

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Insight

9.11.2022

Sermon 4

Ephesians Series

Ephesians 1:15–19 (CSB)

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

¹⁵This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

Introduction. Paul shares his pastoral and apostolic heart for the believers in Ephesus.

A. Paul helped found the church and stabilized it in its beginning.

1. He invested 3 years of his life there, which was a long time for Paul.
2. The best ministers always leave part of themselves wherever they go.
3. They also take a piece of that place and people with them.

B. On this occasion, Paul reflects on the great people serving and loving Jesus in Ephesus from house arrest.

1. Are they ok?
2. How are they facing the struggles?
3. Who has been added to the kingdom?
4. Is the man down the street saved yet?
5. Has sister so-so received the Baptism since he was away?
6. How's Timothy doing (the same Timothy of the letters is the pastor)?

C. Paul thinks of them often and prays for them continuously, and now he pulls back the curtain for a moment to reveal the kinds of prayers he is praying for them.

1. This week especially, I found myself praying similar prayers for many of you.
2. This may sound strange, but the heaviness of what you all face lands upon Julie and me.
 - a. We do not feel it the same as you, but we do feel for and with you.
 - b. Midweek, I found myself thankful that I was preaching this passage because the timing, for me, is perfect.
 - c. Paul's writings helped provide language for my own prayers.
3. When I don't know what to pray for, Paul gives me some examples.

When Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus, what did he say?

1. First, Paul prayed, "THANK YOU"!

¹⁵This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

A. The word Paul used for “thank you,” you may have heard before.

1. It’s the word *eucharist*.
2. If you were raised Catholic or in a liturgical church, you have maybe heard that word before.
3. We usually don’t say the “eucharist” but instead say “communion” or the “Lord’s Supper.”

B. *eucharist* means “to give thanks.”

1. On the night Jesus was betrayed, “And when he broke bread, he gave thanks and said....”
2. Jesus gave thanks, amid trial in the midst of betrayal and strife
3. Paul, unable to leave or move as he wanted, cannot stop “giving thanks” every time he remembers them in his prayers.

C. One of the most powerful prayers we can pray is the prayer of thanks.

1. Not just thanking God for the tangible blessings, but for the people blessings.
2. Unfortunately, I do not get to talk to everyone on Sunday.
 - a. But if we talk even for a few minutes together, I find myself saying this phrase a lot:
 - b. There is a lot of good people here.
 - c. This is a great place.
 - d. I’ve never been part of a church with such wonderful people.
3. As your pastor, I’m thankful and appreciative of the building, and solid finances, and all of the blessings God has provided.
4. But first, and foremost, I’m thankful for you!

D. When we choose to bless those God has put in our lives, we experience the benefit of that blessing returning back to us.

1. When you curse what you should bless, you cause good things to die.
2. Don't curse the people around you, and wonder why they leave or turn toxic.
3. But instead, let us give thanks to God in our prayers for each other!

PRAYER of Blessing for each other.

2. Second, Paul prayed for them to receive the Spirit of knowledge and wisdom.

A. What Paul is praying for here is, first of all, only possible through Holy Spirit.

1. Notice that the English is capitalized, referring to a specific Spirit.
2. There is only ONE way to know and experience God: through the Holy Spirit who reveals Jesus.
3. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that as Paul desires the believers in Ephesus to know God more fully, that He would pray that God would give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge.

B. The wisdom and knowledge here is not merely for information.

1. Many wise and knowledgeable people do not know God or grasp the "mysteries" of salvation.
2. There are also plenty of people who do not have much earthly knowledge or education, yet who are deep and wise in the things of God.

C. The purpose of wisdom and knowledge is to know Christ.

1. It is to have a personal knowledge of God.

2. You do not have to live off someone else's knowledge and experience: You are called to have your own experience, wisdom, and knowledge of who Jesus is and the glorious riches of His grace.

D. Paul's prayer was for each believer to have their own knowledge and experience with Jesus.

1. That is my prayer for you as well.
2. That EACH of you will have a ever deepening relationship with Jesus, the ONE who loves you, redeems you, and grants you an inheritance and a share in eternal life.

3. Third, Paul prayed that they would WAKE UP to what God has provided through Jesus.

¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

A. The "eyes of your heart" is more than an emotional understanding.

1. The "heart" in ancient writing refers to the center of the personality.
2. It's the inner man in its entirety¹.
3. Paul is praying for the Ephesus believers to not only to feel God, or to understand God, but to fully grasp all that God has provided through Jesus.

B. Paul prays for them to fully know 3 things:

1. First: The hope to which he has called you.

¹ The verse [V 10, p 69](#) [p 69](#) speaks specifically of *the eyes of your hearts* and we need to remember that in biblical expression the heart is not simply the seat of the emotions, nor the seat of the intellect or 'understanding' (AV), but as Masson puts it 'the centre of the personality', to which God speaks, 'the inner man in his entirety'¹

a. This is the hope of present salvation and our eternal inheritance.

b. Hope is always present, never future.

1. What you may be hoping for may lie in the future.

2. But the HOPE is always present.

a. For example: I HOPE the Cardinals when the World Series:

b. The result is in the future, but the hope, the feeling, the anticipation is PRESENT.

c. Paul wants them to know the "hope of his calling."

1. This is not just something future, although there is an anticipation of a future event.

2. But the HOPE is for today!

3. Jesus' future return is called "THE BLESSED HOPE."

4. We LIVE in the hope of Jesus' soon return.

d. Many of us today are fighting to stay in hope.

1. Fear pushes away hope.

2. Hope is the first casualty of fear.

3. Life, without hope, is deadly.

e. Maybe today you are in need of HOPE!

1. HOPE: Living in anticipation of God's moving, providing, and His restoring.

2. Paul prays that those who read will know the hope of his calling.

2. Second, Paul prays they may know the wealth of Christ's glorious inheritance in the saints.

a. Paul has in mind the special relationship God wants to have with us.

b. We are Christ's inheritance, we are the prized possession, His portion.

c. When we realize that Christ wants us, and died for us, we realize our worth in God's eyes.

3. Third, Paul prays they know the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

a. God is all-powerful, whether we admit it or not.

b. But for those who believe, we can beautifully experience that power.

1. Consider the many men in this room:

a. Many of you have had the joys of holding your babies or wiping the tears from your child's eyes.

b. Yet, those same hands that wipe away tears or cradle a loved one are the same hands that are prepared to protect that family and do harm to any threat that may threaten them.

c. Same hands, same person, different response.

2. The same hands that will wipe away every tear from the believer's eyes is the same hands that wields judgment's sword.

3. For those who believe, we may know the immeasurable greatness of his power.

c. My prayer for you is that you will KNOW God, and His power, and His might.

1. That He will anchor you in the storm.

2. That He will be your shield when under attack.

3. May the Devil's challenge be God's opportunity to demonstrate the immeasurable greatness of his power in your life.

Close: Thank You, *Eucharisteo*.

A. In a few moments, we will give thanks to God through the Eucharist.

1. But first, I cannot help shake the idea that many of us need precisely what Paul was praying for.
2. You need God's power in your life.
3. You need wisdom and knowledge of Him.
4. You need your life enlightened, because life is getting increasingly dark.

B. This morning, I want to provide opportunity to pray with you and for you.

1. I believe that this prayer of Paul is still in force today.
2. God wants you to have and experience these very things.
3. I'm going to pray, and have you remain seated.
4. **In just a moment, if you would like prayer for any reason at all, would move from your seat to the front so this body of believers might give thanks to God for you and pray for your healing, your growth, and for God's presence to be demonstrated in your life.**

C. This will allow us to fulfill the first part of Paul's opening:

1. He had heard of the Ephesian believer's faith in Jesus AND their love for all the saints.
2. When we come around the front to pray we demonstrate these things: OUR FAITH in Christ AND our love for the saints.