

To Know Hope & Power

Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul's Prayers

- ❑ After his expression of praise (1:3-14), Paul talks about his prayers for the Ephesian believers. Read Ephesians 1:15-23.
- ❑ This passage may be outlined as follows:¹
 - A. Thanksgiving (1:15-16)
 - B. Intercession² (1:17-19a)
 - C. Affirmation of God's Power & Christ's Position (1:19b-23)



Thanksgiving

1. What is Paul thankful for? Why does he give thanks for them?

- ❑ Verse 15 begins with “For this reason.” These words point back to verses 3-14. The thought of God's gracious “blessings in Christ” leads to thanksgiving for God's particular work in the lives of the Ephesian believers. Paul gives thanks for their “faith in the Lord Jesus” and their “love for all the saints.” Faith and love are evidence of God's gracious work.³
 - Do you regularly give thanks for God's gracious work in the lives of others?

Intercession

- ❑ Having expressed the tremendous “blessings in Christ” that believers have received (1:3-14), Paul prays that his readers may have a greater realization of them.⁴
 2. Based on verses 17-19, what does Paul pray for? Develop a diagram of verses 17-19a to answer this question.⁵

¹ Developing an outline can help us trace the author's flow of thought. An outline of the whole book (with headings, subheadings, etc.) is needed to keep things in proper context. In a book outline, verses 15-23 would be one section. However, as we study individual passages, our outline can become more detailed. Outlines may vary. Some people may break verses 15-23 into two parts, and keep verses 15-19 together, or verses 17-23 together.

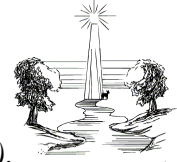
² “Intercession” – the act of interceding. To “intercede” is to ask or plead on behalf of another. To “intercede in prayer” is to pray for another person (or persons). Paul practiced what he preached (see Ephesians 6:18).

³ In his writings, Paul emphasizes the great value of faith, hope (1:18), and love (1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Cor. 13:13).

⁴ Of course, the full realization of these blessings does not happen in this life, but believers want to realize them as much as possible. As Paul wrote elsewhere, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...” (Phil. 3:10)

⁵ A “mechanical layout” can be used to diagram the verses. In a mechanical layout, the words are written in the same order as the text, but arranged to see the relationships between clauses and phrases. Different translations may order the phrases differently, and sometimes the structure of the original language is lost in the translation. Thus using a more literal translation will result in a structure closer to the original text. There is no one “right way” to diagram a passage, but practiced and careful students will agree as to the relationships between most clauses and phrases.

- ☐ Paul keeps praying: 1) that God may give them the Spirit⁶ of wisdom and revelation (1:17a), and 2) that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened (1:18a).
3. Why does Paul pray that they may receive Spirit-given wisdom and revelation? (1:17b)⁷
4. The concept “eyes of the heart”⁸ is common to many cultures. What does it mean to have the eyes of our hearts enlightened (or opened)?
5. Why does Paul pray that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened? So they may know:
- the _____⁹ to which God has called them (v. 18b).
 - the riches of God’s glorious inheritance¹⁰ in the saints (v. 18c).
 - God’s incomparably great _____ for us who believe (v. 19a).



Affirmation of God's Power & Christ's Position

- ☐ In speaking of “God’s incomparably great power,” Paul piles up “power words” – “working, mighty strength, exerted” (1:19-20a). How is God’s power demonstrated? It is demonstrated through Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and his exaltation to the heavenly realms, far above all rulers, authorities, and spiritual powers (1:20-21; cf. *Philippians 2:9*).
- ☞ “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...” (*Ephesians 1:22, NIV*; cf. *Psalm 8:6; 110:1*)
6. As believers, God’s incomparably great power is at work in us. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is head over the universe for the benefit of his church. What difference should this make in our daily lives? (*Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:28-39*)

Reflection/Application

- Do you know God? If you have not received Christ as Lord and Savior, that is the first step.
- Do you feel you know God well enough? Do you want to know him better? Do you want to more deeply know the hope and power that is in Christ? Regularly pray (with a humble, seeking and responsive attitude) that God would enlighten the eyes of your heart. And following Paul’s example, pray the same for others.

⁶ Some translations say “a spirit,” but all would agree this is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us wisdom (knowledge of God’s will, how to live) and revelation (illumination, understanding). Paul’s prayer “is not for some further Spirit reception, but for the indwelling Spirit whom they have already received to give them further wisdom and revelation” (Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 676).

⁷ “that you may know [God] better.” God reveals himself and his ways to us by his Spirit, so that we may know Him better. This knowledge is not merely intellectual, but personal and relational – “the experience of life in union and fellowship with him” (Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 68).

⁸ In the Bible, the “heart” denotes the whole inner life; the center of personality. The “eyes of our heart” relate to our inner awareness and understanding. In our fallen condition, our understanding is darkened. We need the “eyes of our hearts” opened so we can receive the light of God’s revelation; so we can know God, and his truth and his ways.

⁹ “hope” – denotes what is hoped for. In its fullness, it is unseen and future. It includes “salvation (1 Thess. 5:8), righteousness (Gal. 5:5), resurrection in an incorruptible body (1 Cor. 15:52-55), eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7), and God’s glory (Rom. 5:2).” (Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 134-135.)

¹⁰ “inheritance” – “Either the inheritance we have from God (see v. 14; Colossians 1:12) or the inheritance God receives, i.e., the saints themselves.” *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).