

That You May Know

Ephesians 1:15-23

You will never exhaust the riches of God's wisdom, glory, character, or plan. Therefore, class is never over for the follower of Christ. It is our joy and privilege to be every learning more about the hope, value, and power we have in Him.

"What a POWERFUL name"

- Good to remember this week when we have seen such a destructive power unleashed on our state – a Hurricane that has taken lives and left 10's of thousands homeless
- God is infinitely more powerful than a hurricane
- But here's the interesting thing: where does He want to unleash His power?... through us!
- When believers sacrifice to help those in need we are the power of God at work in the world for good.
- So let's show the world the power of God by sacrificing to help
 - o Many of you have been doing that this week – thank you so much! God is pleased!
 - o But this will be a LONG road to recovery – we need to continue to sacrifice for those in need
- How can you serve, how can you give?
 - o We've listed some specific ways on our website
 - o We've partnered with many other churches in town: www.bcsleads.org

Turn to Ephesians 1

Students: great to have you back!

I'm glad you had a shortened week – you needed it because this is syllabus week

- We remember what it feels like to get 5 or 6 syllabi on the same week – overwhelming! Like each prof assumed their class was your only class.
- A little secret: many of us adults, myself included, still have nightmares of syllabus day... and I've been out of A&M for almost 20 years!

Here's the funny thing I've come to realize over the years since college: a syllabus is actually a gift.

- May not feel that way right now, but it is! Because it tells you exactly what the objectives are for the class. You know in detail what you'll be covering, what you'll be expected to learn and do.
- Can you imagine how much harder a class would be without a syllabus! Just come to class and find out – "Dang, a paper was due today. But you didn't know because there was no syllabus!"
- A syllabus brings clarity – it tells you what you need to learn
- It's a gift.

And so it's no surprise that God has given us a syllabus for the Christian life

- Actually, multiple syllabi spread throughout scripture
- This morning we will study one of those syllabi
- Eph 1:15-23 Paul lists out the "Learning Objectives" God has for us in this course called "life"

So as we read the first few vs of this passage, ask yourself:

What does God want me to learn in this life?

Read Eph 1:15-19 (read it to you in the NET – a little more accurate and helpful)

Starts with “For this reason” – points us back to the previous passage

- Last week: we studied the longest run-on sentence in the Bible as far as I know!
- 11 verses, 202 words spelling out the spiritual blessings we have received from the Father, Son, and Spirit through faith in Jesus.
- “For this reason” means that the prayer is a result of their faith in Jesus – because they’ve trusted in Him, Paul wants all of these things for them
- Point: he is praying for believers
 - o **v18a “since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened”**
 - o “enlightened” → the Holy Spirit has come into your life and removed the veil of darkness that Satan had placed over your eyes so that you can see the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ.
- **This prayer – which is God’s syllabus for your life – assumes you are already a believer**
- **That’s probably not true of everyone here this morning:**
 - o some of you may be just visiting us this morning – a friend or neighbor invited you
 - o just checking out this whole Christianity thing
 - o So let me explain it to you as simply as I can
 - o go back a few verses – read 1:7
 - o **there are many religions in this world, and all of them other than Christianity tell you what YOU MUST DO to become right with God or the gods or the universe**
 - give you a list of steps, a noble path, 5-pillars, a Law to follow, to practice, to do so that God will accept you
 - o **Christianity is the opposite: Christianity tells you WHAT GOD HAS DONE to make you right with Him**
 - tells you that God’s Son, Jesus, became human and lived a perfect life and then died in our place, as a sacrifice for all of our sins, and then rose from the dead to redeem us from sin – to free us from the penalty of sin so that we could be forgiven for free
 - that’s what GRACE means – getting something good you don’t deserve – Jesus died and rose from the dead to purchase forgiveness for you as a free gift
 - o But He won’t force that gift on you – you must say “Yes, I want that. I believe I am a sinner but that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead so I could have eternal life for free. Yes God. I want that.”
- **The moment you believe that good news, God’s Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you forever**
 - o we studied that last week: read 1:13
 - o the Holy Spirit sealed you by moving into your life permanently
- **And now that the Holy Spirit lives within you, you can begin to grow in your knowledge of God**
 - o **God’s Spirit will teach you about Him and His ways and His plans for your life**
 - o read 1 Cor 2:12,14a
 - o “the natural man” – that’s us before we were believers – we couldn’t understand God and His ways – it was all foolishness to us
 - o But now that the Spirit lives within us, we can understand and grow in God’s Word

And that’s the heart of God’s syllabus for your life

- **it begins with the Gospel... but doesn’t end there**

God’s goal for you is to KEEP LEARNING and KEEP GROWING in spiritual knowledge

- See that in Ephesians... see it in Colossians... Read Col 1:9
- God wants you to keep learning – that’s true no matter how far you are along in the spiritual life
 - o even for those of us who’ve gone to seminary, we have really only scratched the surface of the depths of God’s wisdom and truth.
 - o How do I know that? Read Rom 11:33
- You will never exhaust the depths of God’s revelation – you will never get to the end of this adventure of learning more about God and His ways.

- So for all of us, myself included, there is still so much to learn! And that's what God wants for us. Class is never over for the follower of Christ. There is always something new, something better, something richer to learn in our spiritual walk.

So what specifically does God want us to keep learning about in this life?

4 things to keep learning about in life:

1) Our God

- **read v17 – “Him” = God**
- Knowledge of the Triune God – of Father, Son, and Spirit – is first and most important
- **Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us”**
 - o Yes! There is nothing more important in determining who you are and what you do in this life than what comes into your mind when you think about God.
 - o Your perception of God – whether He does or doesn't exist, whether He is loving or righteous or powerful or wise – that perception of God will determine your orientation towards life more than anything else
 - o True for believers and unbelievers alike – true even of an atheist – his belief that there is no Creator or higher power shapes his reality and his approach to life more than any other single belief
- Everything in life flows out of this foundation of what we think about God
- **Therefore, there is no more important thing for us to learn about in life than God**
 - o That's why theologians down through the centuries called the study of God “Theology Proper” – this is the most proper, most beneficial of all topics to study
 - o It shapes all else.
- **Therefore, it is the first item on God's syllabus for your life – learn more about Him**
 - o No matter how much you think you already know, keep learning, keep growing
 - o Many of you know Jane Battle – who's been walking with the Lord for many years and taught 1st grade Sunday School since pretty much the beginning of time! She is so wise and godly and knowledgeable in scripture... and yet she is always hungry to learn more! She's in a Bible study every semester – not just to teach, but to learn – to keep learning more about God. Because she understands that nothing is more important.
 - o Be like Jane! Keep learning about God your whole life long.
- **Now let's be clear: knowing God includes both facts about God and relationship with God**
 - o Facts alone are not enough
 - o But relationship without facts isn't enough either
 - o We must pursue both
- **Keep learning about God... and you can start with the end of this passage... vv20-23!!**
 - o Read v20-23
 - o 3 things Paul tells us about our God – all of which demonstrate His power:
 - o **He is the Source of life**
 - Proven when He raised Jesus from the dead – death overcome
 - Death does not have the final word, God does
 - “What a beautiful name”
 - “Death could not hold you, the veil tore before you”
 - o **He is Sovereign**
 - all powerful, all-authority in the universe
 - all things belong to Him; He rules as unchallengeable King of Kings
 - “What a beautiful name”
 - “You have no rival, you have no equal, now and forever God you reign”

- **He is Generous**
 - Gave His own Son as head = leader and source of the church
 - Jesus fills all in all – He fills the church with hope, value, and power
 - He gives freely
- The better you know these things about God, the better you will be able to weather the storms and temptations of life.
- So keep studying what the Word reveals about God
“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us”
A.W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy

2) Our HOPE in His calling (v18)

- **“hope”**
 - not like English word “hope” – not wishful thinking like, “Gosh, I hope I win the lottery”
 - = something good in the future that’s guaranteed to come true
 - biblical hope is looking forward to something you’ve been promised by God
- **So what have we been promised in the future by God?**
 - A LOT! Salvation, eternal life, resurrection bodies, immortality, new heavens and a new earth, perfection, infinite joy, perfect peace...
 - So many good things – too many to list
 - So I will just summarize with my favorite passage about the future: read Rev 21:2-5a
 - IMO it doesn’t get any better than that
 - Everything new, everything right, everything perfect
 - That is what is in store for all who’ve trusted in Jesus
- **And that future hope gives us strength when we suffer**
 - Hiking trip when I was 12 – exhausted, sick, weak – yet able to cruise down the mountain because I had hope in the hamburger I’d eat when we got back to town – I knew it was coming – kept me going
- **You know what’s coming and you know it will be good – and that knowledge will keep you going when life gets hard**
- **So practically speaking: learn more about the hope you have to look forward to**
 - Read **Revelation, 1 Thessalonians, Isaiah**
 - Read **“Heaven” by Randy Alcorn** – gets into a lot of details about what next life will be like
 - Read **CS Lewis’ “The Last Battle”**
 - last few chapters paint an unforgettable picture of heaven
 - it’s not a theology book – it’s a metaphor – don’t press the details
 - But enjoy the beauty of how it describes the unending adventure of the next life

3) Our VALUE as His inheritance (v18)

- Confusing phrase – we’re not exactly sure what Paul meant
- Best guess: that the “saints” – that’s us – are God’s own inheritance and thus have incredible value in God’s eyes
- It’s about knowing your value
 - read 1 Peter 2:9
 - True of all believers – you are chosen, royal, holy – that’s true of you whether you feel like it or not
 - You are God’s own precious possession
- **What a contrast to how our world values people!**
 - Our world: assigns value based on performance or attributes
 - valuable if you are beautiful, wealthy, funny, smart, creative, famous, talented, athletic
 - value is something you must earn or prove in some form or fashion

- **No! Your value was set in stone in eternity past when God chose you by name to be His inheritance**
 - o Your value is based on God's choice of you to belong to Him forever
- **Let me be honest with you: Lot of days I really don't like myself**
 - o I'm not a very fun guy to be around: been depressed for years, I struggle with all kinds of doubts, cynical, super introverted, uncomfortable in groups, selfish, prideful
 - o So there's often days when I really don't like myself
 - o And yet this passage tells me there are NO days where God doesn't like me!
 - That's incredible to me!
 - I don't want to be around me... and I'm me!
 - o And yet God loves me and likes me so much He chose to be around me every day for all ETERNITY!
 - o I am precious in His sight – I am the inheritance He longs for
 - o And so are you
 - o That truth radically changes the way we see ourselves – loved and liked by the Creator because of His choice of us, not because of our performance or attributes
- **That also should change the way we see other believers:**
 - o their value is not based on their apparent holiness or wealth or success or race or political beliefs... they are valuable because God chose them
 - o that is part of our answer to the scourge of racism
 - o black, white, Hispanic, Asian... all who trust in Christ are equally precious in the sight of God for He has claimed each of us as His own eternal inheritance

4) His POWER at work for us (v19)

- Paul heaps up words to emphasize the greatness of God's power available to believers
 - o "power" "strength" "might"
 - o = supernatural power in action
 - o power to win victory and overcome enemies
- same power that raised Jesus from the dead
 - o conquered the enemy of death
- **If you are a believer, then God's power is at work in you, whether you feel it or not**
- **To do what? 2 things: Read Philippians 2:13**
- **1) Enabling you to say "no" to sin and "yes" to obedience**
 - o "no" to temptation
 - A believer NEVER HAS TO SIN – sin is never inevitable
 - 1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
 - You can always say "no" to temptation at a particular moment if you have trusted in Jesus
 - So if I sin, it's not God's fault; it's mine. I could have said no. And I should.
 - o "no" to the tempter
 - When Satan tempts you, you can say "no."
 - Not because you are powerful... but because Christ in you is powerful
 - I've been trying to explain that to my kids – very curious about Satan
 - I want them to have a healthy respect for Satan and demons – they are real and far more powerful than us
 - But I don't want them to be afraid because they have Christ in them – therefore in Christ they are infinitely stronger than Satan
 - You need never obey or succumb to him

- “no” to yourself
 - selfishness and self-preservation
 - “yes” to obedience
 - “yes” to others
 - “yes” to suffering
- **2) Changing your desires for the better**
- “to will” = to desire to do what God desires you to do
 - theology of addictions and habits
 - God’s Spirit is at work in you today
 - As you say “no” to sin through His power, He rewrites your brain little-by-little so that sin has less of a draw upon you tomorrow

How do we grow in this knowledge?

- It’s the Holy Spirit who actually grows our knowledge of God, Hope, etc.
- But what’s our part?

Quite a few answers Scripture gives: How do we grow?

- **Study the Word** – that’s the source of all absolute truth and knowledge about God
- **Gather with other believers** – we grow best in community where others can help us along the path
- **Obey what you already know** – if you walk in known sin you can’t expect God to reveal more of Himself to you; sin always results in blindness and self-deception
- **And many other steps**

BUT the first and most important step is what Paul actually models for us in this passage...

Most Important: Pray

- Do what Paul did – he prayed for the Ephesians to grow in this knowledge. He prays that often for other churches, for his friends, even for himself.
- Pray and ask God to grow you in wisdom and truth
 - One of the few things we know God does want for us – pray with confidence
 - pray for healing, new job, deliverance from financial stress... don’t know if that’s what God wants to do for you
 - but you know He wants this for you, your kids, everyone – to grow to know and love Him more
- Pray this for yourself
- Pray this for your kids
- Pray this for others

Close with time in silent prayer – pray for yourself, pray for other believers you know