



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading Heb 13 Pray for Dr. Herbert McGonigle & family
Tuesday	Reading James 1 Pray for Sigrid Nwator and family
Wednesday	Reading James 2 Pray for Myra O'Hara and family
Thursday	Reading James 3:1–4:12 Pray for Michael Okechukwa (<i>working as nurse on covid ward</i>)
Friday	Reading James 4:13–5:20 Pray for John & Vera Packard
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Sandra & Mike Pitt & Family
Sunday 29th November	Reading 1 Pet 1 Pray for Grant & Crys Pettitt

Prayer requests:

- We pray for the coming celebration of Advent 2020 which starts next Sunday. Pray for Katie C who will be preaching on that occasion.
- We continue to pray for John & Ann B, Jon F, Bill & Sue E, Nat H, amongst others who have been in hospital and received good care from our NHS
- Pray for David Sykes ill in hospital for six weeks, and has COVID 19
- Debi Matsetlo has been taken into hospital with Coronavirus; she is also pregnant. Our thoughts and prayers for Kingdom and family
- Annette J fell and hurt herself this week. Prayers for her and Mike

- We continue to uphold those recently bereaved; remembering Nathaniel and of course, Christine's funeral planned for Wednesday 2nd Dec, 10.00 am at church, then following at the graveside at Southern Cemetery

Welcome again to our worship service as we gather together, albeit remotely, to acknowledge the Lord in our lives, who continues loving and providing for us in so many ways. I find this to be so true – Our Lord and Father is the God of all and is over all and is in all. As we turn to read the news this week in our *Update*, some people have good things to celebrate, others have severe challenges, and still others are so busy with many things that there's hardly 'time to bless themselves', as they say. Whatever is going on in your life this day, the Lord Jesus is a part of it with you; so let's place our complete trust in Him for a good and wholesome outcome.

Our ***congratulations to Joanne Bolton*** who retired this week after serving in the NHS for thirty-six years. After a lifetime of serving in this amazing caring profession, we pray for many good things to follow.

We had our board meeting on Friday evening, and in the weekly email from our church secretary Mark B, which includes the *Update*, there will be a summary of on-going ***plans and actions*** that we hope will be informative in these days leading up to the New Year of 2021, a year with significant political and other changes ahead.

Huw preached well last Sunday, which was gratefully received by many and we want to acknowledge this in our *Update* news. We had lovely and positive comments from new 'attenders' at our Sunday digital service. We continue to pray for Huw as he continues his college placement. He will appreciate your prayers too as he concludes his present semester in December, completing essay assignments, etc.

I was reminded recently from a fellow believer how it is so important to remind people of the gracious gifts from the Lord of faith and discipleship. We call it ***the proclamation of the Word of God!*** At one level it is just someone speaking, telling the stories of our spiritual heritage; at another level, it is life-giving and sustaining, uplifting, and offering invaluable direction to life that very moment.



Sometimes it seems like a gentle trickle of a peaceful stream, at other times a raging torrent which grabs our full attention.

It is a weekly reminder of the most important things in life, which we must never take for granted. 'Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love...' God's Word is not just 'sounds' - it is the Lord working in and with us every day... until we get to that great Day of the Lord which is His Promise.

Blessings to one and all... **Grace & Peace!**

Message: Faith & Love **Readings:** Psalm 100, Eph 1: 15-23

When I started my studies at NTC back in 1981 - 'British Isles Nazarene College' (BINC) as it was then - I visited Brooklands a couple of times. But the first time I preached here was 31 years ago in 1989. And this was in, or about, November, and this Ephesian's letter was the passage I preached from on that occasion so many years ago. I had come to preach with a view to being your pastor - this passage proved fruitful! This same passage is also the one for this Sunday this year in the Revised Common Lectionary that I have often used, and it seemed like a good passage to preach from again.

On that occasion, I remember saying that Paul uses a literary feature called a chiasm in verse 15. A chiasmus is a grammatical device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order. A simple example is the word **ABBA** (an Aramaic word meaning 'Father', used as an affectionate name like 'Daddy').

Often, a chiasm includes another idea in the middle of the repetition where they intersect: and this is an easy way to remember it: '**AB(X)BA**' from a Christian point of view - with the 'X' marking the cross-cross point.

An example from Mark's gospel is where he records Jesus as saying, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*" There are lots of these in everyday life too: For example: "*It's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice.*" Such chiasms often carry wisdom. Or what about this one from Churchill, referring to the debating chamber in the House of Commons: "*We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.*"

Paul has one very important Christocentric example in our reading: "**For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all**

the saints," (Ephesians 1:15) Paul is crisscrossing these ideas to form the letter 'Chi', a Greek letter, and the first letter of the word Christ ('Christos'), i.e. **Our Faith and Love is found in Jesus Christ!**

We see this 'faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints' displayed in the following ways in these verses. Firstly in...

1. His Promise

Jesus Promised Hope for those who have this special Faith and Love. When someone's promise is good, there is engendered within you - **an expectation!** And that is what Paul is writing about here in this amazing letter to the Ephesian Church.

In chapter two Paul writes about us being made alive in Christ! He says we are as **One in Jesus**. In chapter three he explains why he believes God sent him to the Gentile world - the city of Ephesus is included in this command; this 'faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints' **is for everyone!**

Paul concludes chapter three on his knees with a prayer, and it is a poignant one for everyone listening - it is a prayer for a great church. It was that the church might '*grasp*' the dimensions of this **love of Christ**; '*know*' how it **surpasses all and every kind of knowledge!** (In a world like ours where so much knowledge is just a few clicks away on a computer, this incredible love surpasses it all!) Then he writes to the church - that they would take the Lord up on His Promise to fill them to the measure of the fulness of God! How can it be? It is about believing the Lord for the impossible. This phrase is filled with Promise - I tell you it is true - there is nothing greater or more meaningful in any church than 'Faith and Love' - 'faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints'! It is filled with Promise for all who live by it. It also includes...

2. His Providence

Jesus will provide for all who trust in him with everything that is needed at just the right time. Going back to our passage in Eph 1: 15ff, Paul writes, '**I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know... the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...**' (Eph 1: 18)

Usually, when we think of 'riches' and 'inheritance', we tend to think about material wealth; but that is precisely *not* what Paul has in mind here. Paul is thinking about the Lord providing different things than we think we need, at different times than we expect, and in different ways to how we may presume.



In other words, we had better watch out because we serve an Almighty God who is not limited to our lesser modes of thinking. When our manner of life is governed by this Christian founding principle - 'Faith in Christ, and Love for all our brothers and sisters' – *the Lord will*, as Psalm 121 says, '*look after our coming and going both now and forever more*'.

Now as Paul writes to these Christians in Ephesus, he confirms that he had already heard about their faith and love. Then he indicates his expectation about the God he knows. The Lord will look after you. What happens then, if we stop or become limp in our 'faith in the Lord Jesus Christ', and we don't 'love the saints' as much as we used to do?

I do not know the answer to that, but I do know that the point of what Paul is writing is not *our* strength, but *His*. It is God's uncanny ability to provide for the needs of his people. And I have to say, the Lord provides for people who don't even acknowledge him – or at least acknowledge him yet. Then finally, 'faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints' is crucially linked **to...**

3. His Power

When you give thanks for the Lord's Promises and his endless examples of daily provisions, you are invited to consider his power in all circumstances.

And I think this is a very sobering point to consider. For Paul, the greatest display of power the world had ever seen, '**was exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 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.**' (Eph 1: 20-21)

I must add that this expression of awesome power was preempted when Jesus died for us on the Cross at Calvary.

I wanted to tell you this morning that when God displayed his greatest expression of 'Power', he did so before a small group of people at Golgotha, and then on Easter Sunday before **no one** - while it was yet dark. Does that not strike you as a different kind of **Promise**, a different kind of **Providence**, and a different kind of **Power** to what we usually expect from world governments, where human beings sit in seats of man-made authority.

I have to say, though, there is coming a day... and what a Day that will be - it will be a Day like no other. But that will be *then*, and this is *now* – the time for our faith in the Lord to blossom and shine. As Paul writes in his final chapter,

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Eph 6:10–11)

These final words from Paul's letter drive home the heart of his message, and the heart of my message this morning.

His final words in this heavenly Epistle are these: '**Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.**' (Eph 6: 23-24)

We find Christ where Faith and Love meet. **Amen.**