



Time to Reflect

- Why do you think Paul knelt to pray? How does our understanding of God affect how we pray?
- How can we, as Christians, grow deeper in our knowledge and love of God?

Last week we considered the great message that Paul proclaimed and how this 'mystery' was for both Jews and Gentiles. We discussed the unchangeable principles of the Christian faith and we reflected on the spiritual confidence that God longs for His people to have. This week we will be focusing on a great prayer that was prayed by Paul and we are encouraged to pursue spiritual depth.

"This passage is the second of two prayers recorded in Ephesians, the first one being in Ephesians 1:15-23. In the first prayer, the emphasis is on enlightenment, but in this prayer, the emphasis is on enablement. It is not so much a matter of knowing as being – laying our hands on what God has for us and by faith making it a vital part of our lives."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p93)

Specifics

- There is much for us to learn about prayer as we consider this week's passage. In the first instance, this is a rich and deep prayer, one that is focused on spiritual needs as opposed to material needs.
- Paul had a profoundly spiritual focus as he prayed this prayer. He really wanted the Ephesians to grow deeper in their knowledge and love of God, and he encouraged them to go for growth.
- Warren Wiersbe challenges us to focus on spiritual growth as we pray. He writes, **"Too many of our prayers focus only on physical and material needs and fail to lay hold of the deeper inner needs of the heart."¹**
- Before looking at the content of Paul's great prayer, it is important that we notice his posture. Note how he knelt to pray (v14). This is an act of humility and submission, and it reflects the enormity of who it is that we are praying to – God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
- There is no specific command in the Bible about a special posture for prayer and we actually encounter different approaches to prayer. Abraham stood before the Lord when he prayed for Sodom (Genesis 18:22), and Solomon also stood as he prayed to dedicated the temple (1 Kings 8:22). In 1st Chronicles 17:16 we read that David sat before the Lord when he prayed about the future of his kingdom. Then, in the Garden of Gethesemane, Jesus fell on his face when he prayed (Matthew 26:39).
- Regardless of posture, it is actually our attitude that matters the most as we come to pray. Wiersbe observes, **"It is through prayer that we lay hold of God's riches that enable us to behave like Christians and battle like Christians. Whether we actually bow our knees is not the important thing; that we bow our hearts and wills to the Lord and ask Him for what we need is the vital matter."²**

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p93.

² Ibid, p94.

- Paul's great prayer was addressed to "...the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (v14b-15). What a privilege it is to pray to God the Father, the Creator of all.
- As we move to look at the content of this prayer it is worth noting that there are four distinct requests contained in it. However, these are not individual or isolated petitions; they are interconnected. Essentially, Paul was praying for strength, depth, apprehension and fullness.
- In (v16) Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be strengthened by God. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being."
- The Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian living and service and this power is given to us by and through God's grace. Wierbse powerfully reflects, "It is not necessary for us to 'work something up.' The power has to be sent down."³
- It is the inner spiritual power, given to us by God, that sustains us as we seek to become the people that God wants us to be. This same power enables us to be faithful to God. It is important that we seek to grow in spiritual power and this is why studying the Bible, spending quality time in prayer, and uniting in worship are so important.
- Paul longed for the Ephesians to go for spiritual depth. Note the use of the words *dwell*, *rooted* and *established* in (v17). Paul was praying for a deeper experience between Christ and the Ephesians, a personal and meaningful relationship.
- This kind of relationship is one of total faith, unshakeable trust and radical commitment. It's an ever-deepening fellowship – the continuous and developing journey of a lifetime.
- Wiersbe suggests, "If there is to be power in the Christian life, then there must be depth...If you don't do deep, then you can't go high."⁴
- In (v18-19a) Paul expresses his desire that the Ephesians would apprehend, or grasp, the fullness of Jesus's love. This love surpasses all knowledge and human understanding.
- Someone once said, "The love of God is an ocean, and no line can sound its depths. It is a sky of unknown dimensions, and no flying machine can reach its heights. It is a continent of unexplored distance, and no tape can measure its length."
- God longs for us to experience His fullness. Paul knew this and prayed about it in relation to the Ephesians (v19b). A more accurate translation of this would be "...filled unto all the fullness of God."
- This challenges us to compare our spirituality to God and His standards, as opposed to other people. It also encourages us to focus on God's greatness and His unlimited resources, in contrast to our own finite existence. This is the outworking of the reality that God is always greater.
- Our passage ends with a beautiful doxology (v20-21). Wierbse observes, "Paul seemed to want to use every word possible to convey to us the vastness of God's power as found in Jesus Christ."⁵
- The wonderful ending to this great prayer is a reflection of the greatness and goodness of God. It gets us thinking about the power of God and how He works in and through us. This is a song of praise, offering glory to God. What a closing to an incredibly rich prayer.
- Ultimately we are reminded that what we do in this life is in preparation for the eternal ages, when we will glorify Christ forever.
- Jesus is able to do immeasurably more than we can possibly imagine and hope for. We are simply called to trust him and lay hold of God riches in our daily lives.

³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p96.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp97-98.

⁵ *Ibid*, p100.