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## EPHESIANS 1:15-21

Easter Sunday

[PRAYER] Lord, I just pray you'd call my heart. I just love Easter and my friends here. This is exciting for me to be a part of what you're doing here. So I thank you for that. But Lord, I know that right now we're going into this very sacred moment where you might use the words that I say in powerful ways in people's hearts. So Lord, would you please help me to think clearly and help me to be able to present the message that you've shared with me this week in ways that will help these folks as they continue to live their lives every day. So Lord, we thank you for Easter and we thank you for the gift of your word that we can grow and learn from it. In Jesus' name, amen.

I've been a pastor for over thirty years. I've preached a lot of Easter sermons. There's the kind of Easter sermon where you take a historical part of the story and you learn from Peter and John running to the tomb. That's a great study. I really enjoy that.

There's also the Easter sermon where Mary is the one who first sees Jesus after He's resurrected and those touching moments in the garden are really special to draw out and try to understand more.

I think my favorite of the historical Easter sermons is the one of the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus and then they don't know they're with Jesus, but He's actually walking with them. And then they discover this and it just changes their lives. Those are historical sermons about Easter.

There's also theological sermons about Easter where we recognize that the resurrection is really the stamp of all of the theology that we have. That because Jesus rose from the dead we can believe in the crucifixion, we can believe in His life, we can entrust ourselves to Him. So the theological sermons are really inspiring, I would suggest, when it comes to Easter.

But today I want to take a different passage of scripture. I want to look at a prayer. A prayer that references Easter and the resurrection. It's a prayer that Paul is praying for the Ephesians because he wants them to understand something about God. And I think it's a prayer that we all need in our own lives. So I'm eager to share what God shared with me this week with you today.

So what I want you to do is if you would, I want you to read the prayer first from Ephesians 1. You can open your Bibles to Ephesians 1:15-21 and I'm going to read it to you. If you would stand with me in honor of God's word as I read this prayer that Paul prays for the Ephesians.

*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 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. 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.*

You may be seated.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians church a different kind of letter. Probably the most formal letters of all the ones we have in the New Testament. It's a letter describing what it means to be a Christian, to understand fully and embrace Christianity. It's a great book to understand what it means to walk the walk. Those are the words that are used in the passage in Ephesians. To walk the walk that He has called us to walk.

Ephesus was a coastal city, a very wealthy city. They had a lot of traffic going through there, so there was a lot of intellectual knowledge where people were learning all kinds of things and philosophies abounded there. It was a very proud city. It was a city that a meteor had hit the city or somewhere right near the city apparently, and when it hit there it left this crater. They then attributed this to the goddess Diana who had visited the city. And they then attributed all kinds of powers to the city and the place and so on. In fact one of the Seven Wonders of the World at the time was right there in Ephesus. A very proud people. Proud of what they had, of this other religion that they kind of developed through the goddess Diana.

In the midst of that, there was a church. A church that had to live with prosperity, they had to live with immorality. There was a lot of sin going on, different kinds of religions that were taking place. So Paul writes to them and he just wants to share with them what it means to be a Christian in the midst of that kind of environment.

So in this prayer, the thing that he's praying for that's so strategic, I think, is that he prays that they *may know him better*. Know who better? Well look at the passage. Verse 17 – *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father...you may know him better*. And at the end of the passage it says that He has *rule and authority over 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*. Rather exclusive, I would suggest. Paul is saying here there is one God. You just need to know that.

Now some of you I know grew up with religion in one way or another. Maybe you grew up in the Christian church or the Baptist church or the Catholic church. Or maybe you grew up with Jehovah Witness, or some other religious system. You know there are eleven major religions in the world today – Hinduism, Taoism, Judaism, and Islam. There are eleven of them. Eleven religions. But I suppose what you could do is you could say everybody has their own faith, right? Everybody has their own belief system of how they operate.

But some people believe that it's faith that's most important. That having faith is what gives you this power in life and everybody needs to have faith. That's not what God teaches. And that's not what Paul is saying to them. Because it's not what you have, but it's what you believe in that's most important. Having faith is not as important as having truth. You want faith in the truth. So it's very important to understand what the truth is.

I remember in my church growing up there was a motto on the side of the platform. It says: "It does make a difference what you believe." That's what it said. It does make a difference what you believe. Now some people would say today, "It does make a difference that you believe." That's not what you said. It's not just important for you to have faith and to believe in something. It's important for you to believe in the right thing. So it's important what you believe and Paul is sharing that here. He's praying that you would get to know God better.

I just wish you would pray that prayer for me that I would get to know God better. I need to get to know God better in my own heart.

I think about people in the Bible who got to know God better. I think about Moses. Moses was kind of a failure. He flunked out. He was in a great place in the kingdom and now he's kind of on the backside of the desert taking care of sheep. He's into entertainment, so there's entertainment over there, bushes burning. So he goes over there and talks to the bush. So he's into that.

In the midst of that, God has a message for him, and God says this: "Moses, I'm going to give you a purpose in life. I'm going to give you something. I want you to go and tell the king that I want my people to be let go."

Moses is going, "You've got to be kidding me. God, you've got to be kidding me."

So here's what he says: "God, if I go there and I tell them to let the people go, do you know what they're going to say to me? They're saying, 'What god told you that?' What am I supposed to say when they say, 'What god told you that?'"

And God says, "You tell them my name. My name is Yahweh," translated Jehovah, which comes from the word 'is,' that He is. The all-existing one. You'd think that would be enough for Moses to know the first name of God now. He's getting to know God better. God tells him His first name.

But no. You know what Moses says. He says, "God, what if they don't believe me?" So God says to Moses, "Moses, what do you have in your hand?" which He does to us all the time. What do you have right around you?

Moses said, "Well that's my rod. I take care of the sheep with it." God says, "Throw it down." So he throws it down. The Bible says that the rod turned into a snake. Right away it says *and Moses ran*. I can imagine the picture. Get out of here! Because he just lacks this confidence in his life. He's so timid.

God says, "Go back over there and pick up that snake by the tail." So Moses picks up the snake by the tail and it turns back into a rod. Now we know the story because God used Moses in a significant way and God revealed power through Moses, and eventually what happens is people are rescued, Moses becomes this great leader, leading these people all over the wilderness and so on. So it's just an amazing story. But he got to know God better.

I think about Abraham. See the name Jehovah gets put with other words to understand God better all through the Bible. Abraham is an example of that. Because Abraham was promised something very important. God says to Abraham, "I'm going to give you a son and through you all the nations of the earth will be blessed."

"Oh that's great, he says, "But we're past the child-bearing stage. We don't have kids. And we can't have kids now."

And God says, "I'm going to provide for you."

Well after that didn't happen month after month, Sarah has an idea. "I know, let's get Hagar." So they got Hagar and Abraham went to Hagar and they had a child. And that would be the one through whom God would do this blessing thing. No. That's how it happened, but then God in addition gave them another child through Sarah who's a miracle baby. And Isaac was born into their home. Just a thrill.

Those of you who have children just know (especially when they're little), they're so fun and just enjoyable to be with. So he just enjoyed him so much.

God put him to the test. Really interesting test. He said, "I want you to take Isaac up to the mountain and I want you to sacrifice him on the mountain." Okay. So he took Isaac up and while they're walking up the mountain, Isaac says, "Hey Dad, I think we forgot something. We got the wood and we got the fire, but where is the sacrifice?" And Abraham says, "The Lord will provide." Abraham needs to learn that the Lord will provide and not make other ways to try to get around what God wants to do. God will provide. That's what he needs to learn.

So they get up to the mountain and they put out the fire and the sacrifice is all ready to go there. Abraham is there and he's going to kill his son and God says, "Stop." And in that moment there's a ram in the thicket. And in that moment we have this new picture of God. Jehovah-jireh. God will provide. Abraham got to know God in a new way. God was teaching him all these things.

God, I need that in my life. God will provide. I need to know Him as Jehovah-jireh, the God who provides for me.

One time the Israelites were maneuvering through the wilderness and they came to water and they needed it because they were so thirsty. But they got to this one spring or lake or whatever it was and the water was bad. It was bitter. They couldn't drink it and they complained. God tells Moses, "Take a piece of wood and throw it in there." When he did, the water became sweet. God did a miracle there and the water became sweet. So they called the place, they realized the name for God, Jehovah-rapha. God is the one who heals. He heals our brokenness, He heals our hearts, He

heals the disappointment in our lives. He heals all those things. God is the one who heals and we need to get to know Him as the God who heals.

One time the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites and they were in the midst of the battle, just like you and I are in the midst of the battle a lot of the time in our lives. We're fighting the battle. They got to know God in a new way in that moment. It was Jehovah-nissi. Banner. That Jehovah is my banner. Can you imagine the confidence that they had as they went into the battle? Now I think we need to know God as Jehovah-nissi, our God of the banner.

Just one more. There's a whole bunch of them. Just one more I really like. And that is Gideon was chosen. Or God came to Gideon and says, "Gideon I want you to lead the people here." And Gideon said, "I'm not sure this is the will of God here." God said, "I told you to do it." "Well I'm not sure. I'm going to test you, God."

So he's wrestling with decision-making, just like we do. Should I buy that car or not buy that car? Should I go to this job or not go to this job? Should I quit? What should I do? We're making these decisions in our lives. So in the midst of all the decision-making. The Bible says that Gideon came to know God in a different way. His name was Jehovah-shalom. Jehovah-peace.

So when we come to this verse and we see that Paul is praying for them, that they would get to know the Father, the glorious Father, get to know Him better, I'm getting a picture of what that looks like. I need to get to know Him in a personal way.

In fact the word *know* here is the word *ginosko*. It's the word that describes a personal knowledge of the situation. A relationship with that person or information. I know it. I really know it is the idea. It's the personal relationship. And that's important. It's important. It's important because if you grew up in religion class, or you grew up in a church where you learned a lot about religion, that's not bad, but that's not what he's talking about here. You've got to understand religion is not what we're talking about. We're talking about a relationship. That if you take the eleven different religions that are out there and even if you add Christianity as a religion, that's not what Paul is talking about here.

Christianity as we know it and the relationship that we have with Jesus is something more than just a head knowledge; it's something in our hearts. And so that's why he goes to the next phrase there. Do you see that in verse 18? He says – *I pray that the eyes of your heart...* The heart is the operating principles of a person. When you open your heart up to Jesus, it means that you let Him in to the controlling. That you're fellowshiping with Him every day. It's all about relationship. It's not just about knowing that Jesus Christ died on the cross. It's receiving that into your own life. It's not just about knowing that Christ rose from the dead. It's receiving that.

So Paul prays for them. He says – *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know.* Do you see that word *know*? I just want to draw a contrast between the two words that are know there. If you knew Greek, you'd look at that and you'd say wow that's really interesting. In English we lose that. So the word *know* above there in verse 17 is experiential knowledge that I need in order to experience God. And if you don't have that today,

you need it, that experiential knowledge. But this word *know*, he's saying I pray that you'd get all of this so that your awareness of what's going on will be enlarged.

See, we all have this sphere of awareness. Things that we know. They're all around us, right? But there are things outside of our awareness that we aren't aware of yet, so we don't know them. He's saying I'm praying that God's going to enlighten you so that you know, so that your awareness will be expanded.

There are some people who create for them this little circle and they stay within it and "don't bother me with the truth. I don't want to hear the truth. I'm stuck here in my circle and I'm believing what I'm believing and I'm going to stay in this circle even if it's not true," and they just are stuck there. "Don't tell me anything new." Paul is saying I just pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened so that you may know.

This word *know* is *eidon*. Which has the idea of becoming more aware, that is enters your sphere of awareness. I need this. You can pray for this for me, that God would give me a greater sphere of awareness of what He's doing.

There's three specific things that he's going to mention here in this passage. Three things that we need to be aware of. I put them all down here for you. One is hope. Let's just go through the passage. It says – *that you may know the hope to which he has called you*. That's the first thing. The second thing is – *the riches of his glorious inheritance*. I put that in the confidence department. If you knew you had an inheritance of a million dollars, you'd live a little differently if you could draw on that million, wouldn't you? There's a sense of confidence that we have because of the inheritance that we have. And then the *incomparably great power for us who believe*. And that power is big.

Are you with me? I mean these are three things that Paul is saying I pray that these things would be opened up for you. The first one is hope.

Now I've got to take a little tangent here for a moment because I want to remind you of the name of our church. Our church's name is Calvary Chapel Living Hope. The name of the church comes from a Bible verse, 1 Peter 1:3. I want to show you the verse. In 1 Peter 1:3 it says these words – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. We're back to the Easter story. It's because of Easter that we can be born again and we can experience this living hope in our lives.

So Calvary Chapel Living Hope is a place where people find Christ. And they find the inspiration to live for Christ. They learn more about this awareness of what happens when you are in Christ. I'd encourage you to learn those things, understand them. See what God has for you. This isn't a place where you just... I know some of you just visit on Christmas and Easter and I'm glad you're here. Christmas will be in a few months. But I would hope that you would come back in the middle of that somewhere because we will help you grow spiritually. God can help you do some amazing things. That's who we are. It's all about offering hope. I want you to know we all need hope in our lives every day.

That's just one of the words. The second word has to do with this idea of confidence that comes from this glorious inheritance. If you knew all that God offers you, if you knew that it was sitting there, you would have so much confidence to live your life. And then of course this power. This power. I'm telling you, we live in a hard world. It's difficult to live every day the way we're living. It is a difficult place and God has given us power to do that. But you don't get it.

Do you see verse 19 there? I'm going to move it up on the screen there and I want you to see because there are four words for *power* all put in there. Because God wants to say this is power, power, power, power He's offering us because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Notice it says in verse 19 – *and his incomparably great power*. I've referenced them with footnotes you can see below. The first word is *dunamis* where we get our word 'dynamite.' It's spectacular power. And Paul is saying there's this incomparably great spectacular power that's available to you.

But he doesn't stop there. He says – *That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted*. So there's this *energeo*, which is personally energizing. There's this *kratos*, which is inner strength. There's *iskus*, which is mighty force. The idea is we need power. And Paul is outlining that in the passage here for us so that we can see this is really big. So this is one of those prayers that Paul prays that says power, we need it, it's really important in our lives.

We believe in prayer at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. It's prayer that really helps us to connect with God. It certainly changes our world. But it helps us understand more about who God is and what He wants for us. Prayer is one of those things that we can do for ourselves. You can pray on your own. But you also develop tremendous benefit from praying with other people.

We have several opportunities to pray in a group at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. Every Sunday morning we pray here at 9:15. There's a prayer meeting that meets every month. You can pray in that prayer group. We're very interested in praying. And after our worship service every week, we have a prayer time. Why do we do that? Because we know that prayer is a way for us to connect with this glorious Father and to get to know Him better. And to say, "God, how can I fit into your plans today? What would you like to help me understand?"

Now this idea of getting to know God better is very important and I would suggest that there's some urgency to Paul's prayer. This is not something that's optional like you're going to come here and then you're going to take a class or something. This is something that's really important for you to know today because you don't know what's going to happen today.

John Snee can say this much better than I can. So John, why don't you come and share with us for a couple minutes.

[John] For anyone who doesn't know, I've been a fireman at City Trenton for about twenty-three years. Last week I went on a call. One of the things you have to deal with is unfortunately death. So we were called to go out to this high rise to assist the medics in ventilation because this gentleman had passed away. So we got to the lobby and they said you're going to need to wear

your SCBA. You're going to need to wear your breathing apparatus to go up there. They wouldn't go in the room.

So myself and junior man, we went up the elevator, we were on air and we went to the apartment. I walked in the apartment, opened up the windows and proceeded to go into the bedroom where this gentleman was. He was on his bed, laid back, and he was deceased. Then I looked to the left and he had a little night table and he had a Bible that was open. He was doing a Bible study. I stood there and I'm looking at the Bible and the book was open and I thought, "Wow. That's amazing that he was in the middle of reading God's word and He took him home. Like that second. This gentleman was in his word and the next thing you know, he's in heaven with God. Spending eternity with the one who went to the cross and died for him."

The flip side of that is I've seen the other thing. I've been to motor vehicle accidents where we're trying to extricate somebody out of a car and I've witnessed and I've seen man's last breath right before my eyes. And it's at that time I think the same thing. I can remember every instance where I've seen it. We're trying to get someone out of a car and unfortunately they pass. And I think to myself, "Wow." Like that person just left this place. They just left here. And they're standing before God in judgment because the Bible says that every knee will bow and declare Him righteous amongst all men. I'm thinking I'm quite sure that person had no idea what was about to happen. And here they are standing before Christ in judgment.

I know that the Bible teaches this. When we stand before God, He's going to ask one question. "I sent my Son into the world to die for you. Have you accepted Him as your Savior?" So it's powerful when I see that. It is powerful to know that they were just here and they're gone.

If I could leave you with one illustration an old pastor of ours used to say: "If you can imagine yourself on judgment day and it's a courtroom and over here at this table is Satan and here I am standing in judgment. He's got all the books on me, all my sins. Sins as a young boy, as a teenager, as an adult. And I'm not worthy of heaven. I should be condemned. Satan's got all the goods on me. And in the room walks Jesus and He puts His hand back and says, "I've got this. I paid the sin for your death." Because April 9<sup>th</sup> in 1997 in a small church like this, I came forward and accepted Christ as my Savior. Because of that, Christ paid my sin debt.

So I would just like to encourage you, if you're not a believer and salvation is something that you're wrestling with, you can come forward later and people will pray for you. If you're not sure what it means, speak to someone. Because tomorrow is not guaranteed. You can make plans to go on a vacation this summer, but it doesn't mean you're going. It's not guaranteed. So I would just like to encourage everybody don't put that off. Salvation is the biggest decision you will ever make in your life. And you know what? You will want eternity to be your home. Because that's what we celebrate this weekend.

Just think of this thought for a minute. The truth is if people weren't condemned to go to hell, God isn't who He says He is, then all this that we celebrate this weekend is not true. But we know that as believers. We know that it's real. So I would just encourage anybody, if you haven't made that decision to follow Christ, you can do that today.

[Scott] I just pray that prayer for you and for me. You can pray it for me that Paul says that we would get to know the glorious Father better. Get to know Him better.

I'm going to ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes and I'm going to ask you to pray after me, everybody, in honor of those who may be just coming to a place in their life where they want to accept Jesus. But if you pray after me, all of you, let's do that together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I need you. I know that I'm a sinner and I ask you to forgive my sins. I accept you as my Lord and as my Savior. I want to serve you with my life. Thank you for coming into my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you've prayed that prayer for the first time today, I'd really like to know that. You can write it on your communication card or better yet, when we sing this next song, maybe you'd like to come up and I'll just pray with you or the other people that are up here will pray with you and rejoice with you as we come into the presence of God through prayer.

At the end of our worship time, our service, we have this ministry time. It's a time where God can minister to you in special ways. So I encourage you just to allow God to speak to you in these next few minutes as we sing a song that talks about the power we need and the love we need in our own hearts. We need it. And that's what Paul is praying for them.

If you'd like prayer come on up. Prayer for yourself or prayer for someone else. Let's join together in prayer because praying together, something happens that's pretty powerful in God's kingdom. We exchange faith, we share that faith. We enjoy the faith of someone else as we're coming alongside. It's just a privilege. I'm just so grateful when people pray with me or pray for me. It just bolsters my own faith. The next three minutes is an opportunity for you to connect with the Father, the glorious Father that we need to get to know better.

Let's stand together and sing.