

“Comprehending His Work in Us”
Ephesians 1:15-19
(Preached at Trinity, January 26, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verse 15** we find Paul praising God for the faithfulness of the Ephesian Christians. They were pressing on in faith and love and their reputation was being spread abroad. Paul says, "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you
2. When Paul heard that they were pressing on in faith and love his heart was filled with gratitude to God which drove him to prayer which is the essence of the remainder of the chapter. His prayer for them was dominated by two aspects of prayer – thanksgiving and intercession.
3. As we continue in this passage we find the content of Paul's prayer of intercession for these believers in Ephesus. First of all he prays for the increase of their experience of the knowledge of God.
Ephesians 1:17 NAU - "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."
4. They already knew Him. Paul is praying that they might know Him more.
 - a. There is no greater blessing; no greater experience than knowing God
Jer. 9:23-24 NAS - "Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD."
 - b. We have an intimate, personal relationship with God
It is a unique particular relationship made possible through Christ
John Owen – "To know the Lord is to know God as he is in Christ *personally*, as he will be unto us in Christ *graciously*, and what he requires of us and accepts in us through the Beloved. To know God as he is revealed in Christ is the highest privilege whereof in this life we can be made partakers, for this is life eternal, that we may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."
 - c. The passion of the Christian is knowing Him more. We pray for ourselves, we pray for one another that we might rise to ever greater heights in the knowledge of God. Christianity is a matter of the heart and the head.
5. The prayer comes in the form of a single request for the enlargement of our knowledge but it has two aspects.
 - a. First, it is a prayer that God would grant them a spirit of wisdom and wisdom in the knowledge of Him. It is a prayer pointing to our relationship with the living God, a prayer to know Him more

- b. The second aspect is a prayer that God would grant them greater knowledge in His redemptive work in their lives.
- That they might have greater insight into the hope of their calling
 - That they might have greater understanding of the riches of their inheritance
 - That they might have greater understanding of the greatness of God's power toward those who believe.
6. May God bless us this morning as we consider these glorious treasures of His grace
- I. That they might have greater insight into the hope of their calling
- Ephesians 1:18 NAU** - "so that you will know what is the hope of His calling"
- A. The work of our redemption is a work of the Trinity
1. The Father is credited with the plan itself. He ordained the objects of salvation, His elect, and He ordained the mission of Christ to redeem them
 2. The Son accomplished all that was required to redeem God's elect people by coming in human form, in accomplishing the demands of the Law by His perfect life, and in suffering the death of the cross to accomplish the atonement for their sins.
 3. The work of the Holy Spirit is the application of the redemption purchased by Christ by bringing God's elect people to faith and repentance.
 4. Theologically, the work of the Spirit in the Bible is called Vocation or calling represented by the Greek word, κλήσις
Ephesians 1:18 NAU - "*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling*"
Ephesians 4:1 NAU - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"
Ephesians 4:4 NAU - "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling*"
2 Timothy 1:9 NAU - "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity"
2 Peter 1:10 KJV - "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"
Romans 8:30 NAU - "and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."
5. It is by Divine calling that sinners are made partakers of the benefits of redemption.
- a. The work of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner translating him from darkness to light is referred to as effectual calling.
 - b. The Holy Spirit brings to effect that which God ordained from eternity.
- B. The work of the Holy Spirit is both an external call and an internal call
1. The external call is the ministry of the Word, particularly the preaching of the Gospel.
 - a. The external call is a declaration of God's gracious promises in Christ.

- b. In the external call through preaching the demands of the Gospel are pressed upon all.
 - c. God calls upon all men to repent. He calls upon all to trust Christ. All are invited to receive God's gracious gift.
Ezekiel 33:11 KJV - "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, "
 - d. We are commanded to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth
 - e. All are held accountable for how they hear and receive the Gospel.
James 1:21-24 NAU - "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."
 - f. Jesus told His hearers
Luke 8:18 NAU - "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."
2. Salvation demands an inner call.
Matthew 22:14 KJV - "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."
- a. Although the Gospel is clear and understandable embracing it demands a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us.
 - a. This inward call is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit where He opens our heart to the Gospel. Through regeneration we are brought from death to life. He convicts us of our sin and convinces us of the excellence of Christ.
 - b. We call this irresistible grace because once the Holy Spirit shines the light of the Gospel into our awakened heart we flee to Christ. By God's almighty power He commands light to shine out of darkness. He opens our blind eyes to see.
- C. Paul is praying that they (and us) might be enlightened to know greater heights of the hope of our calling.
- 1. Only the regenerate, those who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in bringing them to Christ, can fully appreciate this grace Paul refers to as "the hope of our calling."
 - 2. Notice particularly that Paul was praying for them to know the *hope* of His calling. Our future is secure. Death is not something to fear or dread. God's work of grace in us is sure.
The Christian concept of hope (ἐλπίς) is a sure expectation
 - 3. **Verse 18** literally prays that the "eyes of your heart may be enlightened" He's praying that they might experience the fullness of this hope.
 - 4. The Christian can look into eternity with a sense of expectation and anticipation.

5. Paul is praying for these Christians who *had* been called of God and who *had* an unshakable hope to experience more and more the life that is lived in the light of this hope.

II. Paul prays that they might have greater understanding of the riches of their inheritance We can look at this objectively or subjectively. Is Paul talking about the inheritance that Christ has received in the saints or is Paul talking about the inheritance that Christ has provided for the saints—our inheritance in Christ? The answer is, both.

- A. Paul wants us to understand the truth that the Church is Christ's inheritance
 1. He has purchased us so that He might receive us unto Himself
John 14:3 NAU - "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also."
Ephesians 5:25-27 NAU - "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
 2. The Father pledged us to the Son in the eternal transaction
 Jesus said,
John 6:37-39 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
 3. We were the objects upon Jesus' heart when He hung upon the cross. We are His and nothing shall separate us from Him.
 4. Paul wants us to understand how precious we are in the sight of Christ – the "riches of the glory of His inheritance."
- B. It is also true that we are partakers of the glorious inheritance of Christ
 1. We are partakers of the covenant founded in eternity in the eternal counsel of God and purchased and sealed by Christ through the shedding of His own blood
 2. The New Covenant is unconditional because Jesus has satisfied everything
Ephesians 1:19-20 NAU - "*These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*"
 3. In the New Covenant we are God's people, His adopted children who enjoy an infinitely great inheritance.
 - a. He has put his Law within us, written upon our hearts. The Law can no longer condemn us.
 - b. We have the glorious blessing of knowing God. We have a relationship with the living God.
 - c. He has forgiven our sins
Jeremiah 31:34 NAU - "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

4. Paul wants us to understand the “riches of the glory” of our inheritance; to fully experience the splendor of what we possess in Christ.

III. Paul prays that they might have greater understanding of the greatness of God’s power toward those who believe.

- A. Christians often fail to grasp the greatness of the power of God working in us
 1. In describing the greatness of God’s power in us Paul uses an interesting word translated “surpassing” - ὑπερβάλλω. βάλλω means “to throw.” ὑπέρ means above and beyond or exceedingly. Literally it implies to throw beyond. It stresses something above and beyond, exceedingly great, extraordinary, extreme. This describes the extent of God’s mighty power at work in us.
But Paul then attaches it to the word μέγεθος which means “greatness.” In other words Paul wants us to comprehend what is the extraordinarily mighty greatness of God’s power which He demonstrated in our salvation.
 2. God raised us from the dead by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.
 - a. We marvel at Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. We marvel that Lazarus had already begun to decay.
John 11:39 NAU - "Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."
The KJV puts it well – “he stinketh.”
 - b. We were spiritually dead. There was a stench in us that rose up to the nostrils of God; an abominable smell.
But God raised us from the dead. Paul stresses this in **Chapter 2 Ephesians 2:1 NAU** - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins"
 3. This power is at work in us. We are presently enjoying the power of the resurrection. We have been raised with Christ.
Romans 6:4 NAU - "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."
Colossians 2:12-13 NAU - "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,"
- B. Being raised with Christ has a wonderful effect upon our lives
 1. The Christian life is a testimony to God’s mighty power in us
1 Thessalonians 1:5 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"

Ephesians 1:19-20 NAU - "*These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places**"

2. We are living by the power of the Holy Spirit in us – the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Ephesians 2:5-6 NAU - "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus"

3. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places

Conclusion:

1. Salvation is far more than someone merely calling himself a Christian. It is far more than merely joining a church. It is far more than a person deciding to clean up his life and become a moral person.
No! It is a supernatural change. It is nothing short of a miracle.
2. The definition of a miracle is something that transcends the natural; something that is contrary to the natural course. It is God's working by direct agency without the use of second causes or through the use of means.
Salvation surely falls into this category. Although God uses the preaching of the Gospel in our salvation our regeneration is by His work alone.
Paul is praying that these Ephesian Christians might fully understand "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."
3. And our salvation is not simply about avoiding hell on the Day of Judgment. It is a present reality. It is a mighty working of God's power in us today!
4. Does this amaze you? Your salvation is nothing short of miraculous. It was not of your doing but of His mighty power in you.
Your life in Christ is nothing short of miraculous. He is working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. You are a partaker of the life of Christ.