



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Powered by God

February 23, 2014

Ephesians 1:16-20 (18-19)

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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 ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

(Pastor prays)

Much like the world we live in today, the people that Paul wrote to were surrounded by a culture that was hostile to almost everything that they held dear. A culture that wants very little to do with a Christian worldview. Allow me to illustrate. David Wise is an Olympic freestyle skier. In fact, this Olympics in Sochi, David won the gold medal, and as impressive as that is, the big discussion has been around his alternative lifestyle. Several news agencies, including NBC, have reported on his alternative lifestyle. Do you know what that lifestyle is that they are calling “alternative?” He’s happily married, with a beautiful two-year-old daughter. He said, “More than being a superstar skier, first and foremost I have to be a good husband and father.” And the press is

calling that an alternative lifestyle. It's the world we live in, and if you are a Christian, it can sometimes be overwhelming. But we've got to fight against that.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." So we don't just curse the darkness, we reach for the light. We don't just point out the problems, we look to Christ for hope and life and power and a good future. That can't really take place if you are not in Christ. And in this passage, the prayer and promise is for those in Christ. It's what this chapter has been all about. And in this passage, Paul is praying for believers to know something. Being a Christian is not a crutch for hard times; it is a life for all times. This passage is packed with meaning. You could think of it like this: he covers our past when he says that he wants you to know the hope to which Christ has called you. Look back at his call, his effectual calling. Then, in verse 18, he says he wants you to know what's in the future. To know what are the riches of Christ's glorious inheritance in the Saints. But we don't live in the past, and we can't see the future. So, Paul says that he is praying for you right now. I want you to know "...what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places."

Do you know what Paul is praying here? I know life is hard, and what you're facing seems overwhelming, but you've got something that's going to get you through. You have the power of God. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Look Christians, don't give up. By God's grace and His power, He's going to get you through it, and He will receive glory for it. Past, future. Let's look at the present.

In Christ, Our Confidence is Strong and Our Future is Bright

So what does God do to make our confidence strong and our future bright? What does He do through Christ? I think there are three things, and all of them are right there in the text. Let me show you the first one:

In Christ, God Gives Us Hope

Notice what Paul is praying in verse 18: having the eyes of your heart enlightened. That happens when you became a Christian. The eyes of your heart are enlightened, and you see things differently based on that. I want you to know the hope to which He has called you. That word *hope* is assurance, confidence, and trust, and it's the calling that gives it. When Paul talks about God's call in Christ, it's not a general invitation to salvation. When God calls things to happen, it's His call that creates conversion. In fact, the word for *church* in Greek is *Ecclesia*. It literally means "the called out ones." The old timers said this was The Effectual Call. His call has an effect. Something happens. I'm spending some time here because the concept of God's calling is such an important building block in the Christian foundation. The most vivid example of God's call in Christ is the story of Lazarus being dead for four days, and Jesus standing in front of that tomb of deadness and calling "Lazarus, come out." It had an effect. When God calls you in Christ, you get called out of something and called into something else. I love Peter's description in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

So what does that mean? Why should it give me confidence?

He calls us to belong. Paul writes to the church at Corinth and says in 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." As a Christian, you are a part of this family of support and love and accountability and that gives great confidence.

In His call, He gives endurance. We see that in 1 Peter 2:21: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps." Because you are in Christ and He suffered for you, you can face anything with the hope of His calling.

He calls us to be different. Paul tells the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, “For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.” This gives confidence, especially to our students that feel like they are standing alone when they seek to be different. They are standing on something. That truth that in Christ, God gives us hope.

In Christ, God Gives Us Value

Let’s look back at Ephesians 1:18: “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.” What does Paul mean for us to know? I think he’s talking about us purchased by the blood of Christ and being His possession, His inheritance, so to speak. The way it’s worded, we are His valued inheritance. Think of it like this: because we are in Christ and bought by the blood of Christ, He has assigned us great value. Even when you feel like you have been used or forgotten or devalued, you are His precious possession.

Let me illustrate this. My grandfather on my mother’s side was named Morrison Biggers McCrorie. He fought in World War II in the European theater. He died when I was six. I remember his flag draped over his coffin, and last fall my mom found the flag at the bottom of a closet. She had one of the deacons who was a marine fold it in the military triangle and put it in a glass case. It is in my office and it is one of my most valued possessions. The physical makeup of the flag didn’t change. You can still buy a flag like that for \$7. But, because I love and cherish it, it has great value to me. In the same way, God found you somewhere you shouldn’t have been and He purchased you with the blood of Christ. And, because He loves you, it’s His love that has given you such value. You are a trophy of His love and grace. It determines how you live your life. You don’t need cheap love from someone that wants to use you. You have God’s love, the One that values you supremely. Now, if the death of Christ is the supreme illustration of the love of God, then the resurrection of Christ is the supreme demonstration of His power.

And that brings me to my third point:

In Christ, God Gives Us Power

Let me show you where I get that. Look how Paul says it in verses 19-20: “and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” The power that it took to raise Christ from the dead is the power mentioned in verse 19 as the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe. In this one little passage, Paul is straining to tell us the power we have in Christ. In fact, he takes the Greek dictionary and just turns it upside down and empties out all the Greek words for *power* and puts them in verses 19 through 20. There are four of them.

The first one is *Dynamis*. That is the power of acting, doing, and enduring, it's where we get the word dynamite.

The second one is *Energeia*. That is active power where we get the word energy.

The third is *Kratos*. That is the power to overcome something.

And the last one is *Isxus*. That is physical force to get up and go. That is to live.

So he lists these four words for power, and then backs up and says that is not enough. He adds what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us. Paul's not praying that it be given to believers, he's praying that we would be made aware of a power we already have. It is the power to save, the power to sanctify—that means to grow in Christ—the power to sustain.

The question is, why do we need this power? I believe there are three reasons. The first one is that we are weak. An example of this is Matthew 26:41, when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter, James, and John couldn't stay awake. These are men who were with Him every day for three years. Jesus said to watch and pray that you don't fall into temptation. The

Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Why do we need His power? Because we are tired, we get tired, we are emotionally drained and feel overwhelmed. We are weak.

Our enemies are strong. Paul addresses this at the end of Ephesians 6:12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” If we could see what is against us, seeking to destroy us, we wouldn’t be so cocky and cavalier with our Christianity. We need His power because we are weak and our enemies are strong.

The gospel is at stake. Even the apostle Paul, after years of following Jesus, knew that he could fall, and if he did he knew the devastating effects. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” We need His power because the gospel is at stake. Because the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It’s the gospel. Christ’s life, death and resurrection—that puts us in Christ. And in Christ, our confidence is strong and our future is bright. In Christ, God gives us hope. In Christ, God gives us value. In Christ, God gives us power. Come give your life to Christ.

(Pastor prays)