

St Paul's Church, Feilding Sermon on Sunday 26 June 2022 by Bobby Kusilifu

**“I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.”
Ephesians 1:15 – 19**

In the verses, we've looked at so far, especially verses 3 – 14, Paul has told us that our future is secure by the promise of the Father, we have salvation by the work of the Son, and as a guarantee, we have a sealing, or a deposit in the form of the Holy Spirit. These are the spiritual blessings we have in Jesus Christ. God has given us these blessings so that we might use what we have for Him. Paul has explained in Ephesians 1:3-14 what some of our spiritual blessings are. Those verses also reveal the purpose for our spiritual blessings. They are for the praise of his glory. When God blesses us with spiritual blessings, they are never to be used for our own glory or recognition. The things God gives us are for his praise and his glory. This is the first purpose of the spiritual possessions that are ours in Jesus Christ. They were given to us with the purpose that God would be glorified.

Then in verse 15, Paul begins by saying that these spiritual blessings are for the praise and glory of God. Paul says I have been giving glory to God that you are using them for the glory of God. They were giving glory to God in two ways. They were being faithful and loving. They were known by their love for each other. In these two ways, faith and love, the Ephesian Christians were giving glory to God. Then verse 16 shows us that when Paul heard about this, he glorified God through his prayers. See what it says? I have not ceased to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. He is glorifying God, praising God, giving thanks to God for the faith and love of the Ephesian believers. And then in verses 17-19, Paul tells them exactly what he prays for. When we look at the verses more carefully, we see that he has one main prayer request with three specific items.

First, Paul asks that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and why does he pray this? So that they may know Jesus better. He prays to God that they may gain the spirit of wisdom and revelation. He prays here in verse 17 that they may allow the Spirit to do the work that the Spirit comes to do. That they would develop and have a new nature, a new character and have a new spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Jesus. Wisdom is knowledge of the true nature of things, to live the way we should. It is applied knowledge, allowing what we know about God to be seen in how we live our lives. Revelation, of course, is knowledge that comes only from God. It comes from spending time with God and his word. It comes only with discipline and time. So, Paul wants his readers to gain spiritual knowledge, so that they may know Jesus better. The spiritual possessions we have in Christ have been given to us so that we will first, give glory to God and second, gain knowledge of God and to live our lives accordingly.

In verses, 18-19, Paul lists three things that he specifically prays for — for his readers to gain knowledge of. Paul says that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened in order that they may know, (first) the hope to which he has called them, (second) the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and (third) his immeasurable great power for us who believe. Paul's prayer is that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened, so that they would gain spiritual knowledge and understanding in three

ways. First, that they would know hope, second, that they would know their riches or inheritance as believers and third, that they would know God's power. Let's take these one at a time.

Paul's first item that he prays for is that his readers would know hope. Paul mentions here that God has called us to this hope. Remember, that in verses 3-6, we are chosen to be holy and blameless before him and destined to be adopted as his children. Paul says here that this is our hope for the future. And our hope is a certain hope. Hope in Scripture is the absolute certainty of our victory in God. We do not place faith in our own good works, we hope in Christ, we place faith in His works, and we know that since God does not lie, our hope has a good foundation, and our hope will come true. Someone, said, "when God makes a promise, faith believes it, hope anticipates it, and patience quietly awaits it".

The second item that Paul prays for is that his readers would know the riches of his glorious inheritance. I pray that we understand the riches that belong to us in Christ—the inheritance that is ours in Christ—is partly for our use right now. In verses 3-14, Paul has shared three things that we have in Christ, but these are not the only blessings that we have. Other Scriptures, tell us what these other things are. And Paul says here that for many of them, we can know them now! I should point out here that the word "know" often means more than just a head knowledge of something. It is something we are to experience and live in and live by. The knowledge that Paul wants us to have here is an intimate, experiential kind of knowledge. And here Paul wants us to know the blessings that we have in Christ by using them and using them now.

Then the third item he prays for is in the first part of verse 19, Paul prays for his readers to know what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power for us who believe, according to the working of God's great power. Paul says it is immeasurably great! That means there is no comparison between this power and any other power in the world but more than that, you cannot be able to measure it as it is beyond measure. And Paul thinks this power is so great, that he goes on in the rest of verse 19 and on through to verse 23 to talk about this power. We don't have time to look at these verses today, but we will do so next week. I don't want to spoil it for you, but just for a moment think about the power of God. He created the universe. What kind of power does it take to create the universe? If you don't know, go home today, and try to create a simple apple, then think about the power of God.

How much power does it take to raise a person from the dead? How much power does it take to allow a virgin to be with child? How much power would it take to guide and direct a universe filled with free creatures? This divine power of God is something He has placed at our disposal! At the end of this first phrase in verse 19, Paul says that this power is only for those who believe. This power is not for all. Not everyone will share in this power. This power is only for those of us who believe.

Have you believed in Christ? I would invite you today, if you have not, to make sure of your eternal destiny. Believe in Jesus so that you may share in this and live for the praise of God's glory, And that you may know God, know the hope to which we are called, the riches of his inheritance, and the power for us who believe. These things cannot be ours in any other way, other than by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. If

we are in Christ, all these are ours. And also, we need to, like Paul, pray for each other and for many others that we can all learn more and more about Jesus and to experience these spiritual blessings that are ours by the will of our Father and for the praise of his glorious name.

For reflection

How can you make sure that you are praying for growth in knowing God and his purposes, for yourself and others?

God's grace and peace be with you,

Bobby