

## **THE PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING**

### **EPHESIANS 1: 15-19**

Introduction:

This is one of the prison prayers of the Apostle Paul. When you consider the content of the prison prayers, they are remarkable. What a revelation of the maturity and insight of this faithful servant of the Lord.

The mood of the prayer is one of gratitude. He was moved to the prayer by information that came to him concerning the faith and love evident in the church at Ephesus. They were demonstrating the genuineness of their walk with God. Faith in the Lord Jesus and love for the saints are two distinguishing marks of the true people of God. So to the Apostle it is obvious that God has done and is doing a saving work in the assembly at Ephesus. They are a people there who depend on the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, and who truly love each other with a godly kind of love. He is so grateful for this that he lifts his soul up to the Lord on their behalf.

The prayer comes out of his soul like a burst of care and emotion. This whole passage is just one long sentence. He is so caught up in the prayer that he does not stop to organize his thoughts, they just burst forth from his energized spirit in the Spirit of the Lord.

The primary burden of the prayer is for the eyes of the hearts to be opened. He knows that they are true children of God, but he wants them to understand fully what this means. If they are to understand, then the Spirit of God must do His work of illumination in their hearts. Their inner eyes must be opened to see the truth of God. Is this not the need of every congregation of believers throughout the ages? Would we not be better and do more if we really understood? Are not our shortcomings often the result of limited understanding?

But the prayer for understanding has a greater in good mind. Paul wants them to understand so that they will give to the risen Lord His proper place in their assembly and in their personal lives. He wants Jesus to have mastery over them in everything.

As you attempt to analyze the prayer, which is not easy, how many petitions are there in the prayer? Are there four petitions, or just three? In my first attempts at organizing the prayer, I found four, but then I have decided that there are only three. The opening petition really sets forth the sphere in which all of the petitions are found. The three things that the Apostle petitions God for will be received if they come to a greater knowledge of God Himself.

I need to say a word about the confidence of the prayer before we look at the petitions. The confidence of the prayers is expressed in the One to whom the prayer is addressed. The prayer is addressed to “the God our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” This is a reminder of the difference that meeting Jesus had made in the life of the former persecutor of the church. He had been a zealous defender of his Jewish heritage, and the faith of his fathers. He was a son of the God of Abraham. But when he received the revelation of Jesus on the Road to Damascus, everything changed. He now knew that the God of Abraham is the God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Father of glory. When you come to the God revealed in Jesus, the Father of glory, you can come with full confidence. Surely the Father will welcome your petitions and hear your prayers.

What do we need to understand? Where do we need more light? In the enlightened understanding of the Apostle, we need more light in three critical areas.

I. THE PETITION FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOPE OF OUR CALLING. (Our past)—TO ENCOURAGE US

1. The call to salvation—what hope does it offer?
2. The call to participation—what hopes does it offer?

II. THE PETITION FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE RICHES OF GOD'S INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS. (Our future)—TO ENRICH US.

1. When the saints are the inheritance.
2. When the saints receive the inheritance.

III. THE PETITION FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK FOR US AND IN US. (Our present)—TO ENERGIZE US.

Paul uses the four key Greek words for power in this prayer. He is piling word on top of word to express his impression of the power of God at work in us. He uses the basic Greek word for power, *dunamis*. This is the power to achieve, to do whatever you will to do. God has this power in with "the exceeding greatness" of His *dunamis*. The next word is "working" is *energeia*, which suggests action, power at work; "power" is *kratos*, power that subdues, rules, governs; "mighty" is *ischus*, power that is inherent, power that resides in the person he uses it or not.

But the apostle points to the experience of Jesus as an example of this power in operation. So we would understand the greatness of the power at work in our coming into the kingdom and the power at work in the completion of God's work in us, he holds the experience of Jesus for our encouragement.

1. It is resurrection power.

2. It is ascension power.

3. It is dominion power.

We have already experienced the greatness of His power in our spiritual resurrection. Paul illuminates this in the next chapter as he describes what actually happened when we were saved.

We continue to experience this power as we participate in the body of Christ. There is nothing less than the supernatural at work in our lives daily as we grow in grace, and serve the Lord with gladness.