

"Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Ephesus"

Part 2

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.

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

Their faith in Jesus Christ was also known by the love which they had for all the saints. This LOVE was a mark of TRUE 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

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.

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**.

II. The Prayer Part 2

Notice Ephesians 1:17

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 prayed 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.

Now we are going to continue to look closely at the prayer of the Apostle for these believers at Ephesus.

Notice Ephesians 1:18

Here Paul prays for the EYES OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING TO BE ENLIGHTENED. Paul had just prayed for their knowledge of God to be increased. Now here we are going to see that he desired that they would have more than HEAD KNOWLEDGE of God.

The prayer here in 1:18 literally means, "THE EYES OF YOUR HEART". Now some may ask if that really makes a difference? The answer is "YES".

The HEART here refers to the EMOTIONS, THE MIND and THE WILL. This was the center of emotions. Paul desired that the TRUTH of who they were IN CHRIST would be a heart knowledge and not just a head knowledge. This would take the work of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of their heart.

Let me show you something that Jesus said:

Matthew 13:13

¹³ *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because **they seeing see not;** and **hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.***

Paul did not want this to be true of the believers who received this letter. He knew they would have the head knowledge of who they were IN CHRIST, but he wanted this Truth in their hearts. The reason why he desired this was because if this TRUTH became a heart knowledge it would change the way they lived. It would motivate them to walk in the light of who they were IN CHRIST. It is what we believe in our heart that controls our lives. Let me show you some examples:

Hebrews 11:7

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.

Noah believed that God was going to bring a flood and this Truth moved him to work for 120 years to build the ark.

Hebrews 11:8-9

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:

Abraham walked away from a thriving city to go to a land he had never seen before. He believed God and it changed his life.

Now let me show you what the writer of Hebrews said concerning these people.

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Let me show you what the writer of Hebrews said about others.

Hebrews 11:32-39

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

³⁴ *Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

³⁵ *Women received their dead raised to life again: **and others** were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

³⁶ *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:*

³⁷ *They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;*

³⁸ *(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

³⁹ *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

It was their belief in the Truth that changed their lives. So, it is also true in our lives. When the Truth of who we are IN CHRIST gets into our heart it changes the way we live. We stop living for the world and begin living for eternity.

Now let us notice the details of Paul's prayer.

1. He prays about the past.

Notice Ephesians 1:18

He prays that they would know the HOPE OF THEIR CALLING. He wants them to know what they have been called into. He prays that they will understand the hope which they have in Jesus Christ.

The word HOPE refers to a JOYFUL EXPECTATION.

Let me show you what we who are believers have been called into.

1. The hope of the rapture.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

¹⁵ *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

2. The hope of a glorified body.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

3. The hope of an eternal home.

John 14:1-3

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4. The hope of the Kingdom.

Revelation 20:1-6

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

² And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

³ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark

upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

⁵ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

⁶ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

5. The hope of the eternal state.

Revelation 21:1-5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

² *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

³ *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

⁴ *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

⁵ *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

Conclusion:

In all of this I am reminded of what we have been called OUT OF.

1. God's Judgment and Wrath

John 3:36

³⁶ *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

2. Eternal Damnation

Revelation 20:15

¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.