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## Ephesians 1:15-23

We Need Grace:  
My Prayer For You

*Jonathan M. Romig*  
CornerstoneWestford.com

Do you remember prayers? Are there **certain prayers** that stick out in your **memory**, maybe from your **childhood** or **more recently**? When I was a kid my **dad** put us to **bed** every-night by praying something like, “Heavenly Father, would you put a **hedge of thorns** and a **wall of protection** around Jonathan, and would he wake up **refreshed** and **ready to go**. Amen.”

What prayers do you remember? Maybe your **parents** or a **sibling** or your **pastor** or an **elder** praying? I remember that when the elders prayed in the **church I grew up** in they always seemed to pray **forever**. Praying for **several minutes** can feel like an **eternity** when you’re a **kid**.

When I lived near **DC** and helped lead a **small group** at **George Mason University** I remember **how** one of the students prayed. His name was **Jim** and it just felt like he was **talking to God**, like God was **sitting in the room** and the two of them were having a **conversation**. It made my heart **feel something**. Prayer is supposed to be **real**. Prayer is **talking to God**. Prayer is **pouring out your heart** to God.

Today we get to “**eavesdrop**” on a prayer. We get to “**listen in**” as the **Apostle Paul** tells the church at **Ephesus** what he prays for them. This prayer isn’t what you might **normally expect** from a prayer. Although they live in a culture **hostile** to Christianity, Paul doesn’t pray for God to **protect** them. Although some of them may be **sick** or **poor** Paul doesn’t pray for **healing** or for **financial stability**. Although some of them may be wrestling with **sadness** or **hurts** Paul doesn’t pray for **happiness** for them.<sup>1</sup>

What Paul prays for is so much **deeper** than **my normal prayers**, and maybe yours too. I hope today’s prayer will serve as a **model** for the way you pray this **upcoming week**. It’s already challenged my prayers. So what Paul prays for the Ephesians I also want to pray for us today.

### **This is my prayer for you: (v15-16)**

**Ephesians 1:15-16** For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (NIV®)

Paul **hears** how well the church is doing at Ephesus—that they’re **loving Jesus** and loving **each other**—and it **so moves** him that he can’t stop **thanking God** and **praying** for them. **Why** is that? It’s because Paul **knows** this church. Paul **preached** in Ephesus and **pastored** them for several years starting in **Acts 19** (Acts 19:10). At Ephesus, “God did **extraordinary** miracles through Paul” (Acts 19:11). If Paul touched a “**handkerchief**” or “**apron**” and those things were taken to the sick, they were **cured** of their **diseases** and **evil spirits** left them.

But **despite** all this the new believers at Ephesus had a hard time **giving up** some of the **witchcraft** they’d come to trust. The **temple of Artemis** was built in this city and it **dominated** the religious life. This is a model of the temple. It was so **big** and so **grand** that it was one of the **seven wonders of the ancient world**.<sup>2</sup> So this **tiny group** of Christians is trying to **follow Jesus** in a city ruled by a **foreign religion** and so you can see how they might **struggle to completely believe**.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

That changed when some men called the “**seven sons of Sceva**” tried to **cast out** a demon in the name of Jesus and Paul, but **didn’t actually believe**. They demon said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” and then he **attacked** them. Acts says “they ran out of the house **naked and bleeding**” and this scared everyone. A bunch of believers brought their **witchcraft scrolls** and burned them, amounting to **50,000 drachmas**, or **50,000 days labor** .

After this the **silversmiths** in Ephesus started a **riot** because they were **afraid** Paul was going to ruin their business **selling idols** of Artemis, which is true. He was. This riot led to Paul leaving Ephesus (Acts 20:1).

So do you think it’s **good news** when Paul hears that the people of Ephesus are still **loving Jesus** and still **loving each other**? Yes! It’s huge because there was a **huge temptation** to either start practicing **witchcraft** and worshipping **Artemis** or to give in under the **social and economic pressures** of the city.

Today we too are going to **face temptation** after **temptation** to **turn away from Jesus** and to **stop loving each other**. Everyday we’re told to **give up** on Jesus. The church is an **dying institution** full of **people who hurt me**. There are no more powerful tools that Satan has then to turn your heart from **loving Christ** or to turn your heart **against a fellow believer**. This is why we **need prayer**. Paul has been praying **consistently and regularly** for the believers of Ephesus (1 Thess 5:17).

But what does Paul pray for? Paul prays that they would know God through Christ Jesus, and so that’s what I’m praying for us. *This is my prayer for you...*

## 1) That you may know God (v17)

**Ephesians 1:17** I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (NIV®)

Paul prays for the **Father through the Son** and the **Spirit** to give believers the **Spirit of wisdom and revelation** “so that” they would **come to know** God. **Acts 6** uses “**Spirit**” and “**wisdom**” to mean the **Holy Spirit** (Acts 6:3,10). Paul is praying for the believers to know Christ by being filled with **the Holy Spirit** (“Spirit of wisdom”) and by understanding **God’s word** (“revelation”).

I made a **diagram** to **explain knowing God**.<sup>3</sup> God **speaks to us** through the **Bible**, his word, and through the **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit **illuminates our hearts** or **helps us hear** God speaking to us through his word. **Notice** that we need **both** the Holy Spirit and the Bible. If just have the **Bible** without the Holy Spirit we **won’t understand** it and if we think we have the Spirit but don’t read our Bibles our conception of God will be **warped** and we may not really have the Holy Spirit at all.

Although my diagram doesn’t show it, this isn’t just a **solitary** “me and Jesus pursuit.” Paul isn’t praying this for individuals but for “you all—may God give **you all** the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” That means I can hear from God through the **church**, through **preaching**, through **community groups** and **discipleship classes** and **youth Bible studies**. When a brother in Christ says, “Jonathan, here’s a sin you need to **repent** of or Jonathan, be **encouraged**” that can **also** be God speaking through them. As God **speaks** and we **listen** and **respond** we get to know God personally.

One of the things I remember from one the **church conference I attended** this summer was something one of the plenary speakers, Mike Perkinson, said. He said something like, “I wouldn’t like it very much if my **daughter** came up to me and said, ‘I just want you to **use me** daddy. Just use me.’”<sup>4</sup> Now I’m looking forward to the day **Elijah** can do the **dishes** and **mow the lawn**, but I’m much more excited about getting to **know** Elijah as a person. I love seeing his **personality** begin to show. How often do we do this to our Heavenly Father? “Use me, Father! Use me” but is more interested in knowing us, loving us, and growing in relationship with us. *This is my prayer for you... that you may know God... and...*

## 2) That you may have hope (v18)

**Ephesians 1:18** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, (NIV®)

In the Bible the **heart** is the **true man** or **true woman**. It's who you **really are** at your **most real identity**. Maybe today we would call the heart your **soul** or your **core** or maybe just your **heart**. Although heart in our culture is more about **feelings**. The heart in the Bible might include feelings but also your **mind** and **will**—your **core identity**.

Here Paul is praying that their hearts, who they truly are, would be **enlightened** so that they may know the hope God has called them to. The word for enlighten means to **illuminate** or **shine**. You ever been in a **dark room**, maybe **asleep in bed** when your **husband** or **wife** or **dad** or **mom turns on the light** and you're **blinded**. Paul is praying that the light would go on in our hearts and that instead of being blinded we would truly **see the hope we have**. Paul tells us the **state of our hearts without Christ** in our next chapter.

**Ephesians 2:1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, (NIV®)

This means our hearts were originally **blinded by sin**. But if you know Christ, you have a new heart. But does your new heart truly **see the hope** it has? **Earlier** in Ephesians when Paul talks about an **inheritance** he's talking about **our inheritance**, the one **we receive** from God (Eph 1:14). But now Paul talks about **God's inheritance** (v18). Maybe some of you have **an inheritance** coming to you so you know that that is like, but chances are most of us don't. **Imagine** your the **son** or **daughter** of **Bill Gates** or **Warren Buffett** and you will one day inherit a **vast fortune**. You'd look forward to that day, right?

**Likewise**, God has an inheritance he is **looking forward** to receiving. But God's not looking forward to receiving a bunch of **money**. He's not looking forward to receiving **land** or the **family business**. God already **owns everything**. What God is looking forward to inheriting is... **you!** Verse 18 says "his glorious inheritance **in his holy people**." God's inheritance is **found in us**. That means one of the things God is **most looking forward** to receiving is you and me. He **wants** to spend eternity with us!

I don't know about you but I kind of feel like I am an **addition** to **God's plan**, like God is really looking forward to spending eternity with his **Son Jesus** and the **other Christians** who were really good and **did everything right**. Do you view yourself like the kid who was **barely let into the party**. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says we are God's **treasure**. It says we are incredibly **valuable** and **precious** in God's eyes. We're his "**glorious inheritance!**"

*This is my prayer for you... that you may know God... and that you may have hope... and...*

## 3) That you may know the Father's power (v19-23)

**Ephesians 1:19-23** [I pray that you may know the Father's] ... incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV®)

My prayer for you is that you would know just **how powerful** our heavenly Father is. His power is **surpassingly** great! It's **incomparable**.<sup>5</sup> It's **beyond measure** and **words!** And yet we catch a glimpse of just how much powerful our Heavenly Father is in what he has **done for Jesus**. The Father **raised** Jesus from the dead. Look at the **resurrection!** Look how the Father not only raised Jesus from the dead but raised him

up into the heavenly places and seated him on a throne. That's called the **ascension**. Did you know that you have access to **resurrection power** and **ascension power**?

What is **resurrection power**?

1. Resurrection power is believing God can save my **family members, coworkers, and friends** no matter how **far from God** they seem.
2. Resurrection power is believing God can give me the **hope** I need to keep going in **depression**.
3. Resurrection power is believing God can **heal communities** broken by **gang violence** or **police brutality**.
4. Resurrection power is believing God can **save my loveless marriage** after an **affair**.
5. Resurrection power is believing God can **rescue me** from my addiction to **drugs, alcohol, and sex**.
6. Resurrection power is believing God will **one day raise me** from the **grave**.

**If** our heavenly Father can raise Jesus from the grave, is there anything he can't do?

What is **ascension power**?

1. Ascension power is believing **Jesus is ruling supreme** over all of **reality** on the **throne**.
2. Ascension power is believing **Jesus is bigger** than your **scariest demons or nightmares**.
3. Ascension power is **recognizing** I don't have to be **afraid** of our **government** or a **controlling family member or boss** because Jesus is on the **very top**.
4. Ascension power is believing God can save a **nation** and **world** torn apart by **partisanship**.
5. Ascension power is **trusting** the **church** and its **ministry to Christ** because it's **his body**.
6. Ascension power is **knowing** my future is secure because Jesus has it in the **palm of his hands**.

You **have access** to Jesus' power if you have confessed your sins, put your faith in him, and received his resurrection as your own. If you believe in Jesus death, resurrection, and ascension, and you want to know him, then you have access. But so often we **forget** about God's power. We don't use it.

***This is my prayer for you: that you may know God; that you may have hope; and that you may know the Father's power.***

I want to end today's message by praying for us, by praying this prayer for our church. I want to encourage you this week to include Paul's prayers in your prayers. Pray that you and your family and friends would **know God, have hope, and know the Father's power**.

Heavenly Father, help us **know you**. Help us know you through your Holy Spirit and your Word. Would you **light up your Word in our hearts** so that we love it and so that when we read it we hear you speaking to us? Would you light up our hearts so that we encounter you. We want to obey you, but first we want to be in **relationship with you**.

Would you give us **hope**? Would you give our church body hope? Father, it's really tough when attendance isn't good or when we don't seem to be growing or when things like ministry or taking care of people or our building feels overwhelming. In these moments would you remind us of the hope we have in you. Remind us of how we are **your inheritance**. You can't wait to spend eternity with us. We're that **valuable** and **precious** in your eyes.

Heavenly Father, would we know your **power**? Would we experience resurrection power in our own lives as you forgive us of our sins and raise us from spiritual death. Would we see resurrection power all around us as you bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus, especially those people who

we've given up on? Would we see **resurrection power** in our world and neighborhoods as they're transformed by you? Would we see **ascension power** as we remember Jesus reigns supreme and has all things under control.

*Heavenly Father, may we know you, may we have hope, and may we know your power. Amen.*

*Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes further endnotes and references. Click to listen to sermons or to read our story.*

<sup>1</sup> This introduction is similar to that from this book. Coekin, Richard. *Ephesians For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading* (God's Word For You) (Kindle Locations 357-362). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Weima, Jeffrey A.D.. *Romans to Philemon: Volume Three* (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Book 3) (Kindle Location 9948). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Prayer icon in sermon slides made by [Freepik](#) from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com). All other icons via Keynote.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Chong Perkinson spoke at the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference Annual Gathering at Gordon College in August 2018.

<sup>5</sup> This word “**incomparably**” is used in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians to describe God’s **glory** (2 Cor 3:10), God’s **power** (Eph 1:19), God’s **grace** (2 Cor 9:14, Eph 2:7) and God’s **love** (Eph 3:19).