

## Enlightened by God

### Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 1:15-23 (ESV) For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, [16] I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] 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, [19] and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] 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. [22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

#### Introduction

A. I'll begin with a question. What is a Christian? How can we tell (and given that we were children of wrath this is an important question)? If a person says they are a Christian is it truly so?

1. You would probably say something like a Christian is a person who believes in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. The Bible says that:

Romans 10:9 (ESV) ... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2. You would probably also say that the way a person lives their life matters. The Bible calls this fruit. Good fruit reveals a Christian (especially fruit of the Spirit).

Luke 6:43-44 (ESV) For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, [44] for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

3. My personal favorite definition of a Christian: The life of God in the soul of man. This captures the activity of God in His sovereign grace (CARS). We are a new creation!

B. In Ephesians 1:15 Paul lays out a brilliant summary of a Christian. Two key points:

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus (notice it isn't only Savior).
2. Love for the saints (this sums up the entire law).

Galatians 5:6 (ESV) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

3. Take away faith and you will not find love. Take away love and you will not find faith. What is a Christian? A person who lives by faith and loves the saints.

C. Paul's response to these saints is precious (he hadn't seen them for at least four years).

1. I do not cease to give thanks for you (see verse 16).

Ex: Even with Corinth Paul was grateful. Paul is a dispenser of grace (acceptance).

2. I remember you in my prayers (a demonstration of love).

D. Paul prays that the eyes of their hearts will be enlightened. The title of this sermon is **Enlightened by**

**God.** Paul asks God to work in their lives. Paul prays.

## I. Why does Paul pray?

- A. Ephesians 1:1-2 is a salutation (a greeting). It is like “dear sir” but it has doctrine attached.
- B. Ephesians 1:3-14 is an explosion of praise (a benediction) as Paul marvels at the grace of God in salvation. God decisively acts by choosing, adopting, redeeming and sealing His people.
  - 1. In Ephesians 1:15-23 Paul prays a prayer of intercession. Why? These folks are believers. They know Christ and they love the saints. Isn't that enough?
- C. Well, evidently not. Here are at least four reasons why Paul prays:
  - 1. One, when we come to Christ we are children. We aim to mature.
  - 2. Two, we see dimly. We urgently need the Holy Spirit to illuminate truth to our hearts.
  - 3. Three, we always have room to grow in knowing God.
  - 4. Four, though God is sovereign God uses means like prayer (we pray because God works).
- D. One reason Paul was an effective leader is because he balanced praise and prayer (Ephesians 1).
  - 1. Paul praises God for the spiritual blessings (inheritance) we have in Christ.
  - 2. Paul prays that we would know the richness of these blessings.

The Christians's primary need is for wisdom and obedience to appropriate the abundance of blessings the Lord has already given. Our problem is not lack of blessings, but lack of wisdom and insight to understand and use them properly and faithfully. Our blessings are so vast that the human mind cannot comprehend them. John MacArthur in *Ephesians Commentary*, p 43

## II. What does Paul ask God for? Paul makes one massive request.

- A. That God would give them (and by extension us) a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. In short, Paul prays that they may know God.
  - 1. There is a world of difference between knowing about God and knowing God.
    - Ex: I could describe my wife Beth to you but you would not know her.
  - 2. Knowing God matters because this is the very definition of eternal life.
    - John 17:3 (ESV) And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
  - 3. Because eternity is forever it would seem wise to pay some attention to it.
    - Ex: If Jesus Christ isn't in heaven we want to be with Him.
  - 4. But we are here on earth. When we understand that we are primarily here to know God our life takes on a different perspective.

Once you become aware that the main business you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place on their own accord. J.I. Packer in *Knowing God*, p 34

- B. How do we know God? J.I. Packer in *Knowing God* (recommend highly):

Knowing God involves, first, listening to God's Word and receiving it as the Holy Spirit interprets it, in application to oneself; second, noting God's nature and character, as His Word and works reveal it; third, accepting his invitations and doing what he commands; fourth, recognizing and rejoicing in the love that he has shown in thus approaching you and drawing you into this divine fellowship. J.I. Packer in *Knowing God*, p 37

1. Paul was particularly passionate about knowing Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV) But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

**III. Paul's one massive request (that they have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him) is filled out in three ways.**

- A. One, that you may know the hope to which you are called (a glorious inheritance).

1. God has called us. He took the initiative to pursue us because we were lost.
2. God has called us to a glorious inheritance. This is our hope. One day we shall see Christ and we shall be like He is. O happy day! It is fixed and certain.

- B. Two, that you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

1. O that we would know the riches that await us in eternity. Those riches make all the difference in our lives now.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. [17] For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

- C. Three, that we may know the immeasurable greatness of his power.

1. God's power is evident in the universe and in creation but God's greatest display of power was in raising Jesus Christ from the dead.
2. That same power is at work in us. Once we were dead in trespasses and sin but no more. We are in Christ and therefore we are alive.

**IV. In verses 21-23 Paul goes on to inform us about who Jesus Christ is. There are three descriptions:**

- A. Jesus Christ is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. His name is above every name (name means who He really is).

1. You can trust Him with your life.

- B. God placed all things under His feet.

1. You can trust Him with your life because Jesus reigns over everything.

- C. Jesus Christ is the head of His church (which is His body).

1. Spiritually we are in Christ and therefore we are connected to Him.

Ex: Vine and branches.

## Close

- A. Paul's prayer is that God would enlighten us to see things as they really are. What we know and who we know will determine the quality of this life and the life to come. Old Testament prophets:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (ESV) Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, [24] but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

Hosea 4:6a (ESV) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Hosea 6:6 (ESV) For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Habakkuk 2:14 (ESV) For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

- B. The greatest need we have is God. Therefore, knowing God is our most urgent priority. We can't love what we do not know. To know God is to love Him (enlighten our hearts!).
1. This is one reason we emphasize biblical fellowship which is sharing our experience of God (not merely our lives and our experiences and our sin).
  2. Care groups provide a means for us to know one another but more importantly to know God. Knowing God is our supreme calling.