

A Prayer For The Church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 October 2023

Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 00] We are continuing our series in the book of Ephesians today, so if you'll take the word of God with me and turn to the book of Ephesians. We are completing chapter 1 today, Lord willing.

Beginning in verse 15. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 15. As you turn there, I want to remind you of a little bit of background on the book. Ephesians has two themes. The first half of the book talks about who we are.

The second half, how we live. Who we are and how we live. Much of our content from this series was drawn from the Christ-centered exposition series of commentaries, the book on Ephesians, authored by Pastor Tony Merida.

And the background of the book of Ephesians is it was written by Apostle Paul around the year AD 62. And the setting, he was under house arrest and Roman imprisonment far away.

But he was very familiar with this church in Ephesus. He had been a pastor with them for about three years. You can read that account in Acts chapter 19. The breakdown of the book, again, chapters 1 through 3.

[1 : 10] Who we are in Christ, our identity. And actually this corresponds well with what the youth are studying on Wednesday nights. They have a series going on studying our identity in Christ.

And that is exciting when that overlaps with what's going on here on Sundays. The second half of the book talks about how we live for Christ. So who we are and how we live.

Part 1, we're in right now, who we are in Christ. So today we'll be reading from primarily the Christian Standard Bible, Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 15.

If you're able to, would you join me in standing? If you need to remain seated, that's fine. But if you're able to join me in standing, we'll read together Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 15.

This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

[2 : 04] I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling.

What is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints. And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. According to the mighty working of his strength.

Verse 20. He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens. Far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion and every title given.

Not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him, Jesus, as head over everything for the church.

Remember that? Church is not about me. Church is about Jesus. Which is his body. The fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

[3 : 16] You may be seated. Lord, I thank you for this time. I thank you that you've given us this letter to this church in Ephesus that is still 100% relevant for our church in Henrietta.

I ask that you would move in our hearts this morning. Let the light of your word reveal the truth about us. And help us to walk out of these doors today. Knowing you more intimately.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right. This chapter is broken down into two sections. We covered two weeks ago, the first half and the second half here.

Man, that first half was powerful. Absolutely powerful. It's really hard for Paul to improve on what he did in that first chapter, the first half of the first chapter of Ephesians.

Talking about who we are in Christ. The redemption that we have through his blood. The inheritance that we have received. That we were chosen by God. And being chosen by God

motivates us then to love him, to worship him, to give him praise.

[4 : 21] And now he closes this chapter with a prayer. A prayer for the church. A magnificent prayer that you and I can latch on to and be grateful that this is in the scriptures meant for our edification today.

So what is he talking about in this prayer? Let me ask you this question. Does anybody know who these people are? Good guess. It took us a minute to even identify the type of jerseys, but we got there.

These are arguably the top five soccer players in the world right now. Arguably the best at their positions, according to the main soccer publications out there.

I dare say that if any one of these guys walked into our church this morning, there's not one person in this room who would have a clue who they are. However, if they went in just about anywhere else in the world, they would be mobbed.

Paparazzi would be following them everywhere. There'd be crowds thronging them because those people know these guys. These guys are worldwide celebrities. Except in the United States.

[5 : 35] We're the only ones who don't play football with our feet. And so there is a little disconnect there between knowing who these people are and knowing who these people are.

Now take a minute and let's hear some names. All right. Who do we have up here? Troy Aikman. Roger Stavak. Tony Romo. Zach Prescott.

My wife even know who a couple of these guys were, man. Listen. If any one of these guys walked into our building this morning, we might have to cancel the service because y'all would be so starstruck, right?

Who am I kidding? I would be too. Yeah. You walk into a town in Texas and throw some Dallas Cowboys quarterbacks up there, absolutely people know who they are. For those of you who didn't have a clue, those are Dallas Cowboys quarterbacks, okay?

It's all in the context of what you care about, what your interests are, what you spend your time learning about. And around the world, soccer is king.

[6 : 47] But here in Texas, the Dallas Cowboys are king. They may not always be king on the scoreboard on Sundays, all right? But we're going to win today and they kick at noon, so we need to hurry up.

But y'all don't rush off. We got to help get ready for Drunkertreat, okay? So let's wrap this puppy up. All right, here we go. So the idea here is we need to reflect and consider how well we know God.

Because there are certain things that we know very well. And a lot of it depends on context. And the truth is, how well you know God depends on how much time you've spent studying him.

How much time you've spent with him. How much time you've spent learning about him. How much of a nerd you are about God. How many Star Wars nerds we got in here?

Yes? Some of you, like, hesitantly. Not proud of it, but yes. I did. I did say yes. I did.

[7 : 54] Star Trek? Anybody Star Trek? You got some Trekkies? Wow. Wow. The age of some of those, like, okay. Some younger people who are Star Trek fans.

All right. What else? Marvel? DC? What? Marvel and DC, Jessica. Wow. Okay. Amazing.

We're bridging gaps here in this church, man. Well, listen. How many of us nerd out for holy God as much as we do for these other areas of entertainment in our lives?

Now, look, I can tell you every single member of the Dallas Cowboys this year. I love them to death. I love my Texas Rangers. Let's not talk about last night. But how much of our time, how much of our interest is spent knowing more and more about these things that matter in the here and now, but in the scope of eternity, they don't matter a bit.

They don't matter at all. But we oftentimes know far more about that than we do the one who bled and died for us, rose from the grave victoriously, and offers life-changing power to us every day.

[9 : 14] So there is a revelation involved in knowing God. Let's look back at verse 17 of chapter 1. Verse 17 of Ephesians chapter 1.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

That you would get to know God better, and then you would experience this divine revelation that comes with knowing God. What are we talking about when we say revelation? That God reveals things to you.

God reveals the truth about Himself. God reveals His true nature. Do you realize that if you grow up in church, oftentimes you can get a distorted view of who God is?

You understand that? You can all of a sudden realize, especially growing up in Baptist churches, that God is not just a bunch of rules. Because sometimes that is what we portray, and that is what we emphasize, that if you do this, if you check these boxes, if you live according to how we say you ought to live, then you are good, you are fine, and God is happy with you.

[10:26] That is not an accurate view of God. God knows the truth about you. He knows the truth about me. He knows we are far worse than the image that we portray on Sunday morning in church.

Whether you're standing in a choir or sitting out here, we try to portray the best version of ourselves, don't we? Of course we do. God knows that you're not really that.

He knows that those people, young people who post on Instagram, their lives aren't really like that. They took that picture 25 times to get it just right, to portray this certain image.

And we do that in our day-to-day lives. When people are coming over to our house, what do we do? We try to straighten it up real quick. We try to clean it. We go, oh man, I've got to throw the dishes in the dishwasher.

I've got to go make the bed real quick, you know, or at least close the door to the bedroom so they don't go in there. We try to portray an image that we have it all together when God knows we don't have it all together.

[11:28] We are a mess. But God is revealed when we get to know Him better, we realize those aren't the things that He prioritizes. Remember what we talked about in our series on the church?

Don't make the secondary stuff primary. Primary is what God really cares about. He cares about you. He cares about your heart. He cares about rescuing you.

He cares about changing you. He cares about saving you. He cares about redeeming your life. So there is a revelation in knowing God. Now man, we care about how you have it all together.

Mankind, our fellow neighbor, we are judging. We talk back. We talk bad about you behind your back. That's what people do. God doesn't do that.

So we reveal the real God when we get to know Him better. How do you get to know God better? You spend time with Him. You pray.

[12:28] You talk to Him. You actually spend time in your day talking to the one who wants to hear from you. You actually spend time reading the instruction manual for life that He left behind here.

And we've got Him so nicely bound in leather and all that. That is God. He's revealed Himself to us. I'm not talking about getting some vision because you ate too much Mexican food the night before.

I'm talking about real, genuine learning of who God is. He's told us exactly about His nature.

He's told us everything we need to know about Him. And it's all there for the taking. And God reveals Himself to us. You know what else? He reveals us in Him.

It's like a mirror. However, when we look at God, we see how fake we are. When we look at how real and genuine His love is, we see how poor of an excuse our love is.

[13:29] And then we're just astounded. Why would God love me? I'm a mess. I can't measure up. That's what grace is all about. That's what salvation is all about.

That's what God is all about. So we need Holy Spirit glasses. We need Holy Spirit glasses. These are not rose-colored glasses.

This is not looking through life that everything's okay. It's realizing that everything is not okay, but it can be well with my soul despite all the mess around me.

Despite all the mess within my own heart. It can still be well with my soul because God loves me. He cares. He's sacrificed everything.

And He wants and desires above everything else a relationship with me. Because that glorifies Him.

That brings glory to Him. So we have an opportunity to worship our God, praise Him, bring honor and glory to His name every day by working on our relationship with Him.

[14:36] Seeing us as He sees us. Seeing Him as He truly is. We can only do that by looking through these Holy Spirit glasses.

So if you have put your faith in Christ, repented of your sins, turn from them and turn to Him as your Savior to become His child, then you have the Holy Spirit with you.

And the Holy Spirit can reveal who God is and who we are to us. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 kind of talks about this. We are not proclaiming ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.

God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is a revealing light. It is an illuminating light that shines on our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. And it allows us to see clearly.

[15:35] Until then, we're seeing a distorted view of the world. And that's why we're so easily swayed by things we read online. By things we watch online.

By things we hear other people say. Things we hear people say about us. We are so easily swayed by everything except what God says.

So we must get to know Him better. We've got to look through His Holy Spirit glasses and then see who we really are and who He really is. Number two, the blessings of knowing God.

The blessings of knowing God. Did y'all notice today in your bulletins you've got some work to do? Anybody notice that? Good. Y'all doing the work? Y'all writing it down?

Alright, here we go. We told you for a little while this was coming. We're going to be active participants today. Fill in those blanks. Alright, so number one, the revelation of knowing God.

Number two, the blessings of knowing God.

[16:36] Boy, the blessings of knowing God. We could spend the rest of the day talking about them and still not scratch the surface. But let's give a little overview here beginning in verse 18. Ephesians 1.18. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

Talk about that revelation. So that you may know what is the hope of His calling. There we go. The hope of His calling. What is the wealth of His glorious inheritance in the saints?

The wealth of His inheritance. And what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the mighty working of His strength?

Did you catch those three key words that were in there? Hope, inheritance, and power. Hope, inheritance, and power.

These are three blessings of knowing God that the text reveals to us here in Ephesians chapter 1. So, let's look first over Jeremiah. We're looking at hope.

[17:35] Hope number one. Hope. Then Jeremiah 29.11. I know the plans I have for you. Plans for your well-being. Not for disaster. To give you a future and a hope.

That is why Christians can have such a positive outlook on life. Even when things aren't going well. It's because God gives us a future and a hope.

He promises that. So, it's like it doesn't matter how bad the here and now gets. I know that there's a future. And I know my future is secure. I know there's a hope for today.

I know that even though I mess up, God's love for me wasn't contingent on me not messing up. God loves me despite my mess ups.

So, I can have a hope. And I can still have a future. My future is secure. There's nothing that I did to inherit God's presence. There's nothing I did to inherit God's love.

[18:33] And there's nothing that I can do to lose it. I have a future. And it's secure. And I have a hope. And it's real. And it's unshakable.

You know what the enemy of hope is? Fear. The enemy of hope is fear. How many of us struggle with fear on a daily basis? You don't have to raise your hand. We know you do.

You know I do. We all do. We all do. Every one of us struggles with fear. Because we are living in this flesh.

But that's why we must remind ourselves continually who God is. We got to get to know him more intimately. That's where that hope comes from. Look through those Holy Spirit glasses.

And remember that we have a hope. And it's alive. 1 Peter chapter 1. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy. He's given us new birth into a living hope.

[19:36] There's a song. A Christian song that's written about that. That says Jesus Christ. My living hope. He is our living hope. He's alive. That's why the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Is the one thing that we can rest all of our hope on. It's the one thing that we can build our hope on. Because if he died. And he didn't come back to life. Then he wasn't God.

The things he said weren't true. And this is all an exercise in futility. It's all worth nothing. But he did rise from the dead. He is alive today.

And he is our living hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the dead. You and I have hope. Well we can only have hope. When we get to know God better.

Because otherwise. We can't battle that fear that surrounds us. Yes. Our destiny is secure. We should have that hope. And carry that with us. But we're too caught up in fear.

[20 : 36] We're too caught up in getting to know everything. Everything else around us. Except. The God. Who loves us. And can transform. Our lives. First Peter chapter.

One. And the next verse. We read verse three a moment ago. Into an inheritance. That can never perish. Spoil or fade. Did you get that? His great mercy.

He's given us new birth. Into this living hope. Because Jesus rose from the dead. And into an inheritance. That can never perish. Spoil or fade. How many of you guys.

Have like a hundred million dollar inheritance. Waiting on you. Whenever so and so does. I didn't think so. If you are.

You need to tithe on that. Okay. So. So. Um. Our inheritance. Is so much better. Than a hundred million dollars.

[21 : 29] Our inheritance. Can never perish. Spoil or fade. It can't be wasted. On something else. It can't. Have its value. Decrease. Through the stock market. Our inheritance.

Is so much better. Because it is eternal. It is forever. Forever. You know what the interesting part in that. This is another blessing.

Of knowing God. It's understanding. That he is our inheritance. You know what the crazy part is. We are his inheritance. Did you see there. Uh. In verse.

Where was it here. Ephesians chapter one. And verse eighteen. That you may know. What is the hope of his calling.

What is the wealth. Of his glorious inheritance. In the saints. Do you know what scripture teaches here. And it alludes to it right here. Ephesians one.

[22 : 25] We are his prize. That weird. It is easy for us to recognize. How great and good God is.

How he is our inheritance. He is our treasure. He is our prize. He is so much greater than we are. That's not hard to wrap our heads around. But it's a little wild.

To consider that God looks at us. As the big prize that he won. We are his inheritance. And he can't wait to get us home. He is so looking forward.

To this joyous reunion in heaven someday. When he gathers all the children into the fold. So we can take comfort in knowing. That God is going to take care of us.

We are his inheritance. God has got us. He loves us. He values us. He treasures us. But that's a blessing of knowing God. That's a blessing of being familiar with him.

[23 : 26] That's a blessing of knowing his heart. Knowing his mind. Spending time with him. Then you see how God sees you. And you see who he really is.

And then finally. It talks about the blessing of knowing God. It's his power. The immeasurable greatness of his power. Toward us who believe.

Folks do you know why? You may not have experienced the power of God in your life. Because you may not really believe. You might not really be saved.

If you died today. You might head straight to a burning hell. Because you've never turned from your sin. And put your faith in Jesus. I'm dead serious.

I will give that invitation every time I preach. And 99.9% of the time. Nobody walks down here. But I guarantee you. There are people sitting in this Sunday.

[24 : 27] Under the sound of my voice. Every week. Week after week after week. And they refuse to repent of their sin. And put their faith in Jesus for salvation. I promise you that is true.

In our church. Don't start looking around and wondering who it is. Look in your own heart. Say God. Am I your child? Have I truly repented of my sin.

And put my faith in Jesus? Has there been visible evidence of that in my life? Do I see evidence of the Holy Spirit in my life? Because otherwise.

There's no power. Did you see what it said? The power is there for you who believe. You don't believe. You don't get the power. If you don't believe.

You don't get the inheritance. If you don't believe. You don't get the hope. That is the blessing. Of knowing God. Please don't leave this room today.

[25 : 27] Without meeting God. And getting to know him. That's what this is all about. Y'all. We can sing the songs. And the choir sounds great. And we can dress up nice.

And come and be friendly to everybody. But that is all worth nothing. If you don't know Jesus. You got to know Jesus. You got a meeting for the first time today. For those who do believe.

We have access to unlimited power. I talked about it with the teens on Wednesday night. Jesus said all power is given unto me. So you can go. With all that power. Because I am with you. So we have access to all his power. Second Peter chapter one. His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness. Watch this. Through the knowledge of him. Who called us by his own glory and goodness. Knowing God better gives you access to his power. [26 : 23] And that's all you need for life. Everything required for life. And for living how God wants you to live. Living godly. Is found in knowing God.

You got to know him better. That's why we study his word. That's why we gather together. That's why we have Sunday school classes. That's why we have small groups. That's why we have ministries throughout the church. To get to know God better. We know God better by obeying him. We know God better by coming to church. By fellowshiping with the believers.

By singing songs that praise him and talk about his goodness. We know God better. That gives us access to his power. Which is all we need for life.

So. Finally. The victory of knowing God. Those blessings of knowing God are amazing. But I can promise you. There is a victory.

[27 : 18] In knowing God. There is a victory awaiting us. It's this theological idea. Of already. But not yet. You understand what I'm saying? God has already sealed us.

He's already secured us. He's already forgiven us. And made us his children. We just haven't realized that yet. We're still trapped in this body. We're still living on this wicked earth.

Surrounded by sin. All around us. But the victory is already won. Look at verse 20. He exercised this power in Christ. By raising him from the dead.

And seating him in his right hand in the heavens. Far above every ruler and authority. Power and dominion. And every title given. Not only in this age. But also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet.

And he appointed him as head over everything for the church. You want to know who's in charge of this church? Jesus is in charge of this church. He's the head of this church. Which is his body.

[28 : 15] The fullness of the one who fills all things in every way. Can I clue you in on something here? This is one of my favorite resources. Wilmington's Guide to the Bible. And the man who wrote this said.

The believer is fighting from a victory. Not for a victory. The victory is already won. That's the good news for you this morning. Jesus already beat death.

He conquered death. 1 Corinthians 15 says. Thanks be to God. Who gives us the victory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are living this life.

Fighting this spiritual battle. From a place of victory. Not trying to win the victory. God's already won it. It's here. It's here for us to live in.

Enjoy. Claim. Every time Satan comes after you. Every time he tries to discourage you. Or attack you with fear. Or tempt you. With something you know you shouldn't do. You can say Satan.

[29 : 11] You're a beaten enemy. You can say Satan. God has won. I'm not going to give in. To a loser. So. The takeaway this morning.

Is my confidence grows. As my intimate knowledge of God grows. My confidence grows. As my intimate knowledge of God grows.

What do we mean by this? How does knowing God give me confidence? One. I see more clearly. We talked about that illumination.

That revelation of seeing us. As God sees us. And seeing him. As he really is. I can see more clearly. That gives me confidence. I have hope. A living hope. Jesus is alive.

My hope is real. And that gives me confidence. And I have. And I am. God's inheritance. Boy that should give you confidence. You have inherited all that God is.

[30 : 09] We are joint heirs. Co-equal. With. The son of God himself. Jesus. We are joint heirs. With Christ. And then God sees us.

As his inheritance. Talk about a confidence builder. God values you so much. And then I have power. I have all power. That God has. The Holy Spirit of God.

Walks with me. Prepares the path for me. Protects me. Guides me. If I listen to him. I have all that power. And I already have the victory. These are confidence builders.

That we can go with us. Every step of the way. Second Timothy chapter two. The last book of the Bible. That Paul wrote. That we have record of. He says I'm not ashamed. Toward the end of his life.

He said I know. Whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded. That he is able to keep. What I have committed to him. Until that day. You see the confidence. It's oozing through that. You see the confidence.

[31 : 06] That Paul had. I know. Who I have believed in. And I am absolutely. Persuaded. That he will keep. What I have committed to him.

Until that day. What kind of confidence. Do you have. Here's the real question. How well do you really know God. There is a direct link.

There is a direct correlation. Between how well you know God. And your confidence level. As a Christian. If you're shaky. You're beaten up by fear.

Tossed to and fro. Insecurity. Uncertainty. You need to get to know God better. God is the answer to that. His power.

His hope. His inheritance. All these. Can soothe those fears. All these can reassure you. But you've got to get to know him. You've got to spend time with him.

[32 : 08] You've got to get to know him intimately. And you can recognize him in the world. You can see. That's from God. That's from God. Hebrews 4.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace. With confidence. So that we may receive mercy. And find grace. To help us in our time of need.

We can approach God. With confidence. Okay. We're talking about a daily activity. A daily approach. Getting down on your knees.

Maybe even lying prostrate. If you need to. On your face. Before God. Spending time. Getting to know him. Sometimes just being quiet. And listening to him.

Waiting to see. What those thoughts and burdens. And prayers that he puts into your heart.

Opening up his word. And seeing what he's already said to us. And then rising up.

[33 : 04] And walking with him. In confidence. We can daily approach him. With confidence. We can run into the king's court. We can run up to his throne.

And take. All of his time. At any moment. You understand? My confidence grows. As my intimate knowledge. Of God grows.

Would you bow your heads with me? God. I ask that you would increase our confidence. That you would increase our knowledge of you. There might be somebody in here this morning. Who needs to meet you for the first time. So right now.

While our heads are bowed. I'm going to ask this question. Like I do every week. If you don't know Jesus. As your savior. And you know today's the day. You need to repent of your sin. Turn from it. And turn to Jesus.

Would you slip your hand up real quick please? Would you slip your hand up? Thank you. Let me ask this question. How many of you might say that. I need to be a more confident Christian.

[34 : 01] Which means I need to get to know God better. I need to change my view of God. Get to know him. In the way that the Bible actually portrays him. Not other people. Tell me what he is.

I need to get to know him for myself. How many of you would say. That's me. I need to build my confidence. And get to know God better. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. How many of you would say.

That fear. Has been attacking me. And that's something. I need prayer for. Fear has been. Coming after me. Would you slip your hand up real quick. I'll pray for you. Thank you. Thank you.

God you see these hands. And you know. You know every other question. That I could have asked. And you know the answers. I pray that you would work at our hearts. This morning. That nobody would leave this room.

Having a false relationship with you. That nobody would leave this room. Still trusting in themselves. That nobody would leave in this room. Thinking that you don't love them. You don't care about them. God you've told us exactly the opposite.

[35 : 00] And you prove it time and time again. In our lives. And those who haven't experienced that. I pray that they would get to know you better. That they would learn.

What is that power? What is that hope? What is that inheritance? That is found in you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.