



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Knowing Christ

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Ephesians 1:19-23

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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 Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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 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.

(Pastor prays)

Death is a bitter and relentless enemy that will eventually come to us all. Sometimes it's slow stalking, sometimes it's a sudden thief in the night stealing; but it always comes. The Bible tells us we are dust, and to the dust we shall return. And those thoughts, if left alone, either can make you morbidly introspective or cause you to frantically search for the next bolt of excitement because you only live once. Neither of those are good options. One is depressing and the other creates a string of hollow, cheap thrills. And we weren't created to live in a string of cheap thrills. In this passage, Paul shows us a more excellent way. He's writing to a group of believers much like us, living in a culture much like ours, and he's pressing in and trying to help them grasp something. He started back in verses 18-20: *"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 his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand.” I want you to know these things, to grasp them and believe them and enjoy them because if you do—if you know these things—it changes everything about life. It changes how you love, how you weep, and who you marry. It is something you need to be reminded of, because...

When You Know Christ, Life is Good, Regardless

Don't forget that Paul is writing this letter from a nasty prison cell. He's telling us...

When You Know Christ, You Know True Love

It's good for us to say that God is love. John tells us in 1 John 4:8, *“Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.”* We believe this to be true, that part of the glory of God is His remarkable love for His people. Now, it's true that God loves the world, all of it, but His love for the world cannot be fully known unless it is experienced in Christ. Paul is starting in this passage to communicate this love. I can tell you that God loves you all day, every day, but you can't know that God loves you if you are not in Christ. Paul says in verse 18 that he wants you to know hope in Christ. In verse 19 he tells us he wants you to know riches in Christ, and he wants you to know the greatness of his power in Christ. All of these things are wrapped up in knowing Christ. Don't forget what Paul says in Romans 8:37-39: *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This informs a couple of things, but I'll just pick one: It informs our emotional state of mind. We operate on full, not on empty. Not constantly looking for one more thing or person to fill a void or emptiness. This is especially true for teenage girls and young adult women. When you become a Christian, you are adopted and loved and completed in Christ. When you operate as a complete and whole person in Christ, you hate the trashy fake love of the world. And you won't settle for it, because the truth is that when you know Christ, life is good, regardless. When you know Christ, you know God's love.

When You Know Christ, You Know Full Forgiveness

Let me show you what I mean. To see it, you must read verses 19-20 together. *"And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places..."* What you have here are two things, two events that show us the power and forgiveness towards us who believe in Jesus Christ. The first is the resurrection: *"...He raised him from the dead."* And then the ascension: *"...and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."* That second phrase in verse 20 is really vital to us because Paul is telling us that the One we believe in, Jesus Christ, was not only raised from the dead...He is at the place of honor, the right hand, and the place of ruling, beside the throne of God and the place of completion. He sat down. That is the work of redemption complete. On top of that, Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father is a fulfillment of Scripture: Psalm 110:1 says, *"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"*

I want you to grasp the importance of what this means for your forgiveness. All of your sin, all of it. Jesus at the right hand tells us He has the power to forgive. Jesus said in Matthew 26:64, before He went to the cross, *"You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."* The cross shows us the love of God to forgive sinners. The resurrection and ascension show the power of God to forgive sinners. Now, maybe you think your sin is too much. Maybe you had sex outside of marriage or maybe you committed adultery or

you have been involved in a homosexual lifestyle or had an abortion and you feel like people are judging you. You should know there is only one Judge, and He—right now—sits on the throne of forgiveness. He has the power to forgive you as you turn from your sin and believe in Christ and what He has done. Furthermore He is seated at the right hand. He has the right to forgive. Hebrews 10:12 tells us, *“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...”* A single sacrifice at the cross by His blood; Christ didn't just purchase potential forgiveness, He purchased people. Ephesians 1:7 says, *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace...”* Redemption is buying. When you buy something it belongs to you. When you are in Christ, He has the right to forgive you when other people will not forgive you. You may have done something to someone that is so bad they will never forgive you as long as you live, even after you have sought forgiveness and made restitution. That's not how it is with God. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* How good is it to be forgiven? Have you come to Christ for forgiveness? He has the power to forgive, and He has the right to forgive.

He has the desire to forgive. Listen to this—He is seated at the right hand of God. Hebrews 7:25 says, *“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”* He has the desire to save and forgive, and He wants to forgive you. Come and experience forgiveness. Come and drink the living water in Christ. When you know Christ, you know love. When you know Christ, you know full forgiveness.

When You Know Christ, You Know True Courage

Courage is the missing element in many believers in our day, and it is a vital part of what it's going to take to live joyfully in this brave new world when everything about our society is against being a Christian—everything! Halfway-Christians will fade, and it is part of the judgment. This new society

will separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares. And to live through it, you will need substantial, Christ-centered courage. Paul gives us something in verses 21-22 to bolster our courage. He says of Jesus, *“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. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body.”* Now, we don’t have time to unravel all of what Paul has said here, but we know this: Regardless of what you face, Satan’s world system, and evil schemes, whatever the level of powers that are in the universe, all of them report to Christ. They are subordinate to Him. Paul is going out of his way to let people know that people might die for their faith; he’s going out of his way to let them know there is no reason to fear the future. You can get up each morning and face the day because greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world. When you know Christ, life is good, regardless. When you know Christ, you know true love. When you know Christ, you know full forgiveness. When you know Christ, you know true courage.

(Pastor prays)