

*A Prayer for the Saints*  
Ephesians 1:15-23  
Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Bethany Baptist Church  
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*...pray...*

God had delivered *Israel* from slavery in *Egypt* and was leading them to the *Land of Promise*. There, every tribe was to receive a *portion* of the land; an *inheritance*.

Well, *almost* every tribe...

**Numbers 18:20:** Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You shall have *no inheritance* in their land *nor own any portion* among them; ***I*** am your *portion* & your *inheritance* among the sons of Israel.

The *other tribes* would receive a *distribution*.

Faithful *Caleb* would carve out a *homestead*

Moses' successor *Joshua* would have a *place*

But *not* the priestly tribe of *Levi*. ... *No land for Levi*.

But hear this *insight* from **A.W. Tozer**:

"When the LORD divided Canaan among the tribes of Israel. Levi received ***no share of the land***. God said to him simply, '***I*** am thine part and thine inheritance.' and by those words made him ***richer*** than all his brethren, ***richer*** than all the kings and rajas who have ever lived in this world. .. the man who has ***God as his treasure*** has all things in One."

"***I*** am your part."

If you could only *pray* for **one thing**, what would you *pray for*?

**Turn with me to a prayer request.... Ephesians 1:15-23.**

Here is the **second long sentence** in chap1, w/ **169** Gr words. (Chap 1 only has **3 Gr sentences**: vv.1&2, 3-14, 15-23!)

That *first* long sentence was a *eulogy* to God's blessings & this *next* long sentence is a *report of Paul's prayer*. (Notice in **v.16** – *I do not cease giving thanks for you...I make **mention** of you in my **prayers***).

Paul was a *spiritual leader* – *par excellance* – he knows that spiritual leaders **pray** for their flock & the apostle had **one prayer request** that is basic for every *Christian* in every *church* in every *generation*.

Paul offers the **best prayer possible** for any & every believer (drill down into):

1. You need **to really know** God (vv.15-17). That's Paul's prayer.
2. Your heart needs to **clearly see** God (vv.18-19). As you see Him you'll know/love Him.
3. Your *confidence* needs to **be** God (vv.20-23). Confidence in God's power – His power to answer your prayers – *this prayer*.

**Paul's sentence is *long* but his prayer request is *fairly simple*...**

1. Let's *begin by reaching* into the *middle* of this *prayer report* and *extracting* the apostle's *main* prayer request:
  - a. V.19b – *the true knowledge of God...that's it!* That's what he's praying for – *your knowledge of God*. Paul's Greek word here is a rare & intense form of "knowing" = "*true knowledge*" or "*deep knowledge*."
  - b. Paul wanted every Christian to *deepen their knowledge of God*.
  - c. But I want you to think *carefully* about this w/ me – this prayer is *not* ultimately to know more *about* God, it's about knowing God *more, more deeply*.
  - d. In the Bible (OT/NT) the concept of *knowing* (wrt *relationship*) is very similar to the idea of *loving*.
  - e. Paul says the *ultimate goal* for you is *not* to be satisfied w/ just knowing *more* God-facts (*theology, etc.*), you need to know God *more intimately* than you ever *have*. Paul is praying for your *relationship* w/ God.
2. The apostle had **three** *motivations* in making this *critical request* for the Ephesian church.
  - a. The *first* we've already examined thoroughly vv.3-14.
    - i. Notice that Paul begins this prayer report (15) w/ "*for this reason*." For *what* reason? Well, he's *looking back* to vv.3-15.
    - ii. It's his wonderful list of *best blessings* that every Christian experiences: *election, predestination, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, revelation* (mysteries), *inheritance, salvation & security*.
    - iii. Now that you have *these blessings*, which all add up to your *salvation*, you need to know God **more &more &more** *deeply*.

- b. Paul's *second* prayer motivation (15) was the Ephesians' *reputation* for their **faith** in the *Lord Jesus*.
- i. Paul hasn't been in *Ephesus* for a few years, but he'd been *keeping track* of them! ... And the news he heard was *good!* 😊
  - ii. Time had proved that their initial *professions of faith* in the *Lord Jesus* were the *real deal!*
  - iii. The *gospel* teaches that salvation starts with trusting Jesus as both *Savior & Lord* (15). The Ephesians' consistent submission to Jesus as *Lord* proved that their *faith* in Him as *Savior* was *real*.
- c. The *third* motivation was their **love** for *all the saints*.
- i. *Love* (αγάπη) means to pursue someone's good, even when he doesn't seem *deserving* or *lovely*. I.e., Christian love is *unselfish* and *unconditional*.
  - ii. Paul writes that *all the saints* must love *all the saints* like that!
  - iii. Jesus taught that by our *love* for one another all the world will *know* we are His followers.
  - iv. The Apostle John plainly said that we *can't claim* to love *God* whom *can't see* if we won't love *God's people*, whom we *can!*
3. So Paul prayed that God would give every Christian an *attitude* (lit. their "*spirit*," v.17) that would lead to *knowing God better*.
- a. Spec., a deeper relationship w/ God is built on **two** components (17): *wisdom & revelation*.
  - b. *Wisdom* (Scripture) is *knowing God's truths* & how to *obey* them.
    - i. **E.g.** in Prov you read "*the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*" → i.e., the *first* principle to grasp is that *God exists & He's bigger* than you & you will *answer* to Him. That's *smart!*

- c. *Revelation* → “*uncover.*” Like *pulling back a curtain.* “*Revelation*” suggests that the really *life-changing truths* in Scripture must be *revealed* by God to be *understood* by men. The Bible is *not* some kind of *spiritual self-help* (DIY) *book* – you *need* God’s Spirit to make it *clear* & help you *apply it!*
- d. We need to stop and pull together our *spirit of wisdom* & our *spirit of revelation* & *deeper knowledge of God.*
- i. Christians *need to know God more deeply.* The goal is not accumulating *theological facts* but growing in a *loving relationship.*
  - ii. ***But...***you can’t *love* what you don’t *know.* So to love God more you have to understand God better. **2X**
  - iii. Where has God *revealed* Himself to us? What *informs* our *wisdom...*? Ultimately, *God’s Word.* God’s *wisdom* is *revealed* by God in God’s *Word.*
  - iv. Can you *love* someone you don’t *hang out* with? Can you *love* someone when you *don’t even know* what their *fav flavor of ice cream is?* Get my *point...*?
  - v. Do you recall the story of sisters *Mary & Martha* (Lk 10)? Jesus comes into their house to *teach* & Martha runs into the kitchen to *cook.* Mary *sits* at Jesus’ feet to *listen.* Martha *complains* to Jesus! Jesus clarifies the *priority:* “*Martha, Martha, you are worried & bothered about so many things, but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*”
  - vi. Don’t you suppose, beloved, if we spent more time *listening* to Jesus, *searching* God’s revealed truths, *growing* in wisdom & therefore *deepening* our relationship w/ God...the *chores* around here would *still get done?* ... Maybe even ***more*** chores would *get done!?!*

And so Paul prays that *God’s people* might ***know God better*** – ***love Him more deeply.***

**Another way to say this is that *your heart* needs to *see God*! Read vv.18-19a.**

1. The Bible loves this idea of your *heart*. It isn't just a reference to your *feelings*, the Bible defines your *heart* as the *command center* of every aspect of your *being* – *intellect & will & ... (yes) feelings*. I.e., your *heart* is all that you really are, on the *inside*...
  - a. Paul wrote that your *heart* has *eyes*! And he prayed that as God *opens the eyes of your heart*, you begin to *see Him more clearly & to know Him more deeply*.
  - b. The apostle outlined a *clearer & deeper* love of God w/ **three** *truths*. These are *not three* new *prayer requests*; they are more *details* of how we *know God better*. I.e. Paul was *building* on the *idea* (17) of a *deeper knowledge of God*.
  - c. Each *aspect* is introduced by the term “*what is*” (v.18 -2x; v.19a -1x).
  
2. *That you will know what is the hope of His calling* (v.18).
  - a. When you & I use the word “*hope*” we often mean “*wish*.” But in your *Bible*, “*hope*” is a *completely confident concept*! *Hope* is the *assurance* that God's *promise* will definitely *come to pass*, but *hope* also understands that often only God *knows the timing*.
  - b. And our *calling*, of course, is our *salvation*, which is the *result* of God's *choice before the foundation of the world* (read vv.4, 5). Paul was simply *reiterating* what he had *written* in Rom 8: “*For those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would become the first born among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified*.”
  - c. Beloved, as you grow more *confident of*, and more *focused on*, your *salvation (calling)* you will love God more *deeply*.

3. *That you will know...what is the wealth of His inheritance.*

- a. This is the *third* reference to *inheritance* in chapter 1 (11, 14), which is clear indication that our *eternal inheritance* is an important *truth*. Paul linked *inheritance* to *our adoptions* as God's children, which he then connected to God *predestining us* to salvation (11, 5).
- b. What kind of an *inheritance* waits for the children of a *king*? Paul uses **two** descriptions: *glorious & rich*.
  - i. Your *inheritance* will be **glorious**. Because it's from God it will reflect God's *glory* → *all He is & all He does*. Just as the *skies* are glorious & the *mountains* are glorious & the *oceans* are glorious... your *inheritance* is glorious!
  - ii. Your *inheritance* will be **riches**! You can't begin to *calculate* how *vast* that *treasure* will be.
- c. And again, the *heirs* of God are the *saints* of God. Christian, as the *eyes* of your heart gaze on the *wealth* of your inheritance, you will *love* God more *deeply*.

4. **V.19** – *That you will know...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.*

- a. How *powerful* is God!?! Bible teachers point out that Paul used **four** different words for *power* in v.19.
- b. **δυναμις** – *power, capacity*
- c. **ενεργεια** – *supernatural power at work*
- d. **κρατος** – *mastery, the ability to overcome*
- e. **ισχυς** – *strength, inherent power*
- f. You probably *won't* remember the details of those **four** terms, but never forget that *God's power is available to every believer...to you!*

When your *heart* sees the **certainty** of your salvation & the **riches** of your inheritance & the **power** of God aimed at Devil like a *heat-seeking missile* in your defense, you will **love** Him **better than ever!**



**It's a *simple prayer*: to *know* God better, to *see* Him more clearly. Is God *able* to *do* that for you?**

1. **Yes!** You can be *confident* that God is *able*! Paul closes his *prayer report* by building on the idea of *God's power* w/ several *demonstrations* that should *comfort* the *heart* of every *saint*...
2. God was able to *raise* Christ from the *dead*!
  - a. The *prophets* predicted it, *Jesus* previewed it, *angels* announced it, and our mighty God *brought it to pass*!
  - b. Do you remember that *resurrection announcement*: “*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen, He is not here!*”
  - c. And the **NT** promises: *if we have become united w/ Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection* (Rm 6:5).
3. God was able to *seat* Christ at His *right hand*.
  - a. Where is Jesus now? He is at the place of *honor*, in Heaven's *throne room*, at God's *right hand*.
  - b. From there Christ *intercedes* for the saints & serves as our *Advocate*.
  - c. Paul writes (Col 3) *Therefore if you have been raised up w/ Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died & your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

4. God was able to *subject* all things to Christ's rule.
  - a. In v. 21 Paul places the *resurrected & enthroned* Christ above a list of His *spiritual enemies* in their dark offices as *rulers & authorities & powers & principalities*.
  - b. He is above every *name* you can name. At name of Jesus every knee will **bow** & every tongue **confess** that *Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.
  - c. His rule is *forever & ever*.
  - d. Lest you miss Paul's message: **everything** is under Jesus' feet. This *battlefield* picture is *clear*: the *King of glory* is (will be) an absolute *victor & uncontested ruler*.
  - e. And the Bible promises God's people (Rm 16) that *the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet!*
  
5. God was able to give Christ to the *church* as its *head*.
  - a. The *living & ruling & victorious* Messiah, *head of all*, is *head of the church*.
  - b. We are His *body*, the display of His glory in the *world*.
  - c. He is the *fullness* of the Church because He fills *every saint* **in** the Church...
  - d. ... and this very moment, by the power of God, Christ fills *you!*

Is God able to *answer* this prayer? ...*to really know Him*...

Is God able to *enlighten* the eyes of your *heart*?

Is He able to *deepen* your love for Him? *Nothing else matters more!*

**Rest assured, beloved, He is able! Just ask!**

**...pray...**