

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on November 25, 2018:**

**"Transforming Life Lessons
for the Church Today from Ephesus:
Part 3 (Ephesians 1:15-23)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that as first responders we been given faith, love, illumination and the supernatural power of Jesus Christ so we can share this with others.]

Notes

Introduction:

- As pastor Craig studies and prepares for these messages, it does change him very much and he hopes it changes us as well.
- It's truly a transformative experience when we think about these writings of the apostle Paul.
- In this passage of Scriptures we're going to take a look at today, it occurred to pastor Craig that all of us here are first responders.

- While we don't run into a burning building while others are fleeing from it, we do run into the darkness – whether it's about helping those who are suffering hurting and pain in their relationships or talking with people who don't believe in God.
- Each of us here are first responders operating out of our belief.
- We are first in what we do – first in belief, then first in response.

Recapping transforming life lessons from last week (Ephesians 1:3-14):

1. Our loving Father is to be adored and praised.
 - God is not to be feared or to run from, but to be adored and praised.
2. He has given us every spiritual blessing.
 - God has given every spiritual blessing in the heavens and on earth to those who believe and have faith.
3. By his kind will we were elected in Jesus Christ as His very own children and brought into His family.
 - Now whether you grew up having a physical father in your life, you definitely have an Eternal Father, who loves you more than any physical father ever could.
4. In Jesus Christ we have been purchased and in a lavishing way our past, present, and future sins forgiven as if they never existed.

- The Greek word for “redeem” and “reconcile” means “to be placed or put back in a right relationship” – which means that our sins are as if they never had existed.
 - When we come to belief and become a first responder, in that respect, God the Father sees us through the eyes of Jesus, which means He see us completely forgiven.
 - So, there is nothing that should hold us back from sharing God’s love for us on others.
5. God’s will is no longer a mystery but revealed to us that his kind intention is to unify all creation into Jesus Christ.
- In the future, everything in heaven and on earth will be unified in Jesus Christ.
6. As first responders we are the praise of his Glory.
- We’re going to see today that it was Jesus’ resurrection that gives us confidence and when we return that divine grace coming to us in how we live our lives, we become the praise of God’s glory.
7. Our inheritance has been secured, sealed, and guaranteed by the pledge and evidence of the Holy Spirit.
- There is no reason for any of us here to doubt that we haven’t been sealed.
 - And this understanding gives us a responsibility, because we were saved for a purpose, not just to feel good, to serve God and others.

Our response to faith is love:

- Remember we defined the purpose of Scripture in two words – and that was belief and response.
- Response is our participation in what we believe.
- So, in our flourishing care groups, we defined what faith is.
- Can we explain what faith is to others without using the word “faith.”
- When someone asks you, “What do you mean that you have faith?”, we need to think about how we are going to answer that person.
- Scripture tells us that when we are asked a question, we should be ready to give an answer of the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15).
- And faith is part of the hope that lies within us.
- An answer from one of our members: “Faith is belief about what God has revealed about Himself and trusting Him to carry it out.”
- Another member answer: “Faith is the evidence of things not yet seen or received” (Heb. 11:1).
- In our care groups we have defined faith as “having trust and confidence in what Jesus said He did.
- We have a trust and confidence that we have been forgiven of our sins.
- We then have trust and confidence that we have a responsibility to share that love with others.

- We are to love God and love others without fear, shame, guilt or doubt.
- We have a trust and confidence that we are secure in Jesus.
- Here Paul praises the church at Ephesus for their faith and their love.
- Now Ephesians was written by Paul around 65 AD and Revelation was written by John in 95 AD.
- The angel at the church of Ephesus praised them, too. But then, he also gave them a warning, because they had lost their first love.
- May that never be said of us!
- What would the angel of our church in Monrovia say about us?
 - Would he say, "I commend you for your love?"
 - Would he say, "I commend you that you never lost your first love?"
- That first love is a love and faith in Jesus Christ.
- Now, what about our desire to really flourish in our relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit?
- What about our desire to dig into God's Word to see what it has to say to us?
- Reading Scripture is a daily renewal.
- So, could it be that in 2019, we get back to some of our first loves – prayer and study and developing that flourishing relationship with Jesus?
- And then, living out of that flourishing relationship with those that we meet and share it with.
- Please listen to the Holy Spirit if He is encouraging you to participate in our Thursday morning or evening Bible studies or to participate on our flourishing care groups that meet Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday evenings.

Ephesians 1:15, For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,

- Can we say here, collectively, that we have love for each other? And let there be NOT one exception to that love.
- In God's economy, all means all, with no exceptions.
- Now, we know that family members can get sideways with one another from time to time. If that occurs, we need to reconcile with one another.
- We need to ask ourselves, "Do I have love for all the saints?"
- If not, it's OK to say, "I'm sorry." It's OK to say, "Forgive me!"
- And, if we can't be in love with each other as part of our family, how can we extend love to the world around us?

16) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

- As the body of Christ, we need to pray for each other and give thanks for each other.
- And when we know one of our family members is down, we help lift them up.
- We need to lavish our love on our fellow family members.

Paul then prays for them that they have wisdom, revelation, knowledge of Jesus Christ:

- Now the word “knowledge” is key here in this passage.
- “Knowledge” means more than academic recognition but rather experiencing a relationship.
- We need to renew our relationship with Jesus in a refreshing way – that’s what the Father wants us to do.
- You can’t really know and love someone unless you spend time with them so you can really get to know them.
- That’s what Jesus invites and calls us to do – to spend time with Him and to grow in our relationship with Him.
- Jesus wants us to include our lives with Him, because His life is included in ours.

17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge (experience) of Him.

- Jesus wants an active relationship with Him – we need to realize that it’s participatory on our part.
- And as we get to know Jesus better, we’re transformed – our hearts become conformed to the very heart of Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit – the spirit of wisdom and revelation – first brings us to faith and then He transforms our lives over our lifetime by conforming our hearts to the very heart of Jesus – which is a divine and supernatural process.
- Now, this process has change and even suffering involved in it.
- And of course, we have a part to play in it – and we can move that process forward as we experience more of Jesus in our lives.

Paul also talks about the illumination in the hope of our inheritance:

- Now we have faith, which is in the present – but we also have a future hope.
- That future hope has been accomplished by Jesus but it hasn’t been realized yet, but will be in the future.
- So we are living in the times between the times, so to speak.
- God’s divine grace comes down to us and we receive it and when we return it back to the Father, in participating in that relationship with Him, then our lives are transformed through God’s grace.
- And in this process that divine grace becomes divine glory.

18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

- Paul is telling them that they need to grow deeper in their relationship with God and to realize that the Holy Spirit given to us is in the process of removing the scales from our eyes so we can see and understand who we are in God’s eyes.
- We, as believers, are part of God’s process of introducing our faith to not-yet-believers, which is a part of bearing fruit in our lives.
- So, Paul is praying that more of that enlightenment might come down upon the church at Ephesus.

- Growth, enlightenment and illumination is not a one-time event in our lives, but rather an ongoing process, which is called sanctification.
- Now there is something about being involved in studying the Word because it changes us by making our whole perspective very different.
- And when we are filled with the love of God, we can't hold back that flow of God's love to others.
- So, the spiritual disciplines are very important and it was a past hallmark of us, but we seemed to have let it go because we did it in a legalistic way.
- There is something about spending a part of our day in Scripture and in prayer that changes us, which is a good thing.
- So, could it be that in 2019 we return back to our first love of really digging into Scripture and developing that deep experience with the Father, Son and Spirit?

Supernatural power by belief:

19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

- When we believe in the Father, Son and Spirit there is something noticeably supernatural about it, because there is power in that.
- So, the power of belief and faith in the Father, Son and Spirit is not like anything else in our lives because there is divine power that we can access, which changes us.

Resurrection power is important for us:

20) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

- The proof of our faith in our relationship with God is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and His ascension into heaven – these were absolute game changer, because it turned the world upside down.
- Through the power of Jesus' resurrection, we know our inheritance is secured.

Jesus has power over all dominions:

21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

- Paul alludes that there is a dark side to this world, but take hope, Jesus has overcome it.
- All of the powers of the darkness of this world have been consumed in Jesus.
- They do not have any control over us, as believers.

Jesus Christ is the head of his church (his Body):

22) And He put all things in subjection 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.

- The very head of the church is who we develop a relationship with.

- We need to realize that we are part of the body of Christ.
- When we really let this sink into our minds, it changes how we respond to people.

Summary Comments:

- As first responders, why have we been given faith, love, illumination and the supernatural power of Jesus Christ?
- The answer is to share God's love and grace with others.
- Our role is – loving God, loving others without fear, shame, guilt or doubt.
- If an angel were here, he might say, "The church here at Monrovia are pretty special people."

Closing prayer