

Paul's prayer

Ephesians 1:15-23

Introduction

What are the things that you regularly pray for? Who do you regularly pray for and what are the sorts of things that you pray for when it comes to others? Do you have a system (a way of remembering) to regularly pray for others?

We often pray for those things or people that are important to us. In verses 15 to 23 the apostle Paul wrote informing the Ephesians of his prayer for them. He told the Ephesians that whenever he prayed for them that he always thanked God for them. By recounting his prayer, the apostle wasn't just letting the Ephesians know that they were important to him, but he was also teaching them what was most important for them as believers. In these verses we see what is most important for a believer to know and understand and why we need to appreciate these things.

The prayer can be divided into three parts. In verses 15 to 16 Paul told the Ephesians what he thanked God for when it came to them. In the second section Paul told them what he prayed for them (verses 17 to 19a) and in the last few verses of the chapter the apostle, having spoken about God's great power, he went on to explain what that power is like. Please read verses 15 to 23 of chapter 1.

What he was thanking God for

Paul explained that whenever he prayed for the Ephesians, he thanked God for them. This sometimes referred to as thanksgiving. Please read again verses 15 to 16 to understand what he was thanking the Lord for when it came to the believers in Ephesus.

1. What was the apostle always thanking the Lord for when prayed for the Gentile believers in (and most likely around) Ephesus? How long had he been praying like this for?

Think about it

When Paul thanks God for saving believers through the gospel, the apostle often mentions the faith and love of believers (2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Col. 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonian 1:2-3; 2 Thess 1:3; Philemon 4) in that thanksgiving prayer. Why do you think Paul mentions the faith and love of believers when thanking God for the salvation of believers?

What he was asking God for

Having told the Ephesians what he thanked God for when he remembered them in his prayer, the apostle went on to explain what he was praying for them in verses 17 to 19. This is sometimes referred to as intercession - asked God for things on behalf of others. Please read these verses to understand the important things that the apostle prayed for when it came to other believers.

2. The apostle wanted the believers to not only know and understand God better but to more fully appreciate the hope to which he has called us in Christ Jesus. But in order to know and understand these things what did the apostle say needed to happen (see also 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)?
3. What do you think it means to have your eyes of your heart enlightened (see Ephesians 4:18 also 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)?

Think about it

If people are to be saved and grow up in their salvation what are the things that need to happen and what should we be doing (see also 1:11-14)?

The apostle Paul wanted his readers to know God better so that they might understand all that he had graciously given them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle mentions three things that they needed to have the eyes of their hearts enlightened to see and appreciate: 1) the hope to which they had been called; 2) the wealth of his glorious inheritance, and 3) his great power.

4. What was the hope to which they had been called (see 1:4-14 and 2:10, 19-22) and why is it important for believers to understand this hope? How might understanding this hope have changed the way that believers might have conducted themselves in Ephesus and the province of Asia?
5. What was this glorious inheritance and who was it for (see also Colossians 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-9)?
6. How do you think knowing about this inheritance might have helped the Ephesians endure any hardships that they might have been going through as believers?
7. How does Paul describe the power that is for us who believe? Why is it important that we realise that such power is there for the believer (6:10-13, see also 1 Peter 1:3-9)?
8. What does it mean for all things to be placed under his feet and what sense of these words been fulfilled (see Col. 2:15 and Phil 3:20-21)?
9. What will we and the world be one day like (see Habakkuk 2:14)?

Think about it

What is our hope as believers and how does that change the way we see life here in this world?

Conclusion

Paul's prayer is a window into what he thought was important for we pray for those things that we believe are important.

Think about it

What sort of things ought we be thanking God for and do you think we thank him enough for these things?

What should we be praying for when it comes to others and why is it important to be praying for these things?

Spend some time praying for one another.