

TANGIBILIZING TRUTH EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Henrietta Green, known as "*Hetty*," holds the notorious reputation as "[The World's Greatest Miser!](#)"

When she died in 1916 at the age of 81 her estate was worth \$100 million - roughly 3 billion in today's dollars - yet Hetty was so tightfisted she refused to turn on the heat in her room, and never used the hot water.

She ate cold oatmeal and cheap pies to save money.

She washed only the dirtiest portion of her dresses - the hems - so she could cut back on the cost of soap.

Once, she searched a carriage all night long, just to find a lost postage stamp that was worth 2 cents.

When Hetty's only son, Ned, broke his leg his mom tried to admit him into a free clinic for the poor.

When she was found out, she took him home vowing to treat his wounds herself... Eventually, Ned's leg had to be amputated because of Hetty's reluctance to spend money on his treatment. *This lady was **stingy!***

Yet this is the life that's lived out by many Christians.

Our accounts are full of blessings from which we never draw... Our spiritual pantry is stocked with all we need, yet we spend our days starving and famished...

One of my favorite Bible commentators, Alexander Maclaren writes this, "[Alas, that when we *might* have so much, we *do* have so little.](#)" It's not that God hasn't blessed us. He's lavished His blessings upon us. It's that we fail to take advantage of His rich treasures...

In the first 14 verses of Ephesians 1 Paul lays out for us in one, colossal sentence *who we are* and *what we have* in Christ. And our inheritance is breath-taking...

In Christ we're *chosen, holy, blameless, loved, pre-picked, adopted as sons and daughters, graced, accepted, redeemed, forgiven of all our sins out of the riches of*

His grace, made part of a plan with a glorious ending, given an eternal inheritance, even a foretaste of heaven through the mark and seal of the Holy Spirit.

The breadth of our blessings is astonishing...

Reading Ephesians 1:1-14 is like a person receiving a financial statement with a massive list of assets.

There're two types of assets - liquid and fixed.

It's like a pendulum. Liquid is on one end. Fixed is on the other end. And all a person's assets fit somewhere on that pendulum... **Cash** is the most liquid. It's readily accessible for a person to use... Whereas **equipment** is most fixed. For its value to become accessible it has to be disassembled and sold to a capable buyer...

Savings accounts and **money markets** are liquid, whereas **real estate** and **vehicles** are more fixed.

This is what makes wealth a tricky business.

Theoretically, a person with a 1918 Model T Ford has a \$50,000 value - the car's price. But that's only if he finds a buyer... A rare car is more liquid than a parcel of property, but it's more fixed than a savings bond.

It has value, but if I lose my job and go broke - I can't eat spark plugs, and upholstery, and rubber tires.

The question in a crisis becomes, *how fast can I liquify my assets, and cash in on the wealth I possess?*

And this is the question we should ask about our spiritual blessings. In a sense forgiveness is a fixed asset - set in stone. The Bible declares we're forgiven.

But what if I'm haunted by the past, and overcome by guilt, and feeling condemned - *how liquid is God's forgiveness?* Can I cash it in at that very moment?

Heaven is a fixed asset. But when the evil of this world crowds in and tries to suffocate my faith, *how accessible to me is the joy and power of heaven?*

Paul wants our blessings in Christ not only to be fixed, but *liquid* - riches we can cash in at a moment's notice - at the point of our weakness - when a touch of heaven is needed right now, right here, on Earth.

Here's another way to say it, he wants us to **tangibilize our blessings...** You don't have to tell me, I know, "**tangibilize**" is not a word in the Webster's Dictionary, but it fits exactly with what I'm trying to say.

To "**tangibilize**" is to make the spiritual tangible, and relatable, and grip-able - it brings what's spiritual into my physical reality - it makes **the intangible tangible**.

To most of us spiritual blessings are ethereal, other-worldly, mystical stuff - we brush up against them on rare occasion - but God wants us living in their reality.

Here's one man's observation, "**The problem with the church is that it doesn't practice the gospel. We preach it, pray it, and sing it, but we just don't tangibilize it!**"

And this is Paul's desire for all these blessings he's listed. He wants us to experience *the reality of our spiritual riches*. Unlike Hetty Green we should enjoy and benefit from the wealth we've been given in Christ.

Realize, Jesus paid for these blessings with His precious blood. How dare we let them lie dormant and waste away. Let's experience our blessings to the max!

And how does Paul suggest we do it? *By prayer!*

After listing our blessings, Paul doesn't stop there. He then asks God to **tangibilize** them in His Church.

This is the purpose of the prayer Paul begins in verse 15 and runs through the end of the chapter.

Paul is praying for his readers. **"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers..."**

On occasion we run across a prayer in Scripture, and when we do we should pay close attention. God embedded these prayers in His Word for a reason.

I've found, the best way to learn to pray is by example. Remember the disciples came to Jesus, and asked Him, **"Lord, teach us to pray."** He responded by giving them a prayer to pray - a model prayer. We call it **"The Lord's Prayer."** The implication is that you learn to pray by praying. **Prayer is better caught than taught.**

And in Ephesians we find two prayers Paul prayed for the Church at Ephesus - here, and in chapter 3.

Paul prayed for his friends in Ephesus.

I believe the greatest favor you can do for any friend is to pray for them. On occasion we'll say, **"Sorry, but all I can do is pray for you."** Yet don't be sorry about that! Prayer is the best blessing you can give anyone.

For you to intercede with God on my behalf - *nothing you can do has a greater impact*. I like the old saying, “Never put anyone down unless it's on your prayer list.”

Often we pray only for people in trouble - who are *backslidden* or *snakebitten* - but Paul prayed for the Ephesians because of the goodness he saw in them.

When he heard of their “*faith in the Lord*” and “*love for all the saints*” - that’s what motivated him to pray.

It’s interesting his mention of their love. This is the mark of real Christianity. Jesus said the world will know we’re His followers if we have love for one another.

E. Stanley Jones said of his coming to Christ, “When I was converted and rose from my knees, the first thing I wanted to do was put my arms about the world.”

A person who knows Christ will want to love.

As verse 15 implies, faith and love go hand in hand. Faith in Jesus always produces love for all the saints.

And notice that word “*all.*” We all come from different places, and occupations, and backgrounds, but the Christian emphasis is not on where we’ve been, it’s on where we’re going... and we’re **all** headed in the same direction. We’ll all be gathered up together in Christ.

I like this quote by Martin Lloyd-Jones, “The Ephesians not only love those whom they happen to like, but all the saints. Not only the clever ones, not only the learned ones, not only the pleasant ones, not only those who belong to a particular social stratum - no, ALL the saints... We do not ask, where has he come from, what school

has he attended, what is his bank balance? We are interested in one thing only. Is he a child of God? Is he my brother? Are we related?”

In verse 17, Paul begins his prayer for his friends in Ephesus. He says, “**That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...**”

Here’s Paul’s first request... that God would give to the Ephesians insight into the knowledge of who He is.

This is a human being’s greatest attainment - *the knowledge of God*. Listen to Jeremiah 9:23, “**Thus says the LORD: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me...**”

There was an ancient Greek axiom, carved into the Temple of Apollo, and used by Plato, “**Know Thyself.**”

This same maxim has become the cornerstone of modern psychology. Self-knowledge - self-awareness is supposedly the key to our peace and happiness.

“***But not so,***” says Paul. The key to unraveling the tangled knot we call “life,” and making sense of our messy world, is not “**Know Thyself**” but “**Know God.**”

“**No God, no peace - but know God, know peace.**”

This is the ultimate prize - the secret for which *the sages of the ages* have longed: *the knowledge of God.*

David, the poet-king of Israel wrote in Psalm 42, "As a deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for the Living God..."

The mighty Moses cried out, "Show me Your glory!"

Paul was a Christian 30 years when he wrote to the Philippians, "This one thing I do, that I may know Him."

Augustine, an early church leader, wrote of his intoxicating experience with God, "You called, You cried, You shattered my deafness, You sparkled, You blazed, You drove away my blindness, You shed Your fragrance, and I drew in my breath, and I pant for You."

These were all people who wanted to know Jesus!

They weren't content with just knowing about Him, or hearing from someone who knew Him, or even interacting with Him casually - or at a distance.

Their goal was to know Christ up-close and personal.

Listen to the lyrics from an old hymn, "Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord. My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word. O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now to me. That He may touch my eyes and make me see." I like this line, "*Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee.*"

Don't misunderstand, I love "*the sacred page.*" I'm a student of the Scripture - and you should be too.

But the point of the Bible isn't just to disperse information, the Bible introduces us to God. *The point of the Bible* is to help us know *the God of the Bible.*

There is an experiential knowledge of God that runs deeper than the page. It's brings the page to life.

It's when you touch God, and are gripped by God.

A relationship with God that's contrary to the sacred pages of Scripture is never a legitimate experience.

But there is an encounter that occurs beyond the page - it's deeper, it's more personal, it's more intimate.

And entering into this experience is not the result of your own quest or search. It's not up to us to flush out God, as if He's shy - like a quail rustled from the brush.

We don't coax God down from heaven through *mindless meditation* - or by *the allure of crystals* - or by *rubbing beads* - or by *saying hail Marys* - or by *staring at your navel* - or by *chanting mantras* - or by *making sacrifices* - or by *keeping commandments* - or *following laws*. **For us to know God, He has to reveal Himself.**

God is too high, too holy, too infinite for us to approach Him on our own. God lives in rarefied air. You and I can never survive His altitude. Knowing God isn't us reaching up to Him, it's God bending down to us.

It's foolish to believe that all roads lead to God, for there are no roads to God. *It's God that comes to us!*

Here's how to experience God... Position yourself in Christ - *by faith, trust in Jesus* - for only *in Christ* are you chosen, and adopted, and accepted, and forgiven.

Then, like Paul, pray that God gives you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him!

In Christ you can go online. I can't explain it - it's a miracle. God reveals Himself to you. It's *Christ in you* and *you in Christ*. You enter an interactive relationship.

Romans 8:16 explains it this way, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**" A conveyance begins under the surface of our lives. On a heart level the Holy Spirit creates in us a sensitivity to God's presence and all His blessings.

When Jesus walked the Earth He was confined to a body - thus He could only be at one place, at one time.

But after His resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to take His place. Now God's Spirit carries on constant interaction with all believers.

Thinking of the disciples who witnessed Jesus return to heaven, Augustine sums it up for all of us, "**Jesus departed from our sight that we, now trusting in Him, might return to our heart, and there find Him. For He departed, and He is here.**" *He departed, but He's here!*

This is made possible by the spirit of revelation!

During the Great Depression times were tough and jobs were scarce. Only the Telegraph Office was hiring.

The job-opening was “*receiver*” - and the job’s only qualification was a working knowledge of Morse Code.

The waiting room was packed with applicants. Everyone was mixing and mingling. There was quite a commotion. Obviously late, one fellow walked into the office, and sat down quietly. Not five minutes later he jumped up and walked into the boss' office on his own accord. Everyone was ticked off - he'd broken in line.

But not soon after, the boss emerged, along with the rude fellow who broke in line. The boss announced that the guy had gotten the job. Everyone could go home.

Here’s what had happened. While everyone was chit-chatting in the foyer, the boss was in the other room tapping in Morse Code... “**First person to hear this message and walk into my office gets the job.**”

Only one person was so tuned in that he could hear beyond the din of the room noise and heed the call.

And this is true in life! God will give us the Spirit of revelation, but it can be drowned out by the hustle and bustle of this world. *Are we listening to the tapping? Are we picking up the messages from the other room?*

I’ve talked to folks who tell me, “**Pastor Sandy, if I could just see God, then I’d believe.**” But none of us sees spiritual realities with physical eyes. We need inner eyes. That’s what Paul prays for in verse 18, that “**the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...**”

At first glance this is a strange phrase. You probably didn't know that your understanding had eyes.

When our kids were little, Kathy's understanding of children - their motives and their behavior - was so keen she could predict their next move. *She still can!*

She had our kids convinced there were eyes in the back of her head. *Zach would part her hair to find her eyes!...* But an understanding with eyes - *what's that?*

It's interesting to track down the biblical references to our spiritual anatomy. The Bible ascribes to the spirit the same senses our body possesses. *Here's a list...*

John 3:3 implies that the spirit man **sees**...

Matthew 13:9 the inner man has ears to **hear**...

Psalms 34:8... **taste and see** for that Lord is good...

In Philippians 4:18 the generosity of the Philippians was like **a sweet-smelling aroma** to Paul and to God.

Spiritually we can *see*, and *hear*, and *taste*, and *smell*... Apparently, our understanding has eyes!

It's one thing to know a truth intellectually, but it's quite another to see how that truth applies personally.

Remember what Jesus said to His disciples concerning the fickle faith of the multitudes, "**Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not here, nor do they understand.**" They saw and heard and understood the facts of what happened, but not their implications.

It's been said, "**Some people drink at the fountain of knowledge, others just gargle.**" That's true spiritually.

We've all choked on the dust we created when we swept the floor, but a janitor named Murray Spangler had an idea. Why not suck up the dust rather stir up the dust. He designed a crude, but workable vacuum cleaner, and talked a friend into investing in his idea.

Guess the name of his friend? [HW Hoover](#).

Isaac Newton saw an apple fall from a tree and deduced from that familiar event the theory of gravity.

James Watt was watching a kettle boil - it prompted him to develop the idea of the first steam engine.

I've stirred up dust - seen apples fall - watched kettles boil - *but that's all I saw!* My understanding lacked the eyes of Spangler and Newton and Watts.

It's one thing to see, *but did you really see...* the potentials... the possibilities... the ramifications...

Information and *insight* are very different things.

Information is a knowledge of the facts, but **insight** is the wisdom to use those facts to one's advantage.

This is what Paul prays for the Ephesians - *insight!*

He's been itemizing their spiritual blessings, but that's not enough. *Let's tangibilize our treasure. Realize our riches. Cash in on all we have in Christ!*

And Paul especially wants God to open our eyes to three truths... verse 18, “**that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...**”

Are your eyes wide open to the **hope of your calling**, and **to His inheritance in the saints**, and **to the greatness of His power** toward us who believe?

Realize that in Christ you have a grand and glorious **calling** - you’ve been chosen and adopted as a child of God. That makes you a co-heir with Christ. Incredible!

You could be the President of the US, or the Queen of England, or the Coach of the Georgia Bulldogs - and it would be a step down. We have the highest calling known to man. *In Christ we’re all somebody special!*

But do you really know it? Have you tangibilized this calling? We nod when the pastor talks about our adoption, but does the truth that we’re beloved of God cause goose bumps - and our chest to stick out - and our eyes to twinkle! *Does it excite us as it should?*

Here’s a truth that should grip us, and elevate us, and change everything about how we see ourselves.

You and I are kids of the King!

Here’s a truth to boost your self-worth.

Here’s a truth to bolster your resolve and purpose.

Here’s a truth to immunize you from human opinions.

Here's a truth to set you on an Godward trajectory, and nothing should be able to knock you off course.

As Leonard Ravenhill once said, "The Christian who has the smile of God needs no status symbols."

But again, do I really get it - *the truth of this truth?*

If you truly **embraced the hope of your calling**, you'll never lower yourself to worldly standards...

If you **realize what Christ thinks of you**, why would you ever get bummed out because Susie down the street didn't invite you to her tupperware party?...

If you **relish who you are in Christ** you won't be upset when the world doesn't award you its accolades.

Here's my point, we need to **tangibilize** our calling!

And are your eyes opened "**to His inheritance in the saints?**" Earlier in the chapter we talked about our inheritance in Christ, but God has an inheritance - *and guess what it is?* Here's where you need to hold on to your hat. It's a shocker... **God's inheritance is YOU!**

You are God's treasure! He considers you His fabulous fortune. God in heaven longs to receive you and cloth you in His glory. In Psalm 2:8 God the Father says to His Son Jesus, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession." We are God's inheritance.

In John 17, when Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, numerous times He refers to His disciples then and now - as those the Father gave Him.

We are the Father's gift to His Son.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...” Why did Jesus submit to the cross? *What was in it for Him?* It was YOU. Fellowship with you was the joy set before Him.

I'm convinced that none of us has the slightest inkling of just how great a love God has for us!

Last Sunday we attended CCCM and it was strange not seeing Pastor Chuck, but they opened with one of his favorite hymns. I've heard him sing it many times...

It's by Frederick Lehman - called “*The Love of God.*”

“Could we with ink the ocean fill, and 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 ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.” We read these words - and we're stunned by their imagery - but have you *tangibilized* His love for you?

Do the eyes your understanding see how much God values you? *If so*, why do you shed tears at night and bemoan how lonely you feel? *If so*, why are you upset that the office crowd has decided to turn against you?

You're loved with a depth of love that's unimaginable. You're precious to God - *warm your heart by that truth!*

“But Pastor Sandy I need something more tangible, someone I can see, and touch, and hear” - but you don't! What you need is faith to tangibilize God's love.

Hebrews 11:1, *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for...”* Faith is what tangibilizes spiritual realities. It brings substance to what would otherwise elude us.

Paul prays that God opens your spiritual eyes to *the hope of your calling*, and *His inheritance in the saints...*

But also, that He open your inner eyes **“to the greatness of His power toward us who believe...”**

And Paul goes on to describe the magnitude of this power... *“According to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come, and He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

It's interesting that whenever the OT writers refer to God's power they measure it up against the creation, or Noah's flood, or the exodus from Egypt, or some other epic event... But when the NT writers want to reference the greatness of God's power they all point to the cross, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus!

The cross of Christ is the greatest power plug!

God's greatest unleashing of power was the work of Jesus! What Jesus did to redeem the world back to God eclipses what God did to create it in the first place.

Jesus died, and rose, and ascended to God's right hand - *the place of ultimate authority*. Today angelic ranks and principalities in heaven and on earth - all fall under His jurisdiction. Every name will bow to Jesus.

And lest we ever get confused, Jesus has authority in and over His Church. Jesus is King in His Church!

I love this imagery. The Church is the body, and Jesus is its head. This means the Church is lost without Jesus. Imagine, a body without a head - it's uncoordinated, and useless, and as good as dead.

But flip the analogy - it's equally stunning. Jesus compares Himself to the head of a body. But a head by itself isn't complete without the rest of its body.

And this is how much Jesus wants us! He ties His purposes to our loyalty and cooperation. Without the body the Head isn't complete. His plans are crippled.

Never forget, how important you are to Jesus!

And He wants to open the eyes of our understanding to something incredible, *“the greatness of His power...”*

Yes, it boggles the brain that God wants to plug us into the same power that *held Jesus to the cross*, and *conquered death*, and *exalted Him* to the place of supreme and ultimate authority! *This very same power!*

And I have to admit, I can read that, and understand that intellectually - but my experience still falls far short.

Here's where I need to do - **tangibilize some truth!**

Listen again to Alexander Maclaren's insightful words. He writes, "How do we know a power? By thrilling beneath its force." In other words, you learn the power of a waterfall by standing underneath its crash.

So "How are we to know the greatness of the power of God, but because it comes surging and rejoicing into our aching emptiness, and lifts us buoyant above our temptations and weaknesses? Paul was asking that their spirits might be saturated with and immersed in that great ocean of force that pours from God..."

And my question to you today, "*do we dare ask God to saturate us and overwhelm us with this same force?*"

Why are you looking at your sins and weaknesses as if they're mountains that can't be scaled? Don't you believe God's power can lift you over any obstacle?

How dare we capitulate - and not try - when the power of the Almighty beats beneath our breastbone!

Here is what your faith needs to see... Again, look closely at verse 19! *To whom is God's power intended?*

Divine power is directed "*toward us who believe...*"

Do you and I really believe?

Here's how you **tangibilize** *your high calling* - and *His love for you* - and *the resurrection power of Jesus...*

It might not be easy, but it's simple... **You believe!**

You ignore everything that tells you not to... your doubts, and fears, and skepticisms, and worries, and falsehoods... and you plunge headfirst into faith!

Stop toying with the blessings you've been given! *Start banking on them.* Stop living like a spiritual miser.

Jesus has earned abundant resources for you to spend. They're fixed, but there also as liquid as your faith is strong... Believe, pray, **tangibilize** your treasure!

Ask for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God... Pray that God opens your inner eyes... *to the hope of your calling, His inheritance in the saints, and the greatness of His power toward us...*

I'll close with an old saying that offers good advice, "**Stay under the spout where the blessings come out!**"

That's God's word to us! *Have faith and be filled.*