

The Hope of a Glorious Inheritance

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- [0 : 0 0] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. First chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.
- Reading again at 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? And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might?
- Now the last time I was with you we looked at the beginning, the first few verses in this prayer of the apostles.
- And I'd like just to continue that and to look at first the emphasis that he places on the need for enlightenment.
- [1 : 0 2] And then to look at the three hearts that he mentions in his prayer. When the forces of Nebuchadnezzar overcame the city of Jerusalem, the king of Judah, Zedekiah, was taken a prisoner.
- He was taken to the capital city, to Babylon. At that time it was regarded as the world's greatest city.
- There were impressive buildings there. Some would contend that there was the famous hanging garden, the wonder of the world.
- Zedekiah might console himself in captivity, gazing at the wonderful sights in the city of Babylon.
- But he saw none of these things. Why? Well the Bible tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had the sons of Zedekiah killed at Riblah.
- [2 : 1 8] And that was the last thing in this world that Zedekiah saw. Because after that his eyes were taken out.
- And he was bound in chains. Taken to Babylon. And put in prison. Till the day of his death. So instead of beholding the beauty, the wealth and the glory of Babylon.
- He lived in darkness. Gloomy darkness. In a prison cell. And in this context of prayer.
- The apostle is determined that this should not be the case. With those to whom he writes. And those who subsequently would be his Christian readers.
- He lays emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And so he prays the eyes of your hearts. The eyes of the Lord. And he says, He uses language that many who knew the Old Testament would be familiar with.
- [3 : 3 4] Having eyes enlightened. And Psalm 13. Light up my eyes. Psalm 19. The commandment of the Lord is pure. Enlightening the eyes.

but here the apostle in this prayer is not just requesting that the eyes be enlightened but that the eyes of the heart be enlightened how do we understand by the words of his petition can we not say that this means that he is praying that their understanding be flooded with light he writes further on in this letter now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds they are darkened in their understanding and because they are darkened in their understanding they are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart become callous and given themselves up to sensuality greedy to practice every kind of impurity they are darkened in their understanding and that is what was true of every one of us by nature lacking in the knowledge of the true light and the result of that was that we were alienated from the life that is in God we were strangers to the truth we were blinded to the glory of the truth and the attractiveness of the person of Christ and in the words of the prophet we saw no beauty in Christ that we should desire no attraction in Christ to draw us to seek him and just to illustrate this there was a prime minister in this country known as William Pitt the Younger he had a friend by the name of William Wilberforce who was also a member of parliament and a Christian

Pitt went to church just I think on formal state occasions he had no understanding of spiritual matters and Wilberforce was deeply concerned about Pitt's woeful spiritual state he used to pray for him and there was a minister in London at that time by the name of Richard Cecil Wilberforce loved to go to hear Cecil he used to go and hear him preach as often as possible and frequently he would ask Pitt to accompany him but Pitt always found an excuse not to attend does that sound familiar with those whom you try to persuade to come to hear the message of the gospel however one day

Pitt agreed to accompany Wilberforce to hear Cecil preach and Wilberforce on that day thought he had never heard Cecil having such liberty in expounding the scripture with profound spiritual insight Wilberforce was absolutely transfixed by the message that was proclaimed by this man Cecil it was like it was like being having heaven on earth for him and he began to wonder what Pitt thought of the preaching and he didn't have long to wait because when they came out from the service Pitt said to his friend Wilberforce Wilberforce I did everything in my power he said to try to understand the message that was proclaimed by Mr. Cecil but I have no idea what he was on about absolutely no idea

Wilberforce was deeply disappointed now he was a man Pitt the Younger those of you know your history will know that he was a man of great intellect a great thinker probably more supreme powers than Wilberforce's friend had and yet when it came to the message of the gospel despite the fact that the preaching of Cecil was so impressive and moving for Wilberforce it meant absolutely nothing to Wilham Pitt the Younger what made the difference well the difference was this that the eyes of Wilberforce's understanding had been opened and the eyes of Pitt's understanding had not and so when the apostle here is praying with regard to the eyes of our understanding being enlightened he is implying that there is a great cloud has come over the mind of man that prevents us from understanding the message of the gospel and you remember how Paul or how the Bible speaks of Paul himself remember his dramatic conversion on the

[9 : 54] Damascus road but he was for three days blind and you remember the Bible tells us when he was visited that when the servant of God spoke to him you remember what the Bible has to say about about Paul or about Saul you remember Ananias came to was sent by the Lord to go to Paul and his greeting is a lesson to every one of us here was a man he was apprehensive and God made his initial approach to him as to going to see Saul

Saul had such a fearsome reputation for being an enemy of the church and the Lord reassured Ananias and said and behold he is praying and when Ananias came to the house his greeting was brother Saul and it seems to me that these two words are so pregnant with many brother Saul and the Bible tells us that what happened there immediately something like scales fell from the eyes of Saul and he regained his sight that happens spiritually the scales drop off our eyes perhaps you were wondering how did people come to a saving knowledge of Christ

I remember as a university student a long time ago and I used to ask myself how do people come to faith in Christ I used to see fellow students whom I recognized to be Christians I felt envious of their status but I didn't know how they had come to faith was I under the preaching of the gospel yes from a child but I didn't understand how they came to faith did they hear a voice did they see a vision was there something different and it was none of these things it was just as if the scales were removed through the illumination of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and I saw the way of salvation in Christ

Jesus and came to an understanding of it so we all need this illumination and we are all blind spiritually until we are enlightened in order that we might see the majesty of Christ and his beauty that we should desire and the apostle was praying that those people would be given further illumination so that they might see more and more of the glory of the way of salvation in Christ because we have to remember that the petition that has been offered here has been offered on behalf of people who were not blind they had been enlightened already and what does that tell us does it not tell us that we all need more and more enlightenment as long as we are in life that we can never come to the place where we can say

I don't need any further enlightenment we constantly need to be enlightened with matters belonging into the kingdom of the Lord and there is progression made through the enlightenment that is given by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and it is obvious that the apostle places great emphasis on this that we may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God I think as Dr.

[14 : 52] Martin Lloyd Jones and his my memory serves me right he wrote or he preached on the epistle of the Ephesians and if you ever get your hands on the on the books that were printed they're well worth perusing and reflecting on and I think it was him that said and I hope I'm quoting correctly that we are but little children paddling on the edge of the mighty great ocean of truth and you know if you've seen children on the seashore or on the beach with their buckets and so excited and they go dip their toes in the water and you would think they were right in the middle of the ocean you know that's the kind of picture that's conjured up in your mind and sometimes we deceive ourselves into thinking that we possess far more knowledge than we really do but we're just like little children paddling on the edge of the great ocean of truth we start as babes in Christ and through the teaching of the Lord with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another and that comes from the Lord who is the Spirit well he is praying that the Holy Spirit would give them and us a deep and real and personal grasp of the great realities of the kingdom of grace and then he comes to these three things that he introduces with the little word what and the first one is this the hope to which they were called what is the hope to which he has called you or as it might be literally translated the hope of his calling now hope is something wonderful isn't it you know we associate hope with life where there is life there is hope and when hope is removed we are looking inevitably at death and that is true spiritually we were once without hope remember says Paul in the second chapter of this letter you were at that time separated from

Christ alienated from the commonwealth of Israel strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world having no hope that was our natural condition what took place in order for us to have hope and the apostle here is telling us that it is that you were called by God in other words your hope was rooted in your calling and notice what the apostle writes he doesn't say what is the hope of our calling but what is the hope of his calling in other words it is God who calls and that is what gives hope when God calls a man or a woman or a boy or a girl and calling here is to be understood as effectual calling you can trace the course of the call of God into the eternal well and its foundation is found in the election of God and Christ it is found in the well of love that is in God and Paul writing to the

Romans those whom he foreknew or foreloved he also predestined to be conformed to the image of a son in order that he might be the first born among many brethren those whom he predestined he also called and as I said this refers to the effectual call of the gospel you know we speak of the general call of the gospel and the effectual call of the gospel the general call is addressed to every person who comes under the proclamation of the gospel but it doesn't have any lasting effect upon the lives of those who only hear the general call doesn't matter how sincere the call is addressed yet they have no difficulty in rejecting that call finding examples and remember the one of the examples we have in the

Bible the kingdom of heaven says Jesus may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for a son sent to servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast but they would not come they didn't have any difficulty in finding reasons to reject the call that was addressed to them but when God calls effectually then there is obedience that's where the distinction comes in effectual calling it's the work of God Spirit whereby He convinces us of sin and misery enlighten our minds and the knowledge of Christ renewing our wills He doth persuade us and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel and so the effectual call of the truth puts a person in possession of eternal life and that brings about new spiritual life in the person who hears the call in order to respond to it you remember perhaps we might illustrate it from the way

Lazarus was raised from the dead Christ coming to a grave where a man had been buried and was dead four days Christ gives the command to remove the stone from the mouth of the grave and then the scripture tells us he cried out with a loud voice Lazarus come out and then the scripture says the man who had died came out his hands and feet bound with linen strips his face wrapped with a cloth Jesus said then unbind him and let him go and you notice Jesus raises him from the dead and he leaves the church to do the unbinding that's the work of the believers in life in assisting those who are newly raised the power of the word remember

[22 : 22] Jesus spoke to the only son of the widow of name he also died and Jesus met the funeral procession and he stopped it and then he touched the bier which was a breach of the ceremonial law and then he spoke to the man Gemma who have newly died, you don't expect them to hear you, but you may have spoken to them in that moment of grief and sorrow, when they passed out of life.

You don't expect them to respond. But here is Jesus saying to this man, young man, I say to you, arise. It might have sounded pretty foolish to those, and there was a large crowd there.

But then, to the amazement of everyone present, he sat up and he began to speak. The Bible doesn't tell us what he said. You would love to know what he said, wouldn't you?

He sat up and he began to speak. But you see, the emphasis is this, it's on the response of this man to the word of Christ. In other words, the power in the word of God.

Power to raise to life. That's what happened in your life and in mine, if we are in Christ. The power, the word came with power to you.

[24 : 05] You were dead, and yet, because of the power in the word, you were quickened to life, and you too began to speak.

And you began to speak in a very different way to the ways in which you formerly spoke, as you reflected the power that had touched upon your life and heart, and made you sit up and respond to the Christ who addressed you.

So, Christ quickens to life, and you obey, just as Lazarus obeyed the voice of Christ in the Bible example that we have.

It doesn't matter how you became aware of that taking place. What is important is that you are effectually called, and that you embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered to you in the Gospel.

John Murray, the late John Murray, not of the Banner of Truth, but Professor John Murray, he writes that it doesn't make a great deal of difference practically with regard to the order which took place first.

[25 : 49] Regeneration or effectual calling? I would hate to go to challenge Professor John Murray, but in my own mind, it seems to me the call precedes the regeneration.

Or perhaps both happen simultaneously. Jesus cried out, Lazarus come forth. The moment Jesus cried out, he who was dead came out of the grave.

And you know, in that example, the stone was rolled away. In other words, any impediment to the dead man coming out was removed.

And Jesus did that in your life too. He removed a lot of the impediments that you were erecting and they were disarmed in order for you to come out and to look to the Christ of God and to trust in Him.

You remember how McChain expressed it, I once was a stranger to grace and to God. I knew not my danger, felt not my load. The friend spoke and wrapped you of Christ on the tree.

[27 : 13] Jehovah said, Canaan was nothing to me. What made the difference? Was it not that he was effectually called?

When free grace awoke me by light from on high, then legal fear shook me. I trembled to die, no refuge, no safety, and self could I see. Jehovah said, Canaan, my Savior must be.

My terrors all banished before the sweet name. My guilty fears banished with boldness I came to drink at the fountain, life-giving and free. Jehovah said, Canaan is all things to me.

Oh well, can you and I say the same this evening that he is all things to us, that we too have responded to the call and because we have responded to the call, then we have a hope that makes not ashamed.

And it is important that we recognize this because you can be sure that the enemy of your soul will try and remove that assurance.

[28 : 36] He will come with an array of doubts. He will try to stimulate your biety in your Christian life. He will bring you face to face with a walter of sins that are in your inner life.

And he will try and whisper to you, call yourself a Christian. You ought to be ashamed of all of these things. And then you're so grateful that your fellow being doesn't know these thoughts.

But the Lord alone knows. And the Lord knows how to deal with them too. Well, can we say with the hymn writer, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but holly lean on Jesus' name. What? That's the first what. The second what?

What are the riches of his glorious inheritance and the saints? There's some kind of debate with regard to these words. There are two views.

[29 : 57] The first view that Paul is writing about the riches that God himself possesses in having saints as his inheritance.

In other words, that God's inheritance is his people, those who belong to the Lord. Blessed is the nation, for example, Psalms 33, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

Deuteronomy 32, but the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is allotted heritage. In the New Testament, in 1 Peter chapter 2, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

A people for his own possession. And from that, some would argue that the apostle is arguing here that they might grasp that they are God's inheritance.

Those who will spend eternity with him, that's one view. The other view is that this refers to the riches of the inheritance, that God gives to his saints.

[31 : 28] And that is the view that I personally prefer. That it speaks of the riches of the inheritance that belong to those who are in Christ Jesus.

and that we might somehow grasp this, although much of it is hidden from us. That we might grasp that there is a riches that belongs to those who are in Christ, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Remember, Paul in writing to the Colossians expresses it like this, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The inheritance of the saints in light. And that seems to me what the Apostle is focusing our minds on in this prayer.

That he is setting before us the multiplicity of blessings that God has for his own people.

[32 : 37] And even as we progress in the Christian life, how little understanding we have of the multiplicity of blessings that God has for us.

And if that is true here, how much more so when you go through the veil that separates you from the eternal dwelling.

remember how Paul writes in the Corinthians, now we see in a mirror dimly. Who of us would dare to contradict what the Apostle says and say that we see clearly.

And yet despite the fact that the Apostle says that we see dimly, he is equally convinced that he will ultimately see face to face. now I know in part, he says, then I shall know fully even as I have been fully known.

Well, passing from grace to glory is such a marvelous transition that our feeble minds are not able to grasp the magnitude of the transition that takes place in the lives of those for whom this is true.

[34 : 11] But he is setting before us, I believe, the abundance and the fullness of the inheritance. And you might say that along with the Son, as God is mine inheritance, and what more could be desired, what more could be desired than to have God as your inheritance.

He himself says, riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. They will see the glory of Christ, and they will participate in the glory of Christ.

And in the book of Daniel, we are told, those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

So the apostle is pleading that they might have a knowledge and a grasp of where they are going. And you remember how Peter writes about this in his letter, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you, who by God's power have been guarded through faith for a salvation, ready to be relieved, who yield in the last time.

An inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Note the description of the inheritance. It will always survive. It cannot perish. It's imperishable.

[35 : 50] It can never be spoiled or ruined. It is undefiled. It shall never wither. It is unfading. And the power, the same power you might say, is working on both sides of the veil, keeping the inheritance for the heirs and preserving the heirs for the inheritance, so that there will be no disappointment in the lives of those who go on into this and to the heirs of this glorious inheritance.

inheritance. You'll receive four tastes of it in this life, but they are just four tastes. The glory of the riches of his inheritance in the saints, that you would understand that you are God's inheritance, that you have been given an inheritance by God.

Do you believe that? As Dr. MacDonald expressed it, or as the translation of his hymn expressed it, but the blessings of the land, how can I ever tell them over?

It is full to overflowing with its milk and honey stores. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance? What is the hope to which he has called? The time has gone.

What is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might. In this prayer he drew your attention, first of all, to the beginning of the life of the believer, how effectively called, so that you have a hope that will be most gloriously realized.

[37 : 34] Then he took you to the end of the life of the believer, in the sense, it is merely just a beginning to the inheritance, the richness of the inheritance.

And now he speaks of the presence, the present in the life of the believer, where you need power. And he speaks of the resources that belong to God, that are so near at hand for the Christian.

And he uses four different words to set before us the greatness of the power that belongs to God.

And the first word he uses is the word from which we get the word dynamite. Anybody who has used dynamite will know how powerful that can be, breaking rocks asunder, and so on.

And so he is speaking of the raw power that overcomes obstacles. And the second word that he speaks of here is the word from which we get energy.

[38 : 48] And then he uses two other words, the words from which we get strength and power.

power. And it seems to me that Paul is using this argument in order that we might believe in the power of God, and that we might know that we have access to that power and to these resources.

Because when we look within ourselves, if we're honest, we see much weakness. Even if God in his mercy has granted us to grow some, to mature some, to have some victory over sin, the most consecrated believer, when you look within your own heart, you see your weakness.

It's apparent and your weakness seems no match for the challenges that we face. We look out in the world and we look on a sinful world, a sin-sick world, a world filled with troubles, filled so far beyond the scale of being able to do anything about it individually or even collectively.

That's the kind of world we live in, a world full of sorrow and tribulation. And Paul is saying, but it's the power of God that is at work in us.

[40 : 12] And the apostles say, it's the same power at work in us in your sanctification that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated him at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

And you see what Paul is doing. He's encouraging you. When you look at your own weakness, he's saying, I want you to remember, you might find it hard to believe, but it's the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead that is at work in you, making you more like Christ.

And when you almost despair and you say you'll never be like Christ, just remember, it's the power that raised Christ from the dead that is conforming you to the image of God's Son.

And the apostle Paul will say, that's what I pray for you. Well, the power that raised Christ from the dead is an immense power.

It broke the power of the grave and the bands of death, triumphed over it. that's the power that is at work in the lives of those for whom the apostle prays here.

[41 : 31] What is the hope to which he has called you? What are the riches of his glory in heaven? What's the immediate greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might?

May God bless these thoughts to us. Let us