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Main Idea: What we give back to God and others is our growing faith in the Lord. We are called to pay it forward in love to be Christ's life example, to be the people and church someone wants to give thanks for. When we become stagnant in our spiritual formation or distracted to meaningless trends, we must be in prayer and seek God's empowerment and wisdom to have His enlightenment so we know Him more and others see Him more in us. Why? By faith in Jesus Christ through the grace of God, you and I have eternal salvation! An incredible amount of gratitude should come from each and all of us in Christ! We can have joy in life now and in our inheritance to come. To motivate us, consider that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is working in and through us. Let us be His Work. Allow our churches to succeed and grow in His empowerment and by His will for His glory. There is nothing better for us to know or do.

Contexts and Background: This passage is a prayer that Paul gives; it has elements from classic Jewish prayers that are meant to help the people understand God's Word. Paul spent two years with the Ephesians, planting and equipping them; after this period, he was absent for five years in travels and imprisonment. He is in prison when he dictates this Epistle. Paul says, "*I heard about*", when he receives a good report--with a caveat. Even though there is faith and church growth, the city is dependent upon the trade of occult-related materials and many church members were working in that field; they were compromising their faith. The Gospel inspires us in turning away from sin and the occult. The church has grown, but what price (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut. 34:9; 2 Kings 6:17; Psalm 119:18; Isa. 11:2; Acts 19:17-41; 28; Eph. 5:8-14, 29; 6:12).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Faith in the Lord.* Faith sees what is ahead when our eyes and thinking cannot. This is not blind faith, naiveté, or ignorance as some in our culture would have us believe. Faith is a gift from God, and it is our steadfast trust, conviction, and confidence in Who our Lord is. Faith is knowing what He has done. Faith is knowing what He does--right now--and still will do through us. Faith is knowing He is true, and we are transformed by this very faith in Christ. *By faith*, ordinary people became extraordinary with an everlasting legacy, reputation, and example. We are careful to remember that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of God is a gift! We can persevere and overcome tough times through faith; in this faith, we can be loving and thankful. How and why? Trust in and receive God's promises, and beware of the pride and envy that block our gratitude to Christ for what He has given us ((Matt. 21:32; Mark 1:15; John 10:10; Acts 16:31; Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 1:4; Heb. 11; James 2:19).
- *My prayers.* Paul is setting aside his precious time for considerable prayers for his people. He is an example for us to be in corporate prayer, as there is no better use of our time.
- *Spirit of wisdom and revelation.* The Holy Spirit gives us a boost to gain wisdom, the application of knowing what is true, the study of digging out from His Word and disclosing of the knowledge to know Christ and His eternal truths, so that, *you may know him better.*
- *Enlightened / knowledge / Understanding.* The application of a life that, in context, is "wholeheartedly" devoted to Christ as Lord, not just Savior. Then we can be His ambassadors of Truth (Jer. 9:24; Mark 12:28-31; 2 Cor. 5:20).

- *Hope.* This is the confidence and conviction in God for our future that is in His hands. Faith is not mere belief. It is real--genuine and authentic--so we are sure in Whom we trust and to whom we go to live for righteousness. Christ is the source and application of our hope; surely, our confidence and trust is in Him. This is not a one-time encounter; rather, it is continued every day in the believer's life. We can be certain that God's promise is real and tangible even when we do not see it (Rom. 1:16-17; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14-26).
- *Glorious inheritance.* Who we are in Christ is "magnificent" and forever, and His indwelling is the here and now. We are also told we are made for eternity, we have a purpose, we matter, and we belong to Christ. Our life, inheritance, and faith is all in Who and What Christ has done for us (Rom. 8:28-30).
- *Great power / greatness... raised Christ.* The same *mighty* power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in the believer and, collectively, in the church, from alienation from God to an eternal relationship and so much more. The context of this word is repeated--the incredible power of God's 'operational' and "efficient" salvation given to us with "might" and "love" to possess. The word is '*Dynamis*' where we get dynamite from, referring to the supernatural strength and impact of God's Word upon and into the whole of humanity. The wonder of God's great divine redemption! This is ours to reflect upon, live, and share! We are to never dilute God's Word to make it seem "more appealing". (What utter arrogance that it might even be considered.) He presents the power, we are the means of display (1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 2:4-5; 3:16-17; Col.3:3).
- *Authority power and dominion.* This is Christ's Preeminence and Lordship. This is a clear proclamation that Jesus Christ is not just a god but The One True God, whose Supremacy predates time and history because He is the agent of creation! There is only One God: Jesus Christ is God. Other passages testify to the Trinitarian nature of God as in One God and three personalities, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Rev. 5:1-7, 13). This also refers to sin and the ways of the world that are meaningless and hopeless. Christ is the Perfection! He has the power and authority to be the Light and shatter the darkness on our behalf (Acts 19:13-20; 2 Cor. 3:15; 4:4-6; 6:14; Eph. 5:8-14; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:13-18; 3:3; 1 Thess. 5:5).
- *Under his feet.* This is a military term that means to place under the authority or subjection. People at this time--Greeks and some Jews--believed that gods, angels, and/or knowledge ruled the world. They believed that man had the power to manipulate--like magic, and they believed that we were subject to the stars or to some sort of fate. These various philosophies were causing divisions and distractions in the church then. Paul reminds them of the superiority and Godhood of Christ! Creation and the elements of nature are not subject to gods or humanity; we are under the authority only to The One True God. Christ is God. This may also mean that humans created by God in God's image--us--have dominion over creation and the earth. In this, we are subject only to God, and we are responsible to be good stewards of that which God alone has given us. Due to sin, this has become corrupt (Rom. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; Heb. 2:5-11).
- *Body... Church.* This is the unity, assembly, and administration of Christians to learn, grow, worship, fellowship, and serve united in Christ for His glory. The living "Body of Christ," is the metaphysical aspect of Christians in unity, working together. The church is where we all need to participate and encourage "one another" together in worship, learning, fellowship, care, and outreach. The church is the community of believers, not the building or the denomination. So, if the community is at McDonald's, the church is at McDonald's. A church is not a pastor, strong-willed leader, an address, or a vision. A true Christian community is the community led by God's precepts, practiced with humility. This is where the character and Fruit of the Person, Centrality, and Supremacy of Christ is growing Christ-centered leaders for the Glory of God. These leaders

are walking the path first, as led by Him, all working together for His glory (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:23; 4:12;-16).

- *Fullness/complete in Christ.* This means “that which is filled,” and we have the presence, agency, and riches of Christ that give us completeness in Him. God does not need us to fulfill Him, though we need Him to fulfill us! The church is filled by God, as we are His for His use. We have access to Him and His fullness, including His wisdom and all we need for an abundant life through Christ (Eph. 1:3, 19-23; 3:19; 4:66-10; 5:18; Col. 1:22)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

This passage is a reminder Who is in control of the Church universal and local--Christ, Who is our “Head,” our Superior and we are the incorporated “life.” Our purpose is to worship, learn, fellowship, serve Him, and be the beacons of His Light into the community. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to one another and to what Christ has called us to do and be. **Once we grow our faith in the Lord, real transformation with God will occur; then, we will be able to make and maintain an impact with others.** We will focus on the priority of knowing and growing in Christ and be His living example in love and service to our community. If, not, we are doing it wrong! Believers are to embrace who we are in Christ and create synergy to practice unity and peace among one another as a display of how God brings redemption to all of us. If we fight and are in disunity, “how can our love” be real? We will become obstacles to those who do not know Him, the very people we are called to reach or who are new to the faith. Paul experienced strife and forgiveness that led to reconciliation—a model for us all (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 2:16; 3:6; 4:24-26; Col. 3:15).

Church Leadership Tip: Being filled with Jesus is a requirement for being a Christian, and this must be evident in us. This is what the Fruit of the Spirit is all about: God is working in and through us. It is imperative that the leadership of the church exhibits the life and power of Christ. If not, what are we there for? If it is weak, it's time to step up the personal and corporate prayer, daily Bible reading. We must be aware of our sinful desires and place them at the foot of the Cross. People will not see Jesus at work unless they see that He is at work in the leadership. This sets the tone for the congregation!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What are some opportunities you had to show your *faith in the Lord*? How does this help you be motivated as His display, pointing others to Christ?
2. The question is, where does your faith lie?
3. What have you given back to God and others? How is a growing faith in the Lord important?
4. What happens when we become stagnant in our spiritual formation?
5. What happens to a church when it is distracted with meaningless trends?
6. What takes place for gratefulness to set in for Who and what Christ has done for you?
7. Have you taken joy (confidence and contentment in Christ) into your life now? How does your inheritance to come play a role?
8. *By faith*, ordinary people became extraordinary left with an everlasting legacy, reputation, and example. How does this truth inspire you?
9. If the Gospel inspires us in turning away from sin, why do we fall into it so often?
10. What can you do to take a hold the steadfast trust and confidence in Who our Lord is and what He has done? How will this help His work be accomplished through you and your church?
11. What can your church do to be His Work, allow your church to succeed and grow in His empowerment for His glory? What are some better things can your church do other than glorify the Lord?
12. What can you and your church do to commit itself to be in prayer and seek God's empowerment and wisdom? How will this help you be an impact in your community?