

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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PRAYER IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

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The book of Ephesians primarily deals with the salvation that God offers to all mankind, and how mankind should respond to that blessing of salvation. One of the interesting features in the book of Ephesians is the prayers that Paul offers on behalf of his readers. Consider briefly with me the prayers in the book of Ephesians and what application we might find in them.

Paul's First Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-19)

As Paul opens this book, in which he will attempt to explain some of the grandest themes in Scripture (i.e., salvation, grace, etc.), he prays for the readers who will attempt to take in these great themes. After acknowledging that he thanks God for them, Paul tells his readers what his specific prayer is on their behalf. He prays that **"the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"** (Eph. 1:18a). As you consider the things that Paul is preparing to write (God's grace which makes us alive in Christ - 2:1ff; God bringing Jew and Gentile together in Christ - 2:11ff; The mystery which Paul revealed - 3:13ff; etc.), it is no wonder that Paul is primarily concerned with his readers' knowledge and understanding. Paul goes on to express specific petitions — **"that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in**

the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (Eph. 1:18b-19b).

Paul’s Second Prayer (Ephesians 3:14-19)

This prayer comes as Paul brings the book’s first half to a close. He has just explained the greatness of what God has accomplished for all mankind in Christ, and now he offers this prayer on behalf of his readers. He begins by saying, **“For this reason...”** (Eph. 3:14). The reason Paul is praying for his readers, I believe, is because he recognizes the magnitude of what he has just written to them! Paul’s second prayer is two-fold: (1) **“That He would grant you... to be strengthened with power... in the inner man”** (Eph. 3:16), and (2) **“that you... may be able to comprehend... the love of Christ”** (Eph. 3:17-18). Paul has just explained what God has graciously done for all mankind in Christ Jesus. It is only natural that he now prays that his readers have the strength to respond properly, and that they fully comprehend what Christ’s love means for them.

Instructions Concerning Prayer (Ephesians 6:18-21)

As Paul closes out the book of Ephesians, it’s not a prayer he offers on behalf of his readers, but an instruction about the prayers that his readers should offer. He begins by telling them that they should pray **“at all times”** (Eph. 6:18). Furthermore, their prayers should be **“for all the saints,”** and **“on my [i.e., Paul’s] own behalf”** (Eph. 6:18-19). For what exactly are they to pray? Paul asks that they pray for Him as he tells others about God’s great blessings in Christ (Eph. 6:19). I would suggest that their prayer **“for all the saints”** was to be a prayer much like

Paul's previous prayers: for their understanding of the great things God has done for them.

What Can We Learn About Prayer From the Book of Ephesians?

First, prayer should be a part of our every day life. Paul did “**not cease giving thanks**” (Eph. 1:15) and he tells us to “**pray at all times**” (Eph. 6:18). His instruction to the Thessalonians comes to mind: “**Pray without ceasing**” (1 Thess. 5:17). How often do we take these instructions seriously? I wonder what a difference it would make in our lives if we were in a constant state of speaking with the Lord, both in offering Him thanks and praise, as well as in giving Him our needs.

Second, the content of our prayers is important. I see nothing wrong with broad, generic prayers (cf. Matt. 6:9-13), but it is interesting to note how specific Paul's prayers were in the book of Ephesians. His prayers directly concerned the situation he was addressing. He was praying that these brethren would grasp the magnitude of the blessing they had received. What more appropriate prayer to make both before and after he explains some powerful principles. Let's enhance our communion with the Lord by expressing our praise and petitions with specific terms rather than generalities.

Finally, how we pray matters. Paul instructed his readers to pray “**with all power and... with all perseverance**” (Eph. 6:18). What's more, when we read Paul's two prayers in retrospect, we see that this is exactly how he prayed. Paul prayed with power—he knew these things were going to be difficult to understand, but he prayed confidently! In the same way we are told (in the

context of praying for wisdom) to pray “**in faith without any doubting**” (James 1:6). Paul also prayed with perseverance—that is, he prayed continually (as we’ve already seen). Additionally, notice that Paul’s two prayers were essentially for the same thing: his reader’s understanding. Paul persevered in offering these prayers! May it be our goal to pray with power and perseverance in all things. It is my prayer that each and every one of us pray in a way that is pleasing to God!

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Local Church Membership:
Benefits

PM LESSON:
...What You Must Do For God
(Ephesians 4-6)

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**