

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **We Are God's Artwork**

November 2022

Fall Quarter

**November 12, 2022**

## **Lesson #2 – Christ Is Wisdom**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Ephesians 1:15-23

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. Why is it important that believers understand the inheritance that they have in Jesus Christ?
2. How does God’s calling provide hope for the believer?

***Key Verse: “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.”—Ephesians 1:18***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Ephesus was a leading city of the Roman Empire. It was a large administrative center, perhaps 200,000 in population. Its Jewish population was substantial (some estimate more than 10,000), with many synagogues. Ephesus was a bustling seaport at the time, the point of contact for trade from the eastern and the western parts of the empire. Its harbor eventually filled with silt and became unusable, however, so the site was abandoned within a few hundred years. Ephesus was home to the Temple of Diana (the goddess’s Roman name; Artemis in Greek), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (Acts 19:35).

Paul’s first contact with the Ephesians was on his second missionary journey (AD 52–54). After his lengthy ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:11), Paul, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, set sail for Ephesus. He remained there only a short time and then departed for Jerusalem, leaving Priscilla and Aquila behind (18:18–21).

Paul’s second visit to Ephesus was on his third missionary journey, the account of which is recorded in Acts 18:23–21:6 (about AD 54–58). He spent about two and a half years in that city (compare the chronological references in 19:8, 10 and 20:31). Those converted under Paul’s ministry gave up their magic practices and burned their magic books—worth 50,000 pieces of silver, which is estimated to be equal to the yearly income of more than 130 men (19:18–19). The impact of his ministry had such an effect in the city that Demetrius, a leader of the local silversmiths, incited a mob at the theater against Christian teaching (19:23–41).

Demetrius’s motive was less religious than economic. The problem was that, due to Paul’s ministry, widespread conversion to Christianity occurred. This meant that people were not purchasing the cultic paraphernalia of Diana, and this created a significant income loss for the silversmiths. So Demetrius persuaded the crowds that Christianity was not only detrimental to their business but also brought disrepute to the goddess Diana, who was worshipped throughout “Asia and the world” (Acts 19:27).

The message of Christianity was making inroads in a great trade city of the Roman Empire, upsetting the status quo in the process. Paul's message reached both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10, 17; 20:21). After leaving Ephesus, he ministered in Macedonia and Achaia. And on his return Paul visited the Ephesian elders at Miletus, where he reminded them of his ministry, warned them about false teachers, and prayed with them before his departure (20:15–38). The letter we call Ephesians came about some five years later, while Paul was imprisoned (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

Our text picks up exactly where lesson 10 (Ephesians 1:1–14) left off. Most letters in Paul's time offered a brief word of thanks to whatever god the writer worshipped. Paul followed this practice in most of his letters in the New Testament, praising only the true God. And he used the thanksgiving not just as a formality—part of good letter writing—but as a way to introduce ideas that he would develop later in the letter.

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

### **Prayer and Digression on God's Power (1:15–23)**

The primary idea of this paragraph concerns believers understanding what God has provided for them in Christ (see previous paragraph). This section has three parts: First, an introductory thanksgiving and reason for prayer (vv. 15–16); second, a report on the content of the prayer (vv. 17–19); third, a digression on God's power (vv. 20–23).

**1:15–16.** For this reason refers to the earlier praise section (1:3–14). Thus two things spur Paul's prayer: God's great past and present work (vv. 3–14), and the Ephesians' current faith and love (v. 15). But Paul still saw their faith and love as God's work, for he gave thanks for it.

**1:17–19.** Basically, Paul's request was that the believers would comprehend what God had already done (described in vv. 3–14). **Father of glory** does not quote a particular verse but uses OT language (e.g., Ps 29:3; 24:7). **Spirit of wisdom** refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. Is 11:2; 1Co 2:6–16). Having the **Spirit of wisdom** and **revelation** has to do with knowing God and grasping spiritual truth. Although believers are already indwelt by the Spirit (1:13; Rm 8:9–11), they continually need His work in them to understand the things of God (1Co 2:12). What Paul meant by knowledge and insight is conditioned by the OT (1Ch 28:9; Jr 24:7; Hs 2:20). It is not mere cognition but right thinking with right relationship.

There are three things that believers should comprehend: First is the **hope** to which He called them (v. 18; cf. Col 1:5). **Hope** has to do with future certainties such as salvation (1Th 5:8), resurrection (1Co 15:52–55), and eternal life (Ti 3:7). Second, they should know **the glory of His inheritance**. This refers not to what believers receive (that is, what God bestows), but to what God receives: His own people. Thus, Paul's prayer was for believers to know the astonishingly great value God places on them. Third, they should know God's **power** (v. 19). It is incomparable and able to bring believers to glory. This reference to power leads to Paul's digression (vv. 20–23).

**1:20–23.** God's greatest power is demonstrated in the resurrection and glorification of Christ. This event is eternally and cosmically significant, for it demonstrates both Christ's victory over death and His ongoing authority over all. Christ's position at God's **right hand** (v. 20) is one of favor, honor, and power (e.g., 1Kg 2:19; Jr 22:24; Ps 44:3), and His presence there determines the believer's present and future (see 2:4–7; Heb 7:25).

Christ's position of authority is described four ways (v. 21): (1) above all other thrones or powers (evil forces; cf. Col 1:16); (2) over every other name (cf. Php 2:9–11); (3) all things are under His feet (see Ps 8:6; 1Co 15:27; Heb 2:6–9); (4) He is head, that is, ruling authority, over all things for the benefit of the Church (HCSB), His body (v. 22; cf. 1Co 12:12–27). The second part of v. 23, which says the Church is Christ's **fullness**, probably refers to divine power and glory (see Col 1:19; 2:9) and here is passive. That is, the Church is what He fills with His glory and power.

**LESSON NUGGET** – In Christ we have a wonderful inheritance (1 Peter 1:1–4), and in Christ we are an inheritance. We are valuable to Him. Think of the price God paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance! God the Son is the Father's love gift to us; and we are the Father's love gift to His Son (John 17:6, 9, 11, 24).

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*