

Christian: Do You Know Who You Are? Part 4

Ephesians 1:15-23

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Today

1. We're wrapping up our short series on who we are in Christ this morning
2. And as we do, we move from looking at who we are as *individuals* to who we are as a *group*
3. Not only does the Holy Spirit want us to know who and what we are by virtue of our faith in Christ as individuals,
 - a. He also wants us to understand that in Christ we are made a part of something significantly bigger than just ourselves
 - b. being a Christian means being a vital part of the Church
4. Now, when I say that word "Church" I know it brings up all kinds of different images and reactions in your minds
 - a. some have strong positive feelings toward the church
 - b. others are neutral,
 - c. while some are downright hostile or distrustful
5. The verses before us today are aimed at helping us understand and appropriate what it means to be IN the Church, which is IN CHRIST

B. The Church

1. You know, anyone can love the *ideal* church. = The *challenge* is to love the real church!
2. It's been said that the church is kind of like Noah's ark
 - a. it's easier to put up with the stink on the inside
 - b. when you consider the alternative on the outside
3. And then there's the little well known ditty:

*To live above with saints we love
Oh that will be glory
But to live below with the saints we know
Well, that's a different story*
4. It's my conviction that one of the prime reasons why the church struggles is because it does not know who and what it really is
5. Let's take a look at what Paul says here and see if we can't have our understanding enlightened

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 15-16

{15} Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

{16} do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

1. Paul had received a good report on how the church in Ephesus was doing
2. This had to have been especially good news to Paul since he had spent 3 years of intense ministry there
3. Now he hears that they were staying true to the faith, and were devoted to one another and the Lord
4. What an encouragement it is when pastors and ministry leaders hear a good report from others about the people they're leading
5. In vs. 17 -23 Paul tell them what he was praying for them

B. Vs. 17-23

{17} that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

1. Let's stop right there
2. Actually, this is one long sentence from v. 15 through v. 21; but there is so much here, we need to break it apart verse by verse and phrase by phrase
3. Paul was praying that the Ephesians would see and understand who Jesus was
4. This is the prayer of a pastor who really cares about the spiritual well-being of his people
 - a. he didn't desire that they would merely be good *listeners* to the Word
 - b. he yearned that *each* of them would come to see who Jesus was, and *understand* what faith in Him means
5. It's sad to say that some pastors want to keep their people always looking to them to show them the way
 - a. they want to be like Moses on Mt. Sinai who alone ascends to receive the oracles of God
 - b. then descends to impart the will and counsel of the Lord to others
6. The *faithful* pastor isn't like that
 - a. he yearns for people to learn to go to God on their own
 - b. he aches for them to look past him to the Chief Shepherd
 - c. nothing delights him more than to see his people surpass his experience and knowledge
 - d. the good pastor makes himself merely the shoulders others can stand on to reach higher than he ever could
7. This was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: That they would all know more and more who Jesus is

{18} the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

8. With the same clarity we look around and see this room, Paul prays they may see the realities of the spiritual realm
9. That they would know without a shadow of a doubt what it means to be called by God
10. Friends, when I read these words, I just want to preach!!!!!!
 - a. they stir my soul as I feel Paul's passion in prayer for the Ephesians!

- b. you see, what Paul prayed for them, I pray for you!
 - 1) that you might know who you are in Christ
 - 2) that you might see yourself as God sees you
 - 3) that you might look on His people as He does
 - c. without a doubt, if we could grasp these things, the vast majority of our struggles would simply evaporate
11. You need to know that our church is in an intense season of being stressed and pressed
- a. specially in the realm of the home and marriage
 - b. we've noticed over the years that marital troubles come in waves - and it appears that we are riding the crest right now
 - 1) I'm talking about good, solid Christian homes who are being assailed
 - 2) and if the enemy can't drive a wedge between a husband and wife, then he angles to attack through the kids or through financial pressure or something else
 - c. recognizing this, the elders spent some time Thursday evening praying for the church
 - 1) praying for marriages
 - 2) praying for families
 - 3) and praying for YOU!
12. But you know what?
- a. I have to say that if the men of this church had their eyes opened to what it means to be a Christian, these seasons of turmoil and trouble in the home would be shorter and less severe
 - b. if the ladies of Calvary knew what it meant to be in Jesus, the devil wouldn't spend so much time trying to harass them because his attacks would be more quickly rebuffed
13. May God give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to receive the truth and reality of who and what we are in Christ
- {19} and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power**
- {20} which 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 principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.**
14. Quite frankly, as Paul writes about the power of God, he stumbles all over himself with superlatives
- a. he doesn't just want us to know the *power* of God
 - b. nor does he want us to know the *greatness* of the power of God
 - c. he wants us to know the *exceeding* greatness of His power
15. In other words, "You think you know what power is? You don't."
16. The puny mind of man could never know the awesomeness of God's power unless the Holy Spirit Himself revealed it
17. This surpassing power of God is *toward us who believe*
- a. it doesn't just sit in some heavenly battery
 - b. God bestows it on us by faith

- c. faith is the cable that taps into God's power
18. For the last three weeks in this series, we've seen the tremendous spiritual wealth that is ours
 19. But what good is wealth if you are too weak to use it?
 20. John D. Rockefeller was the world's first billionaire
 - a. for years he lived on crackers and milk because of stomach problems caused by worrying
 - b. he rarely had a good night's sleep and guards constantly stood at his door
 - c. he was wealthy, but miserable!
 21. God has not only blessed us with every spiritual blessing, He's also given us the power we need to appropriate those blessings and put them to work!
 22. Paul knew this power of God that's available to us today had already been demonstrated in history, so he shows how it works and what it looks like . . .
 - a. he said it's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead
 - b. you know, we've heard of the resurrection so often we run the risk of being a bit jaded on just how totally mind-blowing it was and is
 - c. man's final foe, that one inescapable certainty that levels all men, the great equalizer -- death, was beaten in the resurrection
 - d. fallen man, the devil, and all the hosts of evil united in hatred and opposition to God at the cross
 - e. sin, death, and hell all took their best shot
 - f. but Jesus beat them at their own game = He rose from the dead
 - g. then the Father exalted Jesus and seated Him in the place of victory at His right hand
 - h. He now sits in the place of authority and power over all other authority and power
 - 1) whether we're talking about the thrones of earthly kingdoms
 - 2) or the hosts of angelic and demonic beings
 - 3) they all rank under Christ - He sits *far above* them all!
 23. Now - here's the point, this power, this very same power, is ours in Christ!
 24. A woman who lived in a remote valley in Wales went to a great deal of trouble to have electrical power installed in her home.
 - a. but once the lines were in, the electrical company noticed she didn't use very much electricity at all.
 - b. in fact, her usage was minuscule.
 - c. they sent a meter reader out to check on the matter.
 - d. the man came to the door and said, "Ma'am aren't you using the electricity we worked so hard to bring you?"
 - e. she said "Oh yes. We turn it on every night to see how to light our lamps and then we switch it off again."
 25. This sounds like the way many Christians apply the power of God in their lives
 - a. they treat it like an emergency flashlight
 - b. they're content to live by the light of their comfortable status quo
 - c. and only draw on the power of God when there's an emergency
 26. God doesn't want us to see His power as a rescue rope, a life buoy, or escape hatch
 27. He intends it to be the air we breath

- a. our lives in Christ shouldn't be marked by fits and starts, like a car running out of gas, lurching down the road
- b. we should be energized by His love and truth and walk consistently in a path of victory

{22} And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

{23} which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- 28. Remember that Paul is telling them what he was praying for them
- 29. He wanted them to know that Christ is the head of the church - and the Church is His body
- 30. Now, he makes an incredible statement here; As His body, the Church is *His fullness*
 - a. what that means is that the Church *fills up* Christ, it completes Him
 - b. if the scriptures themselves didn't say this, it would be nothing less than blasphemous to say it
 - c. the Church is the complement to Christ who is the head
 - d. without a body, a head is incomplete
 - e. while God is complete in Himself, needing nothing -
 - f. in His unsearchable wisdom He has determined to attain fullness by union with His redeemed!
 - g. just think about that for a moment
 - 1) [pause]
 - 2) that's a "selah" moment
- 31. Consider this:
 - a. man was originally created in the very image of God
 - b. yet even before the entrance of sin into the creation, God declared it was *not* good that the man should be alone - is this a clue that it was *not good* that God was alone?
 - c. the solution to man's problem?
 - 1) God created the woman as man's companion
 - 2) and brought them together as husband and wife
 - d. this is a clue to the reason *why* God created man in the first place - He wanted a companion!
 - e. Paul says this in Ephesians 5 where he defines the role of the husband and wife, then he turns the tables and says that he is really talking about Christ and the church

{Eph 5:30-32} For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. {31} "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." {32} This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

- 32. Think of it - at the cross, the Father and Son were separated for a time so that the Son could secure a bride
- 33. We are now betrothed to Christ
- 34. And the kind of relationship God wants with us can only be understood by looking at what a perfect marriage would be like
 - a. a man and woman who are married do not lose their individuality

- b. but their individuality is taken up into something bigger that actually completes and fulfills them
35. This really is what Paul is praying the Ephesians will understand about their faith
- a. that they are united to Jesus in a covenant not unlike marriage
 - b. that in fact, marriage is but a living picture God has given as a way to understand His desire for intimacy with us!!!!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Head & Figure

{22} And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

{23} which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

1. Have you ever gone to the fair or an amusement park, and they have those painted figures of a muscle man, or a clown, or even a curvaceous babe, but they don't have a head?
 - a. the idea is that you walk up behind them and stick your head on them
 - b. then you have your picture taken and it makes you look like something other than what you are
 - c. but not really because your head never really fits the exaggerated proportions of the comic figures
2. Question: If we could picture Christ as the head of our this local body of believers, would the world laugh at the misfit? Or would they stand in awe of a human body so closely related to a divine head?

B. Under Our Feet

1. One last thing as we conclude; Paul says Jesus is the head and the Church is His body
2. Does it not stand to reason that if Christ is the head and we comprise the body, that makes us his arms and hands, and heart, and legs, and even feet?
3. And what does the first phrase of v. 22 say about the feet?
4. All things have been placed under them!
5. Doesn't that mean that if we are in Christ, then all things have been placed under *our* feet?
6. Indeed it does and it is another of the truths Paul was praying the Ephesians would grasp
7. In Christ, we possess the authority and power to live life to the glory of God
 - a. in Him we have the power to say "No" to sin and temptation
 - b. in Jesus we have authority to refute error and bring down spiritual strongholds
8. While the world would love to keep us under it's thumb, it is in fact, under our feet
9. During WWII, General John Wainwright was captured by the Japanese and held prisoner in a concentration camp.
 - a. he was treated cruelly and became a broken, crushed, an hopeless man

- b. finally the Japanese surrendered and the war ended.
 - c. a US army colonel was sent to the camp to announce personally to the general that Japan had been defeated and that he was free and in command.
 - d. after Wainwright heard the news, he returned to his quarters and was confronted by some Japanese guards who began to mistreat him as they had in the past
 - e. but Wainwright, with the news of the allied victory still fresh in his mind, declared with authority, "No, I am in command here! Now it's time for you to obey my orders."
 - f. from that moment on, General Wainwright was in control.
10. Friends the victory Jesus won at Calvary is complete.
- a. the Spirit is now sent to you with the good news of that victory
 - b. never again go under when the enemy comes to oppress.
 - c. claim the victory in Jesus' name - stand your ground