

Praying for Spiritual Understanding

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[0:00] How are we doing? We're doing good. We're doing good? Yeah. Open your Bibles with me please and turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 1.

! Continuing our study, walking through the book of Ephesians. We began last week looking at the second half of Ephesians 1, where Paul begins to pray for the Ephesians. And now we pick it up this week as we dig a little further into the prayer of Paul for these Christians. So, if you're able, please stand.

As I read from Ephesians chapter 1, beginning at verse 15 through verse, let's see. Ephesians 21. Ephesians 1, 15. 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, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

[1:31] I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may 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, in accordance with the working of the strength of his might, which he brought about in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, in every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, guide us today as we look at Paul's particular prayer for the eyes of our heart to be enlightened, so that we might know certain truths.

So teach us, Lord, not only about prayer, but teach us in this passage what it means to have the eyes of our heart enlightened, that we might know.

Father, we pray that you would give to us today, as Paul prayed, a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of you. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Please be seated. Amen. Do you remember the walk on the Emmaus Road?

[3:16] It was following the resurrection of Jesus, remember? Two of the disciples of Jesus were walking from Jerusalem down to Emmaus. They were on the road.

This is in Luke chapter 24. They did not know that Jesus had raised from the dead. They had only known that Jesus had died. And so these two disciples are walking and discussing things about Jesus.

When Jesus suddenly joined them, though they didn't know it was him. And he asked them, why were they sad? And they said, Cleopas said, are you the only one in Jerusalem that does not know what has happened?

How Jesus, a prophet, one mighty, was arrested and then crucified? We had hoped that he would be our redeemer.

And then they told him also that certain women among us had gone to the tomb where he was buried. And they claimed that the tomb was empty, that he was not there.

[4:18] And there were others who confirmed the same message. And then Jesus turned to them and said, oh foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have written.

And beginning with Moses and the prophets, he began to explain to them and unfold to them all the things about himself from Moses and the prophets.

And as they then turned aside to the inn and they sat down and Jesus broke the bread, as he was breaking the bread, remember their eyes were opened and they recognized this was Jesus.

And as soon as they recognized him, he disappeared. And then afterwards, reflecting on that, they said these words, they said, Did not our hearts burn within us as he opened to us the scriptures?

So a couple of things in that story. Jesus called them foolish and slow of heart to believe. Slow of heart to believe.

[5:32] Not slow of mind. Slow of heart to believe. And then after they recognized Jesus, their eyes were opened. And they talked about how their hearts were burning as he opened the word to them.

So this is the very thing I think Paul is praying for. As these men had their eyes opened, as their hearts were slow to believe, Paul is praying that the eyes of our heart, look at verse 18, The eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

So that's an interesting phrase. The eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you might know certain things. So I think that's an illustration of what Paul is praying for.

Now remember, last week we looked at the particulars of prayer. We saw two elements of prayer, verse 15 and 16. As Paul is thinking of them, he says, Every time I remember you, I give thanks for you.

So one element of prayer is giving thanks for God's work in other people. When we pray, are we including thanksgiving as a vital element of our prayers?

[6:47] Or do we just jump right into, this is what I need, this is what I need? Here Paul, and he does this in almost every one of his letters. He talks about how every time he remembers them and when he prays for them, he gives thanks for them.

And then secondly, we see that in verse 17, he begins to pray for them. And we call this intercessory prayer because he's not praying for himself, but he's praying for this church.

He's praying for other believers. He's praying to the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. And then notice at the end of verse 17, what he's praying for specifically.

He's praying, verse 17, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

His main request is that they would have wisdom. They would have an attitude of wisdom and discernment in knowing Christ, in knowing the Father, in full knowing, a precise, intimate, experiential knowing, not an academic knowing, not a theory of knowing, not a head knowing, but a heart knowing, a full knowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be able to discern and know God personally.

[8:11] So that's his main request. Then in verse 18, he's going to go into this, an extended part of prayer, where he prays for the eyes of their heart to be enlightened. But I want to call your attention to something that you don't see in the English text.

There's a connection between verse 17 and verse 18. Verse 17 is the main request. Give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Then verse 18.

My text has in italics, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. You have that? What does the ESV have? Does it have something before the eyes of your heart?

Having. Having. Having. Having. Having. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Having. So that's accurate.

Having the eyes of your heart enlightened. It's actually, it's a participle that is a perfect passive.

I love perfect passives because perfect means that the action is complete and ongoing. And passive means that it happens to you. So he's saying, having been, the eyes of your heart, having been enlightened.

[9:28] So in other words, something that has happened previously. Having been enlightened. So how does having been enlightened affect the knowing God in verse 17?

I say that it, that it's because, because your eyes, the eyes of your heart have been enlightened, allows us to know God more personally.

So in other words, what enables us to, to experience a deeper, more personal, more accurate knowing of God is because the eyes of our heart have been enlightened.

Okay. So in other words, verse 18 pushes back on verse 17. Verse 18 explains how I come to a greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because I know the eyes, because the eyes of my heart are open and I start to know things. So what do I know? So notice verse, verse 18.

[10:32] So he says, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened so that, so now it's going the other way. So now when our eyes of our heart are enlightened, we know some things so that you may know three things.

What is the hope of his calling? Two, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? And three, verse 19, what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us?

So he wants us to know certain things. So he wants us to know certain things. The eyes of our heart are enlightened. We not only come to a closer knowledge and walk with our, with the father, but we come to know certain facts.

And that is about the hope of our calling and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints and the power of God toward us.

We're just going to look at the first two today because there's a lot there. We're just going to look at part B of verse 18 and part C. Did you know verses can have ABCs to them?

[11:38] Yeah. Okay. Good. So part A is the eyes of your heart. Part B is the hope of his calling. Part C is the riches of the glory. So let's look at, first of all, because the eyes of our heart have already been enlightened, Paul is praying that we come to understand the hope of his calling, to grasp the significance of the hope, to internalize the hope of his calling.

So what is that? What is the hope of his calling? What I'm saying that is, is the assurance of your salvation. To know the hope of your calling or to know the hope of his calling is to have assurance of salvation.

If you know that, you will have certainty about your salvation. So let's break it down. Two parts, the hope and the calling. The hope, hope is a confident expectation. It's confident.

It's not indefinite. It's not unsure. It's not like we hope it'll rain. We hope it'll snow. We don't know for certain. The weatherman never knows for certain.

In fact, you can almost always bet what the weatherman says is going to be off somehow because they're just guessing, especially in Colorado. You just don't know. It always cracks me up when they say, oh, five days from now or next week, you don't even know two hours from now.

[13:06] Now, they can predict pretty highly for today. But for tomorrow, the winds can change. The mountains can redirect the wind. All kinds of things can happen. So he's not talking about that kind of hope.

I hope it'll rain or I hope it won't snow. I hope I don't have to shovel snow. We're talking about something that is assured and certain, something that has an expectancy that we can anticipate.

So there's two views of how this hope is. It's either a hope for the future or it's a hope that comes from something else. If it's a hope for a future blessing, that's usually how we think of hope, hope about something future, then why would Paul describe it as a hope of your calling?

So not hope of future blessing, but a hope of your calling. So it's more likely, the second view, that the hope is not for future blessing, but it's a hope that comes from the call.

The hope of or from the call. It's a hope or confident expectation in and of itself to realize that we are called, to be certain that we have a specific hope.

[14:26] Paul's going to talk about in the next chapter of Ephesians 2.12 that Gentiles before they knew God were without hope and without God. But we have a certain hope.

And so what is the first hope that we're called to? The first hope we're called to is the gospel. When we heard the gospel, that's the first hope that we have. That's the first calling that we receive. And it fits the context.

As in verses 3, chapter 1, verses 3 to 14, he talks about all those blessedness, those things we already have. We're chosen. We're adopted. We're redeemed.

So what is his calling? We say the hope, so a confident expectation of his calling. What is his calling?

So theologians identify two kinds of calling in the New Testament. One is a general calling. In other words, God calls everyone to repent.

[15:28] He calls all to repentance. As Jesus said from one of the parables, many are called, but few are chosen. Many are called.

All are called. God calls all to repentance, but not all do. So there's a general calling, calling in general. And then theologians talk about, they identify a second kind of call, which they call a special call or an effective call.

In other words, there's a call when God calls certain people, they hear and they believe. It's a call to salvation. It's a call into fellowship with God.

It's a call to God himself. And so in chapter 4, verse 1 of Ephesians, we're told, walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called.

So our call to salvation. Our call to have believed. Okay? So, to understand the hope of his calling is to have assurance of salvation.

[16:36] So it's to have hope, right? A certain expectation of his calling, the calling which is to be saved. So it's an assurance that we're saved. So how do we have assurance that we're saved?

Let me go to another text in Romans 8, where Paul uses the same words and helps us to understand how certain those who are called are saved.

So to pray to understand, to grasp the hope of his calling is to have assurance of salvation. Paul says in Romans 8, 28, we love this verse, don't we?

We quote it a lot. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. Right? We like that part. God calls all things together for good. So whenever we're going through hard things, we love that verse because it reminds us, no, God calls everything for good to those who love God.

Well, who are those? Well, it's for the, he goes on, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become, to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[17:53] Now watch the progression here. He talks about those who are called according to purpose. He talks about those whom he foreknew or predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

Now watch. And those, those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? So do you see the incredible truth that Paul defines there?

He defines the call. Our call is the same as God's purpose to conform us to the image of his son, to be like him. So that is God's great purpose in our life.

That's how we could summarize what is my life about? Well, it's to be conformed to the image of his son. So no matter what God is doing in our lives, we are, his purpose is to, is to call us and to conform us into the, into the image of his son, to be like Christ.

[19:01] So that's why we go through hard stuff, to be like Christ. That's why he blesses us so that we could be like Christ, so we could walk like him. But it's, it goes beyond that now.

He says, um, all of his work, starting in the way back past, the part that we aren't any part of, the part that, where he foreknew, and then he predestined, those he predestined, he called.

If he called, you're justified, justified, you glorified. In other words, if he has called you, he will justify you.

If he's justified you, he will glorify you. And it goes all the way back to his work at the beginning. If he foreknew you, he predestined you. If he predestined you, he called you.

If he called you, he justifies you. If he justified, if the first thing's true, the last thing's true. It's like a chain that's unbroken. Our certainty, our assurance of salvation is not in what we do.

[20:00] It's in what God has done. If, if our assurance is in what we do, we're going to be a mess. We're going to be like those who think they can lose their salvation.

And the reason they think they can lose their salvation is because their salvation depends on what they do. If my salvation depends on what I do, I'm toast. I will never be faithful enough. I will never achieve enough. I can't never. But he does. He's it. We see that in the opening verses. He's, you know, he chose us and he predestined us to adoption and he's given us this gift of redemption.

So he's called us. Do you grasp this? Do you have certainty of your salvation? Do you feel assured? Does it, does it rest in God's work or does it rest in your work?

Right? See the huge difference? The huge gap? There are so many that rest their hope on what they do. That's why they got to measure up.

[21:05] That's why they got to work hard. That's why they got to achieve. We don't have to do those things. We get to do those things. Christ is working in us. We will achieve what he wants us to achieve.

We'll fall, but he'll raise us back up. He's praying for our faithfulness. Doesn't depend on us. I think the more free you get of that, the more he'll use you.

That's, remember, that's how Peter, Peter needed breaking. Remember? He thought he could do it. And Jesus had to show him that he couldn't do it. Right? And so he denied him.

And that's when Jesus said, you know, I'm praying. I've already prayed for you that you, your faith will not fail. You're going to fail, but your faith isn't going to fail. You're going to come back.

If God is for you, who can be against you? So first part of the request is praying that because the eyes of our heart are enlightened, we come to grasp the significance of the hope of God's calling us, the assurance of salvation.

[22:16] So we see a second part in the end of verse 18. Because we have been enlightened, He is praying that we come to grasp the significance of our rich and glorious inheritance.

That we come to grasp the significance of our rich and glorious inheritance. What's yet to come. So back in verse 11, he talked about we already have an inheritance. Right? He's given us an inheritance.

We've obtained an inheritance. And the Holy Spirit is the first part of that. But now He's praying that we'll see what we have yet in the future. So I want you to notice at the end of verse 18, He piles up words that describe this.

He says, What are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints? Riches of the glory of the inheritance. He's just piling up words to express the wonder and the marvel and the vastness of this inheritance.

It's rich and it's glorious. Our inheritance, what we have in heaven, what we have in the future is rich. It's abundant. It's full.

[23:35] It's plenty. It's lavish. It's ample. And it's glorious. It's magnificent. It's splendorous. It's excellent. It's wonderful. Outstanding. Now I'm piling up words.

It's how do you explain how vast and incredible and glorious and rich is our inheritance? So Paul prays that we begin to grasp how vast is our inheritance.

Not just that we have this very simple, well, I have the hope of life after death. Well, Paul doesn't describe it as just simple life after death.

He describes it as rich and glorious, as an inheritance, right? That there's something more to be given to us. But not just life after death, but rich in glory, fully satisfying, awe-inspiring.

Now the translations say his inheritance. The glory of his inheritance. Literally, it would read the inheritance of him.

[24:43] So how do I, if we say his inheritance, then we think it's something that is his, right? That it's an inheritance to him, if it's his inheritance.

But if it's the inheritance of him, then it can mean inheritance from him. So which is it? Is it inheritance to him? His inheritance?

Or is it our inheritance? Right? Inheritance from him. It's the inheritance of him to us. Right?

It's a gift. Well, as he says, right? It's the glory of the inheritance of him in the saints. It's inheritance in the saints.

It is a gift of our inheritance. The rich, glorious share that he gives to all the saints. It is the portion or the possession that he gives to all the saints.

[25:42] Right? And he referred to this earlier back in verse 11 of chapter 1. He says, We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose, who works all things after the counsel of his will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.

And him you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise. So we have an inheritance in which the Holy Spirit of promise is given as the first part, the down payment, so to speak, the engagement ring of that future inheritance.

So Paul prays that we come to a deeper grasp of our future blessing, the glory of heaven, the kingdom of God, the new body that we will get.

Some of us look forward to that, right? But we can only imagine, right? So what is it that scripture has made clear about our future inheritance from God?

So when we look at the Bible, when we look at the Bible and it talks about heaven, what does God give us to look forward to about heaven?

[27:03] How does he describe it? Is it roads of gold? Sea of glass. What's that? You know?

We get these pictures and images in the book of Revelation, right? This glorious thing, gold and all this wonderful thing. That's hard for me to grasp.

I mean, that is pictures. It gives us pictures. And it gives us comparisons. But it really doesn't say much more than that. It just, it's like the Lord doesn't want to spoil the surprise.

You know? He just kind of gives these images that we can only begin to fathom. I mean, I think what is described in Revelation 21 and 22 is these incredible pictures.

But I think it's bigger than that. Right? It's just bigger. It's like that Garden of Eden again because it has the trees, you know, and the rivers, and all that.

[28:08] And the tree of life is there again and all that. What is it? So, Peter, when he describes the inheritance, he gives comparisons. So, here's how Peter describes it.

In chapter 1, 1 Peter 1, 3, it says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

So, there's hope again. To a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance. Now, here we go. To an inheritance. Now, he's going to describe that inheritance by comparison.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

So, he gets five comparisons of the inheritance. It's imperishable. It will not perish. Our body will perish. But it will not.

[29:20] Imperishable. Undefiled. It will not defile. Or decay. Right? It will not defile. It will not spoil. It will not pollute. The land around us will spoil.

The earth that we live upon will pollute. But our inheritance will be pure. It will not defile. It will not decay. It will not fade. It will not diminish.

I painted our house 11 years ago. And it's already needing painting again. It fades. Now, I did the best I could.

I scraped, scraped, scraped, scraped. I put 300 hours, I think, into scraping that house. Prepping it to paint it. So, it's lasted more than, longer than normal. But it's still starting to show.

Because some reason the sun shines on it. And that fades it. And some reason the snow and the rain. And, you know, you understand. It will not fade.

[30:22] And it will be kept. It will be kept. It will be guarded. It will be defended and reserved. Kept in heaven for you.

Who by God's power are being guarded through faith. For a salvation ready to be revealed. It's a salvation. It's a full deliverance. So, we are saved now.

Right? We are saved now from sin. There will be a day when we will be saved. Well, we're saved from the penalty of sin. Right? And we're being saved from the power of sin.

As we trust in Christ. We're able to conquer sin. But one day we will be saved from. So, penalty, power. What's the next P?

What's the P in the future? We will be saved from the presence. That's kind of cheating, huh? We're saved from the penalty of sin. We'll be saved.

[31:20] We're being saved from the power. We will be saved from the presence of sin. So, there will be no more sin, in other words. No more temptation. We won't have to deal with that. That's what we're looking forward to.

Because this day we groan. We groan because having been saved, we want to please our Savior. And yet in our weakness, often we fall and we fail. We get back up.

The Spirit gets us back up. But we grieve. Right? That we grieve God. So, what difference does this full deliverance mean?

Just as salvation now is free from the penalty of sin, we will be free from the things of this world. We'll be free from the hopes that are in this world.

We will be free by the strength to endure. So, do you ever think of heaven?

[32:21] You think of it? As you get older, you know, your body starts falling apart. Start becoming more real. You know? I've gone through some stuff this last year, last several years.

And just, you know, you're more mindful. Okay, there will be a day. God will call me home. I hope it's a day when years from now, I preach my last sermon and then I go home and then I go home. If I could write it, that's how I'd want it. But it becomes more real, I think. When I was younger, it was not, you know, it just wasn't a concern.

You know, think about that. Now I do. Now I do. Can you even begin to grasp how vast are the riches and glory of this inheritance of heaven?

Right? And seeing Christ face to face and whatever else is all involved in that. Right? Do you reflect on it?

[33:28] Do you take time to reflect on it? Read the Puritans. The Puritans lived years and years ago before, you know, the advances of medicine and doctors and all that.

And so they, you know, if they got to 50, 55, they're, man, they're ahead of everybody. And so they thought regularly of death.

They thought regularly of meeting their master because it was, it was a quicker reality for them. So let us think about it.

And let us pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened, that we may know that our calling is certain and that our future is rich.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Paul's prayer. Father, cause us to know, Father, these words that Paul speaks about.

[34:27] That we know that we know that the eyes of our heart are enlightened so that we know the hope of our calling, that we might have assurance of salvation. And that we might know the glorious, rich inheritance that we have in the future.

Make those more real to us, Father, we pray. As we seek to walk in you, we ask in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.