

From Spiritual Blessings to Spiritual Prayer

Ephesians 1.15–23

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • February 2, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2020

Prelude:

I. The spiritual blessings that Paul listed to start off the letter

A. show that God is for us to the max.

B. He has opened up the treasure house of spiritual blessings for us.

1. This shows His undying love.

2. It shows His relentless pursuit of man to bless him.

a) Of course, He laid out all these things

b) before we ever knew Him.

(1) As we were going about our lives,

(a) even while we were enjoying our sin,

(2) He was paving the way for beautiful things to come into our lives.

II. Do not let this make you focus on yourself,

A. thinking how wonderful you must be, because

B. the truth is we had corrupted ourselves with sin.

1. No, let this make you see the wonders of our God.

2. Focus on Him, not on self.

a) You have been blessed.

b) Bless God and bless others.

III. Notice the transition now:

“After talking to the Ephesians about the Lord, he talks to the Lord about the Ephesians.”

– Jon Courson, page 1230

Persuasion:

I. **Ephesians 1.15–19 • Paul's First Prayer for the Ephesians**

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 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, 18 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, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...

A. How does that compare with your prayers?

1. What is the content of your prayers?

a) Let me encourage you to write down this passage, or

b) write down the ideas of it,

(1) then add it to your prayers.

(2) If you are like me,

(a) you will remember this for a while and then

(b) forget it.

i) That is why I encourage you to write these things down.

ii) You will have it for years to come and

(1) your prayers will improve dramatically,

(2) then you will see the results.

2. How did the mind of Paul work to utter such a prayer?

B. What two things about the Ephesian Christians led Paul to make this prayer?

1. He heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and

2. he heard of their love of all the saints.

a) The Ephesian Christians were excelling at Christianity,

(1) placing their faith in the Lord and

(2) loving all the saints, their brethren.

- b) Let us not just pray for the weak and struggling, but
 - (1) let us also pray for those who are doing well and
 - (2) here is why:
 - (a) Who does Satan go after the most?
 - (b) Does he target the weak?
 - i) Of course, he goes after them, but
 - ii) he really wants to bring down those successful in their faith and love.
- C. What is so magnificent about faith in the Lord Jesus
 - 1. that Paul would utter such a prayer for the Ephesians?
 - 2. Compare it with the rampant idolatry present in the Roman Empire.
 - a) Is faith in the Lord Jesus less magnificent today?
 - b) What makes faith in Him so wonderful today?
- D. What was it about their love that moved Paul to make this prayer?
 - 1. They loved all the saints.
 - 2. It was not about their nation alone.
 - a) They loved the saints everywhere.
 - b) Truly, we are in a kingdom greater than any nation.
- E. How often did Paul give thanks for them, mentioning them in his prayers?
 - 1. Do you give thanks for brethren, for the church?
 - 2. Why should we give thanks for our brethren?
 - a) They teach us.
 - b) They guide us.
 - c) They pray for us.
 - d) They look after us.
 - e) They accept us.

- f) They are family.
- 3. The church has been a major factor in making me what I am today,
 - a) minus my faults,
 - b) which are all my own.
- F. For what did Paul pray?
 - 1. That God would give them
 - a) a spirit of wisdom and
 - b) a revelation in knowing God.
 - 2. That by having their eyes enlightened:
 - a) they could know the hope of God's calling,
 - b) they could know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance, and
 - c) they could know the exceeding greatness of God's power toward them.
- G. Do you get frustrated by Christians who do not live as they should?
 - 1. Have you thought about asking God to give them a spirit of wisdom?
 - 2. What they need is wisdom and
 - a) they need it from the Creator of the heavens and the earth.
 - b) However, in this case these Christians were already doing well.
 - (1) They obviously had wisdom.
 - (2) Could they use more wisdom?
 - (a) I came to Savage Street with 22 years of preaching experience.
 - (b) Yet, I have made some colossal mistakes.
 - i) I still need wisdom.
 - ii) Would you please pray for me that I have a spirit of wisdom?
- H. Can those who know God know Him more and better?
 - 1. Those people would quickly say, Yes.

2. Pray for them that they increase in their knowledge of God.
 - a) They will discover that there is no end to what we can know about God.
 - b) The more you know of God, the more you want to know.
- I. Notice that by having a spirit of wisdom and a revelation in knowing God,
 1. the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened.
 2. What does it mean to have the eyes of your understanding enlightened?
 - a) When we understand,
 - b) we can see something.
 - (1) It is as though a light has come on.
 - (2) Light from God enables us to see things.
- J. What was it that Paul wanted the Ephesians to know?
 1. That they would know the hope of God's calling,
 2. That they would know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance, and
 3. That they would know the exceeding greatness of God's power toward them.
 - a) If we are already saved, why do we need to know these things?
 - b) What does knowing these things do for us?
 - (1) We should never forget our hope because it keeps us focused.
 - (2) We need to remember from whom we are inheriting for that will move us to continue.
 - (3) We should know the great power that is behind us and for us.

II. Ephesians 1.20–23 • God's Mighty Power

20 ...which 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 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. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is

His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

A. See how Paul transitions from the prayer to what God did in Christ.

B. Going from verse 19 to verse 20,

1. How did the working of God's mighty power manifest itself?
 - a) He raised Jesus from the dead,
 - b) He seated Jesus at His right hand,
 - (1) He placed Jesus far above all other forms of authority,
 - (2) He put all things under the feet of Jesus, and
 - (3) He gave Jesus to be head over all things to the church.
2. What is precious about the name of Jesus, and
 - a) all of His names,
 - b) that His name is far above all other names?

C. Is the exaltation of Jesus limited to this age?

1. He is exalted over everything associated with this age.
2. However, Paul revealed that Jesus is far above all in the age to come.
 - a) If He is God,
 - b) the only thing that could be above Him is the Father.
 - (1) See First Corinthians 15.27 for the sole exception.
 - (2) The next time you see a carpenter,
 - (a) imagine him being exalted above everything,
 - (b) then you will begin to get a picture of the exaltation of Jesus.

D. What is the church?

1. It is the body of Christ.
 - a) By that is meant
 - b) that though Jesus is not personally here anymore,

- (1) He does have a representative on the earth, and
- (2) that representative is the church.

2. The church is His fullness.

a) It is as though He was on the earth.

b) We continue to serve as He served when He was here.

(1) Is the church less than Christ when He was on the earth?

(2) Granted we do not have the powers of deity, because

(a) we are not God, but

(b) in other ways we are everything that Jesus was.

i) Consider just how much the church is His fullness.

ii) John 14.12 shows that we do not lack anything:

12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

– John 14.12

(1) How could we possibly do greater works than Jesus?

(2) He meant in quantity not quality.

(a) However, this shows

(b) that the church is His fullness.

E. The mention of the church here has a connection

1. with the exaltation of Christ,

2. hence with Paul’s prayer.

a) Can you see it?

b) What position does Christ hold in regard to the church?

(1) The church is His body.

(2) That makes Him the head of the church.

F. The picture that Paul paints

1. is of Jesus at the very top.
2. He is above all other authorities.
 - a) Notice Paul's line: "gave Him to be head over all things to the church."
 - b) The NIV has it: "appointed him to be head over everything for the church."
 - (1) Jesus has authority over everything for the benefit of His church.
 - (2) I will cover this more in my sermon this morning.

Exhortation:

- I. Pray for others for their spiritual growth.**
- II. See the church as the greatest thing on earth.**