

Christ the King, November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020  
Ephesians 1:15-end; also Matthew 25:31-end.

Paul is isolated. In Rome. He cannot go where he wants with whom he wants. Sound a little familiar. Part of our experience this past year. Paul is imprisoned due to his profession of faith in Christ. He can't do what he would normally do. Yet you could say with the clouds around him, potential frustrations, maybe if we were in such a situation, what would our tone be? What would we be writing if we sent a whatsapp message, or text, email, or if you are really old – a letter...

Well. Paul writes an amazing letter introduction. You can hardly believe he is in prison, persecuted for faith in Jesus and restricted from doing what he loved doing and had been called to do...

**'For this reason.'**

Paul in fact doesn't even begin with one of his standard introduction to a letter. Normally he kicks off, he says he gives thanks to God for them and prays for them. He does do that but he takes some time getting to it. In fact what he begins with – is what you called a Berakah – a Christianised version of the traditional blessing of God. This is from v3 until 14. Only at 15 – as Joshua read, does the letter continue in more traditional way. But v15, begins with 'for this reason' which means we should read backwards, to see what he has in mind.

In fact what Paul has been writing, has been one long sentence in the Greek – held together with a series of pronouns, which all refer to Christ and the blessings we have received through him. Paul blesses God for salvation in Christ and all that means. It is Trinitarian in fact... God the Father who is the cause and initiator of our salvation – from before history began. Jesus Christ – who effected salvation in history. Holy Spirit, who brings salvation in Paul's life and in the lives of those getting this letter.

'Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the

redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.”

Each of them – like each of us – has the Holy Spirit.

The word seal. Seal points to ownership. Now it is important to remember that Paul is writing to Jews and Gentiles – we see that very clearly in second half of Ephesians 2. God gave the Gentiles the Spirit – by doing so God stamped the Gentile hearers of this letter, as ‘his own possession.’ **Not second class citizens. Equally children of the King.** Equally princes and princesses, not frogs, as someone wrote. This is continued in the phrase literally – ‘the Spirit of Promise, the Holy ‘ The Holy Spirit of the Promise. This points to Joel 2, and also to Ezekiel 36 and 37 – the Spirit was promised as a crucial element of the new covenant God would make with Israel. That Spirit of Promise has been received by Gentiles also. They too are God's possession. **No second class citizens in the church.**

Finally the word ‘inheritance’ – that word: is preceded by ‘our’. You saw the shift in language. ‘You were marked’ Now Paul says ‘our’. Gentiles and Jews together as one people of God, in fulfillment of God's promise to his ancient people. That is the reality. But there is an eschatological dimension to this inheritance. The inheritance has come in part – it will be fully realized at the Eschaton when the King of Kings returns.

Why is this important at all? For me. **‘For this reason.’** What he will now pray – which is what we will focus upon – is for all of them. He sets it beautifully. He says to this first generation Christians – Jew and Gentile. You are all God's possession. Those of you who are part of generations waiting, longing for the Messiah, God's promised King, to come – you are God's possession. You have the Spirit. He has marked you with a seal. You who didn't know there was a Messiah until a few days ago, few years ago, who worshipped multiple gods, lived decadent lives, even occultic lives – You are God's possession, you have the Spirit, he has placed his seal of ownership on you too. Cool.

It reminds me simply. When you are in division with your fellow believer. Ask yourself why. Okay. Then read this entire first 15 verses – not just the

last two we covered. Ask yourself. Is what unites you greater than what divides you? Secondly, consider, if God did the uniting here, are we the ones doing the breaking?

### **What Paul prays**

So v15-19, Paul's thanksgiving and the prayers he is making. V20-23 – the prayer report evolves into a number of theological affirmations.

V15-21 is another long sentence in Greek. He encourages the church – saying what he has heard. He says he is not stopping giving thanks for them. Some of us find it hard to thank God once for somethings. *Imagine Paul in prison, has not stopped giving thanks for them!*

He gives thanks that God has brought them to participate in salvation. All those blessings that he just blessed God for – they are true for these Christians in Ephesus – he knows it because he sees fruit in their lives – faith in the Lord Jesus and love for the saints – they are fellow believers. And Paul shares with them what he has heard – therefore encouraging them further.

What does he pray for them? He is praying for the Spirit to make God known to them. And for the Spirit to reveal to them the rich benefits that is theirs in Christ.

He prays for God to grant them the Spirit. Now, they already have the Spirit as we mentioned. Paul's mind is about a fresh work of the Spirit, more work of the Spirit within them. He asks God to give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

He writes: I keep asking. This matters to him. Doesn't it. There are prayers we pray once. They are prayers we pray daily. The ones, to be honest, really matter. This matters to Paul. ***I keep asking God*** to give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

As they receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, they will in turn: come to a more thorough knowledge of God. As they come to that more thorough knowledge of God, their hearts are enlightened — - heart meaning the core of who they are - they will know the certainty of their

hope and God's inheritance for them – you could say, they will know the certainty of their eschatological **future**.

And as they come to a more thorough knowledge of God, as their hearts are enlightened, they will know God's power, in their day to day lives - in their personal lives individually and as community – as they await the future.

### **The Spirit**

The Spirit is not just to guarantee our salvation but also to bring us revelation, illumination and insight into the will, character, purposes of God so we can know him better. Yes we are saved. From darkness to light.

Yet it does not mean we see things clearly as soon as we are saved. We still need more enlightenment. A greater understanding of our wonderful God. To know the hope in which we live. To know how he wants us to live. To know the power he has placed in us through the presence of his Spirit. For Paul. There is always room for more growth in Christian maturity. There is room for further growth and sanctification. There is more to know of God. And to understand the things of God, we need the help of God. Which he has given. For his Spirit is present within us, each of us, as Paul wrote: if you are sealed, then you have the Spirit, and so this growth Paul prays is possible for all.

Paul is praying, that they come to more thorough – deeper you could say, to use language of psalm 1, their roots go down deeper into God – as someone said, 'sometimes to go further in the things of God, does not mean new things, but current things do deeper'. The Ephesian Christians – first generation – Paul in that prison prays - need revelation and wisdom, to know God more fully and therefore be assured of their future hope and be assured of the power available to them in the present.

### **Future - Hope**

He is praying about their future. That the Spirit as he reveals to them, they will know their future is sure – because it is guaranteed by the presence of the Spirit in their lives, as well of course as the Father's plan

and the work of Christ. They – we – can have hope for a certain yet unrealized future because we have experienced, received God's call to become his people. To look at that hope from a divine perspective – so to speak – he prays they will understand how rich, how splendid is the glory that is to be, in terms of the inheritance God has laid up for them.

What is our hope in Christ?

***How does God describe that hope, the inheritance?***

Paul's praying. The Ephesians will become and be people of hope, perhaps among people who have lost. To be people of abnormal hope we are to be – for what we hope for, to some, will seem weird, strange. But to some what is abnormal, is what God wants us to overflow with... "Genuine hope is not blind optimism, it is hope with open eyes, which sees the suffering, yet believes in the future," (Jurgen Moltmann). To some this is abnormal. Paul wrote in Romans 15: May the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Paul, the Holy Spirit, serves as God's guarantee of their final redemption. That same Holy Spirit is now the source of their understanding how certain their hope is and how splendid it will be when fully realized. If it really hits them that God intends them as his inheritance, with all the saints, that knowledge will transform them with joy and love. God wants them and us!

**The Present - Power**

The God who has this church of all sorts, all ages, all backgrounds – guaranteed them their lives for eternity, has not left them – nor us – to our own devices as we face the challenges and powers of this time. He prays. Their Spirit enlightened hearts – as they receive wisdom and revelation – may understand how great is God's power to us!

The power for us, has already been shown in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, far above all rule and authority. Christ has not been removed from earthly influences by his ascension – far from it. He has been moved to a place of ultimate influence over the matters on earth. This was by the working of God's power.

He then shares in chapter 2 – how that power has not just been revealed in history through Jesus, but to them personally. He reminds them of their story. They were dead in their sins. But God made them alive. He raised them and us up with Christ and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Where is Christ Jesus as King? We, in a spiritual sense, are seated with him...not on the ground before him, but seated with him, beside him.

The power of the Spirit – in their lives, turned them from darkness to light, from death to life, from dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the Son. They – you – have heard about God's power show in resurrection and exaltation – you have experienced God's power as you moved from death to life. Why are you a Christian? You may not have any idea when the change happened in your life, you may have always known Christ, and don't remember the year, the point, when you saw your personal need for him, that personal choice to make him your centre.

But in God's eyes. Each of us were dead in sin. But God made us alive and we moved into the heavenly realms. Why are you a Christian? God's power has been at work.

**What does this power look like?** Ephesians has many references to the Spirit. So what is he emphasizing to them in this letter? In Ephesians 5 he calls on them to be filled and go on being filled with the Spirit. As we said before, a beautiful image of what being filled with the Spirit is like wind filling the sails of a boat.

He goes on to share what a Spirit filled life looks like – it affects how we speak to each other and build up each other; how we worship the Lord, how we give thanks to the Lord, and finally how we submit to each other and our relationships with each other in marriage, between parents and children, between employer and employee. That is power of the Spirit.

Ephesians 3 he prays for them again. He prays for them to be empowered in the inner person – deep within; so Christ dwells in their

core; that they would understand the greatness of Christ's love, and to be filled with all the fullness of God – that the fruit of the Spirit would grow that the character of Christ would be increasingly formed within them. He prays that they would know, live in, be secure, in knowing their position in Christ – who is over all, about all rule and authority, the King over all.

Power. Power that raised Jesus from the dead. Power that raised each of us spiritually from the dead and made us alive. Power to know how wide, long, high and deep is the love of Christ. Power to become increasingly like Christ. Power that Christ dwells in our centre we live by faith. Power that transforms the words we speak to others, the way we build up others, the worship and thanksgiving we bring to God, power that transforms and shapes relationships between couples, between parents and children, between employers and employees. Be enlightened in your heart to know this power. ***It is there for every believer.*** The Spirit is not there living there as a tenant until the great day of the Lord. He seeks to be active. He is the very presence and power of God.

***Conclusion.***

Paul in prison. Begins by Praising God. Then prays 'More Lord'. he is thanking God. He is praying 'MORE LORD'. He prays, by the Spirit they will know God more deeply. He prays, by the Spirit, they will understand the nature of Christian hope. He prays by the Spirit, they will know the nature of God's power already at present and at work in Christians – in all Christians potentially.

And he does this all in prison. Restricted. Persecuted. Yet he keeps on asking. What a servant of the King of Kings.

Pray.

We pray. More Lord. Give us your Spirit afresh.