

**3-19-23**

**Sermon: Paul Prays for the Believers**

**Scripture: Ephesians 1:15-23, CTW Psalm 95**

**Hymns: 623, 629, 636**

**Theme: Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesus applies to us as well because it asks that they fully know and experience the great power that is at work in all of us...the same power that raised Christ from the dead...and put him in power over everything for the church...is that power in you as his church?**

**I. Paul is thankful with an increasing burden to pray.**

Here he is advocating prayer as a church and for the church.

**A. Prayer for maturity...**

That our hearts would be gripped by God. That our eyes would see the eternal power; and that our lives would reach their full purpose in Christ. The lord said in **Matthew 21:13** "My house shall be called a house of prayer,"

This is our prayer isn't it? That we would be in our time the church that prays.

**B. The church in the book of acts was a church that prayed...**

1. **Acts 1:13; 2:1.** On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them, the 120 praying in one accord for 10 days.

2. **Acts 4:24, 31.** The church prayed and the place was shaken-- when Peter and John reported the Sanhedrin's threats.

3. **Acts 6:6.** The church prayed over the seven men appointed to serve.

4. **Acts 13:1-2.** Church was praying and fasting, when the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to go on their first missionary journey.

Hudson Taylor, Christian Missionary to China, said this about the prayers of the church:

"Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power."

## **II. Prayer for Knowledge for the Church**

**A. The Christians that first received this letter had a great reputation.** Paul says in verses 15 and 16, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;"

This would be a great thing for any church to have said of them that they had great trust in Christ and a great love for each other.

These beginning verses say such wonderful things about what God has provided us in Jesus Christ. **God has chosen us from the beginning of time to be a part of His family.** God sent His own Son to be our ticket to heaven by His death on the cross. God has poured out on us wisdom and insight and that we are part of a great inheritance, culminating in the glories of heaven.

God through Christ has implanted in our very being a part of His divine essence through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It should be enough to make you jump up and yell- **Hallelujah!**

**Paul knew we were a great distance from being perfect but in Christ we are set on the road to eternal greatness.** We

should not get a big head about all this – in reality it is very humbling because we are so undeserving.

Some of the people receiving this letter were veteran Christians; they had developed much in their knowledge of God and in Christian character; their reputations were wide spread.

**B. Yet we learn here that spiritual growth is always of vital importance.** If you are satisfied with your present spiritual growth as a Christian then you could be on the road to spiritual death!

**We should never be satisfied with our present condition-** there is always more to learn, more to do, more to be, more people to reach out to, more lives to be changed, more creative opportunities to dream, more ground to cover, more challenges to accept to and more wrestling with Satan! Amen?

**Paul realizes the need for regular growth within any church and mentions this in his prayer for them.** Paul's 1st prayer request is in verse 17 "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."

**Paul does not pray that they have wisdom** to carry on business activities or the knowledge to achieve great things for themselves or how to solve the economic problems of the Roman Empire. **He initially prays that they might know God better.**

The Ephesians along with many other Christians at this time came out of a heathen background. They had a very limited knowledge of the one true God. The minds of the Gentiles were filled with foreign gods and a philosophical love of wisdom.

**They not only needed to grasp the new knowledge about Jesus but they needed to unlearn and disregard their pagan ideas and thought patterns.** Wisdom and knowledge from God were of great need to the early church. They did not

have a NT like we do today. They had to depend on the Apostle's teachings, some circulated letters and orally transmitted stories.

**C. For us today the wisdom and revelation of God has been delivered once and for all- we simply call it the Bible.**

We do not need anything else. We do not need any extra revelations, visions, opinions, books or hidden false gospels. We do not need the Koran, or the Book of Mormon, or some TV evangelist that acts like he or she has a direct line to God.

**Jude 1:3** Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

**2 Peter 1:3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

**Revelation 22:18, 19** I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Do not mess with the Bible, it doesn't need anything added to it or taken away from it!

### **III. Prayer for Wisdom for the Church**

**Next Paul prays that these Christians might be aware of 3 things:** The hope of God's calling, The riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints and, The greatness of God's power toward us.

**A. The Hope of God's calling could refer to many things, we have been called for a number of things. The Bible says we are called by God.**

**Eph 1:18** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what **is the hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

**Eph 4:1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling** with which you have been called.

**Col 3:15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

**1 Timothy 6:12** Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

**1 Peter 2:21** For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

We should not forget that God summons us here as His church for a number of purposes...ALL HIS. **As Christians we must choose His agenda, not ours.** That is difficult to do when you are praying about the direction of the church and planning programs, because the worldliness and culture of the people you are trying to attract can lead you in a bad direction.

### **B. We must be aware of the glory of God's inheritance.**

**Eph 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...**

This is an awesome thought- God considers Himself rich with us as His people. It is with utmost love that God is able to say of us, "They are mine."

As kids, we feel special when our parents introduced us to someone. It is like they are saying you are special, you are important to them.

**Remember this – You are special to God.** That also means other believers are special to God as well. When we tear each other down, we are messing with someone that God's considers special. I'm not talking about joking and kidding. I am talking about when we are malicious and cruel.

We are God's children and He may know all about us-including the bad stuff- but He will not take too kindly to hearing us talking trash about some of His other children.

**C. We must realize the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us.**

**Eph 1:19** "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

All of God's power can be used for our well-being. God cares for us. It is by God's power we are saved. It is by God's power that we will be raised from the dead. Nothing is more powerful than the Jesus we serve.

**IV. As His Praying Church , we must own up to Paul's closing description of Jesus in Verses 20-23.**

**Eph 1:20-23 His Mighty Strength** which He brought about 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 every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection 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.

**A. As Christians we need to be in prayer that we could be the church He calls us to be. 1Timothy 4:12** says "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

We need to be moving toward victory as the body of Christ.

**Young people- and old alike-** let us take to the field of life because we serve the one with all the power. He is coming back to rule this "sin soaked" world and gather all the nations to Himself and we want to be on the winning side. And if take the blows, tackles and tumbles of this world to get there then count us in!

**B. Before We Close, the Bible gives us a Post script...**

We are in a unique situation here because we can check to see how the believers in Ephesus, to who Paul wrote this letter, made out. When we turn to Chapter 2 of Revelation, we see the letter that Jesus instructs John to write to the believers in Ephesus:

**Revelation 2:1-5** "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

"These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

**Warning! Don't Ever think that the instructions of Jesus are easy and painless.** Here we see that because of our human nature, despite the best of intentions, the church can, by its actions, or lack thereof, grow cold in our love for Jesus Christ, who suffered and died that we may live.

**Therefore Paul's words ring truer today than ever before.**

That is our truth! Let Us own up to it. Let us Pray!