

3. Learning How to Pray for Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of their salvation. We also saw that the fact that they are sealed means that they are safe and secure and that Satan cannot destroy them because they are sealed by the Holy Spirit. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to pray for others as we look at the example of how Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus.

In Ephesians 1:15-16, we read, “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” Here, we see that Paul prayed continually for the Christians in the city of Ephesus and the surrounding area. In fact, in every letter that Paul wrote to a group of Christians in a particular area, he spoke about the fact that he continued to pray for them. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from our example as we regularly pray for Christians in other areas.

In this case, we see that Paul thanked God for their faith and love. In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4, we read, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” In these verses, we see that Paul thanked God for the faith, love and hope of the Christians in Thessalonica. If one or more of these things was lacking in a church, Paul would pray that it would develop. That is because we are told in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” Here, we see that these three things abide and so Paul either thanked the Lord when he heard these things were present in a church or he prayed that they would develop in that church.

In 2 Corinthians 5:7, we read, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” We are not in heaven yet and so we must walk by faith as we live on this earth. Hope is based on the resurrection and the return of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Then, Titus 2:13 adds, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Both of these are extremely important in the life of every Christian. However, both will be complete when we get to heaven. In contrast, love is the most important because it is eternal. That is why Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We want to help our children learn to thank God by showing them the importance of thanking God for the faith, hope and love that they see in others.

After thanking God for the Ephesian Christians, Paul went on to pray that God would do some particular things in the lives of the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:17-19 says, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is

the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” We see that Paul prayed that God would develop certain things in the life of each Christian.

Paul prayed that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Christ). The word that is translated “wisdom” speaks of the perfect knowledge and wisdom that belongs to God. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This verse makes it clear that God wants us to grow in His wisdom so that we can share with others the wisdom that belongs to God. The word translated “revelation” means that the *things we have not known in the past have now been revealed to us*. Romans 16:25 says, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.” God used Paul and the other writers of the New Testament to reveal Christ to us.

Paul prayed that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened. Many people have knowledge of the Word of God but they lack understanding. In fact, a person who is not a Christian cannot have spiritual understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” That is why we need the Holy Spirit to give us light so that we can understand the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” We want to help our children develop understanding and not just knowledge. With understanding, it is then possible for them to apply the Word of God to the various situations that they face in their daily lives.

We see that Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to have understanding so that they could understand some specific things. First, he wanted them to be able to understand the hope of His calling. 2 Timothy 1:9 says, “Who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” Because of the fact that Christ has called us, we can look forward to His coming with confident assurance.

Second, he wanted them to understand the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. 1 Peter 1:4 says, “To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Here, we see that we can look forward to an inheritance that will be eternal.

Third, he wanted them to understand the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. This power was given to us at the moment of salvation but Paul prayed that the Christians would understand and use that power. Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly

abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” The Lord is able to do far more than we could ever imagine through our lives as we learn to walk in the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:20-23 goes on to say, “Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” God caused each of these things to become certain when He raised Christ from the dead.

In addition to raising Christ from the dead, the Father also seated Christ at His right hand. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” We want to help our children understand that when they pray, Christ is also sitting at the right hand of the Father where He is speaking to the Father for them. We see that the place where Christ is seated is far above all principality and power and might and dominion. This reminds us of the fact that Christ is greater than any power or authority because He is the One who has all power and authority. Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” He is the One who is over all. Christ is also above every name that is named both in this age and in the age to come. This is a reminder that the Father has placed Christ over all things both now and for all eternity.

We also see that the Father has placed all things under the feet of Christ and made Him the head. Philippians 2:10-11 says, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Then, Colossians 1:17-18 says, “And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Christ is the Head because He is both the Creator who was in the beginning and also the first to defeat death when He rose from the dead.

Christ is the Head of the church which is His body. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” He is the One who supplies all that we need and also the One who fills all things. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray for others, we also want to help them fully understand that they are praying to the One who has authority over all things. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to pray for others.