

Eph ch 1 vs 15-17

This morning we'll be pulling out of this record setting sentence of some 265 words that has made up that which we've been studying for the last few week's, vs 1-14 of the 1st chapter of the book of Eph. and Real quick in these few vs we've been just bombarded and overwhelmed with the unlimited and incalculable supply of spiritual blessing that we have in Christ, we've considered election, we've considered the fruits of election, we've considered predestination and adoption as sons by Jesus Christ and All of these things we read are to the praise of His glory, we've come to realize that our acceptance before God is found only in Christ.

We've studied the fact that it's in Him that we have redemption, or liberation, having been set free from the law, having been set free from sin, we've been freed from the grip and the vices of the world and from the power of Satan himself. and The cost for that redemption or liberation to be given to you freely was very steep, a higher price couldn't have been paid for you or for me, because we weren't redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from our aimless conduct. But rather we were redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ as of a lamb with out spot and with out blemish; the price of your freedom (if you are found in Christ) came only through His own blood.

The primary result of the shedding of His blood for all who believe is the forgiveness of sins, Jesus Christ is our Yom Kippur, He is our perpetual Day of Atonement, He is our high priest, He is our sin offering having shed His blood for the remission of our sin, and He is our scapegoat having had the sin of the world laid (as it were) upon His head, and it's in Him that they are carried away as far as the east is from the west. An immeasurable distance, never to be brought back to you or imputed to you again, God's forgiveness in Christ is complete, He is the perfect fulfillment of what we read in Lev 16, He is the substance of which those things were merely the shadow.

He did all these things according to the riches of His grace and according to His wisdom and understanding and it's by the wisdom that He avails to us in Christ whereby we're able to understand the mystery of His will. That is, the ultimate culmination of all things which is the gathering together all things both Jew and Gentile alike and ruling and reigning in perfect wisdom and justice and mercy. Sin is tearing everything apart but God is in Christ going to gather all things together and restore perfect order to His kingdom on earth, both during the millennial reign and then on out through eternity. In this text we've been comforted by the fact that God is in control, and in vs 13 and 14 we see in essence the plan of salvation. 1st you hear the word of truth, which is the gospel of our salvation, the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to humanity.

Paul said in Rom 1:16 “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*” and Having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ you place your trust in Him (and these vs correlate beautifully with Rom Ch 10 vs 13-15 which is God’s plan for evangelism, so I’d encourage you to check out those vs at sometime as well.) and Upon placing your trust in Jesus Christ from the heart you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the seal speaking of ownership, it’s God’s proof of ownership concerning you, it’s the witness of adoption. and The guarantee of our inheritance and that word guarantee could also be translated “earnest” which is interesting because that word can also be understood as “engagement ring” and what is an engagement ring? It’s a guarantee; it’s a way to give an assurance of the fact that you’re going to keep your promise.

Jesus Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride and He has given us the Holy Spirit as an intimate guarantee that He will come again and claim His bride, because He has given us His promise and the Holy Spirit is the engagement ring or the earnest of that promise, we couldn’t ask for greater assurance. and It’s all to the praise of His glory, as a matter of fact we read 3 times in these few vs that He has done and is doing and will do all that He does to the praise of His glory, so that He might be glorified and magnified throughout all time and eternity.

I recapped all of these things so that we might have a fresh perspective in our minds and in our hearts of what’s been stated thus far so that as we approach this mornings text we’ll be in the flow of the heart of Paul the apostle and the Holy Spirit’s direction and encouragement for our lives as it pertains to the context of the text. Because we come now to the 1st of 2 prayers recorded in the book of Eph and Paul begins what’s come to be vs 15 with the word “therefore” which simply means, “in the light of what was just previously stated” which was vs 1-14. Now we won’t get any farther than vs 17 today but in light of the fact that our text begins with therefore I felt it necessary to refresh your hearts with what the “therefore” was in regards to and then next week we’ll be leaving those 1st 14 vs alone all together.

One thing that I would have you take mental note of as we spend a couple of studies in the text that’s before us is the directness that we read of in Paul’s prayers, because I believe that even in that there is a lesson for us when it comes to our own prayer lives and that’s that we need to learn to pray directly and specifically. So many times we pray in generalities or in terms of the symptoms rather than stating specifics and getting to the heart of the issue. But we see that Paul didn’t mess around when it came to prayer, he understood that prayer gave him the audience of the King, he understood that prayer turned toward him the very ear of God. and So he prayed specifically, he dealt with the heart of things not peripheral issues and so we would do well to learn from his example as one who was radically used *by* and effective in his walk *with* the Lord.

Vs15-16

Now there's a couple of things we need to take note of right off the bat in vs 15, there's 2 qualities in the lives of these Ephesian believers that has caught the attention of Paul the apostle, that has given him reason to rejoice and give thanks. 2 Things that we might coin as "earmarks" or "characteristics" of the true believer, and what are those 2 things? Faith and love, Paul says after I *heard* these things concerning your lives, when these things begin to come into fruition in your life, when you are born again out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light, people hear about it. A testimony is created and you become a witness, and people will hear of what type of testimony you are, Paul heard of their faith and love.

What are people hearing about you? What are they hearing about Calvary Chapel of Joplin, my prayer is that they're hearing, hey, there's something genuine going on down there, they are a people of faith and love, God must be at work down there, let's go check it out. and Notice who it was that their faith is in, it's in the Lord Jesus, it's not faith in faith, how many times do we hear, "well, you gotta have faith", you see there are those generalities again faith in what, faith in who?

Faith in the Lord Jesus, faith is so critical in the life of the believer, you say how important is it that I have faith? Well with out it (according to Eph 2:8) you can't be saved, we read there that it's by grace *through faith* that we're saved, what's the implication? That with out faith you aren't saved, we know that with out faith it's impossible to please God (Heb 11:6) and the bible even takes it one step farther in Rom 14:23 where it says that, "*whatever is not from faith is sin.*" Eph 3:12 tells us that, "*we have boldness and access (to the Lord,) with confidence (how) through faith (and here it is) in Him.*" That is, in the Lord Jesus, and the bible has so much to say concerning faith, (but for times sake we must be moving on).

The 2nd quality that we note in vs 15 is *love*, that is love for the brethren. and We talked about this somewhat in the book of Gal, faith and love are virtually inseparable (speaking of course of the agape' love of God) you might almost say that true faith is worked out in our lives in love. Because what this is telling us more or less is that if you love God, you're going to love God's people, you're going to desire to be around the people of God, and minister one to another.

Now I know that we all have different personality quirks and not everybody is a "people person", but I believe that that will be being slowly dissolved from our lives the more we're willing to allow God to do that work. Because if God dwells in you, you're going to be taking on godly attributes, and one of God's attributes is love, He loves people. That's why He gave His only begotten Son to shed His blood for the sins of the world, because God so *loved* the world.

John tells us in 1 John 4:20-21 *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."* and Not only our best buddy brothers, notice that their love was for all the saints, even the ones that they may not see perfectly eye to eye with, they weren't making mountains of mole hills, majoring on minor issues, dividing the church over disputes concerning gray areas of doctrine.

Now there are certain areas that we can't compromise in; and to sacrifice truth for the sake of unity isn't love, that's compromise. But there's no need for you and me to break fellowship over the fact that you hold a mid trib rapture theory, or a post trib or a-millennialist position, but I am thoroughly convinced of a pre-trib rapture, (because you see I can over look your misunderstanding of scripture) and just agree to disagree with you there. But the point that's being made is that there is an obvious unfabricated agape' love that's issued out from the Eph believers for everyone who names the name of Christ in truth. Jesus said that the world would know that you are My disciples by the fact that you have love for one another. John told us that love for the brethren was more or less a litmus test to see whether or not everlasting life was truly abiding in us, we read in 1 John 3:14 *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."* Eph 4:2 exhorts us to bear with one another in love, not in irritation or frustration, but with a heart of love.

These 2 qualities, faith and love are inseparable in the life of the believer, and as soon as there is a severance of one from the other (if that's even possible), they are both rendered useless. 1st Cor teaches us that anything that's not done mingled with agape' is pointless and we already learned that with out faith it's impossible to please God, and it's impossible to have that type of agape' love opporating in our lives apart from faith. Again we don't have time to read all of the correlating vs but as far as faith and love is concerned I'll give you a few references and then if you feel so compelled you can look them up later. 1 Thess 1:3, 2Thess 1:3, 1 Tim 1:5, 1 Tim 1:14, Col 1:4, and of course 1 Cor 13:13 just to name a few. and Believe me when I tell you that we could make an entire study, even a series of studies concerning faith and love and how they are worked out in the life of the believer, but this morning we're going to press on.

Paul says that upon hearing these things he gives thanks for them in his prayers with out ceasing. What a sign of maturity, being able to praise God for a work that's going on in the lives of believers and in a fellowship outside of the one that God has called you to. Why, because he could see the big picture, he didn't see the church as this fellowship or that one, but he was able to recognize the global body of Christ and when God was developing any aspect of His body and expanding His kingdom through any group of believers Paul was able to rejoice.

Because it's not about how big this church is or how spiritual that group seems to be, it's about knowing Jesus and making Him known, we're not in the ministry to make a name we're here to magnify a name, the name of Jesus. and When things were going on in the lives of a group of believers that magnified and glorified Jesus Christ Paul said I thank God for you, I remember you before God, do we do that. When we see God using someone in a mighty way do we take to our knees and say God thank you for that man, Lord encourage them, strengthen them and continue to gain much glory through their lives for your names sake. Or instead do we get jealous and think with in ourselves, well why isn't that going on here or how come that's not me, (well #1 just so that you know I believe it is happening here, I thank God for allowing me to serve such a dedicated and sold out group of believers that have such faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints.) But it could just be that type of attitude that quenches the move of the Spirit of God.

Envy and Jealousy are characteristics of the flesh, and God doesn't bless the flesh. The bible says that He searches to and fro over the whole earth looking for just one who's heart is in perfect tune with Him so that He might do some radical things and glorify His name in that person's life. Is that you, can God find such a heart as that in this fellowship, I pray that He can, but Paul the apostle had a radical prayer life. We often think of him as the foremost apostle and a tremendous teacher of the word of God, but he's not usually the 1st person that comes to our minds when we think of prayer warriors of the bible, or intercessors of the faith.

We might think of Moses who interceded for the nation numerous times, or we might think of David who bore His heart so eloquently before God in the Psalms, Elijah who called down fire from heaven or Daniel who was a faithful man of prayer in such a hostile environment. Obviously Jesus comes to our minds, prayer was one of the main things He did, He prayed so much that His disciples finally came to Him one day and said, "*Lord, teach us to pray*". But we're usually not too quick to think of Paul and yet he was a man who prayed with out ceasing. We read 2 of his prayers in this epistle alone, the one that's before us being the 1st

Again, I won't take you through them all but as a bit of home work you might sometime just keep a running list. and Every time you see in one of Paul's letters the mention of him praying or something that he prays about or encourages us to pray for, just jot it down and then after you've read all of the Pauline letters look it over and it'll blow your mind, Paul was constantly in prayer. and Prayer is another one of those things that's a distinctive of the true believer, because prayer is the life blood of the church, or any believer, prayer operates sort of like a spiritual umbilical cord through which we receive those spiritual nutrients that bring us life.

You remember that when Paul was converted in Acts ch 9 that when the Lord spoke to Ananias and told him to go (to Saul at that time) that as if it were the sign of true conversion, He said, Ananias get up and go to him for behold, he prays. Now Saul was a Pharisee, he could recite hordes of prayers, but they were all repetitious, meaningless rigor moro, so it's not in just saying words that sound real spiritual, but he's seeking me from the heart, behold he prays. He never quit.

How's your prayer life been lately, are you still seeking God with all your heart with the fervency of that 1st love relationship, or has it become meaningless one sided idle chatter that goes no higher than the rafters in your roof? What is it that characterizes your prayer life, thanksgiving and gratitude, or griping and self centered petitions. It's not wrong to bring your needs before the Lord, but are you lifting others as well, praising God for the work that He's doing in them and asking for more of it on their behalf. Or is the only time someone else comes up in your prayer life is when you have some sort of beef with them and you're asking the Lord to level them out for you. We have so much to learn from the model that we see in Paul and all the other's that we've mentioned. Paul said I do not cease to make mention of you in my prayers and what is the primary request that he makes mention of on their behalf.

Vs17

This is the primary or you might say the general request of God that Paul makes on their behalf, now (Lord willing) in our next we'll see how it begins to break down from there, but this is the foremost desire that Paul had for the lives of these believers. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory might give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, why? So that they might know God accurately, so that they might fully realize who it is that they were in love with and whom it is that they serve. That word "knowledge" speaks of "exact or full knowledge," it speaks of "discernment, and recognition," and, "a greater participation by the "knower" in the object "known," thus more powerfully influencing him". (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words,)

Because as the old hymn states to know Him is to love Him, and the greater your love for someone the greater their influence over you, because you're going to want to refrain from doing those things that will hurt them. and You're going to want to be active in those things that are pleasing to them.

What pleases the Lord? Obedience, the bible says that to obey is better than sacrifice; Jesus said if you love Me keep My commandments. Notice what it is that's to motivate you and motivate me to service, it's to be your love for Christ, Jesus never said because I'm shedding MY blood for you or because I'm dying for you, keep my commandments. Remember He purchased you to set you free, you don't owe Him because of what He's done for you. Now we tend to cringe at that concept because when we realize all that He's done for us. Our response is to want to somehow repay, but we never can that's why we read the parables of the king forgiving his debtor all the debt that he could never pay. Your salvation is no strings attached, you'll never read in scripture where God says to man, because I've given you salvation, because I've done so much for you, now you owe Me and you are to serve me.

Now that having been said the bible does say that our giving ourselves back to God to be used of Him however He sees fit is our reasonable service but understand that Jesus never desires us to serve Him out of guilt or compulsion, because we somehow feel pressured or whatever. The only way that Jesus asks us to serve Him is if it's out of love, no strings attached, even as He gave Himself for us out of love, no strings attached. So if you don't love God, then don't serve Him, but if you do love God, then serve Him with all your heart, grab hold of the plow and don't look back, lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of you, and just pray, "God here's my life, I lay it down before you do whatever it takes; Lord be glorified in me."

Paul said it's the love of Christ that constrains me, that motivates me, that compels me and drives me on to serve Him with such fervency. and The more you know God, the more you love God and so Paul prays for the believers at Ephesus that they might know God intimately and accurately. and Again the true believer is going to want to know God deeply and personally, and notice that Paul reminds himself and us who it is that he's praying to, something else to be aware of. He's praying to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, he's praying to the Father of glory, the more we're reminded of and aware of who it is that we're praying to, the more alive and the more profound and the more real our prayers will be.

So often we might find ourselves saying, did you say your prayers? Or don't forget to say your prayers, I know I've been guilty of that and in reality it wasn't until I was preparing for this study that I realized how shallow and unprofitable that phrase is. Because just saying prayers, or reciting prayers in a habitual manner is meaningless, that's to be found in that condition that Paul was if prior to his conversion when he would just recite these words but they weren't really uttered from the heart.

Jesus said to do that is to completely miss the bus, God's not into beautifully articulated prayers from the lips, that's one of the reasons Jesus was so down on the Pharisees. He said you hypocrites, you draw near to Me with you mouths, you honor Me with your lips, but your hearts are far from Me. Jesus called that hypocrisy, it's playing the game, it's going through all the motions looking real spiritual showing up to church every Sunday with your bible in hand and all the while in your heart, you're out to lunch. You're not sincere about a love relationship with Jesus, prayer is communication with the one True Living God, it's dialogue and conversation with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory. When you pray that's whom you're talking to, it's God, it's the Father of glory, and it's important that we be sober concerning that lest we be guilty of being flippant, or bored with our prayer time.

The 1st Wednesday of every month we come together as a body and spend our time in prayer and worship and communion with God and I just got to tell you that if you miss out on that time. Or you're guilty of thinking well I don't really want to go out tonight it's just prayer, you've missed the boat, you're missing out on a tremendous time of blessing and edification.

You heard it said and maybe you've heard me say, you show me a powerful church and I'll show you a prayerful church. One that is seeking God with it's whole heart, one that's being revived according to His word and one that wants to know Him deeply and intimately and in return make Him known to a hurt and dying and desperately empty world of people. Maybe that's you this morning, hurting and desperately empty, knowing God is the remedy for your condition, by faith through the person of Jesus Christ receiving Him into your heart and into your life, not according to your lips but according to your heart.

There are way too many misconceptions of God, and my prayer for this body is that we might be given a spirit of wisdom, that the Holy Spirit might enlighten us and reveal to us accurately the heart of God. So that we might know Him, and take that knowledge balanced in love and be faithful to His command to make Him known, Jesus' last command was that we should *"go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;* (in other words make Him known, and known accurately, but how can we make Him know accurately unless we 1st know Him accurately?) *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*" So A few Characteristics of the true believer are #1 Faith toward God and love towards the brethren, #2 they will be a people of prayer and then also, #3 they will have a heart that wants to know God deeply and intimately and accurately.

