

The Epistle to the Ephesians

Prepared by William S.H. Piper, D.D.

Rogma International, Inc.

Copyright 2001 by Rogma International, Inc. All rights reserved.

LEARNING HOW TO PRAY

Ephesians 1:15-23

INTRODUCTION

In Luke 11:1 we see Christ praying. His disciples waited nearby, watching and listening. When Christ concluded His prayer, one disciple immediately asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” It would do the text no harm to add, “like that.” The disciples yearned to be able to pray as Jesus prayed.

My father was a great teacher and preacher of the WORD. He was also a man of prayer. People drove for miles just to hear his Sunday morning prayer for the church. As a boy, I often listened to him as he prayed and poured out his soul in his study. It has always been the desire of my heart, even to this day, to be able to pray like that.

In this lesson, you will be listening to the first of two remarkable prayers uttered by the Apostle Paul. Many scholars and Bible teachers think that this prayer contains some of the most profound truths in all of Scripture. I trust that when you complete this lesson you will say, “Lord, help me to pray like that.”

IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON

- When praying, millions of Christians say, “God bless so-and-so” or “God bless this-and-that” without ever asking God to bless in a particular way or with a particular blessing. Most of the praying I hear today is for God to meet certain personal, financial, or physical needs. These are certainly legitimate concerns but you will notice in the text that the Apostle Paul says nothing about such needs. His greater concern for the Ephesians, and for you, is that you have wisdom, understanding and power.
- This lesson is important in that it will deepen and broaden your prayer life and enrich your heart and mind.

THE LESSON

I. Ephesians 1:15-16 “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.”

- A. *wherefore* – Whenever you come to a “wherefore” or a “therefore,” especially in the writings of the Apostle Paul, you should immediately review what was just written. In this case, Paul had just instructed the Ephesians regarding the great spiritual blessings they had “in the heavenlies” “in Christ.” They were CHOSEN, PREDESTINATED, ACCEPTED, REDEEMED, ENLIGHTENED, ENRICHED and SEALED. Paul was thankful for these great blessings they had received.
- B. *wherefore I also* – Note the “also.” Paul gave thanks for them not only because these saints had been the recipients of great spiritual blessings, but also because of the wonderful things he had heard about them. He was grateful to hear of their faith in the Lord Jesus, which they were demonstrating by their “love unto all the saints” (Ephesians 1:15).
- C. *faith* – What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 says “Now faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen.” Faith is the willingness and the ability to trust God implicitly with everything and for everything. Faith never doubts.
 1. By faith we are saved (Ephesians 2:8).
 2. By faith we are justified (Romans 5:1).
 3. By faith Christ lives in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17).
 4. By faith we defeat Satan (Ephesians 6:16).
 5. By faith we are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5).
 6. By faith we overcome the world (1 John 5:4).

Much more could be added here, but we simply wish to emphasize the importance and value of genuine faith. Paul was thankful that these early Christians had such a remarkable faith.

- D. *and love unto all the saints* – We need to recognize the first and natural response of genuine faith in Christ is love for the children of God. Galatians 5:6 says, “faith which worketh by love.” The fact that these Ephesian Christians loved each other was evidence to Paul of their genuine faith. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). (Read also 1 John 2:9-11, 4:8.)
- E. *saints* – A special word needs to be said about saints. People do not become saints because a religious system says they are holy enough to be elevated to “sainthood.” The Bible clearly states that every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is reckoned by God to be a saint. Believers are “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called (to be) saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2). The words “to be,” as previously noted, were later inserted by editors and are best omitted. The meaning is not that we are going to be saints someday, but that we are saints **now** by divine calling (Ephesians 1:1; Romans 1:7). The original word for “saint” in the Bible indicates a sanctified person; one set apart for God’s service. 1 Corinthians 1:2 says we “are sanctified in Christ Jesus” and 1 Corinthians 1:30 clearly says that Christ is our sanctification. Christ sanctifies us with His own blood (Hebrews 13:12). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ ONCE AND FOR ALL (Hebrews 10:10). This is POSITIONAL sanctification. We are continually being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and the WORD (Romans 15:16; Ephesians 5:26). Since all believers are sanctified and seen by God as holy in Christ, we are indeed SAINTS OF GOD! Amen!
- F. *Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*

Constantly giving thanks to God ought to be as natural as breathing for a child of God.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we are told to give thanks in everything “for this is the will of God.” In Philippians 4:6, Paul writes, “Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” It is easy to be thankful when the skies are blue, bills are paid, health is good, and everything goes well. But a truly born again Christian gives thanks through his tears, when sickness prevails, pain is constant, and sorrows mount up like waves on the sea. If you are God’s child, He knows your needs and regardless of circumstances, He is working out His purpose for your life. Keep on praising and praying!

1. “*I...cease not*” – A similar thought is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” These phrases do not mean that Paul was on his knees praying all the time. “Without ceasing” and “cease not” do not mean that Paul constantly prayed audibly.
2. To “pray without ceasing” can be understood in these ways:
 - a. “Making mention of you in my prayers” means whenever I pray I remember you. It also means that you mention those you promised to pray for whenever you take time to pray.
 - b. In addition prayer is the cry of the heart for the blessing of Heaven. God hears the yearnings and groanings of our hearts when we are unable to express the burdens that are there (Romans 8:26).

II. Ephesians 1:17 “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” Paul made specific requests in his remarkable prayer on behalf of the Ephesians and for us as members of the body of Christ, the CHURCH.

- A. *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* – That may sound strange to you. Is Christ not God? Indeed He is! “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...” (John 1:1,14). In Christ, God was manifested in the flesh. He took upon himself the fashion of a man (1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:7-8). This involves the virgin birth and the incarnation of Christ. While space does not allow a full exposition of the glorious details, it is most important to remember the God of the Bible is a Triune God. He is one in substance, but three in manifestation – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While each has specific responsibilities, all act in perfect harmony and agreement as one God. Christ came to earth as a perfect man, and “as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). He came to earth to do the will of the Father (Hebrews 10:7-8). In this capacity, it is perfectly right to refer to God the Father as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- B. *The Father of glory* – Glory is the very essence and excellence of God. He is the source of all glory. Heaven is full of His glory, the brightness and beauty of His perfect purity and holiness. Christ shared God’s glory equally from eternity until he was “made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-8). In John 17:5, Jesus prayed, “O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”
- C. *may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him* – This does not refer to the Holy Spirit. It refers to an attitude of humility, reverence, and a hunger to know God intimately. The Holy Spirit is a divine instructor who is willing to teach us about God and all spiritual things.
1. John 16:13 “When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth....”
 2. John 14:26 “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things....”

III. Ephesians 1:18 “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”

- A. Paul prays that we might be enlightened. Many Christians are lacking in the understanding of some very basic and simple truths. I pray that you will delve into the WORD and let the Holy Spirit enlighten you even in the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10).
- B. Paul prays that the Ephesians and all saints everywhere might be enlightened regarding three particular things. These are easily remembered as “The Three Whats.”
- (Memorize these three “whats.”)**
1. WHAT IS THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING?
 2. WHAT ARE THE RICHES OF HIS INHERITANCE?
 3. WHAT IS THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER?

C. Let’s take a look at all three.

1. What Is the Hope of His Calling?
 - a. We are Christians because God has called us and we responded to that call (2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 8:28).
 - b. In Philippians 3:14, Paul writes, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
The prize involved in the “high calling of God” is a hope of many things:
 - 1) The hope of the resurrection and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).
 - 2) The hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7).
 - 3) The hope of glory (Colossians 1:27; Romans 8:18).
 - 4) The hope that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as he is (1 John 3:2).
 - 5) The hope of sharing in the exceeding riches of His grace in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).
 - 6) The hope of receiving a glorious inheritance when we, as joint heirs with Christ, are privileged to share His glory and all the riches of heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4; Ephesians 1:11-12; Romans 8:17-18).
 - 7) The truly “blessed hope” –“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

(Know the texts that go with each of the above for the exam.)

- ◆ *Much more could be added to this list but this should be enough to give you an appetite to search the Scriptures for revelation concerning “the hope of His calling.”*
2. What Are the Riches of the Glory of His Inheritance in The Saints?
 - a. Note that Paul is referring to the Lord’s inheritance! The amazing and wonderful thing is that while we, as Christians, have our inheritance in Christ, He has His inheritance in us.
 - b. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

- c. It will be a glorious time for Christ when the saints are gathered home and He views that vast, innumerable, transformed host whom He “purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). That will be His inheritance.
3. What Is The Exceeding Greatness of His Power?
- a. God’s power is directed toward and on behalf of all who believe. We are to benefit from and share in that power.
 - b. The power of God exceeds greatness. This power is greater than any man-made or earthly power. Man has been able to generate enough power to blast huge rockets into space. Volcanoes are powerful enough to spew molten rocks and mountainsides hundreds of feet into the air. Hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods have enormous power to twist metal, topple trees, and bring cities to a standstill. But the power of God exceeds anything produced by man or nature. Paul mentions three things that illustrate God’s power:
 - 1) He raised Christ from the dead.
 - 2) He seated Christ at His own right hand far above all principality and power and might and every name that is named.
 - 3) He put all things under Christ’s feet and made Him to be “head over all things to the church.”
 - c. Let us take a look at all three:
 - 1) *He raised Christ from the dead* – No event in history is as well authenticated by eyewitnesses as the resurrection of Christ. This event was proclaimed by all of the apostles. The prime consideration here is not that Christ was raised from the dead, but the power it took to do that. That power exceeds the greatness of any other power. With all of man’s wisdom, no man has ever been able to raise the dead. As Christians we are going to experience and share in the greatness of that power. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:5). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). (Read also 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.)
 - 2) *He seated (exalted) Christ at his own right hand far above all principality and power and might and every name that is named.*
 - a) **THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD** is a place of honor and authority.
The mighty power of God is seen not only in the resurrection of Christ, but in bringing Him back to Heaven and seating Him at God’s own right hand, thus exalting Him far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named. In our vast universe there are principalities and powers ruled by Satan, the god and prince of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the prince of demons (Matthew 12:24; Ephesians 6:12). In Colossians 1:16, Paul writes, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers....” We can all rejoice in this: at the cross Christ triumphed over every principality and power. In Colossians 2:15, the Apostle Paul wrote, “and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”
 - b) **AND EVERY NAME THAT WAS NAMED** – Think of the great men whose names fill the pages of history. Think of the great heads of government and military leaders, philosophers and scientists, artists and writers. Their names melt away and become as nothing compared to that name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9-10). That blessed name will be praised forever in the ages to come.

- 3) *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church* (Ephesians 1:22). There are millions of human beings and world leaders who are not now submissive to Christ or “under His feet.” Know assuredly, the hour will come when every knee in heaven and earth will bow to Christ and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). Christ will soon return and “smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Revelation 19:15). Then “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15).
(A future lesson will be devoted entirely to the study of the Church as seen in Ephesians.)

Ephesians
Exam – Lessons 4

Name _____

Address _____

Multiple Choice – Circle the letter in front of the correct answer. Only one answer is correct unless otherwise stated.

1. What words could be added to the request “teach us to pray” made by the disciples of Christ after they had heard Him pray? (Value 4 points)
 - a. like that
 - b. the same way
 - c. your will
2. The major importance of this lesson is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. it contains the perfect prayer.
 - b. it will deepen and broaden your prayer life.
 - c. it will teach you how to approach God.
3. When you come to a “wherefore” or a “therefore” in Paul’s writing, what should you do?(Value 4 points)
 - a. You should carefully study the verse.
 - b. You should review what Paul said previously.
 - c. You should carefully note the verses that follow.
4. The wonderful things that Paul heard about the believers in Ephesus were: (Value 4 points)
 - a. their faith and love.
 - b. their predestination and adoption.
 - c. their endurance and hope.
5. The evidence of the apostle John’s statement that “we have passed from death unto life” is that:
 - a. we stand strong in the Christian life. (Value 4 points)
 - b. we are happy all the time.
 - c. we love our fellow Christians.
6. We become saints by: (Value 4 points)
 - a. living a holy life.
 - b. being born again.
 - d. helping as many people as possible.
7. By “I cease not to give thanks for you,” Paul meant: (Value 4 points)
 - a. I thank God for you every time I think about you.
 - b. I pray for you every moment of the day and thank God for you.
 - c. The believer can go to God in prayer at any time.
8. The phrase “God of our Lord Jesus Christ” means: (Value 4 points)
 - a. that Christ is not God.
 - b. that Paul is talking about the Trinity of God.
 - c. that God the Son is not as important as God the Father.

9. Paul speaks about God as “the Father of glory” because: (Value 4 points)
- the Father is the source of glory.
 - Christ prayed, “O Father, glorify thou me.”
 - God is so very great.
10. What does Paul mean by “the spirit of wisdom” in Ephesians 1:17? (Value 4 points)
- This refers to the Holy Spirit.
 - This refers to the believer’s attitude of humility and wanting to know God.
 - This refers to a request to become a wise person.
11. The divine teacher God has sent us is: (Value 4 points)
- Jesus Christ.
 - Paul.
 - The Holy Spirit.
12. Choose two texts showing that the believer has been called. (Open Bible) (Value 6 points)
- Romans 8:28
 - John 3:16
 - 1 Corinthians 15:22
 - 2 Timothy 1:9
13. According to Ephesians 1:19-23, in what ways did God show His exceeding great power? (Mark two.) (Value 6 points)
- He raised Christ from the dead.
 - He saves the believer for all eternity.
 - He put all things under Christ’s feet.
 - He gave Christ power to raise the dead.
 - He gave Christ power to do miracles.
14. Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father because: (Value 4 points)
- He defeated Satan.
 - He lived a sinless life.
 - He became a man.
15. All things will be under the feet of Christ when: (Value 4 points)
- He comes to take all the believers to heaven.
 - He returns to set up the millennial kingdom.
 - the New Jerusalem comes down on this earth.
16. Put the letter of the correct reference in front of the prize. (Open Bible) (Value 18 points)
- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ___ The blessed hope | a. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 |
| ___ The resurrection and immortality | b. Titus 3:7 |
| ___ Receiving a glorious inheritance | c. Colossians 1:27 |
| ___ Eternal life | d. Ephesians 2:7 |
| ___ Sharing the exceeding riches of His grace | e. Ephesians 1:11-12 |
| ___ Glory | f. Titus 2:13 |
17. Give a definition of faith. (Value 3 points)
-

18. The verse in Ephesians teaches refers to believers as saints is: (Open Bible.) (Value 3 points)

19. The text in the Bible that says we should be thankful in everything is: (Open Bible.)
(Value 3 points)

20. Paul prays that we might be enlightened concerning three things. What are they ? (Open Bible)
(Value 9 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Decision Time

You have just studied Paul's great prayer in Ephesians 1. Paul was faithful in prayer. Have you been faithful in praying every day? Praying is really talking to God. It is good to tell you that you love Him, confess your sins, pray for both believers and unbelievers. It is good to thank God for watching over you and blessing you with all spiritual blessings each day etc.. Every believer should spend some time talking to God every day. I invite you to make that decision today. Set a time and place right now.

I _____ make a promise to God on this _____ day of
_____ in the year _____ that I will talk to God at a special time and in a
special place.