

death, as great a difference in them now as it is between Christ in the tomb and Christ raised and ascended to the right hand of God. That same power had worked in them.

2. For them now

And that power was working in them now, even as Paul was writing. Paul goes on (**READ Ephesians 1:19-23**). This is the power of the resurrected, ascended, reigning King at work not just then but now. The scope of His reign all encompassing. The focus of His reign directed towards the church. Over the church as her head. Within the church as her life. For the church – hear me – such that everything that happens under His rule over creation happens for her. Such is His rule. Now. Exercised for us. Christ is King over the universe and the church. And the one is ruled for the sake of the other.

Illustration:

Think of these lilies – so beautiful, so frail. How do they grow? How do they bloom? The sun – 93 million miles away, a temperature of 29 million °F, the energy of 100 billion mega-ton hydrogen bombs released every second. All for the lilies. Oh, for more than that but you get the idea. Indescribably great power at work within us, around us, changing us – bringing us to life, raising us to life, and enabling us to bloom, to live.

Application:

We need to know that and have our eyes opened to it. Such power at work for us and in us in order to save us. Such was the pit of our condition. And we need to know that lest we grow proud, lest we delude ourselves into thinking it was a small thing.

And yet such power that is now at work within us, empowering us, changing us, sometimes even carrying us. And we need to know that lest we grow discouraged. Too often we live as though this “immeasurably great” power was that of an Easy Bake Oven. No – a thousand times no – this is resurrection power, power to bring the dead to life!

CONCLUSION:

But let me bring us back to these spiritual cataracts, the fog, the veil upon the eyes of our hearts. Clearly Paul says there are some things we need to know. Why then are we so often so much like the man I mentioned earlier – so blissfully ignorant of what’s passing us by, so comfortable with our inability to see? It’s easier. It’s easier to believe we haven’t been called to anything radically new, to pick up these commands we see in chapters 4-6, this radically new way of living before God and with one another, and just to admire them. To admire them and then perhaps try them. To try them and then to despair of ever being able to live up to them. And having despaired, then readjusting our sights, dumbing down the standards to our level, and settling in. And settling for so little.

But so much is lost. The joy, the satisfaction, the fulfillment of finding what we were meant for, of how life was meant to be. Vibrant communion with Him, daily dependence, leaning upon Him and finding that His commands are good and that His promises hold. We grow comfortable with our cataracts and so much is lost. We buy into the lie that it’s all “pie in the sky” and lofty ideals never really real. So much is lost.

Hear me. That lie smells of smoke from the pit of hell. And we need to stand up and punch that lie in the mouth. Look at what we have. Look at what Paul has described – this hope, this inheritance, this power! Why would we settle for so little? Why would we let ourselves or one another grow so comfortable with our cataracts? Look at what we have, at what is held out to us! Better yet, look at who. Let us pray to Him now.

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because of the significance of what God has done for us,
(magnet) there’re some things we need to know.

And should this surprise us? Consider the source of this inheritance, who grants it – none other than “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*” (v.17).

2. The content

And the content of this inheritance – elsewhere we are told that one day we will see God. And that His appearing will have a transforming effect upon us – upon our spirit, upon our bodies, upon the whole of creation. And this transformation will then overflow into our relationships – perfect communion both with Him and with one another.

The “riches of His glorious inheritance” are what await and Paul prays that we might know and understand and anticipate this in a way that honors the One who has granted it.

Illustration:

I remember my dangerous habit as a child growing up at home of sneaking peeks into my parents’ stash of gifts to us before Christmas. I shouldn’t tell you this. If your children do this, I’ll deny I ever said it. But the suspense was too much. I just had to see.

Application:

Now don’t do that with Christmas gifts. But do it with “the riches of our glorious inheritance.” We’re told to. In fact, Paul is praying that his readers’ eyes would be opened to seeing what it is God has in store. There’s nothing wrong with anticipating heaven. In fact, if you think about it, it would be wrong not to. It would be dishonoring to the One who’s preparing it for us to just blow it off. Anticipating it honors Him.

And it helps us – especially in the face of discouragement. In what I see in myself (in how far short and how easily I fall), in the church (the hypocrisy, the dissonance between what people around us say and then how they treat us). It can be tempting to give up, to lower the sights. And Paul, in reminding us of what awaits, is saying, “*Don’t you give up. You’ve got an inheritance coming.*” Purchased for you at the cross, guaranteed and secured at an empty tomb. Don’t you give up. Don’t you back down.

III. THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TOWARD US

But there’s one last thing (**READ Ephesians 1:18-19a**). The call points us to the past. The inheritance points us towards the future. But this power points us towards the here and now, the time in between. And this is stirring. Now what is Paul speaking of?

A) The Nature of this Power

What is the nature of this power? So many kinds come to mind – financial power, political power, military power – all well understood. But all paling in comparison.

1. Description

Paul speaks here of *dunamis*, the Greek word from which we get “dynamite.” And here it is a power said to be “immeasurably (incomparably, surpassingly) great.” A force which overcomes, prevails, conquers, and blows through anything that gets in its way.

2. Clarification

It is a power – and please notice this – not “*like*” but “*according to* the working of (God’s) great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.” Meaning “the same as.” That is the power that is being spoken of here as being at work.

B) Who It’s For

But where? In who? “Toward us who believe.” How? In what way?

1. For them then

Paul is praying that his readers might know the greatness of the power exercised in saving them, the greatness of the change they had experienced – raised from a spiritual

I. THE HOPE TO WHICH HE HAS CALLED US

First, the hope. What is Paul speaking of here? (READ Ephesians 1:18a)

A) His Call

A connection is made between our hope and God's call.

1. What it is

This call of God is what theologians often refer to as His "effectual call."

2. What it does

The call by which His Spirit works within us in a real but mysterious way to convince us of our need of Him, to bring understanding to our hearts of the gospel message, persuading us and enabling us to place our trust, our hope in Him. Such is this call.

B) Our Hope

And Paul says that the reality of this call grounds us with hope. Why?

1. Because of the fact of the call

Because now we can know there is purpose to our lives. Now we can know there is meaning and direction because the One who called us is very intentional, purposeful.

2. Because of the source of the call

And those purposes are unshakeable. This too is grounds for hope. That no matter how bad we've been or how bad we are, there are purposes He has in mind and they will hold.

3. Because of the intent of the call

But then this hope is all the richer when we consider what the purposes of the One who called us are. They are wondrous and awe-inspiring – new life in which even now we know, love, serve Christ; the enjoyment of fellowship with Him and with one another; the anticipation of His making all things new and our being caught up in that, made a part of that, and even used to bring that about. There's hope in our being called.

Application:

We need to know that. We need to know the hope of our calling and have our eyes opened to it because we are so prone to forget and get caught up in everything else. We are prone to forget. And prone to fret as well. But we have nothing to fret. It's His call, His purposes. They can't be undone. And that's such a relief because when I try to live this stuff out I fail so miserably and so consistently and it's good to know His purposes for me hold – despite myself. You see, the hope and the calling are inseparable.

II. THE RICHES OF HIS GLORIOUS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

Which takes us to the next thing (READ Ephesians 1:18). With the call, we look back to the beginning of the Christian life. With the inheritance, we look to the end.

A) Who Receives It

But what is Paul speaking of here? Whose is this inheritance? Ours or God's?

1. Not a reference to God's inheritance

Just looking at the words, it would seem it could go either way. And, in fact, scholars are split on this. Some say it is a reference to the inheritance God is said to possess in His people, that we are His prized possession. And that's certainly seen in other passages.

2. But to ours

But here Paul is speaking not of what is God's but what is ours. Note the parallel text in Colossians (READ Colossians 1:9-12). Paul is speaking of an inheritance granted to us.

B) How It Is Described

Now how is this inheritance described? As "glorious" and consisting of "riches."

1. The source

March 27, 2005

“An Easter Prayer”
Ephesians 1:15-23

FCF: We don't know whose and who we are > tentativeness

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because of the significance of what God has done for us,
(magnet) there're some things we need to know.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

It has to be one of the most stirring things I've read recently. *“If Christians really believed what they said they believed, they'd be dangerous. If they really believed they were forgiven, if they really believed they were accepted by God, if they really believed He was with them now and their future was eternally secure, they'd be dangerous.”*

What do you think? How does that strike you? I'll tell you how it strikes me. I like it. It's right. But there's a problem and the problem is this. The image is of a pack of lions moving out together taking on the world. But the reality I see is too often a litter of kittens playing with string. We don't know whose and who we are. And so we're tentative. We're timid. And we're scared. How does that square with life after Easter?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Ephesians 1:15-23](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

I don't know how much you know about cataracts – a darkening, a veil that comes over the lens of the eye and keeps light from getting in. Fortunately, modern medicine is pretty adept at removing them. But I once knew a man who waited over 25 years to have his cataracts removed and by the time he had the procedure, he'd been legally blind for quite some time. After all those years of wasted sight, over the course of just a couple of weeks and a few out-patient operations, it was as though he'd been given new eyes all over again. But 25 years! It's scary what we can get comfortable with. Think of all he missed. All those years of people saying, *“Look, there's some stuff you need to see.”*

Paul is saying much the same in our text this morning. *“Look, there's some stuff you need to see, to understand, to get a handle on.”* This is a prayer, what could well be described as an “Easter prayer.” Paul has spoken in verses 3-14 in praise to God for all He has done in saving His people. And now he shifts in prayer to that same God that they would grow in that. He has heard of their faith and love – fruits of God's work in them. And his reaction is twofold. On the one hand, he is filled with gratitude. But on the other, he is filled with a “holy discontentment.” He longs that they would drink yet more deeply, that they would grow in their knowledge, in their understanding and experience of the Lord's grace. And so he prays. He prays for it will only be through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that these stubborn chronic cataracts of the heart will be removed such that they would see yet more of what God has done and grab hold of it.

It's as though Paul is saying, *“Look, there's some stuff you need to know, to really know. Because of who you are (because you really are too messed up – they carried a lot of baggage, you see). Because of where you are (in too rough a place – Asia Minor was not a family friendly region). Because of what you are to do (too high a calling, God's commands beyond their ability to keep – every area of life touched upon, nothing deemed too trivial). Oh, and one more thing. Because of what God has done for you, there's some stuff you need to know. And frankly, you'd better know it and come to grips with it or the mess within, the place you're in, and the calling upon you will take you under.”*

Now what does he draw the reader's attention to? Three things – our new hope, our new inheritance, and our new power. Each of which we need new eyes to see.