

A Prayer of Wonder (Ephesians 1:15-23)

I. Introduction

A. Ephesians Summary Statement: The reconciling wisdom of God has been gloriously displayed in Christ calling us to walk by grace in the peace He has given us

B. Review from last time in Ephesians:

1. Last week we finished the first sentence of Ephesians, Paul's glorious celebration of the goodness of the glory of God worked for us in Christ - and we looked at it in two parts
 - a. Praising His Glory: The Wonder of Sovereign Redemption (Ephesians 1:3-10) - God has displayed His glory (in Christ, in grace toward us, through salvation), which calls us to praise His glory forever.
 - b. Praising His Glory: The Wonder of Unmerited Riches (Ephesians 1:11-14) - If we have obtained an inheritance completely by God's gracious choice then our lives ought to be devoted to reveling in His glory and displaying it to the world
 - c. And we saw 4 things: (1) we have obtained an inheritance!; (2) We have all obtained the same inheritance; (3) We all obtained the inheritance in the same way; (4) Our inheritance calls us all to the same response: to praise His glory
2. This morning we're moving on to the next section of Ephesians, and Paul is going to start apply what he has been preaching - He is going to rejoice that they are all one in Christ, he is going to rejoice in the glorious inheritance they have all received, and he is going to get caught up in the glory of Christ: and he does this by pausing and praying for the Ephesians

C. Read Ephesians 1:15-23

D. Proposition: Paul has declared the glory of Christ that has made them one and now he wants them to know the glory of Christ that has made them one so Paul prays this for the Ephesians.

1. Paul prays because they are all one in Christ
2. Paul prays that they would know God completely
3. Paul prays that they would see how great salvation is
4. Paul's prayer gets caught up in the glories of Christ
5. Application

1 II. Paul prays because they are all one in Christ

1 A. Ephesians 1:15-16

1 B. For this reason ...

- 1 2 1. Ephesians 1:13 - *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*

2 C. ... because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints ...

1 D. ... I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers

1. Paul recognizes the Ephesians as fellow believers, fellow heirs, fellow members of Christ, even his brothers and sisters
2. So Paul now has a tender, compassionate, caring attitude toward the Ephesian church because they are one and the same family with him, and he expresses this in two ways
 - 1 a. First, he thanks God for them - Paul sees many different peoples being brought to salvation in Christ and Paul rejoices in God's glory displayed in the diversity of the church and thanks God for that display; and he thanks God specifically for the Ephesians, for the ways that they are a symbol of God's grace and God's goodness and that God has made the Ephesians one with him (Paul)
 - 1 b. Second, he prays for them - as his brothers and sisters in Christ, Paul cares for the Ephesian church, he wants to see their best in Christ, so he seeks God's goodness, His favor, His blessing on their behalf

1 III. Paul prays that they would know God completely

1 A. Ephesians 1:17

1 B. ... in the knowledge of Him

1. For them to know God is Paul's desire for the Ephesian church
 - a. And the word 'knowledge' here is not simply knowledge as in factual knowledge
 - 2 b. It is actually the Greek word *epignosis*, which literally means over-knowledge (epi - gnosis)
 - 1 c. Or we might say full knowledge, or overflowing knowledge, or exceeding knowledge, or abundant knowledge
 - d. Paul wants the Ephesians to know God completely: to know Him as their Savior, to know Him as their Lord, to know Him as their Provider, to know Him as their Friend - to know all that He has done for them and to be in relationship with Him
2. We touched on this briefly last week in verse 14 when we saw that the Spirit was the guarantee, or the deposit, of our inheritance
 - a. We was that that word 'guarantee' meant the first portion of a payment (and is still used in Greek today for an engagement ring!) - so what we have now in fellowship with the Spirit is a real taste of the full inheritance we will enjoy forever
 - b. That is, to know God is our inheritance; to know God is our hope and our reward - so to know God ought to be our desire: if we don't desire to know God through the fellowship of the Spirit now, we should have no confidence that we will participate, or even that we could enjoy the eternal reward because they are the same thing, there is no difference in kind, the only difference is in intensity
 - 1 c. It is, as Paul says in I Corinthians 13:12 - *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

C. ... may give you [a] spirit ...

1. We are unable to know God on our own, though, so God must give us a spirit to know God
 - 1 a. Most of your translations will have the article 'a' there and spirit will be lower case, but that is completely an interpretive statement - the Greek could go either way between 'a spirit' and 'the Spirit' - personally, I believe that it is the latter, because almost everywhere in Ephesians Paul uses this word *pneuma* He is referring to the Spirit, including only three verses before - so I think that this would better read "may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"
 - b. To know God we must have the Spirit of God dwell within us - on our own it is impossible to know God, but through the work of the Holy Spirit we can truly come to know and have relationship with God
 - c. So, having rejoiced that the Ephesians do have a share of the Spirit in verse 14, Paul prays that the Ephesians would be being continually filled with the Spirit so that they would continually grow and deepen in their knowledge of God
2. And Paul prays that the Spirit would do two things for the Ephesians:
 - 1 a. First, Paul prays that the Spirit would be the Spirit of wisdom - that the Spirit would work in the hearts of the Ephesians to make them able to see, to experience, to take in the knowledge of God - for the Ephesians to know God, they must first be changed to be able to know God
 - 1 b. Second, Paul prays that the Spirit would be the Spirit of revelation - that the Spirit would show God, would reveal God to the Ephesians - for the Ephesians to know God the Spirit must show God to them
3. So Paul prays that the Ephesians would have what they have been given, that they would experience the blessings that God has already lavished upon them, that the Spirit that they have tasted would continually make them to know God more

1 IV. Paul prays that they would see how great salvation is

1 A. Ephesians 1:18-19

B. ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened ... that you may know ...

- 3 1. As Paul continues his prayer, he becomes more specific about what He wants the Spirit to do: He wants the Spirit to enlighten their hearts - to shine His light into their hearts to give them the knowledge of God
2. Paul is praying that the Spirit would fulfill His revealing role - to show them all that God has done for them in Christ
3. And this is the main work of the Spirit in this world, to take the work of Christ for us and to show it to us, to teach us what Christ has done for us, and to apply it to our hearts
- 1 4. So John will record Jesus' promise in John 16:13-15 - *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*
5. And Paul prays specifically that the Spirit would reveal or make known three things to the Ephesians:

1 C. ... what is the hope to which he has called you

- 2 1. To understand this phrase, we need to go a little bit forward to Ephesians 2:12 - *remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*
2. The Ephesians had been without hope, they had been separated from God, under His wrath, doomed to destruction; they had no reason to hope for anything in this world or in the world to come
3. But now God had given them a living hope in Christ - He had reconciled them to Himself, He had exhausted His wrath, and He had called them friends
4. So Paul wants them to know how much God had already done for them: from the first moment of their salvation they had been given a new hope - God was no longer their enemy, but their friend, their Lord, their protector

1 D. ... what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

- 3 1. This is a reference to something Paul has already introduced in Ephesians 1:11, 14 - *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ... [and] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*
2. If Paul wants the Ephesians to know how much God has already done for them, he also wants them to know how much more God is going to do for them - they may have already experienced infinite blessings of salvation, but there are infinitely more blessings yet to come - they have only received the down payment of their inheritance, the fullness will be paid in time

1 E. ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe

1. If Paul wants the Ephesians to know how much God had already done for them and how much God was still going to do for them, he also wants them to know how God had, is, and will do this for them
2. So Paul prays that the Ephesians would know the greatness of God's power - God's power had been exerted to win salvation for them and God's power would be exerted to complete salvation for them
3. And it would be God's power that connected the beginning of salvation to the end of salvation - it would be God's power that kept them in salvation, knowing the hope to which He had called them, and it would be God's power that would preserve them and bring them to their final inheritance, to dwell in His presence forever
- 2 4. This power at work in them will lead to the first great benediction of Ephesians in Ephesians 3:20-21 - *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
5. So Paul prays that they would know that power, that they would feel that power working in them, that they would rely on that power, rest in that power, hope in that power, but Paul is going to tell us more about that power in the next few verses, which brings us to our next point

F. But first, let's do our first kids' question for today:

1. What does Paul want for the Ephesians?
2. To see, know, and wonder at the glory of God

1 V. Paul's prayer gets caught up in the glories of Christ

1 A. Ephesians 1:20-23

1 B. ... according to the working of his great might ...

1. As we enter the last section of our study this morning, Paul is going to describe what God's power for them is like
- 1 2. And that power that at work in them is the same power that was demonstrated in Christ - so Paul starts this section to remind us where the power of God came from and how great that power is
3. But, as he starts to list the power of God demonstrated in Christ, the rest of the prayer gets caught up in a recitation of the glories of Christ

1 C. The glories of Christ, the Triumphant Vanguard of our salvation

1. The power of God's salvation has been perfectly displayed in Christ, and Paul is going to start listing the ways
- 1 2. First, God's power has been displayed in Christ by raising Him from the death - death, the last great enemy of God's people had no power over Christ, so on the third day He rose up again from the dead, so Paul can rejoice in I Corinthians 15:55 - *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*
- 1 3. But God's power, displayed in Christ didn't stop there, God not only raised Him from the dead, but also sat Him at His right hand in the heavenly places - a declaration not only of Christ's triumph, but Christ's kingship - He has taken His seat as the regent and heir of the ultimate sovereign and now reigns over the cosmos with none to oppose Him, a fulfillment of the promise of Psalm 110:1-2 - *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!*
- 1 4. But Paul doesn't stop there, he then goes on to list all the enemies that Christ now rules over - *He is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come* - every enemy that stood against Him, every accuser that had arisen against His people has now been laid in the dust and Christ has been exalted supremely over all - again, there are none left to oppose
- 1 5. So Paul's conclusion is that all of Christ's enemies have been made His footstool - all things have been placed under His feet - He is now sovereign over the entire universe, all of the cosmos now answer to Him and to Him alone
- 1 6. But, though He is the supreme ruler of all things, He has been put in charge of the church in a special way - He has been made the head of the church - He is both its Lord and its source, He is sovereign over His church, but in a much closer relationship, the intimate sovereignty that the head has over the body
- 1 7. And so the church is His body - His people are filled up with Him: He has filled the whole universe but He has also placed Himself in His people - that word fullness can (and I think does here) mean something like container, that which is full of something - so the church is filled up with Him who fills all in all
8. And so at the end of his recitation, Paul comes back to where He started: these are all the magnificent glories belonging to Christ - He has defeated and now is ruler over all things - and now, through Christ dwelling in you through His Spirit, all of that glorious power belongs to you the Church - He has filled you up and you are His
9. The glories of Christ are things we stand back and wonder at, but they are also things that are being worked in us - that same power that raised Christ from the dead is working in us to give us an ever deeper knowledge of the living God

D. Kids' Question

1. Where do we see this glory?
2. In Christ, the Sovereign Savior

VI. Application: Paul's prayer teaches us ...

A. How to demonstrate our unity: pray for each other

1. Ephesians 6:18 - *To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints*

B. What to desire for ourselves and others: to know God

1. Psalm 25:4-5 - *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*

C. How to pray: seek to know what Christ has given

1. I John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

D. To get lost in the glory of Christ

1. Colossians 1:15-20 - *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities---all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*