

Thanksgiving and Prayer

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[0 : 00] I'd like to turn once again to Paul's letter to the Ephesians at chapter 1, reading at verse 15. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Especially words there in verse 18, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. The primary need for the Christian church today is to realize, to understand what it means to be a Christian.

So what does it mean that we are Christians? What does it mean to the world around us that we are Christians and that we worship the living and the true God, and Christ Jesus, whom he has sent? Now, we need to know, we need to understand what our testimony is about, but we need to know how we should be recognized by the world around us.

[1 : 50] Because that's how the early Christians impacted their society. People knew who they were. They knew that they were Christians. They were given the name Christians out in Tarsus, where Paul lived.

When they went there, the early believers in the Lord were called Christians, the followers of Christ. They were the Christ ones. And that's how the world should know us also, that we are the ones who follow Christ.

We are the ones who worship Christ, who call upon the name of Christ. And yet we are so unlike the New Testament description of those early Christians.

So what does this particular chapter, the early verses of this chapter, tell us about who we are and what we should be? What is a Christian? Well, we're told a Christian is a saint.

Someone who is holy. Someone who has been set apart. Set apart by God, even as the children of Israel were set apart. We know that Abraham was called out from humanity to establish a new nation of Israel.

[3 : 02] Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Jacob and Jacob who took the name Israel after he wrestled with God at Peniel. And so Abraham was called out from the master of humanity.

And there was established by God a people, his own peculiar people to be separated to him. They were a chosen generation.

They were a peculiar people. And so should we be. We should be. We should be a chosen generation. We should be a peculiar people known for who we worship, known for our life and our walk and our conversation, that we are Christ and we seek to serve him.

We are in the world. We have to be in the world because we are born into the world. We make our living in this world. We have to engage in all the commerce and business of this world.

But we are not of the world. We don't or we should not engage in its recreation. We should not engage in its pastimes. We should not go to the places they naturally and habitually go to.

[4 : 14] Because if we do, we are entering into the devil's province and the devil's playground and really have no business in being in such places.

We need to be a separated people, a people separated unto God and by God himself. But not only are we set apart outwardly, not only has God chosen to separate us out from the mass of humanity by calling us to be his own people.

He has separated us also inwardly. He has cleansed us from the guilt of sin.

This inward cleansing, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, applied to us because of the work the Lord Jesus Christ did for us and for our salvation. We are cleansed from the guilt of sin.

We are cleansed from the pollution of sin that's around us. We know that sin abounds and sin is in the world all around us.

[5 : 24] And yet we are separated from it. We're separated from the guilt of it. We're separated even from the pollution that sin brings into this world. And we are set apart outwardly.

But the inward cleansing, the inward separation is just as important, if not much more important. The hymn writer says, there's a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

We are a redeemed people. This is the inward cleansing and the inward separation. We spoke about it this morning, about our being ready. Were we redeemed?

Were we washed? Were we reconciled? Well, the same sort of question is being asked here in this chapter. Are we part of that people, of those Christians who have been redeemed and cleansed and forgiven and justified?

And if we are, then this inward cleansing also leads to a separation of the world in which we live. Separated not because of something that's innate in us, but separated because of what the Holy Spirit has worked in us.

[6 : 48] We are given the Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us, give us the wisdom to live as Christians in this world and to be witnesses and bear testimony as to whose we are and whom we seek to serve.

And so the Holy Spirit gives us new desires. He fills us with a new hope that we will be with Christ where he is in the glory he had with the Father before the world was.

He makes us a holy, a separated people, a people who are called saints in the scriptures. The word, the Greek word is hagios. It's someone who is separated to be holy.

And the Holy Spirit works all these things each and every day. And every Christian is a saint. Now you know the Roman Catholic Church beatifies human beings and says these only are people who can be called saints.

But the scripture says every believer is a saint. Every believer is someone who has been separated from the world, who is called to be holy, who is called to be part of the great family of the living God.

[8 : 05] And so we are called to be saints. We are also called to be faithful. That is says in verse 2 to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Full of faith. Full of loyalty to Christ. And all that he has accomplished for us and for our salvation. So what makes us Christians?

What enables people to see whose we are? What enables people to see that we are Christians and we are different from them? Well, it's the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

That's what makes us Christians. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. It's the gift of God. It's the gift of God. A gift without repentance. The Holy Spirit given to us and enabling us to understand the scriptures.

Giving us the desire to be in the scriptures often. Making it our very lifeblood and the very breath that we breathe. Giving us the desire to be in the means of grace.

[9 : 14] And giving us the desire to understand more deeply what the scriptures reveal to us. All these are things the Holy Spirit works in us. If we think back to the time before we were called, before we were converted.

We can think how different our lives were to what they are now. We had perhaps a passing interest in the scriptures. But now it's an all-consuming interest.

We want to know the depth of the teaching the Lord gave to us through the prophets and the apostles. And so the Holy Spirit gives us a desire to believe in the Christian truth that is revealed to us here in the scriptures.

See a Christian is not merely a nice man. Not someone who's become moral, has turned over a new leaf and has become godly. Taken responsibility for his life.

But a Christian is a new creation. He's a member of the Christian church, yes.

[10 : 22] But that is what makes him a moral man. What makes him a new and a moral man is that he's a new creation. A new creation in Christ Jesus. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

And he's a new creation who believes certain things about Jesus Christ. Now the world has no interest in Christ. And those outside the church perhaps only use the name Christ as a blasphemy or some word of passing interest as they live out their days.

But for the Christian, Jesus Christ is our Lord and he's our God. We fall before him in wonder and in love and in praise. And we believe certain things about Christ.

About the person of Christ. Of who he is. That he is the eternal son of God who has become carnate. Who has come and lived on this earth as a human being.

He is the one who has been made flesh. And who dwells among us. He was born into this world through the virgin birth of his mother, the Virgin Mary.

[11 : 34] He took to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. Taking to himself manhood in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And so born of her yet without sin.

We believe in the death of Christ. It was a death not for himself and for his own sins but for us. A vicarious death. What he suffered was for us and for our salvation.

What he had to undergo so that we might be saved. And so we are led to believe and to rejoice in this belief.

That his death and his sufferings are for us and for our salvation. If he hadn't died our hope of salvation in God would be without any foundation whatsoever.

We believe in the resurrection. We are those who believe that there is a day coming when we, those who are dead in Christ, shall be resurrected. And they shall join with the angels in the air and so be forever with the Lord.

[12 : 37] We are those who believe in the great work that was carried out in the day of Pentecost. When the Lord Jesus Christ showed himself there alive in Jerusalem.

A Jerusalem that still has that temple platform still there today. And that's where Jesus Christ met with his disciples. And where the Spirit came.

And where there were tongues of fire exhibited on that platform. That platform that is there today is historical reality. That that's where it happened and that's where it was experienced.

And on the day of Pentecost 3,000 men were converted on that one day. But the outpouring of God's Spirit upon that people. As they were brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what makes us Christians. Not because we are born into a family of Christians. Not because we attend a Christian church. Not because there's some sort of genealogy where we can prove we belong to some particular family.

[13 : 44] Or some have a particular history. But the Holy Spirit indwelling us. Giving us new hope and new ideas and new beliefs. Beliefs that we didn't have before.

And so we are brought to see that the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom. And righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

It's not just some merely intellectual understanding. But it's a heart knowledge. While we are in the world, there's a tendency for our eyes, for our understanding to be darkened.

We are surrounded by darkness. We are surrounded by a world who doesn't want to know anything of the light that there is in Christ Jesus. And so there's a tendency for our eyes, for our understanding to be darkened.

And as long as we're in this world, we shall need the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. To enlighten our minds into the knowledge of the truth. Again and again. It's a continual work.

[14 : 56] As the world seeks to darken that understanding. The Holy Spirit works in us. To bring light. The light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So that we are brought to know more and more of Christ's work. And understand more and more of God's plan of redemption by Jesus Christ.

And the question we have to continually ask ourselves is, do we know this God? Do we know this God that we are speaking about here?

Do we know the person whom Paul is talking about here? Remember Paul here goes on to give some substance to what he is saying.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And your love toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you.

[16 : 00] And Paul tells them the substance of his prayer. He tells them what he is praying for. He ceases not to give thanks for them. Praying to a God he knows.

The God and God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the things we can notice here is that Paul prays to God the Father. He doesn't pray here to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is praying to God the Father. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that is a pattern of the way our prayer should be. We pray to our Father who is in heaven.

The God who so loved the world that he gave his son into the world. That verse speaks of God's love towards us who have been brought to know the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

And that's the person to whom we should find ourselves praying. He brings us to understand that this God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who gives us wisdom.

[17:10] And the one who gives us understanding. And he prays, as I said, that the light of our understanding might be enlightened.

So that we may know the hope of God's calling. And that's what we're going to look at here for a short time. The hope of the calling that is in Christ Jesus.

While we are in the world, as I said, there's a tendency for our understanding to be darkened.

There's a sense almost of a spiritual short-sightedness overtaking us.

For those of us who are older, we know what a cataract is. You know what a cataract forms on the eye. And the eyes become not as clear as they once were.

And in a sense, that's what the world does to us as we live here in this world. And Paul is praying here that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened.

[18:12] That that spiritual myopia might be relieved from our lives. And so, what is this calling that Paul is talking about?

Paul wants us to know the hope of God's calling. What is this calling that Paul here is talking about? Well, there are two calls in Scripture.

There is a general call. And there is a special call. In the same way as there are two types of revelation. There is general revelation. And there is a special revelation.

General revelation is what we have in the world around us. Every one of us is without excuse. As we see the creation. As we see the power of God. As we see what God has made.

As we see everything that has been brought into being by the power and the wisdom of God. We've been brought to understand. As we are brought to a saving knowledge.

[19:12] That God made all things by the word of his power in the space of six days. And all very good. Now that's a general revelation. It has revealed to us there is a God.

A God who has made all things. And by the word of his power. But to be saved. We also need a special revelation. And that special revelation comes to us in the Scriptures. It is something God reveals to us.

By the apostles and the prophets. And as it says in Hebrews. And in these last days. By his son. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who is the express image of his person.

And the image of his divine glory. And so in these things we see God's person. Being revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving us the hope. Of the calling of this person.

Of the calling of this person. Has effected in us. Paul when he's preaching in Athens on Mars Hill. He talks about this aspect.

[20:10] That these times and these seasons. God has winked at. But now commands men everywhere. To repent. And to believe the gospel.

The preached gospel. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the general call. Everyone is commanded to believe.

Everyone has a right. To believe. But that's the general call. And that call goes out. To everyone. Christ. Is dead.

For everyone. And as we preach. And proclaim the gospel. And that knowledge. That information. Is disseminated. To all.

Who come under the sound. Of the preached word. But that's not what Paul. Is talking about here. The hope of our calling.

[21:10] We. Who've already. And believed. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wants us to know. The hope. Of that calling. He wants us. To be. To benefit.

From. The. The grace. And the power. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our lives. And so Paul. Is saying to us. You. Who've already believed.

There is also. As. An effectual. And a special call. And a special call. See. Many of us. Will. Languish. In hell. Having heard. The general call.

Of the gospel. And never. Coming. To an understanding. Of. The true gospel. As it is. Christ Jesus. We shall have. An intellectual knowledge.

Of what is being said. But we won't have a heart knowledge. It won't penetrate. Any further. Than the mind. See. It used to be said. By preachers.

[22 : 08] That the way. That the gospel works. Is. Is. The gospel. Is. Heard. The ears. And understood. In the mind. And the mind.

Filters it. Into the heart. It has to get to the heart. The seat of our emotions. The seat of our will before. It will take any effect. It's no good just being.

In. The intellectual understanding. Of what we heard. We can. It could be just like. Understanding. Mathematical formulas. Or scientific formulas. This is.

To go further than that. This is to interact. With what. The gospel is saying. Is to come. Into a. Living. Social. Relationship. With what the gospel is saying.

And to relate to it. In our everyday lives. And. What really matters. Is that. The work.

[23 : 03] Of the holy spirit. Works. In us. This. Effectual. Calling. That is spoken of. That. That we will be convinced.

Of our sin and misery. We know. In this life. Our life. Has misery. We know. That the end of our lives. There will be only. A lost. Eternity.

And we. Have to be convinced. By the holy spirit. That that's where our lives. Are leading us.

Leading us. To a lost. Eternity. We have. To have. The holy spirit.

Give to us. An understanding. What. The catechism calls. And illuminating. Our minds. Into the knowledge. Of Christ. Not only. We have to see. The misery.

Of our state. In this world. Without Christ. The holy spirit. Also has. To reveal to us. The. The beauty of Christ. The wisdom of Christ. That he has made into us.

[23 : 59] Wisdom. And. And sanctification. And redemption. We have. Have to be brought. To see this. By the holy spirit. It's not something. We will understand. By studying scriptures.

It's something. That will happen to us. By the giving. Of the holy spirit. And. So where does that leave us. In our relationship. With. Our savior God. Well we pray.

The savior God. That he would give us. A true understanding. Of Christ. That he would enlighten. Our minds. Into the knowledge of Christ. That he would. Renew our will.

From being a will. Which is obstinate. And a will. Which is hard-hearted. And a will. Which is outside. His. Command. That he would bring us. Into a.

A saving relationship. With him. By renewing that will. And so enabling us. To embrace. Jesus Christ. As he is. Offered to us. In the gospel.

[24 : 53] So that's. What a Christian is. That's what Paul. Wants us. To understand. What a Christian is. That's what he's. Talking about. As he talks about.

The hope. Of the calling. In Christ Jesus. So. The calls. Are Christians. And Paul. Wants us to know.

The assurance. Of our calling. The certainty. Of. Our being. In Christ Jesus. The hope. Of your calling. The certainty.

That you are saved. The devil. Is always there. Sowing. Doubts. And fears. Suggesting. That we have never been. Christians. Suggesting.

That all we've experienced. Is something emotional. And that we've never really. Been Christians at all. But. Paul. Here. Is saying. That the scriptures.

[25 : 49] Revealed to you. The right way. Again. If we. Were in the Roman Catholic Church. Our assurance. Is based. On. The church.

Our assurance. Is based. On the prayers. Of the church. Our assurance. Is based. On what. The church. Can do for us. But that's. That's not. What. The scriptures.

Teach us. And it took. Martin Luther. To discover. The. The. Doctrine. Of justification. By faith alone. It is.

By faith alone. In the Lord. Jesus Christ alone. According to the scriptures alone. To the glory. Of God alone. And the doctrine.

Of justification. By faith alone. And grew out. Of that understanding. Of Martha Luther's. And that's. What led. To the reformation. In Europe. And eventually. The reformation.

[26 : 44] In Scotland. That we have. This. This great doctrine. Of the truth. That there is. In Christ Jesus. We have. All the great names. Like. Luther. And Calvin. And Knox.

They're not just names. Of history. There are people. Who are. Who are blessed. And people. Who are. Who are ordained. By God. To bring the truth. To the masses. If you go back. To that time.

Of Luther. And Calvin. And Knox. There was a great darkness. That's why it was called. The dark ages. Called the dark ages. Because there was. There was no. Knowledge. Of the truth.

Of. As there is in Christ Jesus. It was called darkness. Because there was no. The light of the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ. Shining into the hearts of men and women. And. It would be a. A terrible. Effect. If. The lives we led. Descended into. Into that. Sort of scenario. That.

[27 : 38] We have no life. We have no comfort. The gospel. Is meant. To give us comfort. And so the first step. To getting that assurance. Is a deeper knowledge.

Of the love. Of God. In Christ Jesus. Of what Christ. Effected for us. Of what he suffered for us. Of the great lengths.

He went to. So that we might be saved. And as we meditate. And as we. We speak. And discuss these matters. And that's why communion seasons. Are so important. As we discuss.

Primarily. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It brings us. To a deeper. Understanding. An assurer. Element. Of our faith.

In Christ Jesus. See God. Is. Always. Eternal. He's always. Unchangeable. He's always.

[28 : 32] Infinite. And there's. No. Greater comfort. Than knowing. That God. Never starts. Any work. Without. Finishing.

What he has promised. He. Will. Accomplish. He has promised. That all. Who come unto him. Seeking faith. Seeking to be filled.

With the Holy Spirit. He will not. Turn away. But if we go. In spirit. And in truth. He will welcome us. With open arms. He will accede.

To our requests. And he will. Fill us. With his Holy Spirit. And make us. New creations. In Christ Jesus. We told in scriptures.

That. He is the father of lights. With. No variableness. Or shadow of turning. What he said. He will accomplish. And so ultimately.

[29 : 28] Our whole. Position. With God. Rests. On. His covenant. His. Everlasting. Covenant.

Steadfast. And sure. See the covenant. That God made. With his son. The Lord Jesus Christ. Is the basis. Of our hope.

And. Our calling. In Christ Jesus. Is the covenant. Of redemption. Made. Before. The earth began. The covenant. Of redemption.

Whereby. God the father. Gave to God the son. A certain number. Now we don't know. Who they are. We know. There's a certain number. We don't know. What number there is. But we know.

The father gave to the son. A certain number. And all those. Who he gave to the son. Will come. Scripture calls them. The elect. In Christ Jesus. Those.

[30 : 22] Who the father has known. Before the foundation. Of the world. And those. Who he gave to the son. All those. He gave to the son. Will come. And will be saved. And none.

Shall be lost. As Paul says. In Romans. Whom he. Did. For know. He also did. Predestinate. And whom he did. Predestinate. Then he also called.

And those whom he called. He justified. And those whom he justified. Those he also godified. If God be for us. Who. Can be against us.

As you read. That. Passage. In Romans chapter 8. The logic. Is so compelling. It. It. It so comforts us. And so gives us hope. The hope.

Of our calling. In. Christ Jesus. A man. Of us. Shall let it be plucked out. Of. His hand.

[31 : 20] And finally. We need to understand. What's happened to us. If. We are born of God. If we are born. Of the Holy Spirit. We can never.

Fall away. It's impossible. We can't. Fall. From grace. The idea. That we can be born. Of God. One day.

And sin. And lose. Our reward. Is nothing less. Than. Ignorance. Of the doctrine. Of regeneration. Because once we are.

Regenerate. Nothing will ever. Change that standing. In. The mind. And in. The plan of God. If we are Christians.

We are united to Christ. As. In Romans chapter 5. It says. As we were in Adam. Who was our covenant head. So now.

[32 : 18] We are in Christ. Who is now. Our covenant head. As in Adam. We died. So in Christ Jesus. We are now. Made. Alive.

Sinfulness. Of that estate. Into which. Man fell. Consists. Of the guilt. Of Adam's first transgression. The want. Original righteousness. And the corruption.

Of the whole nature. That's what we are in Adam. But in Christ Jesus. We are new creations. We are those. Who are loved. By the father. With as much love. As he loves his only begotten son. We are brought into the same. Situation. The same position. The same standing. As Christ has. With his heavenly father. We'll never be. Begotten sons. But we will be adoptive sons. And as you know. In a family. Where there are natural children. And adoptive children. There's no difference. Or there should be no difference. Between those who are adopted. And those who are natural born.

[33 : 18] And the same thing applies. In the relationship. Of our heavenly father. Where there is perfection. He will love perfectly. His old son. He will love perfectly.

His own adoptive children. And there should be no difference. In that love towards us. As we were. In Adam. As our covenant head. So.

We are now in Christ. And our lives are hid. With Christ in God. As the hymn writer says. On this solid rock I stand. All other ground.

Is sinking sand. Do we know. This hope. Of our calling. Are we filled with assurance. That God loves us. And. He is not.

Going to let us go. See ultimately. Our. Salvation. Our hope. Is in. The promises. God made.

[34 : 12] The promises. God made. To his son. The promises. God made. That none. Shall ever separate us. From the love. Of God. In Christ Jesus. The world.

Can never. Know that hope. The world. Can never have that assurance. But as Christians. We can know it. And as Christians. We should know it.

And that. Is a very easy pillow. To lie on. As. As. We approach. The end of our days. Here in this world. May it be.

That you will know. The hope. Of the calling. That God has for us. In Christ Jesus. Let us then conclude our worship. Seeing to God's praise. In Psalm 86.

Psalm 86. On page. 341. Verse 9. All nations.

[35 : 09] Whom thou made. Shall come. And worship reverently. Before thy face. And they. O Lord. Thy name. Shall glorify. We will sing to the end of the verse. Mark 12.

That's four stanzas. To God's praise. Amen. So they are sáng t straightforward. Of thou AFS. All nations. Or believe.

O nations. O nations. O nations. O nations. ■á come. And worship reverently. Before thy grave. Now zij. O Lord. thy name shall glorify. Because thou art exceeding great, and what by thee are done, which are to be the wise of our cause, I say, alone.

Teach me thy way and in thy truth, O God, when hope will I unite my heart, that I thy name may fear continually.

[37 : 01] O Lord, my God, with all my heart, to thee I will give praise, and I the glory will ascribe to thy name always.

And now may grace, mercy, and peace, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, rest on you, and abide in you, now and always.

Amen. Let's see.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.