

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Prayer of a Disciplemaker

Ephesians 1:15-23

1998

Introduction

The "doxology" of verses 3-14 in Ephesians reveals how richly blessed we are in Christ! Paul now moves on to share what he has been praying for on behalf the Ephesians. Paul uses a similar format in his epistles to the Philippians and Colossians (Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-12).

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 reflects God's heart for the believers—the heart of the Bridegroom for the Bride! This prayer is really God's prayer for us! Paul's concerns for the Ephesians is also applicable to us today!

I Paul Expresses His Disciplemaking Heart

A. He acknowledges the evidence of their conversion

1. Their faith

Col 1:3-5 "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel."

2. Their love (the expression of authentic faith)

Gal 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

B. He acknowledges His love for them

1. Through thanksgiving

God calls us to have a grateful heart for others

Phil 1:3 "I thank my God every time I remember you."

1Thes 5:16-18 "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

2. Through prayer

Remembering = "making mention". Paul was interceding for them by name.

Rom 1:9-10 "God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times;"

Phil 1:4-5 "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now ..."

Col 1:9 "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

II Paul Prays That They Might Know God (17)

A. He prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation

Wisdom = "Knowledge of God's will exercised in skillful living."

Revelation = "Spiritual insight and discernment"

1. That they might know God better

To "know" God better is of utmost importance. It is not merely an intellectual pursuit, but the fullness of knowledge acquired through personal acquaintance.

Col 1:9 "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

a. Superior to human wisdom, glory, or might

Jer 9:23-24 "This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD."

b. To know God is to have eternal life

John 17:3 "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

c. Failure to know God will result in eternal punishment! - 2 Thess 1:7-9

2 Thess 1:7-8 [The Lord Jesus] "will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

This knowledge comes through intimate association, not casual awareness.

Many people intellectually know "about" God, but He wants us to truly know "Him". Through the inspired Word of God we can allow the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" to give us that "saving knowledge" of God Himself!

B. He prays for enlightened hearts

2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Rom 1:21 "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

1. That they might know the hope of their calling (1:18a)

Hope = "Desire with expectation"

This hope is not just a vague and wishful longing, but an assured expectation based on the present possession of the Holy Spirit as our guarantee and because of the faithfulness of God who has promised us an inheritance.

a. We have been called through the preaching of the gospel

II Th 2:14 "He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

b. We have been called out of darkness into God's wonderful light

1 Pet 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

c. We have been called to His kingdom and glory:

1. Present experience

2 Tim 1:8-9 "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace."

2. Future expectation

1 Thes 2:12 "We urge you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

The Holy Spirit enlightens our eyes through the Word of God! There is no reason for us to be ignorant of our wonderful "hope"!

2. That they might know the riches of God's inheritance (1:18b)
 - a. What Paul has already told us
 1. The fact that we were adopted as His sons - Eph 1:5
 2. The fact that we have obtained an inheritance - Eph 1:11
 3. The fact that we have received the Holy Spirit as a guarantee - Eph 1:14
 - b. What Paul is going to tell us
 1. The exceeding riches of God's grace in the ages to come - Eph 2:7
 2. How Gentiles can be "fellow heirs" - Eph 2:12-13; 3:7

3. That they might know His great power (1:19-20)

Power (Dynamis) = "Explosive capability or potential"

Working (energeia) = "Effective or operational power"

Strength (kratos) = "Power exercised in resistance and control"

Might (ischys) = "Bodily strength or muscular force"

Incomparably = In another sphere altogether

- a. A "power" described as:
 1. Incomparably great
 2. Shown toward us who believe
 3. A demonstration of God's mighty strength
- b. The same power God exerted in:
 1. Raising Jesus from the dead!

Acts 2:24 "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

How can it be said that such power is available to us who believe?

We'll see in the weeks ahead how this great power:

Made us, who were spiritually dead, alive in Christ - 2:1-6

Raised us up with him in the heavenly realms - 2:6

Strengthens us in our inner being so that Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith - Eph 3:16

Provides us with immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine - Eph 3:20

Enables us to be strong in the Lord and to take our stand against the enemy's schemes - Eph 6:10-18

III Paul Reveals the Exaltation Of Christ

A. God has seated Him at His right hand - Ps 110:1; Col 3:1

Ps 110:1 "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Col 3:1 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

Not primarily to be thought of as God's physical right hand, but as a symbol of authority.

1. Above all others

Heb 1:3-4 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

Eph 3:10-11 "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

2. Above every title given

Phil 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

B. God has given Him all authority

Matt 28:18 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

1. All things are under His feet

1 Pet 3:21-22 "... Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand-- with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him."

2. He is head of the church

Rom 8:35-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

a. His body

Eph 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."

b. The fullness of Christ

Col 2:9-10 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."

Eph 3:17-19 "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

The church should be the full expression of Jesus Christ in the world

Conclusion

Remember Christ's words to the church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7). They had lost their first love.

The foundation of marriage is a love relationship, not a partnership. Out of a couple's love relationship blossoms the fruit of joy, children, etc. Similarly, the foundation of our relationship with God is love. God isn't looking for employees; He's looking for His bride! He has a destiny for you and will reward you for what you've done. Satan hates us and wants to keep us from knowing God. Know that your Savior loves you!

Take a moment and use Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 to pray for each other right now. Ask each other, "*What's one thing that is distracting you from being more in love with Christ?*" Be brief in sharing, then pray for each other.

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