

All Glory Be To Christ

Ephesians 1:15–23

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Context:

- The apostle Paul (*once an enemy of Jesus & the church*) has become one of the greatest missionaries this world has ever known.
- During one of his missionary journeys, he planted a local church in Ephesus. This little church had apparently multiplied into many churches across Ephesus, and Paul is writing them a letter to encourage them in their walk with Jesus.
- So far (*in the first 14 verses*), this letter has been all about the amazing grace of God in our salvation: He **chose** us; He **predestined** us; He **adopted** us; He made sinners **accepted** in the sight of a holy God; He **purchased** our salvation with His blood; He **sealed** our salvation with His Holy Spirit which **guarantees** our eternal life with God... **if you ever wonder if you can lose your salvation** (see: **1:13–14**).
- And He has done all of this “*to the praise of His glory*” (**1:14**).

This morning, we are looking at **1:15–23** where we hear Paul praying for these local churches.

VS. 15 || I heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus & your **love** for all the saints (*those set apart for Jesus*)



- These people are **trusting** Jesus with their life. They are **believing** the promises of God. They are **taking God at His Word**. In a world that trusts in money, power, wisdom, government... they trust in Jesus.
- And their faith was lived out in the way they freely **loved** one another.
 - They aren't worried about keeping score with other people because they trust that Jesus is King over all their relationships – that He knows what He is doing – that He is good & in control... and this kind of faith in Jesus frees them up to experience love without restraints. They don't need to keep score.
 - **III. A kid throwing mud on me while I was on the swing set after a church gathering – when I was probably 8 years old. My heart wasn't drawn to love; it was drawn to revenge. I wanted somebody to throw mud right back at him. Instead, I called him a jerk and walked away, but I wanted somebody to even the score. That's the default of every human heart.**
 - But when you have faith in Jesus (*that He is in control, that He is good, that He knows what He is doing, that He is working **all things** together for the good of His children*), then you can quit looking at the scoreboard and just love one another. **When you put your faith in Jesus, it's as if He comes and **stands in front of the scoreboard of your heart** so that whenever you are tempted to see whether or not everything is “even” between you and somebody else, you can't even see the score – because all you see is Christ.**
 - So many Christians spend precious years of their life harboring bitterness against someone who has hurt them in some way. Somehow, they were wounded by another Christian, and they have never been able to let go of the hurt because it was never made right. Justice was never served. The score was never settled. The other person never apologized; they never repented; they never owned up to the fact that they wronged you; and so (in order to protect your heart from experiencing that kind of hurt again) your instinct is to put up a wall between your heart and the person who caused the hurt and say, “**You shall not pass!**”. But the more your heart **trusts** in Jesus... the more your heart is set free from chains of bitterness, prejudice, resentment, judgment, fear, shame, regret... and when your heart is free of these chains, the only thing that's left is love.
 - And **that** is how people know that we are followers of Jesus (**John 13:35**).

VS. 16 || Paul hears of their faith – he hears of their love, and his heart is full of thanks. When a church that you love has a reputation of trusting Jesus and loving one another... that makes a pastor's heart unbelievably **thankful**. And what does a thankful heart do? It prays!

Paul knows that their faith in God is a miracle. The reason they have faith in Jesus is not because they are smart; it's because God is gracious. He gave them their faith (**Eph 2:8**). It's not *natural* for people to trust in Jesus (**2:3**); therefore, faith is a miracle; it's something that goes *against nature*. As an antichristian for years, Paul knows this better than anybody: faith in Jesus is a miracle – and so is love. We don't love one another because we are naturally loving people; we love because God first poured His love into us through Christ (**1 John 4:19**). Our ability to genuinely love one another is a gift from God. Paul knows this, and it causes him – not to congratulate them or applaud them – but to give thanks to God.

And then he prays that God would open their eyes so that they would see the miracle of their relationship with God in Christ.

I do not cease **PRAYING** for you...
that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
may **give to you** the spirit of wisdom¹ and revelation² in the knowledge of Him,
the *eyes of your understanding* being enlightened...

~ *Ephesians 1:17–18*

As he prays for God to open their eyes, there are three things that Paul is specifically praying that they would be able to see:

1. The hope of His calling (**1:18**) ...
2. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (**1:18**) ...
3. The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe (**1:19**) ...

1. THE HOPE OF **HIS** CALLING (**1:18**) [“the hope to which he has called you” ~ **ESV**]

I'd encourage you to **underline** the word “**HIS**”. The reason we have hope (*as sinners in a relationship with a holy God*) is because HE is the one who calls. If you have a relationship with God, it is not because you called out to God; it's because God first called you. This is really significant: it's not the hope of “your” calling; it's the hope of “His” calling. He is the one who calls; and **He doesn't issue recalls.**

Secondly, Paul prays that they would see...

2. THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF **HIS** INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS (**1:18**)

In typical Pauline fashion, this sentence has a lot of prepositional phrases, which can make it a little tricky to find the main point. Look at the words carefully with me.

- He's praying that the church would see **the riches of something...** (*Israel? Ephesus? Their savings?*)
- The riches **of the glory of something...** In other words, something is rich with glory. The idea of being “rich” means having abundance, having a lot. So, there is something that has **a lot of glory**. Something is rich with glory.

¹ Either God gives you wisdom, or you don't have it (**James 1:5**). Intelligence is not the same as wisdom. Being smart or educated is not the same as being wise. And the wisdom of this world is not the same as the wisdom that God gives (**1 Cor 1:18; 3:19**). The world labels the Christian as a “fool”, but the fool is the one whose heart says, “there is no God” (**Psalms 14:1**). The cross looks like foolishness. The gospel sounds like foolishness. Glory through suffering looks like foolishness.

² Either God reveals Himself to you, or you will never see Him. This world is full of the glory of the Lord, but our eyes are blinded (**2 Cor 4:4**) and our hearts are dead (**Eph 2:1**) to this glory. Unless God opens our eyes (**2 Kings 6:17**), we will never see.

³ It's a common occurrence for humans to recall things – because there was some kind of oversight in the production process. Like when Honda recalled several of their models because of the exploding airbags – or when Chevrolet recalling their 2012 Sonic because they forgot to install brake pads! About ten years ago, there was an Easter toy called the Chicken Dance Easter Chick that was recalled because it was so loud that it was causing hearing damage. When I was in junior high, there was an “antidrug” program that gave pencils to students with the slogan, “Too Cool to Do Drugs”. But what the designers didn't think about ahead of time was that the message drastically changed as you sharpened the pencil. Pencils sharpen from left to right, and so the first word to get shaved off was “too”, and so the message became “Cool to Do Drugs”. **All of these recalls came as a result of human oversight, but God doesn't have oversight. He doesn't miss anything. He knew everything about you before He called you. Nothing you have ever done has ever been a surprise to God. The God who called you doesn't do recalls, and THAT is our hope.**

- The riches of the glory of **His inheritance**... Pause. Whose inheritance? **God's**. God has an inheritance with lots of glory. The question is: *what is this inheritance?* Is it money in a lock box? Is it gold in a vault? Better yet, is it an inheritance of old, rare books in a personal library? Is it an inheritance in real estate? Or in a trust fund? What is His inheritance **in**?
- The riches of the glory of His inheritance **in the saints**... Just let that sink in for a minute. God's inheritance (*which is rich with glory*) is you – and me: people who have been set apart as belonging to Him (*that's what it means to be a saint*). I wonder if you have ever thought about the fact that your salvation is the inheritance of God. Your salvation **belongs** to God. It is **HIS** inheritance. Jesus gave His life to inherit your salvation, and He will not lose what belongs to Him.⁴ We started our service this morning by singing "**O Church Arise**" which says that "*He will have the prize for which He died, an inheritance of nations.*" If you know Jesus as your Lord & Savior, it is because God the Father gave you to Jesus as His inheritance – and Jesus will not lose what belongs to Him. And Paul is praying that God would give you eyes to see that – to see the glory of it.

3. THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF **HIS** POWER TOWARD US WHO BELIEVE (1:19)

It's **HIS** calling. It's **HIS** inheritance. And finally, Paul prays that God would give them eyes to see **HIS** power. What kind of power is he talking about? *The power of a AA battery? The power of a Chrysler Town & Country Minivan? The power of a Chinese power plant?*

- He is praying that they would see "*the exceeding greatness of His power...according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead...*"
- Paul is praying that the church would see the kind of power that raises dead people to life. I.e., he is praying that we would see the greatest power that exists in the universe. And here's the stunning part: he's praying that we would see that God exercises this unparalleled power "*toward us who believe*"!!!
 - **How often do you find yourself feeling absolutely powerless about a situation in your life?**
 - *Cancer*: you feel powerless to bring healing.
 - *Massive financial debt*: you feel powerless to make ends meet.
 - *Addiction*: you feel powerless to break the cycle of sin.
 - *Struggle*: that nobody ever seems to see and that never seems to go away.
 - Church, hear the glory of what Paul is saying...
 - The power that spoke the universe into existence **belongs** to God: **HIS**.
 - The power that holds this universe together **belongs** to God.
 - The power that makes blind eyes see – and deaf ears hear – and lame legs walks – and diseased skin whole – **belongs** to God. **Not to doctors. Not to medication. God.**
 - And the power that raised Jesus from the dead **belongs** to our God...
 - And He is exercising that power for His people. God has never done anything in your life (*or in the history of the universe*) that is not ultimately for your good (**Rom 8:28**). The power that raised Jesus from the dead (that same power) is **targeted** at you right now (**toward you**: εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας). **But we so often miss it because we're so busy trying to fix everything on our own – we're so busy trying to solve every dilemma on our own.**
- The calling is **His** – but *you* are the one He has called.
- The inheritance is **His** – but *you* are the one He has inherited.
- The power is **His** – but *you* are the one He is exercising that power for.

All that God has and all that God does is for the good of those who belong to Him in Christ. I may not know exactly what you are struggling with this morning, but God does – and all that He has is **for you** in Christ.

⁴ E.g., John 17:12.

And just to make sure you understand the scope of this power, here's how Paul finishes the chapter:

Not only did this God raise Jesus from the dead, but he also “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put **all things** under His feet [**all things: sickness, disease, depression, loneliness, identity crisis, government, kings, natural disasters, addiction, shame, sin, solar systems, galaxies, death, heaven, hell... all things**], and gave Him to be head over **all things**” ... *for what purpose? to what end? What direction is all of this pointing? ... “to the church”*.

- Why does a soldier go to war? *Because he loves his country.*
- Why does a dad go to work? *Because he loves his family.*
- Why does a mom sacrifice so much? *Because she loves her children.*⁵

- Why does God raise Jesus from the dead, seat Him at His right hand in heaven, and exalt Him above everything in the universe? *Because He loves the church.*

I often hear people talk about how they don't need the church to be a Christian, and I think to myself, “*Man, you have such a fragmented understanding of the gospel.*” In the NT, God never calls Christians into isolation; He always calls Christians into community, and the word for that “community” in the NT is “church”.

- Why did God shed His blood? *For the church (Acts 20:28).*
- Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? *For the church (Eph 1:19–23).*

Why is the church so special to Jesus? Because it's “**His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all**” (1:23).

In **Habakkuk 2:14**, we read that “**the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.**” How? Through the church. The fullness of God (*His love, His joy, His power, His wisdom, His compassion, His patience, His character...*) the fullness of God was put on display for the world to see in the church. God means for the world to see the fullness of His glory – in His Son – on display in the church, and therefore He is turning everything in the universe for our good.

His calling – is for our good.

His inheritance – is for our good.

His power – is for our good.

And because it's His – He gets all the glory. We get the joy, and God gets the glory.

Oh, that God would give us eyes to see this. If God would only give you eyes to see that He is for you. He is for you in your cancer. He is for you in your financial hardship. He is for you in your marriage. He is for you in your parenting struggles. He is for you in your addiction – and He is exercising the greatest power in the universe for your good. If God gives us eyes to see this, then there is nothing left to fear.

If God is for us...what in this universe could ever be against us?

What happens when a church sees that Jesus is the supreme ruler of the universe – and that He is exercising all of His power and all of His authority for our good at every moment?

We become a church that is known for our faith in Jesus and for our freedom in loving one another.

And who gets the glory for that? God. We get the joy. God gets all the glory.

⁵ Why do missionaries leave their home? *Because they love those who are lost.*

Why does a pastor or an elder stay continue to serve his church even through the hard seasons? *Because he loves his church.*