

God Gives Hope

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- [0 : 0 0] Wow. Set me up to fall. How you doing? That was a U in kind of the terms of U's.
- One of the things I learned in Greek when I was at college was that we never should have got rid of the term U's because there's no plural term for U's so I might be bringing that back. U's. I'm from Diamond Creek so I can get away with it.
- If you're new, my name's Jono. I'm the pastor of this congregation. It's great to have you here tonight.
- If you are new, then let me catch up to speed with where we're at in Ephesians. We're doing a nine-week series on Ephesians and this is week two so I haven't missed much. Last week we really saw that the book of Ephesians is a big picture view of the Christian faith.
- It's a big picture view of salvation and redemption and so we saw in chapter 1 verses 1 to 14 that God has been planning your salvation before the foundations of the earth were laid, before anything was created. He had your salvation in mind and then we went through the sweep of history through to the present.
- [1 : 1 4] We heard that our sins have been forgiven today, that we have redemption through the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross for us. And then we looked forward into eternity future to see that because of what Jesus has done, you are assured of your eternal dwelling with Jesus in heaven.
- So we saw that massive sweep and I'm kind of a big picture guy so I like that. Tonight we're going to zoom in a little bit. Paul's going to zoom in a little bit on us as Christians in the church today and then he's going to finish by looking at the big picture again of who Jesus is, high, mighty, in authority over the whole world as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.
- So I want to pray and then we'll get to work on chapter 1 verse 15 to 23. Let's pray. Jesus, we pray to you because you are the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.
- You have been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God in power and you can answer our prayers and you promise to hear them. So I pray now that you please give us really clear minds to hear your truth coming from your word.
- I also pray that we wouldn't just learn head knowledge but that we'd be changed, be changed forever to be more like Jesus as a result of this time together.
- [2 : 3 6] I pray it in his name. Amen. I was walking through the city the other day and I saw a great t-shirt. I'm seriously considered buying one. It's only available from America so I'm going to have to wait a little while before I can wear it up here to preach.
- But you might have heard of this t-shirt or this slogan and it goes like this. It had a picture of Jesus, kind of old school picture and it said, Lord, save me from your followers.
- And all right, it didn't go down so well but I thought it was kind of funny. I thought it was funny. You might have thought that yourself before.
- There's a lot of people today actually, it's a bit of a phenomenon. A lot of young people today really at least kind of respect Jesus. They kind of like the kind of things that he did.

Maybe not so much his teaching but they think he's a pretty good guy. But they hate the church. They hate the people in the church. They hate you. And they hate me. And I kind of get that in a way.

[3 : 37] Lord, save me from your followers. But it's not actually a belief, a philosophy, a slogan that the Bible is going to let us get away with. You look through the sweep of the New Testament and you see over and over a call to love one another because you love God.

You see in places like James 3, it tells us that we've all been made in the image of God. Therefore, we cannot say that we love God and hate one another. You also see in 1 John, I think it's chapter 4, that says that we cannot say that we love God and then not have love for one another.

For God is love. Jesus himself says that if you want to know who my true disciples are, you'll see the people who are loving one another. And so we're going to see as well in the first couple of verses here that Paul puts a lot of stock in our love for one another.

So pick it up with me at verse 15. We'll read 15 and 16. He says to the people in the church. And just a reminder from last week, this is probably not one particular church.

It's probably not even one particular region of churches in Ephesus. It's a general letter that's written to many different churches. And so it's good for us to hear as well, obviously. He says, I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints.

[4 : 51] And for this reason, I do not cease to give thanks for you and I remember you in my prayers. So Paul is praying and thanking God for these people in the church and he's thanking God for them for two reasons.

One, that they have faith in Jesus. And two, that they have love for all the saints. You can't love Jesus and not love the saints. And Paul is so happy to hear that they don't just have faith in Jesus.

They have love for one another. You're going to hear over and over, particularly in this series and I hope every week here, that you're going to be implored to have faith in Jesus. That is of utmost importance.

But we want you also to have love for one another. And that's what these people are doing. So Paul prays and he thanks God for this fact. And then he gives us the content of what he prays, which is really helpful for us in thinking about what we ought to pray for one another.

So you see the content there in verse 17 through 19. He says this, So let's just break that down a little bit.

[6 : 24] He starts off by saying, I want you to know something. I want you to know three things. And he asks particularly that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation as they come to know these things.

He asks that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened. We just sang it. I wonder if you know what it means. We should know what it means if we're going to sing about it. What does it mean to have a spirit of wisdom and revelation?

I heard a talk one time when I used to work in the States. I went to a really Pentecostal church. It was awesome. People were just falling down everywhere and dancing. It was crazy.

I came straight out of about 18 years of Anglican church. I nearly died, but I really liked it at the same time. So anyway, the worship time was really, really cool.

The teaching time wasn't so good. And the teacher who came to this passage in one particular talk that he was giving on Fresh Revelations said that this meant that God wants us, that Paul wants us to experience a new revelation of God, some kind of new information from him, some kind of word of knowledge or something in addition to what we can find in the Bible.

[7 : 44] A fresh revelation of God. But actually what Paul is asking for here, what he's asking God to give these people and by implication what he wants us to have, is not a fresh revelation.

It's actually just a revelation of what these people already know. They know it and he wants them to know it more fully. It's the same with us.

You can't just hear the gospel, the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection and then accept it and move on. No, you need to hear it over and over and over again.

You need to grasp it more fully, more deeply, and that's what he's praying for them. And the content of what they already know, that he wants them to know more fully, is in three parts.

First of all, he wants them to know the hope to which they have been called. See that in verse 17. What is the hope to which they have been called?

[8 : 46] If you were here last week, you would have seen from verse, chapter 1, verse, I think it's 11 to 14. Let me read it for us. This is the hope to which they have been called. In Christ, we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him, who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we who are the first to set our hope on Christ, might live to the praise of his glory.

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. This is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption, as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

What Paul wants them to know fully, what he wants us to know fully, is the hope that we have in Christ. That is, our eternal hope, our inheritance, the fact that if you trust in Jesus, your hope is, and it's not a hope like, I hope Esther will win the grand final, because that's a very uncertain hope, right?

It's the kind of hope that is sure and certain, based on what Jesus has done, and that hope is that we will spend eternity with Jesus. That's our hope.

That's our inheritance. When you accept Christ, you're marked with the Holy Spirit. It's a seal. It's a guarantee to stamp on your hope, the hope of eternal life with Jesus.

[10 : 16] So he wants them to get that. I wonder if you have a picture of eternity in your mind when I start talking about it. I tell you what, this is one of the things that will change your life, if you understand eternity, if you can comprehend eternal life, if you start making decisions based on the fact that there is a heaven and a hell, that this life is a heartbeat, and eternity stretches out before you.

This will change everything. This will change how you spend your money. It will change what you do for a career. This will change who you marry and how you treat that person. This changes everything.

To have an eternal perspective. Some of the best times I've had are when close people, people close to me have died unexpectedly.

I mean, it sucks at the time and it hurts and it's painful, but man, just the clarity that it comes. When you're faced with the certainty of death and of life or condemnation beyond that, we had a good family friend last year who died in a water skiing accident really quickly, really suddenly, just gone.

At our place on the veranda, having a beer one weekend, next weekend, dead. And it just focuses the mind to think that all of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day, that all of us are going to spend eternity either in heaven with him in blessing or apart from him and his condemnation.

[12 : 00] It's not enough just to know about heaven and hell. You've got to know it more fully. You've got to know it more deeply. You've got to make decisions out of that place, having an eternal perspective. Number two, he wants us to know the riches of his inheritance.

That is the riches of God's inheritance. We heard last week about our inheritance, eternal life with Jesus. It's an inheritance that cannot fade, cannot be stolen away from us.

We have the guarantee that we will receive it. And now we hear about God's inheritance. You can see it there. Is it verse... Where are you?

18. We need to know the hope to which he has called you and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints. This is God's inheritance. The saints.

I don't just mean St. Mary and St. John and St. Peter as if they're the saints and we're down here as common. No, we're all saints. We're all God's people.

[13:07] We are his inheritance. It's baffling to think about it, but actually what God is looking forward to, what his inheritance is, is to spend eternity with us. We saw last week that before the foundations of the world, he predestined us to be his people.

And then you see it play out as he chooses Abraham and the Jews to be a nation with him. And then as we come into the New Testament era, he unfolds Gentiles, Greeks, people like you and me into that people.

And this is his inheritance. If you're here today and you're a believer, you are God's inheritance, eternal inheritance. He's waiting to receive you to be with him.

This should make you feel very precious. You know, we hear a lot today about self-esteem and how can you up your self-esteem? What clothes can you wear?

What haircut can you get? What car can you buy? How much money can you earn to beef up your self-esteem? But all of that is meaningless next to the fact that God cherishes you as his inheritance.

[14:18] You want good self-esteem? Think about that. God who is overall is thinking about having you and me as an inheritance forever.

The riches of his inheritance in the saints. And third thing, what have we said? He wants us to know the hope to which he has called us. He wants us to dwell on the riches of God's inheritance.

That is us. And he wants us to know his power. God's power for us who believe. Verse 19, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe according to the working of his great power?

Just adds it for emphasis. We don't talk a lot about power in churches like ours, I don't think. The church I went to in America, they talk about power a whole lot, maybe a little too much.

But I think we need to have a healthy understanding of what it means to tap into God's power. That God's power is to us and it's for us.

[15:30] That God's power is given to us for many reasons. You go through Ephesians, he talks about power a lot. The people in Ephesus, just for a bit of context, they were really worried about magical powers and sorcerers and kind of dark powers that could overcome them.

And so Paul talks about, especially in chapter 6, the power of God to overcome demonic forces and dark magic and Satan. That that power is available to us to overcome Satan and sin, all that keeps us from God.

He also talks about the power that's available to us to persevere us in faith. That you might be worried, how am I going to last till my 99th year as a Christian?

How am I going to keep going when it's so hard? And the temptations are so strong. Well, God's power is available to us to persevere us as Christians.

That is, to make sure that we're Christians right through to the end so that we will receive our inheritance. Also, if you read chapter 3 of Ephesians, you'll see that Paul prays that we would have the power to understand, to comprehend the love of God in Christ Jesus, the grace of God in Christ Jesus, that we would know the height and the depth and the breadth and the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

[16 : 58] He wants us to have that kind of power. so that when you hear me say, Jesus died on the cross for your sins so that you might come to know God. You'd be reconciled to him and spend eternity with him.

That wouldn't just wash over you. No, you would have the power to comprehend what that means. That's the kind of power that he wants us to have. Matt Sheff is going to speak to us all about power in a couple of weeks' time from Ephesians.

But he wants us to know the hope to which you've been called. That is your inheritance, your eternal life. He wants us to know that we are God's inheritance.

We're precious. And he wants us to know and experience the power of God for those of us who believe. I want to end just by pulling the camera back again.

Right, last week, verses 1 to 14, Paul really pans the camera back and shows us cosmic realities from eternity past to eternity future. Now he's just zoomed in and he's looked at the church.

[18 : 06] He's looked at you and me. He's prayed for us. And now he zooms back again and he just takes a picture of Jesus high and exalted on the throne.

You heard Brenton read Psalm 8 earlier. He quotes Psalm 8 here in the passage, you might have noticed. Mentions that everything has been put under Jesus' feet.

I just want to talk to you a little bit about this picture of Jesus that is high and exalted. And I want to talk to you in terms of the fact that Jesus has been raised, the fact that Jesus will return and the fact that Jesus is reigning right now.

So let's read all about that. This is verse 20 through 23. He says, God put this power, so the same power that's to work at our lives, he put that power to work 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 age to come.

And he made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Paul just, as he is wont to do, just kind of gushes about Jesus for a little bit.

[19 : 38] This whole first chapter of Ephesians has just been a big kind of doxology, just a big kind of gushing about how great Jesus is, about what he's done and about what that means for us.

And he finishes just by talking about Jesus' authority and power. A lot of young people today have an understanding of Jesus that's very much based on what we read about Jesus in the Gospels.

So the kind of people who wear these kind of T-shirts that I really want to get a few of, those kind of people, probably not Christians, just respect Jesus for being kind of a hippie, good teacher, nice kind of guy.

They take what they know about Jesus a lot from the Gospels. So Jesus, meek, mild, heals people, you know, just an all-round nice kind of guy. But that's not the vision of Jesus that we get for today.

Jesus is not going around saying pithy sayings and healing people and hanging out with sinners and tax collectors, although he does care about all those things. But now, today, he is exalted at the right hand of God.

[20 : 44] He is over all things. He is reigning as King and Lord and Saviour. Revelation chapter 4 shows us that he is on a throne, that he will judge the nations, that everyone will bow before him as king.

And that's the picture we get here. So first of all, Paul shows us that Jesus was raised from the dead. You read about this in places like 1 Corinthians 15 and obviously in the Gospels, the accounts of Jesus being raised from the dead and ascending to heaven.

But he talks about it now that the great power of God was at work in raising Jesus from the dead. This is the reason that we can trust in Jesus. This is the reason that when you read John 3.16, Jesus says, God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

The reason you can believe that is not because we say it so often. It's because Jesus was raised from the dead. In raising Jesus from the dead, he showed that Jesus wasn't just some deluded teacher.

He wasn't just some hippie nice guy. He wasn't just some demonic false teacher. No, he was God's own son. That's why God raised him from the dead. That's why when Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd, John 10, and I lay down my life for the sheep, you can believe him, you can trust him that he's telling the truth.

[22 : 27] Without Jesus being raised from the dead, without the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God, there would be no point in calling yourself a Christian, no point in calling yourself a follower of Jesus.

He'd just be like followers of every other prophet, Buddha, Muhammad, you name it. It doesn't matter. They're dead. They're in the grave. But Jesus isn't.

He's been raised from the dead, so you can trust him. Secondly, he will return. You notice that Paul doesn't just say that he was raised at that point, not that he's just reigning right now, but that he will reign in the age to come.

That's another way of saying eternity. that Jesus is returning. He's coming back to judge the nations, and from then on, he will continue to reign in power.

That he is king, that he is Lord. He's been raised to the right hand of God. All things have been put under his feet, and so he closes by saying that he is reigning right now.

[23 : 34] Verse 22, he, God, has put all things under Jesus' feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Jesus is the head of the church, just like a CEO is the head of a corporation, just like the husband is the head of his household. Jesus is the head of the church.

He sets the agenda for us, and he's not just head over the church, but he's the head and authority over all peoples, all nations, all tribes, all tongues, all sexual persuasions.

Jesus is Lord over all things, and he calls all men everywhere to repent and trust in him. That's the Jesus who we worship.

And that ought to make us stand and sing and praise him, that instead of judging us, he has been merciful to us.

[24 : 44] Instead of crushing us, he has given us new life. Instead of condemning us to hell, he has given us grace upon grace and forgiven us of our sins.

That instead of killing us, he was killed on the cross. Next week, we're going to see this great, probably the greatest picture of grace in the Bible.

The greatest explanation of grace in the Bible next week, so make sure you're back here to hear about that. But that's Paul's prayer for us tonight, I believe.

Paul doesn't want us just to have a basic knowledge of grace or a basic knowledge of Jesus. He wants us to have a full knowledge with power to comprehend the depth and the breadth and the height of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

John Stott is a great Bible teacher and he said this about this passage.

[25 : 49] Just do this to close and then I'll pray for us based on this. He said, what Paul does in Ephesians 1, stick with me, I tune out when I hear quotes, so just look at me. What Paul does in Ephesians 1 in this passage and therefore encourages us to copy is both to keep praising God that in Christ all spiritual blessings are ours and to keep praying that we may know the fullness of what he has given us.

We need to know that the spiritual blessings that we heard about last week and this week are ours and we need to keep praying that we would know the fullness of them. So I want to pray that for us now.

Let's bow our heads. God, give us give us these things please.

Give us a picture of Jesus ruling and reigning over all times, places, peoples, nations.

Help us to know who it is who we are worshipping. Not some feeble, impotent God but a God who is worthy of our praise so that when we stand up in a moment we would praise him with lungs full of praises for what he has given us.

[27 : 14] Not just that he saved us but that he has given us abundant blessings. Please give us the power to comprehend what it is that he has given us.

hope of eternal life and inheritance that never fails or fades away. The dignity that we are God's inheritance.

The knowledge that he has given us power to overcome sin, Satan, death and evil and power to comprehend his love for us. Please give us those things. Please help us never to think that we have got them in abundance but always to be seeking a fuller understanding of them.

So please give us hope. Please give us hope tonight. A sure and certain hope that we too will be raised to new life because Jesus was raised to new life.

That we will not be condemned because Jesus was condemned in our place. will please move in our hearts to bring this about for Jesus sake.

[28 : 24] Amen.