

Ephesians 1:15-23 *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Announcements:

1. Book Club: 6/23: 5:30pm
2. Membership, Today right after church!

Ephesians 1:15-23 | Praying for Others

Last week we began our summer series in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He begins with a hymn of praise to God, weaving in and out of the glorious news of our salvation. Stretching from God's purposes to save in eternity past up into the glorious promise of all that we will inherit in Christ Jesus. It was quite frankly, overwhelming. Coming face to face with such an explanation of God's glory can leave you almost shutting down.

I once visited Florence, and saw the statue of David, and I remember thinking that I should be feeling more. It is objectively a masterpiece, I know this in my mind, I could answer it on a test, but my emotions didn't amount to the heights of appreciation I knew were available. It's a strange feeling, because I knew the problem wasn't with Michelangelo's handiwork, it was me.

How much worse, when we gaze into the wonder of God, and even hear of the riches of grace he lavished upon us, and find ourselves unable to connect? What do we do? Well its as if Paul knew precisely the risk he was taking in laying before us such a glorious picture of the grace of God, and he prays for us to know it. This sermon is for all of you who struggle to connect with the depths of the grace of God, and here is the good news, God also has grace for that.

We'll learn Paul's heart to pray for others. What he prays for others. And the grounding of Paul's hope for others.

1. Motivation to Pray

Ephesians 1:15-16 *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*

Paul begins with a reason, and the reason for his prayer is all of what he laid out in the verses prior to this one. Quick recap: God has given us in Christ Jesus every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And believe it or not it gets better from there. Our sins are forgiven by Christ's sacrifice and God's grace has been lavished upon us. Paul sees that all of the goodness that is offered to us comes from God's eternal purpose in Christ. God is in control of our salvation from first to last.

The shape of his prayer is given by the next reason, which is that he has heard of the faith in Jesus and the love shown towards fellow Christians at the church in Ephesus. Because Paul has heard of their faith and love he hasn't ceased to give thanks for them in his prayers. Notice how these two reasons are connected. Paul gives thanks, because he recognizes that the faith and love which are taking place at the church in Ephesus are because of God's work of grace.

Paul understands that when he sees people who put their faith in Christ and then love one another, he is bearing witness to a miracle. It is a glorious work of God, and God deserves thanks for this. And don't you see that Paul is demonstrating the very qualities he is praising in them. Why would you pray to God for others without faith? Why would you thank God for saving others without loving them?

Paul is constantly praying for others. I read a section of a book this past week that placed all the prayers of Paul together. It's only 4 or 5 pages of text, but overwhelming to see how Paul's prayers are constantly for "you." It's one of the most common words in his prayers. He is thinking of you, of others. What do your prayers sound like? Are they for things, or people? And if they're for people what do you pray for them? Paul aims high.

2. Know God Better

Ephesians 1:17 *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,*

After laying out the motivation for his prayer, Paul shares what he is praying for the Ephesians. We can put it simply, *he prays that they would know God better*. This is the highest aim of our praying for others. It only takes a moments reflection to consider why, and you can hear the reason in Paul's prayer. God is the father of glory. That is all that is

glorious and good flows forth from him. He is the highest of all possible aims, and to know him is the greatest of all possible outcomes. Paul must pray to God for us to know him, because it is God who must reveal himself to us. We must receive, by the Spirit of God, wisdom and revelation in order to know God. Paul prays that God would show himself to the Ephesians.

But we know that this is not enough, remember the statue of David? We can see something glorious and it still not effect us. We need to be changed in order to see the glory of God. So this is what Paul prays for next.

Ephesians 1:18 *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,*

Paul prays that the Ephesians might be transformed to be able to see with the eyes of their heart, the glory of God in his wisdom and revelation. This is to see the glory of God in his highest wisdom which is Christ, and his clearest revelation which is Christ!

Take heart, do you find yourself dull in seeing the wonder of God in Christ? The eyes of your heart can be enlightened. We might even pray that God would give us hearts to receive the wonder of his revelation.

What is it that we need to be changed to be able to see? Three crucial truths.

Ephesians 1:18b-19 *that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*

3 Crucial Truths: What's to come, Who you are, The Power on Your Side

What's to Come: *Know the hope to which he has called you.* This is nothing short of the new heavens and the new earth. The future glory that awaits all Christians, where all wrongs are made right, all sadness becomes untrue. This is the future that awaits us in Christ. When God called us into Christ, he made this future certain. What a glorious future awaits. How little we hold on to the hope of the future. What do you think about the future? Are you worried? Typical wisdom is to quit thinking about the future so much and learn to be present. That makes sense because all your futures end in death. Biblical wisdom is to think about your future more.

Who you are: *The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.* We wrestle constantly to know who we are, and seek to make it up in all kinds of clever ways. You'll notice it in Colorado, we don't have hobbies we have identities. Our hearts yearn to be counted in. Could we be strengthened to know, that we are counted in the number of the saints. That

because of what Christ has done, we are the family who receives Christ's inheritance. Who are you? Heir of the world in Christ.

The Power on your side: *the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.* Here's the craziness of life. The things that really matter, you don't have the power to effect. You can't reach into someone's heart and make them change. You can't push back against death so that it finally surrenders and moves on. But the power that is on your side is immeasurable. Your advocate has the power. It will not be until Ephesians 3 that Paul will once again pick up the theme of God's power, and how unexpectedly he uses it. He uses his power to strengthen us to know the height and width and depth of his love toward us. But here Paul doesn't share what the power is for, but what it is.

3. Authority of Christ

Ephesians 1:20-21 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far 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.

It is the power that raised Christ from the dead. It is the power that seated Jesus at God's right hand in the heavenly places. It is the power that stretches beyond all other rule and authority.

There are levels of spiritual authority that are deeply mysterious and hard for us to wrap our minds around. The demonic realm, and angelic realm, and the seraphim. These are difficult for us to understand. But make no mistake we experience them deeply, and you even know it when you do. There is a spiritual reality to a place. You have a different expectation for what you will experience in Vegas compared to Disney World. Russia compared to Italy. How do you explain that? But Christ is over all of it. All that stands against knowing him, Christ stands over.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

All of this authority of Christ has been give to the church, as Christ is over all things in authority and uses this authority for the benefit of the church. What if we prayed for one another to know God? To be transformed to be able to grasp the glory that is to come. To rest deeply and securely in our identity as God's people. To trust in the goodness and totality of God's power towards us? It's time to lift our gaze for one another. God himself has accomplished this, let us join him by prayer in trusting his grace for one another. It's time.