

sermon study guide

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Christ the King

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. If you had a chance to meet someone, fictional or non-fictional, who would it be? What about this individual's character draws you to them?
2. Most of us have known periods of time when our spiritual progress slows. What slows your progress toward knowing Christ more?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Ephesians 1:15-19

3. Pastor Ashwin pointed out that in our day and in Paul's day many pressing needs called for prayer. But in his prayer in these verses, what does Paul focus on? Why?

Read Ephesians 1:20-23

4. What is Christ's present position? What implication does this have for current world events? Our battle against sin? The mission of the church?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin warned about the danger of 'spiritual stagnation'. How can these verses help keep your faith fresh and growing?
6. Paul prays that we would get to know God more deeply (v. 17) and that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened (v. 18). What revelation do you need about Christ? How will you seek this in order to grow and enrich your relationship with Him?

THE WORD (NIV)

Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, 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 glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

For those who do not believe, Paul's desire is for them to know Christ. For those who do believe, Paul prays for them to know Christ more. Use Paul's prayers as a guide in your praying for both of these groups.

sermon study summary

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There was such spiritual depth to the letters and prayers of the Apostle Paul which spoke of his intimate walk with God. Many issues surrounded the church in his time – persecutions, false teachings, division and threats to name a few. Similarly, we could generate a long grocery list of prayers concerning the world and the church to fill a host of prayer meetings. Yet within Paul's prayers the principal concern was that the recipients would first and foremost know God more and operate out of the assurance of that knowledge. Paul's thrust in Ephesians 1:15-23 was that if we knew who God was and who we were as His people then the concerns of the world would be put into their proper perspective.

The 'shine' of new experiences wears off in time – in marriage, jobs or being a Christian. For the latter, a stagnation can set in over time stalling our spiritual journey. Paul's prayer was to mature believers but still he prayed that they would go deeper and discover more and more the love and nature of God (Eph 1:17). Our hunger to be closer to God and to know Him better should increase through the whole of our Christian life. This is a supernatural revelation from God.

In Ephesians 1:18-19a Paul highlighted three spiritual realities that he wanted us to know:

1. The hope to which God has called us (1:18-19a) and our future hope in Him (1 Cor 2:9). We can look to our future hope when confronted with a problem today.
2. The riches of our glorious inheritance with Him in heaven. We can live in the light of this awareness, being heavenly minded for optimal earthly use.
3. The all-surpassing power available now to us who believe. This power enables us to overcome all challenges.

In these verses Paul uses such words from the Greek as 'power', 'energy', 'ruler' and 'might' to show what is available to us from God now. It is this same power God exerted to raise Jesus from the dead (1:19b-20). While the cross was the highest demonstration of God's love, the resurrection was the highest demonstration of God's power. Paul's prayer is for us to recognize the immense power that has been delegated to us.

There are five principal areas that define our understanding of Jesus – the incarnation, His death, resurrection, second coming and His ascension. Paul turns our eyes to the ascension in this prayer as the culmination of His ministry on earth and where He is right now – seated at the right hand of the Father in a place of the highest honor (Psalm 110:1). Why does Paul focus on this? Because Jesus at the right hand of God is our source of power (1:21-22). Jesus is not idle in this place. He is still working to redeem and restore all things. Nothing in heaven or earth can hinder Jesus. And upon His return we will see the object of our culmination of our hope and the realization of our inheritance.

If we belong to Jesus, what do we have to fear? Any assault against us is an assault against Jesus Himself (1:22). Jesus reigns supreme. All things are subject to Him. The world is not spinning out of control. Jesus is in control. The power of any sin is no match for the power available to the Christian. A far greater power is at work in you enabling you to overcome. Knowing that the church represents a mission that cannot fail inspires us to persevere in battle. The circumstances may not change but God can change how we see them.