

# Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. My name is Y. Plummer, and some of you don't know me. I've been a priest here in about a year. I'm a teaching elder in the PCA, and I work for Mission to North America.

I almost forgot who I work for there. It's been a while. So we are going to be learning and preaching from Ephesians chapter 1, beginning in verse 15 to 23.

So let me read that scripture. For this reason, because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your love towards all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 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, having the eyes of your heart 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards 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 dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the one to come.

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 things.

[ 2 : 02 ] This is God's word. Let us pray. Our gracious heavenly father, our God, our king, we thank you for your grace and your mercy and your love, your sovereignty, you rule, you are our Lord.

I pray this morning that we would recognize that, that you would give us eyes to see that, that you would change us, that you would make us more like Jesus, that you would enable us to bring you glory in all that we do and all that we say, that as you are transforming and sanctifying us, that the world would learn and know that you are God and that you are sovereign.

We thank you for all of these things because we pray them in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

You may be seated. Part of my devotional is to read the book of Ephesians.

I read it every day. I read one chapter each day of the week. It's the six chapters. So Monday is Ephesians 1. Tuesday is 2.

I just don't pray Ephesians on Sunday. And one of the amazing things about reading God's word is that you can read the word over and over and then something happens that clicks on a passage and you realize it's come alive for you.

[ 3 : 42 ] And this has been my experience as I've read chapter 1 in Ephesians. I've been reading this letter for years. I took a seminary course on Ephesians when I first became a Christian.

I know the doctrines of grace. I know that we have been chosen in him, adopted by him, redeemed by him, forgiven by him, sealed by his Holy Spirit. And I believe these truths. I've preached these truths.

I've studied these truths in Bible studies. But lately, God has been doing something special. He's been opening my eyes to a reality that I have not seen before.

I've titled this sermon Open the Eyes of My Heart. And there's a slight rib in that because there were years in which I did not like this song.

Just a little bit too touchy-feely for me. Open the eyes of my heart. Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you.

[ 4 : 45 ] Okay. I want to think about you. But the truth is that the author of this song was actually inspired by Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1.18.

Paul prays that the eyes of the heart might be enlightened. Paul is praying that the believers who already knew the truth of the gospel would not just know about him in their heads, but that God would open their eyes of their heart so that they would really see him and his reality.

And by his grace, this is exactly what has been going on in my life. So this morning, I want to invite you to look with me with Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1.

My hope is that as we study this prayer that God will do for us what Paul prayed for. that he would open the eyes of our hearts.

Our scripture reading began in verse 15 with the words, for this reason. For this reason connects verses 15 to 23 to everything Paul has said in verses 3 to 14.

[ 6 : 02 ] And if you're familiar with Ephesians 1, you know that it's divided into two parts. There's the doctrinal part and the theological part with the blessings in 3 to 14.

And then he continues with this prayer beginning in 15. In verses 3 through 14, he tells us about these incredible blessings that we have in Christ Jesus that God chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

That God adopted us as his children. That Christ redeemed us through his blood. that God revealed the mystery of his will in verse 9.

That we have obtained an inheritance. That we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. And then in verse 15 and 16, Paul says, for this reason, because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love towards all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

After giving the Ephesians all this great theological truth, Paul prays. Because Paul knows that there's a difference between knowing these truths in your mind and seeing them with your heart.

[ 7 : 22 ] The Ephesian Christians already believe the gospel because Paul says so in verse 15. Because I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints.

Yet he prays in verse 17 and 18 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him having the eyes of your heart enlightened.

Because Paul knows that you can possess spiritual truth without fully perceiving spiritual reality. Paul isn't praying that we would receive something new.

He's praying that we would see what we already have in Christ. And Paul makes three prayer requests which are convenient for me since I like preaching three-point sermons.

And he prays that we would know what is the hope to which he has called us, that we would know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and that we would know what are the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe.

[ 8 : 31 ] These three things will be life-changing when God opens our eyes to see them. Now before I get into the first point, I just want to say a few words about the eyes of the heart.

Now we know that Paul is not talking about physical eyes, he's not talking about seeing God with our physical eyes, but he's talking about the eyes of the heart. And in the Bible, the heart is not just about emotions, but it's the center of our being, our thinking, our desires, our affections, our understanding.

The eyes of the heart are our capacity to perceive spiritual reality. Our problem is not that, it's not just that we can't see God, we can't, God is here, but we can't perceive him because we need spiritual eyes to see him.

You remember the disciples on the road to Emmaus, how Jesus came along and they couldn't see him. They didn't recognize him. They needed their eyes open. And I'm going to be using that passage in a sermon I'm going to be preaching in about a month to show us how the eyes are open and why, but that's for another time.

Because we often walk through this life totally unaware that God is here right with us right now. But we need eyes to see him. So proud praise that our eyes would be open.

[ 10 : 02 ] First prayer request. Paul prays, having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. Paul is not praying that they would have hope because we already have hope as Christian.

But Paul is praying that we would know the hope that we have. That we would see it. That we would see the hope that we already have. And what is hope? In the Bible, hope is not wishful thinking.

We often say, I hope the temperature goes down. I hope it rains. I hope for things with a certain level of uncertainty. But biblical hope is confident expectation that rests on the promises of God. If God said it, it will happen. So hope looks forward to it. It is a settled conviction and confidence that what God promises, God will fulfill.

And Paul is not praying for just any hope. He is praying that we would realize the hope of our calling. our hope is grounded in God's call on our lives.

[ 11 : 14 ] God called us before we ever called on Him. He called us through the gospel of His word. He called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

He called us into Christ. And because He has called us, our hope rests in His call. Not in our grip on Christ, but on His grip on us.

And you can think of this hope in four different categories. Our hope rests in the reality that one day we will be saved completely.

We have already been saved. We have been justified through faith. And we are saved each day. We are growing and growing in our faith and knowledge of Jesus. And one day we will be glorified. We will be totally saved. And everything that we hope for will be realized in Christ. Another part of the hope is the hope of the resurrection. Death is not the end of the story.

[ 12 : 20 ] Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection. Our bodies will be raised. Sin will be gone forever. forever. This is a reality that we hope in the resurrection.

We hope also one day to see Christ. When we see Christ we will be like it. We will be changed. The greatest promise that we have is that one day we will see Jesus Himself.

And our faith will become sight. And hope will become fulfillment. The last thing about this hope is that this hope is about the kingdom of God.

One day we will see the new heavens and the new earth coming down. And everything broken by sin will be healed. It will be new. A glorious presence of God that we can't imagine for now.

Imagine a world with no sin. No hatred. No animosities. No earthquakes. No disease. No difficulties. Our minds can't go there.

[ 13 : 27 ] But that is our hope. Why does Paul pray for this kind of reality that we would understand this? Because we live as if this is all there is.

And when we live like this is it and we just keep our faith in our heads our trials become very difficult. Our disappointments can feel overwhelming.

Our fears tend to dominate us and our priorities become very earthly. But hope changes how we interpret everything including suffering.

Paul tells us in Romans 8.18 the sufferings of this life are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed. Do you believe that?

hope. Peter talks about our slight momentary affliction doesn't feel that way. But hope enables us to get through this.

[ 14 : 27 ] Hope changes how we deal with the present. Hope is never just about the future. It's about how we live today. A person who knows where history is going can endure difficulty.

we don't merely survive life. We have hope. We live differently because we know the ending of the story. Let me give you an illustration.

Imagine you're in a dark tunnel and you have a little lantern and you're walking through the dark tunnel and you know there's an end somewhere but you just don't know where it is and you keep going and you're tripping here and you're tripping there and you're bumping into walls and suddenly you see a light at the end of the tunnel and now you have hope.

You have hope to reach in the end. your circumstances haven't really changed. You're still stumbling. You're still running into things but your hope lies in that light at the end and that's the Christian life.

Paul is praying that we know more than just facts about God but that we would see Jesus at the end of our lives.

[ 15 : 44 ] Our future so clear that it reshapes how we live today. Paul is essentially saying Father open their eyes that they would see the future that you've prepared for them.

There's a story in 2 Kings about the king of Aram who was at war with the kingdom of Israel but every military plan he's made somehow gets revealed to Elisha the prophet.

Frustrated the king sent a large army by night to surround the city where Elisha was staying and early the next morning Elisha's servant gets up and he sees this vast army around him and he's

trembling and he goes to Elisha and Elisha is kind of hey greater those who are with us than those out there and he doesn't see it so Elisha prays Lord open his eyes God answered the prayer and the servant saw there was a mountain covered with horses and chariots of fire the enemy was real but it was not the whole story and that's the reality with us there's difficulties and sufferings and everything going on in his life but it's not the whole story God is telling the whole story and he gives us hope and when we can see the hope of God's calling we stop living as though the present world is all there is we begin to interpret every joy every disappointment every trial every death through the certainty that God is doing something with and there's a kingdom that is coming and I believe that before we can live faithfully in the present our eyes have to be fixed on the reality of what God is doing in this world and what he's doing in the next the second thing that Paul prays is that we might know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints this sentence can look a little confusing because Paul talks earlier in verses 11 he talks about in Christ we have an inheritance and in verse 14 he talks about the guarantee of our inheritance and commentators are divided on what Paul is talking about when he talks about the riches of his inheritance in the saints but I believe the text is talking about God's inheritance notice the wording Paul doesn't say the riches of your inheritance he says the riches of his inheritance and I think the most natural reading of this is that the inheritance belongs to God Paul is praying that believers would grasp something incredible

God considers you his inheritance this idea shows up in the Old Testament scripture where Paul calls Israel his inheritance in Deuteronomy 32 9 says for the Lord's portion is his people Jacob his allotted inheritance Psalm 33 12 blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord the nation whom he has chosen his heritage Paul is applying this truth to the church the church is God's treasured possession purchased by Christ and sealed by his Holy Spirit and this becomes even more amazing when we think about where we have come from because remember that we were dead in our trespasses and sins Ephesians 2 tells us he says that we were children of wrath like the rest of mankind

[19:40] Roman 5 says that we were enemies of God rebels! against God yet he through Christ does not just forgive us but he adopts us he redeems us he seals us through his spirit he calls us his inheritance and the passage describes us as the riches of his glorious inheritance God sees immeasurable value in his redeemed people because we have been reunited with his son Christ shed his blood to purchase us us and God delights in what his son has purchased just as a bridegroom treasures the bride Christ treasures his church us and why does Paul pray this because most of us know that we're forgiven but do you know that God delights in you this is a real struggle for some of us

I have been praying that God would bring Zephaniah 3:17 to my heart years sanctification can take a long time Zephaniah 3:17 says that the Lord your God is in your midst a mighty one who will save he will rejoice over you with gladness he will quiet you by his love he will exalt over you with loud singing God is singing over us many of us think that God merely tolerates us do you imagine God smiling over you with delight Paul says I want you to see this not because you've performed well not because you've done some great work but he just delights to be you because you're you because you're in

Christ have you ever shown pictures to your grandchildren to maybe even a stranger because you're just so proud of them they may not like it but you love them and that's what God does with us you remember Job have you seen my servant Job now Job didn't know what was going on but God was delighting in him when you know that God loves you and that you're his treasure you no longer try to gain your acceptance from other people you no longer try to gain approval because you've been approved by the king you've been approved by the only one who really counts and you still love people but you're grounded in the reality that you're treasured that's where your identity lies you begin to see suffering differently Job didn't understand what was going on but he's though he slay me yet I still will hope in him because he knew that

God loved him and when you treasure what God treasures you begin to treasure the church and you begin to treasure God's people and you no longer just see God's people as just other people that you can use or abuse or ignore you begin to delight in them because your father delights in them Paul is not simply praying that we would know what we will receive at the end that we have an inheritance but he is praying that we would know how God sees us and it will change how you live the gospel is not only that we will receive a great inheritance but it is also that we will be received by

one who delights in us and considers us a treasure the last thing that Paul prays about is that we would know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe those that he didn't pray that God would give us more power we already have power he prays that we would know this power that we already possess in Christ the Christian life is not lived by acquiring new power we already have but by seeing and trusting the power that God has already made available to us and what is this power it's indescribable the new American standard bible reads what is the surpassing greatness of his power one word he uses towards us who believe these are in accordance with the working another word meaning active operative of his strength dominant ruling strength and of his might physical inherited strength

[ 25 : 10 ] Paul is running out of words to use to describe this incredible power and so he just points to an event okay I'm trying to describe it let me point to an event and that event is that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand this power cannot be measured and it can barely be described it is not just the power about miracles sometimes when we think about power we think about miracles but this is the power that God has towards you working every day of your life to make you more like Jesus it's the power to fight sin and temptation it's the power to forgive your enemies and it's a miraculous power it's not gritting your teeth it's not saying I forgive you but I won't forget I was at a recent general assembly and ran into a brother that I have had a grudge against for years and

I've avoided and I sat down with him I said let's have breakfast and we sat down and had breakfast and there was actually nothing there I said I love you I said I don't use those words that was Jesus that's the miraculous power that's the power within us to change us to change our dispositions to change our attitudes to help us to resist things to endure difficulty when they come to persevere in the faith to obey Christ to not feel a burden this light momentary affliction Peter calls it the difficulties and none of these we can do on our own this is something that we need the Holy Spirit to help us the Christian life does not begin with work with grace and then work it out even though

Philippians says work out your salvation with fear and trembling but it also says for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work so God wills it and then you work it God wills it and you work it why do we need to know this because many of us live as if we can do this on our own we feel helpless we're like someone with a million dollars in the bank and living begging for money we don't realize what we have and when we pray we don't wait for God to answer it I did pray three years ago when I semi retired I won't say I'm retired I'm semi retired that God would change me I said I don't want to become a grumpy old man where people say this is just the way I am I said please change me he's changing me in ways

I could not imagine sometimes I don't even recognize who I am and be patient sanctification takes time you didn't get this way overnight and it takes time for God to change even God is taking his time changing you so let me ask you where have you lost your hope have you become so confused with today's problems that you have forgotten where history is headed that's going to be a new heavens and a new earth so ask God to open your eyes to the hope of his calling have you forgotten who you are are you still trying to earn God's approval ask God to help you see yourself in the way he sees you as his beloved possession in

Christ Jesus are you trying to live the Christian life in your own strength maybe you're saying I can't I can't forgive I can't endure I can't take this anymore and the truth is you can't one day things started breaking in my house I was going through some difficulty we had we had made some purchases some large purchases and things started breaking first Shirley's car then this printer and then the shower started leaking and I said Lord are you trying to break me and he says yes of your own dependence on you we feel so weak when God gave

[ 30 : 35 ] Paul his thorn in the flesh because his grace was made shown perfect in his weakness we don't like weak we want God to supplement what we already have I'm already strong just make me a little bit stronger we don't want to feel totally weak and dependent and that's the prayer in and of itself help me to reconcile the reality that I really am weak I really not am in control and that is hard for a control freak that is hard for a worrier that is hard for a ruminator I am a professional ruminator I thought it was a gift it's a sin that God has forgiven and slowly weaning me weaning me off of my tendency to ruminate Paul doesn't end this prayer by telling us what to do he ends his prayer in verses 20 to 23 by exalting

Christ when he says that he worked this is the power 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 dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come 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 things in all ways you know what your greatest need is Christ your greatest need in this life is not necessarily a change of your circumstances your greatest need is to see and to see

Christ to see the hope to which he has called you to see that you are his treasured possession to see that there really is power working towards you through Christ and when God opens your eyes your circumstances may not change the cancers still may be there the marriage may still be difficult the prodigal may not return but you will change because you will begin to see reality differently and you'll discover that hope is stronger than despair that God delights is far greater than any shame that you can feel that God's power is greater than any weakness that you can experience these are hard things for us to hear and to absorb intellectually and I've been a

Christian for 40 I just gave my testimony 45 years of walking with Jesus these are things that don't disappear and we don't suddenly start running around the church we're Presbyterians it's okay but these are things that over time God begins to change and you grow in your faith and your knowledge of him and so my prayer today is not simply that we would leave here knowing more theology but my prayer is that God would answer Paul's prayer for us that tomorrow when you wake up and you open your Bible and you walk to work and you do whatever you do tomorrow when you face temptation when you face difficulty my prayer is that God would begin to open your eyes it could be just one verse that he illuminates it could be just one person you need to forgive it could be just one person you need to talk to but I would pray there are no accidents

God this is my circumstance what are you doing with me now the lights at the end but what we have for now is his word and that word gives us the next step we would love to have a plan but God doesn't work that way he's got the plan we need to follow and our primary call is to love God with all our heart soul and our neighbor as ourselves that is our great prayer that God would keep opening our eyes that we would see Christ more clearly than you saw him yesterday because the more you see him the more confidence you will have to trust him and the more joyful we will follow him and the more faithfully we will be able to live with him that is my prayer for you and that is my prayer for me as well let's pray together as a church our gracious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we thank you we praise you Lord

[ 35 : 54 ] Jesus especially if there's any here who don't know this great salvation Lord Jesus I pray that you would give them eyes to see open their eyes like you did Lilia in the book of Acts who eyes were open to believe each one of us if we believe you we need our eyes further open because we don't see well we're like the man whose eyes you healed and he only saw trees but then you healed him again and he saw more clearly so I pray that we would see more clearly each day the wonderful things that you are doing in us and for us towards Christ for Christ Jesus sake the eyes of our heart might be illuminated that we might know the hope that we might know his great inheritance and that we might know the great power for us who believe in Jesus name I pray amen amen