

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
"The Glory of the Church"
(Ephesians 1:15-22)

OUTLINE

- (1) What Hope! (v15-18a)
- (2) What Wealth! (v18b)
- (3) What Power! (v19-23)

INTRODUCTION

We have begun the study concerning the doctrine of the church from Ephesians 1:1-14. The Church is God's people.

A people (1) Chosen by the Father (v1-4), (2) Purchased by the Son (v5-9) and (3) Sealed by the Holy Spirit (v10-14).

We opened up the text to see what the church is biblically speaking. We saw firstly, the church *a privileged people separated from sin unto holiness* (v1-4) - this is what it means to be "Chosen by the Father".

Secondly, the church is *a purchased people in intimate fellowship with the living and true God* (v5-9) - this is what we mean when we say "Purchased by the Son".

And thirdly, the church is *a protected people destined for heaven* (v10-14) - this is what we mean when we say "Sealed by the Holy Spirit".

We recollect that a church needs to understand from the very beginning what it is so that it can know what direction it should be going.¹ The truth is that God is at work in this world, through His church. God's purpose is fulfilled through His church. The church is a reflection of His Creator, pointing men and women to the living and true God. This is the glory of the church, that the world by the witness of the church may know God.

Today, we continue from verses 15-23 of Ephesians chapter 1 which is the Apostle Paul's prayer for the church that God would give the saints a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of Him.

And to do so, the church needs to know three essentials that God had given them and increase in their understanding of them as given in the content of Paul's prayer. These thoughts can be gleaned from verse 18-19a by the interrogative pronoun "what". Pick them up as I read to you verses 18-19a.

Ephesians 1:18-19a *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened (opened, illumined, you may see the light); that ye may know **what is** the hope of his calling, and **what** the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 **And what is** the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.*

¹ John MacArthur, The Master's Plan for the Church, Moody, 2008, 134.

In verses 18-19, he elaborates what that means, namely, that God wants us to know the three essentials about our salvation that will give us assurance about our high calling as God's people. They will give us the hope and eternal perspective that we need to be His witnesses. This is the glory of the church.²

18 *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know these three essentials.*

Our first thought is "what hope!" taken from verse 18a.

(1) What Hope! (v18a)

- *that ye may know what is the hope of his calling*

In Scripture, "hope" always speak of something future, a confident expectation of the future. The "hope of His calling" is that a day is coming when all the saints will see Him and be with Him in Glory.³ This is the hope of His calling.

When God calls us, He says to us through His Son Jesus Christ, Matthew 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

This is how He calls us to salvation, there was a time when the gospel was preached and the Holy Spirit touched our hearts. We said, "Yes, I repent of my sins and believe on Christ." Then we are saved and redeemed. That is the hope – to be saved and to be in Heaven with Him for all eternity.⁴

Between the time we are saved and the journey finally reaching heaven, Paul wants the saints in Ephesus to be constantly renewed in this hope.

How can this hope be renewed till the day we reached heaven? Paul prayed this prayer that the saints may know God's Word. It is by the Word of God that the hope of the saints be not waned but strengthened.

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,

Paul prays to the Father that God's people may spend time to know the hope of His calling when the Holy Spirit would illumine the eyes of their heart that it may be able to value and see eternal perspectives of life. Trouble is that after we are saved, we stop growing because we have not been spending time to seek to renew the hope of our salvation.

One pastor illustrated it so well, "When you buy a new gadget, it comes with an owner's manual that tells you how to operate it. Many of us skim the manual quickly or never bother to read it at all. That's too tedious, and besides, we think

² Steven J. Cole, What God Wants You to Know, 2007, 1.

³ D.A. Waite, Ephesians – Preaching Verse by Verse, The Bible for Today, 2002, 31.

⁴ Ibid.

that we're smart enough to figure this out without reading the directions. But then we can't figure out why the product does not work right! Maybe we need to go back and read the manual.

God has given us His Word as the manual for our salvation. It tells all we need to know to walk with God and live wisely in the light of eternity. But, as we do with so many owner's manual, we read it superficially or hardly at all and then wonder why the Christian life isn't working the way it's supposed to. We need to go back and read the manual carefully, asking God to give us His wisdom and understanding."⁵

We have begun in our prayer meeting to study from the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon tells us how meaningless it is for the child of God to be indulged in the pleasures of world.

If we are not careful and do not spend time to renew the hope of our calling, we will not set our affections on heavenly things but on the things of the world.

Paul is saying to the saints at Ephesus, verse 15, I have heard of the good report of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints and verse 16, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. But do not stop there.

This Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul when he was in prison in Rome, this is called a prison epistle together with Philippians, Colossians, Philemon round about 62-63 A.D. And thirty years later in 95-98 A.D., when the Apostle John was asked by Jesus to make an assessment of this church at Ephesus in the Book of Revelation, John wrote:

Revelation 2:2-4, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience...and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted... Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Something has happened that has caused the Ephesian Christians to lose their first love. Their love has grown cold. This describes a deliberate and responsible action, for the word means "to quit or forsake". The church lost its original spiritual vitality. Paul is sounding the alarm early when all is still well that the saints might make effort to make progress in their spiritual life by renewing the hope of their calling.

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

So, we are called to pray for others and for yourself that God will enlighten the eyes of your heart through His Word so that you will know what is the hope of

⁵ Steven J. Cole, What God Wants You to Know, 2007, 1.

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His calling.⁶ We are reminded we must to be true to our calling as “saint” – “a holy people”. A people called out of the world, of our fallen self, of sin. And we are to demonstrate this calling by our holiness.

There is a day coming when the saints will have to give an account of our life before God.

1 Corinthians 3:13-17 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

This is the first thought, we renew the hope of His calling – What hope!

Secondly, “what wealth!”

(2) What Wealth! (v18b)

- and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

It is Paul’s prayer that we would come to know all of the spiritual blessings that God has given us and appropriate them for our spiritual progress. That the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened in order that we may come to know the character of our inheritance, the inheritance which God is preparing for us. That we are as Peter puts in 2 Peter 2:9, a “*peculiar people*” it means “*a people for God’s own possession*” and that a day is coming soon when Christ will return and gather His possession. This is the thought given in verses 23-23 that the church is the body of Christ we mentioned in lesson 1.

We have not only believed but we have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. A day is coming when God will gather His saints through the ages. We could be that generation when Christ will return to gather His church.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall*

⁶ Ibid., 5.

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be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We need to be renewed spiritually to know our inheritance instead of building an earthly inheritance.

The world's tallest man-made structure is the 829.8 m (2,722 ft) tall Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The building gained the official title of "Tallest Building in the World" at its opening on January 4, 2010.⁷ The world spends its time and energy building for the comfort of this world but as saints, our inheritance is in the Lord, in the souls of the people around us and our own souls, this should be the priority and the focus of our life.

I urge you to come for prayer meeting, this is the inheritance of the saints where we build with God an eternal kingdom.

This was how Abraham lived in the light of his eternal inheritance looking for a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

How do you measure your wealth? Is it by your material possessions or is it by your devotion towards the building of the kingdom of God?

The third thought, "What power!"

(3) What power! (v19-23)

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Verses 19-23 are a description of what God has done through Christ. We are presented with the vision of the Resurrection (v19b, 20a), Exaltation (v20b, 21)

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tallest_buildings_and_structures_in_the_world

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and Dominion of Christ (v22-23). These verses constitute the climax of Prayer, and the very life-breath of our faith, and love and hope.⁸

Notice the five verbs of completed action: “He wrought in Christ”; “He raised Him from the dead”; “He seated Him in heaven”, “He put all things under Him”, and “He gave Him to the Church.”⁹

This is the power that overcame death and sin. This is the power that released us from the bondage of sin so that we can say, “I am freed from the bondage to sin. I can say “no” to sin by the power of the Holy Spirit that is in me.”

God wants us to appropriate this power over temptation to overcome sin, the world and the fallen self.

Why is it that so many Christians are defeated by sin? Some are enslaved by pornography, some to alcohol and drugs. Some have their marriage ruin because of anger and verbal abuse. God wants us to bear the Spirit’s fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

CONCLUSION

What hope (v15-18a), what wealth (v18b), and what power (v19-23). May the Lord help us to appropriate it for our lives!

⁸ W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, Kregel, 1976, 186.

⁹ *Ibid.*