

Eyes Opened for Expansive Vision

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ 3*, August 7, 2011

Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of **your faith** in the Lord Jesus
and your **love** toward all the **saints**,
¹⁶ I do not cease to give **thanks for you**, remembering **you** in my **prayers**,
¹⁷ that the **God** of our **Lord Jesus Messiah, the Father of glory**,
may **give you** a **Spirit** of **wisdom** and of **revelation** in the **knowledge** of **him**,
¹⁸ having **the eyes of your hearts enlightened**,
that you may **know**
what is **the hope** to which **he has called you**,
what are **the riches** of the **glory** of **his inheritance in the saints**,
¹⁹ and what is **the immeasurable greatness of his power**
toward **us who believe**,
according to the working of his **great might**
²⁰ that he worked **in the Messiah** when **he raised him from the dead**
and **seated him at his right hand** in the heavenly places, [Psa 110:1]
²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,
and above **every name** that is named,
not only in this age but also in the one to come.
²² And he **put all things under his feet** [Psa 8:6]
and gave him as **head over all things**
to the church, ²³ which is **his body**,
the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:3-14

³ **Blessed is the God and Father** of our **Lord Jesus Messiah**, who has blessed us with every **spiritual blessing** in the **heavenly places**, in the Messiah, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, for us to be **holy and blameless before him**, since in **love** ⁵ he foreordained us for **adoption as sons through Jesus Messiah, into him**, according to the good **pleasure** of his will, ⁶ to the glorious **praise of his grace**, with which he has graced us in the Beloved, ⁷ in whom we have the redemption through his **blood**, the **forgiveness** of trespasses, according to the riches of his **grace**, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ by making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good **pleasure**, which he set forth in him ¹⁰ as a **universal plan for the fullness of times**, to sum up into one head all things in the Messiah, things in the heavens and things on earth in him, ¹¹ in whom we were **allotted as God's inheritance**, having been **foreordained** according to the **purpose** of him who works in everything according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that **we who were the first to hope in the Messiah** might be to **the praise of his glory**, ¹³ in whom you also, when you **heard the word of truth**, the **gospel** of your salvation, in whom also, when you **believed**, you were **sealed with the Spirit of the promise, the Holy Spirit**, ¹⁴ who is the **first installment** that **guarantees** our **inheritance** until our redemption as God's own possession, to **the praise of his glory**.

Ephesians 4:15

We are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, **into Christ**.

Enlightenment that Empowers Growth

After praising God (3-14) as the one who has done everything for us in the Messiah and through the Holy Spirit, Paul turns to a prayer for the “Saints” addressed in the letter. Based on their faith/trust in Jesus as Lord and love for other saints/believers/Christians. Paul prefers “saints” because it emphasized what God has done – made them holy.

Paul’s primary prayer is not a to-do list of disciplines to master or evils to overcome or even for new power from God. It is for them/us to know the reality that God already creates. We begin by hearing/trusting the story of Jesus. We grow as that truth turns illuminates a universe so that we see the reality in which we live. Our lives change to fit that truth.

This pattern is profoundly important for proper growth as Christians / “saints.” God makes us his children in Jesus. We grow into what we already are by his grace. We are not striving to become something that we must achieve or reach by our effort or merit.

What God Is Doing in the Saints

Paul highlights three things to know, three dimensions of this universe of God in Christ through the Spirit. We experience them as discoveries of reality – a reality already there.

Hope. This world/life is moving in a definite direction with God out ahead calling us forward.

We can’t know life’s meaning by the muddle of past or present but only by the end point.

Rich Resources. The full weight/reality/glory of God, creator of everything, is committed because he takes those made holy by Jesus as his most valued possession, only new gift.

Power. Knowing the unlimited power of God at work in this great process of salvation, reconciliation, transformation, changes our lives. We lived closed in on our own little world, frustrated with little power. By faith/knowledge, we open ourselves to God’s immense power to work in us. We realize we are part of his great work in all creation.

What God Did in Jesus the Messiah

Jesus is the definitive embodiment of this very distinctive, unexpected, counter-intuitive reality of God’s universe. The distinct character of God’s power is known in raising Jesus from the dead. That he died ... for us. That he creates imperishable life through/beyond death. That only when he takes on our lowest vulnerability, pain, suffering, injustice, betrayal, sin, is he exalted above all else that claims power, now and in all the future.

We readily distort ideas of riches, power, hope. Only when we always see/know them through Jesus can we know the grace and self-giving love that is their powerful heart.

Jesus the Head and Source of Life

Thus this growth into reality has a distinct character. Not growing power for government takeover and stronger political structures to impose patterns of behavior.

Rather this astonishing Messiah, dead and raised, becomes the head of a body made up of those who trust him and are made holy by him. As head he is their identity, source of nourishment and breath, their vision, hearing, taste, smell. He works/lives in them.

They form a community/assembly/church, drawn by him into relationship with diverse others who help each other grow up into his life. But what a life! The fullness of God given to us.