

Rooted in Christ's Supremacy

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Text: Ephesians 1:15-23

Series: Rooted in Christ

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Ephesians. We are continuing our series: "Rooted in Christ". The title of the message is: "The Central Focus of Our Church".

What is the central focus of our church? Very simply it is that Christ might be our all in all.

Paul prays that we might know Him, grow in Him, and exalt Him in our lives.

This passage of Ephesians lets us into how Paul talked to people and helped them along in Christ. Our text this morning is a prayer. He's writing this probably 2 decades after his conversion.

Ephesians 1:15–23 (ESV) — "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

20 that he worked 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things 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."

I. Christ is Exalted in our Testimony.

Verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers".

Paul heard about God's fingerprints on these Ephesian saints, and he began to pray for them. Paul felt a personal responsibility to pray constantly for them. There is power in prayer. We ought to pray for every saint here. It was Paul's practice to pray for these saints without stopping.

Paul mentions two marks that demonstrate that we have been joined to Christ. He mentions a *Godward* mark (faith in Christ) and a *manward* mark (love to the saints).

In short, those who live for Jesus are always loving His people.

A. *The Godward mark of conversion: Faith in the Lord Jesus*

There is a commitment to Christ!

Ephesians 1:15b (ESV) — “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.**”

Paul Heard About Their Faith

Paul said, I heard about your faith and love in the Lord Jesus, and it caused me to pray and to rejoice. Why was that? It was something that God had done. Not long before, these Ephesians were pagans. Their girls had been temple prostitutes. They had been enslaved to superstitions. They had been selfish and self consumed. But now there was this radical faith, and Paul heard about it, and it cause him to rejoice!

True Faith = Radical Dependency

True faith has been defined as “radical dependency”¹. Christians through a miracle of God’s grace are given new eyes that cause them to cast themselves on God – they become radically dependent on Jesus. They no longer depend on family, or work, or pleasure. Now Christ becomes our All in all.

What Faith is Not

Coming to faith in Christ is not simply when you prayed a prayer. Faith is radical. It is not a mere acceptance of Jesus. “The devils believe and tremble”. Faith is more than information. Faith is a radical trust. Saving faith means that we trust and treasure Jesus Christ. It is not when you were baptized or signed a card or responded to an invitation to accept Christ.

What Faith is

Your conversion took place when you abandoned yourself to Christ and became radically dependent on Him. That is faith. And out of that you began to earnestly and deeply love the brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can I ask you – when did *that* happen in your life?

Application: What happened to the Ephesians, has happened to us. We now rely on God. We talk directly to Him. We rejoice that we are in His presence *right now*.

You’ve Heard of the Faith of Cedric...

This is why when you come for membership at Living Hope, we want you to have a testimony of faith in Christ. You’ve heard of the faith of those who are coming to Christ at Living Hope. You heard of the faith of Cedric and Nicole. You heard of the faith of Bill and Blanca Ferrell.

¹ Powlison, Seeing with New Eyes, 5

You heard of the faith of the Thomas family. You heard of the faith of Tom and Marie Anderson and Sheryl Halas. Just yesterday, we heard of the faith of Roger Delgado. We hear of the faith of people coming to Christ.

Many Coming to Christ in Ephesus that Paul Did Not Know

Explanation: Now Paul had been among them for 3 years, but he had been gone for a while. Many people were coming to faith in Christ that He did not know. He heard of their radical conversion from paganism to PASSION for Christ!

Application: We ought to be looking for this in our children. We ought to be looking for this in each other. Not some mere mental assent (the devils believe and tremble!), but a deep, moving, flowing, radical faith.

Scripture proofs

James 2:26, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

In Matthew 7, many come to Jesus in the Day of Judgment, who had faith without works. They had religion, but they were lawless in their heart. They were without the law and compulsion and power of Christ in their hearts.

Faith is alive! It bears fruit. The chief fruit it bears is **love** for God's people.

B. The manward mark of conversion: Love toward all the saints

There is a commitment to God's people!

Ephesians 1:15b (ESV) — "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." Paul had spent three years with the Ephesians. He knew many of them by name. It's one thing to observe things yourself. It's a whole 'nother thing to hear of their love toward "all" the saints.

- **1 John 4:20**, "If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."
- **John 13:35**, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The chief way that you can demonstrate your faith is grace filled love toward one another!

One Church

Notice this. And if you are ready to grow this morning here is a wonderful place to grow. He said he was thanking God, he was rejoicing concerning their love unto all the saints. Can I get a little transparent? Can I be honest? Let's do that with each other this morning.

There are a lot of local churches in the body of Christ, but God looks down and he says, “I see one Church.” There is a lot of division even among those denominations and God says, “But I see one Church.”

We are good at Building Walls, Let’s Build Bridges

We seem to have the incredible ability to build walls in the body of Christ. When Jesus Christ and the apostles and those that have gone before us have spent countless effort and energy, not to mention blood to tear down those walls and build bridges.

We must Do This: It is Called Discipleship

Application: Do you have a commitment to the Lord’s people? I’m not talking about Sunday and Wednesday, but every day. Are you committed to being a disciple and discipling others? You must have a deep love toward ALL the saints. You must care where they are spiritually.

Illustration: In ancient Israel, if you want to become a rabbi indeed, you had to become a disciple, an imitator. A young man could choose that when he was 15 – he would choose a rabbi to imitate. And for the next half of his life, until he was 30 he follow the rabbi where ever he went and imitate him. He would read the law as he did. He would do everything that the rabbi did. It was a commitment not only for the young man, but it was a major commitment for the rabbi. 24 and 7 he had to care for and invest in this young man. Paul the apostle went through this process as a young Pharisee.

Providers Vs. Consumers

Those who know Christ are not those who are looking to GET, but they are looking to GIVE!! If you are always looking at what you can consume instead of what you can provide, then you are not a healthy Christian.

Are you a provider or a consumer? The difference always manifests itself on Thanksgiving Day or some holiday!

Christ is exalted in your conversion. The chief way your conversion is seen is through faith and love!

Christ is not only exalted in our **Testimony**; He is also involved in our **Maturity**!

II. Christ is Exalted in our Maturity.

Paul heard about God’s fingerprints on these Ephesian saints, and he began to pray for them. Paul felt a personal responsibility to pray constantly for them. There is power in prayer. We ought to pray for every saint here. It was Paul’s practice to pray for these saints without stopping.

A. *The Goal: Knowing Christ Better*

“17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” – literally, “that you might know Him better”.

It is amazing to consider what God does for us in our immediate salvation. We say with John Newton:

*Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see!*

But there is more! God wants us to “know Him better!”

We are to be constantly growing. **2 Peter 3:18** (ESV) — “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”.

God does not want you to remain immature in Christ.

Illustrations

- 1. A tree doesn’t produce fruit until the roots are down deep**
- 2. An architect does not build until he understands architectural engineering and structures.**
- 3. I don’t let my 12 year old operate on my 3 year old. If my 3 year old needs an operation, I send them to a mature expert.**

Are you in a place where you are growing in Christ? Are you providing? Are you able to provide? Oh that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” (verse 17).

B. The Means: the Spirit and the Word

Notice the ministry of the Spirit in this verse.

“16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of **wisdom** and of **revelation in the knowledge of him.**” – literally, “that you might know Him better”.

Paul is not talking to Christians here, so he is not speaking the initial opening of our eyes that occurs at conversion. He’s saying we need to PRAY for our eyes to be opened more! It is the Spirit that does this work. We need God’s Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV) — “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my judgments.”

The FEAR of the Lord

What Paul is getting at is really the concept that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”. **Proverbs 9:10**, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

In other words, to have **WISDOM** is to see everything from God’s perspective! People who have authentic wisdom consider everything from His point of view.

Paul said it this way in **Colossians 3:1–3** (ESV) — “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Revelation is knowledge that only God can impart.

God’s Word is the source of all wisdom and the Spirit of God inspired that Word.

You can know a lot about me. You can make a lot of external observations about me, but in order to really *know* me, I have to reveal myself to you. In order to know a person, that person has to open up to you. That is what this word “revelation” means. God has revealed Himself to us.

This is not just knowing about God, but knowing Him intimately and knowing Him better day by day. That this wisdom and revelation leads to a greater “the knowledge of Him” – literally, “that you might know Him better”.

Application: When is the last time you poured your heart out to God in prayer? When is the last time your heart was filled with amazement in the Scripture? This should be a daily activity for you. Or are you just coasting along? Wake up! Open your heart. Clear out all the clutter in your heart and soak up the knowledge of Christ.

C. The Focus: Christ’s hope, riches, and power

18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”

1. HOPE – there is a paradox!

- God has opened our eyes to His **Plan**—the HOPE of His calling is not in this world. It’s to another world! This world will lead you to destruction!

18a having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you,

Our hope is not found in this life. We don’t get the promises here and now. We get some benefits, but the vast majority are in the world to come.

Consider Hebrews 11. We see a paradox at the end of the chapter.

Hebrews 11:32-40, “And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

Paul says in **Romans 8:18**, “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

The World to Come Peeking through!

Our hope is in the world to come! Yes there are tremendous things we can look forward to in this world, but it's all the world to come peeking through! God's blessings is that He “makes all things new”. He bears fruit through us! We see people transformed. We see our children walking with God! Those are the blessings of the world to come manifesting themselves here!

Application: There is an emphasis in churches today to replace our eternal hope with a present earthly hope. Churches are replacing the hope of the Gospel with a utilitarian message that allows you to have “your best life now”. And this is not only being seen in the prosperity churches. The hope becomes that we can have a better life by utilizing the things of this world. Our life is enriched brothers and sisters by the hope we have in Christ right now. We have

2. RICHES – there is a promise!

- God has opened our eyes to His **Promise**—the promises of the world leave you empty! 18b what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. Here we must live for a realm in which Jesus Christ has no competition. There are no idols when we see Jesus Christ face to face and we come into our inheritance. Only Christ! Colossians describes how we are to live with the glorious perspective of our future hope. **Colossians 3:1-3**, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Live for those things that are to come! Sometimes we get a peak into the world to come. When people are enlightened by the Spirit and receive Christ by faith, you are witnessing the power of the world to come! When your prayer life is filled with the unction of the Spirit, you are touching the face of God! When you see submission in marriage from the heart, even though it

is hard, you are observing Christ's exaltation in that brother or sister. Glory! Joy! This is the power of the world to come.

Focus on these things! Focus on a place where Christ is God alone!

3. POWER – there is a power in us that will bring us to maturity

- God has opened our eyes to His **Power**—the arm of the flesh will fail you!
19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”

This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead!

Focus on these things will lead you to maturity!

III. Christ is Exalted in our Submission.

The Exalted Christ

20b ... 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things 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.”

Christ is seated at the right hand of God. This speaks of His ascension. It's not speaking of geography or location. It's speaking of authority and position. This is a means of saying that Christ sits in the place of God as God. He is deity.

Everything will be under His control, even His enemies. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is KURIOS (LORD). This is the Greek translation in the Septuagint for YAHWEH, or the God of Genesis. Jesus Christ is Yahweh. Every tongue will confess that. The God of Genesis came to earth incarnate in humanity and was crucified for your sins and for mine.

Now we who are called must submit to Him in all things. We are to be filled with Him that He might be our collective Head. He must uncover every idol in our life. He must be our Lord and Head in all things pertaining to us, His church, and His bride.

Christ is most seen in His exalted form in this temporary time of earth that we live in through His church. He is seen in His people, in you and in me. He is seen in us. And when Christ is exalted in us, when they see us, they see HIM!!

Glory to His Name! He is supreme!