

Prayer of Praise for God's Redemptive Plan (1:15-16)

- “For this reason” most likely refers to all that God has done in graciously choosing to save us (Eph 1:3-14). Whereas 1:3-14 is praise to God for his extraordinary call in salvation, 1:15-19 is a prayer to God for continued growth in salvation.
- Note that Paul does not thank the Ephesians for coming to the Lord but directs his thankfulness to God.
- 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.

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

There are essentially two requests here. I propose it is here where authentic Christian maturity begins, for these requests are at the heart of living as God's chosen ones.

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. Specifically, Paul asks God to give us “a spirit of wisdom and revelation.”
 - ✓ This is likely two separate things but still one idea, mediated by God's Spirit who is living in us: 1) “wisdom” — practical living within the revealed will of God and 2) “revelation” — special insight into what is already known; not necessarily additional revelation.
 - ✓ “Wisdom” and “revelation” are most likely the product of God's Spirit, hence the NIV 2011 and ESV (contra NASB 1995, NRSV). Thus, “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” is likely God's Spirit who produces or gives wisdom and revelation.
 - ✓ The implicit assumption here is that *unless God by his Spirit gives wisdom and revelation it's impossible to know him better.* We come to God on his terms by his means. The same Spirit who seals us in salvation (1:13) is continually needed to light our way as we live out our salvation.

“It is possible one could explain the whole of Scripture and not have spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 13:2). Doctrinal knowledge is no guarantee of spiritual insight. Being informed by the Bible is no substitute for being led by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's illumination provides the means for viewing all of life from heaven's angle; a glimpse from God's perspective. This can only come from the one who “searches all things, even the deep things of God” because “no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit is as vital to spiritual understanding of God as the sun is to the light of day.”

2. This prayer for illumination is that we would be keenly aware about three things: our **heavenly hope**, our **eternal wealth**, and our **unimaginable power** to live the life to which God has called us. *Paul prays that we would have special insight into...*

Prayer for Maturity

Week 4

- 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 expectant anticipation of being “holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27). This is not empty hope, wishful thinking, or blind optimism. It is a confident belief in the faithfulness of God who finishes what he begins (Rom 4:19-21; Philip. 1:6). Our subjective hope is rooted in the objective reality of God’s faithfulness (Rom. 5:2). Our future is guaranteed and secure!
- b. *The wealth of our 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 our position in Christ by faith we can embrace our new identity (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:3) and the supreme significance that we have in God’s sight (1 Jn. 3:1)!
- c. *The incredible greatness of God’s power* — Paul goes on to say (Eph 1:20-21) that the same power that defeated death and sin is unleashed in our lives. And this power is realized through prayer!

So What?

- If heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents (Lk 15:10), should we do any less? When is the last time you thanked God for the salvation of others?
- Since we’re asking God to help us know him better, then it is reasonable that he is the one who provides the means for us to do so. Besides prayer, what other ways do we grow in our knowledge of God?
- 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 (2 Cor 4:6) and we must pray for it, as it comes in no other way. How might this change or enhance your prayer life?
- Given that Paul references God as Trinity in 1:17, do you have in mind the Triune God when praying or do you typically address only one Person of the Trinity? How might you include the Triune God in your prayers?
- 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**. How does this change your outlook about prayer?

*Breathe on me, Breath of God
Fill me with life anew;
That I may love what thou dost love
And do what thou wouldst do.
Breathe on me, Breath of God
Till I am wholly thine;
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with thy fire divine.*

- Edwin Hatch, 1878

Next week: Prayer for Love and Purity (Philippians 1:9-11)