

Series: "Ephesians"

"A Prayer For Heartburn!"

Ephesians 1:15-19

February 24, 2008

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The topic for today's message is PRAYER! Now I know the minute I mention that topic a number of thoughts may go off in many of your heads ranging any where from:

- Alright! I'll learn how to pray better.
- Oh boy! Another condemning and convicting sermon because I don't ever feel like I pray enough.
- Yawn! I've never heard a great sermon on the topic of prayer yet!
- Shhhh! Because whenever we talk on prayer there seems to be a 'reverence' that just goes around.
- All of these!

But let me just say I think this sermon on prayer is going to...

- "Knock your socks off!"
- "Bless your gizzard!"
- "Charge you up!"
- "Light your fire!"

We are in the midst of studying the book of Ephesians on our Sunday mornings here at Bethany Evangelical Free Church and have really just gotten under way.

SLIDE – Pg. 1156

Take your Bibles, please and open them to the New Testament book of Ephesians 1. If you didn't bring your Bible with you today I would encourage you to reach forward and grab that burgundy colored Bible and turn to page 1156. (1st Service – Video Café – Raise hands for a Bible and someone will come by and hand you one! Keep it up!)

So far in our study we have discovered in the first 14 verses "How Spiritually RICH We Become The Second We Trust Christ As Our Personal Savior!" We see that we have been chosen; adopted; graced; redeemed; forgiven; predestined; saved; sealed; and secured! Wow!

Now as we get into Chapter 1:15 it begins with the words...

"For THIS reason..."

- I.e. - Knowing the fact that we receive all these spiritual riches/ these blessings as we have called them;
- Having gained the HEAD knowledge that we are RICH 'in Christ';

Now it is time to gain the HEART awareness of what it all means! SO...God is not content to leave us with merely facts that teach us; He also wants those facts to so COME ALIVE in our hearts that they change us/impact us/get us to live for Him!

After all, if we are honest with ourselves and with each other, how many times do we read and study a passage or passages of Scripture and understand WHAT it means...but it doesn't change us?! It doesn't move us! Well, probably more times than we care to admit.

ILL. - Disciples

In fact, don't you just love and can't you just relate with the Disciples of Christ? In Matthew 13 Christ is teaching by way of parables. He begins by teaching on that famous parable about the Sower and the Seeds. Christ teaches the parable and then he says, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

I.e. - Don't just listen to the words...understand what is meant by them! Thank God Christ tells them (and us) what He meant because they didn't understand it.

Then Christ tells another parable about "weeds in a field".

Now here you have got to give the Disciples credit for their honesty because if this had been me and Christ just said *"He who ears to hear, let him hear"* I would never had done what the Disciples did. Do you remember what they did? They came to Christ and said, *"Ah, Lord, we don't understand this parable would you please explain it to us?"* More power to them!

And I say, *"How many passages of Scripture do I go to that I need either someone to explain them to me or I need God to explain them to me because I don't get it?!"*

LISTEN: This is exactly what this prayer before us is all about! It is a prayer asking God to show us what HE has in mind for us to know about the truths of Scripture!

CAN YOU IMAGINE! Getting God's understanding of a passage of Scripture and what it is supposed to do for me above and beyond any 'mans' take on Scripture! Nothing like "going to the source"!

But I'm getting ahead of myself...let's look at this prayer!

SLIDE – READ vv. 15-17a

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

It has two simple sections to it and these two sections are the same two sections that most of our prayers have with them. Let's think of it this way...

SLIDE – When Praying For People Think Of It In Two Parts!

1. Give thanks for them
2. Pray for them

And when we give thanks for people do it by mentioning these two traits...

SLIDE – Give Thanks

- For their faith
- For their love

Now doesn't that sound like an exciting way to give thanks for someone?!

- For their faith -

Now this could be for either their "saving faith" or their "living faith". By that I mean when we give thanks for someone's "saving faith" - we are thankful for the fact of their salvation and that the Lord is changing them for Himself!

Greg Paglini -

Mike & Erin Grusch -

Jay & Jess Johnson - (Jan 24th)

Shelly Cornelius -

Paul Riniker

Charles Wiese

Dan Smith

Jeff & Melissa McCuddin

Peter & Kathy Shank

Corey Riniker

Cathy Dewar

Bob Manka

Leah

When we pray - Thank the Lord for saving people!

When we give thanks for someone's "living faith" we are thankful for the fact that the person is living out their Christian life!

- Glenna Lenardson
- Ray & Dawn Martinez
- Mike Kabat
- Judy Twite
- Karen Howell

When you and I pray we should always take time to give thanks for people's faith! Their 'saving faith' as well as their 'living faith'!

And we are also supposed to give thanks for people's love. Now this means the people who show and express their love to other Christians!

- Mark & Jeni Hinitt - caring for Walters
- Debbie Picket - caring for people

When you and I pray we should take the time to give thanks for people's faith and people's love! Such a simple thing, yet we so often neglect to do so! These are people "I" know of! You will think of those you know of!

And now in our passage Paul shifts gears from teaching us how to give thanks for people TO how to pray for people!

SLIDE – READ vv. 17-19

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. I pray also 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 the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

SLIDE – What Is This Prayer All About?

There it is! Did you see it? I put it in **RED** for you!

"So that you may know Him better."

Not know 'about' Him more! But to know Him better! And the Spirit of God uses a precise word here when He says...

SLIDE –

"Know Him better" - (epiginosko) - full; thorough understanding

It is the word for broad knowledge; deep knowledge; it has the idea of an understanding of the workings of God; and awareness of how He guides His people supernaturally.

He prays...

“That God would give us a full; broad; thorough understanding of how He works in us; through us; and beyond us; that we may know Him better!”

And Paul didn't mean that he wanted us to know more 'about' God. We have plenty of information and facts 'about' the truth and who God is. In fact, we do a fine job of teaching the Scriptures around Bethany. There are numerous Bible studies - Men's, Women's, Precepts; Topical; Exegetical; from this pulpit; in Life Groups; AWANA; Adult, Students, and Children's Bible Study on Sunday morning; you name it. We do a good job at teaching the Scriptures. And knowledge of the Scriptures is good because the Bible is God's Word and there is no knowledge of God apart from it. Still... knowledge about the Bible in itself is not the fullness of what God has for us. We can know that we have been chosen; adopted; graced; redeemed; forgiven; predestined; saved; sealed; and secured! But to know is not the fullness of God. Well what is the fullness of what God has for us, you ask? Let me/let God show you!

SLIDE –

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.

How do we get the full knowledge of God? How do we “know Him better”? By getting the ‘spirit of wisdom and revelation’!

SLIDE –

Wisdom - “Sofia” - discernment about life

Revelation - “Apocalypse” - unveiling of truth

I pray that the Lord would open your mind so that you will get His wisdom in the midst of your circumstance (that will help us come to a knowledge of Him); and that He will unveil the truth to us so that we will have insight into our circumstances.

Now what does this mean?

This is all part of the illuminating work of the Spirit! When you came to know Christ as your Savior the Holy Spirit took up residence in you permanently! And since He is God He is there to do a work of God in your life.

From Him comes a grasp of spiritual things! We did not get an understanding of spiritual things before we came to Christ. Scripture says...

SLIDE – I Corinthians 2:9-16

No eye has seen; no ear has heard; no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

SLIDE –

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But we have the mind of Christ.

When we came to Christ we received the Holy Spirit who supernaturally teaches us the truths of God. Let me state it this way...

SLIDE –

Wisdom - The super-natural ability to take Biblical statements and apply them to practical/everyday situations!

Revelation - The super-natural ability to see into the Scriptures so that they are unveiled to us and we get God's perspective.

ILL -

I am moving through life and find from my visit to the physician that I have a serious disease! Before I knew Christ my first reaction would have been panic; maybe even a touch of bitterness. I've been a good person how could this happen to me? BUT...now that I've come to Christ (through the prayer of my friend who has asked that I might have wisdom and revelation so that I may know Him better) I see this as an opportunity to trust Christ. This is not an accident. God is sovereign over all of life...even my health. There is a purpose; there is a reason. He will show me! I must stay faithful because He is faithful.

ILL. -

Some of you find yourself in the middle of life; you though you'd find yourself raising your family, happily married and you find your husband or wife walked out! They left! You are now finding yourself in a whole different set of circumstances. Humanly speaking you have reasons to panic; to rush to judgment; to be bitter; unforgiving; full of all the anger and all the emotions that circumstance brings to you. BUT...in a spirit of wisdom and revelation you begin to think - "No, I'm not going to respond like that. That's a dead end street! I'm surrounded with people who live like that. And with a spirit of wisdom I'm going to trust God to have His way in this. I don't know where it is going to lead so I need to find in His word instruction! And suddenly a Sunday morning service like this becomes an oasis and you turn from verse to verse and you see that this is for me!!! This is precisely what I need to hear! And it begins to make sense to you that you need to KNOW God and that He is at work in spite of the difficulty of your situation.

Wisdom - The super-natural ability to take Biblical statements and apply them to practical/everyday situations! That leads to...

Revelation - The super-natural ability to see into the Scriptures so that they are unveiled to us and we get God's perspective.

Let me throw a tip in here...this is a great prayer to **pray for your children!** Especially for those who are teenagers and up! Do you know why? Because it is only by a work of the Spirit in their lives that they are going to see into the Scriptures and apply them properly! **Parents** - pray this for your children!

"Lord, I pray that as my son/daughter opens the Scriptures (as they have their devotions; hears it on the radio; sitting in a church service; wherever) may the truth of Your Word begin to be unveiled!"

It is how our children realize the value of character over and above appearance in the search of a mate. And then they will get serious about their life. And WE will see that this is all in God's hands and I, as a parent, don't have to look for something else to hold on to to hold together!

ILL. - Children - this works!

"Lord I pray for a super-natural discernment for my children. I pray that I might know how you put them together! Help me know what is the best discipline; motivation; guide for this child. The unveiling..."

I wonder sometimes if much of our teaching as a parent doesn't fall flat, not because we don't teach truth but because we don't pray for the truth to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit!

Do we pray like that when we read our Bible? Do we open the pages and say, "*Lord, show me yourself?*" This is not merely a book to read in order to learn what is going to happen as prophecy is fulfilled. It isn't merely a book from which to get some ethical guidelines on how to behave in the relationships of life. Primarily this book is designed to lead us to stand in the presence of the living God, to feel him, to know him, to sense his love, his wisdom, his strength, his might, his incredible grasp of circumstances, his control of human events, and to enable us to understand our relationship to him, to have him stand in our presence living, breathing, compassionate. That is what the book is for. No other book has that quality, but this one has. Christ can step out of the pages and be a living presence in our life and heart, if we pray and ask him to give us that spirit of wisdom and of revelation. But it will not come in any other way.

Now back to Ephesians 1...there's more!

SLIDE – What Is This Prayer All About?

"So that we may know Him better."

Through wisdom and revelation!

Look at the verse again...

SLIDE – READ vv. 17-19

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. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

Can't you just see that! Your heart blinking its eyes! No, no! That is not what it means! The heart when it is used in Scripture is used for mind, emotion, and will. I.e. - "*I pray that we will wake up mentally, emotionally, and willingly so that I won't live my life clueless; selfish; going in my direction and not Yours!*"

SLIDE – That the eyes of my heart may be enlightened

Now LISTEN: This is a "Divine" enlightenment!

LISTEN: click; click. Here the light go on? Click; click.

When we open this Book and read its words...click; click...the light of what God does for us goes on! The truth is made clear!

And do you know what? LISTEN: I really believe this type of enlightenment only happens in prayer! If we are going to get this ‘clear vision of God’ the channel is through prayer.

Now let me be the first to admit to you that I have been greatly moved by this passage of Scripture because it has made me freshly aware that we MUST add, deliberately and intentionally, this dimension that is before us in this prayer to our teaching at Bethany. It is one thing to be good students of God’s Word (and we are in so many avenues here at Bethany), but it is a different dimension to ask God for enlightenment of those truths!

And Paul prays for our enlightenment (click; click) in three areas:

SLIDE – vv. 17-19

1. The hope of our calling
2. The riches of our inheritance
3. The power of His nature

Let’s look at each of them...

SLIDE –

- The hope of our calling

And what is the hope of our calling? Two things: That we today, as we are on planet earth are being...

SLIDE –

- Conformed into His image

SLIDE – Romans 8:28-31

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...what, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

We have hope that God is using all situations, circumstances, and events to conform us into the image of Christ! Great! Clicked???

What else is the hope of our calling? That we will one day be...

SLIDE –

- Transformed into His image

SLIDE – Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Has this clicked??? We will get a heavenly, transformed body! Just bear it out until you get it! Some are worse than others! Hang in there! HOPE may be all you have to keep you going!

The 2nd area of prayer for enlightenment...is that it would click...

SLIDE –

- The riches of our inheritance

And what are the riches of our inheritance?

SLIDE – Our inheritance

Eternal life; full potential to have victory over sin; full potential to defeat temptation; the ability to detect Satan’s lies; the ability to be ‘wise as serpents but harmless as doves’; the capacity to love our enemies; the strength to endure through trials; the insight to not be deceived; the ability to be peace-loving, kind, and considerate; etc.

Oh for the light to click on in the area of what we have inherited in Christ! Nothing would stop us from living the ‘victorious life’!

The 3rd area of prayer for enlightenment...is that it would click...

SLIDE –

- The power of His nature

And what is the power of His nature? READ vv. 19-21

Whoa!

God wants us to know that EVERYTHING is within His power! Why? So we will relax and let Him live His life through us! If we grasped this we would fear...nothing...that comes at us! Not sickness; heartache; turmoil; people; not even death! Because it would ‘click’ that He has the power to remove it; release it; revive it if He so saw fit! We would so relax! We would so try! We would so venture! He has the power to turn things however He chooses!

Has that ‘clicked’ with you yet?

How do we “see” these things? It is a work of PRAYER! In prayer these things will “Click-click”!

Boy, how are you and I going to remember these thing?

Bookmark in your pews...

SLIDE – verse on screen

Leave this up until we start singing!

Bow...

Pray with and for each other...

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