

The Hope in Christ (Eph. 1:18-23)

1. Hope in Christ

In the prison, whenever Paul think about the church in Ephesus, his heart was filled with thanks-giving (16). And he was praying for them that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they might know him better (17).

And his prayer continues like this;

18-19a

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Paul prays that by the Holy Spirit, believers may clearly see 1) the hope in Christ, 2) the riches of his glorious inheritance and 3) the greatness of God's power. As they have already been given to them, he wants them to understand them well.

Paul starts this letter like this; "God blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (v3). "In him we were made heirs of his kingdom" (v11). As Paul himself experienced this and knows this, he prays "Father, please help them to know this." He really wants the eyes of their heart to be enlightened.

The hope in Christ, that is not something in the distant future. It has already been given to them, and to us. But we haven't seen it yet as much as Paul has seen it. We think we know it, but we have not fully got it yet. Paul desires, actually God desires that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened so that we can see these.

All that we need is in Christ.

Col. 2:9-10

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

In Christ, "we already have all the love and life, all the power, faith, and wisdom we need. We simply have to claim it, and begin to enjoy the unsearchable riches God has already given us in Christ."¹

The hope in Christ. It is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorious Father who has given us this hope. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand it. It is the promise of God, the work of God.

There are countless numbers of so-called gods in the world. Some people may wonder, "It should be fine whether I believe in this god or that god, right?" No, it's not. The Bible clearly says it is only this God that gives you this hope." "Which God?" The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorious Father.

It is because the hope is given by this God. It is because only this God can give us this hope. It is because we can only receive these through Jesus Christ. It is because only the Holy Spirit can make us understand it tangibly.

We used to oppose God, be dead in sins and filth, and objects of God's wrath. It is only through Christ that we can receive this grace. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life God has prepared for us. There is no other. When we receive Jesus as "my Christ", this hope will become my hope. In Christ, we have the hope.

2. The heir of the glory

"The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (v18).

God is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorious Father. When we are in Jesus Christ, we can call glorious God our Father. We can have relationship with this glorious God, who is our father. And Father God will give us the hope. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that shows us tangibly.

¹ David Watson, *Calling and Committed*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1982, p.69

(1) The Spirit shows us our need.

John 16:8

When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

By the Holy Spirit, we understand sin, we come to know that we need salvation.

(2) The Spirit brings us new life.

We came to know we were sinners, and that we couldn't save ourselves. But if we just stop here, this is a real hell. It would have been much better if we hadn't known anything about it. The Holy Spirit shows us salvation and gives us new life, and makes us people of God's kingdom.

I want you to remember the time before you come to Yangon. You searched about it and got some information about it. And you probably had a certain kind of image of Myanmar. Then you got on an airplane and arrived at Yangon. At first, it was a honeymoon period. Whenever you see and experience some new things, you are happy and excited; "Wow, I'm in Yangon now!" However, when a couple of weeks passes, you start to perceive things differently, even though you see and experience the same things. "What's going on here?" "What on earth are they thinking?" "That doesn't make sense! You should do it this way!" That is culture shock. Now the real life begins. Welcome to the club!

You may have heard about the life in Yangon, but unless you experience it, you don't really know what it really means. You never know what it actually means, as long as you stay in your familiar environment. But you can experience, feel and understand it when you actually enter into it and spend enough time there.

The same is true with the kingdom of God. While you remain outside of the kingdom though you hear about it, you don't really understand it. It is only a head-knowledge. It is not until you enter it that you actually experience it, feel it, and really understand it.

Then, how can we enter the kingdom of God?

"Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of

God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit (John 3:5-6)."

Unless we are born again, we cannot enter the kingdom of God, nor see it nor experience it.

The Holy Spirit makes us born again. He will make us the people of the kingdom of God. He will make us experience the kingdom of God, and make us taste its riches and help us see the truth of God's promise.

(3) The Spirit assures us of our sonship.

Rom. 8:15-16

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The Spirit assures us of our sonship. Does a child need any qualification, to receive a gift from his father? Is there any reason why a child needs to hesitate to receive a present his father has prepared for him? What does he need to hesitate for? No matter how costly it is, father will give it to his child because he is his child. He wants his child to receive what he has prepared for his child. A child won't think, "If I receive such a great gift, how can I repay it later? There must be a trick." No. He will receive it gladly without any doubt because it is from his father.

In Christ, we can call the glorious God our Father. We can have that kind of relationship with God. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. Through our daily fellowship with God, we will come to know the riches of his glorious inheritance in realities.

3. God's great power

"His incomparably great power for us who believe" (v19).

God is almighty. He created heaven and earth and whole universe and

all life, out of nothing. That power is working for us, who believe. That power is shown for us, who trust in Him, rely on Him, entrust Him and follow Him. We can experience God's faithfulness and greatness.

How great is God's great power for us who believe?

19b-21

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

First, we can see God's great power in resurrection.

God's power that is working in us is the power of resurrection. The resurrection of Christ shows our justification (Rom. 4:25). That guarantees eternal life for us. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we can receive this power of resurrection. By the power, we can be set free from sin and have victory over sin (1 Cor. 15:56-57). And by His power, we will live a new life with the Lord forever. (Rom. 6:5-9)

Secondly, we can see God's great power in Christ's absolute sovereignty. When we believe in Christ we receive the liberation by Christ's sovereignty.

We know Jesus. We must know he is the absolute sovereign Lord. And he is our Lord. We are under his authority. What does it mean? No other authorities can bind us, because no authority can go against Jesus' authority. We are free from all the authority which used to bind us.

Col. 1:13

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

Col. 2:15

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross

This power is for us! Moreover, it is not just on this earth, but also in “the coming world”. Different philosophers and religionists are saying different things. Some says, “There are different levels of spiritual worlds.” Some says, “There is re-incarnation, endless cycle of rebirth.” There are all sorts of different ideas and beliefs. But no matter what others say, we don’t have to worry about it. Jesus stands over all authorities. Since we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are under his authority. No other authorities can go against His authority.

Rom.8:31,37

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³⁷ in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Through our daily fellowship with God, we will experience this great power of God is actually working in our everyday life.

4. The fullness of Christ

22-23

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

We just learned that Christ stands over all authorities. God gave this Christ to Church. God not only says that Church is under Christ’s authority, but He also gave Christ to Church.

Rom. 8:32 (NASB)

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all

God gave Christ to us, the church. He gave us His most precious son,

His greatest treasure. It is not just a little bit of him or given temporary. But we are given the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Amazing!

We used to oppose God. We didn't think sin as sin, but even boast about sin and enjoyed sin. But by his unfailing mercy and grace, God redeemed us by the cross of Jesus. By God's love, forgiveness and righteousness, we were reconciled with God and with others, and joined together with one another. That is Church. And the Holy God, the sovereign Lord dwells in us, among us, the church.

Church is not a building. It is neither a program nor an organization. Church is an organic body.² That is made up of the people who were redeemed by His blood, called out from the world, gathered together and joined together in the name of the Lord. Dale Losch, President of Crossworld says this way: "The church is a community of healthy, reproducing disciples who band together on mission to expend the kingdom."³

The church has the fullness of Christ. Christ fills the church and overflows from the church. It is not just Christ is somewhere in the church. It is not that Christ is in some parts of the church, and not in other parts of the church. Christ is everywhere in the church and every part of the church. There is no room for other things to come in, it is filled with Jesus, because the church is the body of Christ.

If the church is full of Christ, then each one of us, who is the part of church is also full of Christ. Can you imagine that in each one of us, there is the fullness of him who fills everything in every way? We can be filled with Him. It is possible for us to have Him fill every part of our beings. This is the picture:

Isaiah 51:3

The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

² N. Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, p. 22

³ <https://crossworld.org/blog/details/a-better-way-disciplemaking-or-church-planting>

Can you see this will be you? This will be us, NLIF? Jesus can touch and heal our wounds from the past troubling experiences, and recover every part where we are still feeling pains. He can even minister in His love to our memory which we don't want to even recall. He will restore us, and make us being filled with him.

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Is. 58:11)"

That is church, the fullness of Christ, "Experiencing the Life, changing lives."

Today, we studied "The hope in Christ". The Holy Spirit in us will enable us to be grateful even if we are in jail for our faith. He will enable us to understand how great the hope we have in Christ and make it come true in our lives. And He will continue to fill us and transform us into His likeness from glory to glory.

Our lives must be directed by this. Let us see clearly how rich and wonderful what we have received from the Lord. For this purpose, let us ask the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes. Let us ask Him to reveal the power in every part of our lives.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

1) Have you ever experienced; You'd been looking for something and you found that what you'd been looking for was actually just in front of your eyes. Or you'd always thought something really difficult, but when you got it, it was actually really easy.

2) The Spirit assures us of our sonship. If we don't understand that we are received into the kingdom of God as God's children, what do you think our Christian life will be like?

3) Christ fills the church and overflows from the church, and each one of us are a part of His church. What does it mean to you? What hope does it bring to you?

4) Pray the prayer of Paul in v.18-19 in your own words for someone this week. (The Spirit may inspire you to do something for the person. Follow his voice.)