

## Paul's prayer for Christians: an example of intercession

1. Study Ephesians 1:15-23. Who is wrote this? A method of learning about the background of a book in the Bible is to look up its introduction in a Bible dictionary or commentary, and it is worthwhile to examine several. Having this information will help you understand the context of the author.

The author is believed to be Paul who wrote this letter while in prison (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Scholars differ as to whether he wrote from the prison in Rome or Caesarea; but, tradition which has been unchallenged for eighteen centuries, places Paul in a Roman prison sometime around 63 A.D.

Based on textual difficulties, there is considerable debate whether Ephesians was the destination of this letter. While there are several proposals, the one with the fewest problems is the view that Ephesians is a circular letter intended to be read by Christians living in the Roman province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital.

2. To help understand the components of Paul's prayer, break up Ephesians 1:15-23 into its sequential phrases and define the words that Paul uses. This will facilitate an understanding of how Paul inspires fellow Believers and his logical train of thought.

### Ephesians 1:15-23

### Observations and Interpretations

15) For this reason I too,

"For this reason" is a common transition Paul uses for a new thought but in the context of the preceding thought. The preceding verses Ephesians 1:3-14, is praise and thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ and the result of reconciling man with God; Gentiles are fellow heirs of the promise made to God's own people Israel.

---

having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and

Paul has heard of the Ephesians' faith noting their vertical relationship with God.

---

your love for all the saints,

And he notes their expression of love by their horizontal relationships with others which is evidence of their genuine faith.

---

16) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;  
17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,

Paul's prayer starts here. For their faith in Christ and love of others, the prisoner Paul is genuinely thankful for the Ephesian Christians and prays for them constantly!

---

may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation

Paul prays that God will give them "wisdom" (Greek: *sophia*), the insight into the true nature of things and "revelation" (Greek: *apocalypsis*), the spiritual insight and discernment of divine truth (1 Cor 2:7-16).

---

in the knowledge of Him.

"Knowledge" (Greek: *epignōsis*) in this instance refers to a fullness of knowledge acquired through a personal relationship. Paul prays for the Holy Spirit's provision of wisdom and revelation so that a Christian will know God more completely; knowing God through Jesus Christ.

---

Ephesians 1:15-23

Observations and Interpretations

18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened,

"Heart" is a figure of speech that Paul uses to represent a person's thoughts, emotions and moral judgment. In knowing God, Paul prays that the Christian will realize...

---

so that you will know what is the hope of His calling,

The "hope of His calling" refers to the fact of salvation which ultimately culminates in glorification when man can no longer sin (Rom 8:23-24; Col 1:5).

---

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

The "riches of the glory of His inheritance" refers to the fact of the Kingdom of God. While Ephesians 1:3-14 speak of blessings of redemption that Christians inherit in Christ, Ephesians 1:18 speaks of Jesus' inheritance of the saints which occurs with His inheritance of the Kingdom of God (see the article: What is the kingdom of God? Is it present or in the future at [www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/1God/WorksKingdomOfGodPresentFuture.aspx](http://www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/1God/WorksKingdomOfGodPresentFuture.aspx)). As members of this Kingdom, Christians are beneficiaries of its riches.

---

19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

"Surpassing" (Greek: *hyperballō*) refers to out of worldly or unimaginable, and "power" (Greek: *dynamis*) refers to capability or potential capability. God's power is incomparably great.

---

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

"Working" (Greek: *energeia*) refers to effective operation and control, "strength" (Greek: *ichys*) refers to bodily and muscular strength that overcomes resistance and "might" (Greek: *kratos*) refers to power. The spiritually dynamic power of God is an enormous and living force directed towards Christians.

---

20) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and

The power of God is exemplified in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:10).

---

seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The power of God is exemplified in the Ascension and Kingship of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:34; Col 3:1-4).

---

22) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and

The power of God is exemplified in the supreme and uncontested Lordship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:23-28; Phil 2:8-11).

---

gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The power of God is exemplified in the Headship over the church (Col 1:15-18).

---

## Paul's prayer for Christians: an example of intercession (page 3)

### 3. What did you learn about Paul's prayer?

Paul's prayer is that the Believer may know God intimately and affirms the truth and historical reality of their faith. It is a prayer that is centered on and in Jesus Christ in order that they know three facts:

- 1) Their salvation and ultimate freedom from sin.
- 2) Their possession by Jesus Christ and beneficiary of His glorious riches.
- 3) The enormity and incomparable greatness of God's power as exemplified by the Resurrection, the Ascension, and sovereign Kingship of Jesus Christ.

In contrast to contemporary human centric intercession prayers of health and wealth, Paul's focus on the Jesus Christ, as the basis and instrument of God' plan of salvation, is to encourage the recognition of God's grace.

Christian living is living in recognition of God's grace.

#### References:

1. Brown C, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1979).
2. Gaebelin F, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philipians*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1992).
3. Walvoord JF and Zuck RB, eds., *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Wheaton: Victor Books, (1985).