

more! Also, we, united together in Jesus, *by grace through faith*, are Jesus' body and He is our head – *the One who ♦loves, ♦nourishes, ♦protects, and ♦guides His body, the church, which includes all who have been purified by His blood!* **So can God do great things for us in Christ? He can and He has!**

Conclusion: Now, *more aware of our great blessings in Christ*, let us ✦greatly rejoice on this celebration of Jesus' ascension, ✦live with much joy, and ✦gladly share the good news of Jesus with all who will listen!

And all God's people said: *Amen!*

Christians are Richly and Powerfully Blessed by God in Christ!

Based on Ephesians 1:15-23 NAU

The Ascension of our Lord – 2011

June 2 → 7:00 p.m.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, we are nearing the end of the festival-half of the church year; the Son of God ♦has come, ♦has lived, ♦has paid for our sins, ♦was raised to life, and, ♦has ascended to the Father's right hand! Today we are focusing on Ephesians 1:15-23; after the first point, *let us notice how we are richly and powerfully blessed in Christ!*

1. **Two Key Christian Characteristics** – 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,** ¹⁶ **do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;** 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 of Him.**
 - a. Imagine this: You are in a courtroom, you must prove you are a Christian; so what is your evidence?
 - i. **This is how YOU will know:** The Bible says: “**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...**” (Rom 8:16 NAS) The

Spirit bears witness to us *as He works through the Word*; therefore, let us ♦use the Word, ♦listen to the Spirit, and ♦be at peace!

- ii. **This is how OTHERS will know:** Jesus said to His disciples: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35 NAS) When we are in Christ, *it will show and others will know!*

b. What is love? Love is taking action *according to the needs of others!* Jesus said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34 NAS) As Jesus loved us by living and dying to take away our sins, *so we are called to love others by taking action according to their needs!* We are to do so especially for the saints, so what is a saint? – saints are “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 1:1 NIV; also see Galatians 6:9-10)

2. **Important Things to Desire** – ¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know*

- a. what is the hope of His calling – Even though our sins have earned death and punishment for us, *our Heavenly Father has called us to life and peace in Jesus!* (See 1 Peter 1:3-4)
- b. what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints – Even though our sins have placed us outside of the family of God, our Heavenly Father (*according to His mercy, Jesus’ work, and the Spirit’s action*) has made us saints, *people who are holy in His sight, even His dearly loved children!*

- c. ¹⁹ what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe – God has done the impossible; He has changed us →from dead to alive, →from filthy to clean, →from orphans to His very own sons and daughter, and →from hell to heaven! *But can He really do such great things?* Let’s consider an example of His power:

3. **An Example of God’s Power** – ^{19b} *These [His calling and inheritance] are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when*

- a. He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 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. Think about Jesus’ most brutal suffering and death; even though it certainly seemed like the very end, *God raised Him to life*; then, *on the 40th day*, He seated Him at His right hand! Even though the Romans and the Sanhedrin thought they were powerful, *Jesus now has a place “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...”* He also has the name that is above every name – *both now and forevermore!* (Philippians 2:9-11) Furthermore:
- b. ²² ...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. Therefore, *except for God the Father* (1 Cor. 15:27), Jesus is above all things – “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5 NAU) and so much