

12th. September 2010

Ephesians 1:15-23 The Pastor's Prayer

Opening prayer: Lord, speak to us this morning.
Walk amongst us, touch us.
Know what is in our hearts.
Comfort and encourage us. Amen.

Have your bibles opened at page the first chapter of Ephesians.

Our opening verse – 15 - starts: *For this reason.....*

What reason is that? The reason is set out in the first half of this Chapter. So let us do a brief resume of the opening verses.

It is from Paul. It is to the saints in Ephesus. The saints – people like you and me – and to them as a congregation. So we can read it as though it was addressed to us as a whole, AND, as individuals. Or can we?

Paul firstly praises God who has blessed us – that is him and the Ephesians – with every spiritual blessing IN Jesus Christ. Could that apply to you, to me, to us?

Paul goes on to say that God chose them before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless. Can that apply to us? Any one of us? Did Paul really mean that the Ephesians were holy and blameless? I guess they were holy some of the time; even blameless. So perhaps it could apply to us Some of the time.

Choosing us to be holy and blameless does not in itself make us so. In verse 6 Paul goes on to say that God gave us his blessing *freely*. No strings attached. We can receive, or we can ignore – it is our choice!

Then – verse 7 - we have redemption, forgiveness – Ha! People can't be entirely holy and blameless if they need forgiveness. What a relief!

God made known to them his wish – second part of verse 10 - to bring all things together, on earth and in heaven – under Jesus! That I can grasp. That I can visualise. That I can hope for.

The Ephesians were part of the chosen ones. When they heard the news of Jesus – the Gospel – they believed. And believing they had the Holy Spirit with them

We have heard the good news of Jesus, We have heard the Gospel. We have believed. We have the Holy Spirit with us. Paul then, could be writing to us. Do you think Paul would want to write to us, to you, to me? Challenging thought, but if we have opened our hearts to Jesus and received him, then Paul, through these words, handed down 2 thousand years, always part of the New Testament, always part of the central Christian message – then Paul is writing to us today!

In heaven, Paul surely knows of our faith, surely knows of our love and support for all the faithful. Paul says *I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers*. Wow! Do previous pastors to us in Christ Church give thanks for us? Remembering us in their prayers? I certainly hope they do.

Do we remember them? I do. I guess many of us do. And some we are still in contact with and support them in our prayers.

Let us look at the things Paul prays for – verse 17.

That we have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. I have often prayed for wisdom, to know what to say, to know what actions to take. Revelation? I have not prayed for *revelation*, but I do pray for doing the right things for God – so I guess that is the same thing. Paul wants us to know God better – knowing him, getting closer to Jesus – that is that God is revealed to us. So I have prayed for *revelation*, it is just that I use a different word!

Verse 18. Typical wordy Paul. Sometimes I find him inspiring, sometimes he just gives me a headache. Try putting this into your own words. It is about having hope. Hope is a forward looking word – hope is about the future. Is it a forlorn hope? A hope of the impossible – just a fantasy world? No! We have the hope of being with Jesus, and all the saints. That is a marvellous hope – that is what Paul prays we will have.

Verses 19 to 21. Another great mouthful from Paul!

The God who has done these things – raised Jesus from the dead, placed him over all earthly authorities, now and for eternity, surely giving us some of his power is so easy for him. We accept, we believe, we receive

Verse 22. We are the church, and as such, we are the body of Jesus, and he is our leader., our head.

People put their faith, their hope, in many things. Even the church down the ages has done that. I visited a church in Brussels the other day. There was a statue of Mary and child – lots of gold paint, candles burning. I was asked to explain it. Nothing wrong with Mary - but praying to her? Nothing wrong with candles – at least not in my opinion. But using them as a prayer before Mary?

I explained it was a step too far. People felt more comfortable to pray to Mary, they identified with her. Paul says, Jesus is our leader, Jesus is our

head. We can all have the confidence to pray directly to Jesus.

That can be a formal prayer, it can be *chatters*, it can be shouting, being cross and angry, it can be quiet, reflective, listening.

Paul does one other thing than pray for the Ephesians. He tells them he is praying for them. We often pray for people, usually when they are ill, going on a trip, doing something difficult. Sometimes we tell them we are praying for them.

Paul simply prays for them simply because they are there – faithful in the Lord Jesus. Who do you know that fits this description? I think of Jenny and Tony in Bristol, Mark and Patricia in Wendover, Michael and Sonia in Peckham. All faithful Christians doing following Jesus. So following Paul's example. When I get home I will email them this. Well, after the Italian Grand Prix!

Methodists prayer.

**Fill us with hope and expectation
of what we might achieve in your name.**