



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Perplexed? Pray for Wisdom! (Ephesians 1:15-23)

25 JANUARY 2011

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Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

Bible studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:15am for legislators, lobbyists, and staff. All Senate and House Members—all Democrats and all Republicans—are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesday mornings. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2011 General Assembly is the Book of Ephesians. I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Following the standard address and greeting (1:1-2), Scripture demonstrated that the saints of God have "every spiritual blessing" through faith in Christ (1:3), and therefore instructed how to praise God for His grace (1:4-14). Having been chosen and blessed of God

(1:3-14), the closing verses of chapter 1 (vv. 15-23) are based upon the revelation of these truths and provide a prayer for wisdom and revelation. It is important not only to know the wealth of spiritual blessings in Christ, but also how to live a transformed life as a result of such truths. God is glorified in the salvation of the believer whose life is continually transformed by the appropriation of the spiritual blessings that he or she possesses. God's desire is for believers (saints) to know Him to the fullest extent.

IT IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY TO KNOW THE WEALTH OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST, BUT ALSO HOW TO LIVE A TRANSFORMED LIFE AS A RESULT OF SUCH TRUTHS.

The hope of the Christian is based upon the true act by which God brings the believer into a saving relationship. The hope of God's calling is a settled assurance. It is because the calling is Godward that believers are to live holy lives. Spiritual enlightenment is necessary to understand the hope of God's calling, the riches of inheritance in Christ, and the surpassing greatness of God's power. The complexity and magnitude of these truths is so profound that the saints of God need to pray for wisdom (illumination) (cf. 1 Cor 2:10-16).

THE CALLING OF GOD	
GENERAL	To all peoples through the testimony of general revelation
SPECIAL	The working of the Holy Spirit to accomplish faith in Christ
EFFECTUAL	The application of sovereign grace resulting in forgiveness of sin and eternal life

It is also important for the saints of God to know they are precious to the Lord. Those who are trusting in God for salvation are made His inheritance and He is glorified in the lives of His saints. As the saints praise the glory of the Lord, it is pleasing to God and glorifies Him before all humanity. God's power surpasses human comprehension. It is demonstrated in raising Christ "from the dead" and seating Him at the right hand of the Father "in the heavenly places." The greatest availability of power today is not in the ingenuity or strength of humanity; rather, it is resident in the personal life of the saints. The question to ask in this study is whether the prayer of verses 15-23 will be realized in your life.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

(1:15-23) Believers are rich by God's grace with the blessings that are abundantly "lavished" on them. What should be the response of the believer? The answer is fourfold: (1) humility due to God's eternal choosing; (2) sanctity because God's choosing was to make the saints holy; (3) confidence because believers are secure in the eternal counsel of God's will; and, (4) praise because God's grace makes His people richly and fully blessed.

... GOD'S GRACE ALWAYS LEADS TO PRAYER.

When the Apostle Paul first experienced God's grace it made him a man of prayer (cf. Acts 9:11). Even years later, Paul still bowed his knees "before the Father" (Eph 3:14). Understanding and appreciating God's grace always leads to prayer. Beginning with verse 15 of chapter 1, we find Paul praying for the church because their lives had been transformed by the gospel. The evidence of this transformation is "faith in the Lord Jesus" and "love for all the saints" (1:15). "Authentic Christianity always transforms both the Godward and the manward dimensions of life. Otherwise are professions of faith are hollow."¹

The thanksgiving and prayer for the church was certainly written with regard to a particular group of believers. However, none of the particular notices appear in 1:15-23 that are found in the Apostle's other epistles to specific churches. One may, therefore, conclude that the Apostle received good news in general with regard to the churches in Asia Minor. The faith and love of the churches caused the Apostle to give thanks to God in his prayers (1:15-16). His prayer was for even more spiritual blessings to be experienced in their life (1:17-21). It is certainly amazing to recount all that God does on behalf of the believer immediately upon conversion, and then to meditate on the truth that the Lord continues to outpour daily blessings upon His people. Anticipation of these continual blessings was the reason for the Apostle's prayer.

IT IS CERTAINLY AMAZING TO RECOUNT ALL THAT GOD DOES ON BEHALF OF THE BELIEVER IMMEDIATELY UPON CONVERSION, AND THEN TO MEDITATE ON THE TRUTH THAT THE LORD CONTINUES TO OUTPOUR DAILY BLESSINGS. . . .

As a consequence of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance" (1:18), the Apostle petitioned God to grant wisdom and revelation for the purpose of obtaining complete knowledge of Christ. Do you ever feel perplexed? Do you ever

question what is the best action in response to a particular issue or circumstance? Pray for wisdom in accordance with the words of verses 17-21. When you do this, note that the wisdom and revelation pertains to knowledge of Christ. Not only does God answer with regard to particularities, but also by granting a more intimate knowledge of Christ in whom are the treasures of wisdom and revelation. It is good to pray for wisdom, but also expect that God will grant a more complete knowledge of Christ as the answer. The reason is that the more you and I know Christ—the more we become like Him—then the more we are able to make wisdom decisions that are pleasing to God. Just as Christ was dependent upon Scripture (cf. Matt 4:1-11; John 1:10-18; Heb 4:12), we will know how to rely upon God's Word more completely, and to interpret and apply its absolute truths.

Join me in praying "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is" the nature and purpose for "the hope of His calling" (1:18). Hope is not wishing for something you know will not occur. Biblical hope is eager anticipation and unwavering confidence with regard to the certainty of God's promises. The hope of God's calling is to be expectant. Our lives need to be filled with biblical expectation by rejecting thoughts and practices that are contrary to Scripture, and this is so we "may be enlightened."

YOU AND I NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND RELY UPON GOD'S POWER BY STUDYING AND LIVING THE TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER. OUR SUFFICIENCY IS GOD NOT SELF.

"The surpassing greatness" of God is "toward us who believe" (1:19). The power of God, which is available in response to the issues of life, is the same power "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." God's power is greater than any weapon formed against you (cf. Ps 23; 91; Isa 54:9-17). You and I need to understand and rely upon God's power by studying and living the truths of Scripture in answer to prayer. Our sufficiency is God not self.

Following His resurrection, Christ was exalted (1:20) "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (1:21). Christ is preeminent (cf. Col 1:15-23), and rules "all things in subjection" for the sake of those who belong to Him (Eph 1:22-23). The power of God and authority of Christ are exercised on behalf of the church, "which is His body" (1:23). The church is "His body" through which Christ works fully to accomplish His will everywhere and in everything (cf. Rom 8:28). My prayer is for God to equip us both by His grace and for His glory. Pray and be expectant of God's calling!

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Let's Study Ephesians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2005) 22.