SESSION 2
REMEMBERED

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

15 This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

16 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens—far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

17 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A News had made it to Paul in prison about the status of the church in Asia Minor.

B One of the three important characteristics of Christians, each are mentioned in this passage: faith, love, and hope.

C Christ has made those who are in Him holy and set apart for God (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

D "Do not cease" (ESV, NASB, NRSV).

E Paul had genuine gratefulness for their faith in Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:4).

F Paul’s prayer reflected a deep understanding of how the Trinity works in the lives of believers.

G Paul’s prayer was for God to open our hearts—the center of our spiritual lives (Ezek. 11:19)—to know God and what He has done for us.

H "Flooded with light" (TLB) or understanding. Paul’s prayer was for the Holy Spirit to work in the Ephesians’ hearts that they would grow in their knowledge and love of God.

I Christ’s resurrection demonstrated God’s "surpassing greatness" (v. 19, NASB).

J “Set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe ... no name and no power exempt from his rule” (The Message).

K An Old Testament promise (Ps. 8:4-6; 110:1)

L Christ is “chief Shepherd” of His church (1 Pet. 5:4).

M This was a metaphor for the church that Paul used often (Eph. 5:30; Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:24).
1. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (Eph. 1:15-17)
   • Paul expressed his sincere prayer for his readers, explaining that he was praying constantly for them to know God better in their salvation.

2. HOPE OF GOD (Eph. 1:18-19)
   • Paul stated that he prayed for his readers to understand more deeply the hope found in Christ, the value of their inheritance of salvation, and the demonstration of God’s power.

3. POWER OF GOD (Eph. 1:20-23)
   • Paul emphasized that the power seen in Christ’s resurrection and exaltation is the same power that secures a believer’s salvation.
   • There are various understandings of verse 23. Avoid disparaging views that differ from your own.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
God helps believers understand the riches and greatness of His calling on their lives.
   • Believers do well to pray for themselves and others to grow in their relationships with God.
   • Believers can grow in hope and power as they more fully understand their callings in Christ.
   • Believers can live with confidence in the power of Jesus’ resurrection.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What things hinder our ability to be content—continually thankful for what we have?

• We stagnate in our Christian walks when we disregard the blessings we have in Christ.
• Spiritual growth occurs when we’re aware of, appreciate, and access what is ours in Christ.
• After Paul praised God for His blessings to believers in Christ, he prayed God would help believers see and appreciate the enormity of those blessings.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 1:15-17

What did Paul desire for the Ephesians?

• The believers were doing well spiritually. Their love for other believers demonstrated the genuineness of their faith in Christ.
• Paul wanted them to continually grow deeper in their relationships with God.
• God chose believers for Himself and wants us to know Him.
• Paul prayed believers would grow into that divine purpose.

Why is it vital that Christians grow in their knowledge of God? How can we grow in that knowledge?

• God is infinite. We can never know all there is to know about Him.
• When we assume we know all we need to know, we stagnate.

How can we grow in the knowledge of God?

• Experiential knowledge of God, knowing Him intimately and personally, requires spiritual wisdom and revelation. We can ask God for that, being confident that He’s pleased to answer our prayers.
• God has revealed Himself in Scripture. We gain deeper knowledge of Him by prayerfully studying, trusting, and obeying His Word.

EPHESIANS 1:18-19

What else did Paul pray God would do for the Ephesians? For what purpose?

• Paul asked God to turn on the light in the Ephesians’ hearts and minds so they could see the reality of what was theirs in Christ.
• Spiritual realities require spiritual eyes and minds to see and understand.
• Believers can intimately know the God who has called us to a specific hope, promised us a glorious future, and has the power to make it happen.

How can understanding the hope we have in Christ, the value of our inheritance, and the scope of God’s power impact the way we live?

• When we focus on our problems and selfish desires, we can’t see our way to move forward.
• When God enlightens our minds, we want to grow closer to Christ. We rejoice in troubles as tools for transformation.
• Our certain hope that God’s great power has secured our glorious future gives us the motivation and courage to live obediently in the present.

EPHESIANS 1:20-23

Describe the power that Paul prayed believers would come to know.

• God demonstrated His power over sin and death in Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation. Believers can experience that resurrection power.
• Nothing, not even evil powers, lies outside the scope of Christ’s powerful reign. Nothing can “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39).
• God’s power demonstrated in Christ’s resurrection, exaltation, and headship over the church changed everything in the cosmos.

What are the implications for believers of God’s demonstration of power in Jesus’ resurrection?

• God wields His great power to bring about every spiritual blessing in our lives and to give us an unshakable assurance of our salvation.
• God’s immeasurably great power means transformation is possible.
• We defeat ourselves thinking of what we can’t do: I can’t forgive that person. I’m not good at witnessing. I don’t have enough to give generously. Paul prayed we would grasp what we can do because of God’s power that is active in us and for us.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How is Paul’s prayer urgently needed in today’s church?

• Believers live stagnant lives when we maintain a dim view of what we have in Christ. We must pray for spiritual enlightenment so we can experience the joy of spiritual growth.
• Believers need to pray for one another’s physical and spiritual needs. Paul provided us a great model to pray for the spiritual growth of ourselves, our loved ones, and our church families.
• Personal Challenge: Are you stagnating or moving forward in your faith? What will you do to know God better? This week focus on praying for spiritual growth for yourself, your family, and those in your Bible study group.
A CHILD’S COLORING BOOK AND IMAGES OF A VIEW-MASTER® TOY

Display the objects or photos of each. Ask how many adults enjoyed coloring in coloring books as children. Then ask how many played with a View-Master toy. Ask: How are View-Master images superior to coloring book pictures? Explain that the View-Master exploded in popularity in the 1950s when it provided 3-D images of children’s TV shows and movies. Children could move beyond adding color to a one-dimensional rendering of their favorite cartoon character to actually viewing that character in a 3-D world.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23. Explain that in his prayer, Paul asked God to give believers the spiritual ability and sight to move beyond a one-dimensional understanding of their faith to a richer multi-dimensional grasp of their blessings in Christ. He desired for believers to have a fuller mind, soul, and body as a result of salvation.

Our image of God shapes how we live. So Paul prayed we would know God more as He really is, not how we perceive Him to be. Ask: What are resources God has provided for us to know Him? What spiritual realities can we experience more and more as our relationship with God grows deeper?

Close by emphasizing: One day we’ll experience our salvation completely and fully, but that doesn’t mean we have to live with one-dimensional faith now. We can ask God to empower us to grow spiritually, consistently moving further into a fuller appreciation and experience of the realities that are ours for now and all eternity.

PRAYING FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

The Scriptures encourage Christians to pray often and for many things. Jesus taught that we should pray for our daily needs (Matt. 6:11), for forgiveness for our sins (Matt. 6:12), for protection from evil (Matt. 6:13), for God to send more people to spread the gospel (Luke 10:2), for God’s will to be done (Matt. 6:10), to “produce fruit” (John 15:16), and in His name (John 15:16), to name a handful of instances. In the Book of Acts, prayer played a central role in the church’s ministry (Acts 2:42), and in the New Testament Epistles, we see that the church is to “pray constantly” (1 Thess. 5:17), for their leaders (1 Thess. 5:25), and for each other (Jas. 5:16).

One of the more overlooked subjects of prayer may be a prayer to grow in our understanding of the things of God, which Paul encouraged in Ephesians 1:18. While we may quickly pray for our health needs, financial needs, praying for spiritual growth may not come to mind quickly nor appear on many church prayer lists. But, as James reminded us, God wants us to grow in our spiritual wisdom, and the way to do so is to ask Him for it in prayer (Jas. 1:5).

As Christians, it’s not only possible but expected that we will grow in our understanding of the things of God. There are many reasons why we can expect to grow when we seek wisdom from God, but here are two. First, is the priesthood of the believer. When we are in Christ we have direct access to God and can know Him personally and intimately (Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5,9). Second, as believers, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who enables us to understand spiritual truths more deeply and intimately (1 Cor. 2:6-16). These two truths can give us confidence to approach God in prayer and to seek growth in our understanding and knowledge of Him.