

Our Resources in Christ, Part 2: Is there Something More?

Scripture: Ephesians 1:18–23

Code: 1907

INTRODUCTION

A. The Search for More

There is a trend in Christianity today that deeply troubles me. I refer to it as the quest for something more--the idea that being in Christ is not sufficient. People talk of getting more of Christ, more of the Holy Spirit, and more of His power. They view the resources of Christ as a pharmaceutical prescription, doled out one dose at a time. Others think you must qualify to receive them by a particular ritual. I talked to a woman who said she searched for everything she could get because she wanted to get all of Jesus. The implication of that thinking is that people don't get all of Jesus when they are saved. That would be like obtaining the right to His resources but not receiving any of it in their hearts and minds. Is that good theology or bad theology? Do we need more of God, more of Jesus, and more of the Holy Spirit, or do we receive everything in salvation?

B. The Substance of Salvation

Second Peter 1:3 answers that question: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him" (emphasis added). The biblical view of the doctrine of salvation is that salvation grants the believer everything in Christ. There is no need to search for something more. Such a search undermines the essence of salvation. It contradicts what Jesus said just before He died: Tetelestai (Gk.), which is best translated, "It is completed," "it is finished," or "it is fulfilled." To seek for something more indicates a belief that something is missing in salvation.

C. The Sufficiency of Christ

A good illustration of this particular conflict is to look at the problem the Colossian church was facing.

1. The purpose of the Colossian epistle

Like so many of the early churches in the Roman world, the Colossian church was exposed to many kinds of heresies. One of the most prevalent, which could be traced back to the Essenes, claimed that Christ was not enough for a person to be saved-- that something more needed to be added.

That heresy is very similar to what we are seeing today.

The apostle Paul wrote the Colossians to remind them that Jesus Christ is absolutely, totally, and completely sufficient. In chapter 1 he said that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers--all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (vv. 13-19). Paul is saying that Christ is everything, and that is also his message in Ephesians 1.

2. The additions of the Colossian errorists

The Colossian church was exposed to people advocating that a person needed Christ plus other things to be elevated to the true spiritual plane. This is what they proposed.

a) Christ plus philosophy (Col. 2:8)The Colossian errorists added vain human wisdom to the reality of Christ. That is similar to what we know today as liberalism, neoorthodoxy, or modernism. Paul warned the Colossians of that error, saying, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world [the rudiments of human religion, which is philosophical rather than theological], and not after Christ" (v. 8). Christ is sufficient; such philosophy isn't.
b) Christ plus legalism (Col. 2:16-17)Paul said, "Let no man, therefore, judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or of the new moon, or of a Sabbath day" (v. 16). He was telling the Colossians not to allow anyone to evaluate their spirituality on the basis of keeping religious rituals. In verse 17 he says why: They "are a shadow of things to come; but the body [substance] is Christ."
c) Christ plus mysticism (Col. 2:18)Paul said, "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions" (v. 18, NIV). People today believe that Christ is not enough-- that some heavenly vision or spellbinding experience is necessary for salvation to be real. But according to verse 18 those things result in false humility and pride.
d) Christ plus asceticism (Col. 2:20-23)Asceticism is a monastic life--a life of self-denial. Paul said, "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men? These things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh" (vv. 20-23). Ascetics practiced self-flagellation and anything else that deprived their bodies, but all to no avail in God's sight.

3. The point of the Colossian example

There always have been, and always will be people who claim that Jesus Christ is not enough--that something must be added to His saving work. Paul's answer to that is summed up in Colossians 2:9-10: "In him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." Nothing is missing in Christ. In verse 12 Paul says you have been "buried with him in baptism, in which also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." We have no reason to search for something more. What we need to do is use the resources Christ already gave us.

REVIEW

In Ephesians 1:3-14 Paul carefully outlines the believer's resources and position in Christ. He told us who we are and what we possess--a magnificent statement of what Christ accomplished in our salvation. Verse 3 makes clear that nothing is missing: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings" (emphasis added).

The great truths of the believer's position in Christ are so profound and difficult for the human mind to grasp that Paul prayed for his readers to understand the reality of what he just said. A man of God gives himself to the study of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4). He studies the Word to teach its truths and prays that God will enable the people to understand it. For that the human mind requires a special work by the Spirit of God. First John 2:27 says that God has given us an anointing of the Spirit of God, who teaches us all things.

I. THANKSGIVING (vv. 15-16)

"I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

II. SUPPLICATION (vv. 17-23)

A. The Spirit of Paul's Request (v. 17)

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom

and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

Going Beyond Human Comprehension

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-12 Paul says, "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." God has given us the ability to conceive of what is beyond human senses to hear, touch, or see. Some claim that when you become a Christian you don't receive the Holy Spirit. But if that were true, you would never understand the supernatural principles that govern the Christian life. That's why Paul said, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). All Christians possess the Spirit. He is our resident truth teacher. He allows us to comprehend what is beyond human comprehension.

LESSON

B. The Specifics of Paul's Request (vv. 18-23)

Paul had three truths he wanted us to understand: the greatness of God's plan, the greatness of God's power, and the greatness of God's person.

1. The greatness of God's plan (v. 18)

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

The "calling" occurred before the world began, and the "hope" is in what awaits us. Paul prayed that we would understand who we are and what God has prepared for us.

a) The organ of spiritual perception (v. 18a) "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." The Greek word translated "understanding" is kardias, from which we derive the English word cardiac. It means "heart." The Greek text literally says, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened." In verses 15-17 we discovered that God is the source of spiritual enlightenment and that the Holy Spirit is the channel. The object of that enlightenment is knowledge of Christ (v. 17). In verse 18 Paul identifies the heart as the organ of spiritual understanding. (1) The heart examined Many people misunderstand the meaning of heart in Scripture because our American culture has so often designated the heart to refer to the emotions. Many of our love songs refer to the heart. People pass out little hearts on Valentine's day. But ancient peoples, including the Jewish race, did not see the heart as the seat of their emotions. (a) The seat of the emotions When the Jewish people spoke about their emotions they didn't refer to the heart, but to the gut or visceral area--translated "bowels" in archaic English Bibles (Heb., meim; Gk. splanchna). The Jewish person naturally associated his feelings with his stomach because that's where he felt his emotions. Today we'll say we have a "gut feeling." When you become nervous or anxious you feel those emotions in your stomach. Let's look at some examples. i) Song of Solomon 5:4--The bride said, "My beloved put his hand to the latch of my door, and my bowels were moved for him" (KJV). She had a feeling of anticipation and excitement in her stomach. ii) Psalm 22:14--In a prophetic look at Christ's crucifixion, David writes, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" (KJV). iii) Lamentations 2:11--When Jeremiah cried over the destruction of his people he said, "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth" (KJV). iv) 1 John 3:17--"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (KJV)? (b) The seat of understanding The Jewish person didn't tend to think of the heart as referring to feelings, but to

thinking. That's why Paul chose the Greek word kardias, which can be translated either "heart" or "understanding."i) Proverbs 23:7--"As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he."ii) Matthew 12:34--"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."iii) Jeremiah 17:9--"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"The heart in that context refers to the thinking processes--the mind, will, and understanding. The organ of spiritual perception for the believer is our thinking processes, not the emotions. God doesn't appeal to our emotions; He appeals to our minds and will.

Do Your Emotions Obstruct the Truth?

Christianity is not designed to appeal to the emotions; emotions are designed to respond to the mind. Anything under the guise of Christianity that attempts to appeal to the emotions and bypass the mind will generate a response that has nothing to do with truth.

In 2 Corinthians 6:11 Paul says, "O ye Corinthians, our speech to you is candid, our heart [Gk., kardias] is wide open." Paul had an open mind toward the Corinthians--he was prepared to communicate all he knew about God to them. But in verse 13 he says, "In fair exchange (I speak as unto my children), open wide your hearts [minds] to us." Paul wanted to teach them, but he needed their cooperation. This was the problem: "On our part there is no constraint, but there is constraint in your affections [Gk., splanchna, "guts," "emotions"]" (v. 12). Their emotions prevented Paul from communicating God's truth to them. The Greek text says that they were tightened in their guts. Today we would say they were emotionally uptight. So Paul was saying that the work of God in the lives of the Corinthians was hindered because their emotions got in the way of the truth. So be warned: Whenever you put your feelings before God's truth, you will short circuit the truth and your emotions will run your life.

(2) The heart enlightenedWhen Paul prayed that the Ephesian's hearts might be enlightened, he was asking for them to have an understanding of God's plan. The Holy Spirit enriches the believer's mind with an understanding of divine truth and then relates it to his life.(a) The principlePaul told the Colossians that they didn't need vain human wisdom, legalism, asceticism, or mysticism (Col. 2:8-23). But they did need to "let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly" (3:16). And it is the Holy Spirit who drives Scripture into a person's mind.(b) The practiceAfter His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus, but they didn't recognize Him (Luke 24:13-16). They walked along for several miles as Jesus taught them about Himself from Scripture, but still they didn't know Him (v. 27). Later as they were eating with Him, "Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart [mind] burn within us, while he talked with us along the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (vv. 31-32). Knowing Scripture won't make your heart burn until Christ, through His Spirit, drives it deep into your mind.

b) The ordination of a special plan (v. 18b)

"That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and ... the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

(1) A great planPaul wanted the Ephesian believers to understand what God had planned for them. He wanted them to know about their election, redemption, and inheritance. That plan was not an afterthought, but the master plan of the eternal God. We were a part of God's plan even before the world began. That is our identity. Paul realized that once believers understood all that their salvation entailed, they would act accordingly. When I dwell on that plan, I realize that some day all we who love Christ will be like Him (1 John 3:2). How incredible to realize that we are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).(2) A rich planVerse 18 tells us what's involved in God's great plan: "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." We are saints (Gk., hagios, "holy ones"). We were made holy in Jesus Christ. We are God's children and will receive an inheritance. But notice that it isn't just an inheritance; it's "the riches of the glory of his inheritance." That means words can't describe the

greatness of the inheritance God has planned for us.

2. The greatness of God's power (vv. 19-20)

a) His power identified (v. 19) "What is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Paul was trying to describe how powerful we are, so he used every word for power he could think of. There are four different Greek words used for power in verse 19. (1) Defined (a) Dunamis--"The exceeding greatness of his power [dunamis]." We derive the English word dynamite from dunamis. It refers to inherent power. (b) Energeia--"According to the working [energeia]." That word is the basis for the English word energy. It refers to operative power. (c) Kratos--"The working of his mighty [kratos]." Sometimes kratos is translated "dominion." It refers to ultimate power. (d) Ischus--"His mighty power [ischus]." It refers to endowed power. Paul was saying that God has given believers unbelievable power. Many Christians claim they don't have enough strength or power. That's why Paul prayed for the believer to know the power available to him. (2) Demonstrated (a) Power to evangelize Romans 1:16--"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation." ii) 1 Thessalonians 1:5--"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." (b) Power to endure suffering In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." In verses 8-10 Paul details all the troubles and persecutions he had to endure for Christ's sake. Then in verse 14 he says, "Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus." (c) Power to do God's will People often fear they don't have the energy or resources to do God's will. But Philippians 2:13 says, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (d) Power to serve In Colossians 1:29 Paul says, "For this purpose also I labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me" (NASB). (3) Delivered (a) Acts 1:8--Jesus said, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The Holy Spirit came upon you when you were saved. So you do have the power. (b) Ephesians 3:20--Paul said, "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." God has given us incredible power. Don't run around looking for something more. That's an affront to the gracious love of God who has given us everything in Christ. (b) His power illustrated (v. 20) "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." We may question God's power in our lives, but Paul tells us that it's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to heaven. If you still aren't sure God will follow through on His promises, remember that He did so for Christ. We need to understand God has the power to secure us and fulfill the hope that is ours in Christ. We all have a tendency to doubt if God will accomplish His plan. When we do we just need to remember He fulfilled His plan for Christ. He raised Him out of the grave, shattered the chains of death, and drew Him to His side in heaven. He will do the same for us. There is no reason for us to be insecure.

3. The greatness of God's Person (vv. 21-23)

"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; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

a) Christ's ministry It is vital that we know that Christ is in us. He secures us, empowers us, and fulfills God's promises in us. We don't have anything to fear or lose. There is nothing more to seek because Christ is everything. (1) To Timothy Apparently Timothy was having some difficulties in his ministry. He may have been timid (2 Tim. 1:7-8) and discouraged because some of the people in his congregation were questioning his youth (1 Tim. 4:12). Some of the Ephesian errorists were confusing his people with endless genealogies and myths (1 Tim. 1:3-4). Paul told him to stir up the gift of God that was in him (2 Tim. 1:6) and get his gifts organized (1 Tim. 4:14). But above all he needed to "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David" (2 Tim. 2:8, NASB). Paul wanted Timothy to remember the greatness of the Person who lived within him. The phrase

"descendant of David" refers to Christ's humanness--He understands us; He is sympathetic to our problems. The phrase "risen from the dead" refers to His deity--He is powerful enough to accomplish His good will through us. So remember who He is, and remember He is in us.(2) To believersEvery Christian ought to focus more on the person and power of Christ. Paul said, "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). If we focus less on our problems and more on the person and power of Jesus Christ, we would be free from a lot of the problems we face.b) Christ's rankIn Ephesians 1:21-22 Paul tells us that Christ is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." Those are all titles and ranks of angels. Christ is far above them all (Heb. 1:4-14). He also is far above "every name that is named, not only in this age, but also that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (vv. 22-23). He is head over everything, including the church. Philippians 2:9-10 says His name "is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." We are filled with His fullness, and He has chosen to radiate Himself to the world through you. What a privilege.

CONCLUSION

God has a great plan for every believer. He brings it about with His great power and dwells within us to bring it to fulfillment. No wonder Paul said, "We are more than conquerors [Gk., hupernike, "super conquerors"]" (Rom. 8:37)! He also said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). To combat those forces we need to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; put on the whole armor of God" (vv. 10-11). God's power is available to us.

The sixteenth-century French reformer John Calvin said about Ephesians 1:22-23, "This is the highest honor of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation it is for us to learn, that, not until we are in His presence, does He possess all His parts, or does He wish to be regarded as complete!" (Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], p. 218). The incomparable Christ is incomplete until the church, which is His body, is complete. Paul prayed that we might understand these great truths--and that's my prayer for you.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the "something more" that many people in Christianity are searching for today?
2. What does the search for something more do to the doctrine of salvation?
3. Describe the problem that the Colossian church faced (Col. 2:8-23)?
4. How does Ephesians 1:3 apply to the search for something more?
5. In American culture, what does the heart usually represent? What was the Jewish perspective?
6. How did the Jewish people refer to emotions or feelings? Why?
7. What does the heart usually refer to in Scripture?
8. Does God appeal to our emotions or our mind? Why?
9. Describe the problem Paul addressed in 2 Corinthians 6:11-13. What principle does that passage teach?
10. What does it mean to be enlightened by divine truth? How does that occur?
11. Why did Paul want his readers to understand their place in God's plan?
12. What are the four Greek words used for power in Ephesians 1:19? What does each one mean?
13. Why was Paul so concerned that believers understand the power given to them by God?
14. What are four examples of the practical outworking of God's power in our lives?

15. What assurances from Scripture do we have that show we possess the power of God?
16. How did Paul illustrate the effectiveness of God's power?
17. What was Paul's main encouragement to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:8)?
18. Why is it important for us to focus on the person and power of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Are you seeking for something more? What are you seeking? Is it similar to the errors that the Colossians were struggling with (see pp. 1-3)? Be honest in your evaluation. As a Christian, is there anything more to seek that wasn't provided in salvation? Memorize 2 Peter 1:3 as a reminder.
2. Think of the last time you responded emotionally rather than rationally. Are you prone to respond to your emotions or your mind? What should you respond to? Why? How can you be sure that your responses are based on truth and not on feelings? Make more of an effort to read Scripture and memorize important passages. As you saturate your mind with Scripture, you will find your responses are based more on God's truth rather than your emotions.
3. Have you ever felt inadequate to evangelize, inadequate to endure persecution and suffering, and inadequate to live the Christian life? Review the section on the demonstration of God's power. Then meditate on Ephesians 3:20 and commit it to memory.

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