

The Epistle to the Ephesians

“United by a Moment”

Praying to the Sovereign God

Eph. 1:15-23

Scripture has no problem putting absolute sovereignty together with prayer.

I doubt if there is a Christian who has not struggled with prayer, or found it difficult to pray at times. This is not surprising for we are still pilgrims on the way; and it is not depressing, because struggling with such matters is part of the way we learn.

The best way to reform both our personal and corporate praying is to begin to listen afresh to Scripture and seeking God’s help to pray for His glory and for our good.

We need to know God better. Our prayer life reveals much about what we really believe.

Do we pray as meeting with the living God – as really doing business with the ruler of heaven and earth? Or is it ritualistic and filled with clichés?

As we study Paul’s prayers, may our own prayers be reformed and shaped by the Word of God.

A. For this reason ... (v. 15)

- This connects us with the previous verses.
- What God has already sovereignly accomplished constitutes a specific reason for Paul to pray as he does – in line with God’s purposes.

B. Three aspects of God’s sovereignty emphasized (v. 15-23)

1. Because God is sovereign, Paul offers thanksgiving for God’s intervening, sovereign grace in the lives of his readers (v. 15-16)

- Their faith and love are evidence of a sovereign and gracious intervention into their lives which has brought about their conversion and transformation.
- Paul thanks God with heart-felt praise, and this God is the one he must petition to continue the work He has graciously begun.
- When was the last time you offered up thanksgiving to God for His transforming work in others – even those we have not met?

2. Because God is sovereign, Paul offers intercession that God's sovereign, holy purposes in the salvation of His people may be accomplished (v. 17-19a)

- He prays that they might know God better.
- He prays that they would understand God's truth and that the Spirit would make it real to them (i.e. such as in the previous verses!). This is the means through which they will know God better.
- He prays that they might have enlightened eyes to:
 - Understand the hope of their calling.
 - Grasp the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints.
 - Know God's incomparably great power for us who believe.

3. Because God is sovereign, Paul offers a review of God's most dramatic displays of power (v. 19b-23)

- Paul doesn't turn to creation power but the power exerted when Christ was raised from the dead. Here is the undoing of death and the destruction of sin – Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits of a mighty resurrection that will mock the death of death and inaugurate the new heavens and new earth. This is the power of the exalted Christ!
- All of His sovereign power is for the good of His church! All of God's sovereignty and power is mediated through the one who was crucified on my behalf!
- If we focus on what God has revealed of Himself, it will become a ground, not for complaint, not for self-interest, not for fatalism or an excuse for sin, but for worship. It will become a great incentive to approach this sovereign, loving God and intercede with Him according to His own plan and purpose declared in Scripture – for His Son's glory and His people's good.

You might find it a blessing to read and reflect upon Paul's other prayers revealed to us in Scripture. Here is a sample list:

Romans 1:8-10; 10:1; 12:12; 15:5-6; 15:13; 15:30-33; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 16:23; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 2:14-16; 9:12-15; 12:7-9a; 13:7-9; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21; 6:19-20; Philippians 1:3-6; 1:9-11; 4:6-7; 4:23; Colossians 1:3-14; 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2:13-16; 3:9-13; 5:23-24; 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4; 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:2-5; 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2:1-8; 2 Timothy 1:3-7; 1:16-18; 4:22; Titus 3:15b; Philemon 4-7; 25