

Purpose Statement: Every believer has a wonderful, guaranteed future in store. The purpose of this study is to give assurance of this great future.

Eph 1:15–23 (ESV) 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 ⁽²⁰⁾ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ⁽²¹⁾ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ⁽²²⁾ And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ⁽²³⁾ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

1. Continuing our look at this great prayer of Paul for the saints

- A. He has already prayed that the Holy Spirit would open their understanding to know God better
 - 1). This is in a sense a general petition - to know Him better in every area of our life
- B. Now Paul turns to three specific petitions he desires for these believers
 - 1). I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

Eph 1:18 (NLT) I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand...
 - 2). He is praying they can understand three things
 - a). He prays they may understand the “hope” they’ve been called too
 - b). Then what is the riches of the glorious inheritance the saints enjoy
 - c). Finally what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe

2. Paul’s prayer is that we should really understand the things of God

- A. This was the constant desire of Paul

Eph 1:17 (NIV) *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.

 - 1). That tells us that it should also be a constant desire of the believer
 - 2). Peter tells us that we should be living a life that is growing in knowledge

Peter puts it this way: 2 Pe 3:18 (ESV) But *grow* in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

 - a). We know the main way this happens is through Scripture
- B. Here is one of the places the devil will attack – take this appetite for truth away
 - 1). Distract us with other things so we stay spiritually immature
 - 2). He knows when the believer sets the Bible down they are easily defeated

How to Live A Victorious Christian Life

Turn: Eph 6:11–13 (ESV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ⁽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. ⁽¹³⁾ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- 1). Each one of us lives our life on a battleground – and our opponent is radical
 - a). It is not man – it is the devil and his forces that are arrayed against us
- 2). The solution – the way we are going to stand is by “putting on the full armor of God”
 - a). Greek – “Put it on AND keep it on. Never take it off”
 - 1a). Why? Because the devil never takes a break – he watches for every weakness

The Armor

Eph 6:14–17 (ESV) Stand therefore, having fastened on the *belt of truth*, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ⁽¹⁵⁾ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the

gospel of peace. ⁽¹⁶⁾ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ⁽¹⁷⁾ and take the helmet of salvation, *and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*

- 1). Scripture is mentioned twice – “Belt of truth” and “the Sword of the Spirit”
 - a). Belt of truth is a well-rounded general knowledge of Scripture – always adding to it
 - 1a). Put first because it holds everything else together
 - b). Sword of the Spirit – the ability to take out the specific scriptures when necessary
 - 1a). Greek = Short sword used in hand-to-hand combat – used with precision
- 2). See this in Jesus when the devil tempted him in the wilderness
 - a). He had a well-rounded general knowledge of Scripture – belt that held all things together
But he was able to use that knowledge correctly
 - 1a). Each temptation was met with the appropriate scripture to defeat it

Point: God says your growing in knowledge and the ability to use it will determine if you are victorious or not

- A. If you have no appetite for the word – if you have set it down and have no desire to pick it up
 - 1). You are in the battle without the Spiritual armor on – you cannot stand
- B. The normal Christian life is one that reads God's word = resulting in growth in knowledge and maturity
1 Pet 2:2 (NASB) like newborn babes, *long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow* in respect to salvation,
- C. Paul thinks this is so important he continuously prays for it
 - 1). For that prayer to be answered the Spirit will lead you to the book he wrote
That is where all the knowledge you need is found
 - a). That is where the truth you need to guard against all the lies is found
 - 2).
- D. So we must read our Bible – but do that dependent upon the Spirit to give understanding
Eph 1:17–18 (ESV) 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...
 - 1). To grow in knowledge about God will take reading our Bible to see the truth about God
In absolute dependence upon the Spirit to give us understanding of that truth

Transition: If we are going to understand the power of this - we need to define some terms

- A. We need to know what *“Hope”* means in the NT – and what the *“Calling”* Paul refers to is

I. DEFINING TERMS

Hope

Eph 1:18 (ESV) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the *hope* to which he has called you...

1. Paul is not using “hope” in the same way we do

- A. Our use of hope has question marks in it – “I hope this will happen”
 - 1). I'm not sure it will but I hope it does
- B. But this Greek word (el-peace) has no doubt in it – it is a *confident expectation*

2. Confident expectation of what?

Paul tells us: 1 Th 5:8 (NIV) But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the *hope* of salvation as a helmet.

- A. The great hope of the Christian = confident expectation of eternal salvation – *assurance*
 - 1). A confidence that God will keep his promise about eternal life for those who believe

Called or Calling

Eph 1:18 (ESV) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope *to which he has called you...*

1. A great theological term that is being lost in today's Christianity

- A. But these terms are powerful – meant so much to our spiritual fathers

The Two Callings of Scripture (General and Effectual)

1. The general call

- A. See this in Paul's preaching to the Athenians

Ac 17:30 (ESV) The times of ignorance God overlooked, *but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,*

- 1). Gospel of Christ issues a general call to *every* man to repent and believe
- 2). This is the message we are commanded to take to all the nations in the Great Commission

Transition: This is not the call Paul is speaking of here in verse 18

- A. This is not a general letter going to all men - it is a specific letter going out to believers

2. The effectual call

- A. The general call is not always an effectual call - many the call & still end up in hell

- 1). They have not responded – the call has not been effectual in their case

- B. Paul describes the effectual call in Romans 8

TURN TO: Rom 8:28 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been *called* according to his purpose.

- 1). Here we have a calling from God – that calls a person into God's purposes

- C. He goes on to define who these called ones are

Rom 8:29-30 (NIV) For those God foreknew (**chose v. 4**) he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those he predestined, he also *called*; those he *called*, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

- 1). Obviously a special calling that goes beyond the "General" call to all men

3. Notice the three steps between the start and finish of God's plan

- A. **First step:** Those he *foreknew* and *predestined* he also *called*; (these *will be* called)

- 1). Not only with the external "General" call - but also with the internal "Effectual call"

- a). The general call comes to the ear only - the effectual hits the heart in power

1 Th 1:4-5 (NIV) For *we know*, brothers loved by God, that *he has chosen you*, (5) because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also *with power*, with the Holy Spirit and *with deep conviction*.

- 1a). We know you were chosen because the Gospel hit your heart with great power

- 2). This call is effectual because it is backed by the convicting and drawing power of the Spirit

- a). He convinces man's conscience of guilt & the danger he is in

- b). He enlightens the understanding to God's way of escape

- c). He then enables man to turn from sin and embrace Christ as the new Lord of their life

- 1a). The sinner is called from self to God

- 2a). From the earth and its ways to heaven and its ways

- 3a). From sin to holiness

- B. **Second step:** Those he called, he also *justified*

- 1). All that are effectually called are justified (Again part of the package)

- a). Absolved completely from guilt & accepted as righteous through Christ

- 1a). The record of sin is completely washed clean – paid for by Christ
- 2). Therefore - We are no longer dealt with as criminals - but as beloved children, as friends
- C. **Third step:** Those he justified, he also *glorified*
 - 1). Do you see the glory in all this? The predestined are *called to Christ in salvation*
 - a). The Spirit so moves in their heart that they see their sin – flee to Christ
Receive a new nature – the power of corruption is broken
and they are enabled to walk with God
 - 2). The list of sin is wiped clean in *justification*
 - a). Result all that hinders legally is taken out of the way
 - 1a). Nothing stands between the soul and glory - It truly is “Finished”
 - 3). This is so sure – God directs Paul to write in the past tense
“Those he predestined he called. Those he called he justified. Those he justified he glorified”
 - a). All based on God’s work not man’s – all recorded in the past tense

Point: We were called to his plan that will be completed – it is based on him

Php 1:6 (ESV) And I am *sure* of this, that *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

- A. Paul did not base his confidence on the Philippians – their ability to keep themselves
 - 1). He was confident that God would not lose any who are his – He would complete what he started
- B. God Himself makes sure every step from calling to glorification will be completed
 - 1). Aren’t you glad - Our wills are so fickle - our powers are so feeble
 - a). If any one of these steps were dependent upon us - we wouldn't make it
 - b). A chain only as strong as its weakest link - we would cause it to snap

Transition: Paul prays the believer would see this hope is built upon God alone

Why This Is So Important to Paul

1. Assurance of salvation is foundational to the joy filled Christian life

- A. You can be saved without this assurance – but it is hard to enjoy your salvation without it
 - 1). How can you enjoy something you’re not sure you have
CHS: "We prize full assurance beyond all price. We count it to be a gem beyond all earthly values. But we think it is a distressing doctrine to some of the weak ones of the flock to say that full assurance is necessary to salvation. We believe it to be necessary to deep joy, necessary to edification, necessary to usefulness, but necessary to salvation we do not believe it to be."

Thought: Without this you are vulnerable to the devils tormenting – I know this well

- A. He bombards you with doubts & uncertainties - using your slips & falls to cast you into despair
Until you question whether you are a Christian at all – did I just fool myself
 - 1). If he gets you to doubt you are a believer – everything starts to crumble
 - a). The promises lose their power – they are for believers – you might not be one
 - b). You won’t take risks for the kingdom – you’re not sure God will step out with you
 - 2). This lack of assurance weakens so many things
- B. This is why we need to grow in our understanding of doctrine and grace
 - 1). Truth enables us to stand against the devils attacks – getting us to focus on our performance
 - a). It tells us that God is keeping us – and he will finish what he began
Allows us to answer: "Yes I have slipped devil - but I have not slipped out of His grip"

Transition: So we need this assurance to live a joy-filled Christian life

- A. Paul prays the Spirit would give that to us -

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- 1). We need to see he does that in two ways
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II. THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN OUR ASSURANCE

The Spirit's Initial Work to Bring Us to Salvation

Eph 1:18 (ESV) (He prays we would have) the *eyes of your hearts* enlightened...

1. Eyes of the heart is a bit strange – does the heart have eyes?

- A. To understand this we need to know what heart means in Scripture

2. Heart defined: Central disposition, bent, inclination of the human soul

- A. We could say it is all that we are – mind, emotions, will
 - 1). For the natural man (unbeliever) all that is set against God – there is an inbred hostility
- B. In salvation the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to our sinful condition before God
 - 1). Then changes that bias against God – gives us a new nature that changes our natural bias
 - a). He changes that anti-God bias to a pro-God bias
 - b). He changes that hostility against God to an affection for God

Point: The sinner is given life – they embrace Christ by faith and that natural bent against God is changed

- A. Now they are born again – they are in a place they can enjoy assurance of salvation

Transition: But there is another thing necessary to enjoy assurance

- A. It is a product of the Spirit – but we are also involved
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The Spirit's Continuing Work in Sanctification

1. Paul is praying a two-fold prayer as far as these readers enjoying assurance

- A. He prays the Spirit would open their eyes to the doctrines of Scripture
 - 1). It is the great doctrines of the faith – Justification by faith alone – that give us assurance
These are the truths we hold up as the shield of faith to quench the devil's accusations
- B. He is also praying for the Spirit to enable them to live out their faith
 - 1). Doctrine gives us objective proof – facts
Sanctification gives us subjective proof - experience

Point: If I'm not living like I know I should – if my life is characterized by sin – I can't have assurance

2. Assurance requires a growing in the faith – turn to 2 Peter 1

2 Pe 1:4 (ESV) by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

- A. He is speaking to believers – those who are partakers of the divine nature
 - 1). But watch what is necessary for them to be assured of that salvation

2 Pe 1:5–7 (ESV) For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁽⁶⁾ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁽⁷⁾ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

- A. For this very reason – because God has done everything necessary for you to grow - mature
 - 1). He has called you – given you a new nature – placed his Spirit in you
 - 2). Now take advantage of that and progress – run the race well – put in effort

2 Pe 1:8 (ESV) For if these qualities are yours *and are increasing*, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. Do you want to be effective and fruitful – Peter has given us a track to run on

Transition: But watch what happens to assurance if we aren't growing

2 Pe 1:9 (ESV) For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

- A. Lacking these qualities makes you spiritually near sighted – you can't see far away
 - 1). You can't look back on that time you were forgiven with clarity
 - a). Why? Your life is blinding you to that – it is building a case against assurance

Transition: The remedy is found in v. 10

2 Pe 1:10 (ESV) Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

- A. What does it mean you will never fall?
 - 1). As you pursue these qualities Peter is written about in v. 5-7
 - You will not fall – or stumble – into doubt, despair, fear or questioning

3. The two-fold work of the Spirit that gives us assurance of salvation

- A. He illuminates the truth that tells you when you are saved you will be kept
- B. He empowers you to live the kind of life that provides evidence you have been saved
 - 1). It is a life of growth – a life that follows Christ
 - 2). If you're not growing – coasting – living in sin – you lose all that
- C. This is not earning salvation – this is not justification by works
 - 1). This is the work of the Spirit that empowers you

Phil 2:12-13 (NIV) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to *work out your salvation* with fear and trembling, (13) for *it is God who works in you to will and to act* according to his good purpose.

- a). We work out what he has worked in – when we choose to do that he gives us the power
- b). Grace does not eliminate that responsibility – it gives us the power to live like we should

4. Summary: The Spirit in answering this prayer that you will enjoy this hope

- A. He will move you to the Bible to learn these truths
 - 1). Here we see great truths that give us so much assurance – so much confidence
 - a). We are held by him and nobody can take us away – John 10:28-29
 - b). He has started something he will finish – Phil 1:6
- B. AND He will move you to growth and obedience so your life provides evidence you have been saved

Transition: Do you see why this comes before the next request?

Eph 1:18 (ESV) 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,*

- A. If you don't have this confidence you're truly saved – you will be in heaven
 - 1). How can you really be thrilled about the inheritance that is waiting for you there

CONCLUSION

1. Assurance is essential for enjoying our Christian life

- A. It is a work of the Spirit – why Paul asks the Father for the Spirit to accomplish this
 - 1). Assurance comes from Spirit illuminated truth
 - Assurance comes from Spirit empowered living

COMMUNION

1. Communion reminds us why all this is possible

- A. There is no assurance if our forgiveness isn't real

- 1). There is no forgiveness if the cross never happened
Ro 5:9 (ESV) Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
 - a). I have been justified by the blood of Christ – Not guilty – He paid the cost
 - b). Therefore I will be saved from the wrath of God
 - 1a). The Father accepts the sacrifice of his son as full payment for my sin
 - 2a). Therefore his law can find nothing to hold against me – to send me to hell
 Therefore I can have assurance that I will be in heaven

2. Today as we take the cup and the bread we want to thank God for his work

- A. That all of Ephesians 1 is based on the TRUTH that we have been called into his plan
 - 1). That plan ran through a cross where our Lord died for us
 - 2). That plan will continue into glory where we will dwell with God for all of eternity

3. Let's take the bread = His body brutalized for us

- A. Because he suffered for my sin I will not have to suffer for eternity

4. Let's take the cup = His blood shed for us

- A. His blood has an amazing cleansing power
 - 1). As his blood oozed out of his veins it in a sense landed on my record of guilt
 It continued until there was nothing left against me

- A. Paul is praying the Spirit would open their eyes to a Biblical objective assurance of salvation
- B. There is a subjective proof or means of coming to a place of assurance
 - 1). The cry of "Abba Father" placed in the heart of every true believer (Rom. 8:15)
 - a). That relationship between child and parent causing us to respond to Him
 - 2). The down payment (v. 14) a foretaste of heavenly life
- C. Paul wants more than just this subjective proof for them
 - 1). He knows that subjective proof is unstable and apt to change
 - a). Fall into sin, tragedy, sickness, the devil bombards you - you can be shaken
 - b). Perhaps the feelings of relationship are gone - veiled for awhile
 "Perhaps I was deluding myself - maybe I was never a Christian at all"
 - 1a). We can find ourselves in a great place of misery
- D. We need something more sure footed than experience - that will not fail - need objective proof
 - 1). I need something stable I can stand upon when my experience is being tossed around
 - 2). I need understanding of the unchanging truths of God to stand upon

