

Ephesians 1 pt. 3 v.15-23

V.15-16 THEREFORE = In light of what has been set forth in verses 1-14 Paul is moved to action. He is moved to prayer.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is rich with the doctrine, especially doctrine regarding the church.

The doctrines that Paul opens up this letter with are expansive in their scope and scale. Truly Paul is calling to mind the power, glory, and majesty of God. These truths impact us so greatly when we take time to consider them that our spirits soar in praise, worship, and prayer.

These truths remind us of our closeness with the Father, Son and Spirit and how we have become beneficiaries of God's incomprehensible grace.

These are the truths that Paul calls to mind:

- God the Father, whom we worship, has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places;

- He has chosen us before the foundation of the world;
- Predestined us to adoption into His holy family;
- Made us accepted in Jesus Christ by whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins;
- He has poured out His grace upon us abundantly;
- He is revealing to us the mystery of His perfect will;
- He has given us an inheritance according to His purpose;
- He has sealed us for eternity by His personal presence in the person of the Holy Spirit who dwells within and among us.

AND, God has done all of this according to His divine initiative for His glory alone.

All of this combined is a glorious portrait of intimate love, care, and overwhelming affection from God the Father for His children.

We could take each of these doctrines individually and study them for weeks! And these are the foundational thoughts that move Paul in further discourse to the Ephesians.

All of these mind-blowing truths frame Paul's continuing address. Paul understands that the very existence of the Ephesian church is a product of God's sovereignty, grace, and affection wrapped up in the doctrine that he sets forth as directed by the Holy Spirit.

It is that culmination of doctrines, realized in the church, that moves Paul to prayer, having reflected upon their faith in Jesus and their love for all the saints.

Take a moment to note that faith in Jesus manifests itself in love; love for God and love for others. Love is the good fruit of a deeply rooted faith in Christ.

It is plain to Paul that the Ephesian believers lived out their faith practically by their love for "all the saints." They were living out Jesus words: "[Jhn 13:35 NKJV] 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Notice too that Paul uses some very strong language here in describing his own prayer habits for them.

His prayers of thanksgiving for them were continuous, never ceasing.

Oh that we would be people who thank God for other believers - knowing that it is by God's will, and for His glory that they have been brought into the kingdom.

V.17 - Paul also prays for them specifically that they would be supplied with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that their understanding would increase.

He desired that believers would grow to know God, to learn of His characteristics, and to develop a deeper understanding of these vast truths.

We will perhaps never truly understand the fullness of God's wisdom and character - it is, in fact, unsearchable - too deep for us to fully understand or define in this lifetime.

[Rom 11:33 NKJV] 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out!

[Isa 40:28 NKJV] 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the
earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is
unsearchable.

But we can GROW in understanding, in wisdom, and in
knowledge as He reveals Himself to us by His word and by His
Spirit. God desires for us to grow in understanding toward Him.

[2Pe 1:5 NKJV] 5 But also for this very reason, giving all
diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,...

We are to be growing in our faith progressively and as the Holy
Spirit ministers to us by God's Word within His Body we are
growing up in Him -- Adding to our faith, a moral goodness/purity
that comes by being made into the image of Christ, adding to our
purity knowledge that comes by adopting the mind of Christ.

[2Pe 3:18 NKJV] ...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....

Jesus taught the Disciples after His resurrection and Luke tells us:

[Luk 24:44-45 NKJV] ...He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Paul writes to the Corinthians: [1Co 14:20 NKJV] 20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Where does this understanding and knowledge come from? “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory...”

It is God who gives us understanding. He gives this to us through a multitude of avenues - teachers, loved ones, disciples, etc. But all of those are under His will - it is God the Father who gives us wisdom, knowledge, and understanding about who He is.

How is that we come to a deeper understanding, a deeper knowledge of who God is and how he relates to us? We consider the great truths of God’s word! That is what Paul prayed for in verses 18-21.

V.18-21 Paul didn't only pray for a general dispensation of wisdom and understanding or that everybody would just become smarter but that they would come to know God deeper through understanding specific truths about who God is and how He relates to His creation.

Specifically those things that Paul prayed the Ephesians would understand more, and equally applicable to our circumstances, are: The hope of His calling; the riches of the glory of His inheritance; and the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe as demonstrated by the resurrection.

We shall take each of these in turn.

1. The hope of His calling - God's calling is hopeful. This has vast implications for how we are to carry out the Great Commission of making disciples.

Do we truly believe that God's calling is hopeful and that it banishes despair and gifts believers with an eternally hopeful perspective?

If we truly grasped this hope, or rather are grasped by it, then we would not be ashamed of the gospel since it is HOPE! And what do people need? HOPE! And where do we find hope? In the person and work of Jesus Christ!

2. The riches of the glory of His inheritance - the inheritance that is God's. What is that? This is theologically tricky territory because whenever we hear "inheritance" we might automatically assume it is a reference to our eternity with Jesus. And that makes sense - in verse v.11 Paul tells the Ephesians that they have obtained an inheritance in Him!

But, let's re-look at the writing - "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Our inheritance is obtained in Him, His inheritance is obtained IN THE SAINTS! We are bound up together!

In the former times God's inheritance was categorized as the nation of Israel.

[Deu 32:9 NKJV] 9 For the LORD's portion [is] His people; Jacob [is] the place of His inheritance.

[Psa 94:14 NKJV] 14 For the LORD will not cast off His people, Nor will He forsake His inheritance.

[Psa 78:70-71 NKJV] 70 He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; 71 From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.

BUT NOW - Paul says - the riches, the glory of God's inheritance, are bound up in the saints - the holy ones! Who are the saints? All those who have been made holy by faith in Christ, those who have been adopted into God's kingdom and robed in His righteousness.

This is a remarkable demonstration of God's grace and His eternal value system because while we are found to be completely spiritually destitute - we are given the kingdom.

[Mat 5:3 NKJV] 3 "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Do you see how God's inheritance has expanded!? From Israel, to all who believe, because God has poured out His grace upon us and that is glorious to Him and to us! He has made that which is spiritually devoid of intrinsic value to have eternal value by His grace.

3. The exceeding greatness of His Power toward us who believe.

He has demonstrated His power by making average, everyday people, dead in sin, poor in Spirit, alive to Him. This is accomplished only by His power! We cannot achieve this in our own power. We are without strength - unable to revive ourselves.

BUT, as Paul writes to the Romans: [Rom 5:6 NKJV] 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Notice how all that we have been examining is about what God has done for us, irrespective of what we have done for Him! It is all according to the riches of His grace.

This is all about His calling, His inheritance, His power! We are the beneficiaries of HIM.

Now, as we consider these deep theological truths, one might ask, "How can we know that any of this is true?!" Paul tells us that it is by the resurrection that we know it to be true.

V.20-21 THIS IS HUGE!!! DO WE GRASP THIS!!! (V.20-21) We know of God's power; we know truth not because of a feeling, emotion, sixth sense, intuition, or clever proverbs. We know this is true and real because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

The things we have examined: Hope, glory, a heavenly inheritance, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, power - these things are primarily invisible.

BUT, God has stamped all creation with an irrefutable proof of His power, proof that His word is certain, that all of these invisible

ideals that we hang our hope on are coming to pass - the resurrection.

The resurrection is the central truth on which our faith hangs! Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15.

[1Co 15:13-22 NKJV] 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching [is] empty and your faith [is] also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if [the] dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith [is] futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, [and] has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man [came] death, by Man also [came] the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Understand this truth - the man Jesus of Nazareth is alive today!
That fact is more than theologizing about hope - it is truth and it IS hope. It is the proof of God's eternal power and authority.

It is THE singular fact that gives meaning to our faith and compels us to share hope and truth with others. Without it the atonement, the Spirit, salvation are unprovable! By it we are certain of our hope.

Let us ask another question relative to our faith -- Where is Jesus?

Paul addresses this thought here in a physical and authoritative way. The man Jesus of Nazareth physically exists in the heavenly realm, at the right hand of the Father.

We are very often taught that Jesus lives in our heart. Perhaps what people mean to express by this is that the hope of Jesus, or the doctrine of Jesus, or the Spirit of Jesus, exist within us - but the reality is that the physical man, Jesus of Nazareth, who was resurrected bodily in the flesh, actually lives in heaven.

Authoritatively, Jesus exists over all principality, power, might, dominion, and every name that is named in all ages for all time.

There is nothing above Him. There is nothing stronger than Him. There is nothing that has a more expansive kingdom. There is no one who has a greater name.

As Peter preaches in Acts:

[Act 4:12 NKJV] ...there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

He is all powerful, He is God the Son, over all creation.

And what is remarkable is that we have a very special, intentional, relationship with Jesus, "the name above all names", established by the Father.

V.22-23 What does that relationship look like?

Even as Jesus is over all things, and all things are in subjection to Him, the way He relates and communes with all creation is not the same.

He is specially, uniquely, and intentionally wed to the church.

As a matter of fact Paul tells us that the church is the Body of Christ and that He is the Head of that Body.

This is more than an incidental, or transient relationship. This is an undeniable, indivisible relationship. Just as your head is attached to your body. You cannot separate your head from your body and live. So it is with the church.

Also note that it is Christ who is over the church as well! The church is His! No pastor, bishop, elder, shares headship with Jesus.

Where any part of the church is found with anything else as the head - a board, conference, panel, etc. - there we find a church separated from Christ.

In First Corinthians Paul explains to the Corinthian church that they are each individually members of one body bound together for the benefit of the whole body. And here we find that the only person who fills the role of the head - that member that directs the rest of the body - is Jesus Christ.

Since the church is Christ's body, this is massively important!

The church matters in a way that perhaps we have devalued over time - not considering that we are devaluing the very body of Christ represented in the earthly and heavenly realm.

Some have proposed that there is a substantial delineation between the universal and local church and that over time we have just corrupted the Body of Christ and you can't trust any church so you don't have to be a part of any church.

This further devalues God's word and the Body of Christ.

But bearing that argument in mind we come to some theory that bears considering.

Is there a difference between the universal and local church? Is Paul only talking about the universal body, the universal church?

Some Christians use this as an excuse to abstain from fulfilling their God appointed role in the local body, the local church.

They say, "I don't need to go to church to be saved," or some other similar nonsense.

Barring the discussion on the poison of pride that gives birth to such thought, marked by an unteachable heart, an ungracious spirit, and selfish consumerism - the church is important to Jesus because it is His body, so it ought to be important to us!

[Heb 10:24-25 NKJV] 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as [is] the manner of some, but exhorting [one another], and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

"The universal church is often termed invisible, yet the New Testament never speaks of the invisible church. Even as members of a local church are concrete people, so are members

of the universal church...As for membership in an invisible church without fellowship with any local assembly, this concept is never contemplated in the New Testament. The universal church was the universal fellowship of believers who met visibly in local assemblies...The one universal church is manifested in a particular locality, yet each individual assembly is the church in that place.” (Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*)

We are part of the universal church expressed locally in Dothan, AL along with our sister churches in this city who are also visible expressions of Christ’s body.

“She is the continued revelation of His divine life in human form...” Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 2, p. 344). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

This is so huge! The church matters to Jesus! Further in this same letter Paul will refer to the church as the very bride of Christ - his wife! We don’t HAVE to GO to church; we ARE part of the church if we are Christ’s. We GET to be part of His bride and His

body. We GET to show the world Jesus as we love one another because of our faith.

That is what we will continue to develop as we continue in Paul's letter to the Ephesians - this doctrine of the universal church expressed locally by the saints, God's inheritance among all the nations of the earth, advancing His Kingdom by His word, by His Spirit, by His will and for His glory.