

“Having the Eyes of Your Understanding Enlightened”

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Read Ephesians 1:15-23

In order to treat this passage appropriately, it must be read in light of what was just stated in 1:3-14: God as a trinity in the totality of His essence and energy redeemed His people from sin's debt by forgiving their sins and then adopted them as His sons and daughters. All of this was freely bestowed and lavishly dispensed.

As those who are sons and daughters, Paul now prays for their continued growth in the knowledge of Him. Just as God can bless because He is blessed, so can He now give knowledge of His glory because He is the Father of glory.

Whatever the weight of the information given in verses 3-14 it is now expressed along three distinct petitions. The two ideas (vv. 3-14 and vv. 17-23) must be seen as complimentary and parallel. **First**, Paul prays that his audience would know the person of Christ. Christ as the agent through whom the Godhead works and reveals is central to the entire story. Unless and until we grasp this, nothing else matters. And when we do grasp this, nothing else matters. It is impossible to overstate the issue. If Jesus is not the centerpiece of one's own personal story, then there is nothing but ultimate darkness and despair. The story of God was written in such a way that it cannot make sense apart from Jesus Christ as the cornerstone on which the entire structure rests, or as the linchpin that keeps the wheels from falling off the axle of life.

The **second** petition Paul brings is for them to know the promise of the inheritance. Again, this thought parallels that expressed in verses 11-14. The big idea is the principle of “already-not yet.” What we currently possess as the redeemed, adopted sons and daughters of God, is fully sufficient for now, and yet . . . there is more. The very idea of inheritance speaks of something that is still yet future. An inheritance is capable of being possessed in the present, but there is more. An inheritance was once future. For the believer the work of God planned in eternity past and begun in time still has a future installment. There is more. It is this future installment that provides hope in the moment. It tells us that the best is yet to come. In looking to the future, we cannot forget either the past or the present. There is a real and tangible aspect of our present possession that speaks to the moment. Yet it is the future inheritance that provides hope to those who live in the context of despair. It is this future inheritance that provides healing to those who live with disease and addresses wholeness where there is only dysfunction.

Paul's **final** request is for his audience to know the power of God. It is this last request that puts all the rest in perspective. It is only because of God's immeasurable greatness of power working toward us who believe that we can know the person of Christ and the promise of the inheritance. This immeasurable power is so vast that it raised Christ from the dead and placed all things created under His feet. The word “immeasurable” speaks to our inability to measure or quantify just how vast the resources of God are which He has placed at our disposal so that we might know the person of Christ and the promise of the inheritance.

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All this sits within His body, the Church. It is in and through the Church that the risen and reigning Christ works to the community, the nation and the world. The Church is the agent through which His kingdom will come on earth even as it is in heaven.

We see the visible church as a highly imperfect and at times dysfunctional entity, yet the church is His body in which and through which He is working reconciliation/peace. It is from the peace secured by the cross that He now works peace to the world.

Oh the weight of such a task in the light of our glaring weakness! Yet Paul celebrates the weakness because it is only as we are weak that we find the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe (2 Cor. 12:9).

May we pray with Pauline passion for His people, the body of Christ, His church. May we see past our personal pettiness and petition Him with powerful utterances that reflect the very heart of God for us.

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