

## EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

Message #6

Ephesians 1:15-23

**The ultimate biblical goal for every believer in this Grace Age is to know God and to know His Word and its doctrines at a deep level (I Cor. 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-6:3).** Every believer in Jesus Christ has the potential and the privilege of growing deep in their knowledge of God and in their relationship with God.

All of us have probably run across some people who have the idea in their minds that they don't want to get too deep with the Bible. They want it to warm their hearts but not deeply touch their minds. They take the position that they are just not a student, as if God will accept this excuse for not being serious about His Word. These kinds of people need a good dose of this text in Ephesians because it is quite obvious that **the will of God and the prayer of Paul was that God's people would grow deep in their knowledge of God's Word and not be shallow theological simpletons.**

Let me ask a question. Do you believe God is able to make you wise in understanding His Word? Do you think that God is able to make you a very serious student of God's Word? Do you believe it is beyond God's ability to develop you to the point where you are very skilled in understanding the doctrines of God and the books of the Bible? If your life is yielded to the Holy Spirit don't you think the Holy Spirit will create a serious appetite in your soul so that you will crave deep things?

**THE APOSTLE PAUL THANKS GOD FOR THE BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH AND HE PRAYS THAT THEY WILL HAVE DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF HOW RICH THEY ARE IN GRACE.**

Back in the late 1800's, C.I. Scofield came up with twenty-six theological words of Scripture that he based on Paul's letter to Timothy which stressed that he was to "retain the standard of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13). Dr. Scofield said understanding certain theological words was a key to understanding sound doctrine. His words were 1) adoption, 2) advocacy, 3) assurance, 4) atonement, 5) Church, 6) conversion, 7) Death, 8) election, 9) eternal or everlasting, 10) faith-trust-belief, 11) flesh, 12) old man, 13) forgiveness, 14) grace, 15) imputation, 16) justification, 17) kingdom, 18) propitiation, 19) reconciliation, 20) redemption, 21) repentance, 22) righteous-righteousness, 23) salvation, 24) sanctification, 25) sin, 26) world.

Now if you ask most believers to give an accurate precise definition of those words you will discover most cannot. However, that is exactly the kind of thing Paul was after in this section of Scripture. In fact, he prayed for this:

There are two parts to this prayer:

**PRAYER PART #1** – Paul thanks God in his prayers for the Ephesians. **1:15-16a**

Notice how **verse 15** begins “for this reason” (δία τουτο). On account of the fact that they have received the amazing grace package work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Paul could continually thank God. In view of the fact that God had given these believers every spiritual blessing in Christ and the fact that they had been sealed as the property of God by the Holy Spirit, Paul could thank God.

When Paul says that he does not “cease” what he means is that he prayed this thanksgiving prayer many, many times. The specific word Paul uses for “prayer” (προσευχουμαι) is one that indicates Paul continually and reverently moved toward God in prayer for the Ephesians. Paul did not cease from specifically praying and making mention of these Ephesians by name. There were two specific reasons for which Paul could thank God:

**(Reason #1)** - Paul could thank God for their faith in the Lord Jesus. **1:15a**

Now the Greek construction specifically says “the faith in the Lord Jesus.” So this is not “a faith system”; this is “the one and only faith system that will save a sinner.” These Ephesians fully believed that grace saved them; not works and not merit. They could only be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The people of this church continually had faith that Jesus Christ was their only Savior. They were living in a city that taught them to believe in a false deity (Artemis) and do the works of that false religious system.

Every now and then you will hear some politician and even religious leader say all religions are good. All religions except one will put people into hell. Only Jesus Christ can save sinners. Paul would not thank God for people who believed lies, but he would thank God for those who believed in Jesus Christ.

**(Reason #2)** - Paul could thank God for their love for all the brothers. **1:15b**

One commentator said not only had Paul heard about the Ephesians “vertical relationship” with God, but also their “horizontal relationship” with God’s people.

The word used for “love” is agape. This particular love is not the emotional or irrational love; this is the calculated love that seeks to do what is best for another person. The specific target of the love was “the saints,” specifically those in the church of Ephesus. That is very interesting because Paul is thanking God that they demonstrate this love for the saints, not for the world. They demonstrated the highest kind of love to “all” the saints that were in Ephesus who had believed in Jesus Christ.

By the way, as S. Lewis Johnson said this kind of love can be very harsh. This is the same kind of love that God has for us when he convicts us of our sin or chastises us for it. There is so much talk about love and so little understanding of what love actually is.

Now in this context there is something to see about this love because many churches promote the idea that God is loving and not interested in deep doctrine or teaching. This kind of love is always in the context of truth and this context drives home the fact that this kind of love is in the context of deep knowledge of the Word and doctrines of God. Paul would not thank God for a bunch of shallow, spiritual duds who were not interested in deep truth.

**PRAYER PART #2** – Paul petitions God specifically for the Ephesians. **1:16b-23**

**Paul’s desire and prayer for the Ephesians is that their relationship with God would deepen to the point that they would truly understand and know how rich they were in experiencing God’s sovereign grace.**

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer made an interesting observation when he said this world is completely satisfied with the idea of “know thyself.” But the believer in Jesus Christ realizes there is no satisfaction in knowing ourselves, but in knowing God (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 49).

Now what Paul prays here is significant and the truth of the matter is if you look at most professing believers in churches all over this world this prayer has not been answered, because when it comes to accurate deep biblical and theological knowledge, most do not have it and don’t even care if they ever have it.

**There is actually one main prayer request that Paul prays: His request is that God the Father would permit these believers to have deep knowledge and insight of Him.**

Notice carefully from **verse 17** that the prayer is for “deep knowledge (επιγνωσει) **of Him.**” This knowledge level is way beyond the surface. This is a very specific kind of deep knowledge of God and the doctrines connected to God. Paul’s prayer is not that they have deep knowledge of philosophy, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, history, science or government. **Paul prays that they will have deep knowledge of God and His Word.** At the moment of salvation every believer receives the Holy Spirit, but not every believer grows to a deep knowledge and insight of God and His Word.

Also notice from **verse 17** that it is God the Father who must authorize the answer to this prayer. The glorious Father must give the believers a depth level of understanding or they will not have it. We don’t need new prophets or new revelation; what we need is for God to give us deep knowledge of what He has already revealed. The word “wisdom” (σοφια) means we need to perceive accurately the truth that God has “revealed” or “unveiled” (αποκαλυψεως) in His Word in “deep knowledge” (επιγνωσκω) of Him.

In fact, **verse 18** says we must have the “eyes of our hearts enlightened.” So this is not simply an academic pursuit of the mind. God must open our hearts and minds to want a deep understanding of His Word. This becomes a matter of the heart. Hearts and minds are blinded by Satan (II Cor. 4:3-4), but God has the power to change one’s mind and heart so he senses the great need to grow deep in the Word of God.

I agree with Dr. S. Lewis Johnson who said here is the cure and answer to most neuroses found in the world. People have all kinds of emotional problems. People have them at a young age, a middle age and an older age. The solution to most of these problems of life lies in a lack of a relationship with and knowledge about God.

There are three purposes for this prayer:

**Purpose #1** - That the believer would know what is the hope of His calling . **1:18b**

This is important. Paul does not pray that you would simply know you are saved. Paul does not pray that you would simply know you are bound for heaven. Sometimes you will hear people say well the most important thing is that we know we are saved. Apparently Paul did not believe that. **Paul prays that God's people will realize the hope they have because of God's elective grace in calling them into salvation.**

What is the "hope of His calling?" What is Paul praying about here? The specific calling to which Paul is referring is God's elective grace that gives us every spiritual blessing. H.C.G. Moule said in the late 1800's that "His calling" is "the voice of Divine grace prevailing upon the will" (*Studies in Ephesians*, p. 59).

God chose us, redeemed us, predestined us and adopted us into His family. We are fully accepted by Him because of Jesus Christ. Paul says I am praying that you will know these things at a deep level and rejoice in these things. You are short changing your depth level if you don't begin to grasp this point of God's sovereign calling.

**Purpose #2** - That the believer would know what is the glorious inheritance in the saints.  
**1:18c**

We already know from **verse 11** that our inheritance is obtained in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we have a rich eternal inheritance and Paul prays that we will come to a deep level of understanding about it.

**Purpose #3** - That the believer would know what is the surpassing greatness of God's power .  
**1:19**

There are three different nouns used to describe God's power: "power" (δυναμις)- power and ability at a performance level; "strength"(κρατους)- strong at a ruling level and "might"(ισχυους)- strong at a prevailing level. Now this power and strength and might are only connected to "us who believe." **There is not an unbeliever anywhere in this world who can tap into the power of God.**

Paul wants us to have a deep knowledge of the greatness of God's energizing power that potentially exists in every one of us who has believed. He wants us to realize the tremendous power that we have because of our relationship with God. Paul wants us to have an understanding of God's tremendous power that saved us. Everything about grace, everything about our faith is due to the surpassing greatness of God's power.

As one writer said “We must never underestimate the power of God that resides in the believer when we need help in temptation, power in prayer, boldness in witnessing or courage to do what is just and right. This is not a power at our disposal; it is for God to exercise to accomplish his will.”

Now the power that Paul specifically wants us to understand is critical. There is a chronological breakdown of the power of God that was wrought in Jesus Christ. The purpose of Paul listing these stupendous things is to get us to stand in awe of the same kind of power that God has linked us to. There are five power realities revealed here:

**(Power Reality #1)** - The power in us is the same power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead . **1:20a**

Jesus Christ was not raised from a near-death experience. He was raised from the dead. The power that raised Christ physically when He was dead, saved us spiritually when we were dead (2:1). The power of life.

**(Power Reality #2)** - The power in us is the same power of God that seated Jesus Christ at God’s right hand. **1:20b**

We too are already seated in the heavenlies (2:6). The power of position.

**(Power Reality #3)** - The power in us is the same power of God that made Jesus’ name great. **1:21**

Oh that we would know the depths of the theology that it is our connection to Jesus Christ that makes us great. The name that is above every other name is the name Jesus. The power of prominence. Jesus Christ has a prominence far above all angelic and human forces no matter how prominent they may be. You and I have a prominence to us as well. Our greatness does not lie in ourselves; it lies in our relationship with the One whose name is above everything.

**(Power Reality #4)** - This is the same power of God that subjected everything to Jesus Christ. **1:22a**

Jesus Christ is elevated by God over everything and everyone. God would have us realize that we are the victors in this world. One day we will reign with Jesus Christ and rule this world.

**(Power Reality #5)** - This is the same power of God that made Jesus Christ head of the church . **1:22-23**

Paul is praying that the believer will have a deep knowledge of the fact that a measure of the same kind of power that has done things for Jesus Christ has done them also for you. That same power is now in you. Jesus Christ fills all in all which means He is the cause of everything and everyone who has experienced His grace.

Now carefully look at **verse 23**. The church is the body of Jesus Christ and every believer is part of that which fills up that body. We are the fulfillment of the body of Jesus Christ. It is no coincidence that you are saved and that you are in the body of Jesus Christ.

The Church is Christ's body and He fills it with His blessings. There is tremendous power to be gained at church and if you don't go, you will never realize the power you have.

By the way, it is theologically important to note that the church was not in existence until the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. Do you realize how rich you are to live in this Church Age?

Do you realize the magnitude of this prayer? God wants you and me to have a deep understanding of the wealth He has given us.

The problems we have in business, or in relationships, or in society, or with our children begin to fade out when we realize the wealth we have in Jesus Christ.

Now how is it that you get to know someone at a deep level? You have to learn as much as you can about the person and you have to spend time with the person.

How is it that you can get to know God at a deep level? You will have to spend time getting to know God's Word and you will have to spend time with God. You will need to try to understand all 66 books of the Bible and all the doctrines of the faith and along the way you will need to spend time with God.