

Ephesians 1:15-23 (NIV)

Thanksgiving and Prayer

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Footnotes:

- a. [Ephesians 1:17](#) Or a spirit

Ephesians 1:15-23 (HCSB)

Prayer for Spiritual Insight

¹⁵ This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father,^[a] would give you a spirit^[b] of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ I pray that the perception of your mind^[c] may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength.

God's Power in Christ

²⁰ He demonstrated this power in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens— ²¹ far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given,^[d] not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put everything under His feet^[e] and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way.

Footnotes:

- a. [Ephesians 1:17](#) Or the Father of glory
 b. [Ephesians 1:17](#) Or you the Spirit
 c. [Ephesians 1:18](#) Lit the eyes of your heart
 d. [Ephesians 1:21](#) Lit every name named
 e. [Ephesians 1:22](#) [Ps 8:6](#)

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

Ephesians 1:15-23

1:15 Since I heard about your faith: Most likely Paul wrote and sent the letters to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon at the same time. [Philemon 5](#) indicates that Paul recently had received word about the faith of the believers in the region of Asia Minor.

1:16 Never stop giving thanks: Paul particularly was thankful for his readers' faith and love. Faith finds its focus in Christ and expresses itself in love to others. Such love is the evidence of genuine faith ([Gal 5:6](#)).

1:17 Wisdom and revelation: Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to understand what great spiritual resources were theirs in Christ. Revelation refers to the insight and the discernment the Spirit brings to the mysteries of divine truth. Paul wanted his readers to have a spirit of wisdom so that they might get to know God more completely. God has given believers wisdom ([vv. 8-9](#)), but Paul prayed for the church not only to understand but to *experience* these blessings.

1:18 The hope of His calling refers to the assurance of eternal life guaranteed by the possession of the Holy Spirit. **The glorious riches of His inheritance:** Believers will inherit all of God's blessings ([vv. 3,11,14](#); [Rm 8:32](#)). The phrase could mean either God's inheritance or ours; that is, either the inheritance God receives or the inheritance He bestows. The OT consistently taught that God's people were His inheritance. Likewise, Paul's words reflect such an understanding pointing to what God will receive by being glorified in His saints.

1:19 The immeasurable greatness of His power: God's power alone can bring believers safely to the riches of the final glory that will be made available in heaven. The extraordinary divine power by which Christ was raised from the dead is the same power at work in and through believers.

1:20-23 Christ's resurrection was the driving force in Paul's life. In raising Jesus from the dead, God did not merely reverse the natural process of decay, but transcended it. He raised Jesus to a completely new life, giving Him a resurrection body. Not only was Jesus raised, but He was also seated at God's right hand, the place of authority from which Christ now reigns. Christ is above all, indicating that He is infinitely superior. The ascension and exaltation completed the resurrection event, providing hope for believers as Jesus Christ became the first fruit for His people.

Paul claimed the church exists and functions only by reason of its vital relationship to its Head, Christ Jesus. As the resurrected and exalted Christ, He is without need and is independent of anything. Yet as Head, He is incomplete without the body, which is the church that fills up Christ. So the body and the Head are one in the truest sense.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 1".

English Standard Version - Study Bible²
Ephesians 1:15-23

1:15-23 Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving. This section, like [vv. 3-14](#), is a single sentence in the original Greek. Paul prays that the church will gain deep insight into the Lord's powerful working and rich gifts in Christ.

1:16 do not cease... in my prayers. See note on [6:18](#).

1:17 To name **the Father of glory** as **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ** is not to deny Christ's deity but to affirm his true incarnate humanity. Further, it expresses that Christians know God through the Lord Jesus as their mediator. **Spirit of wisdom** refers to the Holy Spirit's secret working in Christians to give them insights into God's Word and the saving knowledge of him ([1 Cor. 2:6-12](#)).

Trinitarian Formulas and Expressions in Ephesians

Reference	Father	Son	Spirit
1:3	Blessed be the God and Father	of our Lord Jesus Christ	every spiritual blessing
1:11-13	him who works all things according to... his will	to hope in Christ	sealed with the promised Holy Spirit
1:17	God... the Father of glory	our Lord Jesus Christ	a spirit of wisdom and of revelation
2:18	access... to the Father	through him	in one Spirit
2:22	a dwelling place for God	In him	by the Spirit
3:2-5	the stewardship of God's grace	the mystery of Christ	revealed... by the Spirit
3:14-17	the Father... the riches of his glory	so that Christ may dwell in your hearts	through his Spirit
4:4-6	one God and Father	one Lord	one Spirit
5:18-20	giving thanks... to God the Father	in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ	be filled with the Spirit

1:18-19 Paul prays that believers will comprehend the blessings that are theirs in Christ: (1) their future **hope**; (2) God's **inheritance in the saints**; and (3) their **power** in Christ. The "inheritance" here is not the Christian's inheritance but **his** (God's). This indicates how precious his people are to God. They are, so to speak, what he looks forward to enjoying forever. Paul piles up "power words" to express the **immeasurable greatness** of God's power, **working**, and **great might** toward believers. Power over supernatural forces through magic and the occult was a great concern in ancient Ephesus ([Acts 19:19](#)), but the power of the living God in Christ trumps all competing authorities ([Acts 19:20](#)).

1:22 put all things. Paul quotes [Ps. 8:6](#) as being fulfilled by Christ's exaltation over all creation and as head over the church. **head.** Like a present-day "head of government," this term points to Christ's preeminence as Lord (see note on [1 Cor. 11:3](#)).

1:23 body. Christ has so identified himself with his church that it is said to be his very body, much as Adam described Eve as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" ([Gen. 2:23](#)) and as God declared man and wife to be "one flesh" (see note on [Eph. 5:28-30](#)). **fullness.** The church, filled by Christ, fills all creation as representatives of Christ.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 1".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Ephesians 1:15-23

1:16, 17 Paul prayed for the believers to know God better. How do you get to know someone? By reading biographical information or historical data about him? That will help you know a lot *about* that person, but it won't enable you to actually *know* him. If you want to get to know someone, you have to spend time with that person; there is no shortcut. The same holds true with God. Reading the Bible, great works of theology, and devotional material is wonderful, but there is no substitute for knowing God personally. What about you? Do you really *know* God, or do you just know *about* him? The difference is in spending time with him. Study Jesus' life in the Gospels to see what he was like on earth two thousand years ago, and get to know him in prayer now. Personal knowledge of Christ will change your life.

1:19, 20 The world fears the power of the atom, yet we belong to the God of the universe, who not only created that atomic power but also raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God's incomparably great power is available to help you. There is nothing too difficult for him.

1:20-22 Having been raised from the dead, Christ is now the head of the church, the ultimate authority over the world. Jesus is the Messiah, God's anointed one, the one Israel longed for, the one who would set their broken world right. As Christians we can be confident that God has won the final victory and is in control of everything. We need not fear any dictator or nation or even death or Satan himself. The contract has been signed and sealed; we are waiting just a short while for delivery. Paul says, in [Romans 8:37-39](#), that nothing can separate us from God and his love.

1:22, 23 Christ fills the church with gifts and blessings. The church should be the full expression of Christ, who himself fills everything (see [3:19](#)). When reading Ephesians, it is important to remember that it was written primarily to the entire church, not merely to an individual. Christ is the head, and we are the body of his church (Paul uses this metaphor in [Romans 12:4, 5](#); [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#); and [Colossians 3:15](#) as well as throughout the book of Ephesians). The image of the body shows the church's unity. Each member is involved with all the others as they go about doing Christ's work on earth. We should not attempt to work, serve, or worship merely on our own. We need the entire body.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2000-2001.

Our True Identity in Christ

Romans 3:24	We are justified (declared righteous).
Romans 8:1	No condemnation awaits us.
Romans 8:2	We are set free from the power of sin that leads to death.
1 Corinthians 1:2	We are sanctified (made holy) in Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 1:30	We are pure and holy in Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:22	We will be given new life at the resurrection.
2 Corinthians 5:17	We are new persons.
2 Corinthians 5:21	We are made right with God.
Galatians 3:28	We are one in Christ with all other believers.
Ephesians 1:3	We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
Ephesians 1:4	We are holy and without fault.
Ephesians 1:5, 6	We are adopted as God's children.
Ephesians 1:7	Our sins are taken away, and we are forgiven.
Ephesians 1:10, 11	We will be brought under Christ's authority.
Ephesians 1:13	We are identified as belonging to God by the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 2:6	We have been raised up to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms.
Ephesians 2:10	We are God's masterpiece.
Ephesians 2:13	We have been brought near to God.
Ephesians 3:6	We share in the promise of blessings through Christ.
Ephesians 3:12	We can come boldly and confidently into God's presence.
Ephesians 5:29, 30	We are members of Christ's body, the church.
Colossians 2:10	We are made complete in Christ.
Colossians 2:11	We are set free from our sinful nature.
2 Timothy 2:10	We will have eternal glory.

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

A Principle to Live By Ephesians #3: Measuring Corporate Maturity

from [Ephesians 1:15-19](#)

When we evaluate the maturity of any local church, we should look for the ways believers are manifesting faith, hope, and love in their relationships with God and one another.

Paul’s motivation for thanking God for these believers in these various geographical locations in Asia was their “faith in the Lord Jesus and [their] love for all the saints” ([v. 15](#)). However, he had one concern. They didn’t seem to understand clearly their “hope” in Christ ([v. 18](#)). (See 1Th #1: Models of Maturity, [p. 1659](#).)

This particular measure of maturity—their hope—relates specifically to what Paul wrote in his introduction to this letter: that they had been chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” ([Eph 1:4](#)) and were secure “in Christ” ([vv. 1,3](#); see also [vv. 6,7,11,13](#)). They, especially the Gentile believers, did not understand fully what this meant with regard to their eternal hope.

Because of this lack of knowledge, Paul prayed that they would gain divine wisdom and understanding through the Spirit’s illumination ([vv. 17-18](#)). Paul wanted these believers to understand they belonged to Christ as His inheritance, and their position in Christ was forever settled by the “vast strength” of God ([v. 19](#))—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead ([v. 20](#)).

Reflection and Response

Why is it so easy to evaluate success in a local church with quantitative measurements rather than these qualitative measurements—faith, hope, and love? (See Col #2: Reflections of Maturity, [p. 1649](#).)

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1626.