

OUR NEW BEGINNING SHOULD BE JUST THE BEGINNING

Ephesians 1.18b-23, Message 09: Know what to expect from God!

Theme: We are not going to attempt great things for God until we know what we can expect from Go.

With this passage, we finish our study of Ephesians 1: Our New Beginning in Christ.

- In our last message (v15-18a) we saw that our new beginning in Christ is just that: a beginning!
 - ✓ There is much more to the Christian life than salvation (and salvation is grand!).
- Today the message is similar (because we are still looking at Paul's prayer for the saints).
 - ✓ We need to know three specific things if we are going grow beyond just the beginning...

I. (v18b) We need to know that God has given us hope!

A. Remember: Paul is praying about what we have...

1. Paul is not asking God to give the Ephesians something they do not have. Paul is asking God to open their eyes to what they already have in Christ.
2. I think that is something that still hinders many of us today:
 - a) Many don't know what they have because so many church-goers today are Bible illiterate.
 - b) And many who know the Bible have "left their first love" in that they have stopped with an academic knowledge and have not developed a personal relationship with God based on faith in His Word (i.e., acting on—living out—the Scripture they know).
3. Let's be different!
 - a) Let's pray like Paul; that God would reveal Himself to us, personally, through the Scripture.
 - b) We're not talking about some mystical experience with the Divine. We're simply acknowledging that if God does not open our eyes of understanding as we read and study the Scripture, we will never come to know Him personally.
4. In the last part of this prayer, Paul lays out three specific things we says we need to know:
 - a) (v18) "...that ye may know...": What follows are three things we ought to know.
 - b) The first thing we ought to know about is our hope...

B. God wants us to know what our hope is.

1. (Eph 4.4) The hope of our calling refers to God calling us to salvation, which in turn gives us hope.
2. (Rom 8.24-25) Our hope is our salvation (spirit, soul, and body).
 - a) And this hope is not the normal, worldly type of hope: "I wish I had... I hope I get..."
 - b) This hope is a sure hope; it is an expectant waiting for what we know will come to pass.
3. (Php 1.6) Our hope is our sure expectation of our complete salvation in Christ.
 - a) What God started at the moment of our salvation, He will finish (totally, completely, perfectly).
 - b) He saved us in the moment of our conversion; He is currently working in us to conform us to the image of Christ; and when Christ comes back for us, He will finish that work perfectly.

C. God wants us to know what our sure hope is... so that we grow beyond just the beginning!

1. We will never grow to maturity in Christ is we are continually worrying about doing something that will make God angry with us... or make us lose our salvation.
2. You need to know that in Christ you have hope: What God started in your spirit (at the moment of salvation), He will see through to the very end of perfection on the day our resurrection.
3. Don't worry about failing because in Christ you are sure. He will keep you. Strive to grow!

II. (v18c) We need to know that God offers us “riches of glory” in the inheritance!

A. Paul is talking about our inheritance from God (not the inheritance God will receive).

1. Don't let the wording here confuse you: Paul is talking about God's inheritance He gives to us.
2. (v18c cf. v17) "His" inheritance refers to the Father's inheritance.
 - a) (Isa 19.24-25) It cannot refer to the inheritance the Father receives, because He has chosen as His inheritance the nation of Israel.
 - b) Paul is talking about the inheritance the Father has and offers to us: "riches of glory."

B. (Col 3.24) The Lord Himself shall give us our inheritance, and it will be as a reward.

1. (1Thes 4.13-18) The Lord will come back for us one day in the Rapture (taking us to heaven).
2. (1Cor 3.11-15) He will come for us and take us to our judgment: The Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - a) (v11) Salvation is just the beginning! It is the sure foundation God laid in Christ.
 - b) (v12) God expects all of us to build on the foundation (the beginning is just the beginning!).
 - c) (v13) And He will judge each of us according to what we have done with what He gave us.
 - d) (v14) Those who have faithfully lived as God desires will receive a full reward (the reward of the inheritance).
 - e) (v15) Those who choose to not invest in eternal things, they will lose their reward of inheritance (not their salvation, which is the foundation, but what they build with their works).
3. (1Cor 15.41-42) Part of that that reward is "glory" (glorifying Christ in the glory we receive).
 - a) Just as the stars differ from one another in glory, so will the saints after the judgment.
 - b) (1Cor 15.51-57) Part of our salvation and inheritance is a new, glorified body (the Rapture is also the Resurrection for Church Age saints).
 - c) (Php 3.20-21) How much glory... (how much glory we receive that will in turn glorify Christ) is entirely up to us. We are saints... but are we living faithfully (according to the Word of God)?
4. (2Cor 5.10) Each of us will receive his reward of the inheritance according to that which he hath done with what God gave us.

C. [Review: Eph 1.18] God wants us to know certain things...

1. He wants us to know what the hope of our calling is: He has called us to salvation and that is our sure expectation (what God started, He will finish—you cannot lose your salvation).
 - So, stop worrying about your salvation and start building on that firm foundation! Grow!
2. God also wants you to know what His inheritance is that He offers you in Christ.
 - Why does He want you to know that? So you will live in a way that will result in you receiving a full reward of the inheritance (because the glory you receive will glorify Christ!).
3. There is none last thing we need to know: Power. We don't live the Christian life on our own...

III. (v19-23) We need to know that greatness of God's power and authority!

A. (v19) God's power that He offers to us is "exceedingly great."

1. (v20-21) It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead (the power that won complete victory over even the last enemy, death; 1Cor 15.26).
2. (v22-23) It is also the authoritative power of Christ, who reigns over all forever (and we are His ambassadors, members of His body—He has give us that same authoritative power to do His will).
3. (Eph 3.20) That is why Paul says later that we simply don't think big enough!

B. (v19) What is the key to living in (according to) this exceedingly great power?

1. "...to us-ward who believe...": Faith. The key is to believe what you read in Scripture.
2. If we really believed what the Scripture said, we would live differently—we would invest in eternity rather than living so much for this world.
3. But, so many of us have believed the lie of our age: Mysticism (so many are waiting for some mystical call of God on their lives... when God has given us call after call after call in the Bible).

Conclusion:

Paul finishes Ephesians 1 with a prayer for the saints (a prayer for us!):

- (v17b) He prays first that we might know God, personally (through the Scripture, not mysticism).
- (v18ff) Then he prays that we might know three specific things that we have in Christ, in this new personal relationship with God as our Father:
 1. **Hope:** We have eternal salvation (eternal security) and we ought to rest on that and grow in that.
 2. **Inheritance:** We have the opportunity to invest in things eternal... in things that result in glory (our reward of glory is simply a reflection of the Christ glory... ultimately, He gets all the glory!).
 3. **Power:** It is God who will do the work in us and through us, **but we must first believe** (we have to know God's Word and then do it—that is biblical belief, and only then will see His power).

Maybe the reason many of us don't attempt great things for God is because don't expect great things from God.

- Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would be different, that they would know what to expect from God.
- Let's do the same:
 - ✓ Let's pray that God would, through the Scripture, reveal Himself to us.
 - ✓ And then, as we grow in knowing God, let's attempt great things for God in the Mission of making disciples (in evangelism and edification)
 - ✓ It's God who will do the work in us and through us by His exceedingly great power and authority. So, what's holding us back?
 - ✓ Let's know Scripture... in order to know God... and then let's attempt great things for Him through the preaching of the Gospel (and the Bible!) wherever we can. and whenever we can.

Remember: Our beginning in Christ is great (we have all spiritual blessing in Him)! But, it's just the beginning.