

Text: Ephesians 1:17-21 (Pew Bible pg.1156)

Title: “All Yours in Christ”

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – William Randolph Hearst was a great newspaper tycoon in the early 1900s. He was one of the most prolific art collectors in the world. One day he read about an extremely valuable piece of art, which he decided he must add to his extensive collection. He instructed his agent to scour the galleries of the world to find the masterpiece he was determined to have at any price. After many months of diligent searching, the agent reported something surprising to Mr. Hearst. The valuable piece of art that Hearst wanted so badly actually already belonged to him. For years it had been stored in one of his warehouses. He had no idea what he possessed.

And the same thing is true for followers of Jesus Christ. We really don't comprehend all that is ours in Christ. The Apostle Paul knew this and it moved him to pray a powerful prayer that is recorded in Ephesians 1. Open your Bibles to Ephesians 1:17.

The prayer takes up vv.15-23, but I want to read just vv.17-21. Read text.

My aim this morning is two-fold:

- For those of you who are believers I want you to understand all what is *already* yours because of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- For those of you who are not believers I want you to see what *can* be yours in Christ if you will put your trust in Him.

Look at the prayer again.

Ephesians 1:17 - I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

He prays that they will *receive* something, so that they will *realize* something.

What they needed to receive, and what we need to receive, is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. We cannot realize all that is ours in Christ unless first we receive some assistance from the Holy Spirit.

And why do we need this wisdom and revelation? So that we may know God better. So the Holy Spirit works in our spirit to give us wisdom and revelation so we can know God better. That needs to be #1 on your bucket list ... the greatest goal and passion of your life ... to know God better. We're not talking about head knowledge of facts and information. We're talking about intimate, personal knowledge. And that is possible only through Jesus Christ.

So here is the first part of this great prayer. Paul prays they will know...

1. THE HOPE OF GOD'S CALLING (v.18)

Ephesians 1:18 - I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you...

We're talking about the hope that comes from the calling of God upon our lives. The calling of God has to do with all that God does for us in bringing us to salvation.

You need to know this about the calling of God. It's not like the calling of a human. If I call you to come to my house for Easter lunch today, it's more like an invitation or a request. After that, it's all up to you. You have to decide to do it, to drive yourself there, to get out of your car and to walk into my house. After the invitation is given, it's all up to you.

The calling of God is different. When He calls us to His home, heaven, He is far more active than we are. Why? Because He knows that there's no way we can get there on our own. At some point we have to decide whether or not we will accept the call, but He knows we can't even do that without His help. So the faith we need is a gift of His grace. And we don't have the righteousness to get to where He is calling us, so He provides that through His Son Jesus Christ. And we don't have the strength to live for Him until we eventually die and get to go to heaven, so He takes care of that by empowering us to stay saved and to persevere.

EXAMPLE: Last week we talked about Jesus' raising Lazarus. Remember Jesus stood at the entrance to the tomb where Lazarus was buried and called Him to come out. Well, Lazarus had no more ability to come out of that grave than a rock would have. He had been dead for four days. But when Jesus calls someone it's different. Jesus called and He enabled Lazarus to return to life, stand up in His grave clothes and walk out of that tomb alive.

And this calling gives us hope. Now hope is not just wishful thinking like a little child saying "I hope it doesn't rain before we get to have our Easter egg hunt today." That's a wish. Hope is confident assurance that the future is great.

And the fact that God calls us to a relationship with Himself and to eternal life means that our future is great in Him. The Bible says, "Faithful is He who called you who will also bring it to pass."

And this calling lifts us to another level of living. This is a high and holy calling.

Ephesians 4:1 - I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

And the hope that comes from this calling is something that others around us will notice.

1 Peter 3:15 - Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

The assumption is that other people will notice this hope that you have and ask you to give a reason for it. It will be an unmistakable trait that others see in you.

This hope gives us confidence face the future. It gives us courage in the face of suffering. It gives us resolve in the face temptation. It gives us assurance in the face of death.

ILLUSTRATION – In the summer of 2010 the popular author and atheist Christopher Hitchens was diagnosed with cancer. He died last year, but before his death he wrote an article for *Vanity Fair* in which he described his battle with cancer:

“I am badly oppressed by a gnawing sense of waste. I had real plans for my next decade and felt I'd worked hard enough to earn it. Will I really not live to see my children married? To watch the World Trade Center rise again?. ... To the dumb question "Why me?" the cosmos barely bothers to return the reply: “Why not?” ... I sometimes wish I were suffering in a good cause, or risking my life for the good of others, instead of just being a gravely endangered patient. Allow me to inform you, though, that when you sit in a room with a set of other finalists, and kindly people bring a huge transparent bag of poison to plant into your arm [his chemotherapy treatment] and you either read or don't read a book while the venom sack gradually empties into your system You feel swamped with passivity and impotence: dissolving in powerlessness like a sugar lump in water.”

Christopher Hitchens had no hope, and it showed in the way that he faced his own death. But our hope is expressed in that great hymn of our faith:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' Name.

Refrain

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

What is yours in Christ? There's the hope of God's calling and then...

2. THE RICHES OF GOD'S INHERITANCE (v.18)

Ephesians 1:18 - I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ...

First, there's the *abundance* of this inheritance ... "riches." There's nothing lacking, nothing more that we need.

Second, there's the *radiance* of this inheritance ... "glorious." The inheritance awaiting us is filled with unimaginable glory.

ILLUSTRATION – Did you follow the story about the Mega Millions lottery winners last week? I know that none of you buy lottery tickets, but maybe you followed the story. Or perhaps you dreamed of what you would do with that much money. The lottery pot had grown to \$646 million. And finally three people picked the right number and split the winnings. But lottery officials said that one person didn't want anyone to know they had won the lottery. Officials said this: "For all of its promise, instant riches come with a price, starting with the immediate barrage of calls from relatives and distant friends eager for a handout. Never mind the need to hire specialists to address tax implications and craft a disciplined investment strategy that could avoid the fate of past lottery winners who've spectacularly burned through vast fortunes or found they were better off before they struck it rich."

But the Bible says that our inheritance in Christ is not like the lottery. It is abundant and it is glorious.

And what is this "inheritance" that is so abundant and so radiant? It is none other than the full experience of our life in Christ for eternity.

Matthew 25:34 - "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

1 Peter 1:4 - and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,

It's more than a destination ... it's a full realization of everything God promises in our salvation. Some of it we experience today; some it we know by faith.

1 Corinthians 2:9 - "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Now this is not just "pie in the sky by and by." It's something we get a taste of today. This inheritance is described in...

Ephesians 1:13b-14 - Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

So God gives us a deposit, a down-payment, with His Holy Spirit that lets us know that our inheritance is safe and secure in heaven.

You need to know what is yours in Christ ... the hope of God's calling, the riches of God's inheritance, and...

3. THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (vv.18-19)

Ephesians 1:18-19a - I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe.

This power is in us because Christ is in us. Our salvation is a display of the power of God from start to finish. It takes the power of God to save us. We can't do it ourselves. We are dead in our trespasses and sins and He makes us alive in Christ.

And the life that believers are called to live everyday can only be done in the power of Christ.

2 Peter 1:3 - His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...

And when we die one day Christ will return and by His power He will lift our bodies out of the grave.

1 Corinthians 6:14 - By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

The Christian life is a display of God's power from start to finish. And this power is for those who believe.

Ephesians 1:19a - His incomparably great power for us who believe.

ILLUSTRATION – Now we saw power on display this past week with the tornadoes that swept through the Metroplex. I saw on television a picture of a house where the windows were blown out and on an inside wall there were three or four slats from privacy fence that had been propelled through a solid wall. Now that's not something easily done, but the explanation is that there was a mighty force, the winds of a tornado, that took hold of those pieces of wood and caused them to do something they couldn't otherwise do.

And the power of God does the same thing for believers. It empowers and energizes us to love ... to serve ... to witness ... to be live holy lives ... to glorify God. We can't do it on our own, but God's power does it through us when we trust Him.

Now this boggles our mind. We can't comprehend this power; but thankfully this power is something that can be seen. In fact, it was seen in what we're celebrating in church today ... in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ephesians 1:19b - That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

Ephesians 1:20 - which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead ...

Now we need to get this. There's an accumulation of four different words to communicate this power. This is such explosive power that Paul needs four different words to describe it.

Ephesians 1:20 - which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead ... and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Ephesians 1:21 - far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

We're talking about the divine, dynamic, eternal energy that resurrected Jesus from the dead ... and it's available to us!

Let me show you what this means for us as believers: When Christ was raised by this power, we were raised. Christ conquered death; we conquer death through Him. When Christ was exalted to the right hand of God by this power, we were raised with Him, seated with Him ... *with* Him, never to be separated. When Christ was inaugurated as the ruler of all authorities and power, we share in that power over Satan and his demons. And when Christ was installed as the Head of the church by this power, we benefit from His headship.

QUOTE: Martin Lloyd-Jones in his commentary says this: "We can be certain and confident of this, that nothing can prevent the carrying out of God's purpose with respect to us. There is no power that can withstand Him; there is no might or influence that can match Him, there is no possible antagonist that can equal Him. The mightiest foes, the devil, death and hell have already been vanquished, and the resurrection of Christ is the proof of it ... proof positive that there is nothing too hard for God."

Philippians 3:10 - I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...

ILLUSTRATION – The tornadoes this past week brought back some strong memories for Nan and me. In April of 1979 our home was in the wake of a tornado. It ripped through our neighborhood destroying our home and every other home within a half-mile of us. In the weeks that followed we began to pick through the rubble and prepare to rebuild our house. Of course it was springtime and everything was turning green. But we were so surprised one day to see flowers beginning to sprout and bloom in the oddest places. There in the crack of the foundation of our house, a geranium plant was growing and blossoming. Out in the middle of the yard was a random tomato plant growing. How did that happen? Well, a neighbor who lived behind us was a seed salesman. He sold packages of seeds to hardware stores and nurseries. His garage was filled with racks and racks of packages of seeds ... fruits, vegetables, flowers ... you name it. When the tornado hit his house is scattered those

seeds for miles in every direction. Some of them landed in our yard. The Spring rains watered them and soon, all over the neighborhood there was a carpet of beautiful flowers.

And when the tornado of the resurrection of Jesus Christ hit 2000 years ago, the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead sowed the seeds of new life ... a new life that can be yours today.

CONCLUSION

INVITATION – USE GUEST CARDS