



Ephesians Week 2 - Ephesians 1:15-23

Sept. 17, 2023 - Pastor Rafael Aristy

Eph. 1:15 "Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you."

Paul begins by letting the churches in Ephesus know how PROUD he is of them! He is proud of their strong faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for God's people everywhere!

- Remember, this is a divided church body: the Jews are trying to hold on to their religious traditions, and the Gentiles to their pagan ones. Paul is affirming that he still sees **faith** and **love** in them.
- "No church is perfect... even if it were, you and I just walked in."

FAITH and LOVE are very important marks of a disciple of Jesus.

- We need to have *Defiant* faith: believing what God says regardless of what culture says, our circumstances say, or even what our feelings say.

Here at Good News, we try to embody this love Paul is talking about.

- It's not only love for God's people here in Omaha, or Nebraska, but everywhere!
- This is why our Mission Statement tagline is **Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday.**
- It's not only about us here, it's also about those in **Africa**, the **Arab world**, in **Europe**, **Latin America**, **Asia**...

"I know exactly how Paul feels."

- When I think of the faith and love you as our Good News Family display, I can't stop thanking God for you!
- That \$154, 298.01 given to Kingdom Builders is not just a number, but proof of your faith that God is your provider, and a display of love for our brothers and sisters across the globe who are sharing the good news of Jesus.
- The way you stand firm in faith in the midst of the struggles that I know you are facing, causes me to be thankful to God for you.

- The way you display love by serving one another causes me to be thankful to God for you.

- *Pause and reflect on the ways you see faith and love in your Good News family and celebrate it.*

- *How have you stood firm even in the midst of struggles in life?*

- *Who do you feel the same way about, like Paul feels for the Ephesians?*

- *If no one, are you investing what you have in Jesus into anyone?*

Paul moves from thanking God for them to PRAYING for them.

1. v17 Prays that God would give us spiritual wisdom and insight (revelation)

This is our prayer for you that you may KNOW Him better.

It is the Spirit of God, the promise from the Father (v13,14), that makes it possible for us to GROW in our knowledge of Him!

ACTS 2:38-39 NIV 38 "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.'"

There is one prerequisite to receiving this promised gift: REPENT - turn towards God & away from sin - ask Him to forgive you.

This promise is not only for the apostles or the Jews; it is for YOU, your CHILDREN (next generation), for ALL!!!

John 14:26 NIV 26 "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Holy Spirit is our teacher and reminds us of the words of Jesus!

1 Corinthians 2:11 NIV "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."

Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God and can reveal them to us.

Wisdom is applied understanding.

- I understand that if a stove is on, it will be hot and if I touch it, I will get burned. WISDOM is what helps me decide not to touch the stove. Foolishness is when I touch it anyway. (We understand what shouldn't be done, yet we still do it.)

- What has Holy Spirit taught you or reminded you of when you needed the reminder?
- What situations are you facing in life where you need God's wisdom?
- What wisdom (applied understanding) do you need to apply to current situations in your life?

2.v18 Paul prays that we may understand "confident hope"

Eph. 1:18 "I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light (enlightened) so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to those He called"

Paul paints a great word picture that our hearts be flooded with light!

Not just a little part of your desires, not a portion of your emotions...ALL OF YOUR HEART!

He also uses their reality of spiritual darkness and oppression in Ephesus (as the center of magic in Asia minor) and directly counters it with the Light of God's Truth.

Genesis 1 tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was *without form, empty and darkness covered the deep*. And God SAID... **Let there be light! And there was!**

May our hearts be flooded with light that v18 "...we can understand (know) the **CONFIDENT HOPE** He has given those whom He called (called=saved)."

HOPE: Greek- elpis; Definition: expectation, hope, trust, confidence.

This word is not what we know as "I hope so. It may happen or not..."

Confident Hope is an expectation, a trust, a confidence that what God has promised, He will do.

- This confident hope does not mean we will have a struggle-free life or that we will not face hard things. What does it mean then?

Confident Hope is an expectation, a *trust*, a confidence that what God has *promised*, He will do.

OUR HOPE is that - in Jesus we have eternal life, in Jesus we have relationship with the Father, in Jesus we have all that our God has promised! **OUR HOPE is Jesus!**

1 Peter 1:3 NIV "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

Hebrews 6:18-20 NLT 18 "So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary."

v18 "...His holy people who are *His rich and glorious inheritance.*"

You are Jesus' RICH and GLORIOUS inheritance!!!

- Jesus suffered, died, and resurrected, AND His reward is that the Father gave YOU to HIM!

- *What does it even mean to be His inheritance?*

YOU are what He most desired...He just wants YOU!

- *From the beginning of the Biblical narrative, God devised a plan to reunite us with Himself. Why?*

3. v19 Paul prays for them to understand the greatness of God's POWER for those who believe Him.

Eph. 19, 20 "I also pray that you will understand the incredible *greatness of God's power* for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms."

Power: Greek- Dunamis: (miraculous) power, might, strength; where we get our word "dynamite"; can mean the "ability to perform"; here it is "Power through God's ability"

Paul, once again, is speaking their language: Before surrendering their lives to Jesus, they believed in the power of a deity (multiple gods actually). Paul wants the churches in Ephesus to know that our God is POWERFUL and able to do what He said He will do!

He gives them an example of God's power... v19 "The same POWER that raised Jesus from the dead!"

How much power do you think it takes to raise someone who was dead for 3 days?

- *How would you begin to know God in this way—being able to understand (comprehend) the GREATNESS of His power? Is it possible?*

There seems to be a progression in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (v16-23):

Pray for spirit of wisdom & revelation >> Pray you know hope >> Pray you know His power.

- This is not a formula, nor is it sequential. God can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants.
- It seems that *we receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and have confident hope in Christ before we can truly understand the greatness of his power.*

Don't seek God's power, seek Jesus!

Paul then begins to introduce topics that he will touch on later in his letter.

v21 "Now He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church."

Since Ephesus was the center of magic in Asia minor, Paul starts letting them know that "whatever power you think you have seen, Jesus is ABOVE that! Whatever AUTHORITY you think your old gods had, Jesus has authority over them. "

"Not only in this age, but also in the age to come..."

ALL things are under His AUTHORITY.

- That trial...struggle...fear...mystery...your future...your marriage... your singleness...your plans, your children...

There's NOTHING outside of His AUTHORITY!

- What are you holding back from trusting God with?

Eph. 1:23 "And the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself."

Acts 17:28a NIV "For in him we live and move and have our being."

Paul prays that we would:

- Receive the Spirit of wisdom & revelation to know God better (V.17)
- Hearts flooded with light to understand CONFIDENT HOPE in Christ (V.18)
- Understand the greatness of God's POWER for those who believe Him (V.19)

- Do you know that we, as a Good News staff, pray for you?

- Is there anyone God has placed in your life that you should be praying these things over?

- Pause and pray the truths from this section (and last week's) of scripture over your life and those around you.