

Ephesians 1:15-23

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[0 : 00] We will read the second run-on sentence this morning as we read verses 15 through 23. If Paul was excited about the salvation of the believers, he was as equally excited about praying for the believers.

We have seen in the book of Ephesians that in the earliest manuscripts, the word Ephesus is left out to the saints who are at Ephesus in verse 1 of chapter 1.

It is not that there is not weight that this book was originally intended for the church at Ephesus, also known as the Ephesian believers, but there is the reality that more than likely this letter was written not just to one particular church, but to a series or a circuit of churches to be circulated among them.

Therefore, when Paul wrote this, he was not writing to address problems or writing to even encourage strengths. He was writing to the church. He was writing to a church local, but he was also writing to a church universal.

Now, we know that. We understand that because when we open up the Word of God, we can see that many times what was written to one particular group of believers has application to all believers.

[1 : 14] And we always want to set ourselves in context, and we always want to set ourselves in the right historical understanding and scene so that we can interpret rightfully what was being encouraged or what was being told of the believers to do.

When we come to the book of Ephesians, we really don't have to set ourselves in the city of Ephesus. We just need to put ourselves in the body of Christ. And understand this letter is written to us.

Paul, in writing this letter, is reminded the believers of how rich they are because of who they are.

They are saints. In verses 15 through 23, we will see a petition for the saints.

I say this by way of introduction before we read it because I want you to pay attention to it.

Someone has called attention, and my mind fails me as to say who, because if so, I would give them credit.

That when you read the prison prayers of Paul, that is, what Paul is praying from prison, in particular, how he is praying for believers while he's in prison, you will notice that there are a lack of requests for God to do or to give something to the people.

[2 : 22] He is not making a petition that they may be enriched. He is not making a petition even that they may be free from persecution. He never makes a petition that God would give them anything other than what we see this morning.

That is, the petition always is that they may come to a greater understanding of who God is. In his darkest moments and in his darkest hours awaiting his own death, when Paul prays for believers, the one thing he prays for is that they will come to a greater understanding of who God is.

And he's praying that for believers. Because he knows that is the one thing that will endure. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you will join with me as we stand together.

We start in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 15. We will read to the end of the chapter, which gets us to verse 23. It is one run-on sentence, but we will read it as it is presented to us for clarity.

Paul says, 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 you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

[3 : 44] I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that 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.

These are 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, and 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 as head over all things to the church, who is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day. God, we're so thankful for the opportunity which we have come together, together with brothers and sisters in Christ to worship. We thank you for our worship and fellowship.

We thank you for our worship and song. Lord, we thank you for the demonstration of worship through craftsmanship. Lord, we pray that now we continue to worship you through your word. May the truth of scripture captivate our hearts and minds.

[4 : 55] May it draw us closer to you than we've ever been. And Lord, may it have a direct impact upon our lives for your glory and yours alone. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Here we see a petition for the saints. As Paul is praying for the saints. Again, we notice that he does not pray that God would provide certain necessities for them.

For them, we notice that he does not pray that God would keep them from harm. We notice that he does not pray that God would keep them safe as they are in this city of Ephesus, which has so much going against them.

We notice that Paul is not praying that they would prosper and that they would gain financially. We notice that Paul does not pray that they would have good health. But we do notice that in his petition for the saints, he gets directly to the heart of the matter, that he is praying that they may have a greater understanding and knowledge of God himself.

As we come to this petition and this prayer, we know that Paul gets carried away in the midst of it. He gets kind of caught up, if you will, in the latter part of it as it looks at the power of God.

[5 : 58] And we'll look at that in just a moment. There are just three great truths that I want you to leave this morning with as it concerns this petition. Three things in which we need to be aware of and three things which I think would directly impact how we live our lives.

Number one, we see the foundation of the request. The foundation of the request. Paul says, For this reason I too. Now we stop right there because Paul has just got caught up in his introduction. He introduces himself. He introduces who he's writing to. And then he begins to speak of their position in Christ and how God has called them to himself, that he'd predestined them, he'd adopted them, that he'd enriched them with his possessions, that their inheritance is great.

And then he goes for this reason too. This, you understand, directly connects what Paul is about to say to what he's already said. Well, you say, Well, sure, pastor.

That makes all the sense in the world. I mean, why else would it be there? Well, we need to pay attention to that then, right? Because if this prayer is based on everything which Paul has already stated, then we need to understand the foundation on which he prays or the foundation on which he is making this request because this is, by the way, of utmost importance.

[7 : 15] He is writing to the saints. He has reminded the saints of who they are in Christ. He has reminded the saints that they are who they are in Christ, not because of their good works, not because of their good efforts, but that God called them before the foundation of the world was laid.

He chose them in Christ, that God has led them to himself. He has adopted them into the family of God. They are honored because of who they are in Christ.

And he says, Because of this, because of who you are in Christ, I make this request. Friend, listen to me. There is a grand difference in how we pray for the believer versus how we pray for the unbeliever.

A grand difference. There is a grand difference. We'll say it again. Difference in how we pray for the believer than how we pray for the unbeliever.

Someone has said once before, we spend more time trying to keep the saints out of heaven than praying for those who are not on their way there. Saying, oh God, please keep them here.

[8 : 24] Oh God. And we understand that. I'm not trying to downplay it at all. I'm not trying to say that mourning and grief is not a reality in this world. But there is a huge difference in how we pray for people where they stand in the presence of God.

Paul is not praying here for non-believers. He's not asking that God would reveal himself to them. He's not asking that he would draw them. He's not asking that God would break their hearts over their sin.

He's not asking that God would convict them of unrighteousness, which is in their life. He's actually praying for these people who know Jesus Christ. Because look at what it says. Having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus, which exists among you.

That because you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, because he has called you to himself, because you are a part of the family of God, he's making these requests which follow based upon that, which is a two-fold sword.

Number one, we understand that this is not how we pray for non-believers because the things which follow are not applicable to non-believers. We don't need to pray that an unbeliever or a non-believer would understand the hope of God's calling because they need to first understand that God has called them.

[9 : 39] There is no hope apart from the calling of God found in Jesus Christ. We don't need to pray that God would comfort their souls. And you say, well, pastor, that's harsh. Well, there is no comfort apart from Jesus Christ.

Right? This boldness in prayers. You know, when the early church met, and we see it in the book of Acts, and I know I'm kind of plowing a little close to the corn. I understand that. I'm getting a little too close to your toes.

And it's mine too. But when the early church gathered together, they prayed and the walls were shaken. But what we find also in the prayers of Paul and even in the prayers of the early church, is they never really, they didn't soften their prayers.

You know, when I read the letters of Paul, I read about Paul handing people over to Satan. Paul calls people by name. We'll meet Alexander the coppersmith who did me much harm. I mean, he calls people by name, right?

I like that. And the reason I like that is because he's honest before God. God, I want you to work in their lives, not to bring judgment, not to bring discord, but Lord, to break their hearts.

[10 : 43] I don't want to ease the suffering they may have. I want the reality that they need to know you. But on the other side of that, for those who do know Christ, for those who have been called, for those who are in Christ, Paul has this beautiful prayer that he prays.

They may come to this understanding. You can say, well, how do we know that? Why? Well, because Paul says, I've heard of your faith, which you have in our Lord Jesus. But then he says, but it's not a hear so only, because, you know, we can hear about a lot of things.

Paul says, I've also seen it. Notice what it says. And your love for all the saints. Well, wait a minute there. I've heard of the faith which you have of our Lord and Jesus Christ and of your love for all the saints.

Jesus says, by this will all men know that you love me. Can you finish it? The love you have for one another. Right? You can say that you know Jesus Christ.

Jesus says in Matthew chapter 7, many in that day will say, Lord, Lord, and I will say, depart from me, for I never knew you. But Lord, did we not do this? And Lord, did we not do that? And Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name?

[11 : 49] And Lord, did we not do many great deeds in your name? And Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord. And Jesus says, it's not enough to call me Lord. I must be your Lord, and I know that I'm your Lord by this, by your love for all the saints.

See, genuine salvation is a displayed salvation. That is, things change. For the fruit of the Spirit is, the first one is pretty important, love.

Why? Because joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control all follow love. There is no joy without love. There is no patience without love.

There is no gentleness without love. There is no self-control without love. There is no any of those things. I keep filling in the blank. He says, because of the faith which you have in our Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

Understand this, my friend. The foundation on which Paul is praying is a certain foundation which is this. He knows he's praying for believers. And when he knows this, he can make a particular request for these believers, not only because they say so, but because their lives display what they say.

[13 : 04] My brother upstairs in the balcony gave me a book recently, and it's a book. I love the title of it, and I'm probably going to get it wrong, but it's a very offensive title, but it's on the book of James.

It says, you're either walking the walk or you're just running your mouth. It's a commentary on the book of James. And it makes a lot of sense, right? It gets you your title.

I mean, the title gets you off guard a little bit. You're either walking the walk or you're just running your mouth because that's what the book of James talks about, right? It doesn't matter what you say because faith without works is dead.

Paul here says, I know that you put your faith in Jesus Christ, and I see it because you have love for all the saints. This is the foundation for the request.

So when praying for the saints, when praying for believers, we will know based upon their fruit. If they are genuine believers, we will understand it, which will guide us in our prayers as we go before the throne, as we go before the Father and we make these requests because we see these being lived out all throughout Scripture.

[14 : 13] Now let's get to the meat of it, right? Because we know he's got a sure foundation, and upon this sure foundation, now he's going to make this grand petition. And this petition is not just for the saints that are at Ephesus. This is a petition for all the saints of all time.

This is what Paul longed for believers in Jesus Christ. I mean genuine believers in Jesus Christ who were displaying that salvation through love for the saints and love for the brethren who were living life differently, and they were called in the midst of a wicked, perverse world, and they were living in the midst of difficult times.

Paul wants them to know these things. Why? Because these things are what move us forward. These things are which enable us in a dark season. These are the things which give us the confidence we have.

And I want you to see, the first one is the favor which God has shown. Number two, the favor which God has shown. He says, for this reason, I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus, which exists among you in your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you.

By the way, I want to ask you just a real quick question. How long has it been since you've given thanks for other brothers and sisters in Christ? I mean, genuinely, before the Father praised God for other brothers and sisters in Christ.

[15 : 24] Do not cease, he says, giving thanks for you. Now, we understand this. He spent a long time in Ephesus. He was there longer than any other place, so that would be natural. Right? But this letter is also being circulated among churches, which he had never seen.

Because he says so in his letter. Some of the people he's never seen. He said, I do not cease giving thanks for you. And while making mention of you in my prayers, here's what he's asking for. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, you see this?

He united himself with those he was praying for. The God of our, our, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Right? The God of our is united. And when we're praying for other believers, if we've never met them, and if they have a similar faith in Jesus Christ, then guess what?

We are a part of a family. That's our Father. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. Here's his request. May give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him. So what is he asking? That you will come to a greater knowledge of him. That's what he wants to happen. That you would know him. You say, well, they already know him. They're saved, right?

[16 : 26] He's already said they have a genuine salvation. How much more do they need to know? A lot more. Right? Faith that leads to salvation is the knowledge of who he is. The fullness of knowledge of who he is is sanctification.

That's why the more we know of God, the more is changed of us. We know him unto salvation, and then we know him unto sanctification. I believe, Scripture teaches, rightfully so, instantaneous salvation.

That is, you are saved in a moment. That when the Father draws you, he reveals the Son to you, he breaks your heart, he calls you to himself. In that moment, you are instantaneously saved.

You are saved in a moment. And I believe in progressive sanctification. That is, you are not yet what you should be. But he will make you what you ought to be. And you press forward until that day.

Well, how do you press forward until that day? The more you know of the God who's called you to himself, the more is changed about you. Read about it when you open up the Old Testament, right? When they're going out of Egypt, they're like, man, that was a great God who did a great number of miracles.

[17 : 29] There were ten miracles. He defeated every Egyptian God. That's why there's ten, by the way. He picked on the Egyptian gods with a lowercase g, and he showed that he was greater than those gods over there.

And now he's let us out. And then they get between a rock and a river, or a rock and a hard place. And, well, we don't know if the God who's greater than the gods of Egypt is great enough to get us through here. And then he parts the Red Sea.

And they walk through the Red Sea. God says, well, I'm greater than that. So then they go through the Red Sea. The longer they're with him, right? And they're moving. And then they come to some really bitter water, some water that's going to die. They're going to die if they drink it.

And they're like, but we don't know if he's a God to make the water clean. And they throw a stick in the water, and the water gets clean. So now he's the God of the waters. And they go a little bit farther through the wilderness. You want me to go all the way through the Old Testament, right? And then they become hungry. And they're like, we need something to eat. And he goes, well, here's some manna. And so now he's a God who provides food. And then they go a little bit further. They're like, we really want some meat. And he goes, okay, here's some quail. And the further they go with God, the more they know of God.

[18 : 25] And then the more they know of God, the more God expects them to change. Because that's sanctification. When we were going through the book of Exodus, we said it took God a moment to get his people out of Egypt.

It took 40 years for him to get Egypt out of his people. That's why it was 40 years later that they go into the promised land. He had to sanctify them.

Some of us are right there on the other side of the Jordan River. And he has called us out of Egypt. But we're just entering the desert season because now he's going to get Egypt out of us. But the further he brings us, I mean, that's why when we open up the Old Testament, we see that he's always, there's these names of God.

Pay attention to that. Every time there's this great happening, God reveals another name of himself to them. And he is revealing himself to them. And they get to know him more. And all of a sudden he expects more from them.

Because now they are understanding him more and more and more and more. And the more they understand him, the greater they are progressing. Because this is changing them.

[19 : 25] Friend, listen. If you have been saved, praise God. Glory to the highest. But that's just the beginning of understanding our Father, which art in heaven, right?

That's just the beginning of the knowledge. We don't stop at salvation. We start at salvation. And after salvation, we need to say, I need to know more of this God, which has called me to himself. And then he begins to work in it. This is why discipleship is so important, by the way. We don't disciple people so that they will be saved. We disciple people who have been saved. You say, well, where do you get that, Pastor?

Well, Matthew 28, there's this thing called the Great Commission. And Jesus says to go forth and baptize them. And the baptism, that's a sign of salvation, right? That's obedience after salvation. You're not saved because you're baptized.

You're baptized because you're saved. We don't want to get into that. And it says, and teaching them all things. Last time I read it, teaching followed baptism. That's discipleship.

[20 : 25] That's why small groups are important. That's why being with brothers and sisters in Christ are important. That's why learning from the word is important. That's why these things matter. And we see this. He's praying. He said that you may know him, the knowledge of him, the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

By the way, you don't know God because you think things better or you read greater books. You know God through revelation. He is asking that God would reveal himself to you.

So you may be reading a book. You may be reading. You may be walking with other brothers and sisters in Christ. And God may be speaking to you and revealing more of himself. But any knowledge we have of God is directly connected to the revelation from God.

That is, he has to reveal himself to us. Now we go on. I told you this is the meat. We're beyond the foundation, right? So what is it that he wants God to reveal to them? I pray, verse 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

That makes no sense. I don't have eyes in my heart. In the New Testament, actually in all the scripture, the seat of emotions is always the heart. Because sometimes in the Old Testament it refers to the bowels of your emotions.

[21 : 29] It's kind of like a gut level. I just feel it in my gut. Some of us make gut level decisions based upon, you know, how God has wired you. Some of you are very analytical and you think through things and that's great.

Some of us, whatever my gut tells me is what I'm going with. I'm a gut level guy, right? So whatever I feel, that's how I go. And sometimes it gets me wrong. Sometimes I mess up. Sometimes I should think through things intellectually a little bit more.

But in scripture, the seat of emotions is always the heart or the bowels right here in the center of your being. Because that's where God made you. And it speaks of the eyes of the heart being opened.

Because the reality is, is that knowledge of God is a heart issue, not a mind issue. There are many, many, many theologians that are people who study the knowledge of God. There are many theologians who are non-believers.

That's why I caution you that when you look something up and it says a theologian says this, that does not always mean anything. That just means that's someone who studies the attributes of God.

[22 : 28] But if he's a non-believing theologian, then he is speaking with, he or she is speaking with intellectual knowledge, not heart knowledge. And heart knowledge is what scripture says is the most important.

Because many things that the mind is convinced of never touches the heart. We see that. So he is praying that God would reveal it to your heart.

And this is what you need to have settled in your heart. So if you have it settled in your heart, maybe your mind will catch up with it. Because it's a heart issue. And you say, well, I don't think that's right. I don't believe that's right. Those are all mind things, right?

What Paul says is you need to get this set in your heart. And when you get it set in your heart, then your mind can catch up later. And you will need to know these things. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Now let's get to it.

What does he want? The riches, the favor which God has shown you. If you are in Christ, get ready to be blown away about how much favor God has poured out upon you. Because it says it right here, so that you will know what is the hope of his calling.

[23 : 26] That you will know. Your heart needs to be assured of the hope of his calling. Now, we see this many times in scripture. You say, well, okay, I get that.

No, I don't think we really get it. Because a lot of times in scripture, this word hope is used, and we read it the same way we define it today. There are many, many children here today. There are many that are back there in the back, and they're hoping they get some things for Christmas.

And they're hoping these things will happen. And they're hoping that maybe they'll get that or get this. And some of you adults are hoping something will happen. And you're living with a hope, so, well, hope in scriptures, particularly in the New Testament, is not hope as we define it.

Because hope in scripture is this. Now, it's a long definition, but it's a good one. It is a confident expectation of things that are certain to come. So you need to know what is the confident expectation of things that are certain to come.

And the joy that that brings to you. So in Christ, we are not hoping like we're hoping to get something, or we're hoping that tomorrow's weather is better, or we're hoping.

[24 : 31] In Christ, we have a hope of eternity because we have a confident expectation that it will be there. And we have a confident expectation that what he has said to us is true.

And the hope of his calling is not doubtful, right? So when he calls us to himself, and he called us before the foundations of the world were laid, and he has adopted us into his family, he doesn't give us a hope-so mentality like, well, maybe I'll make it to heaven.

No, he gives us this confident expectation where we can stand up in the face of the enemy and say, in Christ, I'm going to be there. In Christ, I'm going to be in his presence. In Christ, I'm accepted before holy God.

In Christ, I am forgiven. In Christ, I am renewed. In Christ, I am redeemed. See how that helps. Because if you say, well, I hope so, Satan. And he's going to take that hope-so and make a seed of doubt planted in your mind.

And he's not really, Satan doesn't care about your heart because everything he gets you to do, he starts in your mind. And he puts that seed of doubt in your mind. And that seed of doubt in your mind, if it's not overruled by a certainty in your heart, is allowed to germinate a little bit.

[25 : 40] And then as the book of James says, it begins to bear fruit, and that fruit is sin. And you're led away by these temptations and these lusts of the mind. And your mind is not being transformed and renewed, as Paul says in Romans chapter 12.

And all these things are happening because in your mind, you're not confident. If your heart is set on a confident expectation, as Paul is asking, of the hope that is set before you in Christ, then you are certain to live with biblical, bold assurance, even in the face of temptation.

The reason so many fall, the reason so many stumble, the reason so many backslide, is they're not resting their faith on a confident expectation. They're hoping, in our terminology, maybe doubtful that the decision they made, because it focuses on them, and the prayer they prayed, they're doubtful that it's going to do it, but if there's a chance, they're going to do it anyway.

We don't live that way. In Christ, we say, I didn't do anything. He called me to himself. And since he called me and he chose me, see, now we're taking salvation out of the realm of man's responsibility.

And I know for some of you, it makes your palms sweat, and it makes your brains kind of smoke a little bit, and it makes you a little nervous, and you want to kind of give me some terminologies, but we're just going to stay biblical here, right? When you keep salvation inside man's realm, and it's a prayer you prayed, and it's a decision you made, and it's a choice that you decided upon, and you're maybe doubtful that everything you did is going to get you there, that's like saying that maybe you can be good enough.

[27 : 06] But when you put salvation in the realm of God and say, well, God called me, God chose me, and God adopted me, then there's a certainty because I've yet to see God fail to do what God says he's going to do, right?

And so if he chose me, called me, and adopted me, then there's this confident expectation that what God has started, he will finish. I've seen it every time in Scripture. I've not seen a single thing in Scripture that God got halfway through something and said, well, that didn't work, and he abandoned it.

I haven't seen that. I've not met it anywhere in history. I've not met it anywhere, right? But we know with certainty, and Paul wants us to understand in our heart, listen, if your mind can't grasp it, then just pray that God would convince your heart of it, that what he has done, he will do.

What he has declared finished on the cross, it is finished. He really meant it for you, and he really meant it for me. And because there's this hope or this expectation that these things are going to go about, I'm now free to live a guiltless life.

I'm now free to live free of shame and free, you know, people may say, well, you fail all the time.

You're right. But then I have to remind them, Paul made this great statement. Therefore, there now is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, right?

[28 : 19] How do I know that? Because he says so. There's this expectation that it's going to be, and when I'm living with an expectation, hey, if I told you that when you walked outside, I don't know what would be really good to you.

I don't know. But if I told you that sitting right outside that door, there was something waiting on you that you really wanted. I mean, you had a longing for. I could say new car and somebody said, well, I already got a new car. I could say money and you said, well, I got all the money I could use.

Or I could say whatever. But whatever is the desire of your heart, if I told you I have it for you, it's right outside that door. When I got done, you couldn't wait to go outside that door and get what was yours.

But the desire of your heart is to have fellowship with God because you were created to worship and adore him and to serve him all of your days. That's the desire of your heart. You're just trying to fill it with everything else. And I'm telling you that in Christ, it's waiting on you on the other side of the door called death.

And we ought to be running with an expectation, not trying to die, but with the joy that is set before us in Christ because there's a hope on the other side. And it changes how we live.

[29 : 22] And it changes how we behave in the day today. Because over there, there's going to be an encounter. Over there, I'm meeting my Savior. I don't think I'm going to meet him.

I know I'm going to meet him. And I know I'm going to be in the throne of heaven. I know there will be a day where I cast my crowns at his feet. I know there will be a day where I proclaim with myriads upon myriads in heaven, Worthy, worthy, worthy are you, O Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the Lord.

I know it's coming. And since I know it's coming, I'm going to live today different than I should if I didn't. See, he prays that we understand this favor. God has given us a hope.

That's just the first favor, by the way. That one's astounding. Look at the second one. He says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of his calling. Look at this. Because there are threefold prayers, but two of them are the favor that God has shown us.

And the third one we'll get to in just a moment. He says, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? He said, oh yeah, we're back to speaking about inheritance.

[30 : 26] We are, but slow down and read it again. What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance? I hope your translation has H capitalized right there.

I know many today don't do the pronouns, but should. That his is not speaking about you. It's not speaking about me. That's God. So let's read it as it is presented.

What are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance? In the saints. You know the favor that God has bestowed upon you? You are his inheritance.

He who created it all. He who spoke it all into existence. He who owns a cattle on a thousand hilltops, the scripture says. The saints are his inheritance.

And it tells us in scripture that he is enriched through us. You say, well, how can I give God anything he doesn't already have?

[31 : 29] Or how can I make him better? You can't. But what you understand is that this is how God sees you, right? A holy God sees you as the favorable inheritance which he's calling to himself.

Because so many of us have this picture, rightfully so, that apart from Christ, we are not worthy to be in the presence of God. Apart from Christ, we cannot stand in the presence of a holy God. We're like everyone else in the scripture.

We fall on our face and we say, we're worthy. We're like Isaiah that says, woe is me for I'm an unclean man and I live among unclean people. We're like John on the island of Patmos and we fall on our feet.

We do all those things and rightfully so and we should. But then God comes along beside us and says, but in Christ, I've adopted you in my family and in Christ, you are my inheritance. And in Christ, I love you and I value you so much that I am enriched because I'm bringing you to myself. Have you stopped to consider this reality? There's only one time in scripture that ever says that God rejoices in the death of anyone. There's only one time in scripture where it says that God brought destruction upon people, where God judged them for their sins, where God condemned them, where they were chastened.

[32 : 43] There's one time in scripture where it says that God rejoices in the death. It says he rejoices in the death of the righteous. Why? Because they're in his inheritance.

Heaven is enriched by their presence. There he is. They mean something. Friend, listen to me. In Christ, you and I have worth to the God of glory.

Look at the favor he's bestowed upon us. That we enrich heaven by our presence. Many, many years ago, my wife is a great pastor's wife.

I was a young pastor and a little bit more fire and brimstone in my 20s when I started pastoring. And she said, you know, I read somewhere there are two ways that you can react to when people come into the room. So really, she said yes.

And this is where she started kicking the pastor in the gut a little bit. And she said, you can respond one of two ways. You can either say, here I am, or you can say, there you are. When somebody walks into the room, you can either make it all about you or you can make it all about them.

[33 : 50] How you respond to when people walk into the room is how they're going to respond back to you. But let's take that to the utmost level. That when God calls his people to himself, he looks at us.

I mean, God. Holy God says, there you are. My inheritance. Come and be gathered around the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Lord God Almighty looks at you that way? Have you lived your life under such shame that you think he never would?

In Christ, he does. We are his inheritance. What favor he's put upon us. Right? What favor he has bestowed upon us in Christ.

And Paul wants us to understand this. That God goes, there you are. You're mine. Come back into my presence. What a joy.

[34 : 51] And how that changes. See the foundation of the request, the favor which God has shown. Number three. And I know we're going to make our way through it. Number three. The fullness of God's power available. The fullness of God's power.

The third aspect of this prayer. That Paul moves on from favor. He says, okay, so you understand. Maybe your heart grasps the reality. That there is a confident expectation of things to come. Maybe your heart can grasp the reality. That God looks upon you as his glorious, enriching inheritance. But how in the world do you ever have the ability to live life according to it?

The good news that Paul has that he's praying is that there's more than ample power with God to enable you to do it. Right? That God has enough power directed toward us to empower us to live according to the reality he's already declared.

He says, verse 18. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of his calling. And what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And look at this in verse 19. And what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe?

[35 : 56] Where's his power? Toward us. Right? Toward us who believe. The surpassing greatness of his power. Paul goes on this rant here about the power of God.

And he begins to use words in scripture that are only used to describe God's power. Never man's power. He uses the word dynamos, which is what we get the word dynamite from. By the way, that's the same power that took the stone from the grave.

He uses other Greek words that never have application to man. It's only just the power of God. They're divine displays of power. But he just begins to speak of this power. Do you want to know how much power God has toward you?

That is to empower you through the indwelling presence of his spirit. To enable you. Say, well, I can't do it. Not in yourself. But in Christ you can. Because there is more than enough power. Look at what it says. The surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe.

These are in accordance. You say, well, what kind of power does he have? These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might. By the way, that's the wording there in the Greek that only can speak of God. The working of the strength of his might which he brought about in Christ.

[36 : 58] When he raised him from the dead and seated him in his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion in every name that is named. Not only in this age, but also in the age to come. When you open up the Old Testament.

The Old Testament authors want to speak of the power of God. They use one of two things in the Old Testament to really display the power of God. Do you want to know how powerful God is? The first one is creation. You want to know how powerful God is?

Well, as we saw last week in the book of Job. God created something out of nothing. Hung it on nothing and told it to stay there and it did. God calls forth the stars by name and every one of them is there. God puts every star in his place.

He rolls out the heavens like a scroll. So there's all this declaration that you see God's power in creation. We don't see that in the New Testament. We'll get into that in just a minute. The second one is the Exodus event.

You want to know how powerful God is? God chose his people and called them out of Egypt and brought them into the promised land. He wasn't just powerful enough to take them out. He was powerful enough to take them out and bring them in, right? He completed the task.

[37 : 54] That's how powerful God is in the Old Testament. It's always look at creation or look at the Exodus. When we go to the New Testament, any time an author of the New Testament wants to tell us how powerful God is, he always points to the one place, the resurrection.

You want to see how powerful God is? He'd go to the tomb that's empty. You want to see how powerful God is? Go and look at the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. Why? Because what he did at the resurrection and ascension was greater than what he did when he spoke it all into existence.

What he did at the resurrection and ascension was greater than what he did in the Exodus event. Those were foreshadows of his power to be on full display at the resurrection and the ascension. Because what he says here, the power of God is powerful enough not only to raise Jesus from the dead, but also to raise him up to the heavenlies and seat him at the right hand of the Father. This would be your right. This is my right hand. Right hand of the Father, far above all principalities and powers of the air, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. So he not only raised him to life.

[38 : 55] I mean, Jesus raised other people to life, right? Lazarus came back to life. The widow son from Nain came back to life. There are other people that came back to life. But Jesus was raised to life, ascended on high, sat down at the right hand of the Father, and put his feet upon the footstool of the earth because he has dominion, everlasting dominion over all things.

And the power that did that is the power that is available to you. He put him above all things. You say, well, he created all things.

Right, but then he put him above all things. He put him above all that he created. And the power of God that can do that is the same power that's available to us. You say, well, where is it? Well, I'm glad you asked because he tells us.

How do I get that power? It's a good question. It has a great answer. And put all things in subjection under his feet. Who's his? Jesus Christ, right? So he put everything under his feet.

Whose feet? Jesus' feet. Paul's going to come back to this, by the way, in the book of Ephesians.

So we need to pay attention to this. It'll come back up later. And I'm almost done. And then after he put everything under his feet, he gave him as head over all things to the church.

[40 : 04] So let's make it a clear line here. He who has everything under his feet is now been made head of the church.

That is, the one who has all power is directly connected to the church, which is his body. The fullness of him who fills all in all.

So it's a good way of saying it in layman's term that the only way the power of God is displayed on earth is through the body of Christ, which is known as the church.

It is the power of God on display toward us in connection with the church. You say, well, you're saying the church has all the power.

No, I'm saying he who is the head of the church has all the power. And he who is the head of the church has so ordained to work through the church. You say, well, how can the church help me in my problems?

[41 : 05] How can the church help me in my struggles? You want to be a better parent? Then you need the church. You want to be a better spouse? Then you need the church. You want to be a better? You need to stop saying, then you need the church. And by need the church, I mean you don't just need to attend the church.

You don't need just to sit in the church. I mean you need the church. You need to be the church. Sinclair Ferguson wrote a book called Devoted to God's Church. In the very first chapter, he said many things which would upset a number of people.

By the way, that's modern books. That's not an old book. I know I quote a lot of old books. But this is a modern book. He says it this way. It is simply not possible to live a God-centered, Christ-centered, Spirit-led life unless my life is also church-centered.

Because anything that is of central importance to the Lord Jesus Christ must also be central importance to the Christian. You ever thought about it that way? If the church is so important to Christ, shouldn't it be so important to us?

It's not something we play. It's not something we do. It's his body. That's why it's so important. You say, oh, pastor, that got real close to home.

[42 : 22] It didn't make me real comfortable. He died for the church. He's calling the church back to himself. It's the wedding supper of the Lamb. The church is the bride of Christ. Every promise, every connection.

The only thing Jesus said he was going to build was the church. Listen, Jesus did not promise Peter. Didn't promise Peter. Didn't say, Peter, I'm going to build a great ministry for you. No, he said, I'm going to build my church. Everything connected in Scripture flows through the church. Is the church perfect? No, but the head of the church is perfect. And a bunch of imperfect people unite under a perfect head.

And the one another's in Scripture, we encourage one another, we challenge one another, we rebuke one another, we correct one another, we love one another, we support one another, we carry one another. The one another's in Scripture are all connected to the church.

The reason so many believers, I'm just going to say this and I'll be done. So many believers today see so little of power of God displayed in their life is because they have so little of the church as important.

[43 : 26] I'm not saying that because I'm a pastor. It's not really about my kingdom, and I've told you that before. The reason the underground church thrives, you go in places where the gospel doors are closed, and you find genuine believers strong in the faith, is because they need one another.

And they connect to one another. And they don't let the little concerns and the little problems of life get between them because they know without one another they're going to die.

And God manifests His glory among their presence. And God gives them the strength as they fellowship together to live another day, to walk another day, to be corrected, to be rebuked, to be challenged.

It's not going to be very popular, but in the easy believism of the Western world, when we don't like it and it offends us, we leave it. And we go find something that is more pleasing to us. Paul says, that's the tickling of the ears, which many will seek after.

Now, if it's a doctrinal issue, we shouldn't have anything to do with it. If it's doctrinal, theologically correct, then we say, oh, God, I'm having a hard time with that, so I'm going to lean on my brothers and sisters in Christ.

[44 : 44] See, the church is important. I believe it with all of my being. Believe it. Not just because it's my vocation.

Hey, if I'm going to be honest with you, Satan has tempted me more in vocational ministry to leave the church than he ever did before I entered vocational ministry. That is, it's harder to be a member of a church while being a pastor than it was while being a member.

Because your feelings can get hurt, you can get upset, things can bother you, you say, well, I can go do something else. And if I wasn't committed to the church in the flesh, I would have.

I just would have. Why? Because this is where the power of God is displayed toward us. Where two or more are together, I am there as well.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this day. Thank you for your faithfulness and goodness towards us. God, we can't comprehend the favor you bestow upon us that we have an assurance of things to come.

[45 : 52] Lord, you love us with incomprehensible love. Thank you for that favor and we thank you for the church. God, thank you for the display of it, even this morning, as we see how knitted together we are that we need one another.

I thank you for my brothers and sisters in Christ. I thank you for what each one means to me. Lord, I pray that you would encourage us as we leave here to grow closer together for the glory of God.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen.