritance —

7. What exactly are the riches of God's glorious inheritance (1:18)? See *Romans 8:18*, *1 Corinthians 2:9*. Paul did not spell this out in his prayer. Whatever it is, it is pretty good! It concerns the blessings of salvation. This is why heaven is likened to streets of gold; it is wonderful beyond our imagination.

NIV **1 Corinthians 2:9** No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him . . .

ESV **Romans 8:18** . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Notes: This wonderful inheritance is limited to "us who believe" (1:19). Also, our inheritance is in the saints (plural). We are saved one at a time, as individuals, but we are saved into a community. It is together with all the other saints that we will get our inheritance.

— God's Power —

Why did Paul want them to be aware of God's power? Nothing can prevent the realization of the believer's hope. The inheritance is sure (Hendriksen, p. 102).

8. What might have been going on, unique to Ephesus, to make Paul remind his readers of God's power (1:19b-22)? Ephesus was known for its temple to Artemis; it was a pagan worship center. At the time it may have discouraging for the believers, meeting in someone's home, to see the magnificent temple to Artemis with all her worshippers.

9. What two examples of God's great power and might did Paul give in 1:19-20? *See Romans 1:14, 1 Corinthians 6:14.* God displayed his might when He raised Jesus from the dead (1:20) and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places (1:20).

ESV 1 Corinthians 6:14 . . . God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

ESV Romans 1:4 (Jesus) was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead . . .

10. Can you think of another example of the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe (1:19-20)? *See Romans 1:16, Acts 1:8.* One example is the Gospel, which is the power of God for salvation. Another example is the Holy Spirit, who gives us power to be witnesses for Christ.

ESV Romans 1:16 . . . the gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . .

ESV Acts 1:8 . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . .

11. What does it mean for Christ to be far above all rule and authority and power and dominion (1:21)? *See 3:10, 6:12, Colossians 2:18.* There is evidence that at this time in that region false teachers were upsetting the churches with misleading teachings about the authority of angels and the need to worship them. If so, this statement by Paul in 1:21 would serve to reinforce the truth that Jesus' authority is far above that of the angels. This is especially true of fallen angels (demons). Be aware that there are spiritual realities all around us (angels and demons). No power of hell can thwart God's plan for His elect.

Perspective: Today that temple is in ruins and the religion defunct, yet Christianity continues on.

12. What can we learn about the church from 1:22-23? *See 5:23.* We learn that **1)** Christ is the head of the church (1:22) and **2)** the church is Christ's body and fullness.

ESV Ephesians 5:23 . . . Christ is the head of the church, his body . . .

What does it mean for Christ to be the head of the church (1:22)? Christ is the boss, the benevolent dictator, the perfect president, the good shepherd, the supreme authority of the church. The biblical form of church government is a theocracy!

13. What does it mean for the church to be Christ's body? The church is the instrument through which Christ works. The church carries out Jesus' will on the earth. This figure of speech also shows an intimate connection. Jesus is intimately and inseparably united with His church. The church is Christ's complement. It is in the interest of the church that Jesus, as Lord over all creation, exercises His infinite power (Hendriksen, p. 103).

Examples: You've got the vine and the branches, the shepherd and the sheep, the bride and the groom, and Christ and the church.

In what sense is the church the fullness of Christ (1:23)? Christ is complete without the church!

What does the word church mean (1:22b)? Church is from *ekklesia*; it had to do with the meetings of the Greek city states wherein citizens were called forth from their homes into the public place of council for deliberating. Originally it was a governmental word, not a religious word.

So What?

14. What are some good prayers for you to pray on behalf of others, based on 1:15-23?

ESV **1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

15. What can we learn about Jesus from 1:20-23?

What is the relationship between faith and love?

Synthesis of chapter one:

- 1. Paul blessed God for God's blessings on us.**
- 2. Paul prayed to God, asking that the saints will understand and appreciate all God's blessings.**

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

Stephen E. Atkerson

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03/12/13