

## Ephesians 1:15-16

We have arrived at one of those famous Pauline sentences. I am always amazed and, frankly, a bit humored when I read this portion of chapter 1. The eye keeps looking for one of those magical periods but, in God's Providence and in true Paul fashion, it is a long time coming! The sentence that begins in v. 15 isn't concluded until the culmination of v. 21! The phrase is expansive in its breadth, but as we will see over the next several weeks, it is even more remarkable for its depth. Today, let us consider Paul's recorded reaction to the power of the Gospel, on display within the congregation of the Ephesians.

### 1. The Catalyst

- a. I want you to notice that Paul's pivot from the Gospel to the effect of the Gospel cannot be missed in its relationship
- b. Before we read of Paul's joy over the Ephesians' faith, we are reminded that their faith is the product of God's Sovereign decree
- c. "For this reason" begins our passage
  - i. What reason? The reason is the Providential plan of redemption which is detailed for us in the passage above
- d. As always, there is something significant here and I believe it is rather clear... Paul wants to make sure that he roots any praise and thanksgiving which springs forth from his observation of the faith of the Ephesians in the Lord!
  - i. There is a subtle, but very real danger that Paul avoids here
  - ii. Sometimes we can see the marvelous gifts of the Lord and become so infatuated with the gift that we neglect the gift-giver
  - iii. The method of rooting thanksgiving in God's goodness is an important and necessary antidote to such a temptation
- e. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 3:6 it is God alone who gives growth
  - i. To be sure, He uses faithful men but, in the end, any fruit we see is a direct product of His unmatched and totally necessary power
- f. Smyrna folks, may we never lose sight of this fact!
  - i. God has blessed us immensely. So much so that we must constantly and consistently be reminded that it is GOD who is doing the blessing
  - ii. Far be it from us to begin to root our effectiveness in our own intellect or gifts or resources

### 2. The Cause

- a. I want you to notice why Paul celebrates
- b. It wasn't because the church had grown numerically or because of their sway within the culture (those things may both have been present as well). Instead, Paul celebrated because of their faith and love
- c. Faith:
  - i. The goal of Gospel ministry is salvation
  - ii. We have already been reminded that salvation is both a glorious, unparalleled blessing for the saints and also a primary way that God gains glory
  - iii. Therefore, saving faith is a worthy goal of Gospel ministry

- iv. When we consider why God deserves our praise, we must be reminded that saving faith (and all of its consequents) is a pinnacle blessing of ministry
  - v. If faith is present, it is because of the grace of God (see chapter 2:8-9) and it is also cause for joy
- d. Love
- i. Paul's joy was not simply in personal salvation, it was expressed because of their evident love for their fellow saints
  - ii. Why is this? My assumption is that there are a few reasons for the second portion of this clause but I'll give you the primary reason why I personally think the statement is included here: love to our fellow believers is one of the most obvious evidences of salvation
  - iii. Jesus told us that our love for one another is how others can "know" that we are His disciples (John 13:35)
  - iv. This love is the product of God's love for us which came first (1 John 4:19) which, interestingly enough, establishes the order that Paul has just given in Ephesians
    - 1. First, He discusses God's love for His redeemed
    - 2. Second, He celebrates their love for one another which is a product of His love
3. The non-ceasing result
- a. What does is the effect of this obvious fruit of the Gospel?
  - b. Paul does two things
    - i. First, he gives thanks
      - 1. What a reminder that all of the fruit of the Gospel is reason to give God glory!
      - 2. Notice how he says it, "I do not cease"
        - a. The word brings with it the connotation of continuous, unrelenting, praise
        - b. This fruit didn't get old to Paul! He continued, on and on, to give God praise
      - 3. Sometimes we can get used to God's blessings, but we shouldn't!
      - 4. Are there people in your life who have been saved by the Gospel of Christ? If so, you have every reason to unceasingly praise Him!
      - 5. Our dispositions can be radically altered when we fixate on what God has done and is doing instead of dwelling on areas that are still to be addressed
    - ii. Second, he prays
      - 1. Why does he pray? Most likely because he knows that this kind of blessing is always open to opposition
      - 2. There is just as much reason to pray for the saints when they are thriving as there is to pray for saints who are struggling
      - 3. In fact, one could argue that we are more vulnerable when things are going our way than we are when we are in tribulation