

A Prayer for the Ephesians – Part 4

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul prays that the Ephesians will grow in the knowledge of God in every way
2. aim – to cause us to seek to know God, to understand him and to be known by him in every way
3. passage – Ephesians 1:15-23

b. outline

1. The Reason for the Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-16a)
2. The Reality of the Prayer (Ephesians 1:16b-18a)
3. The Results of the Prayer (Ephesians 1:18b-23)

c. opening

1. a **question** at the heart of this passage
 - a. Paul tells us in **Ephesians 1:15-23** what is the best thing God could grant to any church
2. the **structure** at the heart of this passage
 - a. the why of what Paul prays – his gratitude for God’s decree
 - b. the substance of what Paul prays – a way of wisdom and revelation built on knowing
 - c. the results of what Paul prays – to be enveloped by theology; to be surrounded by truth
 1. Paul brings (as the climax of his prayer) three (3) specific *experiential* traits:
 - a. the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, and the power of God in us
 - b. **i.e.** the confidence of our place in God’s plan, the assurance of our future, and **(now)** the power of God acting in and through us

III. The Results of the Prayer (Ephesians 1:18b-23)

Content

c. the power of God toward us (vv. 19-23)

3. “power” = ability; might; miraculous; strength; **lit.** one who rules with supernatural ability
 - a. we experience the power of God in numerous ways as members of the elect – in fact, our entire salvation and sanctification is the power of God from beginning to end (“*immeasurable greatness*”)
 - b. the power of God is **constantly** being exercised in us; it is something with real present-day effect
 - c. **question:** but, what is the truest form of God’s power, and how are we most impacted by it?
 1. or, how do we truly experience the raw, unlimited power of God in this life?
 - a. remember: Paul is praying for the church at Ephesus to “*know*” that power of God
 2. typical answer: the power of God is exercised *most frequently* in regards to our **physical circumstances** – that God works his power primarily in our “human” difficulties
 - a. **e.g.** the rise of the “prosperity” or “health and wealth” gospel (obvious)
 - b. **e.g.** the tendency of most church “prayer lists” to be nothing but lists of physical ailments
 1. clarification: nothing wrong with praying for physical need, but is that the most frequent way that God exercises his unlimited supernatural power in our lives?
 - d. Paul will *intimate* the answer to this question by 1) describing God’s power, and 2) transitioning to how this power is relevant to us
4. the **description** of God’s power (vv. 20-23)
 - a. the power to raise Christ from the dead (v. 20a)
 1. **(again)** a *Trinitarian* effort (**i.e.** all of the members of the Trinity were involved):
 - a. as the purpose (glory) and declaration of the Father (**Rom. 6:4; Gal. 1:1**)

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life ... Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead”
 - b. as the consequence of the incarnation & death of the Son (**i.e.** as the God-man)
 - c. as the effect (power) of the working of the Spirit (**Rom. 8:11**)

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”
 2. **(but also)** a *glorification* effort (**i.e.** as more than just a physical “resuscitation”)
 - a. continuity: the raised Jesus showed all the signs of humanness (**i.e.** speech, sight, hearing, breathing, eating, walking, a physical presence [scars], recognizable features, etc.)
 - b. discontinuity: the raised Jesus also showed the signs of glorification (**i.e.** hidden recognition, supernatural abilities, a sense of pureness and power, etc.)

3. **the power of God is his supernatural ability to transform the dead into the living, on a physical level (certainly), but (much more significantly) on a spiritual level**
 - a. **i.e.** to make dead sinners alive, and then to transform them into glorified human beings
 - b. **note:** Paul will “take off” on this point starting in **2:1**, culminating with his point in **2:10**
- b. the power to seat Christ at the right hand of authority (**vv. 20b-21a**)
 1. **(in this case)** a specific effort on the part of the Father
 - a. “his right hand” = **i.e.** as the “right hand man” – to be named to the position whereby the Father grants all of his authority to the Son by virtue of his obedience to the Father’s will
 1. a position of *honor* (**e.g.** James and John request in **Matt. 20:21**)
 2. a position of *deity* (**e.g.** the response of the high priest in **Matt. 26:64**)
 3. a position of *intercession* (**i.e.** the intercession of Jesus in **Rom. 8:34**)
 4. a position of *atonement* (**i.e.** Jesus the high priest in **Heb. 8:1; 10:12**)
 5. a position of *authority* (**i.e.** Jesus over angels, authorities, powers in **1 Pet. 3:22**)
 2. **(here)** Paul underscores that Jesus has been elevated “above” every other form of “authority”
 - a. God the Father has given to Jesus the sovereign authority over every aspect of Creation
 - b. over believers, particularly (**i.e.** in the Great Commission; **Matt 28:18**)
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples ...”
 3. **the power of God is his supernatural ability to join a people together under the exalted Jesus as a part of his ultimate authority over a universal kingdom**
 - a. **i.e.** to join us in obedience to the One in absolute control of all things physical and spiritual
 - c. the power to grant Christ the name above all other names (**v. 21b**)
 1. **(biblically)** “name” = an identifier of (a) character; a “token” used descriptively
 - a. Adam = a man or mankind (**Gen. 1:26**), Cain = gotten [from God] (**Gen. 4:1**)
 - b. Abram = exalted father, Abraham = father of a multitude (**Gen. 17:5**)
 - c. Jacob = he cheats (**Gen. 25:26**), Israel = he strives with God (**Gen. 32:28**)
 - d. Jesus = saves his people from their sins (**Matt. 1:21**)
 - e. Paul = the Gentile variation of Saul the Jew, as one who goes out to them (**Acts 13:9**)
 - f. “YHWH” = the self-existent, self-sufficient, self-determining One (**Exo. 3:14**)
 2. **(here)** the sum-total of all of the glory, power, and authority of the Father, *transcending* all limitations and all rebellions by subordinate creatures (**Phil. 1:9-11**)
“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
 3. **the power of God is his supernatural ability to rename his elect from their “natural” identity into one characteristic of their place under the Ultimate Named One**
 - a. **i.e.** to make much more profoundly equivalent our *name* (as written in the Lamb’s Book of Life; **Rev. 20:15**) and our *nature* as the sanctified
 - d. the power to subject all things to the direct control of Jesus (**vv. 22-23**)
 1. “under his feet” = a **colloquialism** (that 1st C. people would understand) implying *subjugation*:
 - a. of the created order (**Psa. 8**), and of all enemies (**e.g.** David in **1 Kings 5:3**)
 - b. an allusion to the *dominion* under Christ that was lost under Adam (**Gen. 1:28**)
 2. **(here)** God gives this power of Jesus “to the church ... his body, the fullness of him”
 - a. the church represents the *dominion* of Christ in the world (**Matt. 16:18-19**)
“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
 - b. it is through the church that the power of Jesus goes out to take dominion over rebellious sinners, decadent cultures, wicked governments, despot rulers, etc.
 3. **the power of God is his supernatural ability to establish an earthly institution that becomes the force of divine dominion over the power of Christ’s enemies**
 - a. **i.e.** to join us together as a force unlike any other the world has ever seen
 5. the **relevance** of God’s power (**Phil. 3:10 paraphrased**)
“O that I might know him and the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and become like him in his death”
 - a. **individually**, here’s what it means to be enveloped (surrounded) by truth:
 1. to know Christ, in every conceivable way – theologically, doctrinally, experientially
 2. to know the power of his resurrection – to know what it means to be truly alive
 3. to share in his sufferings – to take up the cross in full obedience, to suffer properly
 4. to become like him in his death – to be fully conformed to the image of Christ
 - b. **corporately, as a church**, here’s what it means to be enveloped (surrounded) by truth:
 1. to teach Christ in every conceivable way – so that we all understand more of him
 2. to lead all to repentance and faith – to evangelize everyone to be alive in Christ
 3. to share in his sufferings together – to hold one another accountable to obedience
 4. to become a transformed people – to see genuine change and real hope blossom