**UNDERSTANDING OUR RICHES IN CHRIST
Ephesians 1:15-23**

While I was preparing this lesson, I really asked the Lord to show me what it is He wanted me to say to you about this passage. This is an especially difficult and deep passage. It isn’t very long, only 9 verses, but it is filled with deep truth, nothing new, but it’s truth that we, the church, need to be reminded of.

Last week we began a study in the Book of Ephesians, Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, a church which we know from reading Acts that he loved dearly. This letter has a lot to say about the church. So that seems like a good place to start this morning. QUESTION: What is “the church”? Would someone like to give a good definition? The church is the body of believers, comprised of people who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, professed Jesus as Lord and Savior. If you are a born-again Christian, then you are a part of the church. What is the church’s primary purpose? Why are we here? To evangelize and make disciples, to carry out the Great Commission. Jesus’ instruction to His followers at the end of Matthew (28:18-20): “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” So then, the church is not a building or a denomination, but it is Christians, the redeemed people of God.

Christian Box demonstration. There are a lot of different groups out there who claims to be “Christians” in one form or another. Some of these are the real deal, true followers of Christ and some clearly are not. What is the litmus test of whether someone is really a Christian? What they believe about Jesus. Romans 10:9-10 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” But then Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day [the final judgment] many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Scary passage! Later in Matthew 25 Jesus reiterates this in His discourse about separating the sheep (believers) from the goats (unbelievers). So true belief in Jesus, belief that leads to salvation is not merely an intellectual exercise but it is a belief that changes the way we live.

Are we the real thing? Are we truly saved? Are we being obedient disciples of Jesus in this world? *[thoughts about our class]*

So let’s get into our passage this morning. Paul is so overwhelmed by the very thought that the God of the universe loved us enough to make a way for our salvation and is personally involved in the salvation process. He considers the dear saints of Ephesus and he breaks out into a prayer of thanksgiving. Here is Paul’s prayer…

READ Ephesians 1:15-23

V 15, We know from Acts Ch 18 that Paul helped to establish the church in Ephesus and from Acts Ch 19 that he spent several years ministering to the believers there. But it has been several years since he last saw them. Many new converts have been added and the report that Paul has been hearing about the church in Ephesus is good. Two things he commends them for – “your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints.” This church had their act together. They believed the right doctrine and they demonstrated Christian love. The horizontal component, their faith in Christ, in a right relationship with Him. The vertical component, their love for each other. It was a dynamic church. And Paul is thankful for them, v 16, and regularly prays for them – “I do not cease” to give thanks and to pray for you. When I read this it struck me that this is the way we should be. We need to pray on a regular basis for each other and for our fellow saints as God brings them into our minds.

Notice that Paul prays something specific for these believers, v 17. He prays for wisdom and “revelation in the knowledge of Him,” in other words an understanding of God – an understanding that only comes from the Holy Spirit. We cannot get this wisdom and this understanding on our own, by our own reasoning or efforts. It’s beyond our human comprehension. 1 Cor 2:9-10 says, “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him-- these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” What Paul tells us here in Eph Ch 1 is deep spiritual truth. It’s truly the depths of God. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the wisdom and understanding of God. And that is why Paul prays that the Holy Spirit will teach these believers.

 Beginning in v 18 Paul lays out three specific WOW truths that we need to be reminded of. We’ve heard them before. We know them hear. We’ve read our Bibles. We need to apply them to our lives. We need to live what we know. Even the believers at Ephesus, this precious group of godly believers, needed to be reminded of this. And, friends, so do we! Let’s look at these three truths…

The first one…READ Ephesians 1:18

All that sounds good. What does it mean? We need to be reminded that God has a great and glorious plan for us, His church, those who believe. He has chosen us, called us, therefore we are a people with hope, a bright future. We have something wonderful to look forward to. Paul says something profound and wonderful that if you’re not careful you will miss – we, the saints, are HIS inheritance. We have exceedingly great value to God. And He has BIG PLANS for us.

So that’s the future, and it is glorious, but what about here and now? Well the second thing Paul says we need to be reminded of…READ Ephesians 1:19

What does that mean? The power of God is available for us. The power of God that comes thru the Holy Spirit. Power for what purpose? Acts 1:8 (Jesus says this to His disciples just before He ascends): “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” We need God’s power in order to carry out our purpose, the Great Commission. Phil 2:13: “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” We need God’s power to do His will and to live a life that pleases Him. Later in our study we will read, Eph 3:20, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us…” God’s power can accomplish far more thru us than we can even imagine! I’ve heard a lot of my Christian brothers and sisters say, “I don’t know if I can do that” or “I can’t do that.” You’re right. You can’t and I can’t. But the power of God that we have access to CAN!

Paul then gives an illustration of the immensity of God’s power in v 20 – the resurrection of Jesus. “According to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places…” (19b-20a) The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us, His church. Do you realize that the power of God can make dead people live? That’s exactly what happens when people get saved. Dead in their trespasses and sins made alive in Christ. You and I can’t make any dead person live, but thru our sharing of the truth of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit can. BIG POWER!

The third truth…Ephesians 1:20b-21

This passage reminds me of Phil 2:9-11: “Therefore God has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Paul’s main point here is to focus on the greatness, the supremacy of Jesus Christ. We need to remain focused on Jesus! He has already conquered death, hell and the grave. He has defeated Satan. Because Jesus is the Conqueror, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:37 We have no reason to worry or to fear because greater is He that is in us than He who is in the world.

READ Ephesians 1:22-23

Jesus reigns supreme over everything including the church. He is the Head of the church. We fall under His authority. We live for Him. Paul uses the metaphor of the church being the body of Christ with Christ as the head. What does that tell you?

Jesus is everything to the church, He is the fullness of the church. He fills all in all.

Our focus should be on Jesus. We need to learn more about Jesus, know more about Jesus, so we can fall deeper in love with Jesus. A BIG LORD!

Close with this QUESTION: Did we get all of Jesus when we were saved ----- or is there more?

The Bible says that we got all of Him! READ scriptures and then sing