

Hope Christian Church
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Sermon Series: *The Book of Ephesians*



The Immeasurable Greatness of His Power

(Ephesians 1:15-19 ESV)

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.

For This Reason

In these verses that we come to this morning, Paul transitions in his writing and thinking. The phrase **'for this reason'** almost always in Paul's writings indicates a change to a new topic or a new strain of thought. He moves **from praise**, in v.3-14, **into prayer**, in v.15-19. He moves from exaltation to intercession. He passes from, perhaps the highest doctrine in all his letters, into a most earnest pastoral prayer.

If you ever want to get to know someone, pay attention to their prayers. If you want to get a feel for where they are in their relationship with the Lord, pray with them and listen to their prayers. If you long to draw close to someone, pray with them. And if, in your journey with the Lord, you ever get to a place where you can't pray, then you're in a very precarious position. This prayer, in these verses, opens up for us a little window into Paul's heart for these believers in the city of Ephesus.

(Ephesians 1:15-16 ESV)

¹⁵ *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,* ¹⁶ *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*

Paul explains why, how, and when he prays for them. He writes that the reason why he prays for them is **"because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints."** Here Paul offers us a nice summary of what it means to be a believer in Jesus. Believers are marked by two things, *visible faith in God* and *genuine love for fellow believers*.

Paul Has Heard About Them

Paul has **heard** of their faith and love. The news of their conduct has reached his ears. Word of how these believers were living has come to him. You will remember that, according to Acts 19, Paul spent about two and half years preaching and teaching in Ephesus. After he departed, the believers had continued in the faith and the Lord added new converts to the church through them and many more people had become followers of Jesus. Paul always kept tabs on the people of God among whom he had ministered and evidently he had heard good news about the believers in Ephesus. He had heard about them. What did he hear?

The first fact that Paul indicate that he has heard about them was **of their faith in the Lord Jesus**. The believers in Ephesus are not merely a "people of faith," in some generic sense, but they are a people of *faith in the Lord Jesus* in a very particular sense.

In our culture today, it is acceptable—though for how much longer I don't know—to be a "people of faith." At least being a "person of faith" is somewhat acceptable just so long as you don't explain in too much detail about the content of that faith. But don't start explaining that faith. It's okay to "believe" but keep what you believe to yourself.

Paul is not content with such a vacuous, generic understanding of faith, and neither should we be. Paul explains there is content to the Christian faith. We do not merely "believe," as if *what*

we believe is unimportant. No. We are a people of faith, and there is clear, historical content to that faith.

Faith in Jesus

Our faith is in **Jesus**. The Jesus of the Christian faith is the Jesus who was born in Bethlehem and grew up in the city of Nazareth, where his father Joseph was a carpenter. The Jesus upon whom our faith is focused is the Jesus of Nazareth—a located in northern Israel.

It is the followers of this Jesus whom members of Islamic State are targeting and executing. Just yesterday, CNN featured an article entitled "[Faith Turns Christians Into Terrorists Targets.](#)"

Last July the National Review ran an [article](#) which explained that when Islamic State took over Mosul they sent out word to all Christians that they had to either leave Mosul, pay jizya—an enormous tax, convert to Islam, or be killed.



They went through the city marking the homes of Christians with the 'noon,' the fourteenth letter in the Arabic alphabet, which is equivalent to our letter 'n.'

The 'n' stands for 'Nazarenes,' which is a derogatory term referring to Christians, or those who are followers of Jesus. And just three days ago in the video ISIL released showing the murder of 30 Ethiopian Christians, they referred to those Christians they killed as 'Nazarenes.'

ISIL too had heard of the faith of these Christians. They knew which houses to go to and which to avoid. They knew which houses to spray paint and which ones to leave alone. They knew which Ethiopians were followers of Jesus and which ones were not. They had heard of their faith in Jesus, the Jesus of Nazareth. Yes, Christians are a people of faith, but it is a faith specifically focused upon the historical person called Jesus of Nazareth.



Faith in the Lord Jesus

Paul even more specifically explains who this Jesus is in whom the Ephesians had put their trust. He is **Lord Jesus**. The Greek word translated 'Lord,' is *κύριος*, which is "a title for God and for Christ and means **one who exercises supernatural authority over mankind**—'Lord, Ruler, One who commands.'"¹ This is the Jesus in whom these Ephesians had put their faith is Lord.

'Lord' is not some honorary title which Jesus held at some point in the past. Paul does not say that Jesus was Lord. Paul is indicating that Jesus IS Lord. At the time Paul was writing this letter, Jesus is Lord. This, of course, assumes he is risen. He is not a dead Lord. No one is Lord who is dead. You can't rule anything if you're dead. Jesus is a living Lord who was reigning at the time Paul was writing, which was around A.D. 62, which was about 30 years after Jesus was crucified. If he was alive at the time Paul was writing, then he is alive and reigning today. This is **THE** central truth of the Christian faith.

(1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ESV)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

This is the Jesus of the Bible. This is the Jesus of the Christian faith. He is risen Lord. He is not a nice, moral teacher. He is a victorious warrior who took on death and won. He is not merely a prophet. Jesus is the Prince of heaven, the one and only Son of the God of Hosts. Jesus is not merely a cool revolutionary. He is the One through whom the God who created the world, spoke all things into existence. He is Lord of lords, God of very God, and King over all other kings. He is **LORD** Jesus. This is the Jesus in whom the Ephesians had put their faith. This is the first piece of evidence that they had a genuine relationship with the living God, their faith in LORD Jesus.

Love for All the Saints

Paul had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus. He had also heard of their **love for all the saints**. The first mark of a living relationship with God is visible faith in the Lord Jesus. The second mark of a living relationship with God is *love for all the saints*.

On Jesus' final evening with his disciples before his crucifixion, he said this to them;

(John 13:35 ESV)

³⁵ "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 138.

It is true that we are commanded to love our neighbor, second only to loving God, but there is also an expectation that the people of God are to uniquely care for and love one another. Again and again we see this in Scripture. Believers are commanded to love each other. Jesus, here in this verse in the gospel of John, goes so far as to say that it will be a means of all people knowing whether or not someone is a disciple of Jesus. That is an amazingly clear statement. Paul says basically the same thing.

(Galatians 6:10 ESV)

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We are to be kind and good to all people. However, we are to be especially kind and good to those who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. There should be an especially sweet mark of “above and beyond” affection that exists among the people of God. This should be visible to the watching world.

In fact, if there is no affection in your heart for the people of God, then you should examine yourself. The apostle John explains in his first epistle that one of the ways in which we can know we are truly God’s children is because of this very reason.

(1 John 3:14 ESV)

¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

Those People Are Outsiders

I will never forget the first time I doubted my father’s salvation. It was a two days after² my [23rd] birthday. This was during my parent’s divorce and it was an especially difficult time on all of us. My dad was struggling. I suggested that he speak with some of his friends at church, some of the men with whom I had grown up with looking up to them as “fathers” in faith. His response was devastating. He said, “I can’t go to them. They’re outsiders.” By this he meant that he could not trust them or seek help or support because he had no real relationship with them.

That very day I had read 1 John 3:14. When my father spoke those words, it was as if a warning bell began to ring next to my ear. It was suddenly obvious that my father did not “love the brothers.” The very people I would have instinctively run to for help and support in such a time of trouble, which in fact I did, were the same people he was referring to as “outsiders.” That was the first time I began to consider whether or not my father’s faith was a “fake” faith.

² I know it was two days after because he had promised to take me out to dinner on the day of my birthday, but he completely forgot and left me waiting for him alone at a restaurant. We were finally able to go out two days later.

A Test for Assurance (or Not) of Salvation

Are you looking for a test for how to know for sure that you truly have passed out of death and into life, then here it is. Do you love the brothers? Do you gladly show love to all the saints? Do you enjoy being in the company of the people of God? Do you look forward to spending time with other Christians? Does it please you to do good to those who are of the household of faith? If so, then you can know that you have passed out of death and into life.

However, if you do not love the brothers and sisters in the Lord, then you need to test yourself and see if you truly are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5). If you can't stand the thought of being around "all the saints," then you still have some spiritual work to do. If you look forward to getting away from the people of God, then I wonder if in fact you are in Christ? If you'd rather be anywhere other than with the household of faith, then perhaps the Holy Spirit has not yet sealed you in Christ.

Paul had heard about these Ephesians. He had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and he had heard of their love for all the saints. Faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints are two necessary markers for discerning whether or not you have a genuine living relationship with God the Father.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

What is Paul's response after hearing these things about the Ephesians? He prays for them. He says in verse 16,

Ephesians 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Is this apostolic overstatement? Or is this Holy Spirit inspired truth? Is this overstuffed flattery or heart-felt thanks erupting in continual praise to God? Is this overzealous religiosity or simply true, godly love flowing from the heart of Paul for the Ephesians out through intercessory prayer to God the Father on their behalf? It is the latter.

Paul's simply practicing what he preaches. He teaches us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17) and here he is telling us that's what he does. The word translated as "remembering" here literally means "making mention." This means Paul actually names them out loud before God as he is praying. He specifically mentions them by name before **the Father of Glory**.

This is the Spirit of God within Paul moving across the affections of his heart for the Ephesians and causing him to lift up sweet and kind prayers on behalf of the people of God.

And what does he pray for them? He has four particular requests.

1. First, he prays that God the Father would enlighten them by giving wisdom and knowledge.
2. Second, he prays that God would grant them to know what this hope is to which they have been called.
3. Third, he prays that they would know the riches of this glorious inheritance.
4. Fourth, he prays that God would allow them to understand the immeasurable greatness of his power.

Enlightenment Through Wisdom & Knowledge (v.17-18a)

We see the first request in v. 17-18.

Ephesians 1:17-18a (ESV)

¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

You'll first notice that Paul is praying to **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ**, whom he specifies as **the Father of glory**. Paul is praying to the God of Jesus, the Father of glory. He makes his request to him, that God, the one true God, and to no other god. The word glory refers to the brightness of the shining forth of all of God's good qualities and attributes. Paul highlights this 'bright' attribute of the Father, since he is about to pray that God would '**enlighten the eyes of their hearts.**'

Light exposes what is hidden and removes confusion and fear and all sources of stumbling. If Paul is praying that the eyes of the hearts of these Ephesian believers are to be enlightened, then it only makes sense that he would pray to the Father of glory since he is the one who has the power to shine into the dark places of their hearts and enable them to see. Clearly Paul believes there are things to be known about God that cannot be known unless God shines the light of his glory into their hearts.

Particularly Paul's request is that God would grant these believers the spiritual **wisdom** and **revelation** to **know** him more deeply and truly. They already know much. Remember all that Paul taught them in vs. 3-14. He has explained some magnificent truth in the opening paragraph of this letter. But Paul also knows that without the help of the Father of glory, they would never have the wisdom necessary to know him more fully.

The word translated 'knowledge' is *epignōsis* which means "the fullness of knowledge acquired through personal acquaintance."³ So Paul is praying that these Ephesians would be able to

³ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 30.

fully know God through a personal interaction with him. Paul wants them to personally experience God, not just have a mental knowledge of him. This knowing will not happen apart from God's granting the wisdom to do so. They will not fully know God unless he reveals himself to them.

Remember, he's writing to Christians. These are people who have been born again and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and yet Paul is praying for an even deeper experience and acquaintance with God, the Father of Glory. He is asking God to shine the light of his glory into the hearts of these Christians so that they might apply all this great doctrine that he just wrote to them in the first paragraph. Even though they have already been chosen, predestined for adoption as sons, been redeemed, lavishly received grace, and received an inheritance having been sealed by the Holy Spirit, there is still a need for the continual working of the Father of glory in the life of the believer. This is what Paul is praying for.

Know the Hope to Which You've Been Called (v.18a)

The second request Paul makes is that the believers would "**know what is the hope to which he has called you.**" What is this hope? It is the hope of enjoying everlasting peace and friendship with the one who created us and redeemed us. It is the hope of looking into the eyes of Jesus and having him throw open his arms to welcome us rather than throwing open his arms to send us away into the eternal fires of hell.

It is the hope of being able to rejoice in the glory of all of God's wonderful goodness rather than running away from him and hiding because of our sin. It is the hope of being able to delight in purity rather than snicker at it, while secretly delighting in sin. It is the hope of salvation and heaven and the full enjoyment of all true goodness. It is the hope of no more tears, no more pain, no more separation, no more sorrow, no more loss, no more injustice, no more enemies, no more suffering, but only enjoying "pleasures forever more in the presence of God at his right hand."⁴

(Titus 2:11-14 ESV)

*¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed **hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

Here's the way Peter put it.

(1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV)

⁴ Ps 16:11.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This is the hope to which we have been called. Friendship with God in his kingdom with no enemies.

Know the Riches of a Glorious Inheritance (v.18b)

The third request for the believes is that they may know "**what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**"

First of all we note that the saints, the people of God, are here referred to as God's inheritance. Paul here tells us that we, the people of God, will for all eternity, be to him like a glorious inheritance. This indicates to us how loved and treasured we are by God the Father. This idea of God's people being to him a treasured inheritance or a treasured possession is found throughout the Old Testament.

(Exodus 19:5 ESV)

⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

(Deuteronomy 4:20 ESV)

²⁰ But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

(Deuteronomy 7:6 ESV)

⁶ "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

(Deuteronomy 26:18 ESV)

¹⁸ And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,

(Deuteronomy 32:8-9 ESV)

⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

⁹ But the Lord's portion is his people,

Jacob his allotted heritage.

Psalm 33:12 (ESV)

*¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!*

The Lord treasures his people and he delights in them—us—and he will do so for all eternity.

Know the Immeasurable Greatness of His Power (v.19)

The fourth request Paul makes for the Ephesian believers is that they would know,

Ephesians 1:19 (ESV)

*¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,
according to the working of his great might.*

Paul is struggling to heap up every adjective he can think of in order to describe the greatness of God the Father of glory. He simply says, “I want you to know the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.” God expends an unmeasurable amount of greatness and power toward those who believe in him. And Paul wants believers to know something that is unknowable—**the immeasurable greatness of his power.**

How does one illustrate “the immeasurable greatness of God’s power?” The only way I know of is to go out in space.

The sun is the star nearest to earth. It is about 93 million miles away. It is so far away that light traveling from the sun, at a speed of 186,000 miles per second, takes eight minutes to reach us here on earth.

The next star nearest the sun is Proxima Centauri which is only 4.24 light years away. How far is that? If you were shrink down the entire universe so that our Sun is equivalent to the size of a grapefruit and then travel from the grapefruit sized sun to the next nearest star, you’d have to travel 2,500 miles, which is almost the distance across the continental United States.

Or here’s another way to think about this. The New Horizon’s spacecraft was launched in January of 2006. It is now traveling faster than any other man-made craft. It is traveling through space at a speed of 36,373 mph.⁵ Traveling at that speed, leaving earth it would not arrive at Proxima Centauri for 78,000 years.⁶

⁵ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Horizons accessed 25 Apr. 2015.

⁶ Source: <http://www.universetoday.com/102920/what-is-the-closest-star/> accessed 25 Apr. 2015.

Our galaxy is incredibly vast and we're only talking about the distance between our two nearest stars.

In our Milky Way there are an estimated 300 billion stars. The Milky Way is only one galaxy out of about 100 billion in the universe.

The Father of glory created this universe. He spoke this vast universe into existence. He created the earth and he created the heavens. He said, "Let there be light and there was light," particle and wave suddenly coming into existence and traveling at 186,000 miles per second.



He created in an instant, a universe that is so vast that it would take us, if we could do it, more than a hundred thousand years just to travel across it. This only gives us a hint of how to think about the **immeasurable greatness of his power**.

Has anyone heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus. Is your love of all the saints visible?

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you wisdom and reveal himself to you through experiential knowledge. May the eyes of your heart be enlightened. May you know the hope to which you have been called. May you know how much God treasures those who believe in him. And may you remember this week, the greatness of his power is immeasurable and the strength of his might is inexhaustible. Therefore he can satisfy your every need.