



Context

Paul begins by thanking God for the Ephesians faith and their love for God's people. These are signs of spiritual vitality and the foundation for even deeper maturity. Paul had once lived among the Ephesians but now he hears reports of their faith and love, and he is filled with joy and gratitude. His response is to pray for their continued growth in God's grace.

His prayer is joyful and persistent. Paul thanks God for them and continues to pray for their spiritual progress. He asks that they keep moving forward and not be content with what they already know. They need to continue to learn more about who God is and what God is doing in their lives.

Paul prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would give them a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He desires that their knowledge of God be personal and alive, and not just intellectual assent. True wisdom comes as followers are guided by the Holy Spirit. The more believers come to know Christ the more clearly they understand God's truth. Faith is a journey of continually growing in insight, awareness, and closeness to Jesus.

Paul wants "the eyes of their hearts" to be opened, so they can grasp three things - the hope God gives, the riches of belonging to Him, and the greatness of His power at work within believers. God's power isn't theoretical. It is the same mighty strength that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him above every ruler and authority. That same resurrection power is available to us and gives us courage to live out our calling.

Paul reminds them that Christ reigns over all creation and serves as the head of the church. The church is Christ's body and dependent on him for life, direction, and purpose. The church is meant to reflect God's goodness in the world and be a community that overflows with God's presence, power, and love

Scripture

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ezekiel 47:1-12

1 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and behold, the water was trickling out on the south side.

3 Going on eastward with a measuring line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water, and it was ankle-deep. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was waist-deep. 5 Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. 6 And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?"

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. 7 As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. 9 And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. 10 Fishermen will stand beside the sea. From Engedi to Eneglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. 11 But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. 12 And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

Questions

1. Explain the importance of thinking generationally versus thinking only for our current life? How did you benefit from generational faith?
2. Ephesians 1:15-23 says that Paul constantly prayed for the people of Ephesus. What does it mean to pray for people to grow closer to God and to have hope and power in Jesus Christ?
3. Henri Nouwen says:
How can we possibly expect anyone to find real nurture, comfort and consolation from a prayer life that taxes the mind beyond its limits and adds one more exhausting activity to the many already scheduled ones?
How does this prevent us from spending time with God in prayer?
4. Ezekiel gives us an image of God leaving the Temple and then returning. How does that impact us as we experience the presence of God in our lives and through prayer?
5. Ezekiel 47:1-5 talks about an image of water trickling out of the Temple and then continues to grow bigger and wider as it gets further away. What is this communicating to us as we think about prayer?
6. What is the difference between having the burden and task of praying versus resting in God and allowing God to minister to us?
7. Pastor Paul said that “our prayers matter, but we also still have to remember that God is still at work. And sometimes we need a little glimpse of the work that God is doing.” How does that impact our prayer life?
8. Ezekiel 47:7-12 describes an image of water becoming fresh where fish flourish and it will be possible to fish from the banks. How do our prayers produce life in the midst of places where there are no living things?
9. Pastor Paul says that if we are looking to start the discipline of prayers. Start with praying the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) in the morning, pray for the lost in the afternoon, and pray your praises of gratitude at night. What other ways have you found helpful to pray?

Two follow up questions:

1. Is there someone, or some situation, you could intentionally pray for every day this week?
2. Where are you in the “current” in your own prayer life? Is there a way you could go deeper?