

## What Paul Prays For

Ephesians Part 3

*Ephesians 1:15-23*

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 9.12.18

### Invite-a-Friend Night

- Next Wednesday will be Friend Night. We will have Friend nights once a semester.
- On “Friend Nights” we encourage everyone here to invite one person with you to next week’s worship.
- Thom Rainer, the CEO of Lifeway Christian Resources, a few years back did a study that examined that data on the likelihood of someone saying yes to an invitation to church. Research shows that 85% of people will come to a worship service with you if you invite them if (1) you already have a relationship with this person and (2) you meet them in a neutral location before coming to worship.<sup>1</sup>
  - This is very practical. Invite someone you already know, and meet them before you come to worship next week.
    - Think about when meeting in a neutral location is important. If it is your first time here at HFC, you probably don’t know where to park, which doors to go to, or where to meet your friend if you actually do come.
    - Maybe you can meet them in DSU or at your dorm and walk over together.
- One of the main reasons I chose to make next week our Friend Night, is the text I will be teaching on: *Ephesians 2:1-10*. If you ever want a text that explains where you were before Christ came into your life and what happened once when Christ came into your life, *Ephesians 2:1-10* is a great summary of your life in Christ.

### You can tell a lot about a person by...

- We’ve probably all heard the impression, “You can tell a lot about a person by...”?
- What are some expressions you’ve heard? Fill in the blank: “You can tell a lot about a person by\_\_\_\_\_.”
- According to a BuzzFeed quiz called, “What Does Your Handwriting Actually Say about You,” apparently, my handwriting means I am a *procrastinator*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this podcast episode of *Rainer on Leadership* with Thom Rainer and Jonathan Howe, at about the 10:30 mark, Rainer discusses research on inviting people to church from his 2008 book, *The Unchurched Next Door*. Thom Rainer, “Why People Don’t Invite Others to Church-Rainer on Leadership #459,” *Thom S. Rainer*, August 17, 2018,

<https://thomrainer.com/2018/08/people-dont-invite-others-church/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.buzzfeed.com/adamellis/what-does-your-handwriting-actually-say-about-you>

### ***Ephesians 1:15-23***

- In tonight's passage we're going to be looking at one of Paul's prayers (he prays another prayer in *Ephesians 3:14-21*, with a total of seven prayers in his letters in the New Testament<sup>3</sup>). I think we can tell a lot about Paul-his desires, his wishes, his theology, his ministry, by his prayers.
- Tonight we will see from Paul's prayer why he thanks God for this church, what he asks from God for this church, and we will actually spend some time in prayer, praying like Paul.

### **Paul thanks God for their faith and love. (*Ephesians 1:15-16*)**

- Why was Paul thankful to God for this church?
- When you find yourself being thankful for a person, what about that person are you usually thankful for?
  - Sense of humor/fun personality
  - Hospitable
  - Dependable
- Paul commends the Ephesians church for their *faith* and *love*. Paul thanks God for this church's faith in Jesus and love for the saints.
- If Paul finds their faith and love worthy of him praying to God in gratitude, their faith and love are worthy of our emulation.
- "Faith in the Lord Jesus"
  - *Hebrews 11:1* - "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
  - There are two aspects of having faith in Jesus that we see in scripture.
    - First, we put our trust and hope in Jesus.
    - Second, we are faithful to Jesus by doing what He says.
      - Obedience
- "Love toward all the saints"
  - These people loved each other.
  - Jesus said this to His disciples in *John 13:35*, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." In other words, according to Jesus Himself, followers of Jesus are verified as His disciples by how they love one another.
  - When you come to HFC or go to your local church, do you go there with to goal to love someone else and have the expectation to receive love?
  - Visualize this. What would it be like if everyone on campus thought of our campus ministry as people who love. What if even though they might not agree with our beliefs, they could not deny the love we have for each other.
  - How can you love your fellow Christians better?

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 15:14-33, Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-14, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, and 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

### Paul prays that they would know God better.

- I want is to skip down to verse 18. “Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.”
  - This is a beautiful thought. He wants them to see and comprehend clearly.
  - What do we know about Paul and his conversion?
  - Saul of Tarsus, was persecuting Christians and throwing them into jail. On his way to Damascus he was confronted by Jesus Himself and was blinded. After he was converted and gave his life to Christ, he regained his sight. (*Acts 9*)<sup>4</sup>
  - He saw clearly who Jesus was. He wants others to see Jesus clearly, too. Paul’s prayer is that the church in Ephesus sees Jesus very clearly for who he is, and understands him.
- In *1:17* the ESV reads, “Revelation in the knowledge of Him.”
  - I actually like the way the NIV translates it: “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.”
  - Paul wants this church to know God better.
- We’ve all known people that the more we get to know them we either like them more or less. Some people you like at first, but the more you get to know them the more you realize that they’re kind of a jerk. And others, you might not like them at first, but the more you get to know them the more you love and respect them.
  - This is a quote from Mark Batterson that has been an aspiration of mine: “My desire is that the people who know me the best, respect me the most.”<sup>5</sup>
- The more we know God the more beautiful, great, holy, He is to us.
- Paul prays that as we grow in our knowledge of God, we would understand these three realities:
  - The hope to which we have been called (*Ephesians 1:18*)
    - God has great plans for your future, as well as the future of the whole cosmos.
    - “The focus here is...the consummation of God’s plan in eternity.”<sup>6</sup>
    - D.A. Carson - “In our generation, which reflects too little on the future and almost never on eternity, it is distressingly obvious that we need help, help from God so as to be able to know the hope to which we have been called. Only then will we become more interested in living eternity’s values constantly before our eyes.”<sup>7</sup>
  - The riches of His glorious inheritance (*Ephesians 1:18*)

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<sup>4</sup> I first heard of this connection between “the eyes of your hearts enlightened” and Paul’s blindness during his conversion from a sermon by Alistair Begg:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjPDiuJKBVA&t=1870s>.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 30.

<sup>6</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 74.

<sup>7</sup> D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Formation: Priorities of Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1992), 176.

- God's inheritance is His Saints. Paul is referring to God's inheritance, not the people.
- The immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe (*Ephesians 1:19-23*)
  - The power that is at work in us is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (1:20).
  - What kind of power do you have? Resurrection power.
  - "N.T. Wright - "For Paul, the greatest display of power the world had ever seen took place when God raised Jesus from the dead."<sup>8</sup>

### **A word on the prayers of scripture**

- Before we actually dive into our time of prayer, I
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "The Psalter [The Psalms] occupies a unique place in the Holy Scriptures. It is God's Word and, with few exceptions, the prayer of men as well. How are we to understand this? How can God's Word be at the same time prayer to God?"<sup>9</sup>
  - In other words, the prayers of scripture are very interesting and compelling. They are God's Word to us, but they are at the same time, when we pray them, our words back to God.
- I think one of the best things prayers of scripture can offer us is this: *they give us words to express ourselves to God.*
  - There are many prayers of Paul in his letters to churches
  - Most of the Psalms as prayers to God.
- When we pray scripture, we are praying God's word back to Him.

### **Pray like Paul.**

- Now we will enter a time of prayer. If you have never prayed before, that is totally fine. If you do not feel comfortable praying with someone else, feel free to sit there and pray to yourself. If you're not sure about this whole God thing, that's totally fine, too. If you'd like to get in groups of 3-5 people, that'd be fine, too. I'd just like there to be a time of prayer before God.
- We will have prompts inspired by Paul's prayer in *Ephesians 1:15-23*.
- Prayer prompts
  - Pray that we as a campus ministry would grow in our faith toward Jesus and love toward one another.
  - Pray that we will know God better.
  - Pray that we will understand the hope we have in Jesus.
  - Pray that we will understand God's glorious inheritance in the saints.
  - Pray that we will understand the greatness of God's power that is at work in us.
  - Pray *Ephesians 1:15-23*.

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<sup>8</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York: HarperOne, 1954), 44.