

Ephesians - Lesson 3

Ephesians 1:15-23

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Review

- Verses 3-14 is the longest sentence in the NT
- Addresses each person of the Trinity:
 - Father: Verses 4-6
 - Son: Verses 7-12
 - Holy Spirit: 13-14
- Each one of these three sections ends with the phrase *to the praise of his glory*.
- Focused on:
 - Election: Before the foundation of the world God chose you to be saved through Christ.
 - Baptism: Often referred to indirectly throughout scripture than to be named directly
 - Examples: washing, stripping and clothing, rebirth, adoption, election, death and resurrection.

Chapter 1

Overview of Verses 15-23

- Eph. 1:3-14 is the longest sentence in the NT at 204 Greek words.
- Eph. 1:15-23 is the second longest sentence in the NT at 169 Greek words.
- Following the *Prayer of Blessing* in the previous verses, Paul now includes a formal thanksgiving.
 - This thanksgiving (v15-16a) leads into intercession for the letter's recipients (v.16b-19) and praise of the exalted Christ (v.20-23)
 - The purpose of the thanksgiving was to exercise the personal relationship that was strained by absence.

Verses 15-16a

- **Read verses 15-16a**
- This section can be considered the *Thanksgiving* section
- In these verses Paul gives thanks for his addressees' faith and love.
- The point is not that Paul has only heard of the Ephesians' faith and love.
 - Indicates more of that since he's left he has worried over them and is gladdened by current news.
- Christian Virtues of Faith, Hope, & Love
 - These three virtues tend to be grouped together as seen in 1 Cor. 13:13
 - "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."
 - **QUESTION: What's significant about these three? Why is the greatest love?**
 - These three virtues are mentioned in this section (v.15-23).
 - Faith and Love within verse 15.
 - Discuss Hope later on

- ...your **faith** in the Lord Jesus...
 - Faith in Christ Jesus was introduced in 1:1
 - Ephesians were defined as “Faithful [ones who are] in Christ Jesus
 - “Your faith in Christ” implies Christ as the object of saving faith.
 - Faith is directed towards Christ.
- ...and **love** toward all the saints,
 - Faith produces love. The evidence of faith’s genuineness.
 - Love for one another follows upon God’s love for us in Christ.
 - ...all the saints... emphasizes Christian concern for every member of Christ’s body.
- Faith & Love
 - Both gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - When Paul praises these qualities in the saints, he is praising God work.

Verses 16b-19

- **Read verses 16b-19**
- This section can be considered the *Supplication* section
- ...*I do not cease to give thanks (v.16)*
 - Shouldn’t be taken literally, as if Paul does nothing other than give thanks.
 - This is hyperbole, expressing the ongoing, regular, intensive nature of his prayer
 - This is rooted in Christ’s mandate
 - All prayer is directed by the Holy Spirit, who continually moves faith into conversation with God.
- ...*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (v.17),*
 - Wisdom, revelation, and knowledge are major themes of Ephesians.
 - False religious philosophies give false knowledge.
 - Faith and love, which we discussed earlier leads to complete knowledge of the true God.
 - True knowledge is to be known by God (1 Cor. 8:3)
 - This triad evokes Isaiah 11:2 “and the Spirit of YHWH shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH
 - These gifts are bestowed on all those baptized into Christ.
- ...*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened (v.18)*
 - This is a unique phrase. Possible something invented by Paul.
 - Human faculties that perceive or don’t perceive the works of God.
 - Blindness is a frequent image for the ignorance of pagan existence apart from God.
 - This phrase can be simplified as faith
 - The spiritual powers of sight.
- ...*what is the hope of his calling... (v.18)*
 - Previously we discussed Faith & Love, now we get the third virtue: Hope
 - The concept of hope was introduced in 1:12
 - “who first hoped in Christ)
 - Hope again is repeated in 2:12, 4:4
 - Hope is confidence about the future (Rom. 8:24-25)

- “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”
- Hope is rooted in the promises of God
- God’s calling through His Word becomes the basis of Christian confidence.
- Hope may be understood as the object of faith. The thing hoped for.

Verses 20-23

- **Read verses 20-23**
- This section can be considered the *Praise* section.
- These petitions are guaranteed in Christ.
 - First: ascension to God’s right hand (Psalm 8 and 110)
 - Second: affirmation of Christ’s high office
- At the time of the reformation, Christ’s session at the right hand was a point of contention between Luther and Zwingli and Oecolampadius.
 - The latter two argued against the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament
 - the ascension caused Christ’s human body to be locally confined at God’s right hand in heaven (Eph 1:20)
 - the flesh is no avail (John 6:63)
 - Luther opposed these positions.
- Two questions were at issue:
 - First: Is God’s right hand a place?
 - Second: Is the human nature of Christ locally confined to it?
- Luther:
 - First: the right hand represents a power that is active everywhere.
 - Found this by going through the OT
 - Second: When discussing Ephesians 1 its important to understand the communication of attributes, Christ’s human and divine nature.
 - If Paul were talking only of the divine nature of Christ being seated at the right hand of God, he could not say that all spiritual powers were made subject to Christ at his ascension and session.
 - All powers had already been communicated to Christ’s human nature (Matt 28:18).
 - Ultimately you can’t separate Christ divine and human nature.
- ... *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (v.22-23).*
 - The final aspect given to Christ in the conclusion of this section is Christ’s appointment as Head over all things, with particular benefit accruing to the Church
 - This image is unpacked later in Ephesians as part of the appeal to unity in Christ (Eph. 4)

Questions?

Thoughts/Questions

Any other items you would like to discuss?

Closing Prayers

O God, source of all abiding knowledge, through Word and Spirit You both enlighten the minds and sanctify the lives of those whom You draw to Your service. Bless those here who teach and those who learn, that all the baptized may apply themselves with ready diligence to their tasks and faithfully fulfill their service according to Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have safely brought us to this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.