

POWERFUL PRAYER – Ephesians 1:15-23

I love technology. I have a laptop, an iPad, an iPhone, and a Kindle. There is no end to the wonders I can perform with these four marvelous tools. With my iPhone alone I can remotely turn on my porch lights, record my favorite television show, and never again lose my car in a parking garage.

The power to do all that and more is in the palm of my hand. Just one problem: My knowledge of *how* to do it is limited. I can do a lot with these tools – in fact, I’ve even taught others who know less than me. But I still have much to learn before I will be using these devices at their full potential.

The Christian life is similar. Last week we learned that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. As Peter put it, we have everything we need for life and godliness. All this is available to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But have we learned how to stand on, rest in, and apply these blessings to our lives?

In the passage we studied last week (1:1-14), Paul beautifully elaborated on the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. Then, beginning in verse 15, Paul shifts from praising God for what He has done into thanking God for his readers and interceding with the Father on their behalf.

Paul’s Prayer

Read Ephesians 1:15-23.

When Paul wrote this letter, it had been at least five years since he had seen the believers in Ephesus, but he had heard wonderful reports about their faith. Their continued growth encouraged him and fostered thanksgiving. In turn, Paul encouraged them with his letter and prayers for them. Paul’s relationship with the believers in Ephesus demonstrates that God designed our faith to be relational. He never meant for us to be lone Christians! We see this truth all throughout Scripture and will look at it more closely later in this study.

These believers had “every spiritual blessing” and strong faith in Christ, yet Paul still prayed for them. Why? Although the full power of the Holy Spirit resided within them, they had not accessed everything God had already made available. They still had some growing and learning to do. It sounds just like me! How about you?

Look back at verses 15-23. Make a list of the specific things Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus. Focus on verses 17-19.

One thing that helped me see the heart of Paul's requests for the Ephesians was to temporarily take away the descriptive words and phrases. Here's what I ended up with:

I pray God will give you insight and discernment so you will grow in your knowledge of Him. I pray God will help you understand: 1) the hope to which He has called you; 2) the riches of your eternal inheritance; and 3) the resurrection power that is available to believers.

Before we take a brief look at each of these, let's recall how this "insight, discernment, and understanding" is possible. To do that, we'll take a quick detour to two of Paul's other letters.

Read Romans 8:9-10. Who lives within every believer?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. How are believers able to understand spiritual things? How is it possible for believers to grow in their personal knowledge of God?

Growing in Knowledge and Understanding

Now that we've confirmed that God is able to answer these prayers through the presence of the Holy Spirit, let's get back to Paul's requests. First, Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would grow in their knowledge of God. The Greek word translated as "know" in the NIV and "knowledge" in the ESV is *epignosis*. It refers to the "fullness of knowledge acquired through personal acquaintance."

What's the difference between knowing about someone and knowing them personally?

What are some things you are purposefully doing to get to know God better? Is there something else you could be doing to experience God, His character, and His ways?

Next, Paul prayed that the Ephesians would grow in their understanding of three specific things. He asked God to help them understand the present benefits of their salvation in Christ, their future inheritance as children of God, and the power that made both possible.

The Greek word translated as “calling” or “called” in verse 18 is “used especially of God's invitation to man to accept the benefits of salvation” (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words). Paul uses the same word in Ephesians 4:1 to refer to our current earthly life. *Our relationship with God gives hope for this life, not just the next.*

In what ways have you experienced God's blessings in this life? How does your relationship with God give you hope for today?

Read Titus 3:7, Matthew 25:34, and Galatians 3:26-4:7. Compare these passages to Ephesians 1:5 and 18. These passages help us understand the nature of our “future inheritance.” Check all of the following statements that accurately reflect the teaching of these passages.

Those God saves become His child and Jesus' sibling and co-heir.

God's heirs will inherit eternal life.

God's heirs will share in His Kingdom.

Each of God's heirs are on equal standing with all God's children.

God's heirs are Abraham's seed, children of promise.

God's heirs also receive the Spirit of His Son.

Are you reeling yet from the enormity of all God's promises? If you're still on your feet – or in your chair – the impact of this next truth should take care of that.

Resurrection Power

Reread Ephesians 1:19-20. What miracle does Paul say was accomplished by the same power that is working inside believers?

Did you tremble when you answered that question? The exact same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him authority over all things is the exact same power that is available to believers today!

Believer, what area of your life needs to experience this power today? Are you facing an overwhelming challenge? Does some stronghold have a stranglehold on you? Has God called you to a task, ministry, or area of service for which you feel inadequate? If so, write that below.

Considering the “incomparably great power for us who believe,” how can God work in the area of your life you wrote above?

As Paul ended his prayer in chapter one, he reflected on the power and position of Christ. We serve a Savior who has both the power and authority to rule and reign!

Reread Ephesians 1:20-23. Rewrite these glorious truths about Jesus in your own words.

Two ways we can interact with each other this week:

- 1. Respond to any of today’s questions in the comment section of this post. Share insights, ask questions, or simply praise our God.***
- 2. Share ways the rest of the group can pray for you. If you see a request, feel free to post a prayer. That way we can all pray for each other this week.***
- 3. Wait! One more thing! I’d also like to know if you accepted last week’s challenge and memorized Ephesians 1:3.***

Weekly Challenge

(Each week, in addition to the weekly lesson, I will provide an opportunity – for those who have the time and desire – to go a little deeper. If you are unable to do this, please don’t worry, but if you can, take the plunge!)

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians can help us pray for ourselves and others. When we pray Scripture, we can be assured we are praying in God’s will! Print a hard copy of Ephesians 1:15-23. Put it in your Bible or where you have your quiet time. Use it this week to pray for others.