

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for June 24, 2018

A Prayer for Knowledge
Ephesians 1:15-18

I. The grounds for prayer (1:15)

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

- Paul appears to give three essential grounds for prayer based upon verse 15
- First, the spiritual blessings of our salvation provided grounds for Paul's prayer
 - Everything covered in verses 3-14
 - Chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, insight, inherited, sealed
 - "For this reason"
- Second, the faith of the Ephesians provided grounds for Paul's prayer
 - The Ephesians are joined with Paul as those who have been lavished with the riches of God's grace in their lives
 - The Ephesians responded to the word of truth and gospel of salvation with faith that brought the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and their guarantee of eternity with God
- Third, the love of the Ephesians for fellow believers provided grounds for Paul's prayer
 - The gospel message, the response of faith, and the manifestation of that faith in love for one another prompts Paul to pray

II. The gratitude in prayer (1:16)

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

- As Paul moves to discuss the details of his prayer life, we learn a few more aspects about prayer
- First, prayer is frequent
 - Paul says, "I do not cease to give thanks for you"
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:17 "pray without ceasing"
 - "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." - Martin Luther
 - Prayer is not a single moment or action
 - Prayer is not like checking in with a superior at work once/quarter
 - Prayer is not some formality
 - Prayer should be interwoven into all of our activities, conversations, and planning
 - There is not an area of life where the practice of prayer is exempt
 - Prayer ought to be proactive, instinctual, second nature and reactive

- Prayer is not spiritual medication for the believer to consume “as needed”
 - Utilized on hard days and forgotten on good days
- Second, prayer contains gratitude
 - Paul elaborates, “I do not cease to give thanks for you”
 - Not only does Paul have a regularly consistent prayer life, but Paul’s prayer life regularly and consistently incorporates the thankfulness and gratitude
 - Prayer cannot be limited to the level of request
 - Prayer must be opened up to include our thankfulness and gratitude toward God; otherwise, we are simply asking and demanding from God without recognizing the constant stream of good flowing from His hand into our lives
- Third, prayer is focused on others
 - Paul adds the statement, “remembering you in my prayers”
 - Throughout his writings, Paul models the persistent practice of prayer for others
 - This is maturity and this is leadership
 - It is more than just having fond thoughts of someone
 - It is more than merely reminiscing on the old days
 - Paul took his relationships to the believers in all the churches to the next level by remembering them in prayer
 - It reminds us of Samuel’s leadership in the nation of Israel, even when the nation ignored Samuel and decided they wanted a king
 - 1 Samuel 12:23 “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you...”
 - Thus, prayer is one of the most obvious, necessary and practical ways that we can be ministering to one another

III. The gift in prayer (1:17)

17 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,

- When it comes to the details of how we might specifically pray for others, Paul gives us an example in verse 17
- First, we see that prayer acknowledges the Gift-giver, who is God alone
 - Paul prays to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”
 - It is obvious that prayer must be offered to God
 - Paul specifies the God of His prayers as the One who has revealed the promised Messiah
 - Paul’s prayers are not arbitrarily offered up to some higher power
 - Paul prays to the One who has accomplished all the glories of salvation that he has already described in our previous verses

- And Paul prays to the One who can and will do far more abundantly than we ask or even think as he will state later in chapter 3
- It is only through Christ that we have peace with God the Father and prayer demonstrates that it is only through Christ that we have access to God the Father
- Second, we learn the content of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians and others
 - What a wonderful opportunity to discover how someone prays
 - It is always a blessed moment when we learn from others in the faith
 - This morning, we learn from Paul's own example of how he specifically prays for others
 - What has been the focus and thrust of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians?
 - What topics and themes does Paul emphasize in prayer?
 - Physical safety for the Ephesian church?
 - There was a riot and response of persecution when Paul ministered there in Acts 19
 - Physical health for the Ephesian church?
 - Physical wealth for the Ephesian church?
 - Growth in numbers of those in the Ephesian church?
 - General success for the Ephesian church?
 - How does Paul pray for the Ephesians when he remembers them in prayer?
 - He prays that they might have wisdom, revelation and knowledge of God!
 - What a difference compared to what I would argue are the most common prayer requests of the American church today!
 - If one were to compare the most common prayer requests of the American church with regular prayers of Paul that we have recorded in the New Testament, I think we would see a massive disconnect
 - I think if Paul were to hear how the American church was praying 2,000 years after him, he would be shocked!
 - The American church has fixated upon physical health, safety and success, while Paul regularly prays for the early church to grow in their love and knowledge of God
 - We desperately need this model from Paul in prayer this morning
 - Paul prays for the Ephesian church to receive "the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,"
 - To be clear, Paul is not praying that God gives the Ephesians the Holy Spirit, as if they did not already have the Holy Spirit
 - Paul already declared their sealing and indwelling by the Holy Spirit when they heard the gospel and believed the message of Jesus Christ

- Instead, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit who indwells the Ephesians might increase their wisdom, revelation, and knowledge of God
 - “Rather, he means that the Spirit, who is already within them, will fill every part of their being and enlighten them more fully in the truths of God.”¹
- The eyes of the hearts of the Ephesians have already been enlightened when they were introduced to Christ and saved
 - They received the knowledge of the good news about Christ and they went from being spiritually blind in their hearts to spiritually enlightened
- Paul did not see the conversion of the Ephesians as the end game
- He earnestly prayed for God’s Spirit to continue enlightening the Ephesians to more and more of the wisdom, revelation, and knowledge of God

IV. The goal of prayer (1:18)

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,

- Paul begins to explain his goal behind praying for the Ephesians to increase in their knowledge of God
- Paul’s goal is that the Ephesians’ increased knowledge of God will lead to a better grasp on three particular things
 - Their future hope, God’s future glory, and God’s present power
- First, Paul explains his goal of the Ephesians understanding “the hope to which he has called you”
 - God had obviously called all those in the Ephesian church who were now following Him
 - Paul defended the concept of God’s calling already by speaking of how God chose and predestined the Ephesian believers for salvation
 - Paul elaborates that their calling in the past points to a hope in the future
 - Paul desires for the Ephesians to know that future, eternal hope
 - He must be referring to the hope of eternal life as he had already described the guarantee of that hope when they were sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)
- Second, Paul explains his goal of the Ephesians understanding “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 37.

- Paul prayed for their increased knowledge of God in order to understand their future hope AND God's future glory
- Paul describes God's future glory as God's inheritance in the saints
- Paul wants the Ephesians to understand the glory of God that will be revealed in the moment when He takes the saints as His inheritance for all eternity
- This is a reminder of what Paul has stated earlier—we have a future inheritance in God and He has a future inheritance in us (the saints)
- Why does Paul pray in such a way for such an end?
 - Why does Paul pray for increased knowledge of God?
 - Why does Paul desire the Ephesians to fixate upon the eternal destiny for believers and for God?
- Does this prayer really address the needs in our lives?
 - Consider any problematic or difficult circumstance that you might encounter over the course of your life...
 - How might your increased knowledge of God impact the way you handle that situation?
 - Your knowledge of God has everything to do with how you will handle the trials of life!!!
 - If you do not know who God is, then you will definitely be far from knowing what He is doing
 - When you know the sovereignty of God, the patience of God, the faithfulness of God, the love of God, the righteousness of God, etc., you will not be sidelined so easily as you try to live a life bringing honor unto Him
 - There is no better way to pray for someone!