

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 6 – Ephesians 1:15-19

Prayer

Holy Spirit, come and bless our study of your Word. Open the eyes of our hearts to see your wisdom, power, and glory. Point us to the cross of Jesus, as you always do, so that we would be forgiven, our hope would be restored, and our trust in him would be strengthened. Amen.

From Last Week

Is “we who were among the first to put our hope in Christ” in Ephesians 1:12 a reference to the Jews?

- It would make sense as a reference to those who had converted from Judaism to Christianity. That would include Paul, some of the Christians in Ephesus, and a whole slew of former Jews who would have been able to read the original manuscript of the letter.
- It would also make sense as a reference to all the Christians in Ephesus being the first of many New Testament Christians.
- Does it refer to Israel as a whole? That doesn’t seem to be the case, at least in these verses. There are other places where Paul speaks about the plan of salvation being revealed first to the Jewish nation of Israel and then to the Gentiles, after the majority of Israelites rejected the message. But that thought is not present in these verses.
- Thoughts, comments, or questions on that?

The first 14 verses mark a bit of a break in thought. So, let’s read that opening section and see if there are any questions about those verses that we haven’t answered yet. That will also set the table for today’s discussion.

What in these verses shows that God is so worthy to be praised, a phrase that Paul repeats throughout?

Other lingering comments or questions about the first 14 verses?

Because all of the next verses are “technically” one long thought, we’re going to try to tackle them together. I’ll group some together so that we have some coherency.

Verses 15-16 - Διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ ἀκούσας τὴν καθ’ ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους ¹⁶οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνηϊαν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου,

On account of this, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love for all the saints ¹⁶I do not stop giving thanks for you, making remembrance of you in my prayers...

1. Διὰ τοῦτο – “on account of this” – “This” refers to everything we just heard in verses 3 through 14.

2. What can we assume that the Ephesians were doing if Paul heard about their faith and love (v. 15)?
 - a. What insight does that give into our daily lives?

3. οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν – “I do not stop giving thanks” – This is another present tense verb; Paul’s thanksgiving is continuous!
 - a. How does Paul show his thankfulness?
 - i. Paul has similar words for the Philippians in **Philippians 1:3-5**.
 - b. Again, what insight does that give into our daily lives?
 - c. Would anyone like to share tips on how to work toward a more faithful and robust prayer life?

What comments or questions do you have?

Now to the content of Paul’s prayer; this is a bigger chunk, but it all connects!

Verses 17-19 – ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, δώῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ, ¹⁸ πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ὑμῶν] εἰς τὸ εἶδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ, τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, ¹⁹ καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ.

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him ¹⁸ shedding light onto the eyes of your heart so that you would know the hope of his calling, which is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints ¹⁹ and [so that you would know] the greatness of his surpassing power for us who believe according to the working of his mighty strength.

Verse 17

4. This verse has a nice reference to the Trinity tucked in there: Father, Son, and Spirit.
 - a. One question that tends to come up when translating the word πνεῦμα is “Should it be Spirit or spirit?” Honestly, it usually doesn’t make a huge deal unless it’s made exceptionally clear by the context or by the use of the complete title Holy Spirit.
 - b. If a translation uses “spirit” when another uses “Spirit,” Lutheran pastors will normally adopt the understanding that the Spirit influences the spirit of a Christian.
 - c. Also, when the complete title Holy Spirit is not used, the word πνεῦμα could refer to a human spirit or breath or wind.
 - i. In Acts 2, πνεῦμα is found throughout the verses but changes meanings, based on the context: a wind was heard; the Spirit caused the disciples to speak in tongues; etc.

5. Now, to the work of the Spirit. He is “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” There’s also a knowledge that comes with the Spirit.
 - a. These attributes are used in a variety of instances in the Old and New Testaments. Note the consistency of the Spirit’s work throughout:
 - i. **Exodus 31:3** – Bezalel was one of the main craftsmen/artists involved in the creation of the Tabernacle. God “filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and with skill in all kinds of crafts.”
 - ii. **Deuteronomy 34:9** – After the death of Moses, Joshua was said to be “filled with the Spirit of wisdom.”
 - iii. **Isaiah 11:2** – In this Messianic prophecy, Isaiah writes that the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, giving him wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD.
 - iv. In **Acts 6:3**, when choosing the seven elders to head up the distribution of food for the benefit of believers, but especially widows, the disciples looked for men who were “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.”
 - v. When speaking about spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthians 12:7**, Paul speaks about messages of wisdom coming to one person and messages of knowledge coming to another, but they come from the same Spirit.
 - b. What do these verses tell us about the importance of the Holy Spirit’s work in us? In other words, what can’t we have without the Holy Spirit, based on these verses?
 - i. Most importantly, about whom can we not have knowledge without the Spirit’s work?

Verse 18 - ...**shedding light onto the eyes of your heart so that you would know the hope of his calling, which is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints...**

6. The Holy Spirit is a revealer; he sheds light on things (there’s more coming about light/darkness in chapter 5). Verse 17 details some of the things that the Spirit has shed light on. What other blessing(s) is mentioned here in this verse?
7. This is the only place in the Bible that speaks about “the eyes of your heart.” What does that phrase mean, since our hearts don’t have physical optical organs?
8. Again, even though we’re out of the first section, Paul does not want the Ephesians to forget the inheritance that is theirs, along with just about abundant said inheritance is.

Verse 19 - ...**and [so that you would know] the greatness of his surpassing power for us who believe according to the working of his mighty strength.**

9. Another result of the Holy Spirit's work is that we would know how powerful and able to work God is. Just look at all the "power" words in this verse: greatness, surpassing, power, working, might, strength.
- a. Over what specific things does God have power (can't say "all things")?

 - b. How does he show that power to us?

What comments and questions do you have?

Closing Prayer – CW 183 v. 1 and 4

**Holy Spirit, Light Divine, Shine upon this heart of mine!
Chase the gloom of night away; Turn the darkness into day.**

**Holy Spirit, Power Divine, Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol throne; Reign supreme and reign alone. Amen.**

Just a heads up: Pastor Plagenz is on deck to teach this class whenever I am at home following the birth of my daughter (early June). We will meet as normal next week, May 23. We will not have class on May 30, as both pastors will be out of town for family-related celebrations. We will also plan to not have Bible class on June 13, so that Pastor Plagenz, musicians, etc. have ample time to get out to Robinson Park for outdoor worship.