

"Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Ephesus"

Part 1

Ephesians 1:15-23

Introduction: In our study of Ephesians we have been working our way through chapter 1:1-14 and it was in those verses that Paul spoke of the riches which these believers had in Jesus Christ. They were blessed with ALL spiritual riches IN CHRIST, they were holy and without blame, they belonged to the royal family of God, they were accepted IN CHRIST, they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, they were forgiven of all their sin debt, they had an eternal hope, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

As Paul has laid all of this Truth out for these Gentile believers to absorb, he then reflects upon his own life and tells them how it is that he prays for them. It is not a long prayer, but it is a very rich prayer as we shall see.

I. The Motivation for the Prayer

Notice Ephesians 1:15-16

There is much in these two verses for us to see. We need to first of all notice the word "Wherefore". This word sweeps back over all that Paul has just stated concerning the riches which the believers have in Christ. It is because they had been blessed with all these riches that motivated Paul to pray for them.

He also states here that he had heard of two characteristics about their lives.

1. He had heard of their faith.

As Paul travel in his mission to spread the Gospel word had returned to him concerning the faith of these believers at Ephesus. Now when he speaks of how he heard about their faith he is not talking about just hearing about their profession of faith. He tells them he heard of their faith. That tells me that as others watched them they could see in their lives the results/fruits of their faith. Their lives had changed, and others could see the change and it was this change that was reported back to Paul.

Application:

We who know Jesus Christ as our Savior should be living our lives in a way that others can see our faith.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

True saving faith cannot be hidden. It is going to be manifest in the way in which we live our lives.

Hebrews 11:7-9

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Faith moved Noah to build the ark long before it had ever rained on the earth. Faith moved Abraham to leave the thriving metropolis of Ur to go to a land he had never seen before.

The point is that TRUE saving faith will be visible to those around us.

James 2:14-20

¹⁴ What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

¹⁵ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

¹⁶ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

¹⁸ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

¹⁹ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

²⁰ But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Paul told these believers at Ephesus that he had heard of their faith. People should have the very same testimony about us. Our faith should be seen in the way in which we live of lives.

2. He had heard of their love for the saints.

Notice Ephesians 1:15

The faith in Jesus Christ was also known by the love which they had for all the saints. This is one of the ways in which their faith was known. This was a mark of genuine faith.

Application:

This is also proof today of genuine faith. There are a many people who claim to know Jesus Christ, but they have no love for the saints, or they want to pick and choose who they will love. TRUE faith will love as Jesus Christ loved and that is unconditionally.

1 John 3:14-18

¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

¹⁵ *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

¹⁶ *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

¹⁷ *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

¹⁸ *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Love for fellow believers is the mark of TRUE genuine faith. From what John writes here, we can see that TRUE genuine faith is not just a feeling. It is a choice and that choice will manifest itself in SACRIFICE.

We can be filled with sound teaching and Biblical doctrine but if we don't have love it means nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

³ *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

II. The Prayer

Notice Ephesians 1:17

This petition could be the heading for the prayer. As we move on, we shall see that Paul will get more detailed in his prayer. But what he says here is so very important.

He prays for them to have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him/God. This is not a request for them to receive the Holy Spirit for they already have the Spirit with which they have been sealed by.

The word "SPIRIT" used in this verse speaks of an ATTITUDE OF WISDOM. Now this SPIRIT of WISDOM comes from the Holy Spirit and here Paul prays for these believers to have an attitude of wisdom. Let me word this in another way then you will understand this better. He is praying to God that they would UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH THEY POSSESS IN JESUS CHRIST. The SPIRIT OF REVELATION would be a deeper knowledge of God Himself. This is by the way exactly what eternal life is.

John 17:3

³ *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

So, Paul is praying that they will know how rich they are in CHRIST and that they will seek to have a deeper knowledge of God and His Son IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. The end of this verse is very important. He prayer for their KNOWLEDGE of their riches to increase and their KNOWLEDGE of God to increase. The attitude of WISDOM is to know how to apply the KNOWLEDGE.

Application:

This KNOWLEDGE and ATTITUDE OF WISDOM AND REVELATION is so very important in the life of everyone of us who are believers. Many believers have no idea of the RICHES that they have in Jesus Christ. There are two results for lacking this KNOWLEDGE and WISDOM.

1. They live defeated Christian lives.

Let me show you what Peter wrote to his readers.

2 Peter 1:2-4

² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Many believers spend their lives in a battle with a besetting sin. It may be temper, jealousy, lust, coveting or something else, and they pray that God would give them the strength to get past the sin. They don't understand that God has already given to us everything thing we need to live godly lives and escape the corruption that is in this world.

Romans 7:15-19

¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

This is the state that many believers live in and they never get out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8 where we see the means for victory.

Romans 8:2-3

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Because they do not have this knowledge, they live defeated lives. The lack of knowledge robs them of the joy which they could have in their lives.

2. They search for satisfaction in the things of this world.

Here is the path that many believers walk on for most of their Christian lives. They do not know the Truth of who they are IN CHRIST and they do not understand that TRUE satisfaction is only found in walking close with Jesus Christ. This lack of knowledge causes many problems.

James 1:8

⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

This is what happens to these people, they become DOUBLE MINDED. They try to live for the stuff of the world, and they try to live for God. They are double minded. Let me show you the remedy which James points to.

James 1:9-11

⁹ Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

¹⁰ But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

¹¹ For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

The remedy for those who are trying to live for God and for the world is to be reminded that the brother of low degree will be exalted in glory and the rich man will fade and pass away. If he never gets saved, he will suffer for eternity.

Proverbs 3:13-15

¹³ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

¹⁴ For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

When a believer knows what they have in Christ then it changes the way they view this world. We are then able to see how empty the things and the stuff of this world really are.

True fulfillment is Jesus Christ plus nothing.

Conclusion:

This knowledge and this spirit of wisdom and revelation is available for everyone of us who know Jesus Christ. But you must WANT IT. You must DESIRE IT. You must SEEK IT.

Colossians 3:1-4

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

² *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

³ *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

⁴ *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

1 Corinthians 2:9-12

⁹ *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

¹⁰ *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

¹¹ *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

¹² *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

Let us have the mind and the heart of Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 7:25

²⁵ *I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:*