

A Practical Study of EPHESIANS

HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

“What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

Study Number Two – His Plan for Getting to Know Him – Ephesians 1:15-23

Study #2: His Plan for Getting to Know Him—Ephesians 1:15-23.

The KEY VERSE for this particular study is verse 18:

The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

As the Lord spoke to Moses when he got to the burning bush, we’re walking on holy ground.

This is sacred soil. It’s one thing to say that we pray and it’s another thing to hear each of us pray.

The apostle says he prays and when he prays, brother does he pray.

We're going to get to see two prayers in this book. One here in chapter 1 and then later in chapter 3 he has to burst forth in the praise of prayer.

He's doing that in light of the Master Plan that we looked at in the first study. He just cannot contain himself.

He started with the Doxology: "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all of these spiritual blessings in the heavenlies."

What are those spiritual blessings?

1. I'm special. I've been **SELECTED** by the Father.
2. I have been **PURCHASED** by the Son. Jesus Christ paid the price for my salvation on Calvary.
3. I've been **SEALED** by the Spirit of God when by faith I received Christ as my own.

The focal point of all of God's dealings with man is the Person of Jesus Christ.

We can always tell when we listen to a Bible teacher or a speaker by how much attention they pay to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Does he/she love Him?

Does he/she look forward to seeing Him?

Does he/she talk about His substitutionary death upon the cross for sin?

It's so easy to tell the difference between TRUTH and ERROR.

Or is it primarily experience? Is it focusing on some other irrelevant truth as far as not bringing it into focal point and letting Christ be the center of it all?

As the apostle prays, the Lord's in the middle of it again.

These are beautiful verses.

v. 15 On account of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

“On account of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,”

He says, “I’m getting ready to pray and the reason I am is because I’ve gotten some good news from Ephesus. I’ve heard two things about y’all over there.”

1. “I’ve heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and that’s all it takes to be selected, to have salvation and to be sealed by the Spirit.”

“I’ve heard of that, but I’ve also heard of something else:”

2. “I’ve heard of your love toward all the saints.”

It’s an amazing thing in the epistles of Paul how many times he takes those two words and basically says, those are the things that’ll be true of us if we’re a Christian.

For instance, in Colossians 1:4 he tells the Colossian saints this:

Colossians 1:4

we have heard how much you trust the Lord, and how much you love His people.

He penned that letter to Philemon, the wealthy businessman over in the Lycus Valley, telling him to take back Onesimus the runaway slave. Listen to what he says in verses 4 and 5 of that little epistle:

Philemon 4-5

I also thank God when I am praying for you, dear Philemon, because I keep hearing of your love and trust in the Lord Jesus and His people.

Now what’s that tell us? That tells us that springing for genuine faith is an *agape* love toward our brothers and sisters

in God's family.

If we are really a Christian and we're not just playing a game, we are going to make some of the deepest relationships we've ever made.

If we know Christ, it's going to demonstrate itself first in LOVE.

Now that's not a strange teaching. In the Upper Room, the night before Jesus died, He said in John:

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I've given unto you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.

If we think those guys were saints we have another thing coming. They'd been sitting around there griping and complaining over who was going to be first in the kingdom and nobody washed anybody's feet by the time He got there. They were ticked at each other. And He just has to remind them "Look, I'm leaving. But the one thing I'm going to expect that the world's going to see of you is this love which you have for each other."

Isn't it interesting that Paul would focus on this fact to the Ephesians. The Lord Jesus when He writes to the seven churches in Revelation chapter 2 has to come back to this

church and say, “You’re an awful good church but I’ve got one thing against you. You’ve left your first love. And because you have, I’m going to take away your candlestick.” He is basically saying, “I’m going to take away your witness because love is gone.”

Paul says, “I’m excited about y’all. I’ve heard about your faith and your love.”

Galatians 5:22-23

the fruit of the Spirit is love...

By their fruit we shall know them. Their faith will manifest itself in love for our brothers and sisters.

Francis Schaeffer left behind a tremendous heritage of writing. He was the 20th century Christian conservative philosopher. He wrote a book called *The Mark of the Christian*. Listen to this:

(The Mark of the Christian by Francis Schaeffer)

The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. How, then, is the dying culture going to consider us? Jesus says, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority he gives the world the right to

judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians. ...

We must be very careful at this point, however. We may be true Christians, really born-again Christians, and yet fail in our love toward other Christians. As a matter of fact, to be completely realistic, it is stronger than this. There will be times (and let us say it with tears), there will be times when we will fail in our love toward each other as Christians. In a fallen world, where there is no such thing as perfection until Jesus comes, we know this will be the case. And, of course, when we fail, we must ask God's forgiveness.
pp. 12-13 (<http://www.ccel.us/schaeffer.html>)

The apostle Paul says:

Philippians 1:9

My prayer for you [Philippians] is that you'll overflow more and more with love for others, and at the same time keep on growing in spiritual knowledge and insight.

When people talk about us, what do they say? When people are just having general conversation, what impresses them about us? What are the things that people say?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of us could say, "Well naturally the thing they say is they talk about my faith in the Lord Jesus and my love for everybody else who's part of His body. Or the way I serve others and by the things I do to demonstrate that love."

Those are the real qualities. Those are things that are really important.

Now watch it. Oh this gets so good.

v. 16 I do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

“I do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;”

“Because I’ve heard of your love and your faith, there are TWO THINGS I do for you.”

The Greek text does not communicate the spasmodic business like saying “I’ll pray for you” and we shoot up a little prayer and then we see him six weeks later and say “well I prayed for you.”

Now Paul told the Thessalonian Christians “pray without ceasing.” Just like when we get a hacking cough, we pray every time we think about it.

He says “I’m praying for you.” But notice first of all something else:

“we give thanks for you.”

How positive are we in our mental attitude toward our

brothers and sisters in Christ? Are we really thankful for our brothers and sisters in Christ? Or are we kind of stand-offish because there aren't any labels or there isn't something else that ought to be here in order to make this thing work?

The apostle, filled with the Spirit says, "Listen y'all, I'm giving thanks for you. I'm so grateful for your relationship to Christ and your love for me!"

There has to be more of that.

When's the last time we went up to our brother and sister in Christ and said, "You know I thank God for you. You mean so much to me because of what you say and by..." We'd probably knock them over with something like that.

But those kinds of things really mean a lot and Paul knows that.

He says TWO THINGS "I'm doing for you because you're special":

1. "I give thanks for you" and
2. "I pray for you."

Now he gives thanks because of their PAST performance.

And he's praying for their FUTURE performance.

When he thinks about the PAST, he's thankful to God for them.

But now he thinks about the PRESENT and the FUTURE. He starts praying for them.

This is a beautiful prayer.

v. 17 in order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him.

“in order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him.”

That's a tough verse isn't it? It has a lot of big words in it.

What's he praying? Let's go back over it slowly.

“in order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,”—what's his request?—“may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of”—WHO? Jesus Christ.

What is the apostle saying? He says, “If I could pray one thing for you, my prayer for you would be that you would really get to know Jesus Christ.”

Now it's one thing to say, “Well I know Christ because I'm a

Christian.” And it’s another thing to really know Christ the Person.

Stop and think about the number of years you’ve been married. How well do you know the person you’re married to now after all these years?

We say, “Well I really didn’t know them the night I walked the aisle. But through all the experiences of life, now I know this person who sits next to me! I really know them because we’ve been through life together.”

Paul’s prayed that they’ll come into an INTIMATE, experiential is the Greek word *gnósi tou*—knowledge of Jesus Christ.

That’s his hope for them. He prays for “a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him.”

What’s the difference between “wisdom” and “knowledge”?

“Wisdom” is truth applied in the midst of the stress.

For instance, in James chapter 1 when the saints are going through trouble, James says:

“Deem it pure joy, my brethren, when things are falling apart. Because things are going to happen that are going to be good.” (James 1:2-3)

That's the Anderson translation, basically.

But listen to this verse—verse 5:

“if you are lacking knowledge, let him ask of God...”

Is that what it says?

It doesn't. He says:

“if you are needing wisdom, you can ask of God...” (James 1:5)

Nowhere in the Bible can we, under the midst of stress, ever come to God and ask Him for facts or knowledge. God is not obligated to give us the reasons why He lets things go on in our life. Or else we wouldn't trust Him.

We have to trust Him that He's good. We have to trust Him that He loves us unconditionally. He doesn't have to say it!

By the very fact that His Son died on Calvary is enough evidence! He wants us just to trust Him that He knows what's best for our life.

Now we may not understand it, and because we don't understand it, we don't have any right to come and ask for knowledge.

But we do have a right to come and ask for wisdom to relate to what He's allowed.

There's the distinction.

Wisdom is being able to cope with what God has allowed to come into our life. Because nothing will ever touch our life as a believer but what has been filtered through the Father's hands of love. There's some purpose in it. We don't know it now and might never know it until we get into His presence. But the Lord will make it clear and He'll be vindicated.

And so our response is when we come and ask for wisdom, we've already submitted to the trial. And we don't need a bunch of facts so we can fight against God and build a case against Him. We just need wisdom to relate because He's our Lord and He knows what's best. And when it's tough, that's the way it is.

So he's praying here for them that they might have "a spirit of wisdom."

In other words, that through a revelation and wisdom, they can properly relate to what they're going to face in their lives in a greater "knowledge of Him."

The more we know Him the more we're going to love Him.

The more we get to know Him, the more we love Him.

It's easy in the beginnings of our Christian life to formulate wrong opinions about Jesus Christ. But He is the fairest of

10,000! He's the bright and morning star! He's always there. He's a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He will never fail us!

The apostle in that majestic section in Philippians chapter 3 says:

I count everything but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I might know Him by personal experience, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. (Philippians 3:7-10)

My whole life is consumed with getting to know Jesus Christ.

Let's put it in laymen's terminology.

What does that verse mean?

Paul is praying for these saints that they'd have an **ENLARGED CAPACITY** to understand what God is allowing to go on in their lives.

It's to **INCREASE THE CAPACITY** so we can comprehend and so we can trust what He's allowing to go on in our life!

Oh that's beautiful!

But now there's a problem.

Never pray for patience unless we want trouble. Because God

will give us plenty so we can exercise it.

There are just certain things we don't pray for.

Don't pray for LOVE—because He'll crush us so that the love will flow out. It's just kind of scary.

Whenever we pray for a greater capacity in any area, we're going to get some STRESS so the capacity can come about.

We put ourselves under stress and in the midst of the stress, the capacity increases.

When we start praying for an enlarged capacity, look out. He will provide the opportunity.

No matter what area of life it is. We ask for more love, we ask for more patience. The only thing God has is to put the stress on so that the stress produces the greater endurance! So we'll go further and we'll be able to do it better.

And with this enlarged capacity, we'll understand His plan. Just remember, there's no gain without pain and the enlarged capacity will only come through the stress of circumstances that will allow it to begin to happen.

v. 18 The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

“The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

What is that phrase?

“The eyes of your heart.”

There’s an interesting phrase in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they’re spiritually discerned.

We’re born with HEART EYES and REAL EYES.

Our HEART EYES are closed until we come to know Christ as Savior then our eyes are open. Then we can pray “Open my eyes that I may SEE, glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.”

Ask God to open those eyes so we can understand—the Spirit of God would teach us.

He’s saying “The eyes of your hearts.” That’s the CENTER of all of our emotional being.

Not only for a greater capacity for WISDOM to relate to what

happens, but EYES to really see it.

Hey! God can be trusted!

And with this greater capacity, we also will have the “eyes of my heart...enlightened.”

Now there are THREE THINGS that we will come to know as a result of having our eyes opened:

1. “that you might know what is the hope of His calling,” and
2. “what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

The third one is going to be down in verse 19:

3. “the surpassing greatness of His power.”

He says, “I’m going to pray that your eyes will be opened and you will have a greater knowledge in three areas.”

He says:

1. “the hope of His calling,”
2. “the wealth of the glory of His inheritance,” and
3. “the surpassing greatness of His power.”

This curriculum has **THREE PARTS** in his prayer.

First, this is our **KEY VERSE** for getting to know Him.

There are **THREE THINGS** of basic knowledge that he wants to call to our attention as he speaks to the Father.

What is “the hope of His calling” that we need to know?

Ephesians 1:4

Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

What is “the hope of His calling”?

If we knew that, we would know the **PURPOSE** of:

the Father in **SELECTING** us,

the Son in **SAVING** us, and

the Spirit in **SEALING** us.

He’s praying that we might know that!

What hope does God have in redeeming a lost sinner doomed for eternity? What is the hope of that kind of calling?

In the Bible we see:

it's a HIGH CALLING,

it's a HOLY CALLING, and

it's a HEAVENLY CALLING.

What's the hope for all this?

SELECTED in the PAST,

SAVED while we're ALIVE,

that we might ultimately be made like the Person of Jesus Christ.

“the hope of His calling” involves the THREE G's:

1. GRACE,
2. GROWTH, and
3. GLORY.

Now what is meant by that?

He wants to demonstrate to the world that His grace is sufficient for our salvation and for our present life and for the life to come. He wants His unmerited favor, His grace, to be

uppermost!

But what's He want us to do now?

He wants us to GROW!

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babies desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

He wants us to get out of our diapers and our carnality and become more Christlike! Becoming a channel as a servant of His love to others! He wants us to grow up in Himself.

BUT the other “hope of His calling” is “GLORY”!

The glory's going to be magnificent throughout all eternity because what Christ has done!

“the hope of His calling” is that Christ will get all the glory for us being there.

So the “hope of His calling,” that we might be conformed to the image of Christ through experiencing His grace, experiencing growth, and bringing glory to Him.

Now that next phrase:

“what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the

saints."

That's confusing isn't it?

We are the only inheritance that He's got to look forward to.

We are the HOPE "of His inheritance."

Throughout eternity we demonstrate, to the glory of God, what He can do with a vile, lost, doomed sinner. In providing eternal life and all the marvelous manifestations of eternity we know so little about.

He's going to get glory because we've been chosen, we've been paid for and we've been wrapped up, boy! And we're going to the house. Woo! That is the "wealth of the glory of His inheritance."

Now, it's necessary for us to jump on to verse 19 because it has the third thing he wants here to have a greater knowledge of.

v. 19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power in us who are believing, according to the working of His great might,

"And what is the surpassing greatness of His power"—that's number 3—"in us who are believing, according to the working of His great might,"

John 15:5

... without Me you can do nothing.

But in Acts the last words of Jesus are:

Acts 1:8

you will receive power, after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you; ...

Once again we have the TRINITY in this.

Here's the Spirit of God in number 3. He is the power. It resides in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He's the One who takes us beyond, who gets us there.

There's no hitting the wall in the marathon of life.

Isaiah 40:31

they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...

Paul could say "I'm ready for anything through the strength of the one who indwelt me."

When he gets to talking about power, he gets excited.

v. 20 which was operative in the Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places,

“which was operative in the Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”

He says the power that got Christ out of the grave is the power available to each of us. The power that took Him up into glory and seated Him at the Father’s right hand where He sits today interceding on our behalf, it’s that power that’s available to us.

v. 21 Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is being named, not only in this age, but also in the one about to come.

“Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is being named, not only in this age, but also in the one about to come.”

There are FIVE REALMS here and His power is over and above all of that!

v. 22 And all things He put in subjection under His feet, and Him, He gave as head over all things to the church,

“And all things He put in subjection under His feet, and Him,

He gave as head over all things to the church,”

v. 23 which is His body, the fullness of the One who is filling all things with all things.

“which is His body, the fullness of the One who is filling all things with all things.”

Jesus Christ is interceding at the right hand of God the Father but He’s the head of His body the church. That church is made up of everyone who knows Jesus Christ.

He fills that organism with His presence.

Colossians 1:18 (Amplified Bible)

He also is the Head of [His] body, the church; seeing He is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything {and} in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent].

Here’s a prayer in layman’s terminology to help us understand what the Lord is saying:

Lord, teach us how to cooperate with Your plan and to enjoy an enlarged capacity to receive a revelation of Your purpose. And eyes of our hearts enlightened to know by experience, number one, the hope of Your calling in conforming us to Your Son. Number two, give us a glimpse of what lies ahead for us who are your inheritance. And number three, manifest Your

power by working miraculously in our lives right now that others can see Your power in us.

Here are the lessons that come out of the text:

Lesson #1: Do people speak often of your faith toward God and love for mankind?

Lesson #2: The reality of your faith will be revealed in your love for others.

Lesson #3: How well do you understand the Lord's dealings with you?

Lesson #4: Do you long for an enlarged capacity for wisdom?

Lesson #5: Philippians 3:10: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (NASB).

Lesson #6: John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (NASB).

Lesson #7: Faith is living without scheming.

Lesson #8: The love of the Spirit produced within us as believers helps us recognize that we are responsible for one another.

Lesson #9: Have you asked the Lord to “give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him”? (verse 17)

Lesson #10: Have you prayed with the psalmist in Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (NIV).

Lesson #11: Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (NASB).

Lesson #12: 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (NASB).

Lesson #13: 2 Timothy 1:7: “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (NASB).

Lesson #14: Have I surrendered totally and completely to the sovereign Christ who is the head of His body, the church, and also the head of my life individually?

Loving Father, if we don't have that desire, please create it within us. We're reminded so much of the words of Jesus to the church at Laodicea: “You are lukewarm. You're neither cold nor hot and you make me sick.” Lord, how cold and complacent we've become to some of these great eternal truths. It's so easy to say “Oh I've heard that before.” And the

callous on the heart gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Lord could You come down in the presence of Your Spirit right now and reside upon each heart? Melt its coldness. Strip away its callousness. Create an intense sensitivity to spiritual things. And then Father would You be pleased to open our eyes that we could behold wondrous truths from Your Word? With this increased sensitivity, this enlarged capacity, and these eyes to behold, may we see things as they really are. Lord it's so easy to think that it's alright and it really isn't. It's to think we're in better physical shape than we are and we really aren't. To think that we are more spiritual than we really are and we really aren't. We confess that. Grant to us a warmth, a closeness, a comradery that develops because we care. Lord as Your Spirit convicts hearts right now we pray that if You put the name of some person upon a heart because there's a broken relationship, there's a person who's been offended, there's a lack of forgiveness, there's a bitter resentful feeling that's coming to the service. Oh Father we pray that business will be cared for so we as a body of Your children can experience Your presence. And Father may the might and power of Your Spirit convict hearts of those who know You. That during these days faith in the Lord Jesus might become a reality. We love You for this day. It's been the Lord's day. We've rejoiced and been glad in it. Pray for rest for our bodies, refreshment for our minds and spirits. That we might rise tomorrow again to enjoy another blessed day in Your presence. And if per chance You choose to come tonight, may we have a peace as we hit the pillow that we'd sure be ready if You called. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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“What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

STUDY NUMBER TWO – HIS PLAN FOR GETTING TO KNOW HIM – EPHESIANS 1:15-23

KEY VERSE 1:18

v. 15 On account of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

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v. 20 which was operative in the Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places,

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v. 22 And all things He put in subjection under His feet, and Him, He gave as head over all things to the church,

v. 23 which is His body, the fullness of the One who is filling all things with all things.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What two things had Paul heard about them in verse 15?

3. What two things does Paul do for them, according to verse 16?

4. What does Paul pray for in verse 17?

5. What does Paul pray for in verse 18?

6. What does Paul say to us in verse 19?

7. What is Christ's position at this present time, according to verses 20 & 21?

8. What is Christ's position, according to verse 22?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Do people speak often of your faith toward God and love for mankind?

LESSON #2: The reality of your faith will be revealed in your love for others.

LESSON #3: How well do you understand the Lord's dealings with you?

LESSON #4: Do you long for an enlarged capacity for wisdom?

LESSON #5: Philippians 3:10: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (NASB).

LESSON #6: John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (NASB).

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