



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

A Theological Prayer of Praise

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Church Family, prayer is essential to our relationship with God since prayer is the way that we communicate with God. In fact, prayer is a means that God uses to accomplish his purposes. What I mean by that is this: God is in control over everything, and he has a plan that will be accomplished; yet, our prayers change reality. They do not merely change us; they change reality. For example, God tells Moses after Israel worships the golden calf that he is going to destroy Israel (Exodus 32:7-10). Moses, however, prays and God relents (Exodus 32:11-14). What just happened?



God had a sovereign purpose, and Moses' prayer was the means to God accomplishing that purpose. Pray changes reality because God uses our prayers to accomplish his plans!

Several years ago, I read Ephesians 1:15-2:10 and something important happened. I realized that the context of this amazing passage – and this passage is one of the most amazing passages ever written – is prayer. We all know that the theology of this section of the Bible is incredibly rich. Ephesians 2:8-9 has probably been memorized by millions of Christians. The beauty and purity of these verses are in the context of prayer. There are no lines between prayer and theology for Paul. We learned in Ephesians 1:3-14 that the line between theology and praise is minimal, so now we learn that the line between theology and prayer is too minute. Theology, which is talking and studying God's character, the praise of God, and prayer to God all flow into one another in the writings of Paul.

Church family, our prayers should be like Paul's. Our prayers should be a reflection of God's character. Biblical truths about God must permeate our prayers. As we meditate on these truths, our prayers should morph into praise. Let's strive to model our prayers after Paul's: prayers that our theological praises.



The main point of this passage today is that Paul prays for the church so that they might have a deeper knowledge of God. In other words, Paul prays for the church of Ephesus so that their eyes might be enlightened to incredibly glorious truths about God.

My hope today is that we would be encouraged to pray as Paul prays. In fact, my hope today is more specific. I want each one of us to commit to praying like Paul. Each day this week, I want you to pray as Paul did for a different person in our church family. Pray that they would understand more deeply 1) the hope of God's calling, 2) the riches of God's inheritance, and 3) the power of God's might.

THE CHURCH'S FAITH AND LOVE (V.15)

“*15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,*

Paul is motivated to pray for the Ephesian church because of their faith and love. Now, faith in Jesus and love for the saints are the proper consequences of being blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). In Ephesians 1:3-14, we read about incredible blessings that God gives to his people, and the church has responded properly: they have trusted in Jesus.



They have not stopped trusting in Jesus; rather, their trust in Jesus has led to love the church family. This is what should happen. God blesses us, not for ourselves, but so that we might bless others, especially other believers. There is always an-other-centeredness to our blessings, and the Ephesian church gets this. They have been blessed so they trust Jesus and love one another!

PAUL PRAYS FOR THE CHURCH (V.16)

“ *16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*

This faith and love caused Paul to pray for them, and we notice several important things about Paul's prayer for this church. We notice that Paul prays for the church constantly. Paul does not cease to pray for them. Next, we learn that Paul's prayers for this church are characterized by thankfulness. When Paul remembers this church in his prayers, he thanks God for them. This is not always the case with prayer. There are times when we remember someone and an immediate response is not to thank God for them. This is a sad reality, but this reality is not present with Paul and this church. When Paul remembers this church, he gives God thanks. This is because of their faith and love



In fact, Paul had experienced the love of this church profoundly. In Acts 20, we read about the friendship that Paul had with the elders from this church. This church loved Paul deeply, and Paul gives thanks to God for them.

PAUL PRAYS FOR THE CHURCH ON PURPOSE (EPHESIANS 1:17-23)

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that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.



Paul has a very specific goal in mind when praying for this church. He prays that they would grow in their knowledge of God. Now, Paul has already discussed in detail important things about God. He has reminded them that God is blessed and that he blesses his people richly. Because the church has responded properly to this truth – faith in Jesus and love for the saints – Paul prays that they would know these truths more. He wants them to dive even deeper into the knowledge of God because Paul knows that if they do, their faith in Jesus will become stronger as will their love for the saints.

Paul explains the purpose of his prayer in verse 17. Paul prays so that the church would have spiritual wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. In short, he prays that they would know God more deeply. Maybe this is self-evident, I hope it is, but notice how important thinking rightly of God is. Knowledge of God is essential to our walk with God and our enjoyment of God since our view of God will have an immediate effect on our thoughts and actions. For example, if you think that God is not that powerful, you and I will be filled with utter anxiety when living amid a global pandemic. Why? because we are not convinced that God has control over the virus. Similarly, if you think that God gives grace to sinners reluctantly, you will be



afraid to confess your sin. Our view of God changes everything, and Paul knows this. Therefore, he prays that the church would have spiritual wisdom; he prays that they would have a deeper knowledge of him. Paul mentions three specific things that he wants them to know: 1) the hope of God's calling (Ephesians 1:18), 2) the glory of God's inheritance (Ephesians 1:18), and 3) the greatness of God's power (Ephesians 1:18-23).

1) KNOW THE HOPE OF GOD'S CALLING (EPHESIANS 1:18)

“*18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*

First, Paul wants the church to know the hope of God's calling. Hope is a word that we often misunderstand. We often equate hope to a wish, but this is not the biblical notion of hope. When a biblical author speaks of hope, the idea is not a mere wish, but the eager expectation that the thing hoped for will happen. The hope of our calling, therefore, is the eager expectation that we will live forever with God as his children in his kingdom.



Now, the Ephesian church did not always have this hope. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:12-13 that at one time the members of this church were without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to God. These people previously had no hope. Yet, something incredible happened. In Christ, these Ephesians were brought near through the blood of Christ so that they are now citizens, saints, and members of God's house (Ephesians 2:19). Although they had no hope of being near to God, Christ has given them hope by bringing them near. A Christian's hope, thus, is the eager expectation that we get to be near God forever. Although we did not always have this hope, we now do.

Our hope, like all of the spiritual blessings discussed in Ephesians 1:3-14, comes from God. Notice that Paul describes hope according to God's calling. He could have said "our calling." He does this in Ephesians 4:4. This would have been true, but the focus would have been on us. He calls us. Paul does not emphasize that aspect of calling here. Rather, Paul emphasizes that our hope is rooted in the fact that God calls us. "His calling" stresses the utter control of God. He is the one who calls, and he is the one who gives us hope – the eager expectation that we will live forever with him in his kingdom is secure for us because it is "his calling."

Let's pray for our church family this week that we would know the hope of his calling.



2) KNOW THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

Second, Paul wants the church to know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. The riches here is grace. Paul has already described the pinnacle of God's glory as his grace (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14), and he will describe soon that grace is immeasurably rich (Ephesians 2:7). Paul is praying so that the church would know how deep, how rich the glory of his inheritance is.

Church family, God's grace is rich, vast, and deep. God has a lot of grace and he loves to share it with sinners like you and me. In fact, the goal of creation, redemption, and eternity is that God would be exalted through praise that springs forth from delight. We get to participate in this purpose when we experience grace for grace breeds delight, and delight overflows in worship.

God has an abundance of grace because grace is kindness. Grace is the gift of favor even though we do not deserve it. Grace is a display of God's goodness, and let's remember, God has the perfect union of all good things in himself infinitely. We see God's



goodness perfectly when we see how the members of the Trinity serve one another. When we the Father serve the Son, we see infinite goodness. We also see this goodness expressed as grace when we see each member of the Trinity serve us, sinners. I am sorry, but whenever I think of God serving you and me, I think, “How provocative!” I wonder, “Is this true?” Yes, yes, it is true. Our God came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

Paul wants the church to know that they will experience the richness of God’s glory for eternity. They have an inheritance. Paul discussed this spiritual blessing in Ephesians 1:11-12, and here he prays so that the church would know how vastly rich this blessing is. In fact, for eternity we will know and enjoy this reality more as made clear in Ephesians 2:7. Paul is praying that they would understand their inheritance in eternity more fully now.

Last, let’s notice how Paul describes the inheritance. He calls it “his inheritance.” Again, the idea here is that God gives the inheritance. We do not earn this inheritance through hard work and ingenuity. Rather, this inheritance is in Christ and it comes from God. It is his, and he gives it to us as a gift.

Let’s pray for our church family this week that we would know the riches of his inheritance. ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

3) KNOW THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT

“*19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Third, Paul wants his readers to know the power of God’s might. God is mighty, and the might that he works in us was also worked in Jesus. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (20), seated him in the heavenly places (20), placed all rulers and authorities under his feet (22), and made him head of the church (22-23). Wow. God is mighty and Paul wants the church to know the power of his might.


Church family, this is the God who fights for us. This is true; yet, we often forget the might of our God. Forgetting God’s power leads us to seek protection in a variety of other authorities. Money for example promises protection to those who have it. Yet, its



protection is minuscule. Human relationships are good and given to us from God. We should feel a level of security in these relationships even a high level of security in some, but sometimes these relationships will be troubled. Sin and circumstances can trouble even the best relationships; and in these times, if you have anchored your ultimate security in them, you will be erratic. Church family, our protection is ultimately anchored in the God whose might is powerful!

Brothers and sisters let's think about the image here. Jesus rests his feet on the authorities of this world. Every government, every powerful army, and every powerful leader is subjected to Jesus, the ultimate authority. And this authority is the head of the church. Do you see the imagery? We are the body of Christ. Therefore, we are the feet resting on top of the authorities of this world. The image here is that Jesus has conquered all of these rival powers and so, in Christ, we have conquered them too. Therefore, we do not need to subject ourselves to these powers any longer. We do not need to seek protection in money, success, or any government. God is our authority, and his power is at work in us. We will talk more about this next week when we cover Ephesians 2:1-10.

Let's pray for our church family this week that we would know the power of his might.





CONCLUSION

God has blessed us with incredible blessings. Paul's discussion of these blessings in Ephesians 1:3-14 should lead to praise God for his glorious grace, on the one hand, (Ephesians 1:6, 11, 13) and prayer that the church would know this grace more deeply on the other (Ephesians 1:15-16). Church family let's continue to praise God for his amazing blessings, and let's also pray. Notice how Paul is not praying for himself here. He is praying for the church. Church family, I challenge you to pray for one member of our church each day this week. Pray for that member that they would know more fully God's incredible grace. Pray like Paul that they would know 1) the hope of God's calling, 2) the riches of the glory of God's inheritance, and 3) the power of God's might. I will ask you about this next week so let that be an encouragement to pray this week.

Non-Christian friends, our God is incredibly blessed. He is good and has in himself the complete and perfect union of all good things. He is blessed! Moreover, he loves to share his blessings with us sinners. Would you come to Jesus today? If you would trust him and turn from your sins today, then he promises to bless you immensely. If you have begun to trust Jesus today, please reach out to us. We would love to come alongside you and disciple you for your joy and God's glory. ●●●●●



LET'S PRAY

God, give us abundant grace to pray like Paul this week. Help us to be diligent to pray for our church family – at least one member a day for this upcoming week. Help us to pray that they would know more deeply the hope of your calling, the riches of your inheritance, and the power of your might. Do this please for the joy and maturity of our church so that we might prize the unity we have as members of Christ's body. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.



LET'S PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Ephesians 1:17-23 Prayer Calendar

IN THE BOXES BELOW WRITE THE NAME OF SOMEONE FROM 11TH STREET BAPTIST (VISITOR, FAMILY MEMBER, REGULAR ATTENDER, MEMBER, OR STAFF) AND PURPOSEFULLY PRAY FOR THEM ON THAT DAY USING EPHESIANS 1:17-23 AS YOUR GUIDE.

SUNDAY

JOHN SMITH

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

- RE-READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23
- PRAY THAT THEY WOULD KNOW THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING.
- PRAY THAT THEY WOULD KNOW THE RICHES OF HIS INHERITANCE.
- PRAY THAT THEY WOULD KNOW THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT.

CONTINUE PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY -DOWNLOAD THE ECHO PRAYER APP. THEN SEARCH FOR OUR CHURCH'S FEED

