

Ephesians 1:15-23 Prayer Manual

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 December 2019

Preacher: Rev Trevor Kane

[0 : 00] Let's turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians then, Ephesians chapter 1, Ephesians chapter 1. And we're going to read verses 15 through 23, verses 15 through 23.

And this will be the section that's before us this evening. Ephesians chapter 1, I'm beginning to read at verse 15.

This is the word of God. What is the hope to which he has called you?

What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe? According to the working of his great might.

That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. And above every name that is named.

[1 : 23] Not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet. And gave him his head over all things to the church.

Which is his body. The fullness of him who fills all. In all. Amen. This is a reading of God's inspired, inerrant word.

Let's turn in our Bibles please to 1 Kings chapter 3. 1 Kings chapter 3. It's towards the front of our Bibles. Towards the front of the New Testament.

As we see in Ephesians 1. One of the things that Paul prays for the church at Ephesus. Is that they would have this spirit of wisdom. That they would have this spirit of knowledge.

And as we come to 1 Kings chapter 3. We're reminded of course of that great incident. That great moment. When God appeared to Solomon. And told him to ask for what he wished. And what was it that Solomon asked for?

[2 : 24] He asked for wisdom. To rule this people justly. To rule this people well. 1 Kings chapter 3. We're going to read the whole chapter. Because there's an outworking of Solomon's request.

If you like in the second half of the chapter. So we'll read it all this evening. 1 Kings chapter 3. Beginning to read. At verse 1. This is the word of God.

Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David. Until he had finished building his own house. And the house of the Lord. And the wall around Jerusalem.

The people were sacrificing at the high places however. Because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord. Solomon loved the Lord. Walking in the statutes of David his father.

Only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there. For that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

[3 : 26] At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. And God said. Ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said. You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father.

Because he walked before you in faithfulness. In righteousness and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love. And have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.

And now O Lord my God. You have made your servant king in place of David my father. Although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.

And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen. A great people too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people.

That I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this your great people? It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.

[4 : 26] And God said to him. Because you have asked this. And have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies. But have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right. Behold.

I now do according to your word. Behold. I give you a wise and discerning mind. So that none like you has been before. And none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked.

Both riches and honor. So that no other king shall compare with you all your days. And if you walk in my ways. Keeping my statutes and my commandments. As your father David walked.

Then I will lengthen your days. And Solomon awoke. And behold it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

And offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings. And made a feast for all his servants. Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. The one woman said.

[5 : 23] Oh my Lord. This woman and I live in the same house. And I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth. This woman also gave birth. And we were alone.

There was no one else with us in the house. Only we two were in the house. And this woman's son died in the night. Because she lay on him. And she arose at midnight.

And took my son from beside me. While your servant slept. And laid him at her breast. And laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child. Behold he was dead.

But when I looked at him closely in the morning. Behold he was not the child that I had born. But the other woman said. No the living child is mine. And the dead child is yours. The first said.

No the dead child is yours. And the living child is mine. Thus they spoke. Before the king. Then the king said. The one says. This is my son that is alive.

[6 : 19] And your son is dead. And the other says. No but your son is dead. And my son is the living one. And the king said. Bring me a sword. So the sword was brought before the king. And the king said.

Divide the living child in two. And give half to the one. And half to the other. Then the woman whose son was alive. Said to the king. Because her heart yearned for her son. Oh my lord.

Give her the living child. And by no means put him to death. But the other said. He shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide him. Then the king answered and said.

Give the living child to the first woman. And by no means put him to death. She is his mother. And all Israel heard of the judgment. That the king had rendered. And they stood in awe of the king.

Because they perceived. That the wisdom of God was in him. To do justice. Amen. This is the reading of God's. Inspired and inerrant word.

[7 : 15] Let us turn to the Lord in prayer. Let's turn in our Bibles. Please then to Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. And these verses 15 through 23.

Verse 15. Down to the end of the chapter of Ephesians chapter 1. There are some things in life. That are mundane.

But that need to be done. In order to function properly. For example. I have a haircut booked in. For tomorrow morning. At half past nine. It's mundane. But it needs to be done.

In order to maintain sort of decency. If you like. As a teenager. I can remember being sent by my mother. Down to the housing executive. To pay the rent.

On our house. It wasn't exactly the most exciting thing. For a teenager to do. But it had to be done. Servicing your car regularly is very inconvenient.

[8 : 15] To be honest. And expensive. But in the long run. It helps to keep your car in good shape. It's mundane. But it's necessary.

It's mundane. But it has to be done. And if we're honest. I think sometimes in our Christian lives.

That's how we feel about prayer. That's exactly how we can feel about prayer.

It's mundane. It's run of the mill. But it's something that has to be done. It's just one of those things. That you do as a Christian.

You read your Bible. You go to church. And you pray. Yet what we have here in Ephesians chapter 1 this evening. Lifts our eyes beyond the mundane nature of prayer.

What we have here in Ephesians chapter 1. Lifts our eyes to the greatness of prayer. To the awesome privilege that it is to pray.

[9 : 17] This takes our mundane view of prayer. As something that has to be done. And turns it upside down. As something that is a privilege to be done. We see the Apostle Paul praying here.

In verses 15 through 23. And it expands our view of prayer. It expands our view of what we should be asking for in prayer.

We want to think about three things. The scene. You see three things together. From these verses. Firstly. We want to think about how to pray. How does the Apostle tell us to pray.

What are the things that he says to us. And to the church in Ephesus. In verses 15 through 23.

Secondly. We want to think what to pray for.

What does Paul say that he's praying for the Ephesians for. Is it that they would find jobs. Is it that they would know good health. No.

[10 : 17] He's praying for their spiritual advance. He's praying for their spiritual encouragement. And then thirdly and finally. Wonderfully. We'll see who we pray to.

And why that serves as an encouragement. Why that serves as a spur. In our life of prayer. So firstly then. We think about how to pray.

How to pray. And we see that in verses 15 through 16. The first two verses of this section. So we thought last week about this.

This last kind of phrase. If you like. In this long opening section. Verses 1 through 14 of Ephesians 1. Are one long sentence. And last week we thought about the last section.

Of this praise that Paul had poured forth. He'd reminded the Ephesians of their predestination. He'd reminded them of the love and grace that God had shown them.

[11 : 14] How they were one in Jesus Christ. And as we come tonight then to verse 15. We're starting another long section. It's not quite as long as the first.

But what we read in verses 15 through 23. Again is all one long sentence. It's all one thought that hangs together. And as we come to verse 15 then.

We see that Paul starts verse 15 for this reason. And again the question in our mind should be. Well what reason? If Paul says for this reason.

The question is. What reason is he giving them? It's the reason just given in verse 13. That these Gentiles had been grafted on. That these Gentiles had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That these Gentiles had come to faith in Christ. That these Gentiles had entered into the promised inheritance in Christ. Paul says because of that. This is the way they act.

[12 : 11] Because of that. That this is what I do. Because you're my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Because I've heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus.

Verse 15. Because I've heard about your love towards all the saints. This is what I do. This is what I do. And here we see the two reasons Paul gives.

Why he gives thanks for them. Why he's keen to pray for them. Isn't it? What does he say? What are the two things that he says?

That they love the Lord. And they love the saints. That they have faith in Jesus Christ. And that they love one another.

I suppose it's really an updated sort of example of what Christ gave to us. Isn't it? Remember Christ was asked which is the greatest commandment.

[13 : 12] What did he say? Love the Lord your God with all your heart. And with all your soul. And with all your strength. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. What does Paul say here? What are these two great tests that he holds out?

That they love the Lord. And they love the saints. They have faith in Jesus Christ. And they love the saints.

But I wonder friends tonight if the same could be said of us. The people know us as those who love the Lord. And those who love the saints. All the saints as Paul puts it here in verse 15.

You see it's very easy to love people who are like us. Who think like us. Who dress like us. Who have the same theological positions that we have. But it's love for all the saints.

It's what we thought about in the prayer meeting a few weeks ago. The command that Jesus gives us. By this all men will know that you are my disciples. That you love one another.

[14 : 20] Do we rejoice when God blesses a different tribe other than ourselves? Or is our response to immediately doubt it?

Is our response immediately to say well. I'll never last. Look at it. Look at the leaders. Look at what they're doing. Look at what they're doing. Let's strive to be those who love one another. And who love Christ. Because of that. Because Paul knew that about the Ephesian church. Because word had reached them. That this was how the church in Ephesus were living. Paul says I do not cease.

Verse 16. To give thanks for you. Remembering you in my prayers. Some people at this point take Paul literally.

And they'll say well I mean. How could he never cease to do this? I mean there were times whenever he was eating. He can't have been praying when he was eating. There were times when he was preaching. He can't have been praying when he was preaching.

[15:25] There were times when he was sleeping. He can't have been praying when he was sleeping. So how can he say that he never ceases. Is to give thanks for them. But that of course isn't what Paul means is it?

Rather what Paul means here. Is that this was his pattern. That this was his way of life. Every time that he prayed. He gave thanks for the brothers and sisters in Ephesus.

Every time that he prayed. He remembered them. Before the Lord. At the appointed times of prayer. He prayed for them. I'm sure we're all familiar tonight.

With Pavlov's dog. I think this is the second time. I've used this illustration. In a few weeks. So see if you've done your homework or not. But it was basically. A social conditioning experiment. Where a Russian psychologist.

Got dogs to associate the sound. Of a bell ringing. With food coming. They measured how well. The dogs were responding. By measuring the amount of saliva. That was in their mouth.

[16:27] And as the dogs heard the bell. The amount of saliva increased. Because they were expecting food. It wasn't that the dogs salivated that much all the time. Rather when the bell rang.

Their salivation increased. At the prospect of dinner. And so too here. It isn't that Paul is constantly in prayer 24-7. That Paul constantly does nothing else.

But rather that when he prays. He prays for them. That every time he comes to the Lord. He prays for them. He never ceases to give thanks for them.

He never ceases to bring them before the throne of grace. He never ceases to thank God. For the work of mercy. That's happened in their lives. He does not cease to give thanks for them.

And it's a call to us isn't it? A reminder to us. Of the need for perseverance in prayer. We'll get told about a particular prayer need one week.

[17:36] And we might pray for it that week. But then the next week we'll get told about something else. That's completely different. And the first thing gets bumped off the list. And the second thing then makes it on. We can assure someone that we're praying for them.

But how often are we praying for them? Might pray for a few days. A few weeks if we're really committed. For a few months. But Paul didn't stop praying for these believers in Ephesus.

Didn't stop bringing them before the throne of grace. Didn't stop giving thanks for them. We need that same perseverance.

That same pressing on in prayer in our own lives. Could be that unbelieving family member who seems to have no interest. That we're called to persevere in prayer for.

Could be that sick friend who doesn't seem to be getting any better. That we're called to persevere in prayer for. Could be that difficult work colleague.

[18:43] Who we never seem to have any common ground with. Who we never seem to get any conversation with. Who we never seem to have any spiritual opportunities with. That we're called to persevere in prayer.

To keep pressing on in prayer. So how are we to pray according to Paul? Well we don't give up. But secondly then we see Paul tells us what to pray for.

What to pray for. And we see that in verses 17 through 19. So Paul's told the Ephesians. Look I never cease giving thanks for you. Never stop praying for you.

Never stop giving thanks before God for you. So the next question in our minds is maybe then. Well what do we pray for? If we're told never to stop praying.

If we're told never to cease praying. Then what do we pray for? It's all well and good to pray without ceasing. But what should I pray for? Well we get part of the answer in verse 17.

[19 : 44] We see what Paul prays for the church in Ephesus. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of glory may give you the spirit. Notice the capital S there.

The spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him. How often in our lives are we content to pray for Auntie Janet and her hip replacement.

Pray that God would give her some relief from her pain. And of course that's a good prayer to pray. That's a perfectly wonderful prayer to pray. But what does Paul pray for the Ephesian church here? What is it that he wants them to do here? What is it that he wants God to do for them here?

Essentially Paul prays that their spiritual walk would be deepened.

That the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God would come to them more and more. That they would know God more.

[20 : 43] That they would fear God more. That they would serve God more and more. Remember what we read in Proverbs.

That the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And that's what Paul prays. That these Ephesian believers would have.

This spirit of wisdom. Which is of course then the fear of the Lord. But notice that it's the gift of God to give.

Paul prays that the Ephesian church might be given it. It's the gift of God to give. That's why we read from 1 Kings chapter 3.

I think it's the nearest kind of parallel that we can find in scripture. King Solomon's given this opportunity. When God appears to him and asks him Well what do you want me to do for you Solomon?

[21 : 42] What would you like me to do? He doesn't ask for money. He doesn't ask for a long life. For his enemies to be defeated. But rather asks for wisdom. To know how to rule this great people that God had put him over.

This wisdom that Solomon asked for was the gift of God to give. The spirit of wisdom that Paul asked for the Ephesians for.

Is the gift of God to give. This continues verse 18. That they might have the hearts. The eyes of their hearts sorry.

Enlightened. It's quite a strange metaphor for us today isn't it? I mean our hearts are really the kind of seat of our emotions today.

What do we say? You know we might say if we don't really fancy doing something. We'll just say well my heart isn't really in it. What do we mean? That it's not something that we desire to do.

[22 : 47] A few months time we'll have Valentine's Day. You'll see hearts plastered everywhere no matter where you go. For us our hearts are the seat of our emotions. But for the people Paul's writing to here.

Their hearts would have been the very center of their beings. It would have been everything that they were. The very center of themselves. The very fabric of their beings. Not just their emotions. And Paul here as he says. Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. He wants them to know at the very core of their being. At the very center of all they are.

He wants them to know. And to be sure. To feel this hope. To which they've been called. The hope of the glorious inheritance that is theirs.

In Jesus Christ. How can we better understand that? Because even that in itself still.

[23 : 51] Still I don't think really helps us to see what Paul's getting at. He wants everything about them to be impacted by the gospel.

He wants every area of their life to be shaped and changed by Christ. He wants every decision to be impacted by the gospel. He wants their whole life.

Captivated by the gospel. You see the gospel wasn't something to be done on a Sunday and then left for the rest of the week. It wasn't something to peripheral to life for Paul that you could just kind of take or leave.

The gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ was to be at their very core. Their very being, everything that they were.

He wants their eyes. Of their hearts opened. He wants them to know the greatness of Christ.

[24 : 57] He wants them, verse 19, to know the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. According to the working of his great might. That maybe leads us to the question, well, what has God done for us?

If Paul wants them to know the immeasurable greatness of God. If Paul wants them to know the immeasurable mercy and power of God towards us who believe. We might say, well what has God done? Well in Christ, God has forgiven sin.

In Christ, God has declared us righteous. In Christ, God has declared that the punishment has been paid. That our account is no longer in debt but is settled by Christ.

And Paul wants them to know all this that God has done in his immeasurable power. What do we pray for when we pray for people?

Do we pray for their temporal needs? That their pain would ease? That they would find a job? That whatever calamity has befallen them would work out?

[26 : 10] Now again, please don't mishear me or don't misunderstand me tonight. These are good prayers to pray. And it's entirely right to pray these things for people.

But how much better here to pray for their spiritual good. Rather than their physical good.

How much better to copy the example of the Apostle Paul. And pray for their spiritual needs. As well as their physical. How much better to pray that people would know God more.

That people would know Christ more. That people would be captivated more by the gospel. That people would have more confidence in the power and majesty of God. When we pray for the temporal, we pray a good prayer.

But when we pray for the spiritual, we pray the best for the person. You see, don't miss who it is who's writing this. It's the Apostle Paul.

[27 : 17] He knew what it was to suffer for the gospel. He knew earthly suffering. He'd been beaten. He'd been imprisoned. He'd been stoned. He'd been rejected by his own people.

He'd been shipwrecked. He'd been left for dead. And yet his greatest concern for the Ephesians is that they're growing in grace.

That they're growing more and more in Jesus Christ. So we've seen how to pray then without ceasing. We've seen what to pray for.

The spiritual good of our friends and family. Then finally tonight, we see who we pray to. And we see that in verses 20 through 23. So having seen these first two things, the question might be, well, why bother to pray at all?

Why is it worth praying at all? And part of the answer of that is because of who we pray to. We see in verse 20, in a sense, a continuation from verse 19.

[28 : 21] This great might that God displayed. And how did he display it when he worked at verse 20? In Christ. When he raised him from the dead. When he seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

As it talks about Jesus being seated at God's right hand here. The metaphor is that the right hand was the place of power. It was the place of influence. The place of significance.

You know, as we talk about our politicians today. We might say that such and such has Nicola Sturgeon's ear. We might say that Dominic Cummings has Boris Johnson's ear.

What does that mean? It means that they have influence. It means that they have power and significance. And as Paul talks here about Christ being seated at the right hand of God. He's in that position of power.

Of influence. Of rule. And that's where Christ is tonight. He's seated at God's right hand.

[29 : 23] He's seated in the place of influence and power. Far above all rule and authorities. Far above all dominion and power.

And far above every name that is named. So who is it that we pray to tonight? Well quite simply we pray to the one who's powerful.

We pray to the one who's in control. We pray to the one who's seated in the position of authority.

And that's what makes prayer powerful.

It's not the eloquence of our words. It's not the things that we ask for. But it's the one who our prayer is offered to.

You see as verse 22 tells us. The one that we pray to tonight. Has all things. Put under his feet.

He's the head over all things.

[30 : 33] To the church. That's the one that we pray to tonight. The one who's head over all things. The one who's seated at Christ's right hand.

In power and glory. And majesty. We started tonight by thinking of prayer as boring.

As mundane. As something that we know that we should do. But often struggle to do. And hopefully as we've read these verses together tonight.

Paul has expanded our view of prayer. Has shown us actually rather than being boring and mundane. Prayer is the greatest activity that we can be engaged in. As Paul reminds us here. We are called to pray without ceasing. We are called to pray for the spiritual good. Of our friends and family. And as we pray we come before the God of the universe.

[31 : 37] The God who made all things by his power. Prayer is anything but mundane. Prayer is anything but run of the mill.

Prayer is coming before the creator of the universe. The creator of each one of us sat in here this evening. And knowing that he hears us.

One of the great lies that the devil has convinced us of. Is that prayer is ineffective.

Is that prayer is doing nothing. It's convinced us that that time spent alone with the Lord in prayer is useless. But Paul reminds us here tonight.

That prayer is not doing nothing. But prayer is doing everything. Because of the one that we pray to.

[32 : 49] Because all things are under his feet. Because he sits at the right hand of power and majesty tonight. Prayer is not doing nothing.

But it's doing everything. Amen.