

A Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom and Enlightenment

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 1:15-23 – *“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

Background Notes

In the first half of this chapter we had a list of the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. Remember, not *earthly* blessings, but *spiritual* blessings. And remember, not spiritual *gifts*, but spiritual *blessings*. In the second half of the chapter, the apostle Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would be able to comprehend, appreciate, and appropriate these spiritual blessings. He prayed for spiritual wisdom and spiritual enlightenment, especially in light of these great spiritual blessings. Note the “therefore” in verse 15; “therefore” – I’m praying for you in view of the list of your spiritual blessings. *“Therefore I ... do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.”*

Before we look at the content of this prayer, let’s mention one more point about the spiritual blessings that are listed in the first half of the chapter. Notice that the spiritual blessings are contained in 3 stanzas, and each stanza closes with a refrain in praise of God’s glory! Verse 6, *“to the praise of the glory of His grace.”* Verse 12, *“to the praise of His glory.”* Verse 14, *“to the praise of His glory.”*

Furthermore, notice that each stanza of this doxology emphasizes a different person of the Godhead. In stanza 1 (v3-6), *God the Father* is praised for electing us. In stanza 2 (v7-12), *God the Son* is praised for redeeming us. And in stanza 3 (v13-14), *God the Holy Spirit* is praised for sealing us. Hopefully this outline will help you to appreciate the seven spiritual blessings that are listed in the first half of the chapter.

Doctrinal Point

Believers are capable of being spiritually enlightened.

At the end of chapter 3 we'll see that the apostle Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would be *spiritually strengthened*. Here in chapter 1 he prayed that the Ephesian believers would be *spiritually enlightened*. Look at verse 18: *"that the eyes of your understanding, or your hearts, would be enlightened."* In Scripture, the *heart* is considered the very center and core of our being. Because this chapter is Scripture, or God's Word, this prayer is not only Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, but also for us. He prayed for God's will for us, that we would be spiritually enlightened as to our spiritual blessings. And we *are* capable of being spiritually enlightened.

Let's look at the specific requests in his prayer and then apply them to ourselves.

1. Concerning our knowledge.

Verse 17: *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."* The request is not that we would know more facts about God (*the knowledge of Him*) but that we would know Him better *personally*. Knowing facts about God is very important, but God not only wants us to know *about* Him, He wants us to know Him in a personal way. It's possible to know God better. Just as you can get to know a person better, so you can get to know God better. But you may say, "Wait a minute! I can't see God like I can see another person!" Well, isn't it true that you can get to know a person you've never seen just by writing letters? You may say, "yes, but God hasn't written me any letters." Oh yes, He has - and here it is - the Bible! It's God's big letter. We can read His letter to us and communicate with Him in prayer. Because believers are capable of spiritual enlightenment, we can pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to get to know the Lord better. Why not pray that prayer today?

2. Concerning our hope.

Verse 18: *"that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling."*

What is the hope of His calling? The hope of His calling is not just the fact that we are saved forever, but that we would be fully conformed to the image of Christ and share in His glory forever. And it's a *sure* hope.

It's not called "a hope" because we hope it's true, but we don't know whether it's true or not. It's not like hoping for good weather for your vacation. No! It's a sure hope. It's only called a "hope" because it's yet in the future.

3. Concerning His inheritance.

Again verse 18: *“that you may know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”* His inheritance! In verse 11 mentioned *our* inheritance. Here in verse 18 we read about *His* inheritance. What’s that all about? Well, the particular aspect of our inheritance that we saw back in verse 11 was that we would share in Christ’s glory forever. In fact, because we are God’s purchased possession (v14), we will not only share in Christ’s glory forever, but we will actually enhance Christ’s glory. We will display Christ’s glory! In that way, we are His inheritance.

So, the apostle prayed that we would not only realize that we have a fabulous inheritance to look forward to in Heaven, but that we would realize that we are actually *God’s inheritance!* We are His special people, and we will bring glory to Him forever. Has your heart been spiritually enlightened to that wonderful truth?

4. Concerning His power.

Verse 19: *“that you may know... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”* God wants us to know about His great power. Not just *about* the incredible magnitude of His power, but that His great power is working on our behalf! God wants us to know, understand, comprehend, and *experience* His great power. Have you experienced His great power at work in your life?

There are two sub-points about God’s power:

a. God’s power was demonstrated in the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Christ.

Verses 20-21, *“the power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. Far above all principalities, the power, and might dominion, and every name that is named.”* Notice that this demonstration of God’s power presented here is not God’s power in creating the world, or in doing the great miracles of the Old Testament. Rather, the demonstration of His great power is seen in the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Christ.

Why? In this demonstration of God’s power, the problem of sin was overcome once and for all. Christ is now exalted far above any and every other power forever. Creation and miracles in the Old Testament were “child’s play” compared to this great demonstration of God’s power – the work of Christ over sin. And the point here is that *this same power is working on our behalf.* When you’re worried and anxious about your health and financial security, get the big picture! God’s great power is working on our behalf!

2. God's power was declared in the headship of Christ over creation and the Church.

Verses 22-23: *"and He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* Christ is not only head over creation; He is head over the Church.

And He's not only head *over* the Church - He is head *of* the Church, because the Church is the Body of Christ. Notice the tremendous truth of verse 23, *"the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* A head needs a body, and the body complements the head. As the body of Christ, we will complement the Head, our Lord Jesus, who is the source and sustainer of everything. As the body of Christ, we will complement, enhance, and display His glory forever. Have you realized this great truth? Are you spiritually enlightened? Believers are capable of being spiritually enlightened.

Practical Application

Are you a strong Christian, both vertically and horizontally?

Are you a strong Christian, both vertically and horizontally? What does that mean? Look back at verses 15 and 16: *"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."* Do you see the vertical and the horizontal here? Your faith in the Lord Jesus – that's the vertical. Your love for all the saints – that's the horizontal. The Ephesian believers were strong in both directions. They had faith in the Lord Jesus - the vertical - and they had love for all the saints – that's the horizontal. And notice - not just *some* of the saints, but *all* the saints!

What about us? Some Christians have a strong faith in the Lord, but they have very little love for their fellow believers. They're weak on the horizontal. And there are some Christians who are big on love for and fellowship with other believers, but small on their solid faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. They're weak on the vertical. We need both! God desires us to have both. God wants us to be strong Christians, both vertically and horizontally.