

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***God's Desire that We Know Him***

***Ephesians 1:15-23***

**Keywords:** Praise, Thankfulness, Prayer, Supplication, God's Power

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:**

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Why did Christ come born of a virgin? What was the purpose of his first advent?
  - 1. There are many things that we can think of:
    - a. To save sinners.
    - b. So that he might be a perfect high priest, as the one true mediator between God and man.
    - c. To undo the destruction caused by Adam when he fell into sin.
  - 2. But there is something else that is often missed and yet is perhaps the central purpose of Christ's coming—it is to reveal His Father in heaven.
- B. There is an immense chasm that separates us from God.
  - 1. We are mortal and we are sinners, as a result we cannot see the Father.
    - a. 1 Timothy 6:16 “[God] who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see.”
    - b. Exodus 33:18-20 “Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”
  - 2. It is here that Jesus comes into focus. How do we know God and how do we understand Him? It is through Jesus Christ.
    - a. John 1:1, 14-18.
    - b. Colossians 1:15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

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- c. John 14:5-9 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. 7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
3. You see, this is the great work of Jesus...revealing to us His Father.
  - a. A key text is 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
  - b. And there we have it again, Christ is the revealer of God. We see Christ and we see God the Father.
  - c. And the purpose of the sending of Christ was to allow us to be able to see and delight in the glory of God. And the only way we can do so is by coming to Christ that He might be our Lord and Savior.
- C. Now with this in mind let us look at our passage for this morning, Ephesians 1:15-2.
  1. Background.
    - a. Paul has just finished a large section that is describing the great blessings that are possessed by these believers in Ephesians.
    - b. A purpose of this is to show that they are truly blessed of God in every manner. Why?
      - (1) Because there was a real struggle taking place in the Ephesian church between the Jewish believer and the Gentile believers.
      - (2) Gentiles seen as second class believers. Some how they were outside the fulness of the blessings of God.
      - (3) The Jew was one of the elect of God.
      - (4) The Jew was the recipient of all of God's blessings.

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- (5) But in vss 3-14 Paul makes it crystal clear that the Gentiles also possess these great blessings from God. They are not second class, they are truly children of the most High God.
- (6) But there is something else that Paul makes very clear in vss 3-14. It is that salvation is a work of God, not of man.
  - (a) We live and are saved by the mercy and gracious will of God.
  - (b) He is the one who has chosen us unto salvation.
  - (c) He is the one who gave us His Only Son to be our redeemer and our sacrifice for our sin.
  - (d) He is the one who has given us the Holy Spirit to seal us until the end of time.
- (7) And all of this is to the praise of the glory of God. God's gracious, saving work is designed to cause us to be thankful worshipers.
  - c. And a thankful, God-centered heart prays.
- 2. It is at this point that Paul then begins to pray.
  - a. Notice vs 15, "For this reason. . . ." This links us back to those verses.
  - b. Because God is sovereign over all things. Because he has graciously saved these people, Paul finds himself compelled to pray for them, lifting them up to the one who has saved them, their Father in heaven.
  - c. This goes counter to many who will say something to the effect, "Why pray if God is sovereign? Everything is decided." But the only answer to give back is two-fold, we are commanded to pray, and why pray if God is not in control?
- 3. Yet, when Christians pray they often betray a sense of the person of God as well as idols of their own heart by how they pray. What we have before us is the Apostle Paul sharing with us how he comes to God in prayer.
- D. And I want you to see the very essence of this prayer, for it makes my point that God delights in revealing Himself to those who are His, those whom He has saved.
- E. The main point of this prayer is found for us in verse 17.

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1. Notice the word “that” for it speaks to his desire. It is expressing the reason that he is praying.
2. He desires that believers would, by the work of the Holy Spirit, have a deeper, richer, and fuller knowledge of God.
  - a. To know God is our highest calling.
  - b. The better we know Him the better we live before Him.
  - c. Nothing more because frankly, there is nothing greater than that. It is the essence of God’s work among mankind, to reveal Himself and display His glorious nature to us all.
3. But make no mistake. This knowledge is not one that you can come to on your own, it requires the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart to see and to know.

## **II. A Plea To God.**

- A. We have seen that Paul is driven to prayer because of the great truths of vss. 3-14.
  1. But he is also filled with thanksgiving (15) because he has heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  2. But why thank God for this? It is because, as I already have said, salvation is a sovereign act of God.
    - a. Yes these people have believed in Christ and were saved. But why did they believe?
    - b. Because God had chosen them (vs 4). Therefore he thanks God for their faith. This is why we pray to God for the salvation of friends and family, for though we know that they must believe, that unless God works, they will not.
  3. Notice what he is thankful for regarding them.
    - a. First, their faith in Jesus Christ.
    - b. Second, their love for all the saints.
    - c. These are the two essential elements of true salvation. One is declared, but the other is shown. And without both, a person has not been truly saved.
      - (1) 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

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- (2) And as Paul is sitting chained in prison for the sake of the gospel, he is rejoicing for he has heard of these people's profession of faith, and the evidence of that faith, a love for the brethren in Christ.

*Transition*

It is now, after thanksgiving that the point of his prayer is made. He is excited, he is filled with joy, and he has much hope for these believers. So he goes to the Lord and . . . . vss 17b-18.

- B. True knowledge of God cannot be attained by any other way but through the grace of God (17b).
1. Follow me on this verse.
  2. He is asking God, described as the Father of glory to grant them this knowledge.
    - a. He is the Father of glory because true glory originates in and from Him.
    - b. It is a title describing an essential aspect of God. Much like elsewhere when we read that He is the Father of mercies and the Father of light.
  3. But the way that this is going to be accomplished is by the Holy Spirit.
    - a. Now your translation may not not say that it is the Holy Spirit but this is exactly what is being said. This is because the term can refer to either the Holy Spirit or our spirit.
    - b. But it is the Holy Spirit in view here for it makes no sense to see him asking God to have our own spirits reveal to us what we already know.
    - c. It is through the Holy Spirit that we shall be given the ability to know and see and understand and delight in God.
    - d. It is the Spirit who shall give them this revelation.
    - e. "Revelation" means "to lay bare, or uncover." It is not speaking of some new thing that is being revealed, rather it speaks of uncovering divine truth, specifically, about God Himself.
    - f. This is frequently the described as the unique work of the Holy Spirit.

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- g. Cf. 3:14ff.
- 4. And so we have Paul, because of the people's faith in Jesus Christ, asking the Father to grant that the Holy Spirit would reveal to them a true knowledge of God.
- C. What is the effect of growing in a knowledge of God? Two specific things are brought out in vss 18-19.
  - 1. First, he looks to the future, to that time when sin and death are put away forever. That point where eternity swallows up time. And he looks at it from two different aspects.
    - a. The first is that through a deeper, fuller knowledge of God they would have hope.... a hope of their calling.
      - (1) They are like you and I.
      - (2) If your faith is established upon Christ alone for your salvation, then you should have much hope. Why? Because of the rich realities of God.
      - (3) Paul described many of them in vss. 3-14.
      - (4) And yet too often we live not as children of the King, but as people of this world.
      - (5) Paul knows that the only way that this will change is if they understand God. And as they know Him then they shall have much more hope. And as this happens then there shall be a radical effect upon their life and actions.
      - (6) They need to see how much hope comes with being saved.
      - (7) Biblical hope is not something uncertain regarding the outcome, like hoping we win the lottery or get the job. It is a firm conviction, regardless of the appearances, that God will faithfully fulfill His promises in Jesus Christ.
      - (8) Oh! How many of us are saved yet show little hope! God has drawn us to Himself, poured out his blessing and we need to see this.
      - (9) We want things now but God want us to learn to wait on Him. This requires that we find God to be trustworthy. And that is accomplished by knowing God.

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- b. Secondly, Paul desires that they see the richness of God's inheritance.
  - (1) Notice that it is not their inheritance, but God's.
  - (2) what is this inheritance? It is us!
  - (3) The bible speaks of how the Father has given a people for His Son to save. This is described in detail in John 6.
  - (4) We are God's treasured blessing and possession. We are in Christ and he delights in us.
  - (5) But how often do we really see that to be true? Truly we need to pray this prayer ourselves!
  - (6) Only as we know God, by the revelation of the Spirit, can we begin to get a grasp of the great love with which the Father has bestowed upon us.
    - (a) We are His children and He delights in us.
    - (b) He has redeemed us from sin and death through His beloved Son.
    - (c) And He shall gather us to Himself one day. And until that day, He keeps us safe, sealed by the Holy Spirit.
  - (7) And this is what He desires us to see as we grow in a knowledge of Him.
- 2. But these look to the future. And though we need to have these treasured in our hearts and minds, we still live in the present. And so he also prays a second request that is established in the here and now.
  - a. Ephesians 1:19 “. . . what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”
  - b. Ephesians 2:1-2 describes this world as operating under a “power.”
  - c. And this is the struggle that all believers have. This constant pressure by this world to walk in its ways and in its thinking.
  - d. This is exactly what Paul refers to in 4:17.
  - e. And in chapter 6 he makes it clear that the struggle we have is not one of flesh and blood, but one that is spiritual in nature. Against spiritual powers.

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- f. How then can we endure with these pressures?
  - (1) By knowing God. And the better we know Him the better we shall battle against this world and its lies.
  - (2) And part of that knowledge is that Jesus Christ has defeated those powers and the Father has placed us in Him.
- g. God's power is working in us, it is a surpassing power, one that is beyond our comprehension and our ability to grasp.
- h. This is speaking of the truth that because we are in Christ, because we have the Holy Spirit, that we no longer belong to this world and its power and its authority.
- i. We ONCE walked in accordance to it, but no more. Why? Because of the power of God in our lives through Christ.
- j. God's power is available to us and is constantly working in us, though seldom do we see it, for we do not know as we ought.
- k. Notice beloved that he is not asking that they be given power, rather, he is asking God to show them the power that is already working in them.

D. Paul then gives three examples of God's power to help us realize the fulness of what we have at our disposal.

“What would you have chosen to describe God's power? When you think of God's sovereignty, to what does your mind turn? I confess I am inclined to think of God's power in Creation. He speaks, and worlds leap into being. He designs the water molecule, with its remarkable atomic structure that ensures greater density is achieved at four degrees Centigrade than at the freezing point, so that lakes and rivers freeze not from the bottom up but from the top down, providing a blanket of ice with water underneath so that fish can survive. I think of God calculating the mathematics of quarks, with half-lives in billionths of a second. I think of God designing each star and upholding the universe by his powerful word. I think of the pleasure he takes in the woodpecker, with its specially designed tailfeathers that enable it to peck with such force. I marvel at a God who creates emus and cheetahs and the duck-billed platypus. His power extends beyond the limits of our imagination. (Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, p. 178)

- 1. But these are not what Paul points to. Rather, he takes three examples related to God's power in Jesus Christ as the ultimate examples of the glorious power that is working in us.
- 2. First, it is seen in the resurrection.



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- a. Death is the enemy of us all. It is the power that sin has over mankind. Through sin, death has entered this world and it reigns over all— except those who are saved by Christ.
- b. This is the glory of Easter, that death no longer is our enemy that we must fear. The sting is removed, the victory of death is robbed.
- c. God has raised His Son from the dead, accepting His death as payment for our sin.
- d. Who else in all of creation has the power over death?

But God did not merely raised Christ from the dead. Christ's prayer in John 17, just before his crucifixion is that God would restore to Him the glory that he had set aside becoming a man, (have them turn to it, and read vss 1-6).

3. Second, it is seen in God exalting Christ.
  - a. God exalted the Lord to His right hand.
  - b. Christ is not merely in heaven, he is ruling in heaven.
  - c. Notice that He is far above all other powers and authorities. And this was all accomplished through the power of God....the same power working in all who believe in Jesus Christ.
  - d. And this idea is connected intimately to us and our union in Christ...notice 2:1, 4-6.
4. And third, it is seen in God subjection all things under Christ.
  - a. Here we see that not only is Christ exalted above all other authority and power, but also that all things are subjected under him.
  - b. God, the Father, rules the universe through His Son.
  - c. Nothing occurs apart from His will and His purposes. Not a leaf skitters across the ground, not a petal falls from a flower, not a death occurs apart from the sovereign permission of Christ. All things are under his feet.
  - d. This is great power, and it is working in us.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. He ends this with pointing out that Christ, who has all things under His feet is the Head of the Church.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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1. Now think about that for just a moment. If He is the head and we are His body, then all things are under us as well.
2. This is the glory of God. He has done this immense and wonderful work for His name's sake.
3. May we seek the Holy Spirit to reveal this in our hearts.
4. Last week I spoke plainly about what it means to have a faith that saves. I hope that you spent time considering that reality. I pray that if you are uncertain if that is your faith that you seek God in prayer that He might grant it for you to find Jesus Christ your delight and hope.