

Ephesians 1:15-19

James Heffington / General

Introduction

1. Tennyson on one occasion spent a holiday with a Methodist family in a Lincolnshire village. On his arrival, he asked his hostess if she had any news for him. 'Why, Mr. Tennyson,' she replied, 'there's only one piece of news that I know—Christ died for all men.' Well,' responded the poet, 'that's old news, and good news, and new news.'

2. This word NEWS is a very interesting one, and is composed of the initial letters of the four main points of the compass—North, East, West, South. News is gathered from all quarters, but the best of all news comes, not from around us, but from above us.

3. Paul had heard the news! These believers, sealed in the Holy Spirit and assured of salvation were growing in their walk with Christ. They were living their life in faith and love, the two foremost graces of the Christian life. This encouraged and inspired him; it filled his heart with joy.

4. Paul was a man of prayer and certainly these believers were regularly a part of his prayer life but this good report further motivated him to

They received news from a hole

give thanks and **pray three things in particular for them.**

5. **But these three requests came under the umbrella of a preamble (a preliminary or preparatory statement; an introduction.)** This statement is a foundational one...if these Christians are going to have what Paul prays for them in verses 18-20 then they must first have an answer for what he prays in verse 17.

6. **Paul prayed that...**

7. **God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation** — One commentator said Paul was here praying for God to “bestow on these Gentile converts an enlarged capacity of grace and make them rise to the full dignity of their high calling.” Simpson, E. K., & Bruce, F. F. (1957). *The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (p. 38). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

8. Paul desired that they have an increasing discernment...To become men and women of great understanding concerning the things of God.

9. **This is not book knowledge or experiential knowledge but rather heart knowledge. This is revelation unto relationship. Sometimes the heart has a sounder perception than the head.**

10. Illustration of Billy and Ruth Bell Graham — Franklin Graham once told a story of his famous parents in the latter years of their incredible earthly life. Ruth Bell had grown

very frail and bedridden. She was often too weak to talk or communicate much. Billy, although two years older than his wife and becoming rail himself, was still scooting around, although at a very slow clip.

11. In the room in which Ruth lay bedridden a second bed was brought in for Billy. He would often make his way into the room and lay on the bed beside his beloved Ruth. They would just lay there for hours just gazing into one another's eyes. No words were spoken, too far apart for physical touch but their hearts connected by a lifetime of love. Sometimes it is our inner man or woman which communicates, understands and even speaks the greatest love.

12. This was to be a ministry in our inner man. Paul prayed that God would grant discernment and understanding of spiritual truths to their heart in such a way that we might know Him (His love, character and power) better.

13. This would be the foundation upon which Paul would pray three more blessings for his readers...

Three Requests

1. Paul's three requests, when granted, would completely change the way these believers saw God, themselves, their present life on earth and their future life in heaven.

2. **Paul prays our hearts would be enlightened to understand...**

3. **Recognize or Know the Hope of His Calling —**

The ancient world was a world without hope (Eph. 2:12). A current saying was: “Not to be born at all—that is by far the best fortune; the second best is to die as soon as one is born.”

But all of this was changed for Christians.

Vaughan, C. (2002). *Ephesians* (pp. 34–35). Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press.

4. Someday we are going to leave here and head to heaven. This is an expectation of greatness to come. It is a glorious destiny which allows us to live victoriously here below.

5. We have a certain future bliss awaiting us. To “know” this hope is to have a conscious experience of it. Paul was praying that, “those who already had this hope in their hearts might come to experience its power in ever-increasing measure.”

6. On a train we met a young man who was a junior in college. With his father and mother he had left Sicily to establish a new home in our own land. Having settled in Southern Illinois, they had gone to work in a coal mine. Shortly afterward a mine explosion killed his father, and he himself was maimed for life by the loss of his left arm and right hand. During his hospital stay, he and his mother became so profoundly impressed with the Christian

character of the institution that they decided upon two epoch-making events. First, they joined the church, and next, they legally changed their names. The old name they never mention anymore. The new name sent the lad to college where he earned his bachelor and master degrees, resulting in a professorship in an American college. The name chosen is his constant inspiration: "Giovanni Sperondeo." The first is simply the Italian "John," but the second grips us. "Sperondeo"—"my hope is in God." How uplifting to write such a name: "My hope is in God!"

7. Our hope is in God...how might it change our life to keep that hope in the forefront of our mind and heart all the time.

8. No matter what we are enduring in the moment we have a sure hope to come. We have an eternal life with Him, in the perfection of heaven. A place with no sin, sorrow or death. **A place most importantly, with uninterrupted fellowship with God face to face...experiencing the full measure of His glory.**

9. This hope springs from the "calling" of God on our life. He has called us to eternal life and our faith in Him has made this call a reality for our life.

10. Heaven can be as real to us right now as earth if we would have eyes of faith to see and experience it. Paul is praying for just such a

faith to be a daily part of the lives of the recipients of his letter.

11. **“What is the wealth of His glorious inheritance in the saints”** — Think about this for a moment...God, infinite, holy, perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, everlasting, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Lord of Heavens Armies, considers His people to be His inheritance. God has made us trophies of His grace and...His treasure.

12. We are God’s treasure. This is a fact beyond human ability to understand. How and why would God think of me in a way such as this? The next time you feel worthless and broken just remember it is Christ who saved and mended your life and it is God who has made you a trophy of His love, mercy and grace.

13. **“(We) are wondrous trophies of His reclaiming and upraising power, a spectacle to angels of beings brought back from exile at a tremendous outlay and reinstated after grievous rebellion in unshaken (acknowledgement of loyalty) to their true sovereign.”** Simpson, E. K., & Bruce, F. F. (1957). *The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (p. 39). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

14. **God has chosen to make us an invaluable expression of His glory to all of heaven and earth. ~~We occupy a place of crowning glory of God’s power and glory.~~ God has shown Himself in the utmost way through our redemption and**

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salvation.

15. **“Immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe”** — God did not just redeem and save us but He is changing us. And the power at work in us to bring us to a promised perfection is something to be known.

16. **The friends of Mary Slessor, missionary in Africa, were amazed when they saw that she, a weak woman, had been able to mold savage chiefs to her will. One of the chiefs explained, “You have evidently forgotten to take into account the woman's God.”**

17. **Who would we be apart from the work of the power of God within us? He is reversing our propensity to sin and making us lovers of holiness and obedience. He has changed our heart and continues to mold and shape us into Christlikeness.**

18. **God's mighty strength (power to rule or control; power over death) is now coming to bear on our points of unruliness and imperfections in order to make us like Christ. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at God's right hand.**

19. (We) bear the impress of divine workmanship; but the pattern is still incomplete; they are in the making, yet not left to manufacture themselves into full-sized saints unaided; for the *working of the strength* of almightiness, put forth in bringing them from death unto life, is of the same wonder-working efficacy as

that which raised Christ from the dead and has seated Him on high. Simpson, E. K., & Bruce, F. F. (1957). *The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (p. 39). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

20. God's immeasurable resources have been poured out for our greatest benefit; so that we might be holy as He is holy. So that one day we will be glorified little Christs running around heaven bringing glory to Him in the perfect likeness of His Son.

Conclusion

1. Paul's prayers for the churches of central Asia should be the same prayers we pray for ourselves and one another. That God would grant us wisdom and revelation to know more deeply the things of God...that we would have a recognition of the hope of His calling...we would continually be reminded that God considers us His treasure and demonstration of His glory to heaven and earth...we would remember the power that raised Jesus from the dead is raising our sin sick soul from death to life (and He that began a good work will be faithful to complete it).

2. I think sometimes we forget our birthright; our privilege to pray such lofty prayers. Prayers that seek to touch heaven and bring something of the reality of heaven to earth. But such is the opportunity for those who know Christ.

3. But prayers, regardless the nature of the word spoken, are meaningless babble apart from a real faith

which gives them a hearing from a God who loves to give good gifts to His children.

4. Remember James 1:6-7

James 1:6-7 CSB

But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord,

5. Would you and I have the faith to pray and believe God for an answer to the prayers Paul prayed for the church? How might we be changed if we did so? How might our brothers and sisters in Christ be changed if we prayed such faith filled prayers for them?

6. To know God's heart, remember our hope, never forget we are His treasure, and that His power is at work to perfect us (and the job of doing so is so great it required such power).

These are the prayers of faith that will take a Christian from a babe in Christ to a fully developed disciple on mission with Christ.

7. Paul, one of the greatest believers who ever lived... greatest missionary, pastor and evangelist of the 1st century...was inspired and motivated to pray these things...Let's make a promise to one another this morning to pray the same for not only ourselves but each other...and then...let us expect great things to come!