

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 1:15-23, THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. Thanksgiving for the Ephesian Christians (15-16), *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*
1. Paul declared that he continually gave thanks for them and prayed for them.
 - a. *For this reason*
 - 1) His concern for them was because of their faith in Christ evidenced by love toward other believers.
 - 2) William Barclay, *There is a loyalty to Christ which does not result in love to others. The monks and the hermits had a loyalty to Christ which made them abandon the ordinary activities of life in order to live alone in the desert places. The heresy-hunters of the Spanish Inquisition and of many other periods of history had a loyalty to Christ which made them persecute those who thought differently from them. Before Jesus came, the Pharisees had a loyalty to God which made them contemptuous of those whom they thought less loyal than themselves... True Christians love Christ and they also love their neighbors.*
 - 3) Stephen Fowl, *Faith in Christ apart from love for the saints is dead or incomplete; love for the saints apart from faith in Christ reduces the church to just another social service provider.*
 - b. His concern for other believers was evidenced by remembering them to our Heavenly Father.
 - 1) Romans 1:8, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.*
 - 2) Colossians 1:9, *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 1:3, *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*
 2. Paul heard of their growing faith through others.
 - a. It had been six or seven years since Paul was in Ephesus.
 - b. He had invested much time in their lives and I am certain it was an encouragement to him that they were growing spiritually, Acts 20:31, *Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*
- B. Prayer for the Ephesian Christians (17-23)
1. Paul requested that they receive wisdom and revelation (17-18a), *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,*
 - a. He made his request to the Trinitarian God of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1) To the all-glorious Father, 2 Corinthians 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*
 - 2) Through the Son, Ephesians 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*
 - 3) In the Spirit
 - a) Some believe Paul is referring to a disposition or attitude, 1 Corinthians 4:21, *What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?*
 - b) Others believe he is referring to the Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity.
 - c) I believe this verse accommodates both as seen in Isaiah 11:2, *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*
 - b. His request was that the Ephesian Christians receive wisdom and revelation concerning God.
 - 1) *Wisdom* gives insight into the true nature of things.
 - a) Ephesians 1:8, *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight*
 - b) It has been said that wisdom is the acknowledgment of truth.
 - 2) *Revelation* is the unveiling or giving of truth.
 - a) Here, Paul is requesting that they know more of God Who is their Father.
 - b) The word for *knowledge* is not about facts but of personal relationship.
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Paul wanted his readers to get to know God more intimately as their Father, to become closer friends with Him.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *It is not enough to know God only as Saviour. We must get to know Him as Father, Friend, Guide, and the better we know Him, the more satisfying our spiritual lives will be.*

- c. The means of receiving wisdom and revelation is that they were enlightened.
 - 1) When they received Christ as Savior, they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to illumine Christians to spiritual truth.
 - a) John 14:17, *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*
 - b) John 16:13, *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.*

2. Paul gave reasons why he requested wisdom and revelation for the Ephesians Christians (18b-23)
 - a. He wanted them to know their hope (18a), ***that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,***
 - 1) The word for *know* means to have factual information.
 - a) 2 Corinthians 12:3, *And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-*
 - b) We received our hope by faith but it is confirmed by fact.

 - 2) A Christian's hope is in God's calling.
 - a) We did not choose God, He chose us.
 - b) 2 Timothy 1:9, *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
 - c) Our sure hope or *eager anticipation* in the future is based on God's calling us to salvation in the past.
 - 1] Ephesians 4:4, *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-*
 - 2] John Stott, *He called us to Christ and holiness, to freedom and peace, to suffering and glory. More simply, it was a call to an altogether new life in which we know, love, obey and serve Christ, enjoy fellowship with him and with each other, and look beyond our present suffering to the glory which will one day be revealed. This is the hope to which he has called you. Paul prays that our eyes may be opened to know it.*

 - 3) A thought on God's calling, Max Anders, *We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*

 - b. He wanted them to know their riches as God's inheritance (18b), ***what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,***
 - 1) God's saints are *His inheritance*.
 - a) *inheritance* in verse 14 refers to the prospective condition of the believer when Christ returns; a share or participation in privileges.
 - b) In verse 18, it means what the believer will be to God in that new age.
 - 1] Charles Hodge stated *His inheritance in the saints which is to be enjoyed among them.*
 - 2] *The saints* refers to Christians who have been set apart to God by His calling.
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *This is an amazing truth—that God should look on us as a part of His great wealth! Just as a man's wealth brings glory to his name, so God will get glory from the church because of what He has invested in us.* Note Ephesians 1:6, *Christians will be to the praise of his glorious grace...*

 - 2) His inheritance is richly glorious.
 - a) Colossians 3:4, *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*
 - b) 1 Corinthians 15:43, *It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.*
 - c) H. D. M. Spence, *...this glory is not limp, limited—it is wonderfully rich, full, abundant. God gives liberally—gives as a King, gives glory to all Christ's people...this glory is real and everlasting.*
 - d) Thomas Constable, *It is glorious because when we see the Lord we will experience glorification, cleansing, and removal from sin.*

- c. He wanted them to know God's great power on behalf of believers (19-23)
- 1) Paul attempted to declare the majesty of God's great power (19), ***and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might***
 - a) God's great power is beyond compare.
 - 1] *Immeasurable means to go beyond the usual mark, to go beyond measure.*
 - 2] God possesses exceedingly great power as Paul put *greatness* together with *immeasurable*.
 - 3] *Power is the potential to exert force in performing a function.*
 - 4] Stephen Fowl, *It is probably a mistake to try to read various nuances into these terms. They all work together to convey the sense of God's unparalleled and unsurpassed power.*
 - b) God uses his incomparable power on behalf of believers.
 - 1] His *great might* or *potential* is lavished on His Children.
 - 2] Ephesians 6:10, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *This is the power of God that is available to believers.*
 - 2) Paul provided evidences of God's great power (20-23)
 - a) Jesus' great power was made known at His resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand in heaven (20), ***that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,***
 - 1] The power of God that raised Jesus Christ is the same power available to believers today.
 - a] Philippians 3:10, *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*
 - b] 1 Corinthians 6:14, *And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*
 - c] Max Anders, *The power God demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead and placing him above all creation is the same power he is exercising toward us to bring about the blessings which he has promised us.*
 - 2] His power is tied to His authority which is evidenced by God having seated Him at his right hand.
 - a] Psalm 110:1, *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."*
 - b] Hebrews 10:11-12, *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,*
 - c] Jesus' authority guarantees that Christians will receive their inheritance and be God's inheritance. Jesus will not lose what He paid for at the cross.
 - b) Jesus' great power is manifested in His exaltation over every other authority (21-22a), ***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. And he put all things under his feet***
 - 1] His authority is over all rule and authority.
 - a] Colossians 1:16, *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.*
 - b] Philippians 2:9-11, *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
 - c] 1 Peter 3:22, *who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*
 - 2] His authority is over the present and the future.
 - a] 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*
 - b] Ephesians 1:10, *as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*
 - c] Stephen Fowl, *The God who calls us in Christ to live in a world that is not yet fully redeemed will ultimately put all things in subjection to Christ.*

- 3] Observations
 - a] William Barclay, *He is saying that there is not a being in heaven or on earth to whom Jesus Christ is not superior. In essence, Paul's prayer is that we should realize the greatness of the Saviour God has given to us.*
 - b] Robert Wilkin, *The picture here is of a general as he puts his foot on the neck of an enemy, showing that he has victory, authority, and power. God's wonderful power is His working in believers as He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and put Christ as authority over all things.*
- c) Jesus' great power is manifested in His authority over the church (22b-23), ***and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.***
 - 1] He has all authority over the church.
 - a] Ephesians 4:15, *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*
 - b] Ephesians 5:23, *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*
 - c] Colossians 1:18, *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.*
 - 2] The church is His body.
 - a] All believers are placed into the universal church by the Holy Spirit when they place faith in Christ.
 - b] 1 Corinthians 12:13, *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
 - c] Ephesians 4:15-16, *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
 - 3] The church is the fullness of Christ.
 - a] He fills the church Himself with blessings.
 - b] Ephesians 4:10, *He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.*
 - c] Harold Hoehner, *The verse could then be rendered, "which is His body, which is being filled by the One who fills all things with all things (blessings).*
 - d] Stephen Fowl, *If believers in Ephesus or elsewhere were tempted to supplement their faith in Christ through taking on the law (as in Galatians), through ascetic practices designed to lead to visions (as in Colossians), through manifestations of certain spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians), in submission to or veneration of the powers, or through any other means—they are reminded here in 1:23 that the fullness found by becoming a member of Christ's body is complete, absolute, and lacking in nothing.*

CONCLUSION

- A. It is good to give thanks and pray for other Christians.
- B. Our hope is grounded on God-given wisdom.
- C. All authority is in Jesus Christ whose power was revealed at the cross.