

## To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a Praying community!

Ephesians 1:15-19      September 26, 2010

**Intro.** Prayer is the turning of our hearts toward the heart of God in such a way that we acknowledge and express our complete dependence on him for all things while seeking his active response to our requests and concerns that are consistent with and brought through Jesus Christ. This definition is built on the irreducible components of turning to God in absolute dependence on him with our requests for his kingdom to come and will to be done. The scriptures tell us that this kind of praying moves God to action on our behalf.

The writer of Hebrews (4:14-16) motivates us to pray by depicting a throne room scene. We have a great high priest who is now seated at the right hand of God. This Priest, who is Jesus Christ, has lived as a man and can sympathize with our weaknesses that may keep us from approaching God. So because we have Jesus as our 'go between' and supporter, we should confidently go to the 'throne of grace' to ask for and receive all that we need. With Jesus as our connection, we go confidently to God for his mercy and help.

'I am praying for you.' With these thoughts on the meaning and mechanics of prayer, your prayer on behalf of each other takes on an eternally significant value. God acts according to his purposes in someone's life when you pray for them. When someone approaches the throne of God and grace on your behalf, God acts according to his mercy and grace in your life.

This morning as we continue to learn and grow in our understanding of praying for each other, we focus our attention on sharpening our focus in prayer. Paul's prayer recorded in Ephesians 1:15-23 provides the model prayer from which we are learning to shape our praying for one another. We are immediately impressed from his prayer in this passage as well as 3:14ff that he is asking God to do something for these people in their hearts. His praying, as ours should be, is aimed for action and change at targets beyond physical or external change, mental understanding, emotional relief or temporary confidence. He prayed for changes of heart in the people he prayed for.

I am praying for you . . . for a change of heart. The request to have 'the eyes of your hearts enlightened' certainly points toward heart change. Consider these biblical truths about your heart before we look at how Paul prayed for changed hearts.

- Your heart is the seat of thought and understanding. What rules your heart exercises inescapable influence over your life.    Lk. 6:43-45
- Your heart is the battlefield of desires and factory of idols. That which exercises functional control over your heart other than God is an idol.    Ezek. 14:1-5; James 4:1-2
- Your heart is active. It causes, directs, shapes and shepherds your behavior. Lasting change always and only occurs through a changed heart.    Romans 12:1-2
- God saves and calls you to heart transformation. God's calling on your life is to inner change that results in loving him with all your heart, soul and mind.    Eph. 3:17; Romans 5:5

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Let's learn to pray for one another to have God work powerfully in our hearts both from a general or bigger picture way and a more specific way.

**1. Pray for heart change at the motivational level. 17-18**

Note the reality of the heart struggle that you face described in E 4:17ff. Futile minds, darkened understanding, ignorance of God’s ways and hardness of heart. The goal of being in Christ is to become renewed in our hearts and minds . . . change in the way we think and the motives that move us (4:23). The Apostle’s prayer addresses this heart struggle in the following general ways.

I am praying for you . . .

- a. That God’s glory would rule your heart. *the Father of glory* 17  
1:6, 12, 14      1Cor. 10:31      draw attention to/reflect the glorious Father
  
- b. That God’s Word would rule your heart. *wisdom and revelation* 17  
Psa. 19:8      Psa 119:9-12      motivated by God’s self disclosure – his word
  
- c. That God’s Spirit would rule your heart. *may give you a spirit of . . .* 17  
Eph. 1:3, 8-9; Col. 1:9      Phil. 1:19      empowered/lead by the Spirit  
2Cor. 4:6

**2. Pray for heart change at the experiential level. 18-19**

Note the parallel expression of ‘that you may know.’ It is parallel to opening the eyes of your hearts in that it is another way of indicating spiritual understanding or insight. It is knowledge that is synonymous with experience. It is not to be confused with intelligence, knowledge, or mental understanding. The purpose of this requested spiritual insight is that your life may experience the hope, love and power of God in ways that go beyond mere head knowledge or emotional assent. These are prayers aimed at heart change that produces results in the actual life experience of the person prayed for.

I am praying for you . . .

- a. That you will experience hope in God’s calling on your life. 18  
Hope is the settled expectation of good; hope focuses on that which is not yet visible  
 Hope is placed alongside faith and love as the trio of virtues most obvious in the gospel  
Cmp. 2:12 having no hope      Rom. 12:12 rejoice in hope      Rom. 15:13 abound in hope  
Source or sphere of hope is God’s calling on your life.      Eph.4:4  
 Calling is a term describing God’s perspective of your salvation. He called you to himself.  
1Cor.1:26      2Thess 2:14      Rom.8:30  
 Cmp 2Corinthians 1:8-11      prayer helped connect suffering and hope

b. That you will appreciate God's love for you.

18

The request is pointed at you knowing, apprehending, comprehending what the wealth or value of God's inheritance is in the saints. The emphasis is on the riches or wealth.

A key interpretive issue is seeing that the inheritance is God's not ours. 1:14 speaks of our inheritance in Christ. This verse speaks of God's taking his people as his own and cherishing them as his inheritance – prized possession. Breathtaking extravagance.

Cmp. E 4:1; 5:1

God places enormous value on his people. This prayer request is that God's people may appreciate, sense and know the extraordinary value that God places on them.

John 17:23-26 Share in love father has for the Son - Jesus prays this way

Rom. 8:31ff

Eph. 3:17-19

3. That you will encounter God's active strength on your behalf.

19

Verse 19 contains 4 terms for God's strength, ability and power with 2 descriptive, enlarging adjectives.

God's strength is described as surpassing and great.

Surpassing/immeasurable – to excel, stand out, go beyond; 3:19 love; 2:7 grace

Greatness – big, large, wide

God's working power . . . changes our affections 3:7, 16, 20; defeats Satan 6:10-11; transforms our bodies Phil.3:21

Col. 1:11, 29

This request is more than simply that you would be strengthened, but that you would experience and encounter the immeasurable and great power of God as it is at work in you.

Iron Man illus of endurance . . .

2Tim. 4:14-18

**Pray for heart change at the motivational level.**

That God's glory would rule your heart.

That God's Word would rule your heart.

That God's Spirit would rule your heart.

**Pray for heart change at the experiential level.**

That you will experience hope in God's calling on your life.

That you will appreciate God's love for you.

That you will encounter God's active strength on your behalf.

## **Lord, I am listening . . . please help me . . .**

1. Change my heart.  
Strengthen me to continually grant rulership of my heart to your glory, word and Spirit.
2. Teach me to pray for others.  
Expand my influence for your glory through my focused prayer for others.
3. Open the eyes of my heart.  
Give me spiritual discernment to experience hope, love and power in Christ.

## **Study Questions**

1. Read Ephesians 1 together. Note/mention any repeated terms or themes in 15-23. Note any questions you would like to ask for clarification or better understanding.
2. Review the four bullet points regarding the heart on page one of the notes. Look at the supporting scripture texts. Why is it necessary to pray for heart change in others? Share an example of a change of heart in your own spiritual experience and the role that prayer by others for you played in that change.
3. Carefully read 2Corinthians 4:3-6. What are a few ways to pray for others according to verse 6 concerning their heart's motivation or major focus? Why did God turn the light on in our hearts in the first place?
4. According to Psalm 119:9-12 . . . what are some ways you can pray for others regarding their hearts being open and submissive to God Word?
5. Review the notes and passages on praying for each other to experience hope. How are hope and suffering connected in 2Corinthians 1:8-11? Share an example that you are aware of where someone is facing stiff challenges and needs hope perhaps even more than deliverance from the challenges.
6. Summarize the focus of Paul's prayer in 1:17-19 in 2-3 words. How should this focus shape your praying for each other? Have each group member share a prayer request that comes from, is connected to or is worded in terms of the passage we studied today. Role play how these requests would be actually prayed before God . . . what words or phrases would you use?
7. The key to understanding v. 18b is to see the possessive pronoun his as pointing us to the fact that he is talking about God's inheritance, not ours. From the notes or your own understanding of scripture, review some passages that describe the value of the child of God to God the Father. What does it mean to be his prized possession? How or why would you pray for others to experience and appreciate this? Why do you want someone praying this for you?