

## **A Prayer for Prosperity**

Ephesians 1: 15-19

Our text today comes from the letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. This letter is one of the “prison epistles,” written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. The church at Ephesus was dear to the heart of Paul, having spent about three years there in ministry.

Ephesus was the crown jewel of Asia Minor. History reveals there were some 230 cities along the coastline of Asia Minor, and Ephesus was the largest. It was founded in order to command one of the major highways of commerce throughout the region. While other cities had natural harbors, facilitating trade and travel, the harbor in Ephesus, along with its proximity to the major highway, made Ephesus a favorite of many. Eventually the harbor filled with silt, hindering its ability for shipping, but the city continued to thrive. It boasted a temple to the goddess Diana, which created a lucrative business for gold and silversmiths who made idols for those who came to Ephesus to worship.

Ephesus was a prosperous city, in more ways than one. Paul knew those who were saved by grace were rich beyond measure. Having shared the varied spiritual blessings available in Christ in the opening of his greeting, Paul desired the church there to comprehend the spiritual wealth available in Christ.

While this letter was written thousands of years ago, its truth remains relevant for all in Christ. We have much more than we can possibly imagine. As we examine the [aspects](#) of Paul’s prayer, I want to consider: [A Prayer for Prosperity](#). While Paul did not subscribe to the unbiblical prosperity gospel so prevalent today, he did know there is spiritual prosperity in Christ!

**I. Paul’s Devotion to the Church** (15-16) – As you read Paul’s epistles, his devotion to the church is immediately evident. Ephesus was certainly no exception. Consider:

**A. Their Reputation** (15) – [Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints](#). Clearly, the testimony of the church in Ephesus was known far and wide. Paul had received reports of the church, and the influential reputation she had developed. Paul mentioned:

**1. Their Faith** – Ephesus had a reputation of faith in the Lord Jesus. These were not fringe believers who were willing to accept Christ along with the many other gods and goddesses within Greek culture. These were born again believers, completely surrendered to Christ, and Him alone. (Are we known for our faith in Christ; it is evident in our daily lives?)

**2. Their Love (15)** – Paul had not only heard of their faith in the Lord, he had also received word regarding their love for all the saints. Their love was not reserved for those within their own fellowship, or those with whom they always agreed. The church at Ephesus had developed a love for all the saints. They genuinely loved fellow believers. It is apparent they had watched Paul's life and the infectious love he had shown for all men, especially those of faith.

- This is quite challenging and convicting. It is easy to love those within our circle of friendship within the local body, but what about those with whom we may disagree with from time to time? What about those believers half-way around the world we have never met? Could it honestly be said that we have developed a love for all the saints?

**B. The Supplication (16)** – [Wherefore I also] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. Having heard of their faith and love, Paul revealed that he diligently prayed for them. We find:

**1. He was Faithful** – Paul did not waver in his commitment for the church. He continually offered thanksgiving unto the Lord for them and the ministry in which they were engaged. While they lived in an uncertain, ever-changing world, they could be confident of Paul's continued support and gratitude. He was fully devoted to the church, faithful to support her in any way possible.

- I am convinced we need more commitment and faithfulness in our day. You might argue that Paul said nothing of that in the text, but I see it clearly. If he was committed to continually offer gratitude for the church, he was committed to her well-being. If we reach the place in life that we are continually thankful for the Lord and His church, commitment will naturally come!

**2. He was Prayerful** – Paul also was committed to continual prayer for the church in Ephesus. He daily prayed for their needs, interceding on their behalf. Paul refused to be distracted by the cares and hindrances of this world; he made prayer a priority in life.

- How many of us complain about the lack of time we have to accomplish all we feel is necessary? How often have we complained – I just didn't have the time? I know this sounds harsh, but it's true – we make time for needs that are important. If prayer were a real priority, we would make time for it daily. I admit, I need to make more time for prayer, and less for excuses!

**II. Paul's Desire for the Church (17-19)** – Having shared his committed devotion for them, Paul then revealed his heart-felt desire for the church. He earnestly prayed for their:

**A. Sound Wisdom** (17-18a) – That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: <sup>[18a]</sup> The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus to possess the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. This was a bold prayer, that if answered, would have a tremendous impact on the church, transforming their lives.

- At this moment in time, the world was mesmerized by philosophy. The great thinkers were prevalent in that age, and there was a zest for knowledge. Paul didn't desire the church to possess more secular knowledge, but the wisdom of God and an understanding of His person and purpose. There was no need to search among the world, seeking counsel from the philosophers of their day – the believer had access to the wisdom God gives and the revelation of Himself to those who seek Him.

- Consider the thoughts of John MacArthur: *Warren Wiersbe tells the story of how William Randolph Hearst once read of an extremely valuable piece of art, which he decided he must add to his extensive collection. He instructed his agent to scour the galleries of the world to find the masterpiece he was determined to have at any price. After many months of painstaking search, the agent reported that the piece already belonged to Mr. Hearst and had been stored in one of his warehouses for many years.*

*It is tragic that many believers become entangled in a quest for something more in the Christian life, for something special, something extra that the "ordinary" Christian life does not possess. They talk of getting more of Jesus Christ, more of the Holy Spirit, more power, more blessings, a higher life, a deeper life—as if the resources of God were divinely doled out one at a time like so many pharmaceutical prescriptions or were unlocked by some spiritual combination that only an initiated few can know.* <sup>i</sup>

- The Lord has promised to provide wisdom to those who earnestly seek it, [James 1:5](#). He desires us to possess wisdom, which leads to an intimate knowledge of the person and work of our Lord. Such wisdom is available for those who desire it. [2 Peter 1:3](#) – *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*

**B. A Settled Hope** (18b) – that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Paul wanted them to have an intimate knowledge of God through the wisdom He provides, along with a settled hope in a secure future. Their faithfulness and commitment to the Lord would pay dividends in the future as well. Knowing Christ more intimately would enhance their current life, but their relationship to the Lord was not confined to

this life alone. Paul prayed they would understand and embrace the hope in Christ Jesus, becoming settled in their hope and assurance of an eternal inheritance.

- There is much talk in religious circles about “living our best life now.” I understand the underlying principle they seek to convey – we have much at our disposal through Christ. However, the life we have here can never compare to the glory we shall experience in eternity! Like those in Ephesus, we cannot focus solely on our current surroundings or drive our stakes too deep in this life. We will one day enter the presence of our Lord and Savior for all eternity because of His gracious provision and the eternal life afforded us through His triumphant resurrection!

**C. A Secure Possession** (19) – [And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.](#) Paul also desired the church to possess and experience the exceeding greatness of Christ’s power in their lives. He was far greater than anything they would encounter in life. He was able to secure, sustain, and provide whatever they needed to endure for Him, while leading prosperous spiritual lives.

- While I fully understand what Paul has said in this statement, I lack the ability to fully comprehend the depth of its meaning and the abundance it provides for us. We are aware of the power of Christ, indwelling us through the Spirit, but we lack the ability to grasp such enormity! This much I know – the Lord is more than able to provide for any need I have. He has empowered and equipped me to live victoriously for Him. That offers unrivaled security and peace! [Eph.3:20 – Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.](#)

- We have power available that is beyond ability to comprehend. This power is according to the working of His mighty power! John Phillips said, “*God made an enormous expenditure of His strength, power, and energy in the work of the cross and the subsequent emptying of the tomb in order to redeem us from sin.*” That power is available through Christ our Lord!

**Conclusion:** Paul desired the church to prosper spiritually in a world consumed with material prosperity. We can prosper in Christ, but we must seek Him and rest in His power and grace. He has already conquered every enemy would could encounter. Are you prospering in Jesus? Do you know Him as your Lord and Savior? Come to Him today for the need in your life!

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<sup>i</sup> MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.