**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon Series**

**Paul’s Letter to The Saints in Ephesus**

**Spirit Enlightenment**

*Chapter 1:15-23*

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

We have seen that the first few verses in Paul’s letter to the Believers in Ephesus are very revealing of God’s intent-plan for those saints in Ephesus 2000 years ago and for our lives today.

Paul has identified the saints in Ephesus as Believers who he continues to exalt and encourage. Paul knows that the world in which they live is challenging. Daily, they have to make decisions that separate them from the culture around them. Obviously, their decisions are noticed by their neighbors who, no doubt, are impacted by seeing people who believe in the Resurrected Lord live a life counter to their prevailing worldviews. Is this not what we Believers face today? This is why we need to encourage each other. The counter-Christian-culture is all around us.

After Paul emphasizes that the saints in Ephesus are *sealed* in the Lord for an eternity, he goes on to highlight their faith in the Lord Jesus and the love they have for each other. It is important to notice that our faith in the Lord produces love for our neighbor. Paul personally lifts them in prayer for God to impower them with wisdom and revelation, but this knowledge is not to be general knowledge. Paul prays for their knowledge to be of God.

**Ephesians 1:15-23**

15 For this reason I too,

having heard of

the **faith** in the Lord Jesus which exists among you

and your **love** for all the saints,

 16 do not cease **giving thanks** for you,

while making mention of you in my **prayers**;

 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Father of glory,

may give to you

 a **spirit of wisdom and of revelation**

in the **knowledge of Him**.

 In verse 18, Paul expounds upon the specific knowledge he wants the Ephesian Saints to know. He wants them to attain knowledge concerning enlightenment about God’s calling in their lives. We notice that there is an order to Paul’s prayer. First, he prays that their *hearts be enlightened.* Paul addresses their hearts as having “eyes”, a rather unique quality to assign hearts. This is the key for everyone in receiving additional knowledge about God, beyond salvation.

 18 I pray that the **eyes of your heart** may be **enlightened**,

so that you will know

 what is the hope of His **calling**,

 what are the riches of the glory of **His inheritance in the saints,**

**18 πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ὑμῶν] εἰς**

 **To give light the eyes the heart you into**

 **(understanding)**

**τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστιν ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ, τίς**

**the to know you who I am the hope the calling His who**

**ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς**

**the riches the glory the inheritance Him in the**

 **ἁγίοις,**

**saints (Holy Ones) (Eph. 1:18 BGT)**

The first word in the sentence is directed at giving light (understanding) to a person. This is through the heart that has eyes. Paul understands the fallen human condition. Even though people become in right-standing with God, by surrendering to Him, they still face a daunting everyday task to live life in this chaos. This verse illustrates that our “inner being” (soul, heart) needs to be constantly observing the world through our God-given spiritual eyes.

We know that the culture of scientism demands that we see the world only through a materialistic lens. This is impossible. By our very created nature, we are programed to live spiritual lives. The non-spirit approach is a deadness. When we meet a person who attempts to live this way, they appear mechanical and fail to have an ability to have relationships of any meaning; they are superficial.

 I was listening to a Christian apologist who related an account where he was explaining the atheistic belief system to his audience. He responded to a question from a man who said he was an atheist about human feelings and from where they come. The question was directed at free-will choice. In responding, the apologist said that we know that leading atheists and agnostics believe that we do not have any choice in our emotions. What we see as emotions are really chemical responses that our bodies produce responding to the environment around us. We do not have any choice in this; these chemical responses are a product of evolution in determining the survival of the fittest. Thus, there is not any choice to freely choose to love or show compassion to another person. Humans only have chemical responses. We are just a product of surviving cells originating from primordial soup that evolved to a more advanced life form to perpetuate life physically. Thus, keeping the species alive until another superior life form overtakes humans or earth gets hit by an asteroid destroying people. In addition, humans do not have any purpose, meaning or direction for life. Remember that the leading materialists in the world espouse that humans are from a random-undirected meaningless-purposeless-process (R.U.M.P.P).

As the apologist was giving his response to the atheist, the woman sitting next to the atheist was the man’s wife. She looked at her atheist husband and asked if he believed the apologist’s response. The atheist said that he did. The apologist later learned that the wife of the atheist divorced him. I guess that was her chemical response.

Obviously, God has a better plan for our lives. God intends for us to have a spiritual relationship with Him and each other. It is my experience that all relationships are spiritual. By our nature, we spiritually sense another person’s presence of attitude and character. To deny the spirit-life of humanity is to deny life itself. But that is the reality of many in our materialistic world for the atheists/agnostics. They will never experience the fullness of life because they deny their spiritual abilities.

We often repeat Paul’s declaration in Romans 8:9 that if the Spirit of Christ is not in us, we do not belong to Him.

**Romans 8:5-11**

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,

 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

We see here in Romans God’s design and intent for our relationships which are to be spiritual, starting with God and then each other. In fact, Believers, who set their minds according to the Spirit - are focused on life and peace. This is why Paul points to our hearts being enlightened to receive more of the knowledge about God’s plan for our lives – *“riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”.* Paul further explains to the Ephesians, and to us, the application of God’s Spirit at work in Believers. This is to empower Believers to spiritually overcome the fallen world.

**Ephesians 1:19**

and what is the surpassing greatness of His power

toward us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Do not let the focus on Christ pass. This is one of the main reasons why God incarnated Himself into one of us – Jesus. God brought about, through the full humanity of Jesus, a victory over death and then ascended Jesus to Heaven. Therefore, Jesus is our example and pattern of things to come in us. We, too, as regenerated fallen people, will follow Jesus into God’s heaven.

 **Ephesians 1:20-21**

 20 which He brought about in Christ,

when He raised Him from the dead

and seated Him at His right hand

in the heavenly places,

 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,

and every name that is named,

not only in this age but also in the one to come.

 Paul makes it clear to the Ephesians and to the world that through God’s incarnation as Christ, (Messiah – God in the flesh) He overcame the world - defeating death, illustrated by rising from the tomb, and is today seated at God’s right hand. I see this as God providing us, “The” victorious example, through Christ, our own destiny - our *inheritance*.

This is why God chose to illustrate His plan upon Christ as being a Son. We know that God and Jesus are One. The Trinity (nature of God) cannot be divided. Thus, the Biblical text is constructed to enable us to see the reality of God’s intent for all of us – to be with Him for an eternity as would a Father want his son. God as Jesus Christ illustrated this truth for all Believers. We are *children of God* (Philippians 2:15). The whole Biblical narrative is written in a Father, Son, Daughter and family relationship in order for us to relate to the quality of God’s love. Every person on earth, regardless of culture/language, can relate to the innate love of mother and father, brother-sister, and so on. The Bible is purposely conveyed in family relationships, so we can all relate to God’s love. We experience that love for each other through our families. In our fallen human state, we fail each other, at times, in our love. However, God is love. God is perfect love and never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8).

**Ephesians 1:22-23**

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet,

and gave Him as head over all things

to the church,

23 which is His body,

the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Church (ekklesia – assembly) is the mechanism in which all Believers are represented as one body united in Christ. With the ekklesia coming together, we are strengthened in the power of Christ’s love to live victorious lives with a goal to overcome the fallen world. We see the importance of the assembly emphasized in Hebrews 10:19-25.

 19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

 Therefore, with all of this said about God’s Spirit enlightening Believers - we should have great gratitude to the One who has empowered us to not only survive in this fallen world but to prosper. The Christian life, as compared to alternatives, is far superior in all aspects of life. Above all, we can have peace with God and our neighbor - because we have chosen to open the eyes of our hearts and seek/look for the Lord to guide our lives. We praise God every day that His love resides in us. **AMEN**