

# TWO GREAT PRAYERS & TWO GREAT PROBLEMS

## Ephesians 1.15-23, Message 07: A Practical Overview of Paul's Two Great Prayers

In our study of Ephesians, we've come to one of the two great prayers in this book: Ephesians 1.15-23.

- Before we actually study out this passage, I'd like to do an overview of this prayer and another that is found in Ephesians 3.20-21.
- These two great prayers of the Apostle Paul are like two big fingers pointing out two big problems we have today (and I said “we” because I struggle with these problems, so I know you must also).

### I. Two Great Prayers

#### A. (Eph 1.15-23) Paul's prayer that we might *know* God

1. The whole key to this passage is found in v17: “...in the knowledge of Him...”
2. Paul prays that God would give believers wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (v17) by enlightening the eyes of their understanding (v18). It all centers on *knowing of God*.
3. And knowing God personally results in knowing three specific things:
  - a) (v18a) Our Hope: We will know what is *sure*, what we *know* will come to pass regardless.
    - (1) Our biblical hope is not the hope of the world (“Gee, I hope so...”).
    - (2) Our biblical hope is that which is *sure* and *guaranteed*, but still yet future. We wait for it.
  - b) (v18b) Our Inheritance: We will know and understand the *riches* of the *glory* of God that awaits us if we will be faithful in the work He has given us to do in this world at this time.
  - c) (v19-23) Christ's Power and Authority: We will know, that...
    - (1) (v19) Christ's *power* is “to us-ward” who believe—it is available to all believers.
    - (2) (v20-23) Christ's *authority* is absolute—He rules over *all*.
4. This, then, leads us to the second great prayer of Paul in Ephesians...

#### B. (Eph 3.20-21) Paul's prayer that we might *glorify* God

1. (v21) Paul prays that God might be glorified in (through, by) the Church... which is us!
2. (v20) Paul says that God will be glorified in the Church by doing exceedingly above all that we ask or think (according to His power, that we saw in Ephesians 1, that works *in us*).
3. Now we can understand clearly two problems we struggle with every day...

### II. Two Great Problems

#### A. We don't think big enough.

1. (Eph 3.20-21) God wants to do great things through small, weak, insignificant people so that He can get the glory—so He can be glorified in His goodness, greatness, holiness, and power.
2. (Eph 1.15-23) God wants us to *know Him* so that He can do those great things *through us*.
3. And yet we continually limit God to our own little world, our own understanding, our own abilities.
4. Where is our faith? Why don't we think *bigger* in the Mission of evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved? We need to think *bigger* because the Mission is about *God's ability*, not ours.

#### B. We don't believe God wants to do great things... *through us*.

1. Oh, we'll believe God can do great things... *through others*.
2. But, how often do we think He won't or couldn't use “me” because I'm just a nobody from nowhere, USA?

3. (Eph 1.19) God's power to do His will (the Mission: evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved) is “exceedingly great... to us-ward who believe” (if you are a believer, God's power to do His will is available to you, personally).
4. (Eph 3.20-21) And that power that works in you, as a believer, is sufficient to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” in the Mission that God has given us.
5. The problems is that don't believe it: We don't believe God wants to do great things through us (He'd rather use others who are more popular or better equipped). That's a problem... so fix it!

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Today is a turning point in the life and ministry of Harvest Baptist Church.**

- Today is our last day in the conference room of the hotel. Next Sunday we move to the school auditorium.
- Today is the beginning of our first literature campaign: 20,000 door-hangers.
- Are we going to believe that Paul's two great prayers are for us, personally and individually?
- Or are we going to continue living out the two great problems...?
  - ✓ ...not thinking big enough in the Mission?
  - ✓ ...not believing God wants to use “me” (an insignificant believer) to do something of value (something that makes an eternal difference) in the Mission?

#### **Think about it this way: Where is Noah today?**

1. Noah was just one man, one believer.
  - There was no one else (even his family got on the boat because of his righteousness before God).
2. 2Peter 2.5 says Noah was a preacher of God's righteousness to a wicked and godless generation.
  - No attempt to be relevant... No soft-selling the message... Noah preached God's righteousness.
3. Noah was ridiculed by everyone for 120 years.
  - Think about it: Noah was preaching the coming of God's judgment in the form of rain while he was building a boat in his backyard (on dry land).
  - It had never rained on the earth before! People did not know what “rain” was! “Water from the sky?”

#### **And, yet, God used that one man (Noah) and God was pleased with that one man (Noah).**

- One person can make all the difference in the world if that individual will simply be faithful to God who called him to do a work (to do that work the way God said to do it, and not quit when it gets tough).

#### **We are just starting to reach out to the lost in evangelism and to the saved for their edification.**

- We have chosen one of the most simple ways to get that work done: An invitation and Gospel tract.
- If you think it foolish to distribute Gospel literature this way, door-to-door, consider what Spurgeon said:

I well remember distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something ... [Tracts are] adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. [These persons] have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers ... They may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ; but were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second, but that first attained, we are encouraged to take another, and so at the last ... There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell ...

Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing.

**Paul's two great prayers in Ephesians point out two great problems in us:**

1. We don't think big enough.
2. We don't believe God wants to use us to do great things.

**Noah should be a vivid example of just how wrong we are.**

- The great missionary Hudson Taylor said this: "All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they believed that God would be with them."
- William Carey (another missionary great) said this: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

**Let's do that. And in order to do that, we need to start somewhere, somehow:** We've chose to start with 20,000 door-hangers.

- Spurgeon:  
Brethren, do something, do something, do something! While societies and unions make constitutions, let us win souls. I pray you, be men of action all of you. Get to work and quit yourselves like men. Old Suvarov's idea of war is mine:  
"Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form a column! Charge bayonets! Plunge into the center of the enemy! Our aim is to win souls, and this we are not to talk about, but do in the power of God!"
- General Patton: "A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week."