

PRAYING FOR THOSE IN CHRIST
EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Introduction

In the beginning of this chapter, Paul speaks of **nine spiritual blessings that believers have in Christ Jesus:**

Last week, we looked at verses 15 and 16 as we saw Paul's pattern of thanksgiving. Today, Lord willing, I want us to look at the rest of this chapter.

In these verses Paul talks about both his thanksgiving and his prayers for the Ephesus believers.

We saw last week PAUL'S PATTERN OF THANKSGIVING both here and other places in Scripture. Specifically in this chapter we see his THANKSGIVING FOR THOSE "IN CHRIST." (Vs 15-16)

Paul begins with the word "*Wherefore*," which means he is looking back on **the spiritual blessings that those who are in Christ possess.**

What Paul, in essence, is saying in verses 15 and 16 is this: "*Based on the spiritual blessings that those in Christ possess, after I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love toward the saints, I have continually given thanks for you.*"

Paul's expression here is that of one who has received a windfall of blessings who hears that others have also become the recipients of the same windfall of blessings! He is not jealous at all of them because he is also the recipient of the same windfall of blessings! He is personally blessed while at the same time others are personally blessed!

And he is overwhelmed with thanksgiving that others have been blessed with him!

Paul said a similar thing to the believers in Colosse in *Colossians 1:3-5*—"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, 5For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;"

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This Thanksgiving Was Based Upon Their Faith In The Lord Jesus!

The nine spiritual blessings that Paul spoke of in the earlier verses all come from being "in Christ."

What a joy it is to hear of someone coming to Christ! AMEN!!!

This Thanksgiving Was Also Based Upon Their Love For The Saints!

We saw in many of Paul's other epistles where he had similar prayers for others who had come to know Christ. Paul frequently gave thanks for those who were saved.

Today, however, I want us to focus on Paul's PRAYER FOR THOSE "IN CHRIST." After thanksgiving, Paul prayed for these believers! (VS 17-23)

**I. THE REQUEST FOR WISDOM AND REVELATION!
(Vs 16-18a)**

We know that this is not speaking of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is already given to those who know the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 8:9b)

Rather, this is referring to a disposition or an attitude that we need in our lives!

It is a disposition that we see illustrated in **Proverbs 2:1-11.**

It is a spirit that reaches out and grasps after wisdom!

It is a spirit that hungers and thirsts after wisdom!

It is a spirit that seeks and searches after wisdom!

Now understand that we cannot obtain this spirit or attitude of wisdom and revelation apart from the Holy Spirit! It only comes to those who have the Holy Spirit living within!

"Wisdom" gives insight into the true nature of things.

"Revelation" is the unveiling of the object discussed, which is God Himself.

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The purpose in having this wisdom and revelation is that we might know God better. (Vs 17)

This knowing is not referring to an abstract knowledge of God or objective facts about God, **but rather it is referring to knowing God personally and intimately!**

It includes an **intimate awareness of God's character and will!**

Philosophy says, "Know thyself," whereas Christianity says, "Know God through Jesus Christ." (Cf. John 17:3)

Paul's request for them to know God was because their hearts had been enlightened. (The word translated "enlightened" is in the *perfect tense* which indicates **a past action with continuing results.**)

(i.e. God turned the light on in our soul and the light is still on and it will stay on!)

THE REQUEST FOR WISDOM AND REVELATION...

II. **THE REASON FOR WISDOM AND REVELATION!**

Paul prayed that they might know God personally and now he gives the threefold reason for that prayer:

A. **That They Might Know What Is The Hope Of His (i.e. Christ's) Calling! (vs 18)**

Our **present hope** as believers **has its source in the past** when we were called to salvation!

As we've often said, the word "**hope**" in the Bible is a "*sure expectation!*" It is **the absolute certainty of a believer's ultimate victory in God!** *Colossians 1:5--". . . the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. . ."*

1 Thessalonians 1:3--". . .patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. . ."

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*1 Peter 3:15--"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of **the hope that is in you** with meekness and fear:"*

Romans 8:23-25

So, the reason for wisdom and revelation that Paul prayed for was:

That They Might Know What Is The Hope Of His Calling...

B. **That They Might Know The Riches Of The Glory Of God's Inheritance In The Saints! (Vs 18)**

This refers to our future. At the time of the resurrection of believers, God will inherit those whom He has purchased at a great price according to the riches of His grace.

This is the second of six times in Ephesians that Paul refers to "**riches.**"

In **verse 14**, Paul wrote that part of our "*inheritance*" as believers is our final redemption from the presence of sin!

Here in **verse 18** Paul is speaking about God's inheritance, the saints themselves!

Because of the glorious grace of the glorious Father, He will receive His glorious inheritance!

When we come to know God, we learn both who we are and the glorious position God has given us! He has made us His very own possession and heritage! (Cf. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**)

C. **That They Might Know What Is The Exceeding Greatness Of His Power To Us-ward Who Believe! (Vs 19)**

This relates to our present. The word "*power*" means "*a spiritually dynamic and living force.*"

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The power of God is directed toward believers!

1. **Paul uses three additional words to describe God’s power: (Vs 19b)**
It is “according to the working of His mighty power.”
 - a. **“The working”** speaks of *energetic power*.
It is translated from the same word we get our word “energy” from.
 - b. **“Mighty”** speaks of *God’s inherent strength or forcefulness*.
 - c. **“Power”** speaks of *power that overcomes resistance*.
(As in Christ’s miracles. The word translated “power” here is used only of God, never of believers!)

This accumulation of words for power underscores the magnitude of God’s “great power” that is available to the saints!

2. **Note the three manifestations of God’s power which are seen in Christ:**
 - a. **Christ’s Resurrection Power. (Vs 20-21)**
God’s energetic power which resurrected and exalted Christ in the past is the same power available to believers in the present! (Romans 6)

Think of what an amazing source of spiritual power this is for living the Christian life!

Christ’s ascension to the right hand of God involves His being exalted above every order of authority!

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- b. **Christ’s Dominating Power! (Vs 22a)**
Adam lost his headship over Creation when he sinned, but Christ has been made Head over all Creation!

This will be fully realized in the future!
- c. **Christ’s Controlling Power! (Vs 22b-23)**
Even though the final manifestation of Christ’s headship over all Creation will be in the future, He is now, in the present, Head over the fellowship of believers, the Church!

(Ephesians 4:15; 5:23 and Colossians 1:18)

Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church, and He is the one that fills His body with every blessing!

Conclusion

So ends this prayer of Paul. After demonstrating that the saints have all spiritual blessings in Christ, Paul thanked God for these believers’ faith in Christ and for their love for the saints and then he prayed that these believers would come to know God more intimately in order that they might know:

- 1) The past call of salvation that produced hope in their lives.
- 2) The future inheritance that God has in His saints.
- 3) The present power of God that is available to believers:
The same power that was manifested in Christ’s resurrection.
The same power that will be manifested in the future in Christ’s headship over Creation.
The same power that is manifested in Christ’s headship over the Church.

I thank God for those of you who are saved here today, especially those of you who demonstrate your love to the saints!

I pray that God will give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him!