

# Ephesians 1:15-23: God Revealed – Christ Exalted

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## Review:

Last week we looked at the importance of understanding the Gospel of Grace. The grace of God is so much more than we can comprehend and define by human standards; God's unmerited favour, God's ability to be and do all that we are meant to be and do. We discovered that the grace of God reaches back before the creation of the universe when God the Father chose us to be his sons and daughters. He elected us as his people and then predestined us for the fulfilling of his purpose. We saw that the fullness of God's grace came into focus in the person of Jesus Christ, who redeemed us through his blood releasing forgiveness according to the riches of God's grace. Grace does not stop there but carries on with the sealing or marking of the believer in the Holy Spirit guaranteeing our inheritance as God's people.

## Introduction:

**Eph 1:15-23 - For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,<sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.<sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.<sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,<sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

Paul tells us the importance of our faith in Jesus and our love for God's people. True faith and trust in God will always display itself in unconditional (agape) love towards people but especially all the saints. Faith and love go hand in hand in the Scriptures as seen in the following Scriptures:

- **Colossians 1:4 - because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints...**

- **1 Thessalonians 1:3 - We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **Philemon 5 - because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.**

Paul also highlights his lifestyle of prayer as he pours out his thanks for the saints in Ephesus. He declares to them “I have not stopped giving thanks for you”. This is such a great exhortation to us to be thankful as God’s people. It is so easy to look at all the faults of God’s people, whether family or friends. Paul does not stop at giving thanks but carries on with “constant prayer” for the believers in Ephesus so that they may know God better.

Paul uses the word to “know” with regards to our relationship with God. In the Greek language there are several different words related to know, knowing, knowledge etc. Paul uses a word for knowledge that speaks of intelligent comprehension of an object or matter that is accompanied with experience. In contrast to the other Greek words for knowledge (knowledge without perception or knowledge which is my opinion), Paul is praying for the saints to know God experientially.

## **God Revealed:**

Throughout the Scriptures God has chosen to reveal himself to mankind. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the Garden, God spoke with Noah to build an ark, and God blessed Abraham and spoke to Moses out of a burning bush and eventually face to face. For Elijah God’s appearance was not in the wind or the earthquake or the fire but the still, small voice of God. Ultimately God has chosen to reveal himself to us through Jesus Christ. After the Resurrection, Jesus revealed himself to the disciples in remarkable ways.

This is Paul’s passion for us as believers; that God would be revealed to us in wonderful and glorious ways. There are several key revelations Paul highlights for us in this passage:

- **The glorious Father...**

Paul speaks of the Father of Glory to the church in Ephesus. There was the glory of the Roman Empire in contrast. There was the so called glory of the Temple of Artemis. However, Paul tells us God the Father is characterized by glory.

**Hebrews 9:5 - Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.** The Shekinah glory refers to the radiance or presence of God; this Shekinah glory rested upon the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament underlining God dwells in his sanctuary.

The Greek word used for glory is doxa and describes splendour and brightness, amazing might, praise, honour and greatness. This glory must be seen as a divine or supernatural glory, far greater than anything experienced on earth through the Roman Empire or the majestic temples.

Paul speaks of this glory in **2 Cor 3:7-18**. He reminds us that the Israelites could not look at the face of Moses because of its glory even though it was fading. Moses represents the Law of God and now that Jesus has come the glory of grace is surpassing in greatness. Because of this greater glory we are to be very bold and not veiled like Moses.

Paul then tells us this glory is directly connected to the Spirit of God. **“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”<sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17-18)**. This leads us into the next point of revelation Paul desires us to understand.

- **The Spirit of wisdom and revelation...**

The answer for Paul’s prayer is the Spirit of God coming upon and dwelling within the life of the believers in Ephesus. He makes mention of this desire to the church in Colossae as well; **Col 1:9 - For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**

The wisdom that Paul is speaking of can be likened to the gifts of the Spirit found in **1 Cor 12:7-11**. This spiritual wisdom is given to us is beyond our human abilities to know or understand. Many within the cults were seeking revelation but there were tapping into false and demonic sources of wisdom. In contrast their eyes were **“darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18)**.

The supernatural gift of wisdom gives the ability to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to receive insight into how given knowledge may best be applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ. When this spiritual wisdom is active in one’s life and released to the Body of Christ there is a great release of revelation.

Revelation was an answer to Paul’s prayers...

Revelation would open the eyes of the believers to know God better...

Revelation would enlighten their hearts with hope...

Revelation would release God’s incomparably great power...

## Christ Exalted:

Paul ends this section of his letter with the exaltation of Jesus Christ. He transitions into his next thought by speaking of the power of God which is **“like the working of his mighty strength” (Eph 1:19)**. The power he is referring to is the ‘dynamite’ or *dunamis* power which the Father released when Christ rose from the grave. The super duper extraordinary supernatural power is directly connected with the authority of the Father who “seated him” – literally in the Greek – ‘made him to sit’. It was the power and authority of the Father that exalted Jesus to his right hand in the heavenly realms.

**Phil 2:9-11 - Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

The idea of Jesus rising far above all rule and authority, power and dominion was significant to the believers in Ephesus. There was false teaching related to angels and demons with regards to spiritual hierarchy. Paul boldly declares that Jesus is over all the spiritual goobily goop of Satan and his demons. There is no one greater than Jesus Christ as related to the spiritual warfare we all face on a daily basis.

Paul does not stop there. He declares that Jesus is far above every title... This was a huge clash with the Roman Empire who believed that their emperors were gods. The believers in Ephesus were encouraged that Jesus and Jesus alone was God, yet there were also challenged to declare this in the midst of the anti-Christ likeness of the Roman Emperors.

Paul then ends with this uncompromising thought. **“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Eph 1:22-23).**

The universal church, local and abroad, now has Jesus Christ as its Head. This idea of Jesus being the Head of the Church has several implications.

- Firstly, all power and authority come through Jesus Christ.
- Secondly, Jesus Christ is the source of the fullness which fills the Body of Christ.
- Thirdly, the concept of the church (*ekklēsia*) runs all through Ephesians (3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32).

Paul is committed to the truth being declared about who Jesus Christ truly is. He is exalted above the principalities and powers and his fullness fills the church below.

## **In Conclusion:**

Paul is faithful to present the believers in Ephesus with some great foundational doctrine. We can see his passion and devotion to give thanks and pray for the saints, God's perfected ones. God has a great love for his children. In turn Paul hopes to inspire great love in us for God.

We all need to have a greater revelation of who God is and what he can do in our lives. He reminds us of the riches of God's glorious inheritance – his sons and daughters. God has great longing and desire for saints, holy and blameless to be filled with his Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

As a result of the power of the Father Jesus Christ is now the Head of the Church and fills us with God's fullness. In light of this we must be mindful of what we are filling our lives with. We must be longing for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open our eyes to believe and enlighten our hearts to hope? This is how Christ is exalted in our lives; we see in faith and hope in our hearts.

## **In Application:**

There are several ways we can put this message into action.

Firstly, we can give thanks and pray for one another like Paul did for the church in Ephesus. At times we all struggle with the negative and lose sight of the positive. Whether this happens at home with those who are the closest to us or at work we must remember to be thankfully positive for all that God has blessed us with. Maturing in the Lord is full of 'growing pains' and being thankful and prayerful is one of the best ways to grow in God and enjoy it.

Secondly, any work of the Spirit opening our eyes to see or our hearts to hope again starts from the inside out. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation is devoted to our inner life experiencing Conversion so that our outer life will fulfill his Commission. Christ is fully known in us as we are transformed inwardly allowing Christ to be fully known through us outwardly.

The Bible tells us **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21)**. Is God your passion? Are we longing for God to be revealed to us so that we can be the holy and blameless saints he is longing us to be?

Let's Pray...