

Ephesians 1: 15-23 // Treasure and Getting Along

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[0:00] Thank you, Sean. Well, I should say, nobody made me mad. But there is something that I take incredibly seriously when it comes to ministry, and particularly pastoring, and that is authenticity.

! I have very little stomach for inauthentic pastors or people in ministry who are not real. I think it does a disservice to the congregation.

I think it just does a disservice to their walk with the Lord. So, in spirit of that realness, the reason why I didn't lead communion today is because Maria and I had a marriage moment. And it wasn't a fight, but it was certainly a disagreement of ideology.

Let's put it that way. And I don't feel right to lead communion when there's unrest. Now, we've made peace, and that's why I'm doing the sermon. But I didn't feel right about leading communion within my own self.

So, I'm confessing that to you. I'm sharing that with you to show that authenticity matters. And I hope you'll hear that and see that, that it's important. Because it's hard to look at the book of Ephesians and not see a challenge towards an authentic walk.

[1:20] Last week, we talked about the beauty of the calling that the Lord has for each of us. And I made a statement that I'll repeat again. You are an absolute miracle that you're sitting here today.

You're a miracle. You are. You're a miracle that the Lord has you in this place, in this time of history, in this county, in this town, in this church.

It's just no accident. He has a plan. If we're going to accept that to be true, then we have to also accept that his plan involves you and me.

That you are a part of his plan. That he has a calling that is specific, individual, and special for your life that nobody else can fulfill but you.

Well, how do we get close to that? That's funny because Paul continues on in Ephesians 1, verses 15 to 23. And I think he tells us how.

[2:24] We need to love one another as we love God. And I think one of the most important things is to understand that there's a difference between knowing about God and knowing him personally.

We can know the Bible back in front. And we can know all of the ins and outs of different theological positions. Nothing bad about that. But if you don't know God from the heart, all of that is meaningless.

So we're challenged by this. And Paul follows up with this prayer. And verses 17 to 19 is a prayer that I think we ought to pray for one another in this church.

Sean Joy reminded me of that earlier, that this is a prayer that we should pray for our church. So when we get there, let's just pause a moment. But in the meantime, verses 15 to 16.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. When Paul had heard the faith of the Ephesians, he was moved to prayer and to thanksgiving.

[3:34] How many times do we pray for one another and for this church with thanksgiving? You don't have to answer that. It should be often, and it should be a lot. Because of the fact that you're a miracle.

And that God has a plan. The same God that called me has called you. The same God that has called you has called me. What a grateful time to be a Christian in Dexoma and First Christian Church.

What an amazing time it is. And you know what? I have no idea what's going to happen. But I know he is good, he is great, he is God, and we follow him. So let's follow him together.

Paul was deeply involved with the Ephesian church. He spent a little over two years there. And the funny thing is, if I remember correctly, this is after he was chased out of six towns.

Okay? So he was feeling a little discouraged. But the faith of the Ephesians, the growth that he saw in that church, was encouraging. What a beautiful, beautiful thing. And he spent a little over two years, so he's invested in these folks.

[4:38] And I think Paul is praising God as for the years that after his departure, it's still burning bright. It's still burning faithfully.

There's something beautiful about that. When we leave behind something that goes beyond us, that burns brightly in the Lord, beyond our involvement, that is a good thing.

Some people can get trapped by thinking, well, if I'm not there, it's going to fall apart. Now, no. We should be able to remove ourselves from any situation and yet grow vibrantly because we have been submitted to Christ and he has been involved.

I've said it to guys before that I've raised up. God doesn't need you. He doesn't. He wants you.

What a better place to be is to be wanted versus needed.

That means we have to hold all that we have with open hands, knowing that it is the Lord's. This is the Lord's church. It isn't ours. It's his. It's a rental for us.

[5:42] And we're really grateful to be here. But it is his church and we have to submit that to him on a constant basis. Paul isn't talking about their love of God.

When God's people are in right relationship with him, they will naturally love one another. And I've said it before that we don't have to look too far at an example as we do the disciples.

You have a bunch of guys there that had no reason to get along. None. None. All very, very different men. You know, you have the zealot who, you know, would have done anything to rid Roman occupation from his land, including murder.

We'd call him a modern day terrorist. He would have knifed a guy like Matthew in the night who was a tax collector and in all intents and purposes, working for the enemy. How did these guys get along?

Jesus. He is our united factor. He is the glue that holds us together. And when we get further away from Jesus, we will have more conflict with people.

[6:50] That happens. That's real, especially in church. The further we get away from God, the more conflict we see. And we start tripping over each other's toes, and it gets difficult.

But I can't help but look at the disciples and see this beautiful mixture of a bunch of guys who have no business hanging out together, working, praising, learning, submitting, and eventually dying for what Jesus had been here for.

It says in 1 John 4, verses 19 to 21, That's a heavy mic drop.

It is. It's a heavy one to ponder. Because hatred takes on different forms. We want to think that hatred is just like, oh, you know, this, I hate so much, I'm going to wreck stuff.

But hatred takes on a lot of different flavors. Ambivalence is a form of hatred. You don't exist to me. I'm not going to make eye contact with you.

[8:11] You don't exist. I'm going to ignore you. That's hatred. Wishing someone doesn't exist, pretending they're not there, how is that not hatred? If we hate our brother or sister, what love of God is in us?

That's a heavy one. But I'm going to read this again because I don't want that to be my words. This actually says it much harsher than I just said. We love God because he first loves us. If anyone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar.

That's the word of God. That's Paul writing to the Ephesians right here. Okay? For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God to whom he has not seen.

And this commandment, not suggestion, this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother. There is an incredible amount, and I speak this from experience, not thinking of anybody in this room but myself, there's an incredible amount of swallowing of pride for that to happen sometimes.

Right? Okay. God, I love you so much. Help me to love those around. You know, I used to have this t-shirt. I actually gave it to a youth group, a kid from a youth group, but it said, Jesus loves you and I'm trying.

[9:30] I got in the funniest conversations around town with that. But it was trying to be honest, trying to be authentic for that word. Love of God is connected with the love of one another.

It's connected. You can't extract that. You can't say you love God and hate people. That doesn't make sense. That's not the right math in our heads. About 30 years after this, in Revelation, Jesus

is calling out the Ephesians.

You know what it was for? Because they were one of the letters where it's like, you're doing this wrong. You know what it was for? They lost their first love. This church, this loving church that Paul saw so much faithfulness in and love in increasing measure where he was giving thanks and gratitude, Jesus calls them out for losing their first love.

Revelation 2.4, but I have this against you that you've abandoned the love that you had at first.

Now, when we read that, we usually leap to the idea oh, they've lost their love of God.

But we'd have to go through a more extensive study this morning in order to make sense. I'm just going to encapsulate it a bit. These are folks that while Paul was on the way to Jerusalem, met him and he encouraged them to send beware of the wolves that will come in to try and destroy what you have.

[10:58] I'm paraphrasing, okay? So they went back. Okay, we're going to be theologically accurate. We're going to look for people. We're going to make sure that we're theologically sound and that the Lord will look at us and be pleased, but in so doing, they lost how to love one another.

Well, this isn't perfect. This isn't right. This isn't good. But I'm not going to love anybody, but I'm going to be really concerned about this stuff over here. They lost their love. Jesus calls them out in a letter to the church.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to receive a letter from Jesus like that. But I have this against you. I don't want that to happen for us. Because the two things are vitally connected, love of God and love of people.

If you're not in love with Jesus, your love for the saints is not going to last very long because it's based on willpower. Okay, I can be a loving person.

I can do it for a little while and then all of a sudden something happens or something cuts me off on the highway and I'm no longer a loving person. And I come into a meeting or a situation where I'm just ready to knock some heads together, not based on anything that anybody has done in that meeting, but because I had lost something along the way.

[12:13] And I think we can do that if we're not careful. We have to be mindful of what we have, who we are, what our calling is in the Lord, the love that he has for us, the love that we have for him and how that should affect how we treat one another.

You might think, well, Lord, if you just give me better people to work with, right? If you just give me better people to work with, everything will be fine. Wrong. That's crazy talk.

Lord, it may be that this is a difficult personality, so Lord, just let me love you and give me your love for them. That's a different approach. I remember I was in a lineup for an ATM once.

And you know how some people that had an ATM, I don't know what it is, but they just take a while, you know? And I don't know if they're just paying every single bill under the sun or whatever.

They're just kind of, you know, they're doing this and they're hunting and packing on the keyboard. And part of me is like, okay, I really need to go. The impatience, the sin, right? Because I'm a filthy sinner. The sin rises up of impatience, right? And I want them to hurry up.

[13:23] And it was like just this little bolt of lightning that sometimes happens. And I heard words in my head, not audible. This is my son. This is whom I died for.

And it hit me like a bag of hammers. I was being unloving, critical, and impatient. How can I say I love God if I'm looking at this guy in front of me and just wishing he would just stop what he was doing and walk away?

No, we gotta be different. Set apart. We have to be set apart, right? Are we praying for the people that we serve or the people that are around us?

Are we looking at people that we hang out with and just saying, you know, Lord, I pray that they will know you in increasing measure, that the eyes of their heart would be opened to the truth and the knowledge and goodness of you, Lord.

Are we praying that for those people? I have a habit here. It's a formed habit. I shouldn't say I have. It's been here about 10 minutes. But this last few months, I have been sitting outside in the morning, not in the snow, but so the last few days, that would be disingenuous to say.

[14:35] But when it's not snowing, it's snowing, I sit out there early in the morning and I have a prayer list of everybody that I have in this church from the text process.

You know, if you get a text from our church, it comes from something, there's about 70 names in there. And I pray through that entire list. And sometimes I don't know what to pray for because I just

don't know the person.

I'm new. But I trust that the Lord knows them intimately. I trust that they're listening to him. And whatever it is that they need to hear that day or how he needs to make himself real, I pray for that. I pray for healing. I pray for eyes opened. I pray how I can love that person better. Can I ask you to do the same?

Maybe you're already doing this. In which case, brother or sister, thank you. But if you aren't, can you start praying for everybody in this church? Start with whatever group that you're a part of.

[15:35] Whether it's a Bible study or your group at the summit or some other thing, whether it's the Tuesday ladies group. I know you guys pray a lot, which is awesome. But wherever you are, if you're not making a habit of that, can you pray for the people who you serve with?

Just start there. Pray that their eyes would be opened. The eyes of their heart would be opened to the truth and knowledge and the greatness and goodness of God. I am grateful to those I serve with in this church.

I'm grateful for the people that are in this church. And I'm grateful that even though some of the relationships that are here I have not gotten to know well, I'm trusting in six or seven years we'll have gotten to know each other pretty well.

And I know I'll still be a newcomer in the town. I know how small towns work. Okay. I grew up in a small town and I remember somebody moved in and they were there for about 10 years and we were still like newbie.

I get that. But you're stuck with me anyways. Verses 17. 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.

[16:44] Paul prayed that God would grant the Ephesians the spirit of wisdom and give them revelation. This sounds pretty good, right? I mean, I read that and I'm thinking, yes, I want this.

The problem is that we find those things great, but they can be detached from our purpose. Lord, we want wisdom and revelation. We don't know why, but it sounds really good.

in the knowledge of him. That is where it's important. That's what we must stick with. That's the center of the Christian life, to know God as he is, in truth, as he is revealed through his word and correct our ideas of who we think he is as we go along.

The Bible is not here for us to mold to fit our lifestyle. It's here to mold our lifestyle to be more like God. And that takes a lot of swallowing and pride.

It takes a lot of looking in the mirror and asking ourselves, what if I'm wrong? Lord, show me.

Enlighten my heart. Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, that I might see you. A.W. Tozer has this quote, the most important thing about a man is what comes into his mind when he thinks about God.

[18:00] So when you think about God, what comes to your mind? Praise? Gratitude? Probably. But if it isn't, if it's just somebody that you pretend to see on a Sunday, there's no harm in that.

But you could be closer. You could. And this connects with so many aspects of our own life, to know God in reality, truth, and as he is revealed to us in his word.

And the Bible presents to us a God who is real, who is present, who has been with us in our dark times, who is with us in our light times, who has promise and calling for our lives, regardless of who we are or how we got here today.

I'll say again, you're a miracle, and God has a very individual and special calling for your life. Walk it out. This knowledge.

In Greek, there was a word, it's not gnosis. I'm not going down that road just yet. It's nosko. It's a broad definition and has more of a flavor of understanding and knowledge by experience.

[19:12] Okay? Understanding God by knowledge and experience. It's different between knowing about a person and truly knowing who they are.

We can know about each other. We can know a lot about each other. But knowing who a person is is something different. Sometimes the most frustrating thing is when people make judgments about you and they have no idea who you are.

They haven't taken the time. So do we do that with the Lord? We make judgments about who he is, who you think he should be, but we don't take time to get to know him?

There's a challenge in there for us, I think. We can't be content with knowing just about God. We can admire him and know facts about him and not know him at all.

And this is what Paul is praying about. I think it's one of the chief strategies of our enemy that he may stop people from serving the Lord sometimes. That can happen.

[20:21] But somehow detach you of the real knowledge of who God is by simply making it a head exercise versus a heart exercise. That helps us very quickly to stop loving one another.

It puts us in a place of judgment if we're not careful. So remember Paul's words in Philippians 3, verse 8 to 11. Sorry, 8 to 11. Indeed, I count everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share in his sufferings because like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Do you hear that desire? Do you hear that passion in Paul's writing? That just inner, like, oh, that I might know him. That your heart is burning within your chest to know the Lord better.

There's something beautiful there for us. Are we praying for the people around us in Jesus' name? That they would receive that spirit of revelation and the knowledge of him?

[21:46] Oh, Lord, that everyone here this morning doesn't leave this place without further knowledge of you. That their hearts would burn within saying, yes, Lord, I want more.

Verse 18, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, imagine if someone walks into this building and they're brand new.

Imagine this is the first time they've ever been to a church at all. It's going to look a little bit like a class. You've got some clown up here teaching stuff and you've got everybody kind of sitting in rows, right? It's going to look like a bit of like a class.

But don't we hope that something else transpires? Don't we hope that actually something spiritual happens? That when we open the word of God, when we sing the word of God through our worship songs, when we pray through the word of God in our openings, in our closings, whether in our Bible studies or wherever we are, when we do those things, don't you want people to experience him more than us?

You know, a prayer I have said every Sunday morning that I've taught since 2010 is, Lord, help me get out of your way.

[23:10] Help me get out of your way, Lord. I don't want you to remember a thing that I say. I want you to read the word, be captured by him, inspired by him to love one another on a deeper level, to go out into this very dark world with our enlightened hearts of understanding of his revelation and wisdom and take that outside.

I pray that all these seats are filled, but not because we're doing anything great, but because his name is praised, his word is taught, and it doesn't matter who's up here doing it. Verse 18 again. Have the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? God has bestowed a calling upon you, and that calling is filled with hope.

It's not a calling to walk out into the darkness not knowing what is coming next. It's a calling of hope. You have been called by God.

And you may think, I'm not called to be a pastor. That's not what I'm talking about at all. In fact, I'm the opposite of that. Avoid this at all possibility if you can. Crazy people get called to this kind of thing.

[24:33] No. You have a calling, a very specific calling, each one of you to do something significant, something significant for the kingdom of God in your lifetime. And you know, that may be to speak to one person and encourage and pray for them that becomes the next Billy Graham.

Maybe that's your calling. Do you think that's a small legacy? Nope. I owe much to a woman, and it's not our K, I love K, but I had a K in my life too.

And we used to call her Auntie K. I owe much to Auntie K who was just somebody who was around the youth all the time. We used to go to her house, she'd make us coffee, it was terrible, but it was just really sweet, she did that, or tea, or anything else, you know.

And she would pray for us, she'd have a list on the fridge, she'd be praying for us, you know. I owe much to Auntie K for being a prayerful woman who loved the Lord. And I often look back at those

times because I was not a Christian at that time.

I often look back at those times and I'm grateful for the life that K lived and the influence that she had on quite a few of us that would hang out at her house. And it's interesting to see what we've all gone on to do and there's ministry in some flavor or another in all of them.

[25 : 55] Auntie K's life was fruitful. It was beautiful. So you don't have to think about, well let's go start the next Harvest Crusade. That's not it. You start by praying for the people that you're around right now.

If you don't have a list, make one. If you have a list, increase it. Spend a little more time. God regards us so precious that he thinks of us as his inheritance.

I'm going to read this again because that's a little mind-blowing. Verse 18, I think Paul is hearkening back to this passage in Deuteronomy which I'll read.

Verses 32, verse 9. But the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob has allotted heritage. Did he ever stop to think that you are that precious to God?

You are that important to him? that you are his inheritance? That you are his treasure? His prize? I mean, if you're like me, you're thinking, nope, don't feel that.

[27 : 10] That's okay. But it doesn't change what the word is saying here. You are precious in God's eyes. You are his treasure.

I wish I could look at every single eye in this room at the same time that I say that. you are his treasure. This is God's grace in action right there.

This speaks to how amazing God is that he treasures us this much, that we are his treasure and inheritance. Are we praying that the people around us would know how treasured they are?

Are we praying for the people that we work with in this church or that we sit beside even now would know how precious they are to our Lord? Verses 19 to 21.

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward 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 and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.

[28 : 21] God's power is great toward those who believe. so if you are accepting the fact that you're called loved treasured and that you belong we also have to accept the fact that his power is available to you as well.

The same power that rose Jesus from the dead is available to you in the calling that God has given to you. Just think about that for a moment.

So if he has called you to do something for him doesn't matter what it is you can rely on his power and not your own.

The limitless power of the creator and the first thing he may do is have you understand from the inside out how precious you are how much he loves you so let him in because you know what the next thing is is to show that to the people around you.

Charles Spurgeon has this quote the very same power which raised Christ is waiting to raise the drunk from his drunkenness the thief from his dishonesty the Pharisee from his self-righteousness and the Sadducee from his unbelief.

[29 : 42] The power to change is there in Jesus Christ. The cross is the greatest possible demonstration of God's love the resurrection is the greatest possible demonstration of his power.

It is by his cross that we sit here today in his freedom and it is through his power that we're able to exercise and walk in the calling that he's given us. Rule, authority, power, dominion these are all ways that Paul refers to spiritual principalities spiritual powers because that spiritual battle is real. and you know those little inklings that you get you're not good at this. You're going to fail. That's not the Holy Spirit.

It isn't. There's a war that rages and that war wants to defeat not God because God is undefeatable. He wants to defeat the Christian have them second guess their love and their place in God.

The enemy wants us to not think of us as God's treasure because some of us can be like I'm a treasure I am so treasured that's not the right attitude to have but to know with humility that the Lord died for you.

[31 : 05] One of the most sobering things anybody has ever said to me was that even if I was the only person on the planet Jesus would have died for me. Flip that around even if you were the only person on the planet Jesus died for you.

He died for your life for your freedom. That is power. So let God arise let his enemies be scattered. Verses 22 to 23 and I'll close soon after.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all. Everything under his feet including and especially First Christian Church in Taxoma.

There's something wrong with the church that is not governed by Jesus Christ. He is our captain and our king. He is our Lord. He is the one we serve we submit to.

He is our righteousness. Jesus. We're an extension of what God wants to do in this town. We desire to be his hands and feet. So let us know God better not just about him.

[32 : 22] Let us know the hope of God's calling in our lives. Let us know the greatness of God's inheritance in one another and see it in one another. Let us know the greatness of God's power for those who believe.

If you have a calling and you're starting to get the inkling of what that is or maybe it just seems too big I dare you to take one step forward. That's all it takes. Stop thinking about ten years down the line and just think of this afternoon.

Start with prayer. Lord I don't know what you want me to do but I'm here. Sometimes the greatest response to the Lord can be here am I send me.

Jesus has ascended into heaven and seated at the right hand in heavenly places. What does it say that he's doing there? Anyone? He's praying for you.

Jesus is praying for you. That's how special you are. That's how important you are to him. That's how much of a treasure you are.

[33 : 27] He's praying for you. What a beautiful and humbling thought. Romans 8.34 Who is to condemn?

Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who is indeed interceding for us. Hebrews 7.25 Consequently he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

We could find passages all day that reflects this reality that Jesus is praying for you right now. We need to know you better Lord we need to know the hope of your calling and the greatness of your power let's pray Thanks.