

Ephesians 1:15-23

Verses 15-16:

--(15) This is another verse that lends itself to the idea that this was a circular letter. Paul knew the Ephesians well but he was hearing about the faith and love of the other fellowships in the area that were being established who would also read this.

--Paul is speaking about **love** that comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ. This is more than social or civil kindness that the unsaved have. This is the supernatural love born from the work of the Holy Spirit in a regenerate heart.

--(16) This type of love does two things:

--First, it makes us thankful for others. Are we thankful for the work of God in the lives of believers around us? Even those we haven't met, like those Paul is writing to? Do we live a life of faith and love that would make others thankful for us?

--Second, it turns us into intercessors. The mutual exchange of prayers was a unique expression of NT Christian love. It is a spiritual blessing that we are to give and receive!

--On the practical side: If you need help in praying for others then take a look at what Paul prays for these Ephesians believers (as well as his prayers in other epistles). The Holy Spirit inspired and preserved these prayers as instruction for the church in every age.

--On the technical side: Notice that Paul never confuses what he teaches in what he prays. He doesn't get carried away with emotion or flowery language. His knowledge of God is evenly expressed in both.

Verse 17:

--First, after placing Christ before them as risen, seated in the heavens, and the One center of God's eternal plans in election and predestination for all of creation and time, Paul prays that God would give them **wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him**.

--This is not a prayer that God the Father or God the Son would particularly *do* or *give* something new as much as the Ephesians would understand and appropriate what they already had in Christ. *Instead of praying something like: *God love me*. Paul is praying they would come to know the love God already has toward them: *God help me see how much you love me*.*

--There is some debate about whether the **spirit** here is the individual human spirit or the Holy Spirit. In the end it really doesn't matter because either way it is the Holy Spirit doing the wise work of revelation in us.

--Teaching and declaring Jesus Christ to us—who cannot see Him with our eyes—is one of the unique and specific jobs of the Holy Spirit. There is no other way for us to actually know Him or spiritual truths.

John 15:26: But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:13-14: However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

--The Holy Spirit teaches our spirit **wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.**

--What does this look like on a practical level? The Holy Spirit teaches us something about Jesus Christ. We now know this reality of Christ in an experiential, accurate, and certain way that is more than mental apprehension.

--This new “view” or “sight” of Jesus teaches us to live with new wisdom (the ways of God) or revelation (seeing things the way God sees them). This is way more than mental and theological understanding. This is why humble and normal folks can actually know God more than the intellectual elites. *Paul Tillich and Karl Barth didn’t know God with wisdom and revelation and that is why their adulterous lives were as famous as their theological works.*

--There are many Christians who “know” the Gospel but they don’t actually personally know the love of God or forgiveness in Christ. They “know” what they are supposed to do but they don’t actually know what it is to take up their cross, find strength in weakness, or surrender in obedience. They “know” the Christian message but they don’t actually know Christian life!

--This was Paul’s prayer for all believers—not just the mental giants. We are to love God with all our minds. Whatever mental capacity He gives us does not limit His work of spiritual wisdom and revelation.

--Every true believer should know something of this experience, and in all honesty, it should never stop. Nor should we ever want it to stop! Knowing Christ is the purpose of eternity.

John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

--So our feeling toward others or our desire in ourselves should never be: *Hey, I know enough to be saved, that is good enough for me.* That attitude is way below the mark for any Christian. Do you think that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory** has nothing left to teach you about Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit?

*Bellett (Brief Notes On Ephesians): *“I am so blessed in my calling; so poor in my enjoyment!”**

Verses 18-21:

--**(18)** Here Paul turns his prayer for spiritual revelation into a few specific requests.

--First, he is praying for spiritual illumination in the **understanding** or *heart*. He wants them to clearly see these things as they are in God and Jesus Christ.

--Again, spiritual illumination—divine light—is what happens in believers because God has given life to our spiritual organs. In the new birth, or regeneration, we once again have the senses to commune with the divine. *Adam died spiritually*

--This is why we can learn Christ in a moment of divine revelation from the Holy Spirit.

*Tozer (This World: Playground or Battleground?): *“When prostrate and wordless, the soul receives divine knowledge like the flash of light on sensitive film. The exposure may be brief, but the results are permanent.”**

--This reality of divine illumination is the difference between Christian life and Christian profession—between those who walk into a service and walk out the same or forever changed.

--The apostle Peter is a wonderful example for us:

Matthew 16:17: *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”*

--Here Peter was given illumination in the heart by God. This was a revelation of the Person of Christ as Messiah. What he still lacked was the spirit of wisdom as to what to do with that revelation of Christ and that is why Jesus had to rebuke him a short time after. Even so, he was forever changed and much better off for the moment of divine light!

--If God doesn't give this then we live without it and that is truly a dangerous thing.

Deuteronomy 29:4: *Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.*

--Now, Paul begins to list some of the things that these believers would know through spiritual illumination of the heart.

--First, ***the hope of His calling***. Biblically, our hope is always directly related to our calling in Christ—which is brought to light in the resurrected Jesus seated in the heavenlies. So in Scripture our hope is always tied to things like: resurrection (**1 Peter 1:3**); eternal life (**Titus 1:2**); heaven (**Col. 1:5**); glory (**Col. 1:27**); etc.

--Do we live life with a sense of this calling? To rule the world with Christ in glory? To live forever in a new heavens and new earth? **Hebrews 3:1** calls us ***holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling***. . . to what level are we companions of Christ in this calling? What is your life about? *I just read a report that said 67% of Mormons attend services weekly while only 44% of Protestants do. Why? No sense or personal knowledge of our calling!*

--Paul prays this because we do not have the capacity to know our calling outside of His Word and His Spirit. May God shine His light on this heavenly calling so that we can see it clearly!

--Second, ***what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints***.

--Paul has already written to them about the fact of our inheritance in Him (**11**) but He also has an inheritance in us. We are His and He is ours. Because of Him, we have a claim upon one another.

--The reality and security of this inheritance means that you and I are not missing out on anything. Don't allow the enemy to trick you into thinking this world is all you have.

Mark 12:6-7: *Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’*

--Maybe we try to ignore Jesus or placate Him instead of kill Him, but we have nothing without Him. If you are trying to inherit this passing sinful world you are a fool destined for destruction.

--(19-20) Third, ***what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.***

--Paul wants them to have a new revelation of the greatness of God's power as it was displayed in Christ Jesus. Notice all the words he stacks up to describe this power in its fullness.

--The power of God that works ***toward us who believe*** is the very power that raised up Christ who was made the sin of the world—not just yours or mine—and then placed Him in glory at God's right hand. *Having defeated Satan, sin, and death there is nothing left to resist His power!*

--It is this great power of God that works in us, for us, and through us. Do we know this? Then why do we have so many fears and so little faith when we walk with such a powerful God? We fear Satan, sin, and death—the world the flesh and the devil—when they are already defeated. May God give us hearts to see ***the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe!***

--We are to see that God the Father has ***seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.***

--This means that Christ is in possession of the glory, life, immortality, and heaven that He is bringing us to! God has placed the Son on the throne to honor Him but also to bless the Church—His Body and Bride.

--(21) ***Far above*** is not in terms of distance or geography as much as it refers to dignity, honor, and glory. The power of God has taken Christ, the Son of Man, and connected Him in our nature to *that* glory. So that when we look at Him, when we see Him, we will be amazed that *those* veins bled for me. He has forever connected our nature with His glory.

****Hebrews 2:14-16: Inasmuch than as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.****

--This was also important for them to know that Christ was over ***all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come*** because the pagan cultures in that day age were dominated by superstitious fears of various spiritual forces (Ephesus was full of witchcraft). This is still true in much of the world today, though we face less of this idolatrous fear in America. ****Hebrews 1:1-4****

Verses 22-23:

--Paul ends his prayer with a declaration. The One who is over all things and lives from eternity as the center of God's dispensations is uniquely connected to us as the Church.

--In terms of His ruling and administrating God's will for the elect and predestined, we find that our best interests are a part of His interests, and due to His authority and power, all creation will cooperate (**Ps. 8:6 + Heb. 2:8**).

--In terms of the Church being His body, Paul declares something incredible: That we are a part of the very **fullness of Him who fills all in all**.

--In what sense is the Church the fullness of Christ? Does His fullness fill us up? Or do we fill Him out as His complementary working body in the world? I think the answer is: Yes!

--We are part of what is called: the Mystical Body of Christ. So named because our union to Christ and to one another as the Church (in heaven and earth), is beyond our physical senses.

Pink (Gleanings From Paul): "The church is the mediatorial 'fullness' of Christ: there cannot be a Redeemer without redeemed, a Shepherd without sheep, a Bridegroom with a Bride, a living Head without a living Body."

--Our exalted Savior and Lord does not consider Himself complete without His Church.

Acts 9:4: Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Colossians 1:24: I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.

--What Christ does for Himself to work out the will of His Father He also does for His Church.

Goodwin (The Heart of Christ): "So that although he of himself personally be so full, the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him, that he overflows to the filling of all things; yet he is pleased to account—and it is so in the reality—his church, and the salvation of it, to be another fullness unto him, super-added unto the former. As the Son of God he is complete, and that of himself; but as a head, he yet hath another additional fullness of joy from the good and happiness of his members."

--If you are a part of His body, then He is uniquely connected to you and concerned about your welfare and health. Every part of Christ's body is necessary. He will accomplish our ultimate good in the will of His Father and we are eternally blessed to be a part of His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.