



Lismore



Baptist Church

Letters

“The Prison letters of Paul” Growth Group Study Guide Week 5: Paul’s Prayer For Us Ephesians 1: 15-23

Series Overview: Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians are collectively referred to as the "Prison Letters." The Apostle Paul wrote them while he was imprisoned in Rome. The prison was probably a house where Paul was kept under close guard at all times (probably chained to a soldier). But he was given a number of freedoms not offered to most prisoners. Among them was the freedom to write letters and receive visitors.

The letters Paul wrote were addressed to churches he had started. And even though they dealt with the kind of practical issues you might expect new churches to be dealing with, they are also bold declarations of theological truth. They are messages to the faithful about what God intended the church to be and to do. It is a clarification of the church's mission and identity. Paul is basically saying to the church, "THIS IS US. This is who we are." The church is not a perfect place and it's not always easy living out our faith. But it is possible. And when we do it, it changes the world.

Week 5: PAUL'S PRAYER FOR US

Ephesians 1: 15-23

Overview:

Ephesians is very likely a circular letter. It was first sent to Ephesus and then circulated to neighbouring local churches. Paul's prayer for all of these believers is that they would grow in their knowledge of God and of the things of God. He prays that they would know the hope and the inheritance that is theirs in Christ. And he prays that they would know the resurrection power that is available to them for accomplishing the mission to which they have been called. Paul's prayer is not that these believers would grow in their knowledge about God but that they would know God relationally. It's the kind of knowledge that only comes by spending time with someone. By nurturing the relationship. By experiencing it firsthand. And there are not shortcuts to this kind of knowledge. You can't cram for the test. It takes time. But when we take the time to nurture this life-giving relationship, it changes us. And it changes those around us.

Getting Warmed Up

Have you ever been in a relationship that felt a little shaky or uncertain? How do you feel when you're around or away from this person? In contrast, describe a relationship that you have that is safe and secure. What's the difference between the two?

Digging In

Read Ephesians 1:15-23 aloud.

In Ephesians 1:18-19 Paul asks that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened so that they may know three realities. What are they?

What is the “hope” to which we have been called?


What is the “inheritance” to which Paul refers? Is it God? Is it us?

Paul goes on to pray that we will know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. According to verses 19-23, how has God demonstrated His power? What does Paul want them to understand about God’s power?

What does Paul want us to understand about the nature of God from this overall passage, as well as His heart for believers?

Bringing It Home

Not only does God initiate a relationship with us, but He also wants us to grow in our knowledge of Him. Describe a RECENT circumstance, conversation, or experience that caused you to know Him better – more personally and intimately.



Sometimes we don't fully grasp and experience the fact that our relationship with God is absolutely secure. God's heart is that we'll all grow in our knowledge of Him and enjoy the security that is ours because of Jesus Christ. Paul views God's work in the resurrection as a cosmic event that has changed the course of history. Has this hope "changed everything" for you?

Imagine that Paul's prayer was answered in your life. What might look different in how you lived your life?

Is it hard to centre your life on this hope? What gets in the way?

How does this passage invite you to pray differently? What do you think would look different in our prayer lives if they were shaped by the assumption that what people most need is a "God-solution"?

Of the three realities for which Paul prays (hope, inheritance and power), which do you most need to embrace and experience right now?

CLOSING PRAYER: Pray as Paul did, that we would know the hope, inheritance and power of God.