

# **EPHESIANS**

“That You May Know”

Ephesians 1:15-23

Sunday, August 19, 2018

By David A. Ritchie

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. <sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

- It is officially the beginning of the school year.
- Amarillo schools started back last week, Amarillo College starts up tomorrow, and West Texas starts the week after.
- The first day of school is always a big day, but for the most part, it is an easy day.
- Whether you are starting kindergarten or graduate school, usually your first class designed to set up your expectations of what you will learn over the course of the year or semester to come.
- Somehow, someday the teacher or professor will say something along the lines of: “These are our goals. This is what I want you to know. These are the learning outcomes or objectives we are aiming for.” Or else they will say: “read the syllabus.”
- This is a good thing. Especially, if you are an adult paying good money for higher education, it is somewhat comforting to know your professor has a game plan for what he or she wants you to know. You don’t want to show up to class, ask what you will learn, only to have a professor, the supposed expert, say, “I don’t know; we will see.”

---

<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 1:15–23.

- In our text before us today, Paul has a few things he wants the Ephesians and all his readers to know.
  - Paul loves and knows the Ephesian church. This was a church he planted and spent years teaching and leading. And now this church has grown.
  - There is a second generation of new Christians that Paul has never met. But he has heard of their faith (their belief and trust in Jesus); and he has heard of their love for the saints (their love and support and connection to other Christians throughout the world) (1:15).
  - And he is essentially saying, “Ever since I heard of all the people that have come to this church and been saved, I haven’t stop giving thanks to God because of you! I find myself praying for you!” (1:16).
  - But again, there are some specific things that Paul is praying for this church to learn and know, as they grow and mature as a church.
- 
- Specifically, Paul desires the Ephesians to know something that more than mental knowledge or the capacity to regurgitate information.
  - He is asking for the Holy Spirit to impart wisdom and revelation that is beyond one human transmitting mere data to another (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12–14).
  - This is why he is praying that *“the eyes of [their] hearts [would be] enlightened”* (1:17).
  - So what is the difference between knowing something with your mind and knowing something in the depths of your heart?
  - John Stott: *“In biblical usage, the heart is the whole inward self, comprising mind as well as emotion. So ‘the eyes of the heart’ are simply our ‘inner eyes,’ which need to be opened or ‘enlightened’ before we can grasp God’s truth.”*<sup>2</sup>
  - Last week, we saw how Paul began this letter with a rehearsal of all the glorious blessings of the gospel. This week, we will see how he want his readers – and all Christians – to have hearts that would grasp the fullness of this blessing so that these blessings might be realized in our lives.<sup>3</sup>
  - If I were a new Christian in the Ephesians church who has likely heard about the legends of the great Apostle Paul, it would be pretty humbling and amazing to know that he was praying for me. And you better believe I would pay attention to the things he was praying to God on my behalf. So one way we could think about this passage is that this is what the Apostle Paul would pray for you and for me if he were here right now.
  - There are three things he would want us to not only know with our minds but truly know with our hearts.

## **Exposition**

### **1.) The hope of your calling.**

---

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 125.

- He wants them to know the hope of their calling in Christ
  - O'Brien: "Paul wishes them to understand the place which they as God's people have in the divine purposes."<sup>4</sup>
  - Simply being a part of the body of Christ and participating in its mission is a divine vocation!
  - Through the ordinary means of the church faithfully being the church, the most extraordinary event in history is unfolding.
- 2 Challenges to knowing the hope of our calling:
    - Day to day busyness
    - Preoccupation and distraction and things that don't matter
  - God has called you for more than a status of "being saved" or "being a Christian."
  - Every believer is called to mission by virtue of his or her discipleship
  - How can you embrace this calling here and now?
  - 3 examples:
    - Kevin and Denise Fortenberry teaching kids the gospel every Sunday morning
    - Bryan Garcia inviting people to church from his Jiffy-Lube
    - Dr. Kenneth Freeze praying with people and inviting people to church
  - We all were designed for a purpose; to participate in something that beyond ourselves! God has a plan for your life!
  - You calling is one of ultimate hope:
    - *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:28–30, ESV).*
  - For Christians our calling a calling of hope. Glorification is our end-game!

## **2.) The riches of his glorious inheritance.**

- The word inheritance is a word with a history; specifically, a biblical history.
- It conveys the idea of the Promise Land (slavery, deliverance, wilderness, and at long last a place of rest and freedom, flowing with milk and honey).
- This inheritance was determined by lot and passed down through generations of family.
- But the glorious inheritance Paul describes here is a true and better Promise Land.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 126.

- And it is an inheritance found in the saints.
  - The truest riches of heaven are found not in the streets of gold and foundations of precious stones, but in the people from every tribe and tongue and nation who will come together to worship Jesus throughout eternity (cf. Rev. 21:9-27).
  - The wealth of heaven is the people of God.
  - Every relationship you have with another believer, you will take into eternity
  - John Stott: *"We are told that we shall 'see' God and his Christ, and worship him; that this 'beatific' vision will be a transforming vision, for 'when he appears we shall be like him', not only in body but in character; and that we shall enjoy perfect fellowship with each other. For God's inheritance (the inheritance he gives us) will not be a little private party for each individual but rather 'among the saints' as we join that 'great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.'"*<sup>5</sup>
- This eternal value of fellowship goes contra rugged individualism.
  - The Americanized vision of a Promise Land is often one of increase comfort, autonomy, and isolation.
  - But a life of joy is a life that is shared.
  - Sometimes we fear relationship because we fear loss. We think isolation is safer.
  - We will have to say many goodbyes in this life. Some due to moving and circumstances, some due to missions, some due to death. But for fellow believers, no goodbye is forever.
- The true treasures of a house are not the house itself, but the people in it.
  - There was once a time when I felt like our house was put together. It was a time before there were three little boys who actively terrorize our home. Currently, our furniture is ruined. Every now and then, we will find a random booger on the wall. But I will tell you this; every day Kate and I thank God for the gift he has given us. And we are grateful for our physical home, yes. But the true treasure and wealth of our home is the three little boys that live within its walls.
- Maybe you are in a season of life without a family.
  - But in Christ, you do have family.
  - You are a part of the people of Abraham.
  - You have a place in the Body if you have a place in Christ.
  - And the riches of this inheritance will endure throughout eternity.

### **3.) The immeasurable greatness of his power.**

- One night some years ago, when my wife and I lived in Canyon, we were taking a late night walk around the campus of WTAMU, where we happened to come across an astronomy lab

---

<sup>5</sup> Stott, 57.

- Take a telescope and look at the magnitude of what is above you.<sup>6</sup>
- Here we were dealing with our little stresses and problems when a power greater than we could ever imagine was playing out above us.
- How easy it is to forget the glory that is above and the power that is toward us!
- The same power that rose Jesus from the dead dwells in the church
- For too many Christian realize the power above and within them
- In Christ, we have access to power that can put sin to death; the power to draw near in experiencing communion with God; the power to forge a prayer life that moves mountains.
- It is the same power that will one day fill all creation and make all things new
- We lost authority and power that we were designed to have because of sin.
- But Christ has reclaimed the dominion of man that was lost in the garden (cf. Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8).

### **Conclusion**

- All of the truth in this prayer flows from Jesus.
- The hope of our calling comes from his life and his calling to reveal his father.
- The eternal inheritance came at the cost of his life on the cross.
- The greatness of his power flows from the empty grave that is the lynch-pin of our gospel!
- “*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*” (Ephesians 1:17, ESV)
- As our sign says, it is truly all about Jesus
- You can do church in a way that is all about you: good advice versus good news.
- We want to do church in a way that really is all about Jesus.
- So that we can know Jesus and be changed by Jesus!
- Have the eyes of your heart been opened to Jesus?
- May we be a church that has the eyes of our hearts opened by the Spirit. May we grow more and more in the knowledge and revelations of Jesus Christ. May we know the hope of our calling, the riches of Christ’s inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. *AMEN.*

### **Community Group Discussion Starters**

---

<sup>6</sup> Tom Wright, [\*Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon\*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 16.

- 1.) *Read and summarize in your own words Ephesians 1:15-23.*
- 2.) *Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians that “the eyes of their hearts” would be enlightened (Eph. 1:18). How would you describe the difference between knowing truth only with your mind and knowing the same with your heart?*
- 3.) *There are three things Paul wants the Ephesians (and us as his readers) to understand with their hearts: the hope of our calling, the riches of God’s glorious inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable power of God’s greatness. Which one of these truths is the hardest for you to believe, and why? What would it look like for Christians to confidently believe these truths?*
- 4.) *It is clear that the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 1:15-23 is not for himself, or even ultimately for the Ephesians – it is ultimately all about Jesus. How can we live lives that are centered on Jesus?*

## Bibliography

*A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Ed. Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.

O'Brien, Peter Thomas. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990.

Stott, John R. W. *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

Wright, Tom. *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.