

### STUDY GUIDE 3 Ephesians 1:15-23

In our last lesson, we began to learn about the great blessings we have from our glorious God: how He chose us before time began, to make us His own and destine us for wholeness and glory with Him. We also saw that all of this is ours through the work of Christ the Son. As C.H. Spurgeon put it, "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. If they came to us any other way we might lose them; or we might not be sure that they were genuine; but when they come to us in Christ, they come to stay and we know that they are real. If Christ is mine, all blessings in heavenly places are mine...we have never earned one...and they are the rarest, richest, most enduring – priceless."

It is also in the nature of God's blessings that they lead to even more blessings. The more we mine the treasures of their meaning, the more glorious ramifications we see for those who are His and the more clearly we see the greatness of our God. The verses in this next section of Ephesians 1 help us dig deeper into what it means to be "blessed with every spiritual blessing" in Christ Jesus.

Review your memory verse - Ephesians 1:3 - by writing it out here.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23 two times. ( \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ )

Read verses 15-17 again.

1. In verse 15, Paul says, "For this reason...", he is praying for them. To what do you think he is referring, from back in verses 1-14?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What 2 things has Paul heard about these folks? (verse 15)

Why are these linked together - why is increasing love for all other Christians a by-product of being a believer in Jesus? (1 John 4:10-11, 19 and 5:1 may help.)

3. Biblical love isn't necessarily an emotion, but rather concerns first attitudes, then actions. With the 1 John passages in mind, (and remembering it's God who leads us and changes us) do you see some specific new steps you'd like to take in showing love for other believers? (Perhaps somebody who's hard to love comes to mind...)
  
4. Right away, Paul gives us an example of one of the very best ways to really love somebody - by praying for them. Before we look at what Paul prays, what do you see in how he prays that you can apply in your own prayer life? (From Ephesians 1:15-16, also verse 17a in NIV.)
  
5. Paul knew many of the struggles and needs of these folks - he could have asked God for so many things! But in verse 17, what does Paul ask for them first of all?

Notes on verse 17: The word "know" here (or "knowledge") doesn't mean to just collect information, but to really know and view as reality, to intimately understand and personally experience.

Also, notice that different translations may say either "a spirit" (the actual original phrase) or "the Spirit", an attempt to clarify the meaning of the original phrase. The Tyndale Commentary states that probably here "the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision" is meant, but we should understand that this is only possible as "the gift of the Spirit, who makes wise and who alone reveals the truth".

6. In other places in Scripture, Christians are taught to bring every need and circumstance to God in prayer. Why do you think that in this passage, the Spirit of God leads Paul to pray first and foremost that his fellow believers will know God? (What do you think the Lord wants you to understand?)

7. Skim Psalm 103 (or Psalm 27) where King David tells what he has learned of his God. Are you getting to know God? What has He taught you about Himself?

Has knowing these things about God made a difference in your life? Explain.

What are some of the ways He used to reveal Himself to you? (Any hard times, long struggles, failures, etc.?)

8. How does remembering this affect:  
-your perspective on the present struggles and hard situations in your life?

-your perspective on the struggles of others? (You may have somebody specific in mind.)

-the way that you pray for yourself and others?

Read verses 18-23. Note: As it's used here, "hope" doesn't mean desiring something that may or may not come about. It means the confident expectation of a sure thing!

9. According to Paul in verse 18, what believers could also really use is an understanding of the "hope His call holds for us" and "what rich glories He has promised the saints will inherit". (Jerusalem Bible) Read the following passages that only begin to tell about our hope and inheritance. Jot down the ideas (realities!) that you find particularly helpful.

a. The hope of His calling  
Romans 8:28-29

John 15:16

Philippians 4:19

Philippians 3:20-21

(Isaiah 25:6-9 to dig deeper!)

- b. The riches of His inheritance [among] the saints:  
Romans 8:16-18

(2 Corinthians 4:16-17 to dig deeper!)

1 Peter 1:3-7

Revelation 22:5

Note: Another way to look at "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" is to see it as the saints themselves being the inheritance God receives and finds glorious. Whether or not this is being taught here, it is a truth taught in Scripture (see Titus 2:14). This interpretation again underlines the great worth and value God places on His children.

10. Finally in Ephesians 1:19, Paul wants believers to know what?

11. With all that is going on in our lives and in the world, we can feel so powerless! What is significant to you that God led Paul to describe His power in these three ways from verses 19-20:

-it's of "surpassing greatness" ("incomparably great" NIV)

-it's "for us who believe"

-it's "in accordance with the working of His might which He brought about when he raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places"

(Want to dig deeper? Explain how verses 21-23 further "showcase" God's power that is available to us.)

12. In what specific situations do you need to count upon this incomparably great power of God?

13. In summary... Without knowing what He is really like, and without understanding the reality of His hope, inheritance and power for us, what can happen in our hearts (our thoughts and feelings) and our lives?

**Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 3**

I. Paul's desire for the saints to know God deeply comes through so clearly in his epistle to the Ephesians. James 4:8a states, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Some ponderings:

- a. Is a believer only as close to God as he/she seeks to be?
- b. What, if anything, hinders you from drawing closer to God?
- c. How would you advise someone about deepening his/her relationship with Jesus?

II. Consider Ephesians 1:19 one more time:

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe. *These are in accordance with the **working** of the **strength** of His **might*** <sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

Paul is so determined for his readers to grasp the magnitude of God's *power* that he uses four synonyms for the word:

<b>power</b> ( <i>dunamis</i> , G1411)	Inherent, miraculous ability.  This is the root word for the English word, <i>dynamo</i> . It may have been Alfred Nobel's inspiration for naming his invention dynamite in 1867, but <i>dunamis</i> was not used to describe an explosive power.  This is the word that Jesus used in Mark 5:30, in describing that power had gone out from Him when the woman with the hemorrhage of blood touched His robe and was healed.
<b>working</b> ( <i>energeia</i> , G1753)	Active power.  This is the word used of the power that raised Christ from the dead.
<b>strength</b> ( <i>kratos</i> , G2904)	Power exercised. Force, might or power that can overcome resistance.
<b>might</b> ( <i>ischus</i> , G2479)	Ability, strength afforded by inherent power.

**Additional Scripture for Study Guide 3**

☐ **1 John 4:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

☐ **1 John 4:19**

<sup>19</sup> We love, because He first loved us.

☐ **1 John 5:1**

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

☐ **Psalm 103**

*A Psalm of David.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name.

<sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And forget none of His benefits;

<sup>3</sup> Who pardons all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases;

<sup>4</sup> Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

<sup>5</sup> Who satisfies your years with good things,

*So that* your youth is renewed like the eagle.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord performs righteous deeds

And judgments for all who are oppressed.

<sup>7</sup> He made known His ways to Moses,

His acts to the sons of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord is compassionate and gracious,

Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

<sup>9</sup> He will not always strive *with us*,

Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.

<sup>10</sup> He has not dealt with us according to our sins,

Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west,

So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

<sup>13</sup> Just as a father has compassion on *his* children,

So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.

<sup>14</sup> For He Himself knows our frame;

He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

<sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass;

As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

<sup>16</sup> When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,

And its place acknowledges it no longer.  
17 But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to  
everlasting on those who fear Him,  
And His righteousness to children's children,  
18 To those who keep His covenant  
And remember His precepts to do them.  
19 The Lord has established His throne in the heavens,  
And His sovereignty rules over all.  
20 Bless the Lord, you His angels,  
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,  
Obeying the voice of His word!  
21 Bless the Lord, all you His hosts,  
You who serve Him, doing His will.  
22 Bless the Lord, all you works of His,  
In all places of His dominion;  
Bless the Lord, O my soul!

□ **Psalm 27**

*A Psalm of David.*

27 The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the defense of my life;  
Whom shall I dread?  
2 When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,  
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.  
3 Though a host encamp against me,  
My heart will not fear;  
Though war arise against me,  
In *spite of* this I shall be confident.  
4 One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord  
And to meditate in His temple.  
5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;  
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;  
He will lift me up on a rock.  
6 And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,  
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.  
7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice,  
And be gracious to me and answer me.  
8 *When You said*, "Seek My face," my heart said to You,  
"Your face, O Lord, I shall seek."  
9 Do not hide Your face from me,  
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;  
You have been my help;  
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

<sup>10</sup> For my father and my mother have forsaken me,  
But the Lord will take me up.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me Your way, O Lord,  
And lead me in a level path  
Because of my foes.

<sup>12</sup> Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,  
For false witnesses have risen against me,  
And such as breathe out violence.

<sup>13</sup> *I would have despaired* unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord  
In the land of the living.

<sup>14</sup> Wait for the Lord;  
Be strong and let your heart take courage;  
Yes, wait for the Lord.

☐ **Romans 8:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

☐ **John 15:16**

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

☐ **Philippians 4:19**

<sup>19</sup> And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

☐ **Philippians 3:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

☐ **Isaiah 25:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;  
A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,  
*And* refined, aged wine.

<sup>7</sup> And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,  
Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death for all time,  
And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces,  
And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;

For the Lord has spoken.

<sup>9</sup> And it will be said in that day,

“Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”

☐ **Romans 8:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

☐ **2 Corinthians 4:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

<sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

☐ **1 Peter 1:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

☐ **Revelation 22:5**

<sup>5</sup> And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

☐ **Titus 2:14**

<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

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4. Now locate the five instances of the phrase, *according to* (or *in accordance with*.)

1) Verse \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Verse \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Verse \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Verse \_\_\_\_\_ 5) Verse \_\_\_\_\_

The Greek word that is translated as *according to* (or *in accordance with*) is *kata*, G2596. Paul uses this word fifteen times in Ephesians. *Kata* is related to size, amount, or degree. It can be helpful to think of it as *in proportion to*.

In September 2025, a U.S. executive was briefly worth \$393 billion as his company's stock shares surged in price. If this man gave you \$100,000 from his fortune that would be exciting. But if this man gave you something in proportion to his fortune, say just 1%, you would receive \$3.9 billion!

5. When you read in Ephesians 1:5 that God *predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to* [in proportion to] *the kind intention of His will*, what does this reveal about the extent of *the kind intention of His will*?

6. Similarly, when you read in Ephesians 1:7 that, *In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to* [in proportion to] *the riches of His grace....*, how much grace does God possess? (What quantity is in proportion to that?)

**Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 4**

- I. You may have noticed that nearly all of the verb tenses pertaining to the spiritual blessings in Chapter 1 are past tense in English. In Koine Greek, many of those verbs are aorist tense and indicative mood, indicating a simple action which occurred in the past. (Aorist tense in any other mood communicates nothing about timing and duration of the action.)

In verse 3, when Paul writes that he and his readers are blessed *with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*, that is a positional truth (the way God sees us,) but it may not be our current experience or condition (conditional truth.) This is a concept for consideration as we compare the truths of Ephesians to an Old Testament endeavor.

- II. The story of Joshua leading the Israelites into their inheritance in the Promised Land is a physical representation of a believer’s journey into their spiritual inheritance in Christ. As we make our way through Ephesians, we will add to the following table highlighting parallels between the two books.

**Parallels Joshua & Ephesians**

<b>Joshua</b>	<b>Ephesians</b>
Physical Inheritance = the Promised Land	Spiritual Inheritance = full, eternal life in Christ
General for the heirs: Joshua	General for the heirs: Jesus (Greek form of Joshua)
In Joshua 1:3, God tells Joshua, “Every place on which the sole of your foot steps I have given it to you,....” The inheritance is theirs solely as a gift from God before they ever step foot in the Land. (A positional truth that does not yet match their conditional truth.)	From Ephesians 1:3, believers are <i>blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ....</i> These blessings are a gift from God, by grace. Furthermore, Ephesian 1:11 says believers <i>have obtained an inheritance....</i> (A positional truth that does not yet match a believer’s conditional truth.)
The certitude of the victory and receiving the Land was a positional truth – the Land was theirs, but they had to make it their reality – experience it as a conditional truth.	Believer’s certitude of victory & Christ as our inheritance is a positional truth, but we need to understand it as a conditional (our condition here & now) truth.

✞ Mary Ann Porter



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