

## Ephesians Week 2

1:15-23

### Summary

#### **Summary of the Text**

Paul moves from his 'non-traditional' blessing of God to his more traditional thanksgiving for the Ephesians. He declares that he has heard of the Ephesians faith in Christ and their love for all the saints and it is because they have been transformed by the gospel that he does not stop giving thanks to God for them. He goes on to say that he is regularly making mention of them in his prayers; specifically two things.

First, that God the Father would give to the Ephesians the Spirit who gives wisdom and revelation of God himself. Second, he asks that the heart of the Ephesians may be enlightened. Paul goes further to describe three things he prays the Ephesians would comprehend deeper:

- i. they will know the hope of God's calling of them. This reflects what we said last week about being elected in Christ before the foundation of the world. God has us, we do not need to fret or fear.
- ii. what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. God has chosen us (his people, both Jew and Gentile) to be his own.
- iii. what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe. As we are called to a life of holiness, we do not do this in our own power, we instead accomplish this through God's own power made available to us.

Paul then digs deeper in terms of God's power, showing how it in it's most potent context the raising of Christ from the dead and his exalting of Christ to his right hand. Christ raising demonstrates his defeat of the the powers and his being at the right hand of God shows his ruling over all powers, which is what Paul goes on to say. God has put all things under Christ, so Christ is head over all things. Particularly, Christ is head over the Church which is his body and demonstrates to the world that Christ is over all.

#### **Summary of Discussion**

One area of question was around Christ, the Church and the powers. Basically, if I understood correctly, the question was, if Christ is over/ruler of all, powers included, and we are seated with him or in him, then do we have authority over the powers? My basic answer was that in Christ's death and resurrection Christ has defeated the powers in a finished way, but that it is being worked out in our physical time, i.e. the powers will ultimately be defeated. In terms of what the NT says to us about the powers and our authority over them, particularly Ephesians, it seems to me that we are encouraged to be aware of them and that they can be hostile to us, we need to guard against them, put on the armour of God, and we have some authority, sin and death no longer rule over us and if you resist the Devil he must flee. Though I would caution against a full blown theology of the powers since the NT itself doesn't seem interested in giving us that. Again, we don't deny their existence or their malicious intent, we are to stand firm against them, we are not subject to them, and ultimately they are subjected to Christ who is above every name.

This first discussion led to a second discussion picking up themes from my sermon of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13). For some there was a tension in what I seemed to be saying about not judging and judging. I tried to clarify this by saying that we are not to judge the world

(outside of the church) but we are to judge among our selves (inside the church). The emphasis is when we judge amongst ourselves it is always: i) for the purpose of restoration not condemnation, ii) it is always exercised in love, and iii) it is done out of appropriate relationship. This led to a question about the state of the church (both Northview and churches in general) and the quality or level of our relationships. Often, we do not practice relationship with one another which would qualify us to confront each other with our sin (to restore or otherwise). This brought our discussion back to Ephesians where I pointed out that there are two aspects of Paul's praise for the church. First, is their faith in Christ, but the second is love for all the saints. Further, the role of unity in the church which becomes a living testimony, a living theology to the world that God has overcome the powers in Christ and that Christ now rules over all. So, my (I hope our) conclusion is that our first task in moving forward is to build real relationship, so that we have real unity, so that we can be holy as God has called us to be as his people. This is the essential message of Ephesians, so it was a very appropriate discussion.

### **Glossary of Terms**

Septuagint: Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures