

Ephesians Series

4. Why do we pray? [Sermon Notes]

The verses in Ephesians 1:15-23 represent an aside in Paul's general discussion of what God has done for His people. He uses this opportunity of giving thanks for the Ephesians and in turn gives us a few pointers on how we should be praying for one another

(Eph 1:15 *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.*)

As the one who had been so instrumental in bringing them to Christ in the first place he had much to give thanks for as he had seen their church grow and thrive. So what do we pray for?

- *because we need enlightening (1:17 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.)* I'm going to deal with that a week Sunday when we look at the work of the Holy Spirit.
- *that we may know the hope (1:18 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. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms etc.)* We dealt with the hope this morning.
- *His power for us (1:18 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. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms etc.)* let me just cut out the bit about hope to see what Paul's prayer was for them. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe. What sort of power?

Look at the rest *That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 (C) And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 (C) which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

So Paul's prayer is that we might know God's incomparably great power which is like the working of His mighty strength.

What sort of God? So what? If our God is the one that has the power to raise Christ from the dead. It's the same power that has now made Him head over everything.

So when we pray, what are our expectations of what we ask God for? I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Marcel Proust once said, "The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

Read Acts 12:1-17

This is what the disciples and Rhoda found out on the night that Peter was released from prison - they were praying for him - but what did they expect - well certainly that he was not to be immediately released!!

What about Peter? Slightly different. He wasn't so frantic with fear that he was praying like mad - he was asleep! I'm pretty sure he knew God was in control. But when the angel awoke him, even he thought it was a dream!

We want God to work - but what do we want Him to do and what do we expect Him to do?

William Carey - *"Expect great things of God - do great things for God."*

And we must be people of expectancy.

But does God still do amazing things.

Let's start with this story. Peter is released from prison - how? He was secure, there should have been no way he was going to escape - yet he did.

"Expect great things of God - do great things for God."

Sang Kyoo Lee and his wife, Young Gum, visited Bishop Richard Wilke at his office one day. Sang Kyoo wanted to start a new church for Koreans. "We have been praying for one hundred nights -- one, two hours every night -- asking God to give us power and victory," Sang Kyoo began.

"Yes," Young Gum seconded, "every night, faithfully for one hundred nights. We have been praying before coming to see you."

"We believe God wants us to begin new work with Koreans in Arkansas," said Sang Kyoo. "And we need much power."

Bishop Wilke sensed their dedication and commitment. But he also knew of their struggle to learn English, as well as their financial problems in completing seminary. "We don't have many Koreans in Central Arkansas, do we?" the bishop asked. "Oh yes," Sang Kyoo replied. "We think as many as three or four hundred. We can travel fifty miles in every direction and make class meetings in different towns." Next, Wilke asked if the Arkansas Koreans were Christians. "No, not most," they answered enthusiastically, "but we must lead them to Christ. We will hold Sunday afternoon worship in First Church, Jacksonville. Also, Friday night prayers and Saturday Bible Study."

"Let us know when you hold your first worship service," Wilke said casually. "Our first service will be the day we move into the parsonage," Sang Kyoo said with a big smile. "My wife, Young Gum, son, John, daughter, Susan, and I will kneel down and pray. We'll have a congregation of four," he said lifting up four fingers.

"Their spirit was contagious," Wilke writes, "I kept thinking of practical things, like a refrigerator and clothes for the children and automobile tires." He asked them, "Is there anything at all I can do to help you?"

"Oh, yes, there is," this young couple answered in unison. "Would you pray for us? We will need much power." The three of them held hands and prayed together.

A few months later this young couple once again visited Bishop Wilke. "We have twenty converts," Sang Kyoo said. "We started three home Bible studies in three different towns," added Young Gum. "We are growing. People are coming from fifty miles away. God is answering our prayers."

Bishop Wilke concludes with these words of hope: "As they spoke, I felt the mighty hand of God in the church." (4) The reason Bishop Wilke felt the mighty hand of God was not this couple's level of sophistication, but their level of commitment. They were a living testimony to the power of the cross. Their enthusiasm would be foolishness in the minds of most of us. Naive, we would likely say. But such consecrated naivete can move heaven and earth.

And Swaffham - can this church be restored to its former glory, spiritually, physically - the answer must be yes. Can a great harvest come to Christ in Swaffham? Yes. Because it is the same God whom we worship that raised Jesus from the dead, and who released Peter from jail.

So can it happen here? Yes but we need to have that expectancy in prayer that we will know His incomparably great power

PRAYER (poem):

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.
Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

... Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

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