

So this week I started back at College,
and now that I have made it to 4th year we finally get to choose electives,
Now this is actually a really hard thing to do,
because there are lots of great options on the table but unfortunately, we can only
choose 3
and I know for a number of college students, including myself, the choice comes
down to who teaches the subject.

Who you engage well with and who you think you will learn the most from.
I'm sure if you think back to when you were in school or university,
you can remember some great teachers as well as some not so great ones.
But what makes a teacher great and others not so great.
Is it that they are the smartest person in their field?
Is it that they know the most about the topic that they teach?

Or is it that they can control the class making sure nobody misbehaves?
Whilst these are important things and many teachers have these characteristics,
this is not what makes a teacher great.
I put it to you, that makes a teacher great is their passion and their zeal for wanting
their students to do well
and learn what it is they have to teach.

And we see this same passion and zeal in today's reading.
We are introduced to our teacher, Paul
and we see his passion and zeal for his students, the Ephesians.
Look with me at Paul's prayer for his students

Eph. 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus
and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you,
remembering you in my prayers.

Wow Paul's zeal for his students causes him to give thanks for them always
and it also causes him to pray for them.

And here is what Paul asks of God for his students
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.
What a glorious prayer,

What more could you ask for?
Here is their teacher praying to God that God's Spirit might come upon them so that
they would know God better.
For the leaders here in the room, and I don't just mean the paid staff,
I mean anyone who has someone under their care
do you pray this type of prayer for those under your care?
It is my prayer that you are praying for your group members individually
and that you do follow Paul's example here,

I pray that you are asking God to give His Spirit on your members so that they might know Him better.

Because this is our job as Christian leaders,
it's not to have the biggest and best group with yummiest food and best coffee.
It's not even to have the best teaching style.
It is our job to pray that God will be making himself known to our group members by His Spirit as we teach them from His Word.

After all it is only by God's Spirit that people are changed.
Now this is one of the biggest comforts that I have at college,
I know that my lecturers pray for me by name as an individual.
They not only pray for me personally but they also pray that God will be at work in me as they teach me from His Word.
They model their prayers on how Paul would pray for the people under his care.
So let's have a closer look at the content of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.

Paul prays that the Ephesians would know two things
Firstly, the hope they have in Christ
and secondly, the incomparably great power of God.

So what is the hope that the Ephesians can have.

Paul prays 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"

Now this hope is a twofold hope, but first we need to look at the word hope.
Hope for us today is used quite differently than from its meaning in today's bible reading,
for us hope is more of a wishing type word,
for example, I hope that you do well in your exams, or I hope that you have a great day.

It conveys a sense of uncertainty, and this is very unhelpful when it comes to looking at hope in the biblical sense of the word.
In the biblical sense of the word Hope conveys 100% certainty.
And this is because look at where the certainty come from.
It is not from ourselves, it's not even from Paul,
It's from the one who called us,

It comes from God himself
And that's why we can have 100% certainty in this hope.
Now the first area of hope that the Ephesians now have is, eternal life.

Paul wants them to know that because of what Christ has done they have now be brought from death to life,

Death no longer has any power over them because Christ has been raised from the dead.

And because they have been brought from death to life, by being united with Christ it leads to the second area of hope that they now have Adoption into God's family.

This adoption, means that they now share in the blessings of the glorious inheritance in his holy people.

As Christians they are now united with God's people and God's promises to his people.

This is a major issue for the Church in Ephesus, the division of Jew and Gentile. But Paul prays that know the hope that they have of being united together, both Jew and Gentile.

This is not only a future hope of external life, but it is the present hope of being united together in God's family.

But do we know this hope, are we 100% sure of this.

If you were to die today do you know where you are going?

or do we treat the biblical hope like a wishful type of hope.

Well my prayer for you today is just like Paul's

I pray that God's Spirit will be revealing to you the great hope that we have in Christ.

The 100% certainty that we can have in both our adoption into God's family and also the future hope of eternal life.

Paul now moves on to the second thing that he wants the Christians to know, being the incomparably great power of God.

Now Paul just doesn't want his readers to know about the power of God,

As that's a kind of given that God would have power,

Instead, Paul wants his readers to know of the power that they have access too.

This power has been shown in God raising Christ from the dead and it flows back to the hope that we have in eternal life.

See Jesus spoke of his death and being raised back to life saying

"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."

but without God actually raising him they are only words

But now that Christ has been raised back to life,

these words move from simple words to a very powerful promise in which we can have 100% confidence in

For Jesus also said John 5:24

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

We who believe in Christ have the same power at work in us and we have crossed over from death to life.

Death has been defeated,

Now isn't that wonderful news,

We no longer need to fear death,

We have the promise from God of eternal life and unlike politicians who promise the world but don't have the power to deliver,

God has the power to deliver on his promises.

And Paul prays that the Ephesians would know this very power.

But is this power just God power that he has over life in general? Or is it something more?

Well Paul goes on to explain that this power is much more than just over life in general.

See not only was Christ raised from the dead but look again at vs 20

God has seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ 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. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

This power is an all-encompassing power.

Jesus was taken from the lowest of lows, being crucified on a Roman cross, Which is so humiliating that Roman citizens were forbidden from being crucified on a cross

Jesus is taken from this pitiful low place this place of utter weakness and exalted to such a high place with all power being given to him.

Paul reminds us of this process in the famous words of Phil 2 where he says

Phil. 2:6 Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own
advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Paul wants his readers to know the power that has been given to us through Christ,

Christ has been restored to his rightfully place as head over everything, including the church.

There is no name that is higher

No ruler that has more power

No kingdom that has more authority

Jesus is the head of all

Even the church

For the church this is for our benefit, Christ is our head and we are his body,

We have been united with Him,

He leads us and uses us as his body to carry out his work here in the world.

By being united with Christ we have access to his power as we function as his body.

And this access is by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.

The access is in being a member of the body

From being united together with Christ.

The access does not dwell in church officers, it doesn't even dwell in the title of the person.

Even if you are an apostle like Paul.

Paul knew this and he knew where his power came from

And he also wants us to know,

He prays that God will enlighten us to the power that we have access to through Christ.

We don't have to do it alone,

In fact we can't do it alone, we can only do it through Christ.

And God has placed us in a family together united under His Son,

and one of the best things about families is,

we are all different,

thankfully families aren't just made of all children,

or just all teens or even just all parents.

we have those we can look up to and learn from,
we have those who we can teach and care for
even those who are mature can still learn.

Even Paul, who by most people's standards was an expert, still knew that he had not yet arrived at his goal.
He knew that he had more to know more to learn.

Kano Jigoro who is the father of Judo on his deathbed requested to be buried in a white belt.

His dying wish was to be remembered as a learner, not as a black belt master.

Great leaders see themselves as lifelong learners,
and as Christians this is very true for us

we always have room to mature in Christ, and we need to remember that we are under Christ's authority, but we have access to his power.

So let us pray now asking for God's help.

Dear heavenly Father,

We pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which you have called us, the riches of your glorious inheritance in your holy people,¹⁹ and your incomparably great power for us who believe.
Amen