

God's Plan Involves Power
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Allen Power

Ephesians 1:15-23

- One of the most POWERFUL PRIVILEGES we have as believers is to PRAY for others. Especially, to pray for someone we love dearly. We pray for all kinds of things for those we love, don't we? Examples?
- What if you could only pray for ONE THING for that person you love?
- What if they were already a believer in Christ, what ONE THING would you pray for them? How about this?: A VIBRANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD and a GROWING UNDERSTANDING OF HIS POWER and PURPOSE for their life.

- The Apostle Paul LOVED the church at Ephesus!
- He helped them establish this church.
- He had ministered THREE YEARS there.
- There was DEEP LOVE between Paul and these people.
- Acts 20 documents Paul's last IN PERSON encounter with the elders of this church.
- He was on his way back to Jerusalem and his ship docked at Miletus (MIGH LEE TUHS)
- Because he was in the vicinity of Ephesus, Paul sent word for the elders to come see him
- In Acts 20:18-35 he gives his farewell address
- In verses 36-38 we can see HOW MUCH THEY LOVED EACH OTHER

Acts 20:36-38 (New International Version)

36When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

- Paul loved these people and PRAYED DAILY for them

Warren Wiersbe writes of today's passage:

In the prison prayers of Paul (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–12), we discover the blessings he wanted his converts to enjoy. In none of these prayers did Paul request material things. His emphasis was on spiritual perception and real Christian character. He did not ask God to give them what they did not have, but rather prayed that God would reveal to them what they already had.

- Last week we learned in the first 14 verses of this chapter, that before the creation of the world, God chose YOU and ME and he has a plan and purpose for our lives. A plan of ETERNAL proportions.

- As we look at Paul’s prayer this morning we’ll see that his goal for them (and for us) was that they would **BETTER UNDERSTAND GOD’S PLAN** and **POWER**.

Ephesians 1:15-17

Thanksgiving and Prayer

15For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

- Verse 15: Paul begins with “For this reason” or “Wherefore”...referring to what he had just said. He said a lot in the first 14 verses but glance back at verses 11, 13 and 14 just before this: “In him we were **CHOSEN**” “you were also included in Christ when you heard the word of truth” “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”
- So, **BECAUSE** of your Faith in Christ and God’s Plan for your life, Paul has **SOME THINGS TO SAY** in these upcoming verses.
- Verse 15: What had Paul heard about these Ephesian believers? Faith (in Christ) and Love (for whom?) (all the saints).
- **VERTICAL** – Relationship to God; **HORIZONTAL** – Love for others.
- They were **LIVING OUT** the **GREAT COMMANDMENT**: Loving God and Loving Others. These two things **MUST** be in place for a Church to be what Christ wants it to be.
- 1 Corinthians 13 tells us we can speak eloquently; be gifted greatly; sacrifice consistently; but if we **HAVE NOT LOVE**...we’re just making noise...**WE HAVE NOTHING**.
- Verse 16: How did Paul respond to what he had heard about them? Gave thanks...and have not stopped praying for them!
- How does it make you feel when you find out someone has been praying for you?
- Often we tell someone we’ll pray for them and then we get distracted and forget. (Sidebar: Pray NOW)
- Paul was obviously a **CONSISTENT PRAYER WARRIOR** for the people he loved.
- Verse 17: To whom did Paul pray? God. Easy answer. But there’s more here.
- “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ” – the same God Jesus prayed to...this ties the deity of Jesus to God the Father
- “the glorious Father” – Literally “the Father of all glory” This term means A LOT. Greek word: doxa (remind you of a “church word”?) doxa + logos (word/speak) doxology...speaking a word of **PRAISE** for the **GLORY** of God
- Doxa: All **POWER** and **MAJESTY** are His both in creation and in salvation.
- Here’s the point: Our prayer life will be more **POWERFUL** and more **VIBRANT** if we consistently remember **WHO** God **IS** and **WHAT** He is like.

- Look further in verse 17: WHAT is Paul asking God to do for these believers? “give you the Spirit[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better”
- Question: What are some KEY NOUNS in that sentence? SPIRIT; WISDOM; REVELATION; KNOWLEDGE (Know); Him
- Spirit:

1 Corinthians 12:8 (New International Version)

8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

- The word SPIRIT tells us that all knowledge from God and ABOUT God comes from the Holy Spirit
- WISDOM – Refers to understanding things “as they really are”
- REVELATION – God’s truth disclosed in His Word and His Son Jesus

Matthew 11:25 (New International Version)

25At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

- KNOWLEDGE (Know) – Personal KNOWLEDGE of God
- Later in Ephesians 3 we’ll see Paul praying:

Ephesians 3:17b-19

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- It’s God’s will that you and I have SPIRITUAL INSIGHT. Wisdom and knowledge and revelation that can only come through the Holy Spirit to believers in Christ. That’s what Paul was praying for THEM and US.
- We should copy down verse 17 and put it where we can PRAY it every day for OURSELVES and those we LOVE.
- We can PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL INSIGHT
- We can also EXPAND OUR UNDERSTANDING

Ephesians 1:18-19

18I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

- Verse 18: “the eyes of your heart” – Did you know your heart has eyes? We sing about it: “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord...I want to see you!”
- Question: In SECULAR terms. When we think about the “heart” what are we usually talking about? Romance; Emotions;
- The Bible talks about the heart as THE INNER MAN including EMOTIONS, MIND, and WILL.
- The eyes of the hear must be opened by the Spirit of God.
- Verse 18: What did Paul want our hearts to be ENLIGHTENED TO? “the hope to which he has called you” AND, “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”
- A poll in USA Today reports that the No. 1 question people would like to ask God is "What's my purpose here?"

In his classic book “The Call” Os Guinness writes:

Deep in our hearts, we all want to find and fulfill a purpose bigger than ourselves. Only such a larger purpose can inspire us to heights we know we could never reach on our own. For each of us the real purpose is personal and passionate: to know what we are here to do, and why.

Søren Kierkegaard wrote to a friend:

The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do: the thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die.

- God has a plan and purpose...a CALLING for YOU and ME and Paul was praying for the Ephesians and for US that the EYES OF OUR HEARTS would be ENLIGHTENED to that CALLING.
- Also in verse 18, Paul prayed that we would know “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”
- Last week we talked about how TRAGIC it would be to have an UNCLAIMED INHERITANCE of ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST
- In verse 18, WHOSE inheritance is Paul speaking of? God’s inheritance
- Believers are God’s inheritance...we belong to Him.
- We are His PRIZED POSSESSION...THINK ABOUT THAT!
- We are VALUABLE to Him...He BOUGHT us at an EXPENSIVE PRICE...the blood of His son Jesus

Matthew 10:29-30, Jesus said...

29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny[d]? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

- You and I might say, well I don't feel very valuable...why would God consider ME a prize?

Warren Wiersbe again:

God deals with us on the basis of our future, not our past. He said to cowardly Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (Judg. 6:12). Jesus said to Andrew's brother, "Thou art Simon ... thou shalt be called Cephas [a stone]" (John 1:42). Gideon did become a mighty man of valor, and Simon did become Peter, a rock. We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God's inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.

- In verse 19 Paul prays that our hearts will be enlightened to: "...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,"
- Paul goes on to tell us MORE about that POWER in verses 20-23...referring to that POWER...

Ephesians 1:20-23

20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

- Question: In Verse 20: How much power does God have? The power to raise Christ from the dead and seat him at God's right hand.
- Verse 21: God's power is GREATER THAN ANY OPPONENT that opposes Him: "rule and authority" "power and dominion"
- It's ETERNAL – "in the present age and also in the one to come"
- Verse 22: "God placed all things under his feet...the head over everything..." – The supremacy of Christ...He is "the head" of this "body" called the church.
- We ACKNOWLEDGE God's power when we SUBMIT to His Son Jesus Christ and recognize his SUPREMACY over EVERYTHING.
- John MacArthur reminds us: That same great power that raised Jesus from the dead is available TO EVERY BELIEVER at the time of salvation and is ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Acts 1:8 Jesus said..

8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In Colossians 1:29 Paul said..

29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

- MacArthur concludes: *“Paul therefore did not pray that God’s power be given to believers but that they be aware of the power they already possessed in Christ and USE IT.”* (Emphasis mine). MacArthur Study Bible. Pg. 1773
- Example: Annie’s printer. Just unplugged from the source.
- The very same power that raised Jesus from the dead is AVAILABLE to you and me! But we have to be PLUGGED IN.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- What Paul prayed for the Ephesians in this scripture, God wants for us: To EXPAND OUR UNDERSTANDING about our relationship to Him in these areas:
 - a. He has a PLAN and PURPOSE for EVERY BELIEVER...this week we need to ask Him to REVEAL it to us or if He has, to KEEP US FOCUSED ON IT.
 - b. He TREASURES each believer as a PRIZED POSSESSION. This week meditate on Jeremiah 29:11 and other scriptures like to and BASK in the knowledge that YOU ARE HIS PRIZED POSSESSION!
 - c. And He wants to reveal his AWESOME POWER to us...POWER that became available as soon as we became believers in Christ. This week we need to spend time with Him and His Word so we’re not UNPLUGGED from that POWER.

Resources:

- If we’re still seeking what God’s plan and purpose is, what can we do about that this week? Here are some resources:

http://www.intouch.org/resources/article-archive/content/topic/god_s_plan_for_you

[http://www.intouch.org/resources/sermon-](http://www.intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/content/topic/god_will_show_you_his_will_sermon_outline)

[outlines/content/topic/god_will_show_you_his_will_sermon_outline](http://www.intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/content/topic/god_will_show_you_his_will_sermon_outline)

- We are His PRIZED POSSESSION!

Chuck Smith on Ephesians 1:18 (from:

http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=1&contentID=6606&commInfo=26&topic=Ephesians&ar=Eph_1_18)

III. HE ALSO DESIRED THAT THE SPIRIT REVEAL TO THEM WHAT WERE THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS.

- A. Your knowing your inheritance was his first desire, this second desire is that you might know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
- B. That you might know how much God treasures you.
 1. In the parables Jesus spoke of the man going through a field and discovering a treasure for which he sells everything that he might buy the field so as to obtain the treasure.
 2. He speaks of the merchant looking for pearls and when he found a pearl of great price he sold all and bought it.
 3. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
 4. He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.

5. These things He did for you when you were still His enemy. How much more now that you have surrendered your life to Him shall He not freely give to you all things.
- C. These things you can only know by spiritual revelation.
- D. The natural man thinks of God if He exists, so far removed as to be untouchable, and certainly unconcerned with mankind as a whole and totally oblivious to man as an individual.
 1. God is thinking about you.

[PSA 139:17](#) How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

[PSA 139:18](#) [If] I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:

[JER 29:11](#) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.
 2. Jesus taught just how much the Father was aware of you even small trivia about you.
 - a. For instance the number of hairs on your head.