

“Having Heard of Your Faith and Love”  
Ephesians 1:15-16  
(Preached at Trinity, January 5, 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. Paul is writing this letter to Christians. He refers to them in **Verse 1** as the faithful saints. They are God's elect people chosen before the foundation of the world.
2. In **Verse 3** Paul announced the glorious spiritual blessings God has planned for His elect people.  
**Ephesians 1:3 NAU** - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ"
3. He spends the next 11 verses writing about these blessings. I pointed out that **Verses 3-14** are one single sentence in the Greek. He speaks of election and adoption. He speaks of redemption and forgiveness of sin. He speaks of Divine illumination and of our glorious inheritance and of the Holy Spirit who is the down payment of our inheritance.
4. Now having concluded his discussion of these wonderful spiritual blessings he turns his attention back to the saints who possess them.  
**Ephesians 1:15-16 NAU** - " For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers"
5. **Verse 16** leads the passage. Paul is filled with thanksgiving that Gentiles and Jews have been brought together as co-heirs in Christ. He is filled with great gratitude that God is saving His people. He's thankful for these fellow believers in Christ. This is an important part of Christianity. Christians are filled with gratitude not only because of their own salvation, but also rejoice because others are being saved. It brings us great joy to see others come to faith and to press on in holiness. Paul prays continually for his fellow believers. He begins his prayer in **Verse 17** and continues to the end of the chapter.
6. This leads us to ask a question. Paul was filled with joy and was constantly thanking God for these Ephesian Christians. The question is, how did he know they were Christians? How do we know we are Christians?  
In **Verse 15** he tells us that he has heard certain things about them. They have a reputation.  
He says there are two primary things that mark them.
  - A. There are many things that characterize the life of a Christian. The book of 1 John describes many of them. But Paul says here that there are two primary characteristics that identify true Christian conversion that overshadow all others.
  - B. No matter what else we may say about ourselves if we fail in these two marks we fail the test.
7. Paul says he has heard of their faith and of their love. These two marks identify the Christian more than any other. If you want to know if you are a Christian examine your faith and love. These two marks assure our hearts more than any other.

**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU** - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of *you* in our prayers; <sup>3</sup> constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,"

8. This morning I want to try to set these two Christian traits before you. I pray God might give us great clarity here.
- I. First, Paul says he had heard of their faith – they possessed genuine saving faith
- A. Genuine faith is has a focus upon Christ. Notice Paul says,  
**Ephesians 1:15 NAU** - "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus"
1. Saving Faith is not just a belief in God
    - a. When you ask many people why they believe they are going to heaven they respond, "I believe in God"
    - b. There are few true atheists – God has manifested Himself to all men and men suppress the truth, yet few are able to suppress it entirely  
 There are far more practical atheists – they live as though God does not exist.
    - c. Merely believing in God is not saving faith  
**James 2:19 KJV** – "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."
  2. Saving faith is not just believing that we are saved
    - a. Most people believe they are right with God
    - b. On the Day of Judgment great multitudes will stand before Christ fully expecting to be received into heaven only to find themselves condemned  
**Matthew 7:21-23 NAS** - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
  3. Saving faith is not joining a religion
    - a. Human beings are naturally religious – but they also naturally hate God.
    - b. The world is full of Christless religions, even those who call themselves Christian
  4. Saving faith has Christ at the center of all things
    - a. The life of a Christian revolves around Christ. Everything is in Christ. He controls everything.
    - b. Look at the end of **Verse 23**  
**Eph 1:22-23** - "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

5. Saving faith puts Christ at the center of our hope of salvation
  - a. You must believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins—that He lived a perfect life fulfilling the Law’s demands, and that He died on the cross as our substitute.
  - b. You confess your own wicked rebellion against God and you must trust Christ’s death upon the cross as the full payment for your sin.
  - c. You must confess that there is nothing you can do to merit God’s favor.
  - d. You must confess your desire for Christ’s rule over every area of your life

B. Notice Paul’s words again:

**Ephesians 1:15 NAU** - "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus"

1. Saving faith puts us in submission to Christ – He is our Lord and Master
2. The only way to receive Jesus as Savior is to receive Him as Lord
3. Paul often described lordship as an essential element of the Gospel.  
**Romans 10:9 NAU** – “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;”  
**2 Corinthians 4:5 NAU** – “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.”
4. Many people want to cling to the hope of salvation without Lordship. Parents hold to this hope for their children, spouses for their mates, and on and on – even when there is no submission to Christ. The truth is no Lordship, no salvation.

C. Their faith was observable – they had a reputation

1. Paul had led many of these to Christ. How is it that he says he had “heard” of their faith? He is saying he has heard of their endurance; of their progress in the faith. They were continuing in the faith  
**Romans 1:8 NAU** - "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."
2. Saving faith is an observable reality. The person who has Christ at the center of all things has a life that is radically different from everyone else in the world.
3. And notice that he is thanking God for their faith and love clearly marking these things as being not from ourselves but from the hand of God.

II. Second, Paul says he had heard of their love

**Ephesians 1:15 NAU** - "and your love for all the saints"

A. Saving faith produces a heart for others in the faith

1. Paul was demonstrating this reality in His own life  
In **Verse 16** he expresses how grateful he was that they were pressing on in the faith and how he prayed for them continually. This is because he loved them.
2. Faith and love are inseparable.  
Love is impossible without faith. Faith cannot exist in the absence of love.  
**1 Corinthians 13:2 NAU** - "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."

3. Without love our religion is empty and without substance
    - a. Outward action without love is nothing
    - b. Every religious act becomes worthless without love. You could give away all of your possessions for the care of the poor. You could offer yourself as a martyr. Without love it is nothing.  
**1 Corinthians 13:3 NAU** - "And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."
- B. Love is the chief distinguishing mark of Christianity.
1. We are not justified by love, but love is the fruit of true saving faith.
    - a. By nature we hate one another  
**Titus 3:3 NAU** - "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."
    - b. When Paul heard that these Christians in Ephesus were loving one another he knew something must have happened to them. If a man loves the saints he must have a new nature.
  2. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament
    - Jesus said:  
**John 13:35 NAU** - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
    - John wrote:  
**1 John 2:9-11 NAU** - "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. <sup>10</sup> The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. <sup>11</sup> But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."  
**1 John 3:14 NAU** - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."
    - This was Paul's continual teaching  
**Romans 13:10 NAU** - "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the law*."  
**Galatians 5:14 NAU** - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."  
**Galatians 5:22 NAU** - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love"  
**Romans 12:10 NAU** - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;  
**1 Thessalonians 4:9 NAU** – "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;"
  3. In other words, love is what we are. It marks us, defines us. We love one another. We like being with one another. We enjoy the same things. We love the same Lord. We are adopted into the same family.

**1 John 5:1 NAS** - "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him."

- C. Paul makes a particular statement about our love here  
**Ephesians 1:15 NAU** - "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists among you and your love for all the saints,*"
1. There is a universal element to our love  
 We have a unique love for all of our Christian brothers and sisters.  
**Galatians 6:10 NAU** – “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”
    - a. This love is made possible by our unique union with Christ.  
**Romans 12:5** – “so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”  
NAS **1 John 4:20** – “If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”
    - b. We have earthly families but these relationships are not as great as our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
  2. We love one another regardless of race, wealth, education.
  3. We have a particular closeness to those within our own particular local church. We are in a covenant relationship together. We are laboring with particular goals in mind  
 But while we have a particular closeness to those within our own particular local church we must love all of the saints
  4. We must pray for all of God’s people throughout the world.  
 We must pray for our brothers and sisters in other churches and guard our hearts against envy or jealousy.

#### Conclusion:

1. We have experienced the infinite love of Christ. It is free and boundless. This love has had a huge impact upon our lives.  
 Paul wrote to the Corinthians:  
**2 Corinthians 5:14** – “For the love of Christ controls us”  
 συνέχω – It means “to hold fast.” It can carry the meaning “to seize”  
 The love of Christ has gripped our hearts.  
 We love Jesus and we love all others who love Jesus.
2. This is unique to Christianity. We love one another.  
 MacArthur – “When God’s people are committed to pure doctrine and pure living, they are bonded together in love—as individuals and as congregations—even when separated by great distances and by great differences in culture and circumstances.”