

PRAYING In The Bible

Prayer in the Bible: Paul's Prayer

It seemed funny and a revelation when I heard Ephesians chapter 1 the other day. Ashamedly, it was the third time I listened to this chapter before it hit me. This is a prayer! Throughout my Christian walk it has been a template for me to read or listen to chapters a few times to get it. Ephesians 1 is no exception. I was at the end of this prayer study. The last one about Daniel was posted online. It was time to move on. Then Paul hit me with this prayer. Only two of my prayer studies are in the New Testament. Let us make it three!

This Prayer of Paul begins in verse 17, or does it? It is so easy to dismiss the introductory statements of Paul as just that: an introduction. They are not relevant right? Yet, this prayer study has opened my eyes (after three listens). What is the template of Jesus prayer? It is honoring God, praying for others, and humbly asking a request. Let us break down Paul's words and see if this template is here.

Paul opens this letter to Ephesus with a salutation, or is it? It begins with "by the will of God." However, did you catch "an apostle of Christ Jesus?" A salutation can be an acknowledgment. Paul is putting Jesus and God the Father in their rightful place above him. Verse 2 enforces Paul's humbleness again putting God the Father and Christ Jesus first. Then Paul blesses the people in the name of the Father and the Son, acknowledging that all spiritual blessings come from them. This is exactly why I call this a prayer. God First!

The beginning of Ephesians 1 is a long salutation. Remember we can call it an acknowledgment too. Acknowledging God and Jesus as our Lord above. Let us look at some of those words. Why? It is because these prayers are our template. To Praise God is to place Him above us in reverence. First Paul Puts God the Father and Jesus together as the Blessed in verse 3. Verses 4-5 are amazing because Paul says we have been invited into the kingdom by Jesus good pleasure. How do you worship God? Is it with singing and raised hands? Yes, but there is so much more. Acknowledging God as in control and worthy of praise and prayer is worship too. Basically, who butters your bread!

Who gives us wisdom? Who makes His mystery known? Then in verse 13 Paul seals it by saying we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Why is this good prayer. Do you have a ticket, certificate, or password to enter the holy of holies to talk to God? Who searches God to reveal Him to us? It is the Holy Spirit. If you are going to talk to God, you need the Spirit of truth. Paul opens his prayer by saying to the God above: you are God and I have a ticket to talk to you.

Paul opens the real prayer at verse 17 by asking God to give the people wisdom and the knowledge to know the Lord better. Yet, it goes even deeper. Paul then requests that we know Gods plan so that our eyes of understanding will be enlightened. What a great way to pray. One of the problems with the fall of Adam and Eve is understanding. God told Adam that it is better not to know the difference between good and evil. I am sure most of us can agree. Eve mis-interpreted that understanding by adding the touching of it. Satan in turn added that surely, we would not die. Since that fateful day people have been having a hard time understanding God.

He even goes further by saying we need the mighty power found in the Christ. For? It is to understand what God has instore of each of us. We need the wisdom and understanding of God to see with open eyes. Unless God draws you to Himself, we cannot do it ourselves. Most of

us do not look at it as power. Yet, we will not see the Lord unless God permits it. My heart and mind could see so much more of this world when God opened my eyes. Wouldn't we want God to grant us that? In so many ways this is the ultimate prayer. Pray for protection or a spouse? Pray to have a bill paid or receive a good job? What if God's wisdom took a different route? What if open eyes saw something different than before. Isn't that where wisdom and understanding come from? Seeing our requests in a different light.

If you were to continue into Ephesians chapter 2 you can see it. Paul says the world is trapped in sin and cannot see. Yet, those who accept Christ are blessed in the heavenly. The tree looks good to eat. It just does. Yet, God's way is only hard to swallow because we do not want things God's way. The best prayer you can say is for the Lord to open your eyes to His wisdom and understanding. To tell God you are willing to be put under Christ Jesus. This Christ Jesus says in John 14:6 "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

Think about it. How to see our bills better? To get a clearer picture of life's plan. Jesus is the way to better things. He holds the truth to better days. What is the last word? It is life. Prayer is good. Yet, within those prayers should be a thankful heart acknowledging God in His rightful place. Then we should be asking God for His will to shine on us. To see His wisdom and knowledge. Beyond that we should go on with our day. God is in control and that should be enough. No need to beg. No need to fret. No need to worry. Thanks, Paul, for the perfect prayer.