

## “A Prayer for Christians”

May 26, 2024

Ephesians 1:15-23

### I. Introduction

When someone tells us of some heart wrenching thing in his or her life, many of us are guilty of saying something like, “*I’m so sorry to hear about that. I wish there were something I could do for you--something more than just praying for you.*” Often, after those words come out of our mouths, we recognize that we have gotten our priorities all mixed up. The most important thing we can do for one another is to lift up a heart-felt prayer first and then consider what God would have us do as His hands and feet. We know in our hearts that without prayer and God’s intervention, nothing we can do can be expected to work.

Paul has just written to Christians about the amazing and unlimited blessings believers have from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They have been chosen by God, redeemed through the blood of the Son, forgiven, and adopted as God’s sons and daughters which includes an unbelievable inheritance as co-heirs with Jesus Christ. And when they made Jesus their Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit came to live in them as a seal and a guarantee or taste of what is to come. But then, rather than launching into some type of teaching of how to use these blessings, i.e., doing something, the first thing Paul did, like we should do, was to go to God in prayer. This is what we see in today’s Scripture: Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, which is really a prayer for all Christians. Paul started out with praise to God regarding the Ephesians and then he brought to God his requests for these and all Christian.

### II. The Praise

Although Paul was in prison in Rome, he had heard reports from friends who visited him and from letters sent to him about the believers in Ephesus and the surrounding cities. He heard two things that were fruits or proofs of their conversion; two important elements of a Christian’s life. So, before he brought his requests, Paul **had** to praise God for these changes in people’s lives.

**A. First, they had “faith in the Lord Jesus.”** From the beginning Paul emphasized that saving faith includes making Jesus Lord of one’s life. In [Romans 10:9](#) he explained, “**If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**” Having faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and making Him Lord of your life are both necessary for salvation. Faith is more than just a set of words; because of the Lordship of Jesus Christ saving faith leads to action. [James 2:17](#) says, “**Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**” The faith of the Ephesians was evident in what they did and didn’t do. Through their actions, their faith was visible to others.

**B. Second, they had “love for all the saints.”** True salvation produces true love—agape love; a sacrificial love. In [John 13:34](#) Jesus said, “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**” [1 John 4:7](#) says, “**Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.**” The lordship of Jesus Christ and the Christian walk of the Ephesians was seen in the outpouring or fruit of their faith and their sacrificial love for one other. [Turn to 1 John 3:16-18.](#)

### **III. The Requests**

**A. That they might know God better** After praising God for the witness of the Ephesians, Paul brought his requests for them to God. *First, that they might know God better.* Since we are made in God’s image ([Gen. 1:26-28](#)), the better we know God, the better we will know ourselves and each other. But in our own strength, in our humanity, we cannot really know God—[Romans 3:11](#) says, “**There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.**” To know God, we need help from Someone who knows God intimately. [Turn to 1 Corinthians 2:9-12.](#) Earlier Paul wrote that “**having believed, you were marked in him, i.e., Jesus Christ, with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**” ([Eph. 1:13](#)). The Holy Spirit is in the heart of every believer to help him know God better and to reveal God’s truth. Jesus explained it this way in [John 14:26](#), “**The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all**

things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” Paul’s prayer was that Christians be given “a spirit of wisdom and revelation” to understand and apply the truths and blessings of God.

It is not enough to know God as one’s Savior. That’s just the beginning. [1 Peter 2:2](#) says, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” Every Christian needs to know God intimately as Father, Friend, Guide, Shepherd. The better we know Him, the more satisfying our spiritual and our physical lives will be. God’s Word, the Bible, can be used as a sword to defeat the enemy, but its primary purpose is that we can know God better. The Holy Spirit uses God’s Letter to His children, the Bible, to help them grow in knowledge and understanding of God.

[2 Timothy 3:16](#) says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

**B. That they might know the hope in God’s calling** As well as praying that Christians would come to know God better, Paul’s desire was for believers to fully realize what their new identity or calling means. Paul’s second request was *that they might know the hope in God’s calling*. In this case, hope isn’t just a wishful thought—*I wish it would snow tomorrow*. Hope is the assurance of what will happen in the future—[Hebrews 11:1](#) says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to understand the hope—the assurance—that belongs to all believers because of this calling from God. Paul has already said in so many words that, “*God not only chose to save you, but He chose to save you before the creation of the world, ages before you would have the opportunity by His grace to choose Him. That’s who you are!*” If you are a Christian, you are someone special! Every Christians can be sure of God’s continual love and care—for the rest of his or her life on earth and on into eternity! In [Hebrews 13:5](#) God says, “*I will never leave you or forsake you.*” In [Matthew 11:28](#) Jesus said, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” [Romans 8:28](#) says, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” This is hope in the present.

Believers also have hope—assurance—for the future. Jesus is going to return for His church. In John 14:2-3, Jesus told His disciples that: “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Turn to 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

This hope of the future as well as the present should encourage each one of us to grow in our Christian walk. Turn to 1 John 2:28-3:3. This is God's calling for every believer: as we wait for Christ's return that we live like Christ today—that we walk “in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

**C. That they might know God's riches** Paul went on to pray “that you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” That they might know the riches of God's inheritance. Paul could be referring to the inheritance every Christian has as an adopted son or daughter and co-heir with Jesus Christ about which he has already written. But Paul could also have been referring to God's inheritance in Christians—in us. God looks on each Christian as part of His great wealth. Just as a man's wealth brings glory to his name, so God will get glory from the church by the things we do that bring praise to His name; in Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” It doesn't stop there, 2 Thessalonians 1:10 says that when Christ returns, He will be glorified in us.

Paul's request that the believers might know God's riches is really 2-sided. First, that they understand their riches through their inheritance from God as joint-heirs with Christ, and second, that they understand that they are part of God's riches—as he wrote in Ephesians 1:6 all “to the praise of his glorious grace.” Christians are an inheritance for God.

**D. That they might know God's power** Finally, Paul prayed that believers might know God's power. In describing this power, Paul used the Greek word *dunamis*—from which we get the word dynamite. This explosive power, this “incomparable great power” is given to every believer. It isn't for

everyone, it's only for Christians, for those who believe. When we are saved and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we receive all of God's grace and all of His power.

Notice that Paul didn't pray for power to be given to believers, but that they "may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe." He prayed that the Holy Spirit would give them an understanding of the power—this dynamite—they already possess in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Later in Ephesians, Paul will challenge all believers to use that power in faithful living for their Lord.

Paul wanted the believer to know the greatness of God's power that is available to every Christian, power they already have; just before He ascended into heaven in [Acts 1:8](#) Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This *dunamis*—this power from the Holy Spirit---is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in His ascending into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God. No authority or power—human or spiritual—is greater than that of Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God. He is "far above all," and no enemy can ever overcome Him. He is all-powerful—He is omnipotent, and we are co-heirs with Him! That same power is available to each believer to bring praise to God.

Paul closed his prayer with a practical application. Believers are part of the church which is Christ's body and Christ is the Head. Physically speaking, the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly. Christ is our spiritual head. He controls His spiritual body and keeps it functioning properly. Through the Spirit, we are united to Him as a member of His body. Because of this union, spiritually we share His power in His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. As Paul will write in [Ephesians 2:6](#), God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." The power of the Holy Spirit, through the resurrected, ascended Christ, is available to every Christian by faith. His power is "for us who believe."

#### IV. Conclusion

[Ephesians 1:3](#) says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." It is grace that supplies all wisdom, hope,

inheritance, and power of God, but it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that opens all this to believers. God has given us the Holy Spirit as “**a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.**” We aren’t limited by a lack of blessings from God; we are limited by our faith in God.

*A story is told of the late newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst, who invested a fortune collecting art treasures from around the world. One day Mr. Hearst found a description of some valuable items that he felt he must own, so he sent his agent abroad to find them. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were in Hearst’s warehouse already. Hearst had been searching frantically for treasures he already owned. Had he read the catalog of his treasures, he would have saved himself a great deal of money and trouble.*

Sadly, there are Christians who are searching frantically for something more in their Christian life: more of Jesus, more of the Holy Spirit, more blessings, more power. Paul was explaining that at the new birth, every believer has everything in Christ. There is no need to search for anything more. **2 Peter 1:3** says, “**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**” Believers have everything they need for life.

Every Christian has many specific needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual—for which he must ask the Lord’s help. But no Christian needs, or can have, more of the Lord or of His blessings and inheritance than he already has. We don’t need to pray for more of God’s power, strength, or peace—we have it all already. We need to pray for a better understanding and ability to use what we have been given. Our understanding and abilities will increase as we read and study God’s Word and listen to the Holy Spirit within us. **Turn to Romans 12:1-2.**