

# Giving Thanks

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good afternoon. If I could add my welcome to Martin. It's great to be here with you. Thank you to the band, to Matt and to Ash for accompanying us this afternoon. If you've got a Bible there, could you turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1. We're going to be reading the whole chapter, but focusing this afternoon on verses 15 to 23.

If you use a church Bible, you'll find it on page 1173. So let us hear from the Word of God. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

[ 1 : 23 ] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to put into effect when the times reached their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you were also included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed you were marked in him with the 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.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you.

Remembering you in my prayers, I keep asking that 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.

[ 3 : 05 ] I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

As the grass withers and the flower fades, the word of our God endures forever. Thanks be to God for the reading of his holy word. Let's bow our heads as we approach his word together.

Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to us, for showing us the way of salvation through faith in your Son. We ask you this afternoon that you would now teach us through your word, that you would indeed open the eyes of our hearts so that we would know Christ better, that you would strengthen us to serve you and to live for your glory.

[ 4 : 49 ] Father, quieten and still our hearts. Speak to us. May you deal with us in the way that you require, that we would be like clay in the potter's hand, that you would shape us, that you would mold us, that you would make us look and resemble more of your Son, Christ Jesus.

Father, I pray if there's anybody here listening or watching or in this room who does not know you, I pray that they would encounter the risen Lord, that they would put their trust in you, that they would experience the fullness of Christ and know him forevermore.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. I've entitled this sermon and the prayer for those who have everything.

I want to start by telling your story. William Randolph Hearst, the 20th century millionaire, owned his own newspaper publishing company and he had a hobby.

His hobby was to invest his money in collecting rare pieces of art from all around the world. One day, Mr Hearst read the description of a very valuable piece of art.

[ 6 : 03 ] So he sent his agent abroad to find it. I imagine the guy was travelling from city to city, continent to continent, going through warehouses and catalogues.

I picture him being a bit like Indiana Jones, you know, in the movie The Raiders of the Lost Ark, when you see that massive warehouse stacked full of treasures and some wee guy with a wee trolley putting a box away.

After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasure. To the surprise of Hearst, the priceless masterpiece was stored in none other than the warehouse of William Randolph Hearst.

The multi-millionaire had been searching all over the world for a treasure that he had already possessed. If he had just read the catalogue of his treasures, he would have saved himself a lot of time and a lot of money.

This story is a picture of what we are like as Christians. We possess great treasures in the gospel, yet we fail to appreciate them because we don't take the time to enjoy them.

[ 7 : 15 ] Spiritually speaking, we end up living as if we're impoverished people or lacking. We end up living like homeless people, beggars on the street, forgetting that we are, in fact, spiritual billionaires.

We can waste so much time, effort, and energy seeking ultimate satisfaction and fulfillment in other places like our jobs, possessions, relationships, sex, beauty, or even our own achievements.

Most of these things are good things. people, but you know, when we make them ultimate things that define us, they end up controlling us and they become idols.

But we were created for so much more. And if you're a follower of Jesus, you possess way more than you can ever, ever imagine.

that's what the Apostle Paul outlines in what probably is one of the longest sentences penned in English in verses 1 to 14 of the book of Ephesians chapter 1.

[ 8 : 19 ] We are told that Ephesian believers and us that we have been lavished with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. For instance, if you look at verse 4, it says that God chose us before the creation of the world.

That is despite knowing what we would be like, God chose us to be His. In verse 5, he tells us that we were chosen for God in His love chose us to be adopted to be in His family.

That is God did not choose us to keep us distant from Him, but rather He welcomed us into His family and has lifted us up to share in the same privileges as His divine Son that we become co-heirs with Christ.

Moreover, Paul reminds us in verse 7 that we have redemption through His blood. That is, Jesus has set us free from a life of slavery to sin to bring us into the newness of life where we get to serve this wonderful, gracious, and glorious King.

Paul tells us that God has sealed us with His Holy Spirit, which is a deposit, guaranteeing us our future inheritance where God promised that we will live with Him in the new heavens and the new earth to come.

[ 9 : 41 ] Just reading these words, we can see that Paul cannot contain himself, hence why he explodes in praise because of all these blessings and riches that we possess in Christ Jesus as you read verse 14, to the praise of His glory.

Today we're going to be briefly studying Paul's prayer of thanksgiving. And in light of what we've just said, we need to ask ourselves, what do you pray for for the people who have everything?

They don't need something new. They don't need additional blessings. So what is it that Paul prays for? Well, this afternoon we'll see that Paul prays that they would have a greater grasp of what they already have in Christ Jesus.

Hence why in verse 18 he requests that God would open the eyes of their hearts to be enlightened. We often think that the heart is the emotional part of ourselves.

But in the Bible, the heart means the inner person. That includes our emotions, but it also entails our mind and our will. And Paul prays for four specific things that the eyes of our hearts would know tonight.

[10:59] The four things are this. Number one, that we would know Jesus better. Number two, that we'd know the hope to which God has called us. Number three, know the riches of his inheritance.

And finally, number four, know the power of the resurrected Jesus. So let's look at point number one. Know Jesus better. Let's read verse 17 again. 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.

Paul tells us that his constant prayer for the Ephesians is that they would know God better. One thing I want to clarify is that when Paul is talking about knowing or knowledge, he's not talking about a basic knowledge.

For instance, I know a lot about the Glasgow-born actor James McAvoy. I can tell you that his parents split up when he was a kid, that he was raised by his grandparents in Drum Chapel. They actually attended school across the road in Jordan Hill. And that before training at the Royal Conservatoire to be an actor, James contemplated becoming a Roman Catholic priest, a missionary to the world.

[12:13] I can tell you that James McAvoy has his sister. Joy McAvoy, who's in the TV show Two Doors Down. I can also tell you that James once stood next to me in the social hub in October last year.

What I'm trying to tell you is this, I know facts about James McAvoy, but I cannot say that I know him. Paul is aware that those who attend church are prone to know a lot of information about God, but not really know him.

That's to say to know him in a personal, experiential way. For instance, we can know that God created human beings to work, that our jobs are in fact good things.

We're commanded to work so we can eat, so we can provide for our loved ones and our neighbour, and that our jobs should be a means of serving and glorifying God.

We know that in our heads, don't we? But so often, our careers become about paychecks and our own fulfilment. Soon, what we do for a living becomes a bedrock of our identity.

[13:23] Our self-worth gets tied up in our performance. So, if our company's failing, sometimes we think we're failures. Thus, when our identity's tied up in what we do, it becomes such a source of great anxiety.

Rather than enjoying our relationship with God, we become so preoccupied with other thoughts. We can turn up to worship services like this, and we can read our Bibles, and we can pray, yet we can feel disconnected.

The solution to overcoming the sense of disconnection is to pray to God that the Holy Spirit, do you see that? Capital S, the Holy Spirit who indwells us, would give us wisdom and revelation.

As Paul says elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, he says that the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

In other words, let us pray that the Spirit would reveal the mind of Christ to our hearts, that we would know Him intimately. that His thoughts would become our thoughts, that His ways would become our ways.

[14:39] When we know more of Christ, He transforms our thinking, and in turn, we become more and more like Him. Going back to that thought about when we get the wrong thinking about our work, when we know Jesus better, we discover identities not based on our performance.

When the Spirit reveals the truth that we were chosen, adopted, and redeemed by the grace of God, we discover that God accepts us and is pleased with us not based on our performance, but rather on Christ's perfect obedience.

obedience. It's only when we know these glorious truths that the Spirit reveals that we can be truly set free from finding our self-worth in our careers or in anything else.

rather, our worth is tied to who we are in Christ. Do you see how spending more time with Jesus can lift that anxiety about the things that concern us?

Paul is praying that the Ephesian believers who are so full of faith and love for Jesus would not settle for less, but prioritize knowing Him more and more. That's the greatest need.

[16:07] for us here, Christ Church Glasgow, it's to know Jesus. My responsibility, Jonathan's responsibility, David Martin's responsibility, and our greatest privilege as ministers of the gospel is that we would not impart our wisdom, but the wisdom of God set forth in His Word and applied by His Holy Spirit to our hearts.

When we as God's people spend time with Jesus, He gives us an eternal perspective. Hence why Paul prays that the Ephesian hearts would grasp heaven's provision of hope, inheritance, and power.

So let's look at the first heavenly provision. Know the hope of your calling. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you.

Here, Paul is praying that the believers would have the eternal endgame in view. Paul knows that we are all hope-based creatures who live out our lives motivated by hope.

We see this play out in our ordinary lives. I think of a former building, Sylvain colleague of mine, who used to have a vision board in his study at home. On the board, he would cut out pictures from magazines or print things off from the internet and he stuck it up on this board.

[17:30] I remember he had a big picture of a huge, brand-new, detached house. He had pictures of wedding rings. He even had a picture of an open-top Mercedes SLR sports car.

And in it, he had cut off pictures of two people with amazing beach bodies stuck into the car and he cut off their heads and he put a picture of his face and his girlfriend's face on it. He even put a picture of Mauritius where he wanted to honeymoon and he said he would like to go there on holiday every year.

Having this vision changed the way he lived and behaved. So the desire to have a six-pack saw him change his eating habits. He went on the paleo diet.

He shopped at Whole Foods. Moreover, he even joined a CrossFit gym where he worked out six days a week to get that beach body. To get the wedding ring, the big house and the car. He tried to work every hour under the sun.

He sacrificed so much time. He even changed careers three times just to chase the higher paychecks. In the same way, knowing our eternal hope should affect the way we live in the present.

[18:39] Biblical hope, as one commentator said, is the confident expectation of a guaranteed result. Paul has outlined this guaranteed result already in Ephesians 1 verses 9 to 10, which describes God's purpose of history, which is to bring all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In other words, that Christ will unify or reconcile everything in the cosmos to himself. And that is an absolute certainty.

The hope for us sharing in the glory of Christ is guaranteed, as Paul says in Colossians 3, where he says, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ and God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also be with him in glory. All of this is a certainty because we've been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance, where we will share in not six-pack bodies like my mate in CrossFit, but resurrected bodies like Christ, where our faith will turn to sight as we see Jesus in all of his glory, as we will perfectly reflect his glory back to him as sinless, spotless creatures in the new heavens and in the new earth.

Paul is giving us an eternal vision board. This is not wishful thinking. Nor will you be filled with shame or regrets, for this hope will never, ever fail.

[20:20] Unlike my work colleague, who did eventually get married, but that marriage only lasted two years. No, we Christians can be confident in our future. It is not wishful thinking because it is anchored in Christ Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If our endgame vision is being with Jesus in eternity, it should impact how we live our lives, how we spend our time, how we spend our money.

As one of my friends said, Joe Bernard, in his book, *The Way Forward*, he said, we need a clear view of our destination. He added, we need to be told unequivocally that the judgment seat of Christ is the final stop of every bus and that the chief objective of each individual life is, as Paul wrote, to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and

increasing in the knowledge of Christ.

Do you and I live with such expectation? Do we live in such a way that reflects that one day we're going to meet our Maker?

If we're honest, more often than not, we live with spiritual, dim eyes, and we take our eyes off the prize that is off of Jesus, the joy of our salvation.

[ 21 : 52 ] When this happens, our eyes get lured by the lusts of our heart. We get distracted by the concerns of this world and start conforming to the standards, to the values of the people who live around us.

We even doubt God's goodness when things get hard or when bad things happen to us. But do you realize what it means when you have the eyes of your heart opened to your future hope?

It means you begin to understand that you've been called into the great narrative of salvation. That is, your life was no cosmic accident.

But rather, God chose you before the creation of the world and is working everything together for your good and for his glory. It means when you're going through suffering and it seems meaningless and endless, we need to remember Paul's words to the Romans.

Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. So when you wake up tomorrow morning, instead of letting the eyes of your heart be filled by the worries of the day that lies ahead or the endless news feeds on your phone that will try to distract you, begin your day by filling the eyes of your heart with a fresh vision of gospel hope.

[ 23 : 24 ] Point number three, know the riches of his inheritance. The second heavenly provision Paul prays for for the Ephesians is that they would know the riches of his glorious inheritance and his holy people.

Now there's some debate over the word inheritance. Some commentators debate whether his glorious inheritance is the inheritance that God provides for his people. As in, when we die, we're going to receive something.

Or whether the face value reading of this verse, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, describes us, you and I, the church, being God's inheritance.

I think the face value reading makes the most sense here. For Paul has already told us in verse 14 that our future inheritance is guaranteed and that inheritance that Paul speaks of there is of a new heavens and a new earth.

So in verse 18, Paul is speaking about how God considers us to be his glorious inheritance. Now we know from other parts of the Bible that God considers his people as his inheritance.

[ 24 : 32 ] For instance, in 1 Kings 8, 41, it says, for they are your people and your inheritance whom you brought out of Egypt. Isn't that truly a glorious thought?

Paul is praying that his readers, the Ephesians and us today would have our eyes to understand how much we mean to God. He's praying that we would understand how God sees us, his people, as precious to him.

So often, we let the voices of other people define us. For instance, maybe you had parents or teachers who told you that you will never amount to anything.

I had a friend's mum say that to me when I was 14 and that lingered in my mind for years. Or maybe we allow our circumstances or environment to define us. Maybe you grew up in a broken home and you don't trust yourself or another person to get me to them because you're too scared that you'll repeat history.

Or maybe we allow the approval of others to define us. I remember having the privilege of meeting a really successful US billionaire who shared his testimony in Cumberland Free Church a few years back.

[ 25 : 47 ] he told us that ever since that he was a very young age he had a drive to be successful. For instance he was the valedictorian at school which is the equivalent of our ducks.

He performed at the top level of five sports basketball, football, baseball, track and field and he even went on to an Ivy League school and he got a top job in Wall Street where he made millions. He married the girl of his dreams and he had two beautiful daughters. everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. Although outwardly he looked like he had everything he confessed there was only one thing that really mattered.

He said the only reason that he was so driven is because he was living for the approval and applause of one person and that was his father. The reason he overachieved or succeeded is

because all he ever wanted to hear from his father was a few precious words that he never got to hear.

I love you son and I am proud of you. I'll never forget watching this successful businessman weep as he confessed that he sought approval elsewhere by having affairs and thus ruining and destroying his marriage.

[ 27 : 04 ] It was only until the breakdown of his marriage that he came to his senses and realised that he was looking for the wrong approval. There was only one voice that mattered and it wasn't his earthly father.

What he needed to hear was the voice of his heavenly father. Maybe someone here needs to hear the father's voice say, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Maybe someone here needs to hear the blessing that the father spoke to Jesus at his baptism to be said over you tonight. you are my child whom I love and you I am well pleased.

Paul was praying that his readers and in turn us would see who we belong to and what we mean to him. If you want to see the expression of God's value for you, his child, all you need to do is look at the cross of Christ.

It was there Jesus took the infinite wrath in order that we would receive infinite joy. It was there that Jesus was humiliated to raise all of God's children to royal dignity.

[ 28 : 18 ] It was there that Jesus, the precious son of God, received the judgment that didn't belong to him. Yet he did this to give us his children who once didn't belong to God a new status, co-redeemed with Christ, sons of God, and to be known as a beloved.

Surely we could sing that refrain from the modern praise song, I am chosen, not forsaken, I am who you say I am, you are for me, not against me, I am who you say I am.

Maybe someone here is thinking to yourself, if only you knew me, Neil, if only you knew what I have done, I am not good enough.

Can I tell you, you are absolutely right, you are not good enough. But would you put the trust, your trust, in him who is good enough? The one who left heaven and moved heaven and earth for you, who laid down his life on a cross in order that you would receive the forgiveness of sins and newness of life in him, would you put your trust in him?

the Bible says that we are to repent, it's a short word, that is to change your mind about Jesus, change your mind about this world and this life, to forsake the idols that you've clinged on to that give you so much anxiety and would you let go and take hold of him?

[ 29 : 49 ] Because tonight Jesus offers himself to you. Christchurch Glasgow, we need the eyes of our hearts to be open to see how precious we are in God's sight because we are loved unconditionally and God sees us as holy and blameless and that we are his treasured possession.

Finally, let's just look at verses 18 and 19. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance and his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Paul prays that his readers would know the incomparably great power that is available to every believer. The word in the Greek is *dunamos*. It's where we get the word *dynamo*.

So if you think of a dam, something like the Aswan Dam in Egypt or where there's this constant flow of water going through a massive *dynamo* giving you an endless, never-ending power supply.

But do you notice how Paul layers words upon words to describe the power? He says it is the incomparably great, that is it's exceedingly abundantly, he is speaking to the highest superlative.

[ 31 : 05 ] As in, guys, there is no other power in this universe to compare it to. What Paul is saying is he wants us to know the power which is beyond anything we could ever imagine.

some of you may be asking, but Paul, what does this amazing power look like? Well, Paul tells us that God has demonstrated this mighty power in the past when he resurrected Jesus from the dead. This is the same power that exalted Christ Jesus, our victorious king, to the right hand of God, our father in heaven. That is, Jesus is enthroned above all rulers, powers, and principalities that exist both in this physical and spiritual realm.

This picture evokes another, we sang Psalm 99, an enthronement psalm, another enthronement psalm, Psalm 110, where it says, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

Jesus being enthroned is evidence that all enemies of God, rulers, evil demonic forces, and the last enemy death, have been conquered by king Jesus.

[ 32 : 19 ] Now we know from Acts 19 that a number of people in the church of Ephesus once practiced sorcery, but they gave it up to follow Jesus by burning their scrolls.

Although the believers were no longer involved with the practices of darkness, they knew the reality of these powerful forces and no doubt the ongoing battle of shaking off old patterns of superstitious thinking because they lived in an environment which was spiritually dark, not too dissimilar to ours today.

It's no wonder that Paul looks to God in prayer and asks that his fellow believers would be convinced of Christ's supremacy over all things.

Brothers and sisters, do we recognize the power that is available to us tonight? That same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that indwells us and is at work within us for we have the promised Holy Spirit living within us right now.

And you know this power. This is the same power that once hovered over creation to bring all things into existence. It's the same power that gave you a new heart when you first believed upon Jesus Christ.

[ 33 : 40 ] This is the same power that defeated Satan, sin and death by raising Jesus from the grave. And it's the same power that gives you strength to put to death indwelling sin and enables you to live a holy life.

Brothers and sisters, are the eyes of our hearts open tonight? Do you and I understand the power that's available to us? So often we limit God's power and we settle for less.

We try living out in our own strength and our own willpower. And we even make excuses for besetting sins by saying, I'm never going to overcome this addiction.

This is just the way I am. Be it chemical, sex, food or gambling. Satan convinces us of the lie that change is impossible. Often we're left feeling powerless, inadequate and afraid.

When the reality is we're united to Christ Jesus. We're no longer under the power of or the authority of Satan, but we have been made alive by Christ and we're now under his authority.

[ 34 : 56 ] This is our reality. We're connected to Christ who is the head over everything for the church. So if Christ is the head, then we his people are his body.

This is Paul's way of saying to us, do you know who you are? Do you know who you belong to? Then if you do, become what you are by knowing Jesus better, by living in light of the hope that awaits you, by being defined not by the voices of this world, but the voice of God who values you as his treasured possession.

And lastly, know that you've been given an immeasurable supply of power to live this new life. What a prayer for the Ephesians and what a prayer for us in Christ Church Glasgow tonight.

May we never, ever settle for less, but may we hunger for more of God as his community. Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you for giving us the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we can know Jesus better.

pray that you would continue to open the eyes of our hearts today and this week and every day of our lives, that we as a church community would know the hope of our calling.

[ 36 : 30 ] Thank you for revealing to us that we are your glorious inheritance. May we live in light of how you see us, that you are for us and not against us.

Thank you that the same power that raised Christ from the dead dwells within us. Help us to see this power that you have made available to us to grow as individuals and a church. And we pray the new life that we've experienced that many others in this great city of Glasgow and across Scotland would bow the knee in humble adoration to the exalted King, King Jesus, who is above all powers. And would they know what it is to belong to the body of Christ, his church. We pray for our great city of Glasgow, that she would indeed once again flourish by the preaching of thy word and the praising of thy name.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.