

Hope: Seeing the Church's Potential
Ephesians 1:15-23

“In the new realm that was inaugurated when Jesus ascended and the Spirit descended, life and ministry are flipped upside down such that God’s strength interlocks not with human strength and sufficiency but with human weakness and pain.” Dane Ortlund, Ministry in the New Realm

Our weakness is a canvas for the display of Christ’s glory.

Paul’s prayer is that we might see the church from God’s perspective not from our struggling limited perspective.

We need to pray that we might be given eyes to see the incredible potential of the church because of its union with Christ

I. See God’s Fingerprints: Paul’s Spiritual Discipline of Seeing God’s Present Work of Grace in the Church. Ephesians 1:15-16

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

Ephesians 1:15-16

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

“Every Christian both believes and loves. Faith and love are basic Christian graces.” John Stott

“When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”

Luke 7:9

Faith is often depicted in our most desperate moments. It doesn't seem heroic but desperately dependent. We have to see that though people may be struggling they may be desperately clinging to Jesus. That's the faith that Christ commends.

What can we learn from Paul here?

- A. Look for evidences of God's grace before you look for faults and shortcomings.
- B. Linger over those evidences of grace out of gratitude to God for what He has done rather than being impatient with God for the things that He has chosen not to change yet.
- C. Acknowledge them. Speak about them.
- D. Thank God both for His grace and for His pace in sanctification.

II. Pray for God's Perspective: Paul's Discipline of Seeing God's Unrelenting Commitment to His Church.

"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him that you might know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe..."

Ephesians 1:17-19

A. See the Church's Trinitarian Leadership Team: We need an awakening to the true potential of the Church not by looking at the church's struggles rather than to the church's Sovereign.

- **God is the Father of glory**

"Ascribe to the Lord, o heavenly beings,
Ascribe to the Lord, glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name;
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.
The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
The God of glory thunders,
The Lord, over many waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful;

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”

Psalm 29:1-3

- Our Father is able to do in and through our lives whatever pleases Him. His power is particularly perfected in weakness.

The potential for the church is not just found in what you see or don't see in the people around you but in the sovereign pleasure and power of God.

- **The Spirit is the Spirit of Wisdom**
- The Spirit enables us to understand things from God's perspective.

On the human plane, it can seem pessimistic but from God's perspective, things are going along according to plan, a glorious plan.

- **Jesus is the “Lord Jesus Christ”**

Our faith is not merely in a crucified Savior but a resurrected Savior.
And our faith is not just in a resurrected Savior but in a reigning Lord and King.

B. We need to pray that we see not only the glory of our Triune God but what God has given to us as His church through Christ.

Hope: The certainty of our future and mission.

“that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you...”

The Riches: The spiritual resources that exist in and for the Church

“the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

The Power: The supernatural power that is directed towards us as the Church in Christ.

“what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.”

“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, far above all rule and authority and power and opinion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but in the one to come.”

Ephesians 1:19-20

“The ascension culminated Christ’s earthly work and marks a shift and climax in the Messiah’s three key roles. It not only confirms Christ’s work but continues Christ’s work. He once labored on the earth; **now he labors in heaven.**”

“Jesus is not embarrassed by his people. He proudly represents his people as the God-Man before the Father. Like the priests of old, he wears you as jewels on his breastplate.”

Patrick Schriener, The Ascension of Christ

III. See Christ’s Invasive Mission: Paul’s Understanding of the Irresistibly Invasive Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

“**And He put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**”

Ephesians 1:22-23

What drives the mission of the church is not our zeal for the glory of Christ but Christ’s zeal for His own glory.

Our zeal is a consequence of Christ’s unwavering determination to fill the world with His glory.