

# “Praying to the Sovereign God”

(Ephesians 1:15-23)

## Introduction

➤ The passage of Scripture before us this morning represents the apostle Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian Christians. This is not the words (a transcript) of his prayers for them, but his own description of how he was praying for them. As such, it serves as a dual purpose for us. First, and foremost, we need (as always) to examine, understand, and apply the teaching of Scripture.

Secondly, we can utilize the content of Paul’s prayer as a spiritual gauge for our own prayers. This can be both challenging and convicting for all of us. For most Christians (myself included) feel that they do not pray often enough, nor do they think they pray good enough. And, statistically, both are typically true. Generally speaking, professing Christian (in America today) spend very little time in prayer, and (by their own admission) their prayers are typically a laundry list of things they want God to do for them. Such prayers are void of doctrinal/biblical truth, and often more self-centered than God-centered.

✓ Illust: “When it comes to knowing God, many of us constitute a culture of the spiritually stunted. So much of our religion is packaged to address our felt needs – and these are almost uniformly anchored in our pursuit of happiness and fulfillment, without rightly understanding where true happiness and fulfillment lie. God becomes the Great Being who, potentially at least, meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations. We think too little of what he is like, of his wisdom, knowledge, power, love, transcendence, mystery, and glory. We are not intoxicated by his holiness and his love; his thoughts and words capture too little of our imagination, too little of our discourse, too few of our priorities. Many of our religious exercises and verbal expressions feel painfully unreal, inauthentic, merely formulaic” (D.A. Carson; *Praying with Paul*, p.xiii).

➤ A faithful study of Paul’s prayers will help correct this problem. In fact, we can benefit a lot from studying and emulating the many prayers found in the pages of sacred Scripture. Perhaps at the forefront of all of our minds are the prayers of Jesus [e.g., the prayer He taught His disciples (Matt.6:9-13; Lk.11:2-4), the prayers Jesus prayed (Matt.26:39, 42, 44; Lk.22:42; Jn.12:28; 17:1-26)]. There are also great prayers found in the Old Testament [e.g., Hannah’s prayer (1Sam.2:1-10), Jonah’s prayer (Jon.2:1-9), Jehoshaphat’s prayer (2Chron.20:5-12), and of course the many prayers throughout the Psalms].

In many of Paul’s letters, he described the prayers he was praying for those to whom he was writing (see Rom.15:14-33; Eph.1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil.1:9-11; Col 1:9-14; 1Thess.3:9-13; 2Thess.1:1-12). The apostle Paul understood prayer to be a crucial part of the Christian faith and was committed to a faithful prayer life, and his prayer model that for us. This is certainly true in the first of Paul’s prayers in his letter to the Ephesians.

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

- Glaringly absent from this prayer are requests for an easy, suffering-free, Christian life. What is glaringly apparent in so many of the prayers – particularly in the prayers of Christ of the apostle Paul – is the absolute supremacy of Christ and the God’s sovereignty. Paul’s prayers were not laundry-lists of personal things that he wanted from God. Rather, they were filled with praises for who God is and thanksgivings for that which God has done (and will do). The requests Paul prayed for were typically about others and centered upon their spiritual maturity and growth. He prayed that they would know God better; that they would grow in their faith and faithfulness to God; that they would be more and more grounded in God’s Word and character; that they would have greater insight into God’s will; and that Christ would be pleased and glorified in their lives.
- In this passage, Ephesians 1:15-23, we find three major aspects of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians.

## 1. A Prayer of THANKSGIVING (vs.15-16)

- Paul’s recounting of his prayer for these Christians begins with thanksgiving – a good model for us to follow. For far too often, leaving thanksgiving to the end of our prayers can reduce it – for the sake of time and attention – to quick and general “thanks for everything.” And, if we are not intentional about giving thanks, we may not even do it at all. Our prayers can be lopsided with too much asking God to do things, and too little thanking God for what He has done.

**Col 2:6-7** ~ “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

### A. The reason

- The first thing to note is the opening phrase of this passage: *“For this reason”* (vs.15). For what reason? This points back to the previous passage (1:3-14) as Paul outlined the glorious aspects and benefits of being *“in Christ”* (i.e., being truly saved, a true believer in and follower of Jesus Christ) – 1] Past: election (vs.3-6a) 2] Present: redemption (vs.6b-11), and 3] Future: inheritance (vs.12-14) – all God the Father (vs.3-6) and the Son (7-10) and the Spirit (vs.11-14) has done to save us and secure our salvation. These truths launch the apostle Paul is into a prayer of thanksgiving – to God, for all He has done for *“the saints”* (1:1).

This *“reason”* is coupled with the fact that the Christians in Ephesus (and perhaps other churches in Asia Minor) were producing spiritual fruit (Matt.3:8; Jn.15:1-6): *“because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints”* (vs.15). Notice the two marks of genuine conversion identified in this verse.

First, *“because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus”* (vs.15). They did not merely “believe in God” (Jms.2:19); they did not believe that Jesus was only a good moral teacher; they were not trying to use Jesus as some get-out-of-hell-free-card. Rather, they put their *“faith in the Lord Jesus”* (vs.15). That is, they recognized and submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. True salvation is not merely professing to believe in Jesus as Savior, but it is also to respond to Him as Lord (see Matt.7:21-27; Lk.6:46).

Second, Paul noted their *“love toward all the saints”* (vs.15). This is another universal and evident trait of every genuine Christian. Christians who fail to love other Christians need to examine the veracity of their profession of faith (Jn.13:34-35; 1Jn.3:14-15; 4:7-8; 5:1).

- At the very least, a true Christian will have a genuine faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and will express that faith in their love for other Christians.

**Gal 5:6** ~ “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

## B. The frequency

- All of these “reasons” propelled Paul to give unceasing praise to God for these Christians: *“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”* (vs.16). This, of course, does not mean that Paul was literally on his knees praying for the Ephesian Christians all day and every day. Rather, this expression conveys the idea that whenever Paul prayed for them, he prayed a prayer of thanksgiving. *“I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers”* (vs.16; HCSB).
- It is important to note, again, that Paul was not praising the Christians for deserving or earning God’s salvation (salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone). He did not praise them for their moral goodness, or religious good works, apart from Christ. He did not applaud them for their innate spiritual insight or humility or righteousness. No, he praised God (through prayer) for what He had done in their lives.

## 2. A Prayer of INTERCESSION (vs.17-19)

- After beginning with thanksgiving, Paul described (in detail) how he prayed for these Christians: *“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, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might”* (vs.17-19). This too is a good model for us to follow. Prayers of intercession can keep us from being too self-centered, forcing us to think about and care for others. But a word of warning: if we are not vigilant, even our prayers of intercession can be focused on us (e.g., praying for others to be nicer to us, to treat us better, or to be less of a burden on us).

**Eph 6:18** ~ “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints”

**James 5:16** ~ “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

- To help us navigate these verses, I have divided them into two major headings: 1) the request and 2) the reason.

### A. The request

- Notice how Paul described to whom he was praying: *“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”* (vs.17). Far from thinking of God as “the old man upstairs” or “the guy in the sky” (or any number of other irreverent and blasphemous references to God), Paul declared the deity and Sonship of Jesus Christ (see Eph.1:3; Jn.10:30-33; Rom.15:6; 1Pet.1:3). All of God’s salvific blessings are in and through His Son Jesus Christ. To pray in Jesus’ name is to petition God through His Son, asking Him for that which would be according to His will and for the glory of His Son.

**John 14:13** ~ “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (see Jn.13:31-32; 15:16; 17:1-5; Col.1:15-18).

- The reference to God as *“the Father of glory”* (vs.17) – similar to biblical expressions of *“the God of glory”* (Ps.29:3; Acts 7:2), *“the Lord of glory”* (Num.24:11; 1Cor.2:8), and *“the king of glory”* (Ps.24:7, 8, 9 10<sup>2x</sup>) – depicts the diving splendor of God’s nature and attributes (see Eph.1:6, 12, 14; 3:16, 21). God’s glory is the radiance of His reputation as the one and only Sovereign God. God’s glory is the honor and worship that He is due, for all that He is and all that He does – God is all-glorious and all that God does is glorious!

This is to whom we pray: the one and only self-existing, living, Creator, and sovereign God. This is what leads us to come before God with reverence and humility (not flippantly or arrogantly). This is the confidence we have that God will always do what is right, and that our prayers should be motivated by the glory of God.

## 2) For what? “that the God ... may give”

➤ After addressing to Whom he is praying, Paul then outlined (for these Christians) just how he prays for them: “[that God] may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup>having the eyes of your hearts enlightened” (vs.17-18). Again, it is important to notice that Paul is not asking for material or physical blessings (which, if we are not careful, can dominate our requests to God). His prayer for these Christians is that they would grow in their knowledge of God. This, in essence, he stated in several ways (with several words): “wisdom” (vs.17; *sophia*), “revelation” (vs.17; *apokalypsis*), “knowledge” (vs.17; *epignōsis*), “enlightened” (vs.18; *phōtizō*).

While essentially synonyms, these words each carry a unique aspect (e.g., different facets of the same diamond) of what it means to truly know God – whether that be insight/understanding (wisdom); that which is uncovered/exposed (revelation); that which is learned/discerned (knowledge); or that which comes from being spiritually illuminated/instructed (enlightened).

Notice that God is the Giver (source) of all true spiritual knowledge and understanding. True knowledge of God cannot happen apart from the Spirit of God. It does not come from human intellect, ingenuity, or self-discovery, and it is not found in false religions, worldly philosophies, or secular psychology.

**1 Cor 2:12-16** ~ “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup>And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. <sup>14</sup>The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup>The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup>For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (see Jn.14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Jms.3:15)

**Col 2:3** ~ “in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

➤ Therefore, Paul prayed that God would give these Christians spiritual knowledge and understanding. This is a repeated prayer of Paul for the churches to whom he ministered (see Eph.5:17; Phil.1:9; Col.1:9). May we never grow stagnant, arrogant, or complacent in our pursuit of the knowledge of God. May the “eyes of [our] hearts” (vs.18) continually grow in our understanding of God’s nature, attributes, and will.

**Luke 24:32** ~ “They [i.e., the two disciples] said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’”

**Luke 24:38** ~ “And [Jesus] said to them [“the eleven” (Lk.24:33)], ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?’”

**2 Peter 3:18** ~ “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ...”

## B. The reason: “that you may know”

➤ Paul then gave a list of benefits that are gained from growing in our spiritual knowledge and understanding of God.

### 1) “what is the hope to which He has called you”

➤ First, we gain hope: *“that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you”* (vs.18). This refers to the hope of our salvation (vs.12). The Christian’s hope is not wishful thinking, or an anxious waiting, but the confident assurance for that which is not yet realized (or acquired). Simply put, the more we know about God, and the salvation that He worked in and through His Son Jesus Christ, the more solidified we will be in the hope of our salvation in Christ. Unfortunately, many Christians have doubts about their salvation simply because they are ignorant of biblical truth.

### 2) “what are the riches of His glorious inheritance”

➤ Second, growing in spiritual knowledge and understanding will help us to know *“what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”* (vs.18). This refers to the incomprehensible and incalculable blessings of our eternal salvation (see vs.11-14). That is, all the glories that are awaiting the Christian in heaven – to see God *“face-to-face”* and to *“know fully, even as [we] have been fully known”* (1Cor.13:12; cf. 1Cor.2:9-10; 1Pet.1:3-5; 1Jn.3:2).

**2 Cor 4:17-18** ~ “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup>as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

**Rom 8:18** ~ “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

✓ Illust: “It is truth too magnificent for words to describe, which is why even God’s own revelation requires the illumination of His Spirit in order for believers even to begin to understand the marvelous magnitude of the blessings of salvation that exist in the sphere of the saints” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*; 1:18).

### 3) “what is the immeasurable greatness of His power”

➤ Third, increased spiritual knowledge and understanding will help us to know *“what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might”* (vs.19). God’s power is truly *“immeasurable”* for He is omnipotent. But this is not what Paul was referring to here. That which is *“immeasurable”* in this verse is the *“greatness”* of God’s *“power”* (vs.19).

Paul will subsequently discuss the greatness of God’s power in greater detail (vs.19-23), but here he is praying that their increased spiritual knowledge and understanding will lead them to a greater understanding of *“the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might”* (vs.19). In other words, as our knowledge of God increases our understanding of His power deepens. This is specifically true with regard to our salvation, and this is exclusively for those who are God’s children (those who have been saved, and those who will be saved). The more we know about God, and *“the working of his great might”* (vs.19), the more we appreciate what He has done (is doing and will do) for us.

For example, a shallow or incorrect understanding of God’s salvific work can lead a person to boast in their own accomplishments and minimize the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

**Eph 3:14-19** ~ “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup>that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened [*krataioomai*] with power [*dynamis*] through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may have strength [*exischyō*; be strong enough] to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

### 3. A Prayer of DOXOLOGY (vs.19-23)

➤ Textually, verses twenty to twenty-three are a continuation (a further explanation) of what we find in verse nineteen. I have categorized it here as a separate point to highlight the exultation of Christ found in Paul's prayer.

In writing about the vast – incomprehensible, incomparable – strength of God's power in the life of the Christian, Paul elaborated the magnitude of God's power and the manifestation of God's power.

#### A. The magnitude of God's power (vs.19)

➤ First, with a barrage of words (many of which are synonyms), Paul expresses the magnitude of God's power: *“the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might”* (vs.19). This contains two incredible phrases concerning the might of God's power.

##### 1) “the immeasurable greatness of His power”

➤ God's power is truly *“immeasurable”* (*hyperballō*; to go or throw beyond; surpassing); for He is omnipotent. But this is not what Paul was referring to here. That which is *“immeasurable”* in this verse is the *“greatness”* (*megethos*) of God's *“power”* (*dynamis*).

Eph 1:19 ~ “the incomparable greatness of his power” (NET)

Eph 1:19 ~ “the surpassing greatness of His power” (NASU)

➤ Paul will subsequently discuss the greatness of God's power in greater detail (vs.19-23), but here he is praying that their increased spiritual knowledge and understanding will lead them to a greater understanding of *“the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe”* (vs.19). In other words, as our knowledge of God increases our understanding of His power deepens. This is specifically true with regard to our salvation, and this is exclusively for those who are God's children (those who have been saved, and those who will be saved).

##### 2) “the working of His great might”

➤ The second phrase concerning the magnitude of God's power is: *“the working of his great might”* (vs.19). God's *“working”* [*energeia*] refers to His divine and sovereign activity; the exercising of His sovereign will. He accomplishes His will by the sheer exertion of His power: *“his great might”* (vs.19). These two synonyms accentuate one another. The word *“great”* (*kratos*) can mean greatness, might, power, or sovereignty. Similarly, the word *“might”* (*ischys*) can mean might, strength, ability, or power.

Eph 1:19 ~ “the exercise of his immense strength” (NET)

Eph 1:19 ~ “the working of his vast strength” (HCSB)

Eph 1:19 ~ “the working of the strength of his might” (NASU)

Eph 1:19 ~ “the working of his mighty power” (KJV)

Nothing outside of God assists Him in the working of His power. He is dependent on nothing and no one. All the power God uses to accomplish His will is inherent in Himself as God (Acts 17:24). In addition, nothing can diminish or rival God's power. God is utterly free of any constraints except that which come from His own nature and will.

**Rom 11:36** ~ “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

**Acts 17:24-25** ~ “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

- The more we know about God, and *“the working of his great might”* (vs.19), the more we appreciate what He has done (is doing, and will do) for us. For example, a shallow or incorrect understanding of God’s salvific work can lead a person to boast in their own accomplishments and minimize the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

## **B. The manifestation of God’s power (20-23)**

- To be sure, God manifests His power in many different ways (e.g., creation, cataclysmic events, divine providence, etc.). Paul’s prayer is focused on the manifestation of God’s power through resurrection of Jesus Christ, and beyond: *“according to the working of his great might ... <sup>20</sup>that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”* (vs.19-23).

In these verses, we find that Paul outlined the power that God *“worked in Christ”* (vs.20) in a series of four supernatural events.

### **1) “He raised Him from the dead”**

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a display of God’s omnipotence. Scripture records that Christ’s resurrection was a Trinitarian work: God the Father (Gal.1:1; Col.2:12), God the Son (Jn.2:19; 10:18), and God the Spirit (1Pet.3:18; Rom.8:11) were all involved in raising Jesus from the dead. This is what is conveyed in verse twenty: *“that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead”* (vs.20).

This showcases God’s power over sin and death, and illustrates God’s faithfulness to His promises.

**1 Cor 15:17** ~ “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

**Rom 4:24-25** ~ “... It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, <sup>25</sup>who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

### **2) “[He] seated Him at His right hand”**

- God’s sovereign power was also manifested when he *“seated [Christ] at his right hand in the heavenly places”* (vs.20). This refers to Christ’s ascension into heaven – forty days after His resurrection (1Cor.15:3-8; Acts 1:3, 6-11). In His ascension, Jesus (the incarnate Son of God; Jn.1:1-3, 14) returned to His rightful position at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Acts 2:33; 7:56; Rom.8:34; Col.3:1; Heb.1:3; 10:12; 12:2). This is Jesus’ royal enthronement following His resurrection. Having *“finished”* (Jn.19:30) His work as our *“once for all”* (Heb.7:27; 10:10) sacrificial Lamb (1Cor.5:7; 1Pet.1:19 – dying a substitutionary death on the cross for our sins (Is.53:4-6; 2Cor.5:21) – Jesus returned to His exalted position, at the right hand of God, above everything in all creation.
- This clearly indicates the deity of Jesus Christ, and further describes the sovereign authority of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God: *“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”* (vs.21). Christ is Lord over all creation – reigning and ruling as the resurrected and glorified Son of God – now and forevermore! The Son of God created all creation (Jn.1:3; Col.1:16; Heb.1:2); the Son of God sustains all creation (Col.1:17; Heb.1:3), and the Son of God rules over all creation (Matt.28:18; Jn.5:22).

**Col 1:15-18** ~ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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.”

**Phil 2:9-11** ~ “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (see Ps.2:6)

### 3) “He put all things under His feet”

➤ A third way that Paul described the power of God at work in Christ was that *“he put all things under his feet”* (vs.22). This further describes the sovereign power of God the Father in the sovereign authority of God the Son. All creation is beneath Son, as He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps.2:1-6; Rev.17:14; 19:16). All the enemies of Christ (Phil.3:18) function, figuratively speaking, as His ottoman.

**Psa 110:1** ~ “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” (see Lk.20:42-43; 1Cor.15:25; Heb.1:13; 10:12-13)

**Matt 28:18** ~ “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.””

➤ This should be a source of great encouragement to us as Christians, for as bad as things are (and will be) on this earth, we know that Christ reigns over all and rules over all His enemies. One day, Christ will be glorified in the eternal salvation of all believers as well as the eternal condemnation of all unbelievers – including Satan and all demons (see Jn.5:22-29; Rev.20:10-15).

### 4) “[He] gave Him as head over all things”

➤ Fourthly, God’s power is manifested in the fact that He made Christ specifically the *“head over all things to the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”* (vs.22-23). The church – which is all Christians – belongs to Christ; we are *“His body”* (vs.23; Eph.5:23, 30; Col.1:24). Christians are members of Christ’s body (1Cor.12:12). He rules over us, as we belong to Him. Christ is not only the *“head”* (vs.22; authority) of the church, but He is also the *“fullness”* (vs.23; *plērōma*, or fulfillment) of the church. That is, the church exists because of Christ, in Christ, and for Christ!

## Conclusion

➤ Let me close by making two important applications. As I stated in the beginning, there are two parallel streams that occur when studying a passage like this. First, we want to understand and apply the doctrines that are being taught. Second, we want to use Paul’s prayer as model to follow. So, in conclusion, two questions arise.

***Do you have an insatiable hunger to know God more and more?***

Has your love for God grown cold? Has your pursuit of knowing God stalled? Has your Christianity become merely mechanistic or ritualistic? Are you bored with, too busy for, God’s Word?

***Do you pray for others that they may grow in spiritual knowledge and wisdom?***

How do your prayers compare to that of the apostle Paul’s prayers? Are your prayers more self-centered or God-centered? Are your prayers shallow, automated, or void of biblical doctrine?