

**A Series on Ephesians**  
**Knowing God: “Hope, Identity, and Power” (Ephesians 1:15-23)**  
**March 7, 2010**  
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I. Introduction

Good morning! Welcome to New City!

Introduce three issues: despair, self-hatred, and powerlessness.

We are in the middle of a series on the Letter to Ephesians. We have been studying Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians.

Let’s read Ephesians 1:15-23.

<sup>15</sup>For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup>I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup>which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Paul keeps on praying that God will give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we might know him better. Paul prays that we might know him better in three areas; and these are the three things we want to talk about this morning: (1) the hope; (2) our identity; and (3) the power. If we knew these three things, they will change our lives utterly and completely.

**II. First, he prays for hope.**

Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may *know* the *hope* to which He has called us. When Paul was praying that they may know, he wasn’t praying that they may know for the first time the hope that they have in their calling, he was praying that they would really really know, that they would be amazed by

the hope, that they would be dazzled by the hope in all its depth. Do you understand the depth of the hope to which he has called you?

What does he mean by hope? Generally, when we say we hope for something, it means we wish for something. For example, I could ask you, “did you pass the test?” If you are not sure, you would say, I hope so. “I hope I win the lottery.” “I hope she says yes.” “I hope there’s no traffic.” It is different from saying, I know so. In the Bible, the word “hope” is not the same as a wish, but a certainty regarding the future. The biblical hope is not like a kite at the mercy of the changing wind. Hebrews 6:19 says: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” The hope that we have is an anchor for life; it is secure. Hebrews 11:1 says: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The hope of the future for us is a certainty.

So, Christian hope can be defined as a life shaping certainty about the future. It is living now in a way that is completely changed because of what you know about the future.

Imagine two sets of workers working in identical working environment. Identical long hours. Identical boring work. But, tell one set of people that after one year, they will be paid \$10,000 and tell the other set of people that after one year, they will be paid a billion dollars. What they expect in the future completely changes the way that process the present. Identical circumstances are processed in a different way because of their belief in the future. Same thing with us. What we believe about the future determine the way we approach our live everyday.

Let me make something clear. Christian hope has to do with the ultimate future state. Many people think if I live a good life now, I will have peace and prosperity now. That’s not it. There is only person who lived a good life, yet he was rejected, betrayed, tortured and crucified. He said, if they hated me, they will hate you.

What you think the ultimate future is WILL affect you.

W. Somerset Maugham who wrote *Of Human Bondage*: wrote a biography called “*The Summing Up*.” In it, he said:

“The astronomers tell us that at long last the universe will attain final stages of equilibrium where nothing more can happen, but ions and ions before that humanity will have disappeared. Is it possible to suppose that it will matter that we ever existed? We

will have been a chapter in the history of universe as pointless as the chapter about the strange monsters that inhabited the primeval earth. Now, once you know that the existence of God and survival after life is too doubtful to believe in, then if death ends everything, if I have neither the hope for good nor to fear the evil, I must ask myself now how must I live. And the answer is plain but so unpalatable that most will not face it. There is no meaning for life and thus life has no meaning.”

In his book, *Of Human Bondage*, there is a character called Philip Carey, which is very much like himself. He had lost his faith as a child and believed that at the end it makes no difference at all how you live; but the implication of that belief didn't sink until one day he was sitting on a park bench in London and he came to this realization: “There was no meaning in life. Man by living served no end. Life was insignificant and death was without consequence. And to Philip, it seemed that at last the burden of any responsibility was taken from him and for the first time he was utterly free but ... (two sentences later) he realized he could never be happy.”

Here's what this means: people who believe that there is nothing refuse to believe in the implications. Average people have no belief in the ultimate future, but they believe in justice, working for right and wrong, even if you refuse to see the how completely inconsistent it is, the reality of what you think about the ultimate future will creep into you. Your heart will be full of emptiness. Despair will creep into your life. We are a hope based creature. And what we think about the future determine how we live our lives.

### **III. Second, Paul prays that we would know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**

This is an interesting phrase. If you read over this really quickly, you will assume that Paul is saying that we would know how glorious OUR inheritance is in Christ. In fact, that's what he was talking about when he prayed that we would know the hope for which we were called, but here, he is saying something different: he said the riches of HIS inheritance in the saints. He's not talking about our inheritance. He is talking about HIS inheritance. As Jason mentioned a couple of weeks ago, this passage is praying that we should know that WE (YOU AND I) are God's inheritance. Earlier, in verse 14, we

are called HIS possession. Now, we are called HIS inheritance. Sometimes, the Bible calls us his portion. Do you know what this means? Paul is praying that we would know how God thinks of you and me. How special he thinks of us. He is saying: you are my treasure! You are my love. As a lover says to his love: you are mine! You are my reward! There is no end to God's love for you and me. He does not love me to get me to do something. He does not love me to get to something else. I am his reward and treasure.

If only we knew this. If only we knew this in the heart of our hearts. If only we can just soak ourselves in this. It will blow your mind away.

With all of our imperfections, with our addictions, with our messiness, with our selfishness, with our darkness, YET, God says you are my treasure. He sees us as a beautiful bride. That's what Jason preached. Remember the gown? We are his bride. But, this is not because we are perfect and deserving. It is because we have been forgiven through Jesus Christ our Lord and redeemed. We didn't redeem ourselves by improving. Jesus redeemed us.

Do you know what God thinks of you? Can you grasp it? But, the problem is that we think of ourselves much more critically and negatively than God thinks of us. The problem is that we see ourselves based on our performance, based on how good we are, based on how we are doing in the pecking order of life, based on this and that. You see, if you don't know what God thinks of you and adopt what you think of yourself based on God's view of you, you end up getting trapped in performance based view of yourself.

And others as well. If we don't understand that God sees us as HIS treasure, we will not see others as treasures. We will not see beauty in others. We will never be an inclusive church unless we come to terms with the reality, until we KNOW that God sees us as His treasure and God sees others as His treasures.

The only way for us to love ourselves and to love others is to see ourselves through the lens of God's love. Through the gospel lens of redemption and grace. That was the prayer for Paul and that is my prayer for you!

#### **IV. Third, Paul prays that we may know His power.**

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe" (vv, 18, 19). This phrase "incomparably great power" in Greek is awesome. Each word has made it to the English language. In Greek, it is huper, megathos, dunimus. Huper became super or hyper. Megatos still means great. Dunimus came to mean explosive—dynamite. So, Paul is saying that we may KNOW God's "SUPER, MEGATOS, DYNAMITE." Don't you love that? Now for Paul the place where the power of God is most visibly seen is not in creation or in natural phenomena like earthquakes, storms or volcanoes. It is seen in the gospel. He says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power (dynamite) of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). What saves us and sanctifies us and glorifies us is the power of God. He also prays that we might: know the "immeasurable greatness of the energy of the might of his strength" (v.19). That's a literal translation. It's almost impossible to put into English. The apostle is piling words upon words to describe this glorious power of God that has been revealed in Jesus Christ.

Where has God demonstrated his power? Paul says (1:19-21), "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." What is that power? Do you notice that it is power for us who believe? The very same divine power which raised Jesus from the grave and brought him to the right hand of the Father and set him in a place of incomparable glory is the very power that is available to us. No wonder the apostle cries to God that the eyes of our understanding might be opened that we would grasp this! How awful it is that we often live in such poverty and in such spiritual paralysis when the full magnitude of God's power is available to us!

If you look at 2 Kings, there is a story of Ben Hadad, the king of Aram (2 Kings 6). Ben Hadad was in great trouble. He was an enemy of Israel and had discovered that whenever he made an attack on Israel, somehow or other all his plans had been made known beforehand. He went to the people within his courts and said, "Which of you has betrayed us?" And they said, "Nobody, my Lord, O King. It's that little prophet Elisha down in Dothan. He seems to know even the things that my Lord the king plans in his

bedchamber." "Well," said Ben Hadad, "send an army. In fact, send the cavalry, send the artillery, send everything we have, and get him!" So down they went, launching everything they had to find Elisha, the little prophet of God.

It must have been quite amusing. I'm sure Scripture is full of this kind of beautiful humor. Somebody would stop this great army and say, "Where are you going? What battle are you going to fight?" "Oh," they would say, "we are going to arrest the little prophet down in Dothan."

Elisha was there with just his servant, a young man. The young man looked and saw all the army and cavalry of Ben Hadad and all the horses, chariots and artillery - and his heart sank! He ran to Elisha, dragged him outside and said, "Do you see this?" "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." The young man looked around and saw the hills full of the horses and chariots of the enemy and all the soldiers standing on guard. Then he looked at Elisha and himself. I'm sure he said to himself, "That's the trouble with these old guys. They don't face reality. The guy is turning senile."

But it was Elisha who saw reality, and he cried to God, and said, "Lord, open this young man's eyes!" And the Lord opened the young man's eyes, and he saw that the hills were full of the horses and chariots of the Lord. And that day a mighty victory was won by God.

"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

If we have that confidence, we can go anywhere in the name of God. Oh, may God make us conquerors and more than conquerors through him.