

“The Knowledge of God: Ephesians 1:15-17”

Tenth Sunday after Trinity – August 16, 2020

Sermon Notes – Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Introduction

1. What do you want more than anything else in the world?
2. I want to humbly suggest that the best answer to that question is found in the text we're going to look at today.

Overview of the chapter

- Chapter one of Ephesians consists of three parts:
 1. vv.1-2. Opening remarks
 2. vv.3-14. Extended blessing, doxology or (Heb.) *berekah*
 3. vv.15-23. Thanksgiving and prayer (actually a prayer report)
- The prayer, like the *berekah*, is a single run-on sentence. It is also thoroughly Trinitarian and Patrocentric (centered on God the Father).
- The intent of the prayer is simple: that the Ephesian believers (and we) would personally experience the astonishing range of benefits mentioned in the doxology.
- Today, we're going to drill down into just the first three verses of the prayer and draw the lessons from the text the Lord wants to teach us.

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the holy ones, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Him.

Exposition of 1:15-17

⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the holy ones,

- **“For this reason”** Paul is referring back to entire *berekah*. He’s saying, “because you guys have been caught up into the saving embrace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all the ways we’ve just talked about—chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, assured—for this reason, I can’t get you guys out of my head: I just keep praying for you.”
- It’s been 5-7 years since Paul spend almost three years living with them. Lot’s of new people have come to Christ and been enfolded into the church during his absence and, apparently, Paul had just received a good report about how well they were doing as a church.
- **“faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the holy ones”**
- **“faith”** is *pisteou*, “relational trust, confidence”. Their trust used to be in Artemis, goddess of the Ephesians, and pantheon of other gods. There were millions of fallen spiritual beings that would harass them in an effort to distract them from the true God and lure them into worshipping them.
- But then Paul comes along, preaching the great news that they didn’t have to be enslaved any longer to these corrupt, fallen beings.
- In response to Paul’s preaching, the Ephesians transferred their allegiance from these evil spiritual beings and all these various ritual practices solely to Jesus.
- **“love for all the holy ones.”** “Holy ones” is *hagioi*: those who have been made ritually clean to dwell in God’s presence. *Hagioi* can refer to both spiritual beings human beings. Here in v.15, the reference clearly is to human beings.

“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”

- **“giving thanks”** is *eucharisteo* (Eucharist, holy communion)

- **“I have not stopped... remembering you in my prayers”**, is hyperbolic: a literary exaggeration. It means that, during his regular times of prayer, he made it a point to intercede specifically for them.

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

- **“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** He is the God of the historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth, who himself is the **“Lord”** (*kurios* in Grk., translates Heb. *Yahweh*) and the *Christos*, “Christ” or “Anointed One”. Paul is here making the claim that this One to whom he prayed is the God proclaimed by Jesus, adored and worshiped by Jesus. He is the God with whom Jesus shared the deepest intimacy.

- **“the Father of glory.”** In Hebrew, glory, *kavod*, is “the splendor of the divine presence and power”, “the reflection of the essence of God’s being, the summation of all of God’s attributes” (Hoener). Here, Paul is describing this One to whom he prayed as an utterly transcendent being, full of majesty and light.

- God is both transcendently glorious and incomparably intimate. These two phrases set the parameters for a proper understanding of God. Think of them as curbs on a street. Often, Christians will drift too far to one side or another.

- **“give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”**

- They already had the Spirit living in them, sealing them in their relationship with Christ, v.13. Paul is not praying they would be given as an initial gift. Paul is praying that this Spirit, already in them, would increase the spiritual wisdom and revelation that He was imparting to them.

- **“wisdom”**: *sophia*, which is a kind of penetrating insight into the nature of reality, especially spiritual reality.

- **“revelation”**: *apokálypsis*, meaning “unveiling, disclosure” of things previously hidden by God, now made known in the appropriate time to God’s people and through them, the world.

- In Isaiah 11:1-3a, the prophet predicted the coming of Messiah, Jesus:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

²The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of Yahweh—
³and he will delight in the fear of Yahweh.”

· **“knowledge of Him”**. This is the heart of Paul’s prayer. He wants these guys to know God personally, intimately, deeply.

1. This knowledge of God is suprarational.

· **“knowledge”** is *epignosis*, (*epi* “upon” + *gnosis* “knowledge”, intensive form of knowledge, know deeply and by firsthand experience, to know intimately).

· Knowledge of God, *da’at elohim*, is not merely an intellectual apprehension of God’s existence, attributes, nature and actions, though it includes these things. Knowledge of God is profoundly and pervasively personal. It is not something we master but someone we are invited to experience continually.

· The Heb. verb “know” is *yadah*.

Genesis 4:1

“Adam knew his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.”

John 17:3

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

2. This knowledge of God comes through the Holy Spirit directly, through first hand experience.

· Role of Holy Spirit in revealing God to us.

John 14:26

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

1 Corinthians 2:9-11

“However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

3. This knowledge of God comes when we set our hearts to seek God’s face and not His hand.

· When you seek God’s hand you seek what God can do for you. When you seek His face, you are seeking Him because He is who He is.

Psalm 27:8

“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O Yahweh, I shall seek’.”

Conclusion

Let’s do a quick check-up on your spiritual health

1. Time alone with God daily for Word and prayer?
2. Do you feel loved by Him? You will not want to spend time with him or love him in return unless you feel loved by him.
3. Are you looking more like Jesus now than a year ago?