

# OUR NEW BEGINNING IS JUST THE BEGINNING

## Ephesians 1.15-18a, Message 08: The Key to a Full and Blessed Life in Christ

### Ephesians 1.1-14: We have been looking at our new beginning in Christ.

- (v1-2) Paul began this chapter with a slightly veiled exhortation to be faithful as the saints we are.
- (v3) Then he launched into a description of eight spiritual blessings we all have “in Christ.”
  1. (v4-6) Three blessings glorify the Father: Chosen, Predestinated, and Accepted.
  2. (v7-12) Four blessing glorify the Son: Redemption, Forgiveness, Abundance (of wisdom and prudence because we know the plan of God for the future), and an inheritance.
  3. (v13-14) One blessing glorifies the Spirit: We are sealed by the Spirit Himself.

### Ephesians 1.15-23: Paul finishes this chapter about our new beginning in Christ with a prayer.

- He prays, not that God would give the Ephesian saints what they *do not* have...
- He prays that God would show them what they *already have* in Christ.
- This is because our new beginning in Christ is just that: It is just the beginning!
- God has much more in store for the Christian than just salvation (and salvation is grand!).

### Last Message: We saw a practical overview of Ephesians 1.15-23, looking at two problems we have...

1. We don't think big enough: We look at *our* limitations rather than looking at *God* and His ability.
2. We don't believe God *wants* to use *us* to do great things in the Mission in this world.

### This Message: We are going to see just *how* we can overcome these two problems...

#### I. (v15) The new beginning in Christ is where we begin.

##### A. “Wherefore”: Paul begins this passage (this prayer) referring back to what he just said.

1. Wherefore: (v3-14) Since all those in Christ have such great spiritual blessings...
2. Wherefore: (v15) Since the Ephesians are in Christ (as we are)...
  - a) Paul had heard of their faith: He heard of their conversion to Christ.
  - b) Paul had heard of their love: He heard of the evidence of their conversion to Christ (you know a tree by it's a fruit and you know a true Christian by changes you can *see* in his life).

##### B. Because of this new beginning in the life of the Ephesian believers, Paul prayed!

- And pay close attention to what and how he prayed (to follow/imitate him!)

#### II. (v16) Our new beginning in Christ is just the beginning.

##### A. (v16a) Obviously Paul prayed and gave thanks for the believers (for new and true converts).

1. Salvation is wonderful! It's why we evangelize: To see God glorified in rescuing the perishing!
2. But just as with physical birth, the new spiritual birth in Christ (our salvation) is *just the beginning*.

##### B. (v16b) Therefore, Paul continued to pray for the saints.

1. Paul desired *more* for the saints than just salvation (as great as salvation is, it's just the beginning).
2. Too many people get this idea that you “get saved” and then you go to church, tithe, and live a decent and moral life... then you retire and die.
3. There is more to Christ than that! There is more to the Christian life than that! So, Paul prayed...

### **III. (v17-18a) Our new beginning in Christ is the beginning of a new relationship with God.**

#### **A. This is the key to the Christian life: *A personal relationship with God.***

1. Before Christ, we were God's enemies: We hated Him and He hated us.
2. In Christ, all that enmity and separation is gone!
  - a) We are forgiven, redeemed, born spiritually into God's family... accepted by God in Christ!
  - b) Instead of being God's enemies (instead of being a source of irritation for God), we are now made new in Christ—we are God's children (we are a source of pleasure for Him).
3. Here is the question at hand: Do you know the God who is now your Father? Do you know Him personally, closely, daily... as your Father and your Friend?
  - a) That is the key to being and doing all that God desires—it's the key to the Christian life!
  - b) How do get there? How do we start and develop a personal relationship with God?

#### **B. (v17c) First, we need knowledge of God: “...in the knowledge of Him...”**

1. Our new relationship with God is based on (it begins with) the knowledge of Him.
2. If we want to become and do all that God desires (if we want to experience all the spiritual blessings God has given us in Christ), we need to know God.
  - a) We need to continually grow in our knowledge of God.
  - b) Everything in this prayer revolves around this one thing: The knowledge of God.
    - (1) All that goes before it (wisdom and revelation) is based on the knowledge of God.
    - (2) All that comes after it (enlightenment, etc.) is based on the knowledge of God; it starts here
  - c) Frankly, this is one of the major reason why Christianity in the USA has become so superficial, petty, and powerless: Few, out of all those who claim to be Christians, are actually growing in the knowledge of God. (The parallels of our times and the Dark Ages are staggering!)
3. (2Tim 3.16-17) Our knowledge of God must come from Scripture.
  - a) All Scripture (Genesis to Revelation) has been given to us by God.
  - b) And God said that this Scripture is sufficient to accomplish all His good and perfect will in and through us.
    - (1) We can certainly learn about God by observing creation (but that's not enough).
    - (2) We can certainly know of God's nature and morality by listening to our conscience.
    - (3) But to truly know God (as son knows his Father), we need God's special and specific revelation that tells us about Him (who He is and what He is like): We need the Bible!
  - c) But, we can't stop here—we can't stop with just knowledge of the Bible.
    - (1) The knowledge we obtain about God through the Bible should draw us nearer and neared to the God who wrote the Bible.
    - (2) And that requires more than just information...

#### **C. (v17a) We need wisdom in the knowledge of God.**

1. (Job 28.28) Wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Why is that...?
  - a) Because fear will change you (character) and your conduct. Fear is healthy for you and for your relationship with God.
  - b) Think about it this way...
    - (1) Fear of a violent and painful death will keep you from playing on the highway (it's healthy!).
    - (2) Fear of ruining your marriage will keep you from improper character and conduct (which in turn will allow you to draw closer to the one you love most here on earth).
  - c) The fear of God is healthy because it is wise: It will motivate you to change so that you can draw closer to the One who loves you most.

2. Sadly, this wisdom (the fear of God) is all but absent from Christianity today.
  - a) Most church goers simply want to hear that “God is love” and everything will be okay.
  - b) Yes, God is love. But He is also light and therefore He hates the darkness (God hates sin) and that ought to cause us a certain amount of healthy fear (which is wise!).
  - c) Walk in the light and you will know God and His love. And as you walk in the light, fear walking in darkness because God hates that and will not overlook it.
3. How can we learn and cultivate a healthy fear of God (which is wisdom)?
  - a) (Deut 17.18-19) Know God through the knowledge of Scripture!
  - b) Learn of God by learning the Bible—the whole Bible (both the New and the Old Testaments).
  - c) And this would bring us to the need for God's personal working in our lives...

**D. (v17b) We need revelation in the knowledge of God.**

1. We need God to reveal Himself to us through the pages of Scripture.
2. (v18a) We need God to enlighten the eyes of our understanding as we strive to draw close to Him through a knowledge of the Bible.
3. (1Cor 2.9-16) We have the mind of Christ in the Scripture (v16), but it is His Spirit who gives us understanding of the Scripture (v10) so that we can know God personally.
  - a) It's not about intellectual information (academic knowledge of the Bible), but it starts there!
  - b) As we read and study the Bible to know God, the Spirit of God will enlighten our understanding so that we might know God personally.

**Conclusion:**

**In Christ we have a new beginning (and it is wonderful!), but it is just that: a beginning.**

- God has so much more for us than just a new birth. There is an entire life out there as a son of God!
  - ✓ God wants us to think big in the Mission of being and making disciples.
  - ✓ God wants us to know Him so that we know and believe that He wants to use us in that Mission!
- And we need to understand that all that has nothing to do with our intellectual capacity or our abilities.
  - ✓ It has to do with our personal relationship with God through Scripture and the work of the Spirit.
  - ✓ It has to do with knowing God through the Bible as the His Spirit reveals the Lord to us.

**Let's be diligent in our reading and study of the Scripture, and let's be diligent to pray (like Paul) that God would enlighten the eyes of our understanding so that we might know Him in wisdom and revelation.**

- That is the key to a full and blessed life in Christ: Knowing God in order to make Him known to others.