

Eph. 1:17-19a (LD 45, Q118-119) “Praying for Wisdom”

For the Children: When we are finding it hard to know the best way to act in a certain situation, we often pray for wisdom – for example, if you need to talk to someone about what they are doing wrong, but you don't know what to say. But in the Bible, Wisdom deals with all sorts of things: knowledge about God, about us, about the world; knowledge about what is right and what is wrong; it includes also the ability to choose the right way and stick to it; and how to apply what we read in the Bible. These are all things we can pray about – about God, His will, His promises, our own needs and problems, God's world, His Word, His church, our service to Him. There is so much to pray for! The more we know of the Wisdom in His Word, the more we will know what to pray for. **Questions:** What does Wisdom teach us to pray about? What does the Lord's Prayer teach us to pray about? What does the apostle Paul pray for the Ephesians?

Introduction:

First Point: Praying for Knowledge

- 1) Knowledge from God's Self-Revelation: The apostle prays that God may give the Ephesians a “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” This implies that we need God's Word in order to know Him. Having a personal relationship with another requires that we know certain things about them – what they are like, what they have done, what pleases them and how they might help us. These are things that Scripture reveals about God.
- 2) Dependency upon God: Prayer is a personal response to God's personal Self-revelation. In order to pray, we therefore need His help – on God's gracious initiative; on Christ's work of salvation that makes us and our prayers acceptable to God; and on His Spirit, who enables us to understand the Word, to have the right motivation to pray, and who also teaches us how to pray based on God's Word.
- 3) A Summary of “Prayer Points”: These terms, “wisdom,” “revelation” and “knowledge,” cover a multitude of subjects, related to the issues mentioned above – God's attributes, works, will and promises. The same is true of the hope created in us by these truths, the knowledge of the riches of our inheritance and the greatness of His power” (v. 18). In Mt. 6:33, all this is summed up as “His Kingdom and righteousness.” The Lord's Prayer deals with God's Fatherly nature, His glory, power and holiness; His will; His Kingdom; as well as His mercy, help, provision and protection. When we pray for ourselves in that prayer – for daily needs, forgiveness and help, we are also acknowledging who God is, what He has done, what He requires of us and what He has promised us. All of this can also be summed up simply by praying for Wisdom – as the apostle does for the Ephesians – for Wisdom includes all the knowledge of Scripture, as well as how we use it to serve God. See also Jam. 1:5. Q118 puts it in terms of “everything” we need, spiritually and physically.
- 4) The Importance of Wisdom: This explains why it is so important to pray for Wisdom. The term covers all of God's Self-revelation. All of it informs our prayers. We therefore do not pray for Wisdom only to stop us from acting foolishly; but also to help us grow in our prayers and other aspects of our service to God.

Second Point: Praying for Enlightenment

- 1) Enlightenment of the Heart: The term “Enlightenment” is often used in an intellectual sense. But here it refers to an inner, spiritual perception of truth. Knowledge must affect the whole person, or we do not truly “know” God.
- 2) The Spirit's Work: Knowledge that is held in a spiritual way requires the work of the Holy Spirit. His regenerating work changes our hearts so that we can receive and believe the truth with the whole person. He enables us to understand what we read in Scripture (“illumination”). He enables us to respond rightly – to apply what we read. This also requires the work of Christ for us, for He only sends His Spirit to do this in those for whom He has died.
- 3) Another Part of Wisdom: When we pray for Wisdom, we are also praying for this Spirit-given skill in the application of Biblical knowledge. Similarly, in the Lord's Prayer, we ask for help to resist the devil. See Q/A 127. Again we see how important it is to pray for Wisdom – and what a wide-ranging request that is.

Conclusion: