

Show Us the Church Triumphant – *Ephesians 1:15-23*

Introduction – In verses 3-14, Paul blessed God for His amazing plan, provision, and possession of the church, His inheritance and our salvation in Christ. In the second half of this chapter, he prays for the church to comprehend all that is already theirs in Christ Jesus. Like salvation itself, this understanding will take the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Giving Thanks for Faith and Love (vv15-16) – Paul does not just give thanks, He *“therefore”* gives thanks. He is thankful for the saints, but that is not his point here. Rather, He is thankful to God that there are saints, that the Ephesian church exists, for this is the very manifestation of what he has been proclaiming God has done and is doing. The plan, the provision, and the possession is revealed and all to the praise of God’s gracious glory – and so he does not cease to give thanks. Their faith in Christ is something to thank God for – not the Ephesians; it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). Their love for one another is something to thank God for, not the Ephesians; it is the gift of God (Gal 5:22).

Thanking God for Signs of His Gracious Glory – Maybe you live too much in Christian circles. We often forget what a miracle it is that we believe or that we live according to that faith with love for God and one another. But any time spent among unbelievers should quickly remind us of how ridiculous the gospel, which we hold as absolutely true and central to everything else in the world, sounds and seems to them. And it doesn’t take long in Christian circles to realize how impossible it is that there is any love among us outside of the miraculous work of Christ in us to cause us to be a people who walk in love towards one another. The Ephesian Christians were imperfect, just like us – all of Ephesians 4-6 will attest to the same struggles in that church that exist in ours. Therefore, God must reveal to us all that He has for us in His gracious glory. Hence, Paul prays for them – as should we for one another.

Prayers for Powerful Knowledge (vv16b-18) – Paul has shared amazing insights into the plan of God for His entire creation. Now he prays that God would give them (believers in Christ, mind you, already filled with the Holy Spirit) *“the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...”* Notice all of the *“knowledge”* words. There are three things Paul prays that we would really “get” in ways that will radically change the way we live from the inside out.

Hope of Your Calling – You were no afterthought in the plans of God for creation. Eons before we existed, He chose us. And then He loved us, predestined us, blessed us, lavished grace upon us, sealed us, and on and on. And to what end? That we should be *“holy and without blame”* (Eph 1:4), that we would be *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom 8:29), and that this hope would be used by Him to accomplish just that (1 John 3:1-3).

His Glorious Inheritance in Us – Paul wants us to grasp the fact that when this happens, Christ also is getting something – we are His inheritance. In other places we see that we are His bride (5:25) and that in this union, we reign with Christ in the heavenlies (2:6). He is pleased that you are “in Christ,” He is pleased with where He is taking you, and He is pleased to use His great power which guarantees His triumph in and through you.

Prayers for Knowledge of that Power (vv19-23) – Paul also prays that we would know *“what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...”* and now there are all kinds of *“power”* words to express all that has been given to us. This is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at God’s right hand. This power has set Christ “far above” all current and future authorities. That power exists now in the life of His body, for He is the fullness of the body *“who fills all in all.”*

Power Given – This is not a prayer for power. It is a prayer for knowledge of power already given. The new birth grants every believer everything in Christ (2 Pet 1:3). It is a prayer for enlightenment for us to unleash that power as the church community, the body and bride of Christ, to the rest of the world. We don’t need power to evangelize; the gospel is that power (Rom 1:16). We don’t need power to endure suffering; that power exists in these earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7). We don’t need additional power to obey God; that power is at work in us (Phil 2:12-13). But notice, we all struggle with these things, just as did the Ephesians – that is why Paul is writing to them (and why this letter quickly circulated to all the churches). What we do need is this prayer to be answered – what we do need is the fresh revival of this knowledge that can only be given by the Holy Spirit.

The Prayer and Flow of Covenant Renewal, Reformation and Revival – Paul is praying what we are re-enacting every Lord’s Day service: the renewal of the covenant of God and His people. The Church desperately needs to know these truths again so that we would return to Christ, the Son of the supreme and all sovereign God, to salvation by grace alone through faith alone, and to a powerful hope for the gospel to flourish in our lives and over the world. In the short twenty-year history of this local body, this is the revival that sparked the birth and growth of this church – and yet we pray for more. Much more.