

IT REALLY IS AS GOOD AS THIS

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Evening – 6th November 2022

Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23.

In these verses the apostle focuses on the church that he is writing to. He has laid out the grand design of God and he now prays for the people he is writing to. The prayer is one sentence of 169 words in the Greek. In this prayer the big picture just gets bigger and bigger. We see ourselves in this big picture and are able to see our present situation better.

1. The need for understanding.

Paul has shown the people that they have the Holy Spirit. But progress is not automatic. There is a need to grow in grace and to receive more light and revelation. So we have to pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in us despite the fact that we already have received Him. This is something to pray for ourselves and for others. We, as Christians, have everything but we need help to realize this and enjoy these benefits. We need to be able to make the connections and apply the truth carefully to ourselves.

Otherwise, we are like someone who has a house full of things but does not really know what they do. God has planned for this interaction with Him. We pray to the Father of glory and He acts to send us blessings. We grow together as people in the local church. We help each other to see things better. We are given light and revelation as we serve alongside each other.

It is important to see the place that the understanding plays in all this. This is otherwise known as the mind or the heart. It is blinded by nature and even Christians can still be quite blind. Truth has to be pitched to our minds. It is not music that has to be pitched to our emotions. We need to know something. We see with the eyes of our understanding and things make sense to us. We see better how things apply to us and the result is that we are given joy. We 'join up the dots' and relate the truth better to the here and now. We realize better who the Lord is and what He has done.

Sin binds and enslaves us. It keeps our faculties in lockdown and threatens the renewal of our minds. The devil aims to weaken us. But the more we see, the more we are able to do. We grow in faith and love.

2. What we see!

We see that things really are as good as this! It is not a revelation of how awful we are or an invitation to feel miserable and try harder. This is positive truth and is very bright. It is to have our eyes opened wider to the bigger picture.

There is hope that we understand more clearly and feel more. The sight of future glory is a help to us now. This is our calling as we see in Ephesians 4:4 and Romans 8:30. God's aim is our glorification. He will be our God to the end. We are to be acquainted with this and be assured of this. We are to live in this hope (Hebrews 11:1 and Romans 8:24-25). We are to be assured of this and confess this hope. Christ's resurrection proves it to us. His calling converts us and gives us the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:19 and 48-52).

We have a glorious inheritance. This is the substance of heaven (See 1 Corinthians 2:7-10). It is so, so good (1 Peter 1:3-5). We are not to be afraid to think of heaven for Christ will be there. We will all be there together which lies behind the thought of His inheritance in the saints. It is a populated heaven where we will all be. We will have fascinating stories to tell each other of the Lord's mercy to us.

Then there is the power that we are to have our eyes opened to. Paul multiplies terms to show how great this power is. The power comes from heaven, from our Lord Jesus Christ and by His Spirit. Seeing the power that raised the Lord from the dead, we are informed about our own resurrection. We are to know that power in advance, helping us to overcome sin and temptation. The power will help us to avoid traps and snares. We will be able to persevere, to keep preaching, serving, or staying in difficult work or family situations.

3. We find our place in Him.

All the great themes and purposes of God of vv1-14 bring us to focus on glory in this passage. Election and accomplished redemption lead us to receive the Holy Spirit and to have Christ in our view now and for the future in heaven. We find our location in the wider purposes of God. It opens our eyes, not to our glory, but to His glory. We have all this before us but we know that in the present there is affection and care towards us. There was power that raised the Lord from the dead but that was only the beginning of it. He has now ascended on high, has been crowned and is now reigning. He is over all the angelic host, both the obedient and disobedient. He rules over all earthly rulers and outranks them all.

We shelter under His rule as He rules as head over the church. All things are working together for good for His people everywhere. God has actually, in a sense, declared Himself incomplete without having His people, His body, His church with Him. His plan is to have the church and glorified in heaven with Him. Psalm 110:1 tells us that He has placed His Son with all authority and that eventually everything, including death, will be under His feet. This rule He is able to exercise for His people as He is present everywhere, upholding, 'tweaking', 'nudging' world events towards His desired end.