



Eyes of the Heart

Kicking It Off

Did you ever wear glasses or contacts growing up? What's your worst vision-related memory, whether it was getting glasses, losing them, or something else entirely?

Read

Ephesians 1:15-23

Summary

You can genuinely believe in God and still live like He hasn't done much for you. Paul noticed the same thing in the early church. He's writing to people who already have faith, who already love each other, and he's still praying for them, specifically that God would open their eyes to see what they already have. Not asking for more blessings. Asking for sight.

His prayer has three parts. First, he wants them to know the hope. And he doesn't mean hope like "I hope things work out." He means a settled, guaranteed future, the kind of future that doesn't change based on what the doctor says or what your boss decides. When God called you into a relationship with Him, He called you toward something: a new creation, a resurrection, a life that never ends. Most of us don't live with that in mind. We're ruled by the next six months. Paul's asking God to give people a bigger horizon.

Second, he prays that they'd know the inheritance. This one's surprising because the inheritance isn't what we get from God, it's what God gets from us. The saints are His treasure. His glory. His portion. Which means God isn't just tolerating you, He actually wants you. He delights in you. The people who most need to hear that are the ones who've spent years feeling like they're barely acceptable, let alone treasured.

Third, he wants them to know the power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us right now. That's not a slogan. Paul is saying the church is tied to a risen and reigning King who sits above every power that seems to hold us down. You don't need more from God. You need to see what He's already given.

Discussion Questions

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?
2. Paul prays that believers would know the hope of God's calling, a settled future that doesn't change based on circumstances. What is one area of your life where anxiety about the present tends to crowd out that longer horizon?
3. Most of us approach God with a list of things we need Him to do or fix. How would your prayer life look different if your primary request was simply for God to open your eyes to what He has already done?
4. The idea that God counts His people as His glorious inheritance, His treasure and portion, is one of the harder things to truly believe. What has made it difficult for you to receive the truth that God genuinely wants you, not just tolerates you?
5. Paul warns against placing more confidence in money and technology than in the power of God. In your daily decision-making, where do you find yourself trusting resources or information more than you trust the Lord?
6. The passage ends with Christ reigning above every rule, authority, and power, and that reign being given as a gift to the church. What would it look like practically to live this week as someone tied to the risen and reigning Christ rather than as someone at the mercy of their circumstances?

Significant Quotes from Sermon

"You cannot fix your vision. There is nothing you can do to open your spiritual eyes. You are stuck in spiritual blindness. The Lord is the only one who can fix your blindness. He is the only one who can open your eyes. He is the only one who can help you to see the reality of life."

"Paul is not praying for the Ephesians to receive new blessings. He is praying that their eyes would be opened to see the blessing they already have. He is not saying God, give them more. He is wanting their eyes to be open to see what God has already done for them."

"God wants you. He desires you. He likes you. He wants to spend time with you. You are his treasured possession, the apple of his eye, the desire of his heart. And when your spiritual eyes are redirected and refocused to this idea, it absolutely changes everything."

"The power of money will not save you. Technology will not save you. The knowledge of all things will not save you. The only proper savior is Christ, and Christ alone. Only in his name is there power. In every other name there is only weakness."

Sermon Notes*Ephesians 1:15-23*

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love[a] toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things 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.

Outline

1. Know the Hope (vv. 15–18a)
 - a. Paul's prayer is not for new blessings but for sight of what they already have
 - b. "Eyes of the heart" = internal, Spirit-given perception, not merely intellectual
 - c. Hope = not a wish; the settled future belonging to God's call (resurrection, new creation, glory)
 - d. Most believers are ruled by the immediate (the diagnosis, the job, the next six months)
 - e. Application: anxious, grieving, and disappointed hearts need this horizon; ask God for this sight
2. Know the Inheritance (v. 18b)
 - a. "Riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints" = best read as God's inheritance, not ours
 - b. God counts His people, ordinary and flawed, as His treasure and glory
 - c. Target: those who cannot imagine being wanted by God; those carrying worthlessness
 - d. "You are not tolerated by God. You are treasured by Him."
 - e. Corporate implication: the person next to you in the pew is God's treasure; we cannot despise what God delights in
3. Know the Power (vv. 19–23)
 - a. Paul piles up four words for power (dunamis, energeia, kratos, ischus): this power is immeasurable and directed toward believers
 - b. One measure of this power: the resurrection of Jesus
 - c. Christ raised, seated above every rule, authority, power, dominion, every name — in this age and the next (Ps 110:1, Ps 8:6)
 - d. Christ given as head over all things to the church; His cosmic lordship is a gift to His people
 - e. The hardest petition to believe: we trust money and technology more than resurrection power
 - f. Application: the church is not a small, anxious institution; she is tied to the reigning Christ

Notes

Paul has just spent eleven verses cataloguing what God has given His people in Christ. Chosen before the foundation of the world. Adopted as sons and daughters. Redeemed through His blood. Forgiven. Sealed with the Holy Spirit. Granted an inheritance. It is an overwhelming inventory of grace. And then Paul does something unexpected. He does not ask God for more. He prays that his readers would see what they already have.

This is the hinge on which the prayer turns: "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened." Paul asks the Father of glory to give the church the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, not so they would receive new blessings, but so they would perceive the ones already granted. The problem Paul is diagnosing is not scarcity. It is blindness. Christians can possess every spiritual blessing and still live as though they are poor. We can sing about the grace of God on a Sunday morning and come home ruled by the same fears we carried in. Faith can be real while sight remains dim. Information about God does not automatically produce transformation. The Spirit's work of illumination does.

The prayer unfolds in three petitions. Each one targets a specific kind of blindness. Each one points to something the Ephesians already possess but have not yet fully seen.

Paul prays that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened "that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you." The hope Paul has in mind is not wishful thinking. It is the settled future that belongs to God's effective call in the gospel. When God summoned His people through the proclamation of Christ, He summoned them toward something: resurrection, the new creation, the church gathered home in glory. That future is as certain as the God who promised it. It is not contingent on circumstances or effort. It has already been secured by the risen Christ.

The reason Paul prays for this knowledge is that most people do not live with this horizon in view. We are ruled by the immediate: what the doctor said, what the boss decided, what the next few months might hold. These things are real and they matter. But they are not the most important thing about us. The hope to which God has called us extends beyond every present anxiety and every temporal loss. A Christian who sees this hope is not naively optimistic, pretending that hard things are not hard. She is someone whose present is steadied by a future she cannot lose. The grieving heart needs this sight. The anxious heart needs this sight. The disappointed heart that has started to wonder whether God is actually at work needs this sight above all. The first thing Paul prays for is that we would see a horizon bigger than the worst thing that has happened to us.

The second petition is more surprising. Paul prays that we would know "the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints." The phrase is carefully worded. The grammar

allows for two readings: the inheritance we will receive, or the inheritance God counts as His own. Both are true in Scripture. But the flow of the argument here, and the weight of the syntax, leans toward the second reading. God inherits His people. The saints are His treasure. The church is what He counts as His glorious riches.

This is an astonishing claim. The God who created galaxies and holds the universe together looks at the assembled congregation, ordinary and flawed and still being sanctified, and calls them His inheritance, His portion, His glory. Paul wants this to land with full weight, and it does not land easily. Most people in our churches do not walk through their weeks with a sense that they are God's treasured possession. The one who has failed again does not feel like anyone's treasure. The one who has carried a quiet sense of worthlessness since childhood does not feel like God's glory. The one who is invisible in a crowd does not feel like anyone's inheritance. But Paul does not say God feels this way about us. He says it is true.

This is not a therapeutic adjustment to how we feel about ourselves. It is a theological statement about what God has declared. You are not tolerated by God. You are treasured by Him. He did not redeem His people and then set them aside as a business asset. He redeemed them because He wanted them. That desire moved Him to give His Son. And Paul prays that the Spirit would open our eyes to see it.

The implications reach beyond personal devotion. If the saints are God's glorious riches, then the person sitting next to you in the pew is part of God's treasure. We cannot despise what God delights in. We cannot write off what He counts as His inheritance. A congregation that sees this treats every member differently. The lonely are not overlooked. The difficult are not dismissed. The weak are not marginalized. We are looking at God's treasure.

The third petition is the hardest to believe, and Paul spends the most time on it. He prays that we would know "the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe." He piles up four Greek words for power in a single sentence, straining language to say something language nearly cannot hold: this power is immeasurable, and it is directed not away from us but toward us.

He gives one measure of this power. Only one. The resurrection of Jesus. "According to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." If we want to know what God can do in a life, in a marriage, in a congregation, we look at the empty tomb. That is the available power. The same energy that brought the Son of God back from death is the energy at work in every believer.

Paul does not stop at the resurrection. The raised Christ is also the reigning Christ, seated at the Father's right hand "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one

to come." Every force that claims authority, every power that threatens, every spiritual rival, every political dominion, every voice that tries to hold God's people in captivity, Christ reigns above all of it. His lordship has no ceiling and no expiration date.

And then Paul adds the claim that ties the whole prayer together. God gave Christ "as head over all things to the church, which is His body." Christ's cosmic lordship is not held at a distance from His people. It is given to them as a gift. He reigns over everything, and He reigns for His people. The church is not a small, anxious institution trying to survive the century. She is tied to the ascended Christ, and the power that raised Him flows toward her.

This is the hardness of heart Paul most wants to address in his readers, and in us. We believe in hope. We can affirm it. We sense, in our better moments, that we are loved by God. But we have absorbed far more of our confidence from the power of money and the power of technology than we have from the power of the risen Christ. We trust wealth because we have seen it move things. We trust information because we have seen it answer questions. And so when it comes to trusting the power of God, we hedge. We minimize. We quietly assume that the accounts of what God can do are exaggerated.

Paul prays that the Spirit would open our eyes to see that the power available to the church is resurrection power. Not a force to be deployed with the right technique. Not energy that kicks in when we have earned it. Power that God directs toward His people because of who Christ is and what He has done.

Three petitions. One prayer. Paul prays it not because the Ephesians lack faith, but because faith can be real while sight remains dim. He prays it for an established church, full of love and devotion, because even mature believers live below their inheritance. The Christian life is not primarily about acquiring more spiritual resources. It is about coming to see the ones already given.

This reframes how we pray for each other, for our marriages, our children, our congregations. The deepest prayer is not that God would add something new. It is that He would open our eyes to what is already true. Hope that anchors the anxious heart. An inheritance that tells the worthless heart it is God's treasure. Power that frees the stuck heart to live in the reality of the risen and reigning Christ.

Seeing these three things does not remove pain or resolve every difficulty. It does something else. It puts pain inside a bigger story. It puts our worth inside God's delight. It puts our stuck places inside the reign of the One who reigns above everything. Nothing on the surface changes, and yet everything underneath is reframed.

Blog

Paul has just spent eleven verses of Ephesians listing what God has given His people in Christ. Chosen before the foundation of the world. Adopted as sons and daughters. Redeemed through Christ's blood. Forgiven. Sealed with the Holy Spirit. Given an inheritance. If the Christian life were a bank account, Paul has just read the balance and we are rich in God's blessing.

Then he prays. He does not ask God to give the Ephesians more. He asks that they would see what they already have. "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened." That phrase, "eyes of your hearts enlightened," sits at the center of the whole prayer. Paul is asking for sight. Internal sight. The kind of knowing that happens below the surface of the intellect, where truth actually moves us.

This assumes something about us. We can possess spiritual blessings and still live beneath them. We can know facts about God and remain unmoved. We can sing "In Christ alone" on a Sunday and come home ruled by the same fears we carried in. Paul writes to a church full of faith and love (he says so in verse 15) and still asks God to open their eyes. Faith can be real while sight remains dim. Information alone does not change us. The Spirit's illumination does.

So Paul prays three petitions, three things he wants the Spirit to reveal to the heart: hope, inheritance, and power. These three, not by accident, map onto three kinds of people who fill every congregation.

The first petition is that we would know the hope to which He has called us. Hope here is not a wish. It is not crossed fingers. The word points to a settled future, something God has bound Himself to bring about. When God summoned you in the gospel, He summoned you toward a future you cannot lose: resurrection, inheritance, the new creation, the church gathered home in glory. That future is as fixed as the empty tomb.

Most of us do not live like this hope is real. We live like the next six months are the most important thing about us. We are ruled by what the doctor said, what the boss decided, what our kids are going through, what the market did this week. Those things matter. They shape how we sleep and how we pray. But they are not the horizon. Paul prays that we would see a horizon bigger than them. A Christian who sees the hope of God's calling is not a Christian who stops caring about the present. They are a Christian whose present is steadied by a future she cannot lose. This is a word for the anxious heart, the grieving heart, the disappointed heart. Ask God for this sight.

The second petition shifts our gaze. Paul prays that we would know "the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints." The phrase is carefully worded and rewards slowing down. The grammar leaves open two possibilities. The inheritance could be ours, so that we inherit God, or the inheritance could be God's, so that He inherits us. Both are true elsewhere in Scripture, but here the syntax and the flow of the argument lean toward the second reading. Paul has already said the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance (verse 14). Now he celebrates something harder to believe. God counts His people as His inheritance. The saints (ordinary, flawed, still-being-sanctified people) are His glorious riches. His treasure. His portion.

The God who made galaxies and names every star looks at the church gathered on a Sunday morning and calls them His glory. The one who has failed again is part of that treasure. The one who feels unseen is part of that treasure. The one who has carried a quiet sense of worthlessness since childhood is part of that treasure. Paul prays that the Spirit would let this land. You are not tolerated by God. You are treasured by Him.

That reframes how we live with each other. If the saints are God's glorious riches, then the person sitting next to you in the pew is part of God's treasure. We cannot despise what God delights in. We cannot write off what God counts as His inheritance. A congregation that sees this treats every member differently. The lonely are not overlooked. The difficult are not dismissed. The weak are not marginalized. We are looking at God's treasure when we look at them.

The third petition is the hardest of the three to believe. Paul prays that we would know "the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe." He strains language here, piling up four different Greek words for power in a single sentence. Each carries a slightly different nuance, and together they form one claim: the power of God is not distant. It is directed toward His people.

Paul gives one measure of this power, and only one: the resurrection of Jesus. "According to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." If we want to know what God can do in our lives, in our marriages, in our congregation, we look at the empty tomb. That is the power available to us.

Paul does not stop at the resurrection. Jesus raised from the dead is now seated above every rule and authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named, in this age and in the one to come. He reigns over every spiritual force, every political power, every civic authority, every voice that claims ultimate allegiance. For the Ephesians, who lived in a city thick with the Artemis cult, imperial temples, and magic, this was not abstract. For us, the list looks different (cable news, the economy, social

media, the diagnosis, the family system that has held us captive for thirty years), but the point is the same. Christ reigns above all of it.

Paul adds one more claim in verse 22. God gave Him "as head over all things to the church, which is His body." Christ's cosmic lordship is given as a gift to His people. He reigns over everything, and He reigns for us. The church is not a small, anxious institution trying to survive the century. The church is tied to the risen and reigning Christ, and the power that raised Him flows toward her.

Three petitions. One prayer. Paul wants us to see a hope that steadies the anxious heart, an inheritance that tells the despised heart it is God's treasure, and a power that frees the stuck heart to live in the reign of the risen Christ.

Paul does not pray for the Ephesians to work harder, try more, or muster more sincerity. Those things have their place, but they are not the answer to living beneath our blessings. The answer is sight, the Spirit's opening of our eyes to what is already ours in Christ. The Christian life is not primarily about acquiring more spiritual resources. It is about coming to grasp the ones already given.

This reframes how we pray for each other, for our marriages, our children, our small groups, our congregation. We do not pray most deeply that God would add something new. We pray that He would open our eyes to what is already true. Father of glory, give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Let us see the hope. Let us see the inheritance. Let us see the power. Then let us live in the light of what we see.

Seeing these three things does not remove pain, slow the world down, or guarantee easy answers. It does something else. It puts pain inside a bigger story. It puts our worth inside God's delight. It puts our stuck places inside the reign of the risen Christ. Nothing on the surface of our lives changes, and yet everything is reframed underneath.

This Sunday we will pray Paul's prayer with him, and we will pray it for each other. That the Spirit would open our eyes. That we would stop living as a rich people who act as if they are poor. That we would see what is already ours.