

Living UP TO OUR Heavenly Calling

A study in the book of Ephesians

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Ephesians 1:15-23

Introduction

After spending about three years in Ephesus, teaching every day, Paul left Ephesus, visited others, and then was on his way to Jerusalem. He didn't want to stop again in Ephesus, so this is what he did:

Acts 20:17 – 31

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁷For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

Paul tells them that savage wolves will come among them, and "*Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20:30). Now Paul has left them and he wants them to be so grounded in truth, that even with all the hardships ahead, they will "walk worthy of their calling"—they will live up to their heavenly calling.

Given that background, notice how Paul prays for them.

Ephesians 1:15 – 23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

We can learn so much about how to pray for ourselves and for others by studying this prayer.

Notice verse 17: *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

What does this teach us about prayer?

- Paul kept asking God—he persevered in prayer.

What did Jesus teach us about persistent prayer?

Luke 18:1 – 8:

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ²He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

⁶And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Paul prayed that God would give them the spirit of revelation and wisdom so that they would get to know God better. If you had more revelation—read "understanding"—and wisdom—meaning you make better decisions and avoid mistakes—how would that change your life?

When you pray for others, what is at the top of your prayer requests? Is it always physical needs?

Paul continues his prayer for them:

Ephesians 1:18 and 19a: *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

This prayer is not just for us to read and admire. It's for us to learn how to pray more effectively, less shallow, making a difference in our lives and the lives of those we pray for.

Our hearts can be blind to the hope to which we have been called. There is so much more for us know about our calling, about our glorious inheritance and the incomparable great power that is available for us who believe.

Pray for your understanding to be enlightened—meaning that you will be well informed, well aware of all that God has for you. Pray that God will show you where you are blind; where your heart needs to be enlightened.

The prayer continues:

Ephesians 1:19b – 21: *That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

That power—the power that is available to us who have the Holy Spirit—is the same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead. Paul again reminds us of Christ's exalted position: "*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.*" Recall that Jesus told us after the resurrection that "*all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*" (Matthew 28:18 - 19).

Does anyone else in this world—has anyone else who ever lived—had “all authority”? No, only Jesus.

The prayer concludes:

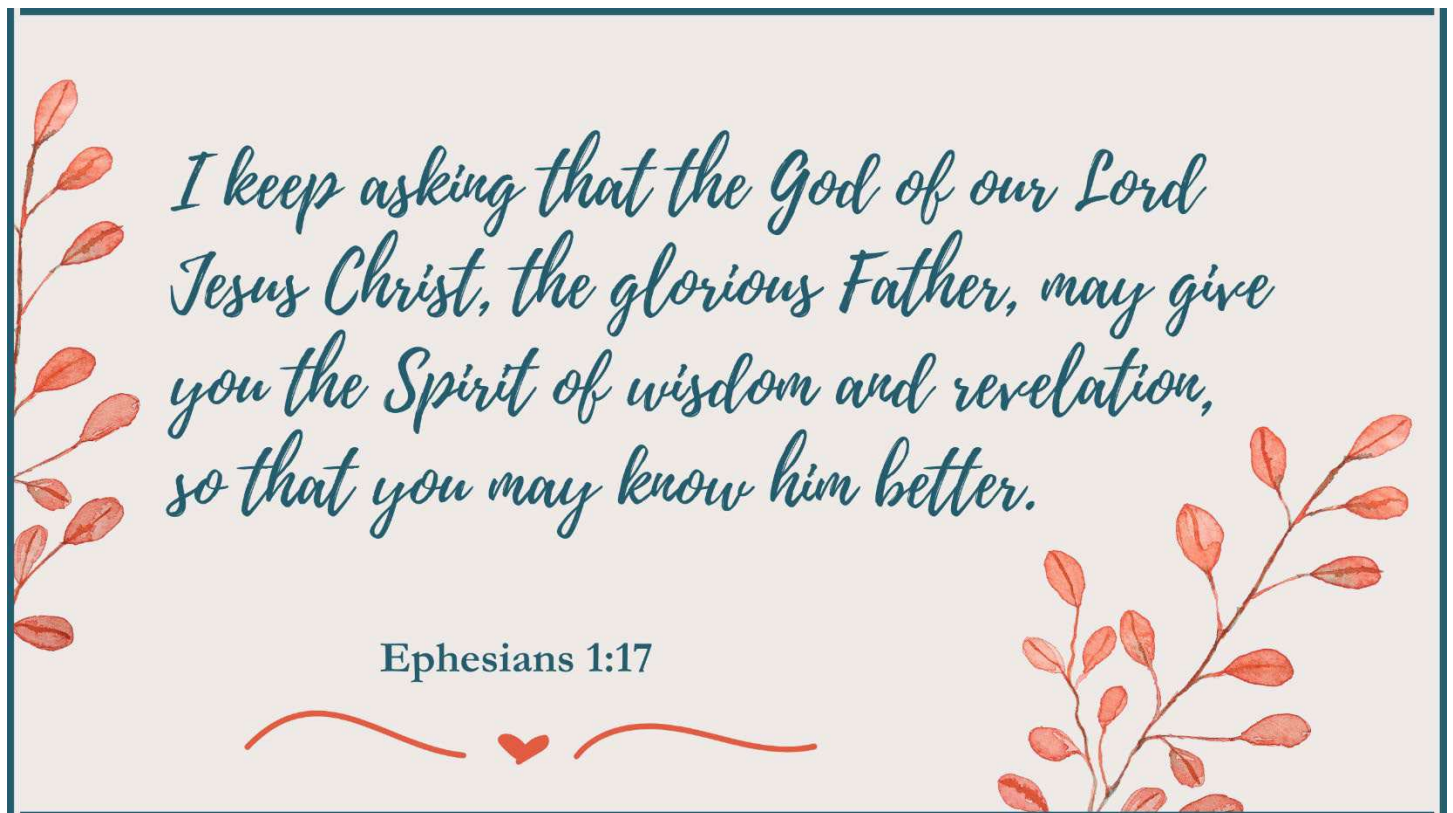
Ephesians 1:22 – 23: *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Here's the truth for every person on the planet: The more you see God, the more you'll trust God, know God, want God, and live for God! It is easy to fall into the trap of giving only lip service to God while our heart drifts away. The one sure antidote for this malady is to come to know God in Christ more fully in a personal and loving way.

John 17:3: *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

Take away:

- Pray this prayer for yourself and others every day this week
- Memory verse for the week –



*I keep asking that the God of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give
you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
so that you may know him better.*

Ephesians 1:17