

And This is How You Should Pray

REVIEW: Last week we started to dig into the meat of Ephesians 1. As we did we saw the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. That in itself was a special and amazing phrase: “In Christ.” It is our location of operation, and we compared it to being in the ocean, subject to the ocean’s currents, and waves. To be honest, we could contemplate being “in Christ” our entire lives and still not fully understand it because it is still one of the wonderfully mysterious things about our faith.

INTRO: So, to begin this morning, I want to talk with you about gift giving. Think about your Christmas list for a minute. How many of you can identify someone on your Christmas list that has everything, and they are impossible to buy for? How many of you are someone on someone else’s Christmas list that has everything and is impossible to buy for?

I brought along a few suggestions for that person that has everything. [PICTURES OF CATALOG ITEMS]

1. For those with a whimsical side - This little gondolier
2. For the cat lover in your life - this automated kitty liter box (look like from space)
3. For the dog lover in your life - This rain coat for your little friend
4. For the man in your life that you think has every tool imaginable - This thing that surpasses a Swiss Army Knife
5. My personal favorite - R2D2 - need I say more
6. Or how about this - the ultimate massage chair - read description

TRAN: We start this way today because last week Paul just described the impossible to buy for people that have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. What do you get someone like that? They have been chosen by God to be holy and blameless! They were adopted into God’s family! They are recipients of His grace! They received redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins, an understanding of the mystery of His will in Christ! And the icing in the cake: They received the Holy Spirit AS a guarantee their inheritance until their full redemption! WHAT can you possibly ask God to give them after listing off all that they already have???

That is what we are going to find out today - because Paul goes on to ask for more for them.

Ephesians 1:15-23 (p. 1173-4)

I. “For this reason” - v.15-16

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- A. What is about to happen is that Paul is going to link all of what we talked about last week
 - 1. All the spiritual benefits
 - 2. All the glories of the grace of God
 - 3. All of that is about to get linked to what Paul is about to do starting with his opening words - “for this reason”
 - B. “For this reason” goes back to the whole paragraph of praise, but more specifically to the last two verses
 - 1. So, because you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit
 - 2. Because you have the Holy Spirit as a guarantee to receive the FUTURE inheritance
 - C. And because I have heard such great reports of your faith and love for the saints
 - 1. In other words the reports are confirming that you really have received the Holy Spirit
 - a) And let’s stop there
 - b) It is in our actions that we confirm our faith is genuine
 - c) When we sacrifice for a brother or sister
 - d) In the case of the recipients of this letter, when their faith is tested by the false religions and occult practices famous in that area of the world
 - e) THAT is how we display that our faith is real
 - (1) Does not mean that we will never sin
 - (2) Just means that our faith wins out and gains strength as we go along
 - 2. Because these reports are showing your faith, I am praying for you just the same as if I were there with you
 - D. Paul says “I have not stopped giving thanks for you...”
 - 1. Obviously this is hyperbole - as is pray continuously, and others in Scripture
 - 2. His point though is obvious: You are always in my prayers
 - E. One other important thing to take note of is on a macro level
 - 1. When you read Paul’s prayer here you may notice a common Christian triad - that of faith, hope and love
 - a) In the first two verses we see faith and love
 - b) In the rest of Paul’s prayer we see hope
 - 2. Another grid you will pick out quickly is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- II. Interlude:

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- A. One of the things I want you to notice is that Paul's prayers recorded in Scripture make for great prayers to pray for others
 - 1. There is actually a practice called "praying scripture" and these are great places to start
 - 2. Let me recommend a book to you from D.A. Carson entitled *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*
 - a) The book walks through several of Paul's prayers in the Bible
 - b) It gives valuable insights as to what Paul was asking for in each one
 - B. These prayers are some of the passages I turn to when encouraging the teens - especially on mission trips
 - 1. Each of them has something great to say, and can be so wonderfully encouraging
 - 2. When you hear someone read the scripture to you and it says, "I keep asking that God...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better."
 - a) How awesome is that
 - C. Which is another thing about Paul's prayers - it is an example of a praying person
 - 1. And Paul did not simply pray for health or well-being
 - 2. He did not only pray for them to know God better, but he got specific in how he asked God for them to know Him better
 - 3. It really is a challenge to us in our prayer lives when we take Paul's words to heart
- III. The prayer - vv. 17-19a
- A. Paul starts by asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father
 - 1. This is all a description of God
 - 2. In fact, the NIV takes away some of the force of what Paul is saying because it is not "glorious Father" but "Father of glory"
 - a) The first is a description of the Father
 - b) The second implies that all things glorious come from the Father
 - B. The request is that they would receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know Him (the Father)
 - 1. Now, they already received the Holy Spirit - we saw that in v. 13-14
 - 2. So why do they need to receive the Spirit again?
 - a) Some have thought this is a "second blessing" of the Spirit
 - (1) Which it is not
 - (2) The Spirit is not given in special manners to some and not to others (1 Cor. 2:12 - the Spirit is given so we understand what God has freely given us)

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- b) What Paul is asking for is for them to be enlightened - for them to see what is already theirs
 - (1) In the Greek, the way the sentence structure indicates that wisdom and revelation are descriptions of one in the same Spirit
 - (2) We are not talking about extra things He gives, but what He IS bringing into their lives
- C. And the goal is wonderful: that they may know Him better!
 - 1. The great thing is Paul is about to go into what constitutes “knowing Him better.”
 - 2. But part of knowing Him better rests on an enlightened heart
 - a) He asks that their hearts be enlightened
 - b) In other words, and as you will see as we go through the prayer, that they may understand in their hearts the full implications of those spiritual blessings that we looked at last week
- D. So Paul delineates three things He wants them to know (and how to better know God)
 - 1. First, know the hope to which He has called you
 - a) Here is hope - in the faith hope and love triad - here is our hope
 - b) The first question is what is that hope?
 - (1) The answer is found in the previous verses
 - (2) We were called (chosen) to be His, to be His children, adopted into His family, and made holy by His Son, Jesus Christ
 - (3) Not only that, but the fact that we have the Holy Spirit as a guarantee, a deposit, a down payment in the inheritance that WILL BE COMING
 - (4) The hope is our salvation from our sins, our adoption into God’s family, and our eventual glorification when we reach heaven and are brought into the family in the fullest sense possible
 - c) And we see again God calling us
 - (1) This is in no way a personal calling - like, “Well, you sure nailed your calling in this life.”
 - (2) This is God’s call to each of us for salvation - our invitations into the family, so to speak
 - 2. Second, Paul wants us to know the riches of his glorious inheritance in His holy people
 - a) The way this is phrased in Greek can mean one of two things
 - (1) Either Paul is referring to the inheritance we have from God
 - (2) Or Paul is talking about us being God’s inheritance
 - b) I think the NIV has it stated best, which leans toward us being God’s inheritance

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- c) What this means is Paul wants us to think two things
 - (1) First is just how valuable we are to Him
 - (a) He is calling us a glorious inheritance
 - (b) Why? Because we were brought into the family at such a great price
 - i) God paid for us with the blood of His Son, Jesus
 - ii) Anything paid for with that kind of price, HAS to be valuable!
 - (2) Second thing I think Paul is trying to help us understand is how valuable each other is
 - (a) You should never mistreat a fellow believer
 - (b) That is a child of the King
 - (c) They are valued beyond measure
 - (d) We need to understand how valuable each other is
 - i) And that goes for practical value as well
 - ii) God has gifted every person, and every person has something to offer you to help you in your personal growth
 - iii) That should never be handled lightly
 - (e) If we are God's inheritance, bought with such a great price, that makes us as a group extremely valuable, and each of us as individuals extremely valuable
 - 3. The third thing Paul wants us to know is God's incomparably great power for us who believe
 - a) The main thing to understand at this point about God's power that Paul is referring to is who it is for - it is FOR us who believe!
 - b) The implications of this are huge because of the time frame
 - (1) This power is available to us NOW
 - (2) We do not have to wait for it, the power is ours
 - (3) So what kind of power are we talking about
- IV. The power that raised and exalted Christ - vv.19b-23
- A. Paul tells us right off that it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead
 - 1. There is more about this power, but I want to camp out here for a couple of minutes
 - 2. There is an alliteration of words here in Greek that is obscured here by the English text
 - a) Beginning in verse 19, Paul piles up four different words that offer slightly nuanced insight into this power
 - b) He says, "...His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength..."

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- (1) The first word power is the same word we get our word dynamite - dynamis
 - (2) The second word power is the word for energy
 - (a) The first word carries the idea of potential strength
 - (b) This second word carries the idea of actual power (according to Aristotle)
 - (3) The third word means “strength or might”
 - (4) And the fourth word means to be capable
 - c) There are some that would try to tell you that Paul is choosing each word to mean something so specific and try to make long explanations as to the subtle divisions of these words
 - (1) That’s pointless!
 - (2) Paul is not trying to make four very separate points about each word - it’s more like Paul has gotten so excited he is heaping up synonyms like crazy
 - d) In which case, taken as a whole, Paul’s point is simple - the power of God - both potential and actual, is more than sufficient for the task
3. And Paul illustrates how the power is more than sufficient for the task in two ways
- a) First, this power raised Christ from the dead
 - (1) In the entire time man has been on planet earth, there have been no verified reports of anyone coming back from the dead in a permanent way
 - (a) Yes, there are miracles in the hospital
 - (b) There was Lazarus, and others in the Bible, but they all eventually died
 - (2) Jesus never died again because He defeated death
 - (3) And speaking of Jesus defeating death, there is another interesting thing present in the Greek that is obscured in English
 - (a) The phrase in Greek reads, “raised Him from the dead ones.”
 - (b) So Christ was not merely raised from a state of being dead, He was raised out from the dead ones
 - (c) The reason this is so important is really cool: it means that when early Christian read this, they saw the future resurrection in the phrase
 - i) Christ was the first to be raised to new life from the dead ones
 - ii) Opening the door for others to follow - specifically, and the text tells us this - those who believe

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- (4) If you remember back a few years ago we did a series on the Gospel Revolution
 - (a) The author of the book had a prayer that would remind him of certain truths
 - (b) In Christ there is nothing I can do to make you love me more or make you love me less - You are all I need for eternal joy - Allow me to be to others what you have been to me
 - (c) The final one was this: "I will measure your compassion by the cross, and Your power by the resurrection."
 - i) This is a prayer that I have listed in my list of prayer requests for my time with God
 - ii) I will measure God's power - God's ability - God's capacity for help, love, I will measure it by the FACT of the resurrection
 - (d) This is what we need to be reminded of regularly - God's power, or His ability to do things is not predicated on what I see in my life - it is predicated on the fact of the resurrection
 - i) As such, I will not doubt God's power
- B. It is also the power that seated Christ at the right hand of God
 - 1. Who can grant the place of the seat at the right hand of the Ruler?
 - a) Only the Ruler
 - b) It is not done in committee, or by popular vote
 - c) It was only by God the Father's will that Jesus sits at His right hand
 - d) Turn to Ephesians 2:6 - we get seated with Christ in the heavenly realms!
 - (1) But did you see what was missing?
 - (2) We are NOT at the right hand of God the Father
 - (3) While we are glorified in a way that we can barely comprehend, we are not given the same position as Christ
 - 2. Then Paul goes on to describe what that means - to sit at God's right hand
 - a) Christ is far above "all rule and authority, power and dominion..."
 - (1) Pages of ink have been written trying to convince us of some sort of hierarchy in this phrase
 - (2) The rule is these kind of demons, and the authority is this
 - (3) I'll give you the secret to understand this passage well
 - (a) While in the context of the book, and given the people being written to, these authorities are almost certainly spiritual forces, the emphasis of the book is NOT on who they all are

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- (b) The emphasis is on the FACT that they are UNDER Jesus!
AMEN?!?!
 - b) Christ is above “every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”
 - (1) Simple as can be
 - (2) Philippians 2:9-11
 - (3) Amen? Christ is exalted!!!
 - C. As an extension of this power, Paul continues in what God has done for Christ
 - 1. All things are placed under His feet
 - 2. This is a reference back the Psalm 8 and Psalm 110:1
 - a) Any Jew who read this would know that this was an ushering in of the last days
 - (1) They were marked by Jesus resurrection
 - (2) And by the giving of the Spirit (Pentecost)
 - (3) And by God making the enemies of Christ his footstool
 - b) This is also an example of the “now and not yet” themes of the end times
 - (1) Are all of the forces of evil done away with - no
 - (2) So in a practical sense today are Christ’s enemies all a footstool under His feet? - no
 - (3) But the Bible views these things as already true - basically because Christ has already defeated the power of sin and death
 - (4) So one day we will see this take place in the fullest sense possible
- V. Application
- A. Take as a whole, this is a beautiful prayer for the saints
 - 1. I would say one of my favorites, but I love Paul’s prayers
 - B. Paul’s point in this prayer is simple
 - 1. I just told you as I exclaimed praise to God, the spiritual blessings that are yours if you are in Christ
 - 2. And now I pray that the Spirit will open your eyes to understand what is your’s in Christ
 - a) That you will know this hope that God has called you to in Christ
 - (1) The hope of life today
 - (2) The hope of life in the future
 - (3) The adoption that is yours
 - (4) The holiness that is yours
 - b) That you will know how precious you are to God, being chosen by Him for Himself
 - (1) That you were bought with the most precious price He could give

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- (2) That you are His inheritance!
- c) That you will know this power that is yours in Christ Jesus
 - (1) I dare say most of us don't really believe either in that power, or that that kind of power is ours
 - (2) But if we are in Christ, if we believe, this power is ours
 - (a) Imagine how that would change your prayer life
 - (b) Imagine how that would change your faith - your ability to believe God for ways He directs you in life if we can only wrap our minds around the truth of God's power available to us in Christ