

LSB Ephesians 1:15-23

15 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, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him, 18 so that you—the eyes of your heart having been enlightened—will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of His strength, 20 which He worked in Christ, by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

I am flawed. You all know that. Each of us is, so no one is surprised very much. One of my flaws is laziness and in that laziness, I am easily overwhelmed.

Hand me a 6" paintbrush and 4 five gallon pails of paint and tell me to paint the surface of my house and I'm overwhelmed. Or the thought of four years of further education overwhelmed me. I can't sit still for 4 minutes. How would I ever be able to accomplish 4 more years of boring education.

I didn't. I went to work. Working on physical projects with other people, solving different sets of problems every day was something I was good at. Electrical work was a good fit. Every day you work through different challenges to bring a result someone will pay you for. Then you go home and enjoy home and wife and family and do it again the next day.

The passage of scripture I read to you just now is teetering on the overwhelming. This really is the grand canyon of scripture. How in the

world can I do justice to even scratching the surface of what is here.

This is the first of two prayers of Paul, for them, and by extension, for us. And the prayer is actually very simple to understand. Here it is. Paul is laying out doctrine after doctrine after doctrine of the church. All of the wealth of verses 3 - 14, eternity past, eternity present, eternity future.

More wealth and knowledge than has ever been comprehended or even dreamed of in the past, is getting dumped on these christians, and on us. Almost unfathomable, the depths of new information that God is revealing in His elect, His saints, now that Chrsit is in heaven, and the church is formed.

Overwhelming truths, laid out for us, doctrine, after doctrine after doctrine, and we're just getting started! This unfolding of the mysteries of God will continue through chapters 2 and 3. Astonishing.

The complete doctrine of the church is here for us. What we've got here, doctrinally, is like a little pocket trap in a river in gold country that just traps nugger after nugget after nugget of gold over the eons. They tumble out of the mountains, down the river, until they get to this natural trap, and they stop in that pocket and get built up over the eons, until, some guy with a gold pan reaches his hand in and pulls out pound after pound of marble sized gold nuggets.

The richness of the doctrine here is beyond the pale. Almost incomprehensible.

In view of that, what Paul prays for here is this. He prays that we would not only comprehend the full mystery of God, in the church, but that we would not stop at a head knowledge, a cranial understanding, but that these things would go beyond our intellect and become the driving force in our inner most being. Our hearts. Our soul - spirits, if you like.

Let's pause and talk about that before we attempt to dive in. What happened to these original hearers at Ephesus? We have some history of

that church. How did it go for them? In Acts we can follow their development and we have bits and pieces here and there that we can sew together.

The church was begun by the preaching of Aquila with his wife, Priscilla at Ephesus and then Apollos, who was mighty in the scriptures joined them at Ephesus. So they had a strong beginning in the word.

Then in Acts 19, Paul himself spends three years teaching at Ephesus. Then Timothy was their pastor after Paul had to leave, and after Timothy, Onesiphorus, who Paul mentions was the only remaining faithful person to him in his imprisonment, Onesiphorus was their pastor.

And then, church tradition tells us that John the apostle came to live at Ephesus and was their pastor until he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos. So what a lineage of godly men this place enjoyed. Aquila, Apollos, Paul, Timothy, Onesiphorus and John. It was like a who's who of christendom there.

It's worth a moment to get a glimpse of that church in Acts chapter 20. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, where prophets have foretold him trouble is waiting there for him, but he is determined to go, and as he passes by Ephesus, he stops momentarily and he calls the elders of that church to him alone for a last meeting together. This is narrative, just like any well written story;

Acts 20:13 But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. (50 miles - 2 days) 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that chains and afflictions await me.

24 But I do not make my life of any account nor dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. 25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

26 Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. 27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole council of God. 28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be watchful, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified. 33 I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to those who were with me. 35 In everything I showed you that by laboring

in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'” 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they began to weep aloud and falling on Paul’s neck, they were kissing him, 38 being in agony especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

That's a moving glimpse of a strong church. How powerful the forces of darkness are that keep battering the strongholds of christendom non stop trying to break down the walls.

Sadly we have one final reference about this church, and it's a letter from Jesus Himself, written by the hand of His slave, John the apostle;

Rev. 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: This is what the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says: 2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot bear with those who are evil, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, you also have not grown weary.

Ephesus sounds like what we would expect a church to be that has enjoyed a list of pastors who are a literal who's who of christendom. Good deeds. Toil, hard work. Perseverance. Intolerance! Jesus praised them for their intolerance. I'm sure there's a sermon in that!

They don't tolerate evil. And they test those who make empty claims and find them lacking. Endurance and perseverance for the sake of the name of Jesus, and in all of this they have not grown weary. Wow! A model church, right? Except for one thing;

4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did

at first. But if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

They were an impenetrable fortress against the schemes of Satan, except for one thing. They fell out of love with Jesus. Somewhere in all of that perseverance and endurance and non tolerance of evil, they became a machine.

Cranking out all of those good things, both positive and negative . . . like a machine. They fell out of love with Jesus. And if you go to Ephesus today it's a rock quarry and a swamp. Earthquakes and conquerings combined with silt from the river that rendered the harbor and port useless caused it to be fully abandoned by 1500. Now it' an archeological tourism place. Jesus removed the lampstand.

That brief history brings lots of color to our study this morning. This church that had everything and ultimately became nothing. It's more than a cautionary tale to us. We need to pay heed to these doctrines and to this prayer. It's important to understand doctrine with our intellects and then to move them down 18 inches into our hearts. That's Paul's prayer for us, here.

15 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,

For this reason . . . We begin by tieing this section to what has been said previously, as I already touched on in my introduction.

For what reason, Paul? Well for all the reasons of the wealth of doctrine we have in Paul's sketch of our wealth in vss. 3 - 14.

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Chosen before the

worlds were formed, in Him, to be holy and blameless and the objects of His love. We are adopted sons and daughters of God and heirs of all God possesses and fellow heirs with Christ. We are mirrors who shine glory back onto Christ and the Father.

We are recipients of grace. We have been redeemed, purchased by His shed blood, for us. Our sins are forgiven. We are recipients of all wisdom and insight. Things revealed to us, the full mystery of the plan of God for all the fullness of time. We are sealed with the pledge of the indwelling Holy Spirit for a future glory that will be to the praise of His glory. We are His possession.

That's just the briefest of possible recaps of all of the wealth that is ours in vss 3 - 14 which is why Paul will say; *15 For this reason*

The reason Paul will burst forth in prayer for these folks is because there is visible evidence that all of what Paul listed out in his long sentence, all of that wealth has evidence attached with it that is proof of these folks standing with the elect.

15 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,

They have real faith which is visible in tangible evidence. Because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, they have a love for all the other saints that the world cannot experience.

The Holy Spirit in me gives me an unconditional love for each and every other elect person who also is set apart from this world by the same Holy Spirit. We love each other. We have a common bond with all of God's elect. He pours out His love in us, and that love spills over onto others. But primary for the receipt of God's love pouring through me, are other christians.

Gal. 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people,

and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

The love for each other is primary because it's so easy to love those who have Christ's love in them.

Paul says the evidence of your election and adoption into God's family is visible in the love you have for one another. We can't see faith by itself. It might be there. We don't know. But real faith that is exhibiting godly love is easily visible.

Their real faith and visible love cause two responses in Paul who also loves them deeply. Vs. 16. Thankfulness for them, and prayer in their behalf.

16 (I) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers:

Why the heart of thanks? What is the basis of their value to Paul? And by extension, why are we valuable to each other? Why am I thankful to have you all, and why do we pray for each other?

Here's why. Or at least one important reason among many. First of all, God in me causes me to love God in you. That's just a reality of new life together.

But we can bore down into that just a little bit. On earth, there is a massive unseen battle of two kingdoms. Two authorities to reign that are in direct conflict with each other. The kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Satan.

We are massively outnumbered by the kingdom ruled by Satan. Evil. Even the sweet folks in our neighborhood that we wave to daily would stand against us if push came to shove. (Think about what happened with the Jews in Germany over a 5 year period. Neighbors and friends became enemies and murderers. Quickly. Don't kid yourself that it can't happen again, can't happen here.) We are in Satan's kingdom surrounded by people that he owns.

I like to use the metaphor of a group of enemy combatants, a little pocket of enemy combatants deep inside enemy territory. We're in combat to see our side victorious. We are desperately trying to regain territory for our King. Right in the middle of enemy territory. We're trying to convince people to leave the evil kingdom and join in Christ's kingdom. We're calling and pleading for them to join with us. But the evil king doesn't want them to leave his armies.

So we're most joyful to be within the safety and comfort of our own numbers. And every time our King wins someone over to our side, we shout for joy. Our King gives us an otherworldly love for each other. And we pray to our Commander to strengthen our armies and our effort with deep care for our fellow soldiers.

Our first order of importance in our prayers is for this group and that effort. We're praying for victories against the enemy. We're praying for our God to add to our numbers for His glory. And we're praying for the strength of those who labor and battle along side of us.

Prayer is a checkbook. Our King is wealthy beyond our comprehension, and He has given us a checkbook full of signed blank checks. But the purpose is to write those checks to purchase things that advance His interests, not ours.

Paul, here, gives us an example of how a senior General in this army writes checks to the King. What does he ask for? Comfort and ease for himself? He tried that once. Remember the thorn in the flesh in 2 Cor. 12?

7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my

weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and hardships, for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

James simply tells us, we ask and receive not because we ask with wrong motives. James 4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses,*

Literally, you whores. People who write checks for their own ease and comfort and desires and pleasures from the company checkbook . . . go to jail. We are in conflict, fighting for our King, working to bring Him glory by advancing His rule and authority. We have a checkbook with blank checks. Write them. Ask for wildly costly things, that advance His kingdom and give Him glory, and see what will happen.

Paul is an example for us of how to write those checks. He gives us this prayer and we are wise to study his example. We have unlimited wealth to draw from. But here is an example of someone doing that excellently for us to copy.

The prayer begins in vs. 17. Let's watch and learn what a master General in God's armies prays for. What does he ask the King to supply? We won't finish this this morning. We can revel in Paul's example to us and learn much about how to pray. Perhaps the King has given us this example so that we, even here in tiny Tonopah, can ask for impossible things, just like Paul did.

*Psa. 50:7 "Hear, O My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you;
I am God, your God.*

*8 I do not reprove you for your sacrifices,
And your burnt offerings are continually before Me.*

9 I shall take no young bull out of your house

*Nor male goats out of your folds.
 10 For every beast of the forest is Mine,
 The cattle on a thousand hills.
 11 I know every bird of the mountains,
 And everything that moves in the field is Mine.
 12 If I were hungry I would not tell you,
 For the world is Mine, as well as its fullness.
 13 Shall I eat the flesh of bulls
 Or drink the blood of male goats?
 14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving
 And pay your vows to the Most High;
 15 Call upon Me in the day of distress;
 I shall rescue you, and you will glorify Me.”*

God owns everything. Even in this world's distress, under Satan's evil rule, God owns it all. He can do anything He pleases. What does He ask of his people? Sacrificial thanksgiving. Pay your vows. Render to Ceaser the things that are Ceasars, and to God the things that are Gods. Then call upon Him in the day of distress and He will rescue. Why? It's all for His glory.

We pray so that the answers will glorify Him. He owns everything. His resources are limitless. Pray for the purposes of His glory and see what happens.

OK, here is what Paul prays for;

Vs. 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him,

Is there an echo in the room. We just talked about his two weeks ago. Wealth. Eternity past, present, and future. In vss. 3 - 14. But particularly in vss 7 - 9, our wealth in our present state.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He caused to

abound to us in all wisdom and insight, 9 making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him

These are all tied together. Forgiveness was the necessary procedure in order to pour out on us unfathomable wealth. Riches and grace. But with those in place, He pours out on His elect wisdom and insight. We get to know and understand the mysteries of His will and His purposes for His good pleasure.

It's no accident that for those in eternity present, Paul asks the Father to give them the two things already promised before. Wisdom and insight. Wisdom and revelation.

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him

It's not quite the same. Wisdom and revelation are the means to an end. And Paul internalizes those external possibilities by asking that they be made living things by the Spirit.

Paul asks for the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation. These aren't dead externals. These are living internals brought to us by God's Holy Spirit who dwells in us. He's asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit to individually open up to us wisdom and revelation.

But that's still not the ultimate final purpose. He asks for Spiritual wisdom and Spiritual revelation, why? *in the full knowledge of Him*

And to try our best to fully understand the request here, we need to bore down into that word, knowledge. We know who the Him is. Right? Jesus. But is Paul simply praying for us to have wisdom and revelation about Him? We need to know everything there is about Jesus?

Not exactly. The original word here translated *knowledge*, is epignósis. It's a compound word made up of two parts. epi and gnosis. Epi is to put

something on. Intimate physical contact. and gnosis is knowing. Intimate first hand knowing.

If it's 13 degrees outside I can look at my down filled parka in my closet and know about it. But it only keeps me warm if I put it on. gnosis is knowing about. epignosis is putting it on.

Genesis says Adam knew his wife and she bore him a son. Are you beginning to get the idea. Paul isn't praying for us to know everything there is to know about Jesus. He's praying for us to put Jesus on. This is the most intimate kind of knowing. After 48 years of marriage, Pam is rarely surprised that I leave tools laying all over the back yard to get rusty when it rains. She even knows she probably can't change me. She knows me.

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him

Paul is praying for what? A deeper and more intimate knowing of Jesus. He asks the Father to accomplish that by the Holy Spirit. He specifically asks the Spirit to increase to us wisdom and revelation.

Here is wisdom. Want more of Jesus? You'll find Him in this book. Want Jesus flowing in your veins so that like someone said of John Bunyan, you can cut him anywhere and he'll bleed out Bible? Want more of Jesus, immerse yourself into the depths of this book.

That's what Paul just prayed for. Oh, yes, there's a LOT more in this prayer, but that's a fine place to begin.

I grew up surrounded by the charismatic movement in it's strength. More, more more. All the music is weeping for more of Jesus. But no one goes looking for more of Him in the right place. Want more of Jesus, baptise yourself in this book. Dive in and go swimming in this book.

When you come up for air, it isn't the book that's clinging to you, it's Jesus. He's right there, inside, waiting for people who are hungry for more of Him and wise enough to know where to find Him.

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of (unveiling) in the full (intimate personal knowing) of Him.

Paul prays that we would have the deepest kind of intimate friendship with Jesus.