

COMMUNITY WITH GOD

By Brooks Ward

SCRIPTURE

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.

OBSERVATION

Prayer is perhaps one of the greatest graces God has given to mankind. We are invited into community with God through prayer. He desires for us to value spending time with Him in prayer. In our passage today we find the apostle Paul writing a letter to the Church at Ephesus. He takes a moment to encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ that he is praying for them constantly (v. 16).

Not only does the apostle wish for the Ephesians to know that he is praying for them constantly, but he takes care to relate the content of his prayers to them. It is in the content of the apostle's prayers that, I believe, we find a great resource to aid us in our own prayers with God.

Notice first the theme of the prayer: spiritual depth in knowledge and wisdom. He begins by using these exact words in verse 17, knowledge and wisdom, and then follows suit all the way through 23. Paul prays that their hearts are enlightened so that they may know the depths of the gospel (v. 18). He then prays that they would be able to comprehend the immeasurable greatness of God's power (v. 19).

The entire prayer life of Paul toward these believers is totally focused on their spiritual maturity and relational intimacy with God. We find no evidence that Paul prayed for their monetary needs/wants, and we find no evidence that Paul was concerned about them having a great, comfortable life. Paul desired that they truly know God. He wasn't

content for them to live nominal, unengaged, consumeristic, pseudo-Christian lives. He wanted them to experience the power of God, and his prayers for them reflect that desire.

In fact, when we explore the rest of Scripture, we find the prayers contained in the Word of God are primarily concerned with knowing our Creator in the depths of our soul. When Jesus prayed for the disciples in John 17, He didn't ask the father for their health, wealth, or safety. Jesus prayed that they would grow in their knowledge of the truth (John 17:17). He prayed for their perseverance in the faith (John 17:11). Jesus prayed that they would be filled with His joy (John 17:13).

The truth is God has given us prayer so that we may come to a deeper knowledge of Him and love for Him. He does care about prayers for healing (James 5:13-14) and other basic necessities, but He desires our spiritual growth over our physical and emotional comfort.

I love food; specifically, I love tacos. A lot. My favorite—and don't judge me—is a steak taco from Taco Bell covered in spicy ranch sauce and cheese with lettuce and tomatoes. The delicious part of that taco is the juicy steak, shredded cheddar cheese, and delicious spicy ranch. I get the tomatoes and lettuce to feel somewhat healthy and to appease my wife's concern for my arteries. Prayer with God that only focuses on our immediate health and wealth while ignoring our spiritual growth and intimacy with the Father is like eating the lettuce and tomatoes off that delicious taco and throwing away the best part.

So many Christians live their whole lives totally focused on their own selfish wants in prayer, while totally neglecting their need to know the One to whom they are praying. Yes, God cares about health; He is sovereign over it. Yes, He promises to take care of us; He has cured our deepest sickness, sin, through the blood of His Son. However, much deeper than providing a new car or healing a broken toe is the need for you to know the immeasurable power and love of God.

OBEDIENCE

God desires real intimacy with us, not our Christmas list disguised in prayer. This week take time each day to approach the throne of grace in prayer. Don't attempt to conquer this week alone. Start each day with the Father. Go to His Word and learn how His people prayed. Realize that Paul's recorded prayers are the inspired Word of God. He desires that you pray this way. Scripture to reference: Colossians 1:9-14; Ephesians 3:16-19; Philippians 1:9-11; and the entirety of Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Three things you can do this week:

1. Keep a prayer journal. Write down every word you bring before the Father.
2. Compare your prayer journal to the prayers you find in the Bible.
3. If this is new for you, stop what you are doing right now, and pray to the Father that He would help align your heart in prayer with His will.

PRAYER

1. Pray that God would ignite the hearts of the people of Harmony Hill to desire a deep and rich relationship with Him.
2. Pray that the gospel would go out from Harmony Hill and invade the surrounding community.
3. Pray that God would help you begin to grasp the depths of how wretched your personal sin truly is, and that He would fill your heart with sin-crushing love for Him.
4. Finally, pray that God would guide you and the people of Harmony Hill into a soul-satisfying, joy-filled prayer life with Him.