

KNOWING CHRIST AND OUR POSITION IN HIM

INTRODUCTION: Ephesians 1:15-23 shows us that real spiritual growth begins with not doing more, but seeing more clearly. Paul hears of the Ephesians strong faith and love, and instead of telling them to “try harder,” he prays that God would open their eyes to what they already have in Christ.

Ephesians 1:15-23

I. RESPONDING TO GOOD REPORTS *vv.15-16*

A. Paul had received excellent reports about the Ephesians. *v.15*

1. Paul had heard testimonies about their strong personal faith.
 - a. Here is an area where Paul had spent three years of his life ministering and he is hearing good reports about their faith.
 - b. This was an area that had all kinds of pagan gods, but Paul is pleased that their faith is in Jesus.
 - c. Paul most likely received the report from Epaphras who founded the Colossian church, not far from Ephesus and visited Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. *Philemon 1:23*
2. Paul had also heard of their love for God’s people.
 - a. This was proof that they had been born again. *1 John 3:14*

- b. This was also proof that they were disciples of Christ. **John 13:35**
 - c. A disciple is not just a convert.
3. Paul was blessed to know that his instructions to the Ephesian leaders were being carried out.
- a. After Paul had left Ephesus, he went over to the region of Greece and then returned to Miletus, not far from Ephesians.
 - b. He sent for the Elders in Ephesus to give them instructions and a word of encouragement.
 - c. He tells them to take good care of the flock.
Acts 20:28
- B. Paul responds to these reports with Thanksgiving.
v.16
1. Because of the good report, it brings him to the place of thanking God.
- a. There is genuine joy in his heart for what the Ephesians are doing.
 - b. They're walking in faith. They're showing love. They're aware of the hope of their calling.
 - c. When I look at Tillamook, I feel the same.

2. This blessing of the Ephesians' faith was not something he always experienced.
 - a. The Galatian church was being inundated by the Judaizers. **Galatians 3:1**
 - b. The Corinthian church was probably the most problematic, with divisions and factions, moral laxity, abuse of the Lord's supper, and pride in spiritual gifts.
 - c. He expresses great joy in the church at Thessalonica and is most pleased with the church at Philippi. Ephesians and Colossians tie for third on the list.

3. He gives unceasing thanks to God as a remembrance.

- a. When other churches were going astray, he could point back to the Ephesians with thanksgiving.
- b. He had spent 3 years with them, pouring himself into their lives.
- c. Later, we do know the Ephesians do get a bit off track. **Revelation 2:2-4**

C. Paul responds with prayer for the Ephesians. **v.16**

1. Paul remembers the believers consistently in His prayers.

- a. This is first, an example of a man of God who prayed.
 - b. We see him writing this consistently in his letters to the churches.
 - c. This was a dedication of time spent in prayer for others. (A challenge to me.)
2. Paul makes regular intercessions on their behalf.
- a. προσευχή (Prayer) means an earnest time set aside to pray.
 - b. He would go to the Lord on behalf of the church and individuals, petitioning the Lord on their behalf.
 - c. How often do we pray for those we are with, but not for the ones we used to be with?
3. Paul bridges praise and petition for their spiritual maturity.
- a. His heart and ultimate desire is that they would grow in their faith.
 - b. We know that Paul would pray in both his known language and in the Spirit.
1 Corinthians 14:15

- c. Later in this letter he will encourage the Ephesians to do the same. **Ephesians 6:18**

II. PRAYING FOR DIVINE BLESSINGS **vv.17-18**

A. Request for spiritual gifts from God. **v.17**

1. He asks that they might be given the spirit of wisdom, which is the ability to take knowledge and put it into right practice.
 - a. Wisdom is the ability to take knowledge and put it into right practice.
 - b. This is supernatural wisdom, going beyond natural experience.
 - c. In the Old Testament the spirit of wisdom would be given so that those receiving it could accomplish something. **Exodus 28:3**
2. He asks that they might have divine revelation of the knowledge of Christ.
 - a. Revelation comes from the Greek Word ἀποκάλυψις which means an appearing or manifestation of something which was previously hidden.
 - b. That “something” already exists.
 - c. As believers, we have the fullness of God’s blessings dwelling in our spirit. The revelation

is the manifestations of those blessings in our lives.

3. He further asks that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened. **v.18**
 - a. In the ESV, NAS, CSB, NLT, translates this “the eyes of your heart”.
 - b. Καρδία is often used symbolically as the center of your spiritual understanding. **Romans 10:10**
 - c. So the core of our spiritual existence has eyes and the light just needs to be turned on so we can see. **Acts 16:14**

B. Request for believers to know true hope and value. **v.18**

1. First, that they would know what the true hope of His calling is.
 - a. This is an expectation of all the promises of God, both present and future. **1 John 3:2-3**
 - b. We have hope for things we have received, but we might not be experiencing in the natural, such as healing.
 - c. He called us to this. He has already positioned us as recipients of His promises. (Fishing in a mountain river.)

2. Secondly, that they would understand the riches of His glory.
 - a. The riches of His glory includes our participation in the glory of Christ. **John 17:22**
 - b. God has highly exalted Jesus and we are seated with Him.
 - c. We are seated with Him as participants in this glory. **Ephesians 2:6**
 3. Third, that they would recognize their status as God's prized possession. **v.18**
 - a. We are His inheritance.
 - b. We often lose site of how much God desires to be in fellowship with us.
 - c. "For God so loved the world...."
- C. Request that believers comprehend divine might. **v.19**
1. That the believers would know the exceeding greatness of God's power.
 - a. The immensity of His power is immeasurable.
 - b. As in the other items on Paul's list, knowledge of this seems unattainable.

- c. We cannot even come close without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and even then, it is a work in progress.
- 2. That the believers would see that this power is directed toward them.
 - a. We are participants in His power.
 - b. εἰς + ἡμᾶς = into and within us.
 - c. It is the power of the Holy Spirit coming into us (as we would put on clothing) and directing all that we do.
- 3. That the believers would align with the working of His great power. **Romans 15:17-19**
 - a. As we become more aware of the power of God within us, signs and wonders begin to follow.
 - b. He is already working and we are simply surrendering.
 - c. This means we don't have to fear the devil.

III. REVEALING THE SUPREMECY OF CHRIST vv.20-23

A. The resurrection and supremacy of Christ. v.20

- 1. God raised Christ physically from the dead.

- a. This life of the gospel is founded upon the resurrection of Jesus. **1 Corinthians 15:14**
 - b. This is a foreshadow of us also being raised from the dead. **1 Corinthians 6:14**
 - c. He led the way of resurrection for us, being the firstborn from the dead. (*Col. 1:18*)
2. At this very moment, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- a. To be at the right hand was a position of privilege, honor, favor, victory and power. **1 Peter 3:22**
 - b. Because He is seated, this means it's a permanent place for him.
 - c. If we go into a home and refuse the invitation to have a seat, it probably means we're not planning to stay long.
3. He has been placed far above all rule, authority, power and dominion. **v.21**
- a. The Ephesian city was filled with people who believed in multiple gods.
 - b. Paul is emphasizing that Jesus is the one who is above all of it.

- c. This is both for now and forever. It's a done deal.

B. The absolute authority given to Christ. **v.22**

1. God has placed all things beneath the feet of Jesus.
 - a. By every being beneath His feet, it is a demonstration of His supremacy.
 - b. It also means that all things are subject to Him.
 - c. Falling at the feet of the king was a sign of submission.
2. God has elevated Jesus to be the head over all things.
 - a. This is to the benefit to the church.
 - b. That means that with Christ as our Lord, Savior and King, we are kept safe by Him.
 - c. If an angry dog came after your child, you would do all you can to save that child.
3. This means that Christ's name is above every name past, present and future. **Philippians 2:9-11**
 - a. He has been raised to the highest possible position.

- b. This was an absolute slap in the face of Satan who had attempted to accomplish the same.

Isaiah 14:12-14

- c. The decline of his rule began at the resurrection of Jesus.

C. The relationship between Christ and the church.

- 1. Here we see the church being illustrated as the body of Christ. **vv.22-23**

- a. The church is depicted as a body with many members. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

- b. This is a common illustration that Paul used which we will see later in Ephesians.

- c. So we are HIS body. Not the denominational body.

- 2. The church is defined as the fullness of Christ, not lacking in anyway.

- a. With Jesus as the head, and with us as the body parts, we are complete.

- b. πλήρωμα = fullness – filled to the very very tippy top.

- c. It's a fullness for the church and for us individually, bringing presence, power, and the riches of God. **1 Corinthians 12:6**

3. Christ provides all that is needed for the church to thrive.
 - a. Without Jesus, we would just be a social club.
 - b. Jesus intends for us to be a living, active body of believers, living victoriously and carrying the message.
 - c. At the beginning of the next chapter we'll see how Paul's makes a comparison to our old dead self to the one who is now alive and how that all came about.

CONCLUSION: Paul responds to good reports of the Ephesians by praying for the Holy Spirit to open the "eyes of their heart" to fully grasp their hope, their value as God's inheritance, and the immeasurable power working within them. This internal transformation is securely anchored in the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ.