

Grow in the realization of your Beloved Identity | Ephesians 1:15-23

1. Have *hope* in your calling, your past is dealt with. (18)
2. Thrive in the *riches* of your inheritance, your future is secure. (18)
3. Wake up to the *power* indwelling you, your present is sourced. (19)

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Good morning church, so great to see all of you. Sunday is my favorite day of the week, and it's because I get to spend time with you, worshiping our Lord and Savior.

We are going through the book of Ephesians, in a series called "Beloved Identity" And in the first two weeks we have seen who you really are in Christ.

It often seems like everyone has an opinion on who you should be.

Your Mom has an opinion on who you should be.
Your Dad has an opinion on who you should be.
Your friends have an opinion on who you should be.
The internet has an opinion on who you should be.

And one of the biggest things we all wrestle with in life is our identity. Who am I, what am I good at? What is my purpose in life?

Above what you feel, above what you read about yourself in your favorite personality profile, you must know who you are in Jesus Christ. In Christ, everyone who has by grace through faith believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, has a relationship with God, and along with that a new identity. It's the identity that you were created & gifted for. You are accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of his glory!

So we've been in this series for two weeks and we have seen who God says you are, in Christ:

1. *You are blessed with everything you need. (3)*
2. *You are chosen in love for His glory. (4)*
3. *You are adopted into the family of the beloved. (5 & 6)*
4. *You are redeemed through the blood of Jesus. (7)*
5. *You are forgiven by grace. (7)*
6. *You are lavished with grace. (8)*
7. *You are known with a purpose. (9)*
8. *You are instrumental in God's ultimate plan. (10)*
9. *You have an inheritance that's not of this earth. (11 & 12)*
10. *You are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (13 & 14)*

That's your Beloved Identity, and it's so incredible, it's overwhelming. But where do we go from there?

I hope you have been meditating on those truths all week long! But how do you top this?

You can't. It doesn't get any better than Ephesians 1:3-14, but today we are going to look at where Paul goes with this.

Paul's next move is opening up his heart with a prayer for the church at Ephesus.

I don't know about you, but that peaks my interest.

Whenever you pray for someone. Or listen in on a prayer for someone's soul, you are getting glimpse of their heart.

It's been said that, "prayer is a window into the soul."

Very few things in life are more intimate than True Prayer, because you are opening up your heart before them and before God. True prayer, reveals what you really think about God.

But before we get to Paul's prayer let's spend a little time on why he is praying this prayer. (Read vs. 15-18a)

Why is he praying for them? First of all, it's because they have Faith AND Love. They believe in Jesus Christ and they are proving it by living out their faith with love.

Have you ever run into a professing Christian who just has no love in their heart? Their continence is sharp, their words are jagged. They profess to believe but the entire tenor of their life is straighten up and do right. There's no grace, there's no mercy, there's no empathy for the downtrodden and those who are struggling emotionally, there's no care for people who have different color skin.

Those people scare me, because the Bible makes it abundantly clear that if you don't have love, you don't have Jesus.

This is a side note, but I was thinking about this, this week. Have you ever wondered why Paul called himself the chief of sinners? In Paul's mind he was the worst. Well come on Paul, you couldn't have been that bad, and then you start piecing together the history of his life in the book of Acts and you see that he was so zealous for the law of God that he hunted down Christians and murdered them! Paul was that religious, pious, hypocrite. He was that pharisee who condemned people, who attacked other believers. When you think of the most self righteous, smug, prideful condescending "Christian" you have ever met, aren't those people pretty repulsive? Those people make me mad. Because they misrepresent Christ, and they weigh people down with doubt and fear. That was Paul. And then Jesus hunted Paul down, back when he was Saul and saved his soul. Saul came to Christ, and that's when he changed from being an over zealous religious man, in the bondage of Judaism, to a free man in Christ. Jesus changed everything about his identity, down to his name and Paul became someone who loved people. He didn't just love the Jews, he loved the Greeks and the Romans and even the barbarians. He loved the church at Ephesus, and not just the fun ones who liked to talk about boxing and racing and the olympics. (You read his letters, you can pick up that Paul was a low key sports fan) But Catch that word in vs. 15. All the saints.

A person who realizes their beloved identity, lives out their faith with love towards ALL. Do you love everyone around you? That's super hard to do, and as a matter of fact it's completely impossible... unless you have the Holy Spirit living inside you. Unless you realize who you were apart from the grace of God, there are just unforgivable people out there, there are coworkers that are annoying, there are bosses that are overbearing. On our own this is ridiculous thought. (Loving people that tare much different than me.) But in Christ, we can have love for all.

Ok, so we need to move forward here, but I just couldn't gloss over that truth. Now that's not the only reason Paul is praying. It goes even deeper than that. Look again at vs. 17, here's What he is praying...

He's praying that they grow in wisdom and revelation. Having the eyes of your heart enlightened.

When you stop and think about this, it makes so much sense. Paul just eloquently laid out with a bullhorn the 10 lavish gifts that we have in Christ! And now he's doing the next logical thing, He's praying that they *realize* it, He's praying that they grow in wisdom and knowledge to gain a greater understanding of who they are in Christ.

So this is what we are going to personalize: **Grow in the realization of your Beloved Identity** If there are any fans of the cult classic TV show, Friday Night Lights. You are Matt Saracen. You are the sophomore backup QB of the football team, you have confidence issues, you have deep, personal baggage that you are working through. But your coach knows you have more inside. The coach knows you have all this untapped ability that you haven't even realized you have yet! If you ever watched Friday Night lights you know exactly what I'm talking about, but we can all relate to this...

We have the lavish gifts, we have everything we need. We have been redeemed, we are forgiven, we have the Holy Spirit, we are chosen, adopted we play a part in the ultimate plan to unite all things in heaven and on earth! But we don't have the confidence we need to max it out. We don't fully understand our identity. So we have to pray! We have to grow into the understanding of who we are in Christ, grow into our fullest potential.

See Paul isn't giving us an angry tirade of what we need to be. His old crusty legalistic self would have brought down the hammer and coarsely told you do STOP TALKING, STRAIGHTEN UP, GET IT TOGETHER. (sadly, that's how I'm tempted to parent my kids sometimes when I'm in the flesh. We all have to be careful of being something that we despise.) But instead of doing his old Saul thing, Paul starts with, with a tender caring smile, this is you you are, and here's how I'm going to pray for you, so you can realize this.

The realization of who you are in the beloved. So there's three specific prayer points starting with the second half of verse 18, and these are the three truths for all of you who are in Christ today...

1. Have hope in your calling | Your past is dealt with. (18)

Read 18 & 19 The three big words today are Hope, Riches, and Power. And all three of these combine to touch on the past aspect of our lives, our future, and the power that makes it all possible in the present.

But the first way we realize our Beloved Identity is by growing in the knowledge of the hope of his calling.

When you were called, by grace & mercy of God you were cleansed from your filthiness of sin. Your sin does not define you anymore in the eyes of God, but while we are still down here in this sin cursed world we still have to cleanse our minds.

You have to practice what's already true of your position. In Christ you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed onto your account. But you have to put your faith into action. James says, "Faith without works is dead."

Romans 6:1, 2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? / Go read that chapter later on today it says....Jesus

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life!

The New Testament word for Hope is “elpis”

In greek mythology Elpis was the personification of hope. Elpis was not a god, but a young female who came after suffering, usually depicted with flowers. But the key thing to understand about elpis for the greeks is that it's more of an anticipation than it is a desire.

See, in our culture, we have a really watered down definition of hope.

When I'm playing my video game tonight, and I complete that activity, that took teamwork and strategy. Not only do I hope to have fun, but I hope to get a great drop. “I hope I get the reward I want.” You hope to have a tasty meal for lunch later today.

We hope to get the perfect job someday. And it's just a wish. *“I hope it will all go away and be ok.”*

In the New Testament, hope is a **confident expectation**.

There's no maybe about it, This as a 100% lock, guarantee. I will bet my life on this, and I trust it more than anything on earth.

My Hope is in God's hands. Jesus is my living hope.

Our world is in desperate need for Hope. It's pretty dark out there, I don't advise lingering on twitter very long. It's pretty nasty. People are angry, people are hurting. And the root of all the vitriol that we see today is that many people are completely lacking hope. If you have a nasty coworker, that hates their life and is a selfish jerk. Have some empathy, they don't have hope like someone with a Beloved Identity has hope. This is one of the myriads of ways that Christ followers should be different.

I once heard someone say, **“You can live 40 days without food, 4 days without water, 4 minutes without oxygen, but only 4 seconds without hope.”**

And when people put their hope in themselves or in the stock market, on their kids shoulders or on the President of the United States, how many times does that work out?

This is one of the reasons we have so many depressed, angry people out there. They need hope.

And as a follower of Jesus Christ, someone accepted in the beloved, stop trying to find hope in the same wrong places as everyone else.

We have to understand this, seriously, we are different, why would we settle for the flimsy hope of anyone other than Jesus, even you, yes you aren't perfect. We are all human.

Look, we can't put our hope in the “goodness of the human spirit.” I'm sorry, that's not reality. We are all messed up people, we are all inherently selfish. And God does change people, and work through people, and yes the image of God does shine through even lost people to care for the needs of others. But if you put your hope, fully, on any human, you are going to be disappointed.

The Christian hope is so much better - it's a confident exception!

It's a hope that never goes away, never fades, it doesn't diminish. Only Jesus will never leave you or forsake you and hope in him will transform your life.

So stop living with the hope of this world. The shaky, malleable sort of hope. The hope in anything other than Jesus may work out for a while, but it also may not work out. It's like your hungry and you open the refrigerator, I had this happen to me this week. There's some 6 day old Little Caesars in the fridge. It could do a number on me, but it's probably going to be ok... or I could just eat a fresh orange or a crisp apple. 6 day old pizza or an orange what's more risky? I'm not going to tell you what I ate, ok I actually ate both, half the piece of pizza and the orange. But settling for the old Little Caesars, as horrible as that sounds now, look people put their hopes in riskier stuff than that all the time. You don't have to settle for wishful thinking, embrace the confident expectation that the best is yet to come!

Have confidence in your calling, and bring hope to the hopeless!

Here's the second thing Paul prayed for and the second way you grow in the realization of your Beloved Identity...

2. Thrive in the riches of your inheritance | Your future is secure. (18)

This is another area, where you need to have the eyes of your heart enlightened. Grow in the knowledge of your glorious inheritance.

What is your inheritance? We talked about this last week, and we will talk about it again. But it's every promise of God.

Listen, one of the easiest truths to believe is that He loves you. But you know what, sometimes... One of the hardest truths to believe is that he loves you.

Remember, His love is not dependent on you. It's grace, it's mercy. You are not paying for the inheritance, it's a gift.

Jesus Christ is the best carpenter of all time and has had over 2 millennia to prepare an eternal place for you. I would say that's an inheritance.

My boys watch this show called "Get Out of My Room" It's a show where you have two siblings that share a room, and this guy and this girl come in get to know the kids interests and hobbies and they renovate two new rooms for both kids. Now my 6 year old and 4 year old want their interior designer mom to make them their own room and their daddy to build it and pay for it. And let me tell you, that's the definition of the world's hope. It's wishful thinking that will not gratify.

But our inheritance is fit for a child of the king. You aren't inheriting mom's old iPhone 6s that has no battery life left, you are inheriting something better than the iPhone 11. We can't fully understand how good this is going to be!

So don't live your life like you've got nothing, and you have nothing to offer. Thrive in the riches of your inheritance.

Be like the person who inherited millions from their father and went out and turned those millions into millions more. (I'm not saying you need to run for president :) This is not about inheriting millions are starting a luxury hotel chain ok :), I'm saying don't live like you are a spiritual beggar.

Because your not, Jesus has given every one of us a talent, Remember that parable in Luke 19. In Christ, we have every spiritual blessing in the Beloved. And we have to do something with it.

- You can have the boldness to invest in other people, because your future is secure.
- You can take risks and say hard things in love, because you are looking at the bigger picture. And your not just worried about September 2019, you are focused on the rest of their life, and the impact you can make for eternity.
- You shouldn't be living like ordinary Joe blow, you don't have an ordinary purpose, you have a purpose to unite all things in Christ in heaven and on earth, to the praise of His glory!
- So don't compromise God's way, and live for the next hookup, or just live for the next vacation, or live to beat your competition in that business deal and on the golf course. You're not just trying to get your kid to behave

You are called to something greater and your identity is greater than all of that. Stop selling yourself short.

Start flipping cities, rather than flipping houses. God has invested the capital inside of you to go bigger, change cities and change the world, that's who you are in Christ.

Here's the third way you grow in the realization of your Beloved Identity...

3. Wake up to the power indwelling you, your present is sourced. (19)

Grow in the knowledge of the immeasurable greatness of His power.....toward us who believe!

Your past has been dealt with by the blood of Jesus. Your future is secure, our faithful God will not fail you, and in the present you are sourced with the power of the Holy Spirit!

But this is only for those who what? Those who believe.

Do you believe this?

I know many of you do. I'm convinced many of us in here today have the changed life to prove it. We love in a way that we never loved before.

Some of you though... think you believe.

And some of you are still curious. You don't really know if you believe or not. You're still trying to figure that out.

You can have this power today. And if you think you believe, but you look more like Saul the religious, angry righteous zealot than you look like Paul the humble, loving give the shirt off my back for others and show them grace because I have been shown grace kind of guy, then maybe you need to examine your fruit?

Remember, Paul is praying this for the Ephesians. Grasping the magnitude of His power that indwells you doesn't come overnight.

Paul is asking that the Ephesians get a spirit of wisdom and revelation to fully wake up to this realization.

Look again at verse 19b-21

- This is the same power that was behind Jesus Christ's resurrection of the dead.
- This is the same power that exalted Jesus Christ! *What's that?* That's such a churchy word, the exaltation of Jesus Christ is his resurrection and ascension back in to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the father.
- This is the same power of God that is over every power and dominion. Angels and demons, the entire spiritual realm that we can't physically see is under his authoritative power. In this age, the church age and the age to come...in the next age the eternal age satan and his fallen angels of darkness will be bound in the lake of fire.

Look at verse 22

Jesus Christ the all powerful one, the head of the church. We are the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. He's the head, we are the hands and feet, we are the body of Christ, the living representation of the glory of God. Created and adopted and chosen to show the truth of who God is. We are made in his image to show his glory.

Men and women spend thousands of dollars to stretch their lives just a little longer. But it's not about how long you live or how young you look on the outside, it's about the Holy Spirit that lives inside of you! Your body is mortal, it will return to dust one day. But your eternal soul will live forever, and one day you will get a new resurrected body. Until then we have to wake up to the power that resides inside of us, don't just live for the outside. It fades, but eternity and the power of God lives inside of every believer of Jesus Christ!

It's immeasurable, there's no Richter scale, no decibel meter, no speedometer....No device that can measure the power.

Don't sell yourself short! You have the ability to walk into a room, and change the atmosphere in the room. With a smile. With mercy with grace, and then when people start asking who's that girl? Who is this guy? Why is he different? How can she handle something like that, the way she does? Then you can share your story about how Jesus changes everything.

We already talked about how Saul went from the worst of the worst, a religious pharisee who persecuted the church to a servant of Christ. Peter went from an unstable guy who aggressively took a sword and chopped off the ear of a Roman soldier who was arresting Jesus, to later that night swearing and denying that he even knew Jesus to a little girl at a campfire. And then he saw the resurrected Jesus Christ and became the man who preached a sermon at pentecost where 5,000 people came to Christ!

How has he changed your life? Are you awake to your identity in Christ? Are you awake to the mission that he has given you? Are you awake to the story that he is crafting for you?

America doesn't need anymore casual Christians. We don't need more dead churches that are coasting with their comfortable, feel good about themselves religion.

Our city needs followers of Jesus who know who they are. They are agents of reconciliation to the praise of His glory!

The problem isn't the power source, the problem is we walk around it. The problem is our charging cord gets old and crumpled and get's spotty.

This is what you need to realize: **Your identity determines your activity.**

If you spend your whole life just changing your behavior so you can be a good person and God can get off our back, guess what. It's not going to get you very far.

If you've tried that, you've probably already started to experience the fatigue.

See this is where so many people get burnt out and frustrated. Christians crying out, and giving up because they feel like failures.

"Christianity is not about getting rewarded for what I have done. It's getting blessed for what God has done."

Of course, we don't realize this overnight. We have to own our new identity and then start living it out. Pray for the eyes of your heart to be enlightened. And give thanks for your Beloved Identity.

Don't start with trying hard. Start with your Beloved Identity. It's not what you do, but who you are. And you are who God says you are. Realizing who you are in Christ, will change what you do.