

Praying to the Sovereign God - Chapter 10

Ephesians 1:15–23 (ESV)

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.

What does the "for this reason" point to here?

When Paul says, “For this reason...” he is speaking of what came before, indicating that the basis of his prayer is in the previous verses of the letter. Let’s read these together.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14:

Ephesians 1:3–14 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the

counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- We have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing.
- This is evident in that he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.
- This was not an arbitrary choosing, but an act of sovereign love in which he adopted us
- It was not because of anything good in us, but because of his grace in Jesus, and for the praise of his glory
- This work of Jesus consists of him redeeming us through his blood, bring forgiveness of sins
- We were chosen and given an inheritance, and this we includes you who have heard the gospel, believed in him, and sealed with the Spirit

Paul's recounting of God's sovereign purposes leads him to pray certain things in accordance with God's will.

1. Because God is Sovereign, Paul offers thanksgiving for God's intervening, sovereign grace in the lives of his readers (1:15-16)

- Paul sees in the conversion of his readers a wonderful example of God's sovereign grace in the lives of men and women. They have been transformed, not just privately but in a public and demonstrable way.
- Paul, knowing that this outworking of faith is the sovereign work of God, offers up thanks for it.
- The assumption here is that without the work of God, they never would have believed.

Carson quotes the hymn:

**I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me.
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of Thee.**

**Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm vexed sea.
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.**

I find, I walk, I love, but oh, the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!
For Thou were long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovest me.

2. Because God is Sovereign, Paul offers intercession that God's sovereign, holy purposes in the salvation of his people may be accomplished. (1:17-19a)

Paul's Prayer is that the Ephesians might know God better.

- Who thinks they know God well enough?
- This should be the prayer for all Christians, as the more we get to know God the more we want to know him better.

The way Paul phrases this gives us insight into what how we know God better:

- "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ..." This reminds us that God's ultimate self-disclosure is in his Son Jesus Christ, and if we would know God better, then we need to seek him in Jesus Christ.
- "The Father of Glory" or "The glorious Father..." This God, whose glory is closely related to his revealing of himself to people. For example, it was the God of Glory who appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2), Moses' desire to know more of God is expressed in his request for God to "show me your glory." (Exo. 33:18-23). Jesus has been revealing the Father's glory and when he prays, he asks that he would return to the Father the glory he shared with him. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is to share in that glory with him.

He prays, not just that they would know God better, but that God would give them a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, which are the means towards the end of knowing him better.

What does Paul mean by Spirit of revelation here? Do Christians still receive new revelation? Carson writes, "Revelation can refer to God's unique self-disclosure issuing in the normative Scriptures; it can also refer to what we mean by "illumination." That is, "the non-normative experience, the enlightenment of an individual's mind so that God's truths and claims, values and norms, are absorbed and embraced." This is what Paul is referring to and this is a work of the Spirit for which we must pray.

In Particular, Paul's prayer to God is that we might have the insight needed to grasp certain crucial truths.

God alone reveals and also enables us to grasp what has been revealed, and both should be prayed for. The particular truths Paul wants the Ephesians to see are:

- First, he wants them to understand the hope of their calling - **what is this referring to?**
- Second, he wants them to grasp the riches of his glorious inheritance in in the saints - We are God's inheritance, those whom the Father has given to his Son, his gift to the Messiah. We need to know who we are, how God see us in Christ Jesus.

- Third, Paul wants us to know God's incomparably great power for us who believe - we are not to be content to be filled with orthodox doctrine but void of power. Paul prays that we would experience God's power.

3. Because God is Sovereign, Paul offers a review of God's most dramatic displays of power (1:19b-23)

Before explaining what he expects God's power to accomplish in us, he tells us what that power is like. If you were to describe God's power, **what would start with?**

Since nothing is difficult for God, it's not as if Paul starts with what is the most powerful or difficult display, but what is the most glorious and revealing.

Paul mentions the power exerted when Christ was raised from death.

This power we must experience is the same power on display when Christ was raised from the dead. The undoing of death, the destruction of sin; his is the first fruits of the final great resurrection that will bring in a new heaven and new earth.

Paul describes the power displayed in the exalted Christ.

Christ is exalted above every authority and power in the universe. As a result of his obedience, he has been elevated to his rightful place at the Father's right hand. In Ephesians 2, we see that God took us, dead in trespasses and sins, and raised us up to be with him, so that we too are seated at the right hand of the Father with Christ. We are citizens of a different kingdom and heirs to a different throne.

Paul declares the power exercised by Christ over everything - for the Church.

Christ's exaltation as head over all is for the expressed purpose of being the head of the body, which is the Church. He is in place to ensure that all of his sovereignty is exercised for the good of his people. **What does this encompass?**