

Ephesians 1G

- For the past month, we've been in the weeds of chapter 1 following along in Paul's outline of grace
 - His outline took us through vs.3-14 as he explained the ways each Person of the Godhead has granted us favor
 - Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked together to bring a plan of salvation and glory to fruition in each our lives
 - We didn't stumble upon the path to salvation
 - God prepared salvation for us, brought it to us, confirmed it in us and now He is living within us to guarantee the conclusion
 - Now as we move forward in Paul's letter to believers in Ephesus, let's remember why Paul launched into his conversation on grace
 - As we learned earlier, Paul is teaching to a church living in a city preoccupied with wealth, success, power, and pagan worship
 - So the temptations for believers to chase the world are everywhere
 - And so is the tendency to boast, to glorify self
 - For in this culture, power, wealth and prestige were considered noble pursuits
 - But the pursuit of these things conflicts with a Christian's duty
 - They distract us from our pursuit of Christ
 - They conflict with our witness and with our opportunities to build the Kingdom
 - And they compete with our pursuit of our inheritance in Heaven
 - That's why Paul went to such effort to explain how far the Lord has already gone in bestowing grace upon each of us
 - God has secured our place in the Kingdom, He's assured us of Heavenly riches far beyond what can be found here
 - And He's done it for us not because we had achieved greatness, but because He showed us unmerited favor

- Simply put, you don't earn what God gives by grace, and you can't lose what you didn't deserve in the first place
- So Paul wants the believer in Ephesus to give greater appreciation to what they have received in Christ
 - In fact, every student of scripture, having reached v.14 of Ephesians 1, should fall to his or her knees in praise and thanks for God's wisdom and mercy
 - God's grace is an overwhelming, awe-inspiring truth for any believer who fully grasps it
 - In fact, notice how Paul ends the passage in v.14
 - He says God's entire plan of grace for His Church is to the praise of His glory
 - The whole plan was designed to inspire praise from us
 - And that all our praise would be to His glory, not to our own nor anyone else's
 - The plan of our redemption and our future glory in the Kingdom began and ended with His grace poured out on us
- And next Paul says he also thanks the Lord for His grace granted to Ephesus

[Eph. 1:15](#) For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,

[Eph. 1:16](#) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

[Eph. 1:17](#) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

- Paul didn't just thank the Lord for the grace God had given him personally
 - Paul also thanked the Lord for His grace given to others, particularly Ephesus
 - In His prayers he specifically told the Lord thank you for bringing the church in Ephesus into existence
 - And he thanked the Lord for making Ephesus a loving church, a place that expressed for all saints
 - Paul says he went step further...he never ceased to give thanks to God for this miracle in such a pagan, lost place

- He made specific mention of the believers in Ephesus regularly in his prayers
- And not only Ephesus, but Paul testified he did the same for others as well
- Paul said similar things to the churches in Rome, Colossae, Philippi, and Thessalonica
 - Think about that for a moment
 - How many long do you think Paul's prayer request list was?
 - How many prayer needs do we suppose Paul had personally?
- Paul says elsewhere that he was often hungry, cold, beaten, opposed by the devil, and imprisoned
 - And then there were his ministry challenges
 - And the need to raise up leaders and to contend with opposition
 - His list must have been a mile long
- And how many other people do we suppose sought Paul's intercession on their own behalf?
 - Can you imagine the list he maintained for others
 - I bet it took Paul hours of prayer time to get through it all
 - And I expect Paul devoted the necessary time knowing how important that time was to his own relationship with Christ
- Nevertheless, how amazing it that on top of all that Paul never ceased to include a thanks to the Lord for the believers the Lord allowed Paul to plant
 - He thanked the Lord for His grace to make Paul's preaching fruitful
 - He gave God glory for the results
 - And he thanked the Lord for communities of loving, faithful believers
 - Do we think about prayer in this way? Do we think about thanking the Lord for His grace, both in our own life and the life of others?
 - When you think about it, that's the most important thing we could thank God for

- Because grace is the start of every good work of God
- Thank Him for your church, for having extended His grace to this corner of the city
- And for having brought together s loving community
- Thankfulness in your prayers will translate into contentment in your life
 - Here again, this may have been missing in the church in Ephesus
 - Failing to recognize the magnitude of what they had already received in God’s grace left them seeking for the world’s rewards
 - And failing to thank the Lord for His grace resulted in a lack of contentment
- Notice Paul says in v.17 that he also prayed for the Lord to give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him
 - When Paul uses the word spirit in v.17, he means an attitude, not the Holy Spirit
 - The believers in Ephesus already possessed the Spirit as Paul said earlier in v.13
 - Paul is asking that the Lord open their eyes to understand the spiritual realities of their situation
 - They needed an attitude of wisdom
 - And they needed God to reveal spiritual truth to them so they could gain that attitude
 - This is the first indication in the letter that Paul knew that not all was right in this place
 - Despite their love for one another in the body, they were moving away from a reliance on Christ and His promises
 - They were departing from their first love, as Jesus later identifies
 - But at this point, Paul is still working to save the church body from that fate
 - But it’s important to notice that Paul didn’t start his counsel by focusing on their behaviors
 - Certainly, the church was engaged in some bad behaviors

- Later in the letter Paul will call out some of the church's bad practices
- But Paul knew the church couldn't put godliness into action if they didn't understand what godliness requires
- As our thinking goes, so goes our acting
- What you understand about the Lord through His word will determine how you behave and whether you mature as a Christian
 - Bible study isn't sufficient to ensure obedient living
 - Plenty of mature Christians still struggle with sin, as even Paul said of himself in Romans 7
 - But study of God's word is absolutely necessary if we hope to have any opportunity to resist sin and walk in peace with Christ
- So Paul was praying for a revelation of knowledge from God
 - When Paul wrote this letter, very few works of New Testament scripture had yet to be written
 - So the church didn't have the benefit of the whole counsel of God's word
 - Certainly they had Old Testament scripture, but Paul knew the knowledge they needed had yet to be revealed in scripture
 - So Paul prayed for the Lord to reveal new truth to Ephesus, and in fact that revelation eventually came through Paul's letters
 - But for us today, we wouldn't pray for new revelation
 - We don't need to make that our prayer, because we already have the full revelation of God in His word
 - Peter says that scripture has all that we need for life and for godliness
 - So when we seek help moving away from sin, we need not petition God for new revelations
 - We just open our Bibles
- Nevertheless, we should echo one part of Paul's prayer
 - Paul asked the Lord to give Ephesus an attitude of wisdom

- A spirit or attitude of wisdom is the key to sanctification
- If a believer doesn't value spiritual wisdom, then they have no hope to mature much less experience sanctified living
- If your attitude is Bible knowledge isn't important or it's only for the pastor, then you're going nowhere fast, spiritually speaking
- In reality, our entire walk with Christ is about knowing Him
 - Warren Wiersbe once wrote that to know God personally is salvation
 - To know Him increasingly is sanctification
 - To know Him is glorification
 - In the end, it's about knowing Him
- It seems Ephesus was a church that didn't value spiritual wisdom
 - Perhaps they valued earthly wisdom
 - Perhaps it was about money, sex, power, achievement
 - Whatever got them excited, it wasn't pursuit of spiritual wisdom
- Their eyes were blinded by the shiny objects of their culture, and it worried Paul, so his prayer continues in v.18

[Eph. 1:18](#) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

[Eph. 1:19](#) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

[Eph. 1:20](#) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

[Eph. 1:21](#) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

[Eph. 1:22](#) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

[Eph. 1:23](#) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- Paul says he wants to see the eyes of their heart enlightened

- Obviously, Paul is speaking euphemistically, since hearts don't have eyes
 - To see with the heart is to have a spiritual understanding
 - So to have the eyes of our heart enlightened means to have our spiritual understanding illuminated or increased
 - Just as our physical eyes see better when there is plenty of light, so does our spiritual understanding grow when God brings illumination
- Specifically, he wants the church to have a better understanding of a two core spiritual truths
 - First, he wanted the church to understand the hope of their calling
 - The calling refers to salvation itself
 - Every believer is called into faith by the Lord Who called us by His Spirit
- And our calling brings to us a special hope, but we must appreciate that hope if we are to allow that hope to drive our life even now
 - Remember, a hope is a trust in something that has not yet come to pass
 - As Paul says elsewhere:

[Rom. 8:24](#) For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

[Rom. 8:25](#) But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

- So what is the hope that we await eagerly, the thing Paul says this church needs to understand and appreciate better?
 - Paul explains in the next part of v.18
 - He says it's the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints
 - Simply put, it's our life in the coming Kingdom
 - It's our resurrected body to replace this one

- It's our heavenly wealth in the Kingdom to replace the wealth of unrighteousness that perished with this world
- It's the glory of sinless life spent serving Christ
- It's the whole package wrapped up in a single hope of our eternal future made possible by our faith in Christ
- This is the hope of our faith
 - It's a hope that looks forward to our future
 - While inoculating us from the excesses of today
 - To the degree we remain focused on the eternal, we'll care that much less for the temporal
- And the second thing Paul wants the church to understand is the surpassing greatness of Christ's power to His children, those who believe
 - Paul is urging the believer to contrast the here and now with the eternity to come
 - The riches of this world are temporary
 - We can possess them for a time, but eventually we must let them go
 - Our houses deteriorate, our cars get dents and wear out, our bobbles fall apart and lose their luster
 - And even if we keep something for a lifetime, we still relinquish it at death
 - And even then we work our entire life to obtain these things, but we rarely actually obtain them anyway, at least not what we really want
 - There is always something out of our reach, something better
 - We get the regular, but we wished we could afford the deluxe
 - We get the deluxe and our neighbor gets the limited edition
 - We get the latest edition, and Apple releases a newer one tomorrow
 - In other words, if we make our life's goal to chase what the world offers, it's like chasing our tail

- We don't possess the power to get what we really want
- And even what we do possess won't last
- And in the end we die anyway
- Sure, we all must possess things, the necessities of life and perhaps a few special things
 - But are your nice things working for you in service to Christ?
 - Or are they barriers to spiritual wisdom and sanctified living?
 - Is the pursuit or possessing of such things competing with your first love?
 - That was the problem in Ephesus
- So Paul contrasts the worldly life with a life of living with eyes for eternity
 - Paul declares that the hope of every Christian should lie in our eternal inheritance and in the surpassing greatness of God's power to secure it for us
 - Paul explains in vs.20-23 that our hope is not a foolish hope
 - The Father has already demonstrated His power to keep His promises
 - He raised Jesus from the dead
 - He delivered Christ to His right hand in the heavenly places
 - And He has put all things in subjection to Christ, including the Church body
 - In other words, if you need proof of Father's promise to you of a coming inheritance in a coming kingdom, then consider what He has already done for your fellow Heir, Christ
 - Jesus has already received the very things promised to every heir
 - Paul says Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection, which means Jesus is merely the first to receive the fruit of His obedience
 - We too are heirs and therefore the Father will grant similar things to us
 - Are you tired of that weak, dying body?

- Don't spend too much time trying to make it last forever
- Put your hope in the Father's power to raise you one day into a new, perfect, eternal body
- Because He did it for Christ already
- Are you tired of everything you own wearing out, breaking down, being stolen or rusting away?
 - Don't spend your life trying to preserve them unnecessarily
 - Don't put in overtime to afford the upgrade, the replacement, or next year's model
 - Put your hope in the Father's power to grant you beautiful things that can never wear out and that nothing here can equal
 - Because He gave Christ dominion over the entire Creation
- Are you growing weary of enemies of one kind or another persecuting you, taking advantage of you, abusing you, disappointing you?
 - Don't waste time on conflict or revenge
 - Don't grow angry or fearful
 - Put your hope in the Father who will one day place you in His government in the Kingdom, ruling over all who might oppose Him
 - Because He has already placed Christ in authority over all enemies and over all the church
- You see how your future and Christ's future are tied together because we are fellow heirs with Him
 - This is our hope as Christians, our confidence that better things are coming one day
 - But it is possible for a believer to neglect to live in the light of that hope
 - We can have these things given to us, yet not understand that they are coming and therefore not live in light of that wisdom
 - The writer of Hebrews says it this way

[Heb. 6:17](#) In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

[Heb. 6:18](#) so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

[Heb. 6:19](#) This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

- God desired to show His heirs, that is you and me, that His promises are unchangeable
 - So even as God declared to Abraham that He would have an inheritance in the Promised Land in the Kingdom
 - Later God swore an oath to Abraham that He would keep this promise
 - And the writer says that though God cannot lie, nevertheless the Lord swore His oath to give Abraham that much greater confidence to rest in this promise
 - Simply put, God wanted Abraham to take hold of this hope, to never doubt in it
 - Notice in v.18 the writer says this hope is a refuge for us
 - It's a refuge against the temptations of the world
 - A refuge from fear and anxiety
 - A refuge from disappointment and depression
 - A refuge from excess and greed
 - But you have to take hold of it
 - You have to understand that it's coming, that it's real and that it's assured
 - Every believer has this hope, because it is theirs by grace
 - But not every believer grabs hold it
 - Not everyone understands it
 - So Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus to be enlightened

- To have an attitude seeking spiritual wisdom
- So that they might finally experience the hope that was already theirs in Christ
- Christian, have you taken hold of your hope? Is it your refuge in this life?
 - Pray for an attitude of wisdom in understanding the word of God
 - And let that knowledge drive you into the hope set before you
 - So you might find it a refuge in this world