

**UNIT 5 EPHESIANS LESSON 3****“PRAYER”****STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 1:15 - 2:10**

The letter now moves from praise to prayer. Paul begins in 1:15 an extended prayer, which will continue right through the next 2 chapters, ending in 3:21 with the word "Amen". The prayer form allows Paul to express deep truths to his readers that perhaps could not be said effectively in any other way. Note, however, that he begins where they are, with words of encouragement and commendation.

I have heard (v15):

1. of your faith in the Lord Jesus;
2. of your love towards all the saints;

and I continually give thanks for you (v.16).

I pray that you may be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know (v.17)/

What is the hope to which he has called you (v18).

What are the riches of His glorious inheritance among the saints (v18).

What is the immeasurable greatness of His power for us who believe (v19)?

Think of this power.

It is power according to the working of his might (v19)

1. In raising Christ from the dead (v20).
2. In making Christ sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places, which is far above (v20):
 - a) all rule and authority and power and dominion (v21);
 - b) every name that is named in this age and the age to come (v21).

In doing this, God has:

1. Put all things under his feet (v22), and
2. made him Head over all things for the Church (v22).

The Church is his body - the fullness of him who fills all in all (v23).

It is power also exercised on you.

When you were dead in trespasses and sins, you once walked in them, following (2:1)

1. the course of this world (2:2)



2. the ruler of the spiritual powers in space, who is the spirit now at work among those who are disobedient (2:2).

We all lived amongst these once:

1. In the passions of our flesh (2:3).
2. Following the desires of flesh and senses ((2:3).

So we were destined to suffer God's anger like the rest of mankind.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us (2:4):

1. Made us alive together with Christ (2:5).
2. Raised us up with him (2:6).
3. Seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:6).

Why? So that in the coming ages, He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus (2:7).

For we are saved by grace, through faith (2:8,9).

Our salvation is God's gift - it is not the result of works, so that no one may boast (2:8,9).

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works:

1. Which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life (2:10)
2. Which we should walk in.

The major part of this passage is a discussion of the power in us who believe. This discussion involves teaching on the present position of Christ, the Church, the condition of natural man, salvation as receiving life, and salvation as being entirely by grace, a gift from God. With such rich teaching, it is possible to miss the main point that Paul is making, that such power, power that can only be described by covering these points, is available now in us who believe.

Back now to the prayer itself. It arises out of the doxology. The blessings we have in Christ are true for us, if we have faith in the Lord Jesus, and the evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus is love towards all the saints. So, Paul can give thanks because He knows that since they have faith and love, they have the blessings of verses 3-14. They had them, and we have them, if we are in Christ, whether we are actually aware of them or not, whether we "feel" them or not. They are ours according to the promise of God.

The intercessory part of the prayer is concerned with awareness of the blessings. The awareness of actual experience. This is linked with our knowledge of God which, as we should know, is something that grows as we continue the life of faith in Christ. He prays that we may be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Wisdom is knowledge of the heart of things; revelation means "uncovering". He prays that we might have these, so that we will know in our experience these three things:

1. The hope to which He has called you. The word "hope" normally means what we would wish for the future. But for the Christian, "hope" is what we can, with complete certainty, rely on in the future. "Hope" is the way the man of faith looks ahead.



This "hope" includes the certainty that God will keep all His promises to us, that ultimately Christ will be victorious, that God is on the throne, as well as the expectancy that Christ will soon return. Verses that express this hope are:

Lamentations 3:21-24; Romans 8:18-25, 28-39;
Colossians 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18;
Titus 2:11-13; 1 John 3:2, 3.

2. The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints. Some commentators see this as meaning that we might see how precious God regards the saints - his rich inheritance. However, although that is a grand thought, most commentators believe that it is referring to our inheritance, or the inheritance he has for us. Notice that it is in, or among, the saints. The true riches of all that God has for us are found in fellowship, surely an encouragement for us to deepen our fellowship.
3. What is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe? Here, and in the next sentences, Paul heaps together as many phrases as he can to give the impression of unlimited power. Then, in the rest of our passage, he seeks to illustrate the strength of this power. He wants us to know that all this power is in us who believe. Other teaching in the New Testament is that this power is in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the discussion on the power that is in us, he tells us that it is power in accord with the power that was demonstrated in the raising, and ascension of Jesus, and also in our receiving life in Christ when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Surely, such a prayer as this, will be the constant prayer we will make for each other and for ourselves.

QUESTION 1:

Why was Paul continually thankful for these Christians (1:16)? Is the order of these two reasons important? Why?

QUESTION 2:

From 1:20b, to the end of the chapter, Paul gives a view of God's power structure in the "heavenly world". What position does Jesus Christ occupy in this?

QUESTION 3:

In chapter 2:1-7, Paul summarises what it means to be a Christian. Can you explain, in terms a non-Christian would understand, the distinction which Paul makes between being spiritually "alive" and spiritually "dead"?

QUESTION 4:

In chapter 2:4-7, what are the three main things God has done for us?

QUESTION 5:



Ephesians 2:8-10 are among the best known verses in the Bible which describe "salvation". Define "grace" and "faith" (get help from a dictionary if necessary). Explain the relationship between grace and faith, expressed in verse 8. Whose is the grace? Whose is the faith? What part do each play in salvation?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY

Paul specifies three things he desires these Christians to "know" (1:18, 19a), once the eyes of their hearts have been opened. What are they? Can you explain these three things, in terms of their meaning, to yourself?