

“Open Up Our Eyes” // Ephesians 1:15–23 // Love *Incorruptible 2*

Prison Campus: Welcome

- For the **last several months we’ve had a group of brothers in Christ and some of their friends** joining us every Sunday from inside Wake Correctional for our **last service** of the weekend
- Well, as of this week, **they are now officially our 10th campus**. And, as you saw, on **March 30th**, Lord willing we will be opening up an 11th campus in the women’s prison.
- Summit Church, could we welcome them as a beloved part of our church?
- You can see they have a great campus pastor: **Tony Diana**, fresh off the cast of the Soprano’s
- To you: In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, black nor white, male or female, prisoner nor free—we are all one in Christ Jesus—with one common problem, sin, and one great Savior, Jesus.

Good to see everybody here this weekend. After teaching on election and predestination last weekend, I wasn’t sure *who* would show up this week, but—you made it.

Ephesians 1: Lasik experience

How many in here have had LASIK surgery? I did about 14 years ago. It was fairly new back then, I think... I heard an advertisement for it on

Works Consulted:

“Grammar of Hope,” Tim Keller

“See It Through,” Steven Furtick

“Strengthened with Power,” Craig Groeschel

“How to Miss Jesus in the Bible,” John Piper

the radio that said, “If you pay for one eye, we’ll fix the other eye for free.” I thought, “That’s perfect. I have exactly two eyes.”

- I got **my exam done and then made an appointment** and went and sat in this little waiting room...
- The **doctor called me in and we made small talk** for a minute, and then she sat me down.
- I’m *thinking surely there has to be some prep*, or something.
 - She gave me **some Valium and then strapped my head** to the back of the chair.
 - Then **immediately I started having 2nd thoughts**—like, “Do good eye doctors advertise on the radio?”
 - “Did I just sell my eyes out to the lowest bidder?”
- But at that point the machine has taken over... **little vacuum cleaner** thingy came out/the knife/peels back...
 - You have to watch... what else do you have to look at?
- Then the little laser goes to work... The best way to describe it is it’s like a kaleidoscope.
 - The most unnerving part is I could smell the burning...
 - (I know this a terrible commercial for LASIK—but, btw, they have gotten much better now).
- Well, **as this little kaleidoscope was doing its work**, I had this terrible thought. What if there is an earthquake right at this very moment? I know earthquakes aren’t common in Raleigh, but “*Has anyone checked the weather channel to see if there’s an earthquake has been forecast? My wife was pregnant with our 1st child, and I thought, “I haven’t even seen my first kid. What if I go blind?”*”
- I seriously was a little scared, but then, almost as soon as it started she unstrapped me and said, “OK, you’re all set...”
- **I sat up and I could see 20/20...** The whole thing took 11 minutes.

- Ever since then, I've been really glad I did it... I do wonder what fail-safe they have in places where there's a lot of earthquakes.

The point I'm trying to make: The prospect of losing our sight would be terrifying for most of us, because so many experiences in life would be different if you couldn't see.

I share that because right at the beginning of Ephesians, Paul pauses in his theological instruction and writes out a prayer for the Ephesians, and the prayer is for **spiritual sight**.

- If you were here last week, you remember that **Paul, in the 1st part of the chapter, has just dropped a series of theological bombs** and he's about to drop some more.
- But Paul knows that simply explaining these things to the Ephesians is not sufficient. **Unless God grants spiritual sight** to them, it's all useless.

So, Vs. 17, he begins "(I pray that God) may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened...

- **See what's he praying for?** To have the eyes of our hearts enlightened—for spiritual sight! to have the Spirit of God reveal to our souls what Paul has just explained to our minds so that we can know him better.
- It's **not enough, you see, to know the facts with your mind**, you see; you have to *feel* their reality in your heart.
- There are **two words for "knowledge"** in Greek. *Oida* refers to knowing facts, data.
 - I know that **Raleigh is the capital** of North Carolina. I know that the **square root of 256 = 16**
 - And the **little tiny piece of hard plastic** at the end of your shoelace is called the 'aglet.'
- *Ginosko*, that Paul used here, refers to a different kind of knowledge. It is a personal, felt knowledge gained through experience.

- I might know (*oida*) that Krispy Kreme's are made of sugar and baby angel nectar, but that's different from the experience of putting one in your mouth (*ginosko*)
- You might know how parachuting works, but that's different than the moment you step out of the plane
- I knew my wife was about to give birth; that was different than holding that 1st daughter in my arms. That's *ginosko*.

- **The Hebrew version of this word was used** sexual intimacy—when a man and woman would unite their souls in sexual intimacy, the Bible says they "knew" each other. It doesn't mean he learned some facts about her. They experienced each other.
- That's the kind of "knowledge" Paul prays for us to have: a felt knowledge of the love of God that we *experience* deep within our soul.

When God grants spiritual sight to us, he takes the doctrines of the gospel we understand with our mind and makes them burst alive with sweetness in our hearts; we come to know them as real, and personal, and felt.

You see, it is possible, to be around Jesus for a long period of time—maybe a lifetime—and never really know him.

- **Consider Judas.** Judas hung around Jesus for 3 years without developing *personal* love and trust.
- **Judas didn't start out as an outright hypocrite.** He was interested in Jesus and wanted to be around him like everyone else. He wasn't a secret agent; he believed Jesus told the truth; was pulling for him, wanted Jesus as a part of his life.
- But **the eyes of his heart were never enlightened** to see the true glory of Jesus, and so his knowledge of Jesus never turned into personal trust or love.

Let me make a big statement here as we get started: ***Almost all of your spiritual problems come from a lack of sight, because what you know with your mind has never been known, felt with your heart.***

- For example: Do you often you feel dry spiritually? Or just cold? Like something is missing? You feel like there should be **more**.
 - This is what you are looking for. What you know *here* (head) needs to come alive here (heart).
- **Many of you have been Christians since you were very little.** You are well versed in the facts, but you don't feel them—any more, if you ever did. They no longer wow or captivate you.
 - **It's not some new fact about Jesus you need to learn.** I'm not going to explain some doctrine and you're going to say, "Oh, I get it now; that's the missing piece."
 - **No, basically, you are like the Grinch,** whose heart has shrunk. You need the Spirit to make your heart grow 3 sizes in one day!
- **Some of you are bored with Jesus.** There's no passion in your life. You go through the motions, but you don't really read the Bible and pray on your own; you don't really feel anything in worship.
 - **Why have you gotten bored with Jesus? How do you fix that?**
 - **It's not new facts** about Jesus that will make him interesting.
 - Stars like **Lady Gaga** have to reinvent themselves constantly to remain interesting. Maybe 2–3x in the midst of one halftime show! Jesus isn't like that! **He's ever-fascinating,** ever-satisfying.
 - You **need to simply have the eyes of your heart enlightened** to the truth you already know.
 - **He is like a well.** You don't get better water from a well by widening the circumference of your well, but by digging down deeper into it.¹
- **Are you discouraged, do you feel sad or overwhelmed?** You need God to open your eyes to who Jesus is, and who he is for you.
 - I've always loved the words of Christian counselor **Larry Crabb**, who admitted in a time of real discouragement,

what I know has been true of me: "God, you're all I have. But I don't know you well enough to know that you're all I need." Larry Crabb

For the vast majority of us in this room, this is our primary need: To know him. And to know him, we need the eyes of your heart enlightened, and the only thing that can yield that in your life is prayer.

And so, we turn to this prayer.

- I memorized Paul's prayer last year, and this is most often **what I pray for myself, and my family and for you, my church.**
- This is given to us as a model prayer, I believe, for how you should **pray for others—**
 - For your kids.
 - **We've challenged you** to ask God for ONE person this year you could bring to Jesus: This is what you should pray for **your 'one.'**

Specifically, Paul prays for us to see... (4 things)

1. The certainty of our HOPE: "I pray that you may know... the hope to which he has called you" (1:18)

- The Greek word for 'hope' is really poorly served by our English word "hope." **In English, "hope"** really doesn't communicate what the Greek word means:
 - In English, the word "hope" usually refers to something we want to happen that we are not sure *will* happen.
 - Carolina fans sure *hope* that they can avenge their tragic Thursday night loss to the Blue Devils come March... but there's no guarantees.
 - **Biblical hope, by contrast, is not something you are unsure about; it is something you are very sure about that just**

¹ Jared Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 18.

hasn't happened yet—but something that you look forward to with great anticipation, and that literally reshapes your entire outlook on life.

- **And what is Paul saying we are certain is going to happen?** What is our hope? What we looked at last week—
 - That God is going to finish what he started in us. We're going to be holy and blameless before him in love, reconciled to him, filled with him, and with him eternally.
- We're certain that is going to happen, because...
 - He chose us before the foundation of the world; and his choice of us was not conditioned on our good works which means his keeping of us is not conditioned on our good behavior.
 - Because he is above all things, we know that no ruler, authority, dominion or power can thwart his purposes.
- ~~And that certainty gives Paul the power to pray. See **how he starts the prayer?** “For this reason... I do not cease remembering you in my prayers.” (vs. 15).~~
 - ~~What is “this reason” that compels him to pray? The certainty that what God has started, he will finish.~~

The certainty of that hope is supposed to reshape how we see everything in life.

- It changes how we look at our pain.
 - **I went to visit the most precious girl** this week—she joins us each week via the web each week from her hospital room at Duke.
 - Shawna: Cystic Fibrosis; cancer. Ocean—that's hope.
 - The kind of hope that stares at Cystic Fibrosis, or cancer, or death itself, and says, “You're no big deal.”
 - Imagine your car broke down... that's hope.
- That hope shows us what **God wants us to do with our blessings:**

- **I read something this week that really convicted me:** The unspoken goal of most Americans is to get enough money so that they don't have to show up to work anymore, so that they can rest and play all day.
- That's not God's purpose for making you wealthy. That is forgetting your hope. You are enriched on earth not to give you 70 years of creature comforts and pleasures, but to better pursue God's hopes for the world.
- **That hope enables us to overcome temptation.** You'll never be able to say no to sin until you're more excited about what you have in Jesus than you are in the temporary enticements offered to you in sin.
 - **When my wife and I got engaged**, she was a student at UVA and I one down here in NC. The hardest thing to do each weekend was say goodbye. I also knew, because she was really, really pretty, that guys at UVA continually hit on her. So, I always made sure she knew, “I'm committed to you, and I'm coming back for you next weekend,”—that was her hope—
 - and eventually I put a big fat diamond on her hand to prove I was coming back. That was my earnest money and we both knew if I didn't come back she got a free diamond out of it.
 - That's partially what gave her the ability to resist flirtations of other guys. A gGuy would flirt with her and she'd look down on her hand and see the certain hope that I'd give her. That and I put out fliers on her college campus that if any guy even flirted her I'd punch them in the throat.
- Paul wants us to **see and feel our hope**, because hope transforms

Second, he prays we'll see...

2. Our **WORTH** to God: “(I pray) that you may know...what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...” (v. 18)

- *Honestly, people read right over that because it sounds like religious mumbo-jumbo.* ‘The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.’ But let’s take a closer look, because it’s an awesome thought.
 - First of all, **WHOSE inheritance is this?** Not yours. *His* glorious inheritance.
 - **God has an inheritance coming to him?** Yes, he does.
 - Well, what does he not already possess?
 - Have you ever had the dilemma of trying to buy something for a really rich person, and you wonder, “What do I get them that they don’t already have or wouldn’t have already bought if they wanted?”

Well, what do you get for a God who can speak literally anything into existence?

- The answer is YOU. The one thing God didn’t have that he was willing to go to the bloody cross of Calvary to obtain was you.
- This is a thought almost too glorious to comprehend: The God who literally had everything, and could wipe the board of creation and start over if he wanted, set his love on you and was willing to submit to the pain and humiliation of the cross just so that you could be with him eternally.
 - **Lesslie Newbigin** says, “To create the heavens and the earth cost God nothing. But to save us cost him his very life.”
- **And Hebrews 12:2** tells us he did it with JOY: “For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”

- **Isa 53** says that Jesus looked from the cross and saw the future offspring his sacrifice would produce and was satisfied.
- **In his hour of greatest trial**, you were the Son of God’s **living hope**—

- **And you get to share in that hope**, enjoying the intensity of that love forever.

Paul says, “When you see how precious you are to God, that will totally transform your life!”

- Later in **Ephesians (3:18–20)**, Paul prays a second time (the prayer our church planters walked us through) and this is what he 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.” (LEAVE UP ON SCREEN UNTIL POINT 3)
 - Paul does **something here pretty unusual** for him—it’s kind of touching: he loses his words. Paul’s normal way of speaking is, “I’m an Apostle; these are the words of God; so you shut up.”
 - But here, Paul says, **I want you to know the love of Christ**, but it surpasses my ability to explain it...
 - I want you to know, first, how **long** God’s love is for you.
How long is God’s love?
 - Paul has already explained that it’s 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.
 - How **high** is God’s love?
 - Psalm 103 tells us as high as the heavens are above the earth, that’s how intense God’s love for us. If

you want to measure the intensity of God's love for you, get out your telescope...

- The Hubble telescope now sends back infrared images of faint galaxies 12 billion light years away (1 light year is 6 trillion miles).
- **That feeling you get** when you realize how big the universe is, that's how intense God's love is for you.
- How **wide** is God's love?
 - It literally **extends to control every molecule** of the universe, marshalling everything in pursuit of his good purpose in our lives. There literally is not one stray atom, electron or quark in all the galaxies, the control of his love is that *broad!*
- How **deep** is God's love for us?
 - So deep he'd reach all the way down into the filth of sin and the grave of death to make a wretch his treasure--literally becoming sin and death for us, dying in our place so we didn't have to. That's how deep his love is for us.
- I love the old hymn: "Could we with ink the oceans fill, or were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the oceans dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky."
- Paul says, "This love that surpasses my ability—as an inspired Apostle—to describe, *this is the love I want you to feel.*"
 - Do you see **the contradiction in that verse, btw?** *I want you "...to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge."*
 - How do you know something you can't know?
 - What that means is that there is **a certain kind of love you cannot explain, you can only experience.**

- And **when you experience that love, and only when you experience**, will God become real to you. Did you see that phrase at the very end: "...You'll be filled with all the fullness of God"?
 - Feeling this love in your heart is literally the experience of the presence of God.
 - My favorite **illustration** of this: Like a **father** picking up a son. **The love has always been there** (he's the father you've always yearned for); you need to *feel* it.

If God isn't real to you, this is **what you must pray for.**

- Some of you **want God to be real in your life.**
 - Some people look for it in some weird confluence of circumstances.
 - I was unsure about asking her out, but on our 1st date we found out that she was born on May 3rd and I was born on May 11th and our waiter told us he was born on May 7th and when you add those dates together it equals 21, the perfect number 7 multiplied by the number of the Trinity and May is the month I got baptized... *Jehovah Jireh!* I experienced God! (Christians = silly)
 - He doesn't become real through a dream or a vision or a voice in your heart.
 - Some people in seminary talk about how God becomes real to them when they sense him using them...
- That's great, but it's not the primary way God becomes real to you.
 - He becomes real when he enlightens your eyes to see how high, wide, long and deep is the love of God for you.
 - I love how one of our church planters in Asheville, Chase Gardner, says: Understanding what God has done for you in Jesus is infinitely more important than recognizing what he has done in or through you.
 - Because that is **how God becomes real** to you.

- **(Knowing this love is also, btw, how repentance becomes real.** A lot of people think that repentance becomes genuine when you get scared of God the judge. Not true. Repentance becomes real and life-changing when you feel the pain of wounding the Father who has never stopped loving you.
 - It is not the power of God, but the seeing the goodness of God, Paul says in Romans, that leads us to repentance.)

Third thing Paul prays we see...

3. God's POWER at work in you

- “(I pray) that you may know... 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...”
- God wants us to know **the power with which he is working in and around and through us** in the world.
- The **nature and magnitude of that power** is measured, Paul says, by the resurrection.
- Honestly, if I were trying to tell someone about God's power, I probably have picked **creation**.
 - Think about creating **everything** out of **nothing**. Seems like you couldn't get more powerful than that, right?
 - With a word, God created 3000 billion trillion stars, each one putting out the same energy as a trillion megaton atom bombs every second...
 - Some of these stars are so big that they defy description. Right here in our own Milky Way, there are stars like Eta Carinae, which is 5 million times brighter than our sun!²
 - **God just blew that into existence. That's power.** But Paul says that there is an even greater power than that at work in us. The power of resurrection.

- Creation may bring life out of nothing. But resurrection brings life back from the dead.
- You see, by **invoking the power of resurrection**, Paul is saying that God not only has the ability to make us into something out of nothing—to take nobodies and make them somebodies—he also has the power to **redeem bad lives** and transform them into good ones.

 - And that's **good news for a lot of you, because** for many of us, your problem is not that you just need a little extra boost of talent; you've **destroyed your life** through terrible choices, addictions, broken relationships
 - Paul says: GOOD NEWS! **If God brought life out of death with Jesus**, then he can bring life and healing back to the mess you've made of your heart and your life.
- Paul says to these **embattled Ephesian believers**: in the midst of all you are going through, you need to see the power at work in you and through you—working in every situation for you, to protect you, to accomplish God's purposes in and through you.
- **Fav OT stories (2 Kings 6): 2 details...**
 - It doesn't say, “When Elisha prayed, God *sent* horses and chariots.” They were already there! Prayer didn't bring the help, it brought the vision.
 - **The question is not, “Has God sent the power?” The question is, “Have you seen it?”**
 - One other detail. The army was down in the valley, and **the angels were up in the hills**. Why not put them in between? God does not always keep us from pain... but we know he, with a much more powerful and sovereign force, is right there, directing those things for his purposes.
 - Sometimes we battle, but we are overseen by a much larger army so that not one spurious things happens...

² “eight-a-ca-REEN-i” / John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 200.

- **Most of you don't need to plead with God for help. You need a NEW LENS** to see the power and promise he's already made available to you. That lens, the new set of eyes, Paul says, is found in the resurrection of Jesus.
 - **There we see that in all things in our lives**—even the bad things, the crosses, he has a plan he is working for our good.
 - **Think about it:** There's never been a time when it looked like God was out of control and the forces of evil were more in charge than the cross!
 - But from our vantage point now, we see that there was never a time where evil was less in charge and God was MORE in control, and that he turned what the devil intended for evil—Jesus' death—into his purposes and our salvation.
 - That **shows us what God is doing in our pain**, and our suffering now, and the power he is using to accomplish that—resurrection power!
 - **No wonder Paul says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors**, for I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lastly, he prays that we'll see:

4. The FINALITY of Jesus' rule

- **Vs. 22, he says,** "(I pray that you would see) that he put all things under his (Jesus') feet and gave him as head over all things to the church."
- I pray you'll see that the battle is already won and Jesus is already securely on the throne.
- New trend in TV dramas.
 - (I've got to see the next episode... Opening montage.)

- Flip through the episodes—Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews... he's in the opening montage. Fast forward to the final episode, "Revelation 22," he's in the opening montage there, which means you can be sure that before the credits roll he's coming back to save the day! He wins!

Furthermore, notice in this verse that Paul wants them to see that the main thing Jesus is doing in the world is building his church.

- The church is the focal point the apex, of everything God is doing in the world.
 - (Jesus is not head over Washington D.C., or Rome, but the church.) Not that he's not over those things (all things are under his feet) but the body he is over is the church.
 - For Paul, it would be inconceivable that the **church was not just an event you attended on the weekend**, but a family you belonged to; a place where you had your deepest relationships and to which you were the most committed.
 - **It was the place that Jesus purchased with his blood**, and the place from which God's power flowed.
- If Jesus died for the church, you should be deeply devoted to it.
 - You say, "People there have a lot of problems." Nobody knows that more than Jesus. Those problems cost him his blood!
 - **But he gave it gladly**, not just for other people's sins, but yours!
 - *If Jesus invested his blood into the church, you should invest the best of your time, energy and resources.*
- And **God is ready to move heaven and earth**, Paul says--literally to pour out the power of resurrection--in order to complete the mission of the church in the world.
 - There are **6400 UPG's** in the world who have little to no access to the gospel. It's not that there is a shortage of God's love or power to save them; God is simply waiting

on someone or some church or you who will believe what God says he wants to do and ask him to do it!

- Do you realize **the power God has placed at our fingertips?**
- Go ask like you believe he has this kind of authority!

MUSIC/CONCLUSION

I return to this statement: All of our spiritual pathologies are cured through vision, and vision is only given by the Spirit, through prayer.

- ~~How spiritual revival works: “They took their blessings for granted and they forgot God.” God allowed them to through affliction. “Then they remembered.” Doesn’t mean they didn’t know the name... just that the truths about God were no longer real to their hearts.~~
- ~~“They remembered.” “Having your eyes enlightened” = Same thing.~~

Paul prays this for us, this is what we should pray for *others*. MODEL

- It’s what you should pray for your one!

Prayer is what releases the power that opens our eyes. Which is why prayer is such a big deal here.

- **Enlightenment like this doesn’t happen through crazy-good weekend production.**
- **Paul didn’t try to create worship experiences,** he prayed for spiritual enlightenment.
 - **Reverb:** A lot of what we call powerful worship is just turning up the reverb.
 - **There’s something beyond weekend emotional highs that you need**—it is the deep soul enlightenment of your eyes!
- **A worship experience** might give you goosebumps for a moment; enlightened eyes will transform your life for eternity.

This is what I’m praying for this church during our study in Ephesians—that YOU would see the hope God has given you in the gospel, that you would see he is in control and working in all things; that you would understand your great worth to God; that you would recognize the power God has put inside you, and that you would ask God to extend that power through you to people all over the world who have yet to hear about him.

Amen? Amen. CAMPUS PASTORS WILL COME AND LEAD US IN A TIME OF PRAYER...

