

Thanksgiving and Intercession Ephesians 1:15-23

INTRO: Paul gives thanks for and prays for those Ephesians who by faith have been redeemed by the blood and blessed by the grace of God. Praise and petition were typical of Paul. He was a man of praise and prayer. The epistles of Paul are noted for their prayers. Paul prayed:

1. For a prosperous journey to Rome (Rom. 1:8-10).
2. For Israel- "Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom 10:1).
3. For removal of a thorn in the flesh (II Cor 12:7-10).
4. For the believers at Ephesus (Eph 1:16).
5. These are just a few of Paul's many recorded prayers.

"The greatness of the man and his ministry can be attributed in a large part to his prayer life" (Strauss 130).

I. VSS. 15-16a, Paul's Praise for the Ephesians

A. Vs 15, "Wherefore" means "on account of this, for this cause." What Paul had written about in verses 1-14 was true of the Ephesians, and because of this he praises them.

1. Paul had heard good things about the Ephesian saints. Two things about them were conversational pieces:

a. Their faith in the Lord Jesus:

1.) They had continued in the faith, and Paul gladly heard about it. This is not true of all. For these Ephesian believers, Christ was still first in their lives. "The true Christian loves Christ and loves his fellow men" (Barclay 89).

2.) They had let the light shine; they had not hid it under a bushel.

b. Their love for all the saints.

1.) They love the rich and poor, educated and uneducated, the likable and unlikable.

- 2.) The man who does not love God's people, whoever they are, is lost or badly backslidden.
2. Genuine faith and love go together (Rom 5:5).
 - a. The magnet that draws sinners to God also draws them together.
 - b. I John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."
 - c. True love reaches out to all men, but especially to those in the family of faith (Gal. 6:10).
- B. Vs. 16a, All praise goes to God for the changes for the good that had taken place in the lives of the Ephesian saints.
 1. Paul's prayer was not selfish; he prayed for others.
 2. Paul prays regularly for the saints.
 3. We need to pray for others and do it regularly (Lk 18:1 "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;").

II. VSS. 17-23, PAUL'S PETITION FOR THE EPHESIANS

- A. Vs. 17, Paul's first request in prayer was for wisdom and revelation. "Wisdom" Greek *sophia* is "wisdom of the great things of God."
 1. He is not praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit; they already have Him (1:13).
 2. Paul is praying that they will be strengthened; that what they have will get stronger (3:16).
 - a. A deeper understanding of the Gospel and a clearer knowledge of God's will means we must daily examine our Christian life. Plato said, "The unexamined life is the life not worth living."
 - b. The Ephesians were surrounded by immorality, witchcraft, paganism, etc.; and they needed a closer walk. That's what we need.
 3. As we grow as Christians, we get to know God better every day.

- B. Vs. 18, Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be able to see with their hearts.
1. The heart is the inner man, the care and center of man's being. Prov. 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."
 - a. Believers need to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the wrong of jealousy, lust and hatred.
 - b. When the heart is pure, the spiritual eye is pure and enlightened.
 2. "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling."
 - a. The Ephesian believers had heard the Gospel call, the urgent invitation of the Gospel, an external call. They responded and the call was made effectual. There is no effectual call without the Gospel call (II Thes 2:13-14).
 - b. Believers need to see how blessed and rich we are because of His calling. We have hope, a sure hope (Titus 1:2).
 - 1.) We are anchored in Jesus and tied to the throne of God (Heb 8:18-20).
 - 2.) We have an anchor: steadfast and sure.
 3. "What the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."
 - a. The one who called us has also given us an inheritance.
 - b. What is in view here are all the blessings of salvation.
 - 1.) Redemption through His blood- 1:7a
 - 2.) Forgiveness of sins- 1:7b
 - 3.) An inheritance yet to be received.
- C. Vs. 19, Paul prays that the Ephesian believers will have spiritual eyes to see just how great God is.
1. Without the power of God there would be no salvation, no inheritance, and no hope.
 2. In this verse, four words are used to help us understand the power of God in fullness with respect to those of us who believe.
 - a. Power- *dunamis*- dynamite.

- b. Working- *energeia*- energy, activity, manifestation.
 - c. Mighty- *iskhoos*- exercised strength.
 - d. Power- *kratos*- great inherent strength.
 - 3. Christians need supernatural power to live victoriously. We have it now, and it will get us into the future.
- D. Vs. 20, God wants us to have enlightened eyes; eyes to see that the power that resurrected Christ from the dead is the power that resurrected the believer from spiritual death to spiritual life. This same power will resurrect the body of the believer from the grave to reign with Christ.
 - 1. Don't worry; trust God. It's all right.
 - 2. The power that will give victory over death, gives victory to the believer now.
- E. Vs. 21, Here we see the pre-eminence of Christ. He is "far above" all.
 - 1. After the resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven and sat down in the place of sovereign authority far above all powers, human or spirit, now and forever.
 - 2. His power is matchless. No enemy can defeat Him. He is "far above all."
 - 3. His name is above every name (Phil 2:9-10).
- F. Vs. 22-23, He is the head of the church.
 - 1. Vs. 22, Christ is head of the church. He loves it and purchased it with His blood. He gave himself for it (Eph 6:23, 25).
 - a. No man on earth is head of the church, not the bishop, cardinal, or Pope. Christ is the head.
 - b. Christ is the head because He built His church during His earthly ministry (Matt 16:18).
 - 2. Vs 23, The church is the body of Christ. The church is the eyes, legs, feet, and hands of Christ on earth.
 - a. Without the church, something would be missing in the ministry of Christ on earth. That's what "fullness" means.
 - b. It is the church that has the commission, the marching orders to evangelize.

3. It is the church that has the responsibility of edifying the believers.

CONCLUSION: Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is God's desire for us. That we would see with spiritual eyes and have spiritual wisdom and understanding.