

Ephesians chapter 1. The last time I was with you and got to preach with you, we preached through Ephesians 1 verses 3 through 14. And Paul there had spoken on the unbelievable privileges of believers in Christ. Things that are so incredible that they actually blow our minds.

Do you remember what those were? The father has blessed all believers with his electing love for them from before the foundation of the world. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world with his predestination of them to adoption as sons of the king of heaven so that we may now cry Abba father. with his redemption of them by forgiving them of all of their sins, past, present, and future, in the central event to which all of life was moving, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he has blessed us with his inheritance promised to us and guaranteed by his bestowing on us the Holy Spirit, who is the seal or the guarantee or the pledge of the life and glory that shall be ours one day.

And for this reason, I want you to see as Paul begins speaking in verse 15 of Ephesians 1, he says, for this reason. And Paul now begins to pray for the Ephesians as a result of all of these blessings and privileges that are theirs in Christ. And there are three things that I'm going to want you to see this morning about this amazing prayer of Paul for the Ephesians. But before we get into that and before we read the word of God and I preach it to us, let's pray and ask his blessings upon us.

Father, it is amazing to think that you and your mercy for sinners such as we are would love us before the foundation of the world, that you would set your love upon us that you would choose us, Father, to be your very own, so that we might live lives of holiness and blamelessness before you, that we might be your sons and daughters in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be forgiven of all of our sins, past, present, and future. and that we might receive the inheritance that is ours now, guaranteed to us by the Holy Spirit, whom you have poured out in our hearts.

Father God Almighty, these blessings are beyond comprehension, and yet they are real for the one who looks to Jesus by faith. And that faith is even a gift from you. Father, we give you praise, honor, and glory for your word now. that you, as I preach these words, would make them your very own words, Lord God, that they would be the words of Christ to your people, to encourage them and to show them, Father, what is the hope of your calling, what are the glorious riches of your inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of the power of God towards us who believe. Father God Almighty, may we be encouraged this day And may we be those people who put our faith in Christ and love all of the saints around us as a result. Lord, I ask that you would come now and pour out your spirit and not withhold him.

For we ask it all in the precious and powerful name of the one who loved us and gave himself for us, even Jesus. Amen. Starting in Ephesians chapter one, I'm going to begin reading at verse 15. And Paul says this in response to all of the blessings that he has just described in verses three through 14. 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, do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers.

And this is what he prays, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of him, so that you, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, you will know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and

what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of his strength, which he worked in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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. And he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Amen and amen. May the Lord bless the reading and the preaching of his word to our souls.

There are three things that I want you to see about this amazing prayer of Paul's for the Ephesians. here in verses 15 through 23 of chapter one of Ephesians. First of all, I want you to see the pervasive personality of the people for whom Paul prays, the pervasive personality of the people for whom Paul prays. We see this in verses 15 and 16. And I want you to remember this, that this personality that the Ephesians possess is only by the grace of God. Paul states two things that are true about the Ephesians, for which he gives thanks to the Father as he makes mention of them in his prayers to the King of Glory. Look with me, starting at verses 15 and 16.

For this reason, I too, having heard of, what? The faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and secondly, your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers. Brothers and sisters, these two things for which Paul gives thanks about the Ephesians are a pair of traits that should characterize all of us who are now Christians. That is, Paul gives thanks for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints.

For you see, lives that have been transformed by the Spirit of God truly in salvation will always demonstrate these two characteristics. Listen to what Sinclair Ferguson says about them. These two characteristics, faith in Christ and love for all the saints, constitute the two features that Paul always seems to look for as marks of genuine conversion. Authentic Christianity, in fact, always transforms us in the Godward and the manward dimensions of our lives.

Godward faith in the Lord Jesus, manward love for all the saints. And unless we see these two things in our new lives as Christians, our professions of faith are hollow. Paul over and over again tells us that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love for all the saints are the marks of conversion in a human heart.

Listen to what he says in Galatians 5, 6. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but only faith working through love. It did not matter whether you were circumcised or whether you were uncircumcised. What mattered was that your faith was there and it was working through love.

Or in 1 Thessalonians 1, 2, and 3, Paul says this, We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and your labor of love, knowing, brothers beloved by God, your election.

You see, those characteristics, faith in the Lord Jesus, love for all the saints, proved and showed the Ephesians that they were truly elect of God. So, why is this important for us to understand this? Y'all, love for Christ, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love for all of the saints prove that you have been born again.

But Paul also says this, that these two characteristics are cause for thanksgiving and prayer. You see, Because of their faith and their love in the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul gives God thanksgiving and gratefulness. And thanksgiving and gratefulness will and should always characterize the speech of the person who has been marked out or set apart by God's grace. Think of how Paul does this. Listen to Romans chapter one, verse eight. He says, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. Paul gave thanks for them because their faith was evident in the way that they were living their lives.

Or in Colossians 1, 8 and 9, he says, because of your love in the spirit, I give thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Brothers and sisters, I want you to think about it. If we, as the Heidelberg Catechism explains, truly understand the depths of our sinfulness and the degree to which we have been delivered from it and forgiven of all of it, then we will never cease to be giving God praise, honor, glory, and especially thanksgiving, not only for our salvation, but also for the fruit of faith and love that we see being worked out in our fellow believers' lives, something that hopefully you and I will continue to pray for more and more in the hearts and lives of our fellow believers, and all the more that we would encourage them in that as we see the day of judgment. that great day approaching.

So first of all, I want you to see the pervasive personality of the people for whom Paul prays. But secondly, I want you to see the power of the person to whom Paul prays, the power of the person to whom Paul prays. We see this in verse 17. Look at what Paul calls him.

He says that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father, of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of him. Beloved, Paul speaks of the one to whom he prays as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory. Beloved, this father of glory is the majestic one. He is the omnipotent and sovereign one to whom Paul and all believers, even you and I pray. He is the father of glory who gives the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of him.

Why is this important for us to know? Because brothers and sisters, our needs on this earth are very great and they are often very serious, are they not? but Paul wants us to know that we pray to the one who is the father of glory. And so I ask you this morning, do you really know the greatness and the power and the glory of the one to whom you pray as a believer?

If we really did, we would be on our knees much more often than we are. I love the words of John Newton that he says, and come my soul, thy suit prepare, that great hymn, Listen to what he says. Thou art coming to a king. Large petitions with thee bring. For his grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much. No, none can ever ask too much. We ask great things because we ask a great God.

And I ask you this morning, do you really believe that when you go to him in prayer? Remember when Jesus went to his father in his great high priestly prayer in John 17, he said, the one to whom we pray is the only true God and to know him is eternal life. Jesus went to him. because he knew that he approached the father of glory who alone could strengthen him for the task of going to the cross and who alone could strengthen his disciples for what they were about to face in the face of the crucifixion and who alone could strengthen all of us who would eventually

believe on him for all the things that we will face in this life. So I ask you this morning, do you know, by experience and practice in your prayer life, this father of glory, and believe in the greatness of the one whom you approach in prayer, when you bring your petitions and requests before him, for brothers and sisters, truly he is able to do all things this Father of Glory.

And the way to know Him better and to be able to grasp the things for which Paul is about to pray for the believers is to receive the Spirit that He provides. What does he call the Spirit here? He calls Him the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him. You see, Christ now gives us and sends us that same spirit to us as believers to share with us wisdom and knowledge of himself and of all that is true of us now, of all that we have in Christ now, of every spiritual blessing that is ours in the heavenly places that he had just spoken about in verses 3 through 14 to help us in our time of need. Paul calls this helper the spirit of wisdom and of revelation. Here, revelation means illumination. In other words, being able to see spiritual things spiritually and thus clearly as God would have us to know them.

Most of y'all know that when I grew up, I grew up in First Perez. And as a teenager, most every Sunday school class that I ever had was taught by Amanda Bailey. She probably taught me more than any other person on this earth about the word of God. And whenever she would teach us, I never forgot this, she would always pray for us at the beginning of every Sunday school lesson that we would be able to discern spiritual things spiritually.

And what Paul is saying here in a very similar way about the spirit of wisdom and revelation is that we pray to the great and glorious one who gives us his spirit so that we may know, understand, and live in the light of the revelation that God has made of himself in the face of Jesus Christ to be able to understand the things that are true of us now as believers.

Paul is praying here that we would be able to look beyond the visible to the invisible realities that are true of us now, that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to grasp glorious things about our state now in Christ and what is true of us now in Christ.

And that is what he prays for. And that brings me to the third and final point here. The third and final thing I want you to grasp here, and here's where I want to spend the majority of my time, in this passage is the three-pronged petition of the prayer that Paul offers for these believers. The three-pronged petition of the prayer that Paul offers for these believers. Notice, there are three things that Paul desperately wants the Ephesians and all of us as believers to know about ourselves and about our state or position in Christ.

We see these things, excuse me, in verses 18 through 23. Look at what he says here. When the Spirit enlightens the eyes of your heart, Paul says you will know, first of all, what is the hope of his calling. Look at what he says in verse 18. He prays for the hope that we would know, and let me get there, so that you, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, will know what is the hope of his calling. In other words, the sure hope to which you have been called in Christ. You know, hope is a very important thing in life. And we as believers, this is not wishful thinking. This is a certainty. This is an assurance. But listen to how Paul had described these Ephesians in chapter 2.

He had said earlier, they had been those who had had no hope, he said in chapter 2, for they were a people who were separate from the special covenant promises that God had given to Abraham and all the children of Israel, and thus they were without God and without hope in the world.

If you do not have God in this life, brothers and sisters, through Christ, you do not have hope. Is this not true today of the funerals of all who die faithless without the Lord? Their final rites are nothing but events of darkness and hopelessness with nothing to look forward to, but pain and torture and hell. And many of you in here have doubtless attended the funerals of such unbelievers whose families have no real assurance of the eternal state of their loved one. And in many cases, they have to grieve as those without hope for the state of that person. And yet how markedly different is the funeral of a Christian. even a strong one at that. I was reminded of this several weeks ago at the funeral of Patsy Pister.

For even in the midst of pain and loss and the sadness of separation that we feel apart from them, there emerges an almost tangible sense of light and peace, a real sense of joy and victory, because those gathered for such an occasion know that their loved one is now in glory with the Lord.

They have that sure hope. There is thus a future and a true hope, even in the valley of death. And we had that sure hope and that true future that we knew of for Patsy when we gathered for her funeral. But y'all, this hope of which Paul speaks, we should never confuse, as I just said, with wishful thinking. No, it is an assurance. It is a bold certainty of the reality of something to come that we who are left behind have not yet fully experienced. And this hope will never disappoint us.

Ultimately, we can be sure of this hope because the love of God, Paul says in Romans 5 8, has been poured out into our hearts. By the spirit whom he has given us, the spirit you see testifies to our hearts as believers that we belong to him and that our hope in him is real. And this world of heavenly perfection to which we look forward. which is the future destiny of all believers, is already ours through the Spirit, because the Father has given us the guarantee of it in the Holy Spirit, whom he has placed in our hearts and given to us. You have the guarantee of that sure hope of eternal life with him. Why is this hope so important for the Christian in life?

Well, I think it's obvious. As Sinclair Ferguson says, because how you live the Christian life now is in large measure determined by how you think about the future. Let me say that one more time. How you live the Christian life now is in large measure determined by how you think about the future. You see, the purpose behind God's revelation about your sure future is to transform the way you live now in the present. Knowing the sure hope of what is coming when the Lord returns to judge the earth and that you belong to him should lead you now to live a transformed life of holiness and righteousness with eager expectation for the one who's coming back to get you. and to treat others in the light of his final assessment of your life.

Remember what he said in the parable of the sheep and the goats. Whatever you did unto the least of these, you did it unto me. And we see this emphasis, this emphasis on the future sure hope of believers influencing their lives now throughout Paul's letters.

Think about 2 Thessalonians 1.11, where Paul is certain that the Lord will return in glory and judgment. And because of that, he prays that believers would live in a manner that is worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.

Peter says the same thing in 2 Peter 3.11. Remember what he said about the end of the world? Since all these things are thus to be dissolved with the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, What sort of people ought you to be now in lives of holiness and godliness? And so I ask each of us this morning.

Since you know the hope of the gospel and what is to come, are you living a life of holiness and godliness now that is worthy of the calling of the Lord, carrying out resolves for good and works of faith by the power of God working in you? The church as a whole, sadly, seems to have lost a sense of the practical implications, the urgent implications of the hope of the gospel the sure hope of the gospel, and thus experiences such little practical success in transforming the culture around them. Sinclair Ferguson says again, we need to see the future clearly if we are to live in the present faithfully.

You know, a lot of times we as Christians are accused too much of being so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good. But I'm afraid that the opposite is true of most of us. We are of little earthly good because many of us are too this worldly minded. We are too much like the world to be equipped to transform it. And yet the realization that our citizenship is in heaven and that we eagerly await a savior from there should impel us, compel us daily to live in this world as those whose ultimate identity lies elsewhere. This world is not our home, believer. Do not treat it as if it is.

But secondly, look what else he wants them to understand about themselves. Not only the hope of their calling, but look what he says here, that you would know what is the hope of his calling and then what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Brothers and sisters, this inheritance that you have to look forward to refers both to the inheritance that we have in Christ from God the Father, as well as to the inheritance that God has in us. Since we are the joy that is promised to Christ when He endured the cross and scorned the shame, He did it for us. We are His portion, just as He is our portion.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were seen as the Lord's inheritance. And in turn, the promised land was the inheritance he gave to them. But Old Testament believers saw beyond the land itself to the landlord himself. God himself was their inheritance. The land was merely a physical expression of the spiritual riches that believers have in God. The Lord was their portion.

And here, specifically, Paul seems to be referring to the riches that we have in Christ our Savior. But why is it important for us to recognize this truth? Well, knowing the riches of the glory of His inheritance, brothers and sisters, it will give you a rich sense of dignity and security about yourself. You possess dignity, first of all, because God treasures you as his own special child whom he has redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Let me say that one more time. Do you understand that God treasures you as his very own child if he has redeemed you by the blood of the Lamb? Mack talked about that at the end of Zephaniah where he said he sings over us.

An amazing expression there. But you also possess security because God protects those whom he treasures and he protects the treasures that are theirs. Brothers and sisters, there are lasting treasures laid up for those who count this world's riches as loss because of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. Lasting wealth lies in the priceless treasure that we have received and will receive one day from God. For he has given us his only son. And if he has given Christ for us, how will he withhold any good thing from our midst?

But finally, notice the third thing that Paul wants us to see. Paul adds a third element to his petition. As if all this were not enough, the hope of his calling, the riches of his glorious inheritance, Paul desires that the Ephesians would know what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of his strength.

Y'all, these young Christians in Ephesus, surrounded as they were by the cult of Diana, as well as by occult powers needed to know that the one who was in them was stronger than the one who is in the world. And all Christians need to be assured of this, this great security and power that we have in Christ, which is why Paul emphasizes it and prays for it here. For think about it, we are attacked on every side, are we not? by the world, the flesh, and the devil constantly. That is why we need to have our eyes opened to the fact that not only does our God to whom we pray have power, but also that God's power towards us who believe is immeasurably great according to the working of his great might. And to show you how great this power is towards us who believe, he compares it and says that it is equivalent to Three things that Jesus did to the power that was displayed in Christ's resurrection, to the power that was displayed in his exaltation, and to the power that was displayed in his victory over his and all our enemies. Look at what he says here, that surpassing greatness of God's power. toward you who believe that is at work in you now is the same power that God displayed when God's spirit raised Jesus from the dead in the resurrection. Do you understand that?

For the Apostle Paul, the resurrection of Christ was not simply a resuscitation of a man from the grave. It was also an act of transformation in which all believers share. Paul says in Ephesians 2 5 that though we were dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with Christ. You have been raised with Christ into the heavenly places.

And though we ourselves have not yet been resurrected bodily, God's resurrection power through his spirit is already living and working in you. who believe the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is now working powerfully in you who believe so that you may have that same strength to fight against all the enemies of your soul.

Understanding and acting upon that power requires faith. It requires faith on our part to believe the things that are true. of you and me. And that is why he's given us the spirit to understand those things. But Jesus says even the faith of a mustard seed can move mountains. This is why prayer is so important. This is why I urge you to come to the prayer meetings on Sunday afternoons. at four o'clock, to come to the men's prayer meetings on Fridays at 6.30. God uses our prayers to accomplish great things for himself.

And that same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now living and working in you. So I ask you this morning, do you believe that?

Do you remember that when the enemies of the gospel and of your soul strive to bring you down and to keep you from the truth? but also that power that works so immeasurably greatly toward you is equivalent to the power God displayed when he exalted Christ to heaven from the grave and seated him at the Father's right hand. Most of you know that that position of power at the Father's right hand, it is the symbolic and literal place of all power and authority from which Christ rules in majesty and omnipotent strength, a power and strength that Christ exerts as the one who always and efficaciously intercedes on your behalf before the Father's throne for your continued forgiveness and acceptance with the Beloved on high. That is the great power at the Father's right hand, willing and ready to accept you with open arms and to forgive you of all of your trespasses and iniquities. And it is the power that is at work in you as a believer, even now, But finally, that power that works so immeasurably greatly towards you who believe is equivalent to the victory, Paul says, that Christ accomplished and will completely accomplish one day over sin, death, and Satan. Even now, Christ reigns at the right hand of the Father, and we have an amazing Savior who towers, Paul says in verse 21 here, over all rule and authority and power and dominion. above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

Therefore, Christian, when you are beset by fears and doubts within as well as without, realize and understand and rejoice in the fact that there is no rule greater than Christ, and that rule is at work in you.

There is no authority that can thwart his purposes, and that authority is at work in you. There is no power that can withstand his might, and that power is at work in you. There is no dominion in all this universe that can prevent his advance and his ultimate victory over all things in this universe. If God is for us, as Paul says, who, who can truly be against us? That does not negate the existence of our enemies, but it does tell us that all of those enemies combined are as nothing against our great God and Father and the power of what He is accomplishing in and through us for our ultimate salvation and glorification. As He says, nothing, nothing can stop it.

Be encouraged this morning, believers, because of the great power that is at work in you, in you who believe. May God make us a people who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who love His people, and recognize that the one that we pray to is the Father of all glory who is able to do all things.

Let us pray. Father God Almighty, you have told us many and great truths about ourselves. And in many cases, it is hard to take in, Father. But I pray after hearing these things, Father, that your people who know you truly would recognize the great power that works towards them who believe and the great power that we have in prayer, that you are willing to use even the prayers of your people to accomplish great things, not only for those who are around us, but also for all throughout this world.

Lord God, let us never despair for those in our families who know you not. Let us pray on for them. Let us never despair, Father, for those illnesses that seem not to be able to be cured. For Christ is able to do all things, and we put our faith and our trust in the one who has conquered over all things and will one day bring all of his people home to glory, face to face. And so we pray and give you thanks for this now, Lord. Strengthen us, Father. Strengthen our faith. Keep us faithful to yourself until that day you return, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.