

PAUL'S PRAYER

WEEK 2: Ephesians 1:15-23

After describing how secure our salvation is in Jesus, Paul breaks into praise and thanksgiving. Furthermore, his prayer is that Christians will be able to understand what they have in Jesus through his death and resurrection. Note he prays this alot, so it must be important. Paul himself is so overwhelmed by the greatness of who Jesus is and all He has done, he desires every believer to have the same confidence in God that he possesses.

READ: Ephesians 1:15-23

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR CHRISTIANS

1: What did Paul pray for?

- *Answer: Spiritual wisdom. (v. 17)*

Paul prayed that God would give believers spiritual wisdom. Why is this so important? It is beyond head knowledge, it is a real and personal understanding of who Jesus is. Paul prays this so you know Jesus more. Paul's passion is to know Jesus [Philippians 3:7-11]. He wants every Christian to know how amazing and great Jesus is.

- *Answer: Understanding (v.18,19)*

Paul wants their hearts to be flooded with light, to have an understanding, a confident hope, an unwavering faith, and to know God better with each passing moment. To KNOW the hope to which Jesus had called them. To KNOW the riches of the inheritance . To KNOW the power that is available for all believers. Paul is also passionate about the salvation we have in Jesus; he knows the greatness of power and the greatness of hope. This passion runs through his letters, and it was because of this passion that he fought against any teaching that corrupted and diminished the gospel. Paul's desire is we all live with the reality of God's power. When we understand this power we will be filled with unshakeable assurance of our salvation.

2: God's power.

What is Paul's Description of God's power? (Verse 19)

- *Answer: Paul describes God's power as 'incredible greatness ' - it is beyond comparison because there is no other power in heaven or on earth that can come anywhere close.*

Read Isaiah 40:18 and 25 - What is being said about God's power?

Paul also states that God's power is 'for us who believe in Him. This is amazing and comforting. This power is on our side! It is active for us. It is not against us. All that God did in and through Jesus, his death and resurrection (which Paul is about to refer to) was done for us and with us in mind. This is the power of Jesus that Paul prays that we will continue to know.

Paul also describes God's power as 'mighty'. Paul wants us to know that there is nothing stronger than God's power ... nothing that can undo what he has done for us, nothing!!!

Read Romans 8:35-39 - What does this say about God's power?

Our sin is no match for His strength! Paul says that this mighty strength of God is the power and authority exercised and demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and in God's raising Him up to the position of authority seated at his right hand.

The resurrection of Jesus is of extreme importance. It affirms and validates all of Jesus' claims to be God. Without the resurrection he is proven both a liar and a blasphemer. It confirms that his death as our substitute is valid ... verifying that he had no sins of his own for which to bear the penalty and punishment, and, having taken the full condemnation due to us, annulled the power of the law of sin and death, and revoked its authority. Without the resurrection there is no validity in the salvation proclaimed in the Bible: no basis on which to believe that the death of Christ was a valid death on our behalf, no basis to trust that it gained the forgiveness of all our sins, no basis to believe that we are now liberated from the law of sin and death, and reconciled to God.

It is this power that Paul wants believers to understand: that God had both the power and authority to raise Christ from the dead. Knowing that this incomparable power of God that overcame sin and death is the same power of God that saved us and keeps us saved. This is a foundational source of the believer's joy, peace and security in God.

Our salvation is in the strongest hands that exist; it is in the hands of the eternal One; it is not in uncommitted, variable hands: it is in hands of him who so loved that he gave his Son. God wants us to realize how great his power is towards us and on our behalf.

3: Authority

How does Paul describe the authority of Jesus? (Verses 20-22)

- Answer: Jesus Christ is seated at God's right hand in heaven. Placed in seat of honor. Placed above all leaders, rulers and authorities.

Read Hebrews 1:3. What does this tell us?

Jesus is 'far above' all powers and authorities. Paul makes it clear there is absolutely no power or authority that comes anywhere near to the power and authority of Jesus. This also confirms God's promise in Romans 8:37-39 that, among other things, no angels, demons or any powers, can separate us from the love of God is Christ. Compared to the power and authority of Jesus everything else is insignificant. Revelation 19:16 says 'He is King of kings and Lord of lords. This power and authority is not limited by time - it is for the present and the future [1:21]. This means that the believer does not need to fear death, God's judgement, life beyond death, or the end of the world: the One in charge, the One whose authority rules, is the One who has already triumphed over all opposing powers [Colossians 2:15].

God has given all of this power and authority to Jesus 'for the benefit of the church' [1:22], for the advantage and well-being of the church. This is the promise of Romans 8:28, that God works all things for the good of those who love him.

4: The Church

How does Paul's describe the Church (Verses 22-23)

- Answer: His body

The letter to the Ephesians contains more references to the church than any other of Paul's letters, with exception to 1 Corinthians. The original work in Greek is ecclesia, which means 'called out'. The church is those whom God has called from out of the world to be his own. Paul calls the church Jesus' 'body'. By using this image of the 'head' and the 'body' Paul understands: That without Jesus the church is nothing, it does not exist, it has no reality or life. There is unity in the church and there is an interdependence among us. Each individual part is connected to each other, and Jesus is the head. This concept of the church as the body of Christ also parallels His teaching in John 15 about himself as the 'vine' and believers as the 'branches'.

Read John 15:1-8:

-What vine are you attached to? How do you know?

-What kind of fruit are you bearing?

-Can you handle the 'lifting' or pruning process?

-Do you abide/remain in Christ? What steps can you take to help you obey Jesus by abiding or remaining in Him?