

November 13, 2022

"Christ is Wisdom"
Lesson 2 of Unit

Ephesians 1:15-23

Intro

Today's lesson concludes chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In this passage, Paul does several things: he offers thanks to God, praises the Ephesians for what they are doing well, and reminds them of both their benefits in Christ and Christ's pre-eminent position in our faith.

Those who must use glasses to read can describe how impactful it is to have these visual aids. It changes, it clarifies all that is seen. Paul uses that idea often in this passage—the concept that we need to see more clearly, have the correct vision, to see and know all that is available to us in Christ.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

1. vs. 15: "For this reason"

In the previous passage, Paul reminded them of the fact that Christ made a way for them
"I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus"

Despite cultural pressures, they have maintained their faith in Jesus

See Acts 19 about Demetrius the silversmith

Paul is currently in prison in Rome

Either letters or messengers have told him of the Ephesians spiritual walk

It had to be comforting to him, since he could not come to be with them

"and your love for all God's people"

Paul has also heard of this perfect practicing of their faith, that they love the brethren

We are called to love others because Christ loved us at the cost of His life

Christ's love has no boundaries / limits; it encompasses all people

His disciples are to show that same kind of love (which can be tough for us!)

2. vs. 16: "I have not stopped giving thanks for you"

Paul wrote to "pray continually" in I Thess. 5:17-18

He is reminding them that he is "practicing what he preaches"

This is Paul's habit, and is to be our habit as well

Paul is obviously giving thanks to God for the Ephesians and their faithfulness

Giving God praise confirms that we place Him above everything else

3. vs. 17: "I keep asking"

Paul has been praying to God many times for and about the Ephesians

He does not pray once; he continues to pray for them

"the glorious Father"

Paul praises God again

He continually offers praise to God; it is a part of His life in Christ

"may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"

This phrase can be taken two ways

First, as God giving each person wisdom and revelation

Second, the Holy Spirit guiding us into greater wisdom and revelation
Both are valid and appropriate to what Paul is praying for the Ephesians
Note that Paul isn't praying for the Ephesians to receive the Spirit
They already have the Spirit
Paul is referring to the Spirit helping them to understand more fully
"so that you may know Him better"
This is Paul's goal for them; it is to be every Christian's daily goal as well

4. vs. 18: "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"

This is the result of receiving wisdom and revelation
Our physical eyes help us make sense of the physical world we live in
So also our spiritual eyes can be sharpened to better understand the spiritual world
Jesus said some have eyes and yet still do not see
It is this spiritual application of sight that He was referring to
Here Paul talks about spiritual eyesight, about seeing with "corrective lenses"
"in order that you may know the hope... the riches of His glorious inheritance"
Paul wants them to see spiritual truth because of the benefits it has for them
First, they will understand that they have hope in what is coming for them
Christian hope isn't just wishes
It's an understanding of what God has done for us
Our hope is in Christ's death and resurrection also
Because of that, we will get to experience the fullness of God's blessings
"He has called you"

Some callings are specific, like Samuel or Paul

Others are general

God's call to all to repent and be saved fits this second type of calling

Responding to this call gives a person all the spiritual benefits

Forgiveness of sins

Reconciliation with God the Father

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives

5. vs. 19a: "his incomparably great power"

God's power and might are evident throughout Scripture

He created all that exists in our world and in the heavens

He parted the Red Sea and left dry ground

He caused the sun to stop in its orbit

He raised Jesus from the dead

"for us who believe"

God uses His power to benefit us

He gives us seasons, rain and sun

He causes all things to work for our good

He forgives our sins and gives us new life in Christ

6. vs. 19b-20: "That power is the same as...He exerted when he raised Christ"

God's view and version of power is not the same as man's

Man uses power militarily, politically, and economically

God's power is seen in an empty tomb

God used His power to raise Christ from the dead
He then “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realm”
Paul is using the term “Christ” here, the Greek for “messiah”
Jesus’s actions before and after the cross prove Him to be the Christ

And Paul notes that “the same...mighty strength” God used then He uses for us now!
That is an encouraging and humbling statement

7. vs. 21: These last three verses describe the superiority of Christ
“far above all rule and authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is invoked”
This list shows that Jesus is superior to any competing person, god, or system

A name was used to show power

Invoking a name was thought to give one the power of the one they named
Ephesian believers would have likely had two names in mind
Rome, and Artemis, the patron goddess of the city
Rome conquered via military power
Jesus’ kingdom comes with peace and spreads peace

“not only in the present age but also in the one to come”

This truth about Christ’s superiority exists in both these times
We are sure about Christ’s supremacy when He returns again
Paul reminds believers that His supremacy exists “in the present age”
That was true for believers in the 1st century
It is true for we believers alive in the 21st century
Worldly powers only have whatever power God allows them to have

8. vs. 22-23: This final couplet of verses describes Christ and His relationship to His church
Jesus’ power is again emphasized
“all things under his feet”
“head over everything for the church”
Only those who willingly submit to His lordship accept His leadership in all things

Paul refers to the church as Christ’s body (1st time he has said this in Ephesians)
The church, His body, shows “the fullness of him who fills everything in
every way”

Faith in and knowledge of Jesus causes the body to grow

This allows us to reveal Christ to the world, and act as His representatives

Application: This passage reminds us of who Jesus is, the Almighty One who is above all. It also reminds us that we are His church, His representatives on the earth, doing His will. We did nothing to create these conditions; the Father revealed them to us through the Spirit and the early church fathers. Our response should involve two things: praise to God for the place we find ourselves spiritually, and constantly striving to live worthy of that calling we have received.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that you chose us from the beginning, and made a way through Jesus for us to be reconciled to You. We ask that Your Spirit will continue to enlighten us and guide us. In Jesus' name, Amen.