

Praying with Jesus & Paul Ephesians 1:15-19*

After praising God for the sovereign grace He bestows on us in salvation (Eph. 1:3-14), Paul can't help but break out into prayerful worship as he eagerly anticipates God completing the work He began (Eph. 1:15-19).

Thankful Prayer for God's Work of Salvation (1:15-16)

- “For this reason” refers to all that God has done in graciously choosing to save us (Eph. 1:3-14).
- Faith in the Lord Jesus necessarily expresses itself in concrete ways (“love for all the saints”).
- When God does a tremendous work in our personal lives we don't hesitate to give thanks to Him. So too we should give thanks for His work in the lives of others.
- Note that Paul does not thank the Ephesians for coming to the Lord but directs his thankfulness to God.
- When is the last time you thanked God for the salvation of others? If angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents (Lk. 15:10), should we do any less?

The Details of Paul's Prayer (1:17-19a)

There are essentially two requests here. It is here that authentic Christian maturity begins, for these requests are at the heart of living as God's chosen.

1. *Paul prays that we might know God better.* Of all the things Paul could have prayed for, this is number one! The kind of knowledge Paul seeks is not generic knowledge but intimate, personal knowledge of God.
 - How does knowledge of God come to us? Since we're asking God to help us know him better, then it stands to reason that He is the one who provides the means for us to do so.
 - Specifically, Paul asks God to give us ...
 - “A spirit of wisdom and revelation”
 - This is likely two separate things but one idea, mediated by God's Spirit living in us
 - “wisdom” = practical living within the revealed will of God (Bible)
 - “revelation” = special insight into what is already known, not add'l revelation
 - The implicit idea here is that *unless God gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation it's impossible to know Him better.* We come to God on His terms by His means in order to accomplish His ends.
 - When God does illuminate His truth in us, He burns it into our hearts and makes it radically personal and immensely practical.
 - Only the Spirit of God reveals God (1 Cor. 2:9-16). We can memorize the entire Bible and not gain this type of knowledge. It is the work of the Spirit to reveal intimate knowledge of God to us and *we must pray for it*, as it comes in no other way (cf., Philippians 3:15 for possible application).

Spiritual insight moves the mind and soul from admiration to adoration of God's excellencies. Persons who are “spiritually enlightened . . . [do] not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but [have] a sense of the gloriousness of God. . . . There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness” (*Works of Jonathon Edwards, Vol. II*, Sermon I, p. 14). Spiritual insight is having a profound sense of God's perfections and beauty. This Spirited illumination does not stop at the corridor of the mind but moves into the deep caverns of the soul where authentic spiritual worship takes place... Every believer must rely upon God to empower the will/inclination to live each moment in the presence of the Almighty God. *Personal holiness comes by way of “every-increasing glory” and the Spirit not only shows the way but endows the will with power and discipline* (2 Tim. 1:7). God knows that, left to ourselves, knowledge is not enough; we need help every step of the way.”

2. *Specifically, Paul prays that we would have special insight into...*
 - a. *The hope of our calling* — the goal of our salvation is to share in God's glory (Col. 3:4; 1 Jn. 3:2-3). It is the expectant anticipation of being “holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27). This is not wishful thinking, but a confidence grounded in the faithfulness of God Who finishes what He begins (Philip. 1:6). Our subjective hope is rooted in the objective reality of God's faithfulness (Rom. 5:2). Hear the counsel of a wise seminary professor given to a young believer who struggles with assurance in the faith.

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Ephesians 1:15-19*

“Since becoming a Christian, you have become more and more aware of the sin in your life, and you are discouraged by it. But what discourages you, I see as a sign of life—not the sin itself, but the fact that you *are* discouraged by it. If you professed faith in Christ and it did not make any difference to your values, personal ethics, and goals, I would begin to wonder if your profession of faith in Christ was spurious (there are certainly instances of spurious faith in the Bible—for instance, John 2:23-25; 8:31ff.).

But if you have come to trust Christ, then growth in Him is always attended by deepening realization that you are not as good as you once thought you were, that the human heart is frighteningly deceptive and capable of astonishing depths of selfishness and evil. As you discover these things about yourself, the objective ground of your assurance must always remain unfalteringly the same: ‘if anybody does sin we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One’ (1 John 2:1). Let your confidence rest fully in that simple and profound truth.

What you will discover with time is that although you are not as holy as you would like to be or as blameless as you should be, by God’s grace you are not what you were. You look back and regret things you have said and thought and done as a Christian; you are embarrassed perhaps by the things you *failed* to think and say and do. But you also look back and testify with gratitude that because of the grace of God in your life, you are not what you were. And thus, unobtrusively, the *subjective* grounds of assurance also lend their quiet support.”

-- From *Letters Along the Way*, D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, p. 23.

- b. *The riches of his inheritance* — Note it is *God’s* inheritance given to us. It is because we are chosen that we’ve been given a royal inheritance (1 Pt. 2:5, 9-10). Because of Christ’s righteousness imparted to us by faith we can embrace our eternal identity giving us supreme significance in God’s sight (1 Jn. 3:1)!
- c. *The power to live for God’s glory* — The same power that defeated death and sin lives within us and is unleashed *through prayer*! The same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to the heavens is readily on display in our lives *when we pray*.