

Paul's Prayer for Our Understanding

Larry Crabtree / General

Epistle of Ephesians / Eph 1:15–23

[Ephesians 1:15–23](#) (NASB95)

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints,

do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

[Ephesians 4:1](#) (NASB95)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

I. Paul's Grateful Heart Expressed ([Ephesians 1:15-16](#))

| [Ephesians 1:15–16](#) (NASB95)

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints,

do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;

A. The Source of Paul's Gratitude

How did Paul hear about the Ephesian church's faith and love?

B. The Specifics of Paul's Gratitude

Paul heard two things about the Ephesians: their "faith in the Lord Jesus" and their "love for all the saints" (v.15).

[1 John 2:9-11](#) (NASB95)

The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Question: According to [1 John 2:9-11](#), what conclusion can be drawn about someone who claims to have saving faith but hates his/her brother or sister?

[John 13:35](#) (NASB95)

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Question: What quality of love is evidenced by the phrase "love for all the saints" (v.15)?

Love is defined as self-sacrificing service.

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus

Question: What is wrong with the idea that Jesus can be received as Savior but not as Lord?

[Philippians 2:10-11](#) (NASB95)

so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[Romans 10:9](#) (NASB95)

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

2. Love for all the saints

Notice that their love was indiscriminate.

To love someone in the Lord is to love him or her as Jesus loves him or her —genuinely and sacrificially.

[Philippians 2:2](#) (NASB95)

make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

[1 John 3:17–18](#) (NASB95)

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Genuine faith is marked by love for all the saints.

[1 John 5:1–2](#) (NASB95)

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

II. Paul's Supplication Expressed ([Ephesians 1:17-23](#))

A. The Spirit of Paul's Request (v. 17)

[Ephesians 1:17](#) (NASB95)

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

1. The Believer's Unnecessary Search

In Ephesians 1:17 Paul is praying that the Lord might spare Christians from a frantic search for things they already possess.

The typical Christian wastes time asking God for things we have already given.

We need to know what we have in Christ, and the wisdom to apply it.

The Christian life is the process of becoming what we already are in Christ.

[Ecclesiastes 3:14](#) (NASB95)

I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.

Christian maturity is like a baby learning to use all the parts he was given at birth.

2. The believer's necessary attitude

a. The source of a right attitude

[Ephesians 1:17](#) (NASB95)

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory...

The One to whom all glory belongs is the same in essence as the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. The significance of a right attitude

[Ephesians 1:17](#) (NASB95)

...give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

(1) Incorrect interpretation

Some people believe Paul was asking God to grant believers the Holy Spirit.

[1 Corinthians 6:19](#) (NASB95)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

[Romans 8:9](#) (NASB95)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Others say Paul was referring to the human spirit, but we have had a spirit and soul all our lives.

(2) Correct interpretation

The Greek word translated "spirit" is pneuma, from which we derive the English words pneumatic and pneumonia.

Pneuma can be translated "wind," "breath," "air," or "spirit." But it can also refer to a disposition or an attitude that governs one's soul.

Paul wanted God to give believers an attitude of wisdom and revelation about Christ.

Question: What is the difference between “revelation” and “wisdom” in [Ephesians 1:17](#)?

The Greek word translated "revelation," used in verse 17 as a synonym of wisdom, refers to God's imparting of knowledge to us, while "wisdom" could emphasize our use of that knowledge.

Truth must be revealed to us before we can practice it.

Principles to Practice:

1. To interpret the Bible correctly we must be able to differentiate which statements discuss our blessings and position and which ones deal with our practice. Look up the following pairs of verses and determine which passage is positional and which one is practical: Romans 5:1 and 14:19; Romans 8:9 and Ephesians 4:30; Ephesians 1:5 and 5:1; 1 John 2:15 and 5:4-5.

2. Do you have trouble loving someone in your church, your Bible study, or your own family? Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and list each characteristic of true love. Which ones are you having the most trouble with and why? Ask the Lord to help you exhibit each quality of true love toward that individual you are struggling to love. Thank God for His Spirit, who will strengthen you to carry out His will in your life.