

Series: Ephesians
Title: After Hearing of Faith and Love
Text: Ephesians 1: 15-16
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Ephesians 1: 15: Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

The apostle Paul began by thanking God the Father for the blessings of his grace in Christ, saying in verse 3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,…” Here, Paul says to our Ephesian brethren, “Wherefore I also, …give thanks for you…”

Divisions: I. WHY PAUL THANKED GOD FOR THEM—**V15: Wherefore…;** II. THE OCCASION—(two things) **V15: after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints;** III. LOOK AT A FEW THINGS PAUL ASKED GOD FOR—**V16:..making mention of you in my prayers.**

Proposition: The reason we thank only God and pray for our brethren is because God did and does all the work to save them and grow them in faith and love.

Jonah 2:9 But I will SACRIFICE unto THEE with the VOICE of THANKSGIVING; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.

Psalms 107: 20 He SENT HIS WORD, and HEALED them, and DELIVERED *them* from THEIR destructions. 21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* HIS GOODNESS, and *for* HIS WONDERFUL WORKS to the children of men! 22 And let them SACRIFICE the SACRIFICES of THANKSGIVING, and DECLARE [tally, enumerate, recount] HIS WORKS with REJOICING.

The sacrifice the believer sacrifices to God is the voice of thanksgiving, counting to God each of God’s works. And we do so—with rejoicing. We rejoice, that the salvation of our brethren is by his wonderful works, alone! This is the sacrifice which God is pleased with. Why? Because when believers thank the LORD we are praising God that salvation is of the LORD.

Application: We have heard preachers and professing believers say “salvation is of the LORD”—all do. But very, very few believe what the verse really means, and that is that salvation is ALL of the LORD. Most mean to say, “Salvation is of the LORD, along with MY contribution.” But if a sinner contributes anything then salvation is NOT of the LORD. That is not thanksgiving. God calls it glorying in the flesh, boasting.

1 Corinthians 1: 29: no flesh should glory in his presence…31:…He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Isaiah 42: 8: I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Therefore, Paul gladly would not give God’s glory to another. He said, “These same blessings for which I bless God for saving me, wherefore I also, thank God for you.”

Now, let’s look at these blessings again. The Spirit of God declares, through Paul, exactly what it means when the scripture says, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

I. WHY DID PAUL THANK GOD FOR THESE BELIEVERS AT EPHESUS?—Ephesians 1: 15: Wherefore…; He refers back to what he stated before.

Paul thanked God the Father for choosing them in Christ and thereby blessing them with all spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: V4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

If a professing believer does not believe God chose his brethren in Christ before the foundation of the world then he cannot thank God for his brethren—he would have to thank them or himself or someone else. That is not saying “Salvation is of the Lord”, they are glorying in their will, in their choice. Or when they say God chose them because God foresaw they would believe they are not saying salvation is of the Lord; They have to pray, “God I thank thee that I am not like other men, but you chose me because you saw I would believe—you chose me because of me.”

God did not foresee they would believe—they were dead in sins. The foreknowledge of God is not God foreseeing, it is God foreordaining. Scriptures says of those who believed, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13: 48) Besides that, faith is the gift of God--Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. So even if God by his omniscience did see that some would believe, it was because God foreordained to give them faith and eternal life. So we thank God that he chose them.

Paul thanked God for his Ephesian for the same reason he thanked God for his brethren in Thessalonica—

2 Thessalonians 2:13: But we are BOUND TO GIVE THANKS ALWAYS TO GOD FOR YOU, BRETHREN, beloved of the Lord, BECAUSE GOD HATH from the beginning chosen you TO salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 WHEREUNTO HE called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Paul thanked God for his brethren because God predestinated them unto the adoption of children, and he did so by Jesus Christ. That is why, together with Paul, they were brethren in God’s house, and we together with them.

Ephesians 1: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children BY JESUS CHRIST to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The predestination unto the adoption includes all things necessary—but there are three specific things. Paul deals with all three in the next several verses. And all three of these are BY JESUS CHRIST. God appointed Christ Jesus, entrusting him as the Head to do all three of these works—the Spirit of God has a part –but overall it is BY JESUS CHRIST. Let me just give them briefly:

1) Our predestination unto the adoption included the predestinated hour when all the legal requirements would be met so God could lawfully adopt the children he chose. When Christ said, “the hour is come”, it was the hour predestinated by God for Christ Jesus to redeem the children God had chosen to adopt into his family.

Ephesians 1: 7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;--

Galatians 4: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

2) Our predestination unto the adoption includes our being born of God the Holy Spirit in Eze 16: 8 this predestinated time is called “thy time...the time of love.”—Christ our Head rules all things to send his pastor and to cross our path with the gospel at that appointed hour.

Ephesians 1: 8: Wherein HE hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Galatians 4: 6: And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son whereby we cry Abba, Father.

3) Our predestination unto the adoption of children includes the predestinated hour when we shall leave this world and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, receiving our eternal inheritance, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Ephesians 1: 11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Christ has and is doing all in perfect faithfulness to the Father.

Hebrews 3: 1: Wherefore, HOLY BRETHREN, partakers of the HEAVENLY CALLING, consider **the Apostle and High Priest** of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2 Who was **FAITHFUL TO HIM that APPOINTED HIM**, as also Moses was faithful in all his house...5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, **AS A SERVANT**, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6 But Christ **AS A SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE; WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

I love God's electing grace but how I love the adoption of children by Jesus Christ!

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Application: My brothers and sisters, I thank God for you, because this house we are in is God OUR Father's house, it is Christ's Own House, whose house are WE. Think of that! God is OUR Father and we HIS children Christ is OUR Elder Brother and we are HIS brothers and sisters—HIS OWN HOUSE, WHOSE HOUSE WE ARE. He shall bring each son and daughter, each brother and sister, home to God his Father—and none shall be lost. We've seen throughout his days on this earth, how Christ meticulously fulfilled every word that was written. So then the hour is predestinated by God the Father for Christ to cross each child's path with the gospel—Christ will not fail to be faithful to the Father who appointed him. Likewise, God has appointed you to the inheritance—so then Christ shall faithfully keep you by his faithfulness to God that appointed him. This is what I thank God for when I think of you.

II. THE OCCASION—WHEN DID PAUL THANK GOD FOR THEM?—(two things)--Ephesians 1: 15: after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, AND love unto all the saints;

This was the cause Paul gave thanks: their faith in Christ, and their love to all the saints. Faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, are the two great characteristics of divine life—all the true saints of God, from the least to the greatest possess faith in Christ and love for the saints. "Faith which worketh by love" is the believers rule of life.

1 John 3: 23: This is his commandment. That we should believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.'

Paul rejoiced at the conversion of new believers. Likewise, he rejoiced to hear that they were growing in grace—in faith in Christ and he knew it because they showed a growing love unto all the saints.

In 1 Thessalonians 3, we see how important being steadfast in faith and love is by how deeply Paul was concerned for his brethren and how it affected him to hear a good report.

1 Thessalonians 3: 5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. 6: But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: **[note this]** 7: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Brethren, your faith in Christ and love to all the saints is beneficial not only for your own souls good, but for the comfort and joy of your brethren. That is one great encouragement to remain faithful to Christ and to love one another.

Application: I can tell you, your faith in Christ and love for each other, is personally, very beneficial for me. John said,

3 John 1: 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Just the reverse, it is greatly afflicting and distressing, when you see brethren wavering. You begin to wonder: Has by some means the tempter tempted them. Has our labor been in vain. **Remember brethren**, Satan wants you to feel like the saints do not really care if you are not here or that we will not miss you—but that is never the case. You are always missed and longed for—I can assure you of that.

When it proves that brethren have not fallen away—when God graciously shows his faithfulness in keeping his saints—then God comforts our heart in all affliction and distress by the faith of our brethren--“Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” You pour out your heart to God saying, “what thanks can we render to God again for keeping these brethren, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.”

Application: I tell my family back home. And I say it to you. If you truly believe in Christ Jesus and love his people be faithful to gather with his saints. I never knew before now, how burdensome it is for a pastor when the brethren are absent. I’m not speaking of now and then—I mean multiple times. But how comforting it is to have faithful brethren—it is so comforting!

Also, when we see how faith working by love causes thanksgiving to God from our brethren—that in itself is a great encouragement to remain steadfast in Christ and to show our love to his dear saints. Anything that causes our Redeemer to be praised and gloried in—is what a believer delights in. You might not realize it, but when you do something for one of your brethren it cause them to thank Christ Jesus for working that in you.

2 Corinthians 9: 11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Application: What greater reward could a child of God want than to know Christ is being glorified by that brother to whom you gave a glass of cold water!

III. A LOOK AT SOME OF THE THINGS PAUL PRAYED FOR—Ephesians 1:16:..making mention of you in my prayers

This will help us see more clearly what spiritual gifts and graces we should ask God for—for our brethren and for ourselves.

1. He asked God to **give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation**--Ephesians 1: 17 **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: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,...**

2. He asked for **strength in the inner man by his Spirit**—Ephesians 3: 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 **That** Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; **that** ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, **that** ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

3. Paul asked God to grant his brethren **“likemindedness”**—Romans 16: 5: Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6: **That** ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Paul asked God to fill his brethren with **joy and peace in believing**—Romans 15: 13: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, **that** ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. He prayed that their **love might about in knowledge and judgment**—Philippians 1: 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; 10 **That** ye may approve things that are excellent; **that** ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

6. He asked God to **fill them with knowledge of God’s will**—Colossians 1: 9: For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 **That** ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

7. Paul prayed that God would **count them worthy of their calling—use them in the work of spreading the gospel**—2 Thessalonians 1: 11: Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12 **That** the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of these seven things and why he asked for those things.

1. **The spirit of wisdom and revelation.** **that** ye may know the hope of his calling, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,...

2. **Strength in the inner man by his Spirit**— **That** Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; **that you be** rooted and grounded in love, to comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, **that** ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

3. **Likemindedness”**—That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. **Joy and peace in believing**—that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. **Abounding Love in knowledge and judgment**—That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

6. **Knowledge of God's will**—That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, be fruitful in every good work, increase in the knowledge of God and be strengthened in patience and longsuffering with joy

7. **Counted worthy of your calling—used in the work of the gospel**—That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified

Application: Brethren, this is the Spirit of God using Paul to teach us what we should be asking for. Paul was far more concerned with the inward growth that would result in the edification of God's saints and the glory of God than with temporal stuff. I don't think we can find a single prayer in this bible, by a believer, for anything temporal.

What have we seen from this passage:

1. Remember to thank our gracious God for saving our brethren, for giving each one faith in Christ and love for all saints—we are members of his house!

2. Remember that your steadfastness in faith and love greatly encourages your brethren and that wavering greatly troubles them.

3. Remember that by your steadfastness in faith and by your love to brethren Christ is being glorified by much thanksgiving.

4. Remember the spiritual gifts which Paul asked for—that the inward man be grown so that Christ be glorified more and more—these things are much more needful than any temporal thing we can ask God to give.

I will end with the way Paul ended that prayer in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 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, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen.