

Ephesians 1:15-23

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Date: 03 February 2023

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[0 : 00] What a joy it is to be with you this morning. I bring with me the greetings, the love and the prayers of the congregation at London City Presbyterian Church.

It's been great to get to know your minister, Paul, as I've settled into life in London. As I was thinking about coming here this morning, I was thinking, what would be good for a congregation I've not met?

And what would be good for all of our souls together? And so I thought, what about the Apostle Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus? You know, Paul planted a church in Ephesus.

We don't believe that this is the congregation he's writing to here in Ephesians chapter 1. This is most likely a circular letter for the presbytery, the churches in the area of Ephesus.

And if you know anything about the letter of Ephesians, you'll know Paul is writing to tell them about the glorious gospel of grace. The first three chapters unpack the theology of grace.

[1 : 07] And the final three chapters apply it to our lives as individuals, as families, as workers. It's an amazing letter that unpacks the amazing theology of the gospel.

And as we come to this section in chapter 1, there's that breathtaking beginning where Paul says in verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

Have you ever wondered, what are the spiritual blessings that are yours in Christ, who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, Paul unpacks them.

Verse 4, You are chosen before He laid the foundation of the earth to be holy and blameless. In love, He predestined you to be adopted as His sons and daughters in His Son.

You have redemption, the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus. You have been lavished with the riches of God's grace.

[2 : 20] And in verses 13 and 14, He says, He has filled us with His Spirit, the deposit and the guarantee of our inheritance. Now, it's in light of this amazing beginning that Paul the pastor says, let's pray.

And he prays that the eyes of the heart of these Christians in Ephesus would be wide open to what they have in Jesus. And so, brothers and sisters, this morning, that's what I want us to focus our attention on.

Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus. Before we begin, let's just bow our heads and let's just pray and ask for God's help. Lord, may the words of my mouth, may the meditation of all of our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in your presence.

And we pray this in the name of our rock and our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Have you ever heard the name William Randolph Hearst?

He was the Rupert Murdoch of the early 20th century. He was a media mogul. He actually, his company put into way the way that newspapers are published.

[3 : 41] And as a result, he became a multi-millionaire. And one of his favorite pastimes was collecting antiques. He loved to come to Europe and collect 14th, 15th, 16th century paintings.

He loved to come to Britain for grandfather clocks. He would visit Syria for rugs, China for vases. You name it, he had it. He had many mansions. He had acquired so many antiques that he literally had to build storehouses to keep all that he had.

One occasion, he was sitting in his mansion and he was reading a sort of art dealer's magazine. And it mentioned a painting that everyone was searching for.

And he thought, I want that. So he picked up his phone and he phoned one of his agents and he said, Listen, I'll give you all the money, all the time it takes, but you're going to get me this painting.

I want it for my collection. So offset his agent. Days turned into weeks. Weeks turned into months. And then finally, there was a knock at the door of Mr. Hearst.

[4 : 49] It was his agent. And he was beaming with a smile. So Mr. Hearst said to him, Did you manage to get this piece of art for me? His agent said, Yes. And Mr. Hearst, as he was bringing them into the home, said, Now tell me, where did you find it?

His agent said, Well, sir, you are never going to believe this. I've spent a lot of your money. I've taken up a lot of your time. When all along, that piece of art was in one of your storehouses. That true story is a modern parable of what you and I are like as Christians. You see, in our union to Jesus Christ, we possess every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm. But like Mr. Hearst, we sometimes fail to take the time to enjoy and appreciate what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And why is Pastor Paul so conscious that believers, the eyes of our heart often get filled with the worries of life and the anxieties of life, praise for these Christians, that the eyes of their heart would be wide open to three things.

[6 : 05] Look down at verse 16. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that is opened, that you may know, number one, what is the hope to which He has called you?

Number two, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints? And then number three, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe?

So three points this morning, that the eyes of our hearts may be wide open to our hope in Christ, to our riches in Christ, and to the power that is ours in Christ.

So first of all, hope. And let me begin by asking you this question. Those of you who are Christians, do you live as a person of hope?

Do the eyes of your heart see the hope to which you have been called? Or have you taken this amazing blessing, this amazing treasure that is yours in Christ, and have you stored it away in the storehouse of your heart and head, never to consider it afresh again?

[7 : 31] Well, Pastor Paul prays here, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which you have been called. Do you know what biblical hope is? It's different from worldly hope, if I can put it like that, which is wishful thinking, I hope it's not going to rain today, I hope it's going to be gloriously sunny.

Biblical hope is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result. Biblical hope is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result.

Christ means what He says. He says what He means. He makes promises and keeps promises. We've just been celebrating Easter. Easter is where we see our hope in all of its glory.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He said He would come, live for us, die for us, and be raised for our justification. Because He has finished the work, because He's been victorious over death, all who trust in Him have that future hope.

We will never die but live forevermore. Our hope as Christians is rooted in the past work of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. And it impacts our future, because we know where we're going.

[8 : 52] But Paul would also, and Peter, in his writings say, our hope in Christ ought to impact us also in the here and now. So the apostle Peter speaks about our living hope.

A hope that is alive, that animates us, that energizes us, because we trust in a living Savior. When I think about illustrating what hope is, biblical hope versus worldly hope, if I can put it like that, I think of when I was 18 years old.

I used to work in a pharmacy. It puts the chemist on a Saturday. And across the road from the chemist I worked in, my late grandfather was a resident in a nursing home.

And so on my lunch break, I'd go across to the nursing home. And I'm sure you've all been in old folks' home. When you walk into the lounge, it's always sweltering hot. And you've got all these old buddies, and they're sitting around tables playing dominoes, or doing crosswords, or watching the TV.

And I'd often find my grandfather nestled in among some of the old ladies. So I'd pull up a chair, and they would see that I worked in the chemist, and so they would engage me in conversation.

[10 : 01] Oh, you work in the chemist? Well, do you know, when I was a little girl, that chemist used to be a flower shop? And it turned out that they'd grown up in this village, and so they would

then go on and tell me, I went to school along the road, and they would just begin telling me their life story.

And I married John, and John was an engineer, and we've had five children. John passed away many years ago. And our five children, only one of them lives nearby.

The rest are all across the world. We've many grandchildren, some that we've never met, because my children don't come and visit anymore. I've been in here for many years, Andy.

In fact, Andy, as I think of you working in the chemist, I keep boots in business because I'm in so much medication. And you know, when I was speaking to them, you know, the feeling that I felt inside, as they walked me through their life story, and they even brought it right up to the present, was a feeling of hopelessness.

They could never speak about the future. Contrast that with those moments where a carer would clock that I had come to see my grandfather, who was a retired minister, and they would come over, they would say, listen, you should spend some time with your grandfather.

[11:14] So they would wheel him into his room. He was an old man in his mid-80s, frail and fragile. And every time I visited him, he would never let me leave without reading the Bible and praying.

He could barely lift his head, but every time he did lift his head to look at me in the eye, he had this glint of excitement, and he loved to say, now, Andrew, I cannot wait to see my Savior.

I cannot wait to get to glory. That, my friends, is a picture of hope. That is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result.

And if you are united to Christ, that is what you possess in Christ. A living hope. Based on the past work of Jesus that has secured your future, but should impact you in the here and now.

We have a hope, says the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 5, that does not, that will not put us to shame. Have you ever put your hope in a person, a loved one, maybe a parent, maybe a sibling, maybe a child, maybe a colleague, a boss, a pastor, and they've let you down?

[12:41] Have you ever put your hope in circumstances, wishing, hoping, they'll all work out for the best, and it's let you down? Here's the thing, if you place your hope firmly and securely in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will never, ever let you down.

He means what He says, He says what He means, and you can trust Him for all that He has done for you. I wonder, do you take this blessing that you have in Christ, have you stored it away in the storehouse of your heart?

Well, it's Pastor Paul's prayer that the eyes of our hearts would be wide open to the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

You know, right now in 2023, nationally, globally, there is a lot of hopelessness. Locally, I suspect, Ealing is just like the neighborhood I now live in.

There's a lot of people without hope. And as Christians, we have a deep and unshakable hope because of what Christ has done. And so, brothers and sisters, we've got every reason to make known that hope.

[13:55] Those of you in this church who've got children and you're raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord, your confidence is not in what you do. Your confidence ought to be in the God of hope.

The God who has made promises to His people and loves to make good on His promises to His people. We have an incredible God who wants the eyes of our hearts to be wide open to that which is ours in Jesus Christ.

second thing Paul prays for is that the eyes of our hearts would see the riches that we have in Jesus Christ. Just look at what he goes on to say. What are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints?

And that begs the question, what does Paul mean when he says riches? Well, he's just made mention of them back in verse 7. He says, we have been lavished with the riches of God's grace. That's God's undeserved love and favor. And He's lavished it on us with all wisdom and insight. My professor at seminary used to speak about, you know the verse in Corinthians where Paul says that God's grace is sufficient for us?

[15:04] He used to say that God's grace is tailor-made for us, like a tailor-made suit. When God bestows grace on His people, it's done with wisdom and insight. He knows how broken, He knows how flawed, He knows how sinful we are, and He gives grace upon grace perfectly for us.

Now, the grace of God is most clearly seen in the gift that is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And brothers and sisters, whether we realize it or not, we are rich beyond anything we can imagine because we have been given the most incredible gift in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that many of us as Christians know how spiritually bankrupt we are. We look in and we see this in. But I think that many of us as Christians don't realize that when you trust in Christ, when you're united with Christ, your bank account, spiritually speaking, is filled with the infinite wealth of the undeserved, unmerited love of God.

such is the grace and the mercy of God that we wake up every morning and we receive daily grace and mercy for each day because great is His faithfulness. You know, in the run-up to this coronation, I've been reading a little bit about the royal family again, and it was quite striking to note that King Charles, on the passing of his mother's death, inherited all of our estates and all the assets are worth billions.

And into his bank accounts has come hundreds of millions. And upon him coming king, he will receive gifts from other royal families, relations, as he takes up this role.

[16:54] And as I was reading these articles and learning more of this, I had the thought cross my mind, why in the world was I not born into that family? And then, I had to remind myself that I have been born again into the family where I have a glorious inheritance that cannot perish, spoil, or fade because it's kept in heaven for me and it is shielded by God's power.

And I am written into the will of Almighty God. and I am an heir of Christ. And all that is Christ's is mine.

He is mine. And that is the most incredible inheritance. And I am His. And so are you if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul here prays that these Ephesian Christians, that all Christians, we would have the eyes of our hearts wide open to the riches and the inheritance we have in Christ.

What would the church of Jesus Christ look like if we stopped pretending that we were poor because we're not poor? We're rich in the love of God. And we started living as we are.

Maybe you're in a difficult marriage. Maybe you've got difficult children. Maybe you've got difficult neighbors. Maybe you've got a difficult boss or colleague. Do you know that God is so gracious to you?

[18:28] He lavishes you each and every day with love that you don't deserve in order that you who realize that you need grace can show grace to those that you live with, work with, serve with.

In the economy of grace, God makes us trophies of grace that we might be those who are so rich and overflowing with our riches that we want to share it with everyone. The most glorious privilege of standing here today is that I have the privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches that are ours in Jesus Christ.

And the most glorious privilege we all have as Christians is that we get to share that as we live our lives. What would the church of Jesus Christ be like if we started to realize what we have in Christ? How rich we are in Christ? You know, you will inherit the earth if you're a believer. It's your inheritance. Blessed are the pure spirit for they shall inherit the earth.

The glory of the gospel is that Christ's inheritances are inherited. So, are you like Mr. Hearst? You take the treasure, the blessing you have, you store it away, you forget you've got it.

[19:42] Paul prays here that the eyes of your hearts would be wide open to see the riches that are yours in Christ. Now, I would say that hope in some ways is enough.

I'd say that the riches and inheritance is enough. Paul doesn't stop. He says, there's one more thing I pray that these Christians would have the eyes of their hearts wide open to and it says power.

Look at verse 19, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe? And do you see how he layers word upon word there? He says, immeasurable greatness of his power.

Every single person who is in Christ has immeasurably great power at work within them. This is the most mind-boggling truth that we'll ever try and understand that if you're a believer, if you're united to Christ this morning, the third person of the Trinity has taken residence in your life.

In chapter 1, verse 13 and 14, he says that the deposit and the guarantee of our inheritance is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3, verse 20, in his benediction, now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine and according to the power that is at work within us.

[21 : 13] So try and get your minds around this, right? God, the third person of the Trinity, is within you and is powerfully at work within you.

So I know that as a Christian, we face temptation day in, day out, and we find ourselves succumbing time and time again. And I know that we can feel in a sinful world powerless, incredibly weak.

And Satan would definitely want us to believe that that is true of us and there is a true sense that that is true of us. But, brother, sister, the Scriptures tell us we are indwell with the Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and we are empowered to live the Christian life. So look at verse 19, what he says, and what is the immeasurable greatness his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Here, Paul illustrates this is the power of God that is at work within you. It's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It's resurrection power. It's the power of the new life in Christ.

[22 : 41] And those who are united to Christ, the living, risen Christ who is seated above all powers and dominion and authority is him who we live in relationship with.

This is the blessing that is ours in him. And it is truly mind-bending and astonishing because when I look at my Christian life, I don't sometimes feel as if almighty God is living within me and is powerfully at work in me.

But here's the thing, it's not about my feelings, it's about the facts of the gospel. When I was a minister in Cumbernauld, one of the great privileges I had was shepherding the old, preparing them for glory.

I sat next to many a hospital bed and many next to an old saint on their deathbed and they were weak and they were fragile and they were fading away, outwardly wasting away.

You know what was glorious? I learned more from them than they ever learned from me because inwardly they were being renewed day by day and they had something that money can't buy, they had something that you can't have unless God gives you and that is they had the power and the love and the grace to share with me to say that Christ is king and we're going to be with him.

[24 : 13] Paul prays here that the eyes of our hearts would be wide open to the blessing of God's power that is in us. Now, as we bring this to a conclusion, let me give you an illustration that might tie all this together.

I grew up just south of Glasgow but about 100 years ago, north of Glasgow, there was a little boy called John. When John was a little boy, he stumbled into a field and he heard a field preacher and he became a Christian.

And John grew up and he became a Baptist minister. He married and him and his wife had a little girl and then sadly his wife passed away.

And so John's sister moved in to his man so she could help him pastor. And John was a very gifted preacher, so much so that he got an invitation to go and preach in America at Moody Church in Chicago.

And so John bought three tickets, one for him, one for his sister, one for his daughter, for the maiden voyage of the Titanic. You know the story better than I do.

[25 : 26] It crashed into the iceberg and the unsinkable ship would be sunk. But it is recorded for us what happened when the alarm was raised.

Pastor John Harper was heard saying this, all women, children, and unconverted men aboard the lifeboats now.

All Christian men stand back. This ship is going down. Brothers, we are going up.

Do you know what that is? That is a man whose eyes of his heart were wide open to the hope he had in Christ. Pastor John Harper, as the Titanic was beginning to plummet into the icicle trees in the Atlantic Ocean, was heard shouting to the orchestra aboard the ship, play nearer, my God, to thee.

That is hope. That is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result. He jumped overboard, landed into the water, and he had his life jacket on and so he managed to grab a piece of debris and whilst he was in the water, the man who had been converted by a field preacher became a sea preacher because he started to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ there in the freezing cold water.

[27 : 03] How so? By the power of the Holy Spirit. This was his deathbed moment and yet he felt enabled to proclaim the unsearchable riches that were in Christ.

There was a man who jumped overboard, he didn't have a life jacket, he sunk for a moment, came to the top and Pastor John Harper was able to grab him, bring him onto the piece of debris, he took off his life jacket and put it on him and in that sense he saved this man's life and he turned to the man and he said, have you believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ?

And I can't believe this but there around the night they had a gospel conversation and that man said no and Pastor John Harper said, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

Pastor John Harper went to glory that night. Six years later there was a reunion of all of the survivors of the Titanic in Ontario, Canada and a man stood up and he said, I am the last convert, Pastor John Harper.

That night in the freezing ice cold water he proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ to me and I was saved.

[28 : 15] That friends is because John Harper lived with his eyes wide open to the hope, to the riches and he lived his life in dependence upon the power of Almighty God.

And as believers today Paul's prayer for us is that you and I would not take the blessings that we have in our union with Christ and store them away in the storehouse of our heart but instead that the eyes of our heart would be wide open to that which is ours.

If you've never trusted in Christ believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. You'll experience a love that you don't deserve, a love that you'd never merit. You'll be given an inheritance that's so glorious.

You'll be written in the will of God. If you are a believer in Christ as you step into this week you've got grace for your marriage, grace for your children, grace for those you work with.

Grace to share in the gospel. You've got hope. Live as a person of hope in a world filled with hopelessness and do so all independent confidence on the power of almighty God.

[29 : 31] Let's pray. Okay.