

# Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:15-17 - Faith in the Lord Jesus

In **verses 3-14**, Paul's given us a great summary of what we believe as Christians. And he's jolly pleased that "the saints in Ephesus" (verse 1) had soaked it all up during the three years he'd been with them, because at the time of writing Ephesians, Paul was holed up in prison in Rome, but word had got back to him in **verse 15** that the Ephesian Christians were doing just fine.

And fine in such a way, **verse 16**, that "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." It was so amazing to Paul what was happening to the Ephesians that he couldn't stop thanking God. So - what exactly **were** these amazing things that were happening to them?

Paul highlights two things, both in **verse 15**, that, first of all, they had "faith in the Lord Jesus," and secondly, they had "love for all the saints." Both these things, then, were the clear result of his teaching. But why, for instance, would their "**faith in the Lord Jesus**" be so amazing to Paul?

Well, look at the world the Ephesians were living in. The whole region had been solidly in the grip of what are probably the four greatest opposites to Christianity: first of all, the **pursuit of wealth** (Ephesus was a major trading centre, with a lucrative business in silver); secondly, the **granting of god-like status to human leaders** (there was even a temple erected to the Roman emperor Domitian with a large two storey statue of him in it); thirdly, the **cult worship of gods and goddesses** (in their case "her divine majesty" the goddess Artemis, Acts 19:27, whose temple in Ephesus was one of the largest ever built and made entirely of marble), and fourthly, their **fascination with the occult** (mysticism, magic spells, sorcery, astrology - and even attempting to manipulate and control demonic spirits too, Acts 19:13-16).

And to top that lot off, the city folk had quickly turned nasty when Paul's teaching about Jesus had posed a serious threat to their income, and to the reputation of their beloved Artemis (Acts 19:24-27). A mob of multiple thousands came out in protest, screaming and yelling so loudly against Paul it had the whole city in an uproar (Acts 19:28-29). But despite the threat to life and limb, many Jews and Greeks in the city listened to Paul and "**held the name of the Lord Jesus in high honour**" (Acts 19:17) - and, amazingly, from what Paul was hearing, they still were.

We learn from these verses, then, that when “the word of truth, the gospel of salvation” is properly taught and believed (Ephesians 1:13), it enables people to break free from the things they’ve lived for, trusted in, and been hooked by in society, like money and possessions, political leaders and celebrities, religious ritual and pseudo-spirituality, and the paranormal.

Which is amazing, because these things captivated and ruled people’s minds in Ephesus, much as they do in our world today. But when the gospel is presented accurately it rips the blinders off, and people see for the first time how their basic fears, needs and cravings have been the driving forces in their lives - **and to what end**, pray tell? What was the purpose of it all, other than trying to get by, make money, feel good, and have good times with family and friends along the way?

Which are all fine, but it’s like pumping air into a leaky tire, because for all our wheezing and puffing an answer never comes as to **what life is really for**. But let’s be fair; it’s easy to criticize what this world thinks life is, but what does the message about the Lord Jesus Christ tell us about life instead? Or put another way, what does the gospel contain in its message about the Lord Jesus Christ that enables people to **transfer** their faith in the things of the culture for life, to faith in him? Something remarkable obviously happens, but what?

Paul gives us a hint in **verse 17**, when he writes, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, **may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation**, so that you may know him better.”

So that’s what happened. When people believed the gospel they were given “the promised Holy Spirit” (verse 13), and the Spirit then gave them “wisdom and revelation.” And Paul knew what that was like because he’d received that wisdom and revelation himself. And he described what it was like in brilliant detail too, in verses 3 to 14.

And what those verses show us is how faith in the culture for life is transferred to faith in Jesus.

It starts where Paul starts in **verse 3**, with **God the Father**. It must’ve been a shock to the Ephesians that God was actually a Father, but even more shocking to hear **why** God was called “Father.” Imagine hearing for the first time that the reason we humans have life is because God wants to adopt us into his family forever as his very own children. None of the Ephesian gods offered anything close to that; their gods occasionally fathered children, yes, but not the whole human race. And not by one Father either.

So this is what Paul put at the top of his list for life, that first and foremost life was knowing God as their Father, which is why, **verse 17**, he constantly prayed to the Father for the Spirit's wisdom and revelation to help the Ephesians "**know the Father better.**"

But how does knowing the Father better lead to faith in Jesus? Because the second point Paul brings out in **verse 3**, is how God got the name "Father" in the first place. It's because - and this must have been another amazing revelation for the Ephesians - God the Father has a Son. Which explains why he planned to have us as his children; it's because he **really is a Father**, a Father, we discover, who already has a Son.

And it's in his relationship with his Son that we get to know the Father better, because in everything the Father plans and does to give us life as his children forever he includes his Son. Take **verse 3**, for instance; it's the Father's wish to bless his children "in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing." Which must be a delight for him as he sees those spiritual blessings growing us up spiritually, so we take on the same "holy and blameless" characteristics he has, making us really and truly his children.

But what makes adopting and developing us into his children such a pleasure for him, is doing all of it, **verse 5**, "through Jesus Christ." All those spiritual blessings he delights in giving us, come to us "in Christ" (verse 3). Which tells us the kind of Father he is. He shares everything with his Son. He wants him involved every step of the way. But even more than that; it's like he hands over the reins to his Son and with a big slap on the back says, "Go on, Son, it's all yours. I have total confidence in you. I trust you." Imagine being a child with a father like that.

But for us, it tells us something vital about Jesus, that if the Father has such confidence and faith in his Son, so can we. And if the Father takes such pleasure in sharing everything with his Son, then this Son of his must be really something. Which is exactly the conclusion Paul came to, because the list of things in verses 3-14 that the Father entrusted his Son with is staggering.

So here's the Father, dreaming up this amazing plan to create physical beings with a strong tendency for weakness and stupidity, who don't stand a chance against evil, but think they're all knowing and all powerful and don't need any connection with their Creator at all. But the plan is to take these fragile but proud beings - who haven't got a clue what they've been given life for, who pretty well mess up everything they put their hands and minds to - and transform them into children who will forever be a delight to him.

Which is another reason for having faith in Jesus, because on hearing his Father's wild sounding plan he didn't collapse in a heap with a coughing fit. Instead he was all for it. He could look at his Father with total love and trust, and willingly play out the part his Father had given him, despite some of the staggering things his Father would call upon him to do.

So in Jesus' trust in his Father we see how great the Father must be, which gives us faith in the Father, but what gives us faith in Jesus is his Father's faith in him. What we see in verses 3-14, then, and what Paul clearly wants us to see in those verses too, is the love and trust of the Father in his Son, which is why Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit to help the Ephesians know the Father better.

Because in getting to know the Father's trust in Jesus, and what he called upon Jesus to do that Jesus willingly went for, it's no wonder Paul heard about the Ephesians' "faith in the Lord Jesus," **verse 15**. They'd got the point, that seeing the Father's trust in Jesus was good enough reason for them to trust him too.

But Paul also knew where that understanding came from. It didn't come from their own brains, or from anything in the Ephesian culture. It didn't come from any of their gods, goddesses, religious practices, myths, folk lore, ancient manuscripts, secret knowledge, philosophers, academics, or revelations from mystics and mediums in contact with the spirit world. Nor did it come from words of knowledge or prophetic pronouncements by people claiming to speak for God.

Nor did it come from those in Ephesus in Acts 19:13 who were "invoking the name of Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed" by calling out, "In the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." If anybody sounded like a plausible source of knowledge about Jesus, surely they did. They'd listened to Paul, heard about Jesus, and believed in his power over demons. But it wasn't faith in Jesus **for what the Father had entrusted him with**, which is what Paul had focused so totally on in Ephesians 1:3-14.

Because it was those verses when believed that marked those the Father had called to be the "first to hope in Christ," **verse 12**. And the reason they put their hope in Christ was the Holy Spirit giving them the understanding that the Father had entrusted his amazing plan to make us his children forever to his Son. There was no need, then, to look to anything or anybody else in this world. The Father had sown everything up in his Son. And that was what they needed to know more than anything else. Which is why Paul prayed to the Father to keep on plying the Ephesians with the Spirit for the wisdom and revelation that would keep their faith in the Lord Jesus intact, and growing.