Ephesians 1:15–23

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[0:00] Book of Ephesians, chapter 1, starting in the 15th verse. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.
And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.
It's very appropriate that this is All Saints Day. We remember the great figures in the past who gave their lives for the Lord Jesus, who lived their life for the Lord Jesus as well.
[1:29] I love reading Christian biographies of some of the missionaries, those who are great figures of the faith. And the church over centuries has celebrated many people who are saints in the impact they had on the world in different ways.

But this reading that I'd like you to turn to, Ephesians 1, says that saints are not just superheroes of the church.
In fact, far from it. It says that all of us are saints. And so I'd like you to turn to Ephesians 1.
Yesterday was Halloween, of course, and there was great excitement that I saw as I was coming in to the city.
And I was with Christine and with Daniel, and their kids were getting ready. One of their kids dressed up as a superhero, and that superhero was his dad, Daniel Avitan.
So Joe had a beard, and he wore, he said his dad likes to wear black shirts. So he wore black shirts and a lumberman's jacket too, and a hat of his dad's as well.
[2:43] So I love that because I think it speaks to what we are as saints. He went as his dad, who he saw as a superhero.

God sees you as saints in that light as well, as those who are set apart for a particular reason, and it is to be those who will glorify God in your life.
Very powerful work that he is doing in you. That word saint, by the way, turn to Ephesians 1. If you have a Bible in front of you, it will be very, very helpful. If you have a phone, you can look at a Bible app, and a Bible app alone.
You cannot look at any other app on your phone. Just Ephesians 1. And if you look at this marvelous chapter, we're going to focus on verses 15 through 23.
But I want you to notice that he starts things out at the very first verse by saying, you know, Paul, who is an apostle of Christ Jesus.
[3:48] I mean, he really is a superhero of the faith. By the will of God, he says, to the saints who are in Ephesus, meaning every one of those who are gathered who have faith in the Lord Jesus.

This is who I'm writing to. And then if you jump down to our passage, he's going to talk about saints a couple of times. That word saints means those who are different.
Those who are set apart. That's what that word saints means. You are different. And here's how you are different.

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If you were to look through the first 14 verses, I'll just summarize them for you. Paul tells them why they are different. He tells them about the extraordinary spiritual blessings that you and I, that church at Ephesus, have received from God.
And it is full of incredible gifts that God has given to you. And so Paul is very joyful of those first 14 verses. A number of times he says, to the praise of his glory, to the praise of his glory.
[4:55] And there is a joyfulness that actually runs through the whole letter that starts here. But he says, the reason and the way that you are set apart is to love and serve the Lord.

And you are different because God has chosen you. He has adopted you from the very foundation of time. From far long before you existed, he chose you and adopted you.
He has also redeemed you. In other words, he has freed you by the forgiveness of sins to be those who can follow the Lord Jesus. Freed to know his love for you.
Freed to know the one who is your Lord and to know the glorious freedom of serving him as well. All by the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross.
And it says in these 14 verses that he made known the mystery of his will. I love that phrase. You know, we think of mystery books as though we don't know what's going to happen until the end.
[6:00] Mystery in the Bible is something that was a secret that has been revealed. And what has been revealed to us in the Lord Jesus is that he, God himself, is planning to unite all things in heaven and earth in Jesus.

That will certainly happen. And it is happening through the work of Jesus in his chosen ones right now. You are part of that plan. And that finally, he gives his Holy Spirit as a guarantee that we belong to him.
He fills you with his Holy Spirit. That is a very different life to live. As those that the living God live in, fills you.
There is a deep goodness to this. We are part of his plan. We know these blessings. And we can take them to heart. Our love towards God is kindled when we take these things to heart.
And I want to say that this verse, as we look at these few verses, 15 through 23, Paul is praying for you and for me that we will take the blessings of God that's described here to our hearts.
[7:12] not just know about them, but to know God through this, to know his goodness, to remember again and again the blessings he has given to us.

And it's important for us because it is very easy to forget. You know, we're coming up on Remembrance Day. You're seeing poppies everywhere right now. And the purpose of those poppies is to remember the sacrifice of those who went before us, who have guaranteed our freedoms here in Canada.
And it is because we are people by our nature who forget. And that's true for us in our, the goodness that God gives to us. We forget those things.
The cares of this world, our concerns of busy lives, cloud them. And it's as though God's word takes those clouds away and makes clear for us again the incredible grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to us.
We may also wonder, well, why are, how are these blessings relevant to me today? There's hard things I'm going through. It makes it seem like maybe we don't have blessings.
[8:23] You may not feel too much like a saint. That's our life. Or you may be pursuing a very exciting and fulfilling career or relationships, a track that we're on in life that seem like much more relevant blessings than what we hear about here in Ephesians 1.

One of the things that, I have two boys that are 21 and 24. It's a very exciting time in life because you're considering what your vocation, what the direction of your life will be.
So my son just moved to Austin, Texas and started a new job in a software company. And everything's new. It's exciting. The opportunities seem to be boundless to him.
I have another boy who's learning how to fly a plane and all the things that might happen there. But the thing we pray for as parents is that our boys will not see that as the great blessing in life alone, but that greater than that is who they are in the Lord Jesus Christ.
It's a great prayer for them. And I know that many pray for your children for that too. It is a great prayer. It is a prayer of allowing the goodness of God to go deep into your heart and to your mind and see that that is the great blessing in life no matter what your career or your life direction takes.
[9:48] People in the churches around Ephesus who Paul was writing were very vulnerable to this as well. They were an incredibly wealthy city. I don't know if you have ever seen the ruins of Ephesus or been there, but even in its ruins, you can see that this was a very powerful and

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prosperous city.

It was also a place that was spiritually dark. We read about in the book of Acts, a dark place spiritually. So there was a real vulnerability to lose sight of the blessings and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in their life.
And so verses 15 through 23, Paul prays personally for this church and really for us too, that God's truth would be more than just facts that they know about, but that each person would know the fullness of God's blessing in their hearts, deep in their souls.
His goodness would go deep into their lives as well. So I want to just look as we finish the sermon, we'll be all about what those three parts of Paul's prayer is.
I see three parts here. The first is very short. It starts with thanksgiving. Right? The beginning of verse 16. And then he prays for God's people.
[11:16] And I want to go into what those prayers are for God's people. He has a heart that God would help his people. And then he ends with confessing the good news of God.

Really, the prayer ends with this incredible prayer of thanksgiving for God's power at work in the Lord Jesus. So first, in verse 16, he says, I do not cease to give thanks for you.
And I think this is a very good example for us in our own prayers. We tend to go right into asking God for our needs. The things, the cares of this world can often be very present to us.
God wants his goodness to be present to us as we pray. Very much in our heart and mind. So God's, Paul's example here is that we would give thanks to God.
And he says, I do it unceasingly. It doesn't mean that he's constantly thanking God every moment of his life, but every time he prays. And as a devout Jew, he would have prayed in the morning and at midday and in the evening.
[12:21] And he would start each of that prayer time with thanks to God for what he has received at God's hands. See, God's goodness. That is what we are doing today on this fifth anniversary.

It is a day of thanksgiving. It is amazing to hear stories. And I encourage you to share those stories because you cannot help but be deeply grateful to the Lord Jesus for his work here and to see lives being blessed in remarkable ways.
Thank God today for his work among you. Paul knew that it was a vibrant faith. You know, he prays, I thank God, he says in verse, remembering you in my prayers.
And he's thanking them, he's thanking God because there is a vibrant faith among God's people here. And I do think of Messiah West as well in this too because Paul says that there is faith that he sees that is combined with love.
So verse 15, going just back up, I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus. I have heard of your love towards all the saints. It goes together in Paul's experience there.
[13:43] And that's an extraordinary thing because there is love in Ephesus between very different people. And it's very counter-cultural love.

So there is love between Jews and Gentiles. Imagine that, that big wall. There's love between slaves and slave owners. There is love between those who were completely apart from God and those who have been close to God all of their life.
A deep love between men and women, poor and wealthy. Those who are highly educated and prosperous. Those who have no education and are very poor.
And Paul says that the gospel has done a powerful work in them so that they are overcoming very ingrained differences to genuinely love each other. And that's the mark of a spiritually healthy church.
You know, at Messiah West, you always want to be looking, are there any barriers or prejudices in this congregation among yourselves? Are there things that separate you from one another?
[14:54] The love towards the saints that Paul's praise for is a prayer for you as well. It's actually about a deep and sacrificial commitment to one another.

And the nice and wonderful thing about a church plant is I think it's particularly evident when that is happening. You really can't escape the need to do that. But you see this working with one another in love for one another as this little tiny church grows and flourishes together.
There is a deep sacrifice because God has loved them first in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul's praying that for you. Know his love for you and because of that love one another deeply.
And then secondly, having thanked God, Paul prays for the Ephesian people. He prays for them. And Paul does this prayer, I should say.

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And this is a prayer that God's word is for us as well. Most certainly. Because here's the prayer. Look at verse 16. He prays that the Ephesians will know God.
[16:06] 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.

In the knowledge of him. So it's having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. It's a great phrase. It's very descriptive. You know, the heart that he is talking about that you and I have is the source of physical life.
And it means that our whole inner life with all of its emotions and wills and thinking would be opened like eyes to the grace of the Lord Jesus.
that God would flood the very center of our being with his truth. With the light of his truth. It's a wonderful prayer for us. And it's a prayer that's ongoing.
That that would continually happen. That our eyes are open. Because they can be dimmed. They can get sleepy. They can get closed a bit. And I love hearing the testimonies of people who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus because it is always about people's eyes being opened.
[17:18] The eyes of their hearts being opened to the love of the Lord Jesus. And I am amazed that just about every time when I talk to people about their testimony, their faith journey, there is every single time just about that I have talked to people, they have told about somebody who has prayed for them.

Who have actually prayed this prayer of Paul's for them. Would my daughter have the eyes of her heart of her heart enlightened and open to the Lord Jesus?
Would my brother, would my co-worker have the eyes of his heart open to the Lord Jesus? Would my grandson have his heart the eyes of his heart opened?
And it is remarkable how God does that even over a long period of time. One of the most memorable baptisms I've ever done was of a guy who was 83 years old confined to his house, he couldn't get out, his wife would come to church.
He was 83, he had been a surgeon at Vancouver General Hospital. He had moved from China to Vancouver in his 30s and become very, very eminent in his medical work and totally opposed to faith in God.
[18:41] His wife was a Christian. They had been married for 63 years and she had prayed for him every day of those 63 years. And it wasn't until after he retired that he started looking back at his life and thinking.

And again, he had retired at age 65, so almost 20 years, God did a slow work in his life. But all of a sudden what happened shortly before she called me was he just turned to her and said, I know that God is the living God.
I know that Jesus had to die for me in order that I might know God. And he says, and you know what, I know that I'm not God. Which was a massive thing.
And you know, when she told me the story, of course she broke down crying and said, will you baptize my husband? And I did. It was a very quiet service, but I must say it was a miracle.
A miracle of miracles because what God had done through her prayers over 63 years is opened the eyes of his heart to the knowledge of God. The true personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[19:54] And this is what Paul is praying for his people. Not just that that would happen for the first time, but that it would be a continual work. He teaches us in his prayer that each of us needs the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus' truth to us constantly.

To renew our understanding and our knowledge of him. To know the grace of God in our life. To renew our identity in him.
And the purpose, and so the purpose of that spiritual eyesight, I think that's a good way of putting it, is to know three things in this prayer. Look at verse, they all start with what.
He says in verse 18 that you may know what is the hope to which you were called. Literally, to know the hope of God's calling to you. And you see what this prayer shows to us.
That God wants you to know that he has called you from the foundation of the world in Christ. And that call became effective in your life when you heard the gospel.
[21:00] When your eyes were opened to the Lord Jesus. That call became effective in your life. That you went from darkness into his glorious light.

That you became part of his plan to unite all things under Jesus. And it is a call by name. And you see in scripture the call of God is always by name.

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That individually he calls you in a very unique way, in your very unique life, he calls you to hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.
And the hope that God calls us to in Christ is unseen. It's in the future. The Bible, in the Bible it is the work of God healing and saving you from every walk of life to live a different life now knowing that you will see the Lord Jesus one day face to face.
That you will have a resurrection body. That you will know the eternal life of seeing God and worshiping him in God's glory forever. To be part of this plan to unite all things under Christ.
[22:10] That's God's call to us. His agenda. And it all has to do with the hope of the Lord Jesus. So we look for this day when God will rule the world in our Lord Jesus Christ with power.

And that all will be made right. Sin and evil will be banished. It is why the earliest churches always prayed, Jesus come quickly. Jesus come quickly. And that's what we pray for.
I remember studying this passage in a Bible study with, on the book of Ephesians. And one person in our group said he realized that the hope he had before becoming Christian was not really hope at all.
It was wishful thinking. It was, you know, I hope maybe this might happen. But God gives a hope that is certain. There is this truth that Jesus will be coming again in glory.
and it could be any day. It is a hope that the world cannot give. It makes all other hopes of success and security and happiness in the world seem very dim and transient.
[23:21] That's what actually COVID revealed to us. I mean, I think it's wonderful that you guys were planted during COVID because COVID was a time when the things that we place our hope and insecurity in was taken away.

And people said, what is lasting? What is certain? What goes deep and is eternal? That's one of the reasons why young people are more and more looking to the deep faith of the Lord Jesus that stands the test of time, that is based in God's eternal word that will never change, and is eternal as well.
And he said, you know, this was a hope that the world cannot give. The hopes of success and security and happiness, are so much overshadowed by the hope centered on the Lord Jesus Christ.
And that's what Paul prays that we would see as well. I think this is a great encouragement to you and to me because no matter how desperate or dark a situation might be that we face, God overrules that.
He has a much greater plan. You guys being planted in COVID shows that God overrules even the biggest pandemic that has ever occurred in the world.
[24:38] And he decides, you know what, I think this church is going to flourish in the midst of that. And as a church we do face turbulence, but our certain hope is that God has a plan that we are part of.

He will unite all things under Jesus. And then secondly, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance? The second what is, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints?
Now notice that God's inheritance is God's. It's not ours in a sense. It is God's. And you know what that inheritance is?
God's inheritance? It is actually us. God's inheritance are his saints. In other words, you are God's valuable possession.
He values it as the inheritance of the ancient world was so deeply valuable, invaluable. You are his riches. This is an amazing thing here and that's why it's important for us to look carefully at this.
[25:48] You are God's prized possession. That God sees you, in the Lord Jesus, and you are infinitely valuable. And one day, you and I will see how deeply valuable you are to God the Father when you stand in his presence.

That is your identity. And it's something that's often clouded in our lives. But he will make you glorious. This is something to look forward to with all our hearts. Paul prays that even now you'll begin to grasp that you are God's invaluable inheritance.
And in a society that can often make us feel worthless or cancel us, our hearts need to be open to the truth of how God sees us because of Jesus.
That's Paul's prayer for you right now. And then thirdly, and finally, Paul not only prays that in that section of what he's praying for, that we would know that we are his glorious inheritance and that he has called us in his hope.

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He also says that we might know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe. That we would know his power in us. There is no way you would be a church right now without the glorious power of Jesus' resurrection at work in you.
[27:12] And when I heard people talk about what has been happening here at resurrection over five years, constantly there is an amazement of what God and his power has done.

And he does it through your faithful work. But it is an incredible gift of God's power that we work in when we are his ministers, when we are trying to carry out his plan.
It is always in his power. He carries us. When he says that we might know what is the immeasurable greatness of the power in us who believe according to the working of his great might, you just can't miss the fact that he is emphasizing the power of God.
It is immeasurable, it is great, and it is mighty. And I think that when we look on our news feeds, and when we look at what is happening in the world, we are often almost overwhelmed by power that is destructive, that involves evil and death.
We see the destructive power of nature. You know, the earthquakes in Venezuela, which was awful to see, the floods in Nepal this summer as well, many who died in the heat wave in Europe.
[28:31] You see the destructive power that is within nature. You see it in human nature as well. in what is happening in Ukraine, in Iran, if you hear the stories of people from those places, it is grim.

It is about the power of evil and destruction that they are facing in those places. But in the reality of sin and death in the world, Paul opens our eyes to God's power in verse 20.
Look at this briefly, verse 20. It says to us that he worked this power in those who believe. in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, number one.
That is the greatest work of power that the universe has ever seen. Jesus being raised from the dead. That is the power, Paul says, that is a work in us. And then he says that he has not only raised him from the dead, but he has seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.
that Jesus is Lord over every single power in this world that you face, that this church faces. He is far above all those powers.
[29:44] He is head even over those who are working against the church, against the Lord Jesus. He is far above all rule and authority. And finally, verse 22, that one who is Lord over all things, he is the head of this church, of your church here.

It is not Daniel's church, it's not my church, it is the Lord Jesus church. Daniel is an under shepherd, and that's what I am as well, pointing to the chief shepherd, the one who is head of this church. And this is the power that we actually serve and work under. So to follow Jesus means to give our lives in service and live to him.
That's why you are all called to worship Jesus as Lord of Lords. That's the gift that we have. All those small things that are happening in service behind the scenes, as well as those that happen in front of everybody, it's all done as a worship to the Lord Jesus.
What you do in work in the name of Jesus and in his power, whatever work you are doing, that is worship of Jesus. It's what we're called to, to follow, means to give our life to him.
[31:09] The beginnings, you're talking about the beginnings of your church. The beginnings of our diocese, there was a guy named Greg Venables. Do you remember him at all? So Greg Venables was from Argentina, and he was the one who allowed this to happen because he was what's called, he was an archbishop, and he was able to put these things into existence in our Anglican system.

And I loved what he said at the conference that he joined us in at the beginning of this diocese. I'll read this to you because I wrote down his words. He said, we had a youth gathering at this conference, and the youth asked him what was the best thing about following Jesus.
They kind of put him on spot, in a spotlight, and he had a great answer. He said, the greatest thing about being a Christian is knowing that Jesus will never leave you and being free to do absolutely anything Jesus wants you to do.
Isn't that a great quote? He says, the best thing about being a Christian is that Jesus will never leave you and that you are free to do absolutely anything that Jesus wants you to do.
He frees you to do that. And that's really living out the lordship of Jesus. So I want to close this. I'll bring it together here by just saying that I hope that your hearts are encouraged by Paul's prayer here.

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[32:35] And that you look at this prayer again this week. And maybe look at those blessings, verses 1 through 14, of what we are in Jesus. I hope that God gives you his spirit so that you can love him and know him.

And that's a certain hope. And therefore, because of that, that you have a certain hope of being part of God's plan to bring all things under Jesus' loving rule. That you know you are God's precious possession.
That you have God's, you know God's immense power that raised Jesus is working in you. As God calls you as a church into all that he has for you.
Jesus has filled us that we might know him and his love and to live for him in a world that God is bringing under the healing rule of Jesus. Therefore, be ambitious for God as you have been, Messiah West.
Be confident in his great power not only to change you, but also be confident in his rule over the world. There's no need to fear the future. In fact, you embrace the future that Jesus has for you and for the world.
[33:42] God is filling the earth with the knowledge of his glory. And that's why I close with a verse from Habakkuk. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the water covers the sea.

May God give you grace to know his goodness for you and empower you to live for him as a life of worship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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