

Ephesians 1:15-21

Spiritual Insight

Image Church // Prayers for the Church: Week 3

Introduction

Good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

Hey, listen, in case you missed it last week, I shared some really exciting news last week...

We are in the process of moving forward on a permanent location for us as a church.

This is an incredible opportunity that God in His faithfulness has put in front of us... It's a space that allows us to do everything that we want to do, everything that we believe the church should be about... This space would serve as not only a gathering space, but also a missional hub!

And not only that but it's in a centralized location for all of you that call Image Church Home...

Nothing official yet, so I need you to stay locked in and engaged in the days and weeks ahead- this process is going incredibly well and it's moving along at a good pace... We're hoping to be able to roll out specifics in the next few weeks...

- ***I'll just say this:*** If you've been attending and sitting on the sidelines in your giving- now is a good time to jump in to help make this happen!

So, stay tuned for more information and be praying to Lord see this through!!! We have some incredible days ahead, Image Family!!!

Sanctity of Life/MLK

This morning we want to take some time to reflect on and pray about several things...

Today is **National Sanctity of Life Sunday**, where we reflect on the tragedy of elective abortion in our society...

Psalms 139:13-16 says **13** For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well. **15** My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. **16** Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.

Psalm 139 tells us in no uncertain terms that a baby is a human being made in the Image of God, a soul that God knows and has a plan for.

I know that this is a difficult subject to talk about, and it may even bother some of you to talk about this... And others of you don't think the church is the place for this to be talked about...

- Listen, there's no political agenda here at Image Church, our goal ***isn't*** to be unified around a political party, our goal is to be unified around the gospel...

And I don't believe that the pulpit is a place to lobby for politics- I will never use this platform to sway you politically, but I will always use it to speak biblically... And you have to understand that elective abortion ***isn't a political issue*** it's a **biblical issue**...

And so, **we want to pause to pray, and ask God to forgive us as a society and change our hearts as a nation on this matter of abortion.**

And we also want to pray for the church, that there would be boldness to stand in the gap for those who choose not to have an abortion...

That God would change the heart of the church in America to be a place of help, hope and refuge...

That the church would not be a place that simply speaks out against abortion, but that the church would actually mobilize itself around our cry for the *sanctity of life*...

For so long the church in America has been *pro-birth* but not *pro-life*... All about having the baby, but hasn't stepped in to walk with momma and baby or to adopt, or to foster...

If we want to be about *the sanctity of life*, we have to be about it *from the womb to the tomb*...

Here's another thing we want to pray for... Somewhere around **3,000** babies, made in the **image of God** with human souls are aborted every single day in our country... And for each of those, there's often a grieving mother and sometimes a grieving father on the other side hurting...

And so, this morning **we also want to pray for those whose story includes abortion**...

It may be that you're here and have lost a child due to abortion. Your pain is real, and we want you to know that Image Church is a place of hope and healing, **not** of condemnation. We want to be here to walk with you in your hurt...

You need to know that God offers you forgiveness, that He loves you, and we love you. You don't have to carry guilt and shame any longer or face the journey of healing alone...

And before we pray about all of this together, I want to also recognize a man that spent his entire life fighting for the sanctity of life... This weekend is also the commemorative weekend where we remember the life and work of **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

Dr. Martin Luther King, taught us how to fight for the sanctity of life for the *born*... He helps us to understand that we can't just fight for the justice of the *unborn*, but we also need to fight for the justice of the *born*...

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought against *racism* and *injustice* and we're grateful for his legacy, and we want to remember it by living out the same biblical values that he died pursuing...

As a church we want to be about *loving God and loving our neighbor*- both of which is a natural **response** to the gospel...

So, I want to spend time praying today that end this morning:

1. God to forgive us as a society and change our hearts as a nation toward abortion...
2. Pray for the church to stand in the gap
3. Pray for those whose story includes abortion...
4. Pray that God would give us a heart for *Biblical justice* for the oppressed and the hurting... That we would live with gospel eyes loving people the way God has loved us, and pursuing people in the way God persecuted us...

Sermon

OK, well, this morning we're going to be continuing our series that we kicked off last week called **Prayers for the church**...

We're looking specifically at prayers that Paul prayed for the church in the **NT**, and we're holding them up asking that the things that he prayed would be true for us at Image Church in 2021...

We're saying: *God we want to see the prayers that Paul prayed become a reality for us today!*

So, the goal is that as we look at these prayers, that they would serve as a framework for our prayers, pursuits and aspirations for today!

And this morning we're going to be looking at the prayer that Paul prayed for the church in **Ephesus**.

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to the book of Ephesians...

As you're turning there let me give you a little background... Ephesus is a city that Paul first connected with on one of His missionary Journey that is laid out in **Acts 19**...

Ephesus is a huge city, and it was the epicenter of worship for most of the Greek and Roman Gods. *So, this is a very unique context...*

And yet in the midst of this unique context Paul had a very effective missionary presence in this city that gained traction and lots of people became followers of Jesus...

Fast forward years later and Paul is imprisoned by the Romans, and he uses this time to write to the church in Ephesus...

Now similar to **Colossians** and **Philippians**, Paul prays toward the beginning of his letter, except this time it comes right on the coattails of a heavily **theological poem**...

Paul went swimming in the deep end of the pool... He didn't go in with the steps either, my man just jumped in...

Some of my more reformed brothers and sisters are like oh please oh please can we talk through it?!?! Not today, I've already gotten enough emails for one month... Kidding...

Ok, let's jump in, we're going to look at what Paul prays, why Paul prays and the implications surrounding it...

Ephesians 1:15-19

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

That is really Paul's setup for what he's about to pray... He's heard about their **faith** and **love** and he's thankful for that and he prays from them, and this is what he prays...

Verse 17...

17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit (*or a spirit*) of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. **18** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...

Ok, so let's stop right here and talk about this... I want you to notice **2 foundations that Paul starts with**, he prays for two foundational things at the beginning of his prayer, he'll show us what these foundations should give-way to in a little bit...

But for now, let's look at these two foundational things that he prays, and I want you to really see the importance of why he prays this...

So, here's the 2 foundational things that he prays for:

1. That the Father would give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him

2. That eyes of the heart may be enlightened

Ok, first what does this mean? Well, based on what Paul's said before this prayer in his integral introduction surrounding God's rich blessings...

It seems that Paul prays these 2 foundational things because he knows that the only way they're going to really get what he's saying is through **prayer** and the power of the **Holy Spirit!**

- *This is worth the price of admission right here...*

See, *if we're not careful theology can become information rather than inspiration...*

Listen, here's the danger of deep theology, we can become so enamored by textual analysis and information that we miss Jesus...

- You know that you can be an expert in exegetical textual analysis and miss Jesus...

Best example of this was the *Pharisees*... They were experts and they knew it backwards and forwards, but they missed Jesus... **John 5:39-40**...

Another example: Judas...

- It's possible to be around Jesus for a very long time but never really know Him!

I agree with one pastor who says it like this...

*Almost all of your spiritual problems come from a lack of sight, because what you know with your mind has never been known, felt with your heart.*¹

I wonder if there are a bunch of you out there that would say that your time in the Word is dry and it feels mechanical...

- My question is do you spend time on the front end praying and asking for the Holy Spirit to bring life to illuminate it for you...

The Word is living and active through the power of the Holy Spirit...

- Example: There are times as I prepare where I will wrestle with the Holy Spirit asking for illumination and clarity in a text... All the sudden, I will get it...
 - *Can't make this up... it's real!*

Would we be a church that engages with the Spirit as we dive into the Word!

Ok, let's keep reading for the purpose of why he prays these things- here's what the reality of the foundational things will lead to...

...so that you may know what is the **hope** of his calling, what is the **wealth of his glorious inheritance** in the saints, **19** and what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power** toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

*Now he spends the last part of his prayer elaborating and expanding on the power of God... **verse 20***

20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens—**21** far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Ok, so there's **3 things** here that Paul prays would be a reality coming as a result of the **2 foundational** things that he started with...

A. That you may know hope

Our definition of hope vs. biblical definition of hope...

Hope for us = wish, would like for it to happen...

Hope accruing to the bible = expectation, or on which your expectations rest...

When we have an expectation that we are centered on that's happening in the future, it changes the way that we live today...

Example: When I know I am going to have a good meal... I plan my day around it...

Example: When I got engaged to Ashley... Expectation- marriage

- It begins to change

¹ JD Greear.

When you have biblical hope, you have an expectation centered around what's been extended to you through Christ...

Meaning... in Christ you this is not all there is... There is hope beyond this life and beyond your current circumstances...

It means that you can endure... This is not wishful thinking, it is certainty in a future reality...

And hope grounded in Christ changes the way that we live...

- Hope is no longer in our money, success or circumstances...
- Hope is no longer in if we find the right person to marry, or if we get married at all...
- It's no longer in getting the right job or getting to the right financial position...
- It's not in the government or political systems...

Hope centers you around one expectation... Eternity with God forever... And this isn't something that comes through your efforts... Biblical hope isn't based on you, it's based on Christ...

It means the burden of perfection and being good enough for God has been lifted off of you and been fulfilled through Christ...

And the way that you engage that hope, the way you lean into it is by growing in your knowledge of who God is... Which is why started the way that he did...

Listen, if you're listening and **you're not a Christian** I know that down deep there is a longing for hope...

- Would you see the hope offered to you in Christ!

Let's look at the second thing Paul prays would be a reality for us...

B. That you may know the wealth of his glorious inheritance

That you would understand your identity and your value in Christ...

In and through Christ you are God's inheritance...

- GOSPEL

Have you ever struggled with your identity or value?? You feel unseen, unknown?

You are God's inheritance... And **God will redeem his possessions!**

I want you to meditate on that for just a second...

One of the greatest battles we face in this life is how we view ourselves...

Khalid- Disclosure- know your worth

He keeps leaving you for dead

I don't know what you been waiting for

*So you've got your love locked up instead
But somethin' better's waitin' at your door
You don't know your worth*

*All the things I know that you deserve
Say it's not real if it doesn't hurt
Find someone you know will put you first
Find someone who loves you at your worst*

*Gotta keep, gotta keep, gotta keep your head up
Who puts you first?*

Find someone who loves you at your worst

This is a lie from our culture... *Some of you believe this...*

C. That you would know the immeasurable greatness of his power
19 and what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power** toward us
who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and
seating him at his right hand in the heavens—**21** far above every ruler
and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in
this age but also in the one to come.

When Paul talks about power he points to the resurrection! He wants
us to know the power in the **Resurrection**.

One Scholar says: And glorious power, in its “surpassing greatness,” is
at work in the people of Christ: it is “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus
from the dead” that dwells in them (Rom. 8:11), energizing the new
life within their mortal bodies and so making the hope of resurrection
real for them.²

**Transformational power of the resurrection- new life... freedom,
forgiveness...**

Conclusion [VAMP]

**1. That the Father would give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in
the knowledge of him**

2. That eyes of the heart may be enlightened

So that...

A. That you may know hope

B. That you may know the wealth of his glorious inheritance

C. That you would know the immeasurable greatness of his power

Putting all of this into practice starts simply by praying and
trusting...

Gospel appeal...

² Bruce, F. F. (1984). *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (p. 271).