

Embrace the Mystery // “Prayer for Clarity” //

Ephesians 1:15–23

Kind of a big week for me... my 1st book was released...

Well, good to see everybody out there. I was a little worried that after I preached on predestination a couple of weeks ago God was going to predestine a bunch of y'all not to come back to church here anymore. So, I'm glad you're here, glad you're back... and ready to dive back in.

(I will say this: Having to explain what the Bible means when it says we are “chosen from the foundation of the world” has given me a whole new way to measure the difficulty of sermon preparation... everything seems like a breeze, now...)

The 2nd thing Paul does in the book of Ephesians is he prays for believers in Ephesus, and I'm grateful his prayer is recorded here because it shows us how to pray... it shows us what God wants us for us. (This is how I pray for my family, my kids and wife; how I pray for you; (the elders pray each morning, this is often what we pray for you...))

¹⁵ ...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 a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

Focus on those words, “*spirit of wisdom*”; “*spirit of revelation*”; “*having the eyes of our hearts enlightened*”... This is a prayer for

spiritual sight. Paul has just taught them this incredible truth about how much God loves them... it is in many ways a mystery.

So, after Paul tells them these deep, mysterious, awesome things about God's love, he prays for them to be able to see it... to see it with their heart; to feel it.

Sight is one of the most valuable things we possess... You don't want to lose it... your life would be drastically different without it. I remember how scary it was when I had *Lasik*. Anybody had that?

- It's so fast, the whole thing happens in a blur.
- I went and sat in a little waiting room and then they call my name. The doctor and I did small talk for a just a minute, and then she sat me down.
- I'm thinking there has to be prep, or something... no, she was like, “OK, swallow these pills.” 10 minutes later. Doc and I make small talk. “OK, sit down.” Vacuum cleaner
- The most traumatic part... the knife. Peels back... What do you look at?
- Laser goes to work... best way to describe it is it's like a kaleidoscope. You can smell it... (I know I'm a terrible commercial for Lasik)
- As this little kaleidoscope goes to work... What if there is an earthquake right now... I haven't seen my kid! My wife was pregnant with our first. I was like, Stop! Has anyone checked the weather channel to see if there's an earthquake scheduled?
- “OK, you're all set...” 11 minutes.
- I sat up and I could see 20/20... Then I went home, took a nap, woke up after the valium wore off, and it felt like my eyes were about to give birth

So, all those who are thinking about having Lasik, be encouraged.

The point I'm trying to make is, sight is something you don't want to be w/o, because there's so much of life that you'd miss out on.

Spiritual sight is something you don't want to miss, either. Paul says, I want you not just consent to the fact that God loves you and is working all things for your good, I want you to *feel* it...

In the Psalms I said "I want to taste that the Lord is good." It's one thing to **know honey (or a rich, chocolate dessert)** is sweet; it's another to have its sweetness come alive in your mouth.

Paul is praying you would taste how God cherishes you; to sense His closeness to you and how He is working in your life.

Because, you see, that's what really changes your life. Seeing God's majesty with the eyes of your heart and feeling His love for you changes your heart... It creates in you a love for Him... a love that drives out the craving for sin, and a love that overflows into a love for others.

God doesn't want religious rule followers, He is calling out a people to love and worship Him. And **let me just say again that for many of us, in this church, this is the one element we are missing (that's what makes this prayer so relevant)**. You see, our problem is not that we don't understand the truths about God's love, it's that we don't *feel* them; we don't taste them, they haven't burst alive in our hearts. The sense of God's love never causes us to weep or to worship. Many of you guys are good at knowing and memorizing stuff... you know what Christians believe and what they should do, but you don't flow with passion for God.

Let me ask you this. *How often do you feel dry spiritually?* Your theology is fine, you're not involved in some big embarrassing sin; you just don't feel love for God. The point is not what you believe or what you do, the point is loving God.

For Paul, he can't start talking about the love of God w/o bursting into worship and praise. Several places in Paul's letters he'll say... "Don't

you realize how big and huge and deep and glorious God and His plan are for you?"

- In one place in Ephesians, Paul makes an incredible contrast... he says, "Do not be drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery, abuse, and broken relationships. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Eph 5:18). In contrast to being drunk with wine, you should be (in a way) high on the Spirit. The difference of course is that being high on the Spirit does not lead to debauchery and broken relationships... But there's supposed to be some similarities in being drunk and being in love with God.

Could we have a moment of honesty, together... *Is this in any way true for you?* Is there any way that you could say that your emotions for God are similar to what a drunk man feels when he's inebriated?

- We Baptists know we shouldn't get drunk with wine, but how many of us are so filled with the Spirit it's like we are drunk with passion for Him?

The point of it all is to know God and love Him, not just to avoid sin or believe right things. And our passion for God begins with *sight*, seeing how much God loves us.

So, this is what Paul prayed—that they would see God with their hearts and be overcome with a sense of awe and worship in the presence of God. And this is what I pray for, for you... and what I'm trying to do to you as I preach.

Personal: I've undergone a change in the last few years of being your pastor/teacher.

- I used to look at the goal of my messages as being to try to teach you to go and do something, or to learn something. But now my goal is for you to worship. (That's the difference in a lecture and a sermon. In a lecture you leave with knowledge; in a sermon you leave *worshipping*.)
- I want you to walk away thinking about how glorious God is.

- I don't want you to walk away anymore thinking about what you need to go and do for God, but I want you to walk away amazed at what He's done for you. I want you to leave with a sense of His awesome size and His love. Because then, you'll do what you need to do.
- Because that sight changes you. Suddenly, in the light of that sight, all the things that have captivated your heart, the false idols and false saviors, they suddenly lose their grip on you.
- I know now that the only thing that can break the captivating power of sin over you is a more intense love for Jesus. So you need to see, with the eyes of your heart, Jesus. It is only a greater love for Jesus that can keep you away from giving yourself to sin.
 - (I look at what many of you are going out to face in the world, what you face on your college campus... watch one of these specials on spring break, and I think, "How are these guys ever going to learn to say, "no" to all that attraction, especially when everybody else is doing it?" Here's how, it's when you develop a more intense love for Jesus. I want you to learn to love Him, and be passionately devoted to His glory, and that will give you the ability to say no to sin.

So, what specifically does He want them to see? 4 phrases that give you 4 things he hopes you see. They are a review of what He just described in the first 14 verses of this chapter.

Clarity 1: "the HOPE to which he has called you" (v. 18) (hope)

- First, let's talk about the word "hope." A lot of times in English 'hope' means a desire that you're not sure will come to pass.
- For example, "Is Carolina going to going to make it to the NCAA tournament this year?" I hope so, but, at this rate, there's no telling. We can only hope. And maybe the NIT is a little more realistic this year.
 - Biblical hope is different. Biblical hope is *certain*. Let me give you a definition: **Biblical Hope: A life-shaping**

certainty that hasn't happened yet, but you know is going to happen.

- What God is has determined to give you and what He's making you into is settled forever, Paul says... God has set His love on you from all eternity and He's never turning back. **You are going to know Him, and be filled with Him, and be like Him.**
- And Paul says, "I pray that you might be able to see the certainty of that and know the value of it."
- So, let's stop... why is it important that we see that?
- Knowing "the hope to which we are called" **keeps us overcome sin and temptation.**
 - I've often read that many people who overeat do so because they are bored or stressed. Eating is like a small way to add some adventure to your life or a way to escape pressure. That's a problem... eating is supposed to be enjoyable, but if you eat food to feed your soul, then you're going to overeat.
 - In the same way, when your soul is hungry... you turn to silly pursuits. But having your heart fixed on what God is doing in you and what He's going to give you will keep you from that.
 - **C. S. Lewis said** we're like kids who are playing in a mud puddle and your parents are like, "Let's go to the beach," and the kid's like... but I want to play in the mud puddle.
 - Listen, the only way you will avoid the trappings of materialism or the race to get ahead is by a greater, and more certain hope.
 - If I see the value of God and His kingdom, will I need to have so much nice stuff now? No!
 - If I am cherished by the God of the universe, will I be driven by the need to have everyone else's approval?
 - You show me somebody who is obsessed with making money and having nice stuff and I'll show

you somebody who is not aware of the hope to which he has been called.

- Knowing the hope to which you are called not only helps you overcome sin and temptation, it helps you endure **pain in your life**.
 - I was thinking this week about the worst college jobs... Example. **The freezer**. Seriously, that is the closest I ever came to taking up smoking. We'd be in for 15 mins at a time. All the guys would go out and puff and I'd think, "Man, that looks *warm*." He's got fire coming out of his mouth. But, I didn't. I just stuck with my Jack Daniels to keep me warm. The worst part about this job was there basically no purpose... Minimum wage: 5.50. Plus, you could only work 4 hours. I drove 20 min one way and then worked in -7 weather for 4 hours and received \$22, before taxes. Terrible. Drudgery. But what if I had some rich uncle who said, "I want you to learn character, so I'll pay you \$10,000/hr if you do it well." So, now, at the end of a shift I have 40K; every week I make \$200,000... everything changes. Do you think it would be such a drag? Hope.
 - If you know what God is doing in you and giving to you, it changes your perspective on pain. Paul says, "If you could just grasp the assurance and beauty of what God is doing in you..."
 - A couple of weeks ago... Matt Chandler...? What pain? Paul, a man who had experienced great pain himself, called it in Romans "this light and momentary affliction," which is "not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us."
 - So, what pain are you enduring right now? Someone you love suffering? Your own physical pain? Bad marriage? Frustration at work?
 - Whatever pain you are in, you have the assurance of God's love, you know that He has fully forgiven and accepted you, and you have the knowledge

that He is present in all things working for your good, and that He has determined that you will know Him and you will see Him and you will be like Him! That is the hope to which you are called.

- So no matter what happens, whether people are mistreating you, or life has blown up on you, or even if people are just annoying you, you can always respond to what God is doing. What if your mothers reflected on the fact that when your kids are annoying you God, in that, had a plan for making you into what He wanted you to be? That is the hope to which you are called.

2nd phrase... **Clarity 2: "what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints," (v. 18)**

- This one might throw you—sounds like religious mumbo jumbo, "*what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*" So, let's break it apart.
 - He's talking about an inheritance... What is an inheritance? Something of great value you get when a rich relative dies.
 - 2nd question: "*Whose inheritance is he talking about?*" Everyone misses. Whose? Not ours. God's. God has an inheritance? Yes.
 - What is it? The saints.
 - Who are the saints? The football team that's going to lose in the Superbowl? No, the saints are all those that God has chosen. You. You are God's inheritance.
 - Paul says that I am praying that you might know that *you* are God's greatest treasure.
- Think about how staggering that is for a minute.
- What is God excited about as an inheritance? Think about it: What would do you get God as a gift that He didn't already have?
 - Just ask it about Bill Gates? If you were related to Bill Gates, what would you get him as a gift? Could you

imagine getting him something and he said, 'Wow... I've always wanted a flat screen TV.'

- Even more so... What do you get God?
- I am God's inheritance. God considered me so precious to Him that Jesus gave up the universe... suffered and died to save me.
- Paul is praying that we would see that... that we would feel it, and be overwhelmed by our value to God and His commitment to us.
- (If you're taking notes, write down "your worth")
- Later in Ephesians (3:18–20), Paul says, *"I pray that you... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*
- Paul is not one prone to exaggeration. ... He doesn't normally speak in a lot of flowing, poetic language. Usually he is like, 'This is what God is like... and I'm an apostle, so you shut up.' Here Paul does something actually pretty unusual for him. He loses his words... "The love of Christ surpasses all knowledge and my ability to describe it."
- And then He describes it in rather poetic terms, "the breadth and length and height and depth..."
- Now, it doesn't tell us what "breadth, length, height, depth" is... but, as I was meditating on this, especially in light of what we learned in Ephesians 1, it seems pretty obvious to me.
 - *The length*: from all eternity and for all eternity. God chose us from before the foundation of the world, which means there has never been a time when God did not know about us and love us. And there will never be a time in the future where He will quit. His love was not conditioned on anything we had done, Paul said it was like an adoption...
 - *The height*: how great and intense His love is for us. Psalm 103... as high as the heavens are above the earth, that's how great God's love for us. If you want to

measure the intensity of God's love for you, get out your telescope... and that feeling you get when you realize how big the universe is, that's how much God's love is.

- *The breadth*: the love of God for us controls all things... God has marshaled every molecule of the universe in pursuit of His good purpose in our lives. He is using everything: bad luck, injustice, even our own bad decisions for His purpose. The control of His love is *broad*.
- *The depth*: how far God went to save us. That's a reference to how far down God had to come to save us. We were so unlovely and so screwed up and God loved us anyway and came to rescue us.
 - Thinking about this... When you start to date somebody... And everything's going well and you find some glaring fault that makes you derail the whole relationship.
 - The Seinfeld episode... broke up with a girl b/c she ate her peas one at a time or had a weird laugh.
 - Brad O'Brien, WCC CP, before he met Jena-Marie, broke up with a girl b/c she said "expresso" instead of espresso b/c he thought it made her sounds like a redneck.
 - Not entirely inappropriate. Although some of you guys are way too picky. I always think it is absurd when some guy tells me he broke up with a girl b/c she had split ends when he's got a mole with hair growing out of it...
 - But my love for my kids is totally different. I don't discover a fault in one of my daughters and say, "Sorry, Kharis... this is just not working out. It's not you, it's me." Actually, her faults become something that make me love her, if

possible, even more. I have compassion on her and want to protect her... and help her with her weaknesses.

- That's how God's love for us was. Tender, compassionate, like a father with a child.
 - Imagine if when you first met a girl she had a little label on her with all her annoying habits, like a label on a carton of cigarettes. Or on an online dating service a little tab, "Me at my worst: All the ways I am annoying, all my self-centered habits and personal uncomeliness." You'd probably never get a date.
 - But when God saw us, He saw everything, all of our flaws and shortcomings, and loved us anyway.
- Paul says, "This love that surpasses our knowledge to comprehend or even me, with an inspired pen, am able to accurately describe... this is the love I want you to *feel* and taste."
 - (By the way, did you see, this is what it means to be "filled with God"? People talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit like it's some weird experience... Had a friend in college who went to one of these really wild churches and I'd be like, "How was church?" Man it was awesome... the Spirit filled so many people... the guy next to me fainted and the guy in front of him started barking like a dog and this other guy was walking around the auditorium clucking like a chicken." **To be filled with God means that you have a sense of the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of God.**)

3rd Phrase... **Clarity 3: "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe" (v. 19)**

- He prayed you will know how much power is at work in you and through you

- Interesting to me, the measure of God's power: "according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead..."
- The measure of God's power is the resurrection. Honestly, if I were looking for an example of God's power, I would tend to think of creation. "According to the power at work in creation." Think about it... God created all that we see, out of nothing! He spoke and the worlds blasted into existence. I'd say, "Think about the size and complexity and beauty of God's creation." For example,
 - I was learning this week about the woodpecker (Wikipedia moment). WP has a spring joint that works like a shock absorber, and it is able to peck the tree at 20x a second.
 - The woodpecker has tongue is 6 inches long... which may not be that impressive until you realize that the average woodpecker is only 6 inches long. Imagine if I had a tongue 6 feet long. How weird would that be? The tongue when it goes back inside of its head wraps around the neck and works like a **shock absorber**. The end of it is a **sharp barb** that works like a skewer that is able to go deep into a tree, stick into a worm and drag it out. That's impressive.
 - Or, I'd say, think about how big the galaxy is! If you had left with Jesus when he ascended in 32a.d. in a car travelling through space at 80 miles an hour and never stopped, you still wouldn't even be at the edge of our solar system. And there are billions of solar systems like ours out there. And God created all that with a hiccup.
- But none of that stuff was the measure Paul used.
- Paul said, "The power at work in you is the power of resurrection."

- Resurrection is the greatest possible power imaginable, because it's the power to bring life out of death. Creation is bringing life out of nothing, which is pretty impressive, but resurrection is bringing life out of death, which is even greater, because death is not a neutral power, death is a corrosive, destructive, negative power.
 - Death is at work in the world because you and I rebelled against God. Our rebellion brought His wrath and curse of death on our lives... and it ruins God's creation and our lives and ultimately everything we, as humanity, touches.
- By Paul invoking power of resurrection He is saying God is not only to create good stuff out of nothing; He is able to create good things even out of bad things.
- And this is good news for you, because a number of the most sensitive parts of our lives are touched by the decay of death:
 - Many of you struggle with destructive emotions; obsessive; jealous; selfish; hateful; controlling.
 - Addictions;
 - Confusion and blindness that comes from sin;
 - Brokenness
- But God brought life out of death. And that means He can bring life out of even the deadest and most decayed parts of your life.
 - God gives the power to break selfishness in your life.
 - To have self-control.
 - To have courage where previously you have been a coward.
 - To repair hopelessly damaged relationships (despair? Jesus got out of the grave)
 - To love God rather than stuff.
- Paul says I want you to see that power, a power that can change and heal you.
- (Some of you need to quit trying to 'make life work' and 'turning over a new leaf' and instead just surrender to this great power available to you).

One last thing... Paul prays that we would be able to see that God...

Clarity #4: "And he put all things under his (Jesus') feet and gave him as head over all things to the church"

- Write down *finality*. He wants us to see the ultimate finality of God's plan.
- One of the biggest themes of Ephesians 1 is that Jesus has a plan and a purpose and nothing that trumps His will or thwarts His purpose. Ever.
- And in this verse it says that God's one great purpose in the earth, the end to which He is controlling everything, is the work He is doing in His church... in you, in making you into people who love Him and who resemble Him and that He lives inside of.
- **I was thinking about some of those movies where you have a big map of the world where they are tracking all the important stuff going on.**
 - Military map tracking other military activity
 - Wall St. tracking what's going on the business sector
 - Sportscenter
 - Jack Bauer
- These maps are tracking what is going on important. You'll find this hard to believe. On Jesus' big map of what is going on in the world is His work in the church... that's His purpose and He's controlling everything. The big deal on the earth, from God's perspective, is not what is going on in Washington, New York City, Hollywood or Wall St. The big deal is what is going on in the church.

All this makes me ask 3 questions...

- **What is your source of hope, worth, and power?**
 - All these things... hope, worth, power... you have a source of them.
 - You have something that gives you a sense of hope. Your hope for the future is in your finances, your 401K.

- There's a myth about people who are not Christians: feel hopeless; worthless; powerless... not true. Most unbelievers have a hope, a sense of self worth, and a feeling of power. But what if it's all an illusion? It's actually a good thing when somebody's life falls apart.
 - Worth: what others think about you, how much you make.
 - Power: your skill; your future; your talents; your ability to always survive... It's where you turn when the chips are down, what you turn to to tell yourself you'll be ok...
 - But every source of hope, worth, and power besides Jesus ultimately will fail you. What happens when tragedy strikes?
 - If your hope is in your financial security, what happens when it crumbles? This is why the recession hurt so many.
 - If your hope is in your family... good until you enter your 30's and you are still single; or you are 45 years old and get divorced. Or your spouse dies unexpectedly. Or one of your kids makes bad decisions and strays.
 - Matt Chandler. A friend of mine and I were talking... You have no idea what you are carrying around.
 - I know a lot of you don't feel hopeless, and that's the problem. You don't realize how frail you are.
 - Talking with a student who had a bright future, athletically... had a wreck, lost his opp to play. I told him this would be a good thing.
 - Becoming a Christian is this... you make Jesus your hope for the future; make what He thinks of you your sense of worth; and you depend on Him to be your power to live and to bring life together.
- **What are you living for?**
- Everything else besides Jesus' purpose will fail; it will fade with death. God has determined that all of this is going to serve Jesus' purposes.
- I've often encouraged you to compare your life to a movie. If your life was a movie, who would the main character be?
 - Ephesians 1 says this story is all about Jesus. Jesus' reign is one that goes on for eternity. You get one shot to be a part of this great story. Get involved in it. Start living for His kingdom. "Only one life to live, will soon be past; only what's done for Christ, will last."
 - If you died today, what would you have done in your life that counts, at all, for eternity?
- **Do you realize how much power is available to you?**
 - The power of resurrection at work to transform you.
 - Not just for you... For ministry! All of resurrection power is available to the church.
 - Like unclaimed checks... the money is yours, but you never get it
 - I think about the mission fields... God is willing to reach them.
 - 5 areas I want us to own: prisoners; homeless; orphans/foster; unwed mothers; dropouts. I want to unleash you on those areas to unleash Jesus' compassion and power there. I want to see the power of the resurrection brought there... I don't know what to do. I am releasing these to you!
 - **Hudson Taylor said (I summarize), "I knew that if I asked God would send out laborers. He had said, "Pray therefore..." If I had asked, God would have given the laborers for the harvest! And I knew that if I did not pray and ask I would be guilty of the blood of millions of Chinese who would perish having not heard the Gospel."**

- Students, do you realize God has put the advancing of His kingdom in the world at your fingertips? Matt 28:20... hesitation not in Him, but in us.
- God is not short on power, we are short on the faith to access God's power. Psalm 2:8
- Can we get over our small dreams? Are you ready for your life to really count?

Conclusion: If there is one thing our church needs, it is to have our eyes opened. B/c our community needs to see God, and they'll see Him in us. We have to have our eyes opened.

God, let us see. Let me see so I can teach you!

BULLPEN:

- God's love blows our minds. (A lot of times we think of God's love very simplistically. We say, if God really loved me, He'd keep me from pain, because I wouldn't want anybody I loved to be in pain. But Paul says, God's love is broader than you understand, and uses all things in your life—your bad luck, your pain, and even your dumb decisions, for His eternal purposes of good in your life.)
- God's love, Paul says, is beyond all comprehension. God set His love on you from all eternity... not because you deserved it, just because He chose you. He compares it to adoption: I've had friends who adopted say you travel to the orphanage where you will adopt the child, and you walk in and, for the first time, you set your eyes on that little baby that will be yours and immediately a feeling of love springs up in your heart for that child, and that parent says, 'That one. I'm going to change this one's life. I'm going to take them out of the orphanage, let them grow up in a home where they are loved. I'm going to give them my name, and give them one day everything I own.' That's what God did to us. He chose us and set His love on us from before the foundation of the world. He came to earth and purchased our salvation and He's never quit loving us and He never will.
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- That is resurrection power. It is your greatest need, to see God
- **Job video**/Soccer story
- This power of resurrection is limitless. It can heal your heart... keep you from your slavery to lust and materialism; cure your

relationships by helping you become a loving person rather than selfish.

- It is a power at work in you
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- Paul assumes we cannot be spiritually mature until God gives us the power to grasp the limitless love of God for us
- This explains what you were created for. Because you are missing this you engage in things that are destructive for you (addictions; shallow cheap sexual relationships; slavery to material prosperity)
- (He explain that the Father has set His love on them from all eternity... and that this wasn't a love that we had in any way earned, but something like what a parent who walks into an orphanage and sees the baby they are going to adopt for the first time, and this feeling of love wells up within them... and they determine to make that one their child and give them everything. God's love for us has been from all eternity, and there has never been a time when He has not loved us and cherished us. And even when we betrayed Him and sold ourselves into the slavery of sin He didn't quit loving us. And so He came to earth to rescue us... by paying the most terrible price to purchase our forgiveness; He was tortured and executed to pay the price for our rebellion; and then Paul explains how God is now at work in the earth, controlling all of history, to make us into the people He has determined we will be. God has predestined that we will be the happiest and most beautiful people in eternity, because we are going to see Him and know Him and be like Him! And nothing can change or thwart that good purpose He has for us!
- "The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall upon us."

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.

- It doesn't happen all at once
- You ask, "How can God finish this good work in me?" You are doubting the power of God.
- Everything we touch is healed... like acid, but in reverse
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- You see, all the virtues of the Christian life begin with an enlarged view of God. What Paul is wanting to do in his writing, even more than just teaching truth, is for Christ to become so real to the heart that in the sermon people have an experience of his grace, and the false saviors that drive us lose their power and grip on us on the spot.
- Vs. 23: We are God's fullness, He comes into His own in us. We most reveal God, more than anything else!
- The Gospel is a flame, I want to get close to it just to let its sparks light me on fire.
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- You seek God more than sin
 - More satisfying and the only thing that really matters in the universe anyway
- You dream great things for God
-
- This sermon is a chance to show...
 - "only one life to live will soon be past"

- Have their eyes opened to the gloriousness of God
- The length of eternity
- The goodness of God
- The power of God that can work in them and through them

Eph 1:15–23: A Prayer for Knowledge

- Hope of his calling: How you have hope for your friends: We are only Christians because we are called. It is God's grace that makes us Christians. We can have hope for non-Christians.
- Eph 1:17: spirit of revelation in knowledge in Him: **Illustration:** Imagine a woman walking into an orphanage. She goes over and begins talking to a child and they hit it off. At the end of the conversation the woman asks the child if she would like to be adopted. What is the child going to say? Would she say...show me your bank accounts because I want to know if you will be able to pay for my education? No. The child is going to be thrilled and jump into the mother's arms. This child is only concerned with the immediate. **Paul says that when we become a Christian we know about as much about God as an infant knows about its mother.**
- Eph 1:18: His glorious inheritance in the saints: **Illustration:** Imagine you are trying to do Christmas shopping for Bill Gates. Imagine that on Christmas morning you want him to open his gift and say, "Wow, I really wanted one of these." What is it going to be? The Star of India...the Mona Lisa. Now think about God. Paul is telling us that there is something that God treasures above all else. What is it? It's you and me...his saints.
- Eph 1:23: our power. 1:17-18 That we would get a spirit of wisdom and revelation in Him. We should never say I know that God is with me but I'm still scared. I know that he has forgiven me but I am still full of sin. Paul is saying that if you feel this way then you do not really know. We must grasp God's fullness...the extent of his power and salvation in our lives.

- See Chan, *Forgotten God*, chp (last): Supernatural. We need to know the power of God in our lives.

Eph 1:15–23

This prayer was given to us for:

- Empowerment: so we could see that the ministry was to be handed off to us (see Ephesian elders in Acts 20)
- Encouragement: it is very encouraging to know specifically *what* someone is praying for for you.
- Example: teaches us what to pray for: to know God
 - What would it look like if our every desire was to know God better in everything? If our one driving passion would be to know Him? How would that affect: our attitude toward trials; our study of Scripture, etc?
- Depression linked to hopelessness. Example. Prisoners in concentration camps. One man had a dream that WWII was ending soon... thought the dream was from God. He was healthy (as 'healthy' as the prisoners were). Soon he read details of the war and it was obvious the war would last much longer. Within days he died. His loss of hope had lowered his body's resistance to all the diseases in the camp.
 - Until we 'get' that, we are not going to live with the imperviousness and joy God wants us to live with.

You think... what was going on in their lives? Persecution? How do you 'make it'?

- God called us to relationship, not religion. Paul said in Romans 14:17 that the essence of the Kingdom of God is not rules about what to do and not do but joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paul can't get close to thinking about the love for God for Him without erupting into praise. "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

- This explains why you feel so restless, because this is what you were created for. Because you are missing this you engage in things that are destructive for you (physical highs: alcohol or addictions; shallow cheap sexual relationships; slavery to material prosperity)
- Many of us have Paul's theology, but do we have his love of God...
- We tend to be people who are emotional about everything but God
- (((When you think of God's power at work in your life, where do you think of it? Prosperity? Power over sickness? Many of us are mad at God b/c he hasn't used his power on us (God, why didn't you fix this? Why haven't things worked out better for me?))
- But what if the power that God wanted to most use in your life was the power to overcome sin... to have a joy in Him. What if to do that He didn't allow you to be constantly prosperous and for everybody always like you, so that you could learn to have joy in God.
- The greatest power in the universe is the power to go through suffering with joy and say, "God is a greater treasure to me than anything else. I have a joy that is better than anything else life can give or death can take away."
- And where does that that intense love of Jesus come from? It comes only from having your eyes opened to His intense love for you.
 - So, like Paul, I want to preach to you about the glory of Jesus, and I pray that God would help you see Him.

And can I say this... a lot of times people who are not Christians have a perception that Christianity is all rules and regulations that make God happy. Some of you that are not Christians, you think that if there is a God then what He's most ticked off at is that you've broken

His rules—you've had sex when you shouldn't; had too good of a time in some places.

But the emotion God most feels over you is hurt and disappointment... that you don't love Him. It's hurt and disappointment for your sake. Yes, there is a just and righteous anger over sin, but there is also a sadness that you don't love God. He loves you and this is what He created you for... to be your God and for you to live with passion for Him.

- This explains why you feel so restless, also, because *this* love for God is what you were created for... And because you are missing this you engage in things that are destructive for you (physical highs: alcohol or addictions; shallow cheap sexual relationships; slavery to material prosperity)
- For the world, the Christian message is a footnote to the really important stuff happening in the world. Channel 8... cable. What is wrong with these people? Get me to the real stuff. FoxNews tells me what is going on in the world; networks have Hollywood.
- Primetime for God is what He is doing in you, the church... Everything else is incidental and ultimately, in service to that.
 - You show me somebody who is obsessed with making a name for themselves and having everyone admire them and I'll show you somebody who is not aware of the hope that comes from having the eternal approval of God.
 - The water molecule. Made of Hydrogen/Oxygen... both extremely flammable but when you combine them the molecule becomes something that you can never ever burn, and that you can use to put out fire. Ever think about that... 2 of the most flammable substances that when you put them

together they make water. That's God just showing off.

- Or, how about this... right before water gets to the freezing point... it expands so the colder water is on top and so, when a lake freezes, it does so on top (You're like, "Someone's been watching the Discovery Channel")