

The Passage we are looking at this evening is a prayer by Paul. It is a prayer in a letter he wrote to the Ephesians. It's one thing to pray for someone on your own time, in private. To spend time with God on someone else's behalf alone is very different than letting someone know you are praying for them. Right. When I let someone know that I am praying for them I am intentionally trying to encourage them. Ya know.

"Hey Matt, I've been praying for you man." Telling someone you are praying for them, there is a purpose behind that. That is exactly where Paul is at right now. He has a prayer for the Ephesian church and the church beyond, and he is letting them know his prayer. He is giving doing what he can to encourage them with the gospel. With the passage we are looking at tonight, Paul is giving them a reminder, a reminder of what matters and why.

Pray

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Before Paul gets into his prayer he has, like I mentioned, a reminder for the church.

Read Eph. 1:15-16.

Paul is reminding the church of their faith in the gospel, and their love for one-another and encouraging them to stay faithful in both.

This last summer I had the opportunity to be a part of the GCF internship here at SoHope. Part of participating in that internship was we had these large group meetings where we discussed some of the theology behind discipleship. One of the things we discussed was the 'assumed gospel' That in our walk, in our preaching, in our devotions, in our relationships when the gospel becomes 'assumes' it ceases to become talked about. It is no longer in the conversation, it is behind the conversation, but not in the conversation. It becomes a private thing. When it is assumed we understand what the Gospel means to us, what it means for our walk, how to live it out, but nobody else does, because we don't talk about it. We assume it.

The first thing Paul *tells* them that he is praying for is a prayer of thanks for their faith and love. Paul I not assuming the gospel in anyone. In every single one of Paul's letters he heavily presents the Gospel. Remember, his letters are to churches and to elders (Timothy). Paul never assumes the Gospel, he preaches it.

So often we get lost in our lives. Work. School. Marriage. Boyfriends/Girlfriends. Sports. Entertainment. Church. Friends. It is an easy thing to start assuming the gospel. To neglect continually preaching the gospel to ourselves, training ourselves in the gospel.

Once the Gospel becomes assumed it is no longer part of the conversation, it is no longer at the front of our minds, at the forefront of the conversation, it is no longer of preeminent importance to us.

Illustration: Marriage. I've been married for 3 years. Dated for 2.5 years before that. Something God taught me very early on was that, once you get married, you don't stop dating. Not dating other people, that's weird. But my wife and I don't stop dating each other. We continue to learn more a more about each other. We continue to spend time together having fun, going out, we are intentional about being continuing to pursue a relationship with each other.

In the same way we need always to be reminded of the gospel. We need the preached to us, by others and by ourselves. The greatest thing we have and ever will be given is the gospel, that is not something we can afford to assume. Preach the gospel to ourselves daily. Paul is saying don't assume your faith. Don't merely internalize it. Don't assume the gospel.

D.A. Carson said this in reference to assuming the gospel "One generation knows the gospel, the next generation assumes the gospel, and the next generation rejects the gospel." If we assume the gospel, then our children, our friends, our family will not hear or understand the why of who we are and, thus outright reject the gospel.

The second thing Paul is thankful for, and reminds them of is their love for one-another. I mentioned at the outset the plural pro-noun that Paul mentions previous in Ephesians. Paul places a heavy emphasis up to this point on community, on the plurality of the church.

Individualism is a talking point of our western culture.

Jesus didn't die for individuals, he died for the church. Christ died for people not a person. Some people like to make the point that if you were the only sinner, Jesus still would have died for you. And whether that is true or not, He didn't.

The reality is Jesus took the weight of sin for THE CHURCH. Not only the church in Ephesus, not only the church in Missoula, but the church as a whole, all persons who would put their love, faith, and glory in Christ. Paul is encouraging them to remember that. To remember that as believers we are part of an institution so much greater than ourselves, the church. Later in the passage and later in Ephesians Paul will talk about the Body. We are all part of one body of which Christ is the head.

The gospel is that Christ died for the Church.

So Paul now has reminded the Ephesians of their need for the gospel, of the importance of making the gospel pre-eminent, and of their place together as the Church.

Read Ephesians 1:16-19

Too often, when it comes to our faith, we neglect our minds. We neglect theology. We neglect the Scriptures. Christian culture cries out for something practical, for something we can use in our life, at work, at school, how to operate in our relationships. It's difficult for most to understand how the Hypostatic Union fits into their daily walk with God. People want something they can use.

And Paul gives us that in Ephesians, but not before he reminds us of the gospel, and showers us with theology, with scripture. Up through Chapter 3 of Ephesians is all gospel, and theological truths and implications of the gospel.

There has to be a theological foundation for how we operate. There have to be 'Why's'

Paul is telling the Ephesians that knowing, the gospel, that using the mind, in worship is vital to our health as a Christian. When we are saved, when God gives us faith, when our eyes are opened to the hope of the gospel, what follows is worship. We respond with our lives in worship to God. That is why we try to live " " morally. We aren't obedient to God to earn anything. We don't pursue righteousness

and holiness because of an obligation, or because of a duty, we pursue holiness because we **want** to. WE respond to our salvation by worshiping Jesus, worshiping the one who saved us, with our lives.

Matthew 22:36

Paul has reminded them of their faith in Christ their love for Christ, and their love for one another. What Paul is now preaching to them is the response in worship of their minds. Don't neglect your minds. Your mind is a part of yourself as well. If we are called to worship with our whole selves, that includes our minds.

Jl Packer, professor, pastor, writer, theologian. He coined a term. "Theology is for Doxology." Doxology means worship. Basically Theology, and theological understanding is for the purpose of worship. Learning more and more about what God has done for us can only enhance our worship. It puts wonder in worship. Understanding then, the hypostatic union, brings a sense of awe to our worship!

What an absolutely practical truth. Maybe not practical as in how to live my daily walk, but immensely practical in that it helps my feeble mind more clearly understand the glories of God, and in turn I can worship Him with just a little more awe, it puts a little more wonder in my worship.

Theology is important, understanding, and knowledge is important. Paul knows this and is pushing the Ephesians to know it too.

Ephesians 1: 17-19 (Keep this up)

What is Paul telling them to know? HOPE of our calling, RICHES of our inheritance, and the POWER of the God.

That you may know, the *Gospel*. That we may know the hope of the gospel, our inheritance in the gospel, and God's power in the gospel. Paul is saying there is HOPE, there is JOY, there are RICHES, and there is POWER is wisdom and in knowledge, in theology.

Friends, as much as we are called to faith, as much as we are to love, we are also called to know. We are called to worship with our minds, thoughts.

What does that mean? How do we worship with our minds?

It starts with Scripture. It starts with the Word of God. The Bible is the revelation of God, it is how God has revealed himself to us. Scripture is God revealing the nature of reality to us.

Because of that it is also our authority. Scripture is our ultimate authority, it is the mouthpiece of God. Meaning that as this is God's primary way of communication and revelation, this is our primary way for understanding authority. It is our ultimate authority.

That means that if what I say is ever in conflict with scripture, I will always be wrong, every time. Outside of God Himself, there is no greater authority than scripture. Not parents, not professors, not ourselves. No amount of imagination, no amount of concentration, of thinking and pondering about the nature of God or of humanity, nothing can substitute for even a moment of time spent in God's word.

This is our lifeline, the most important thing we will ever own.

This is our means for understand and knowledge in what God would have us learn. The Bible is a bottomless well of knowledge and wisdom. There is nothing that you will learn that is more important than what you will learn from the Bible. From Scripture.

This is where we begin, and where we never end. Never will we know all that there is to know about the Bible. Augustine Spent 10 years studying the Trinity, he was a monk. Bald, Robe wearing, monastery monk. Ten years. It's hard for me to spend 10 minutes doing one thing before my self-diagnosed ADD kicks in. There will never come a point in your life where you will not need the scripture, where you will not need the Bible. Where you will know everything there is to know about the scriptures, where you will no longer need the scripture.

There is nothing that you will learn outside of God's Word that is more important that what you will learn from within Scripture.

This can be a huge stumbling block for us. Especially students. Now you would think, that this would be our strong suit as students, that is would be easy for us to learn because that is the culture we surround ourselves with: School. Knowledge. Learning. But that is definitely not what I have noticed or experienced myself.

1. Something as Christians that we are assaulted with is the notion that science, that reason, is antithetical to faith, of any kind. That faith and science, that faith and reason don't jive. The assumption is that to be a Christian one has to turn a blind eye to scientific evidence, to reason to thinking. That faith is blind. While we do not necessarily ever agree with that, outright, or admit that, that doesn't mean that it doesn't influence us. This is especially true for college students and educational institutions. We neglect scripture not because we believe that, but because that is the culture we live in, and it's easy to just let it slip.
2. Another reason we neglect the scripture is that we have wacked out priorities. We put our education, we put our future, our career, higher on our to-do list than our devotions, than reading our Bibles. Our lives get busy and our kids, families, jobs, errands all take a higher priority for us than does the reading. Our Bibles sit in the back seat of our car and the leather starts to curl up a little because of the heat and how long it's been in there.
3. We just undervalue it. We want practical, we want something we can use, something we apply.
4. Some of us are just lazy. This probably the one I myself have struggled with the most. It's not that I don't have it high on my list of priorities, its that I just don't do it. I procrastinate, push it off. The way I see this go most often is you'll be doing pretty good with it, couple days in a row, maybe a couple weeks in a row, and all of the sudden, Saturday rolls around and you go to farmers market instead, and you say, oh it's only one day. But before you know it been a week, maybe two or three.

I'm as guilty as anyone of every single one of those, at one time or another.

But if we know that there is no higher authority than scripture, if we know that the most valuable information we will ever receive is in scripture, then every single one of those reasons is void. You see understanding THEOLOGICALLY helps us practically. If there was no theological reason for scripture, then there is no practical reason for scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16

The most important thing we will ever own is our Bible, it is the most theological and most practical item will ever own.

5. The final reason for the devaluing of scripture, is that some of us that claim the Christian faith, haven't put our trust in Jesus. Some people aren't Christians. This is where I was at for most of my life, up until just a couple of years ago. I didn't care about scripture, I didn't care about theology because I didn't care about Jesus.

Paul precedes his prayer for knowledge with his reminder for faith and love. Without a trust in Jesus, without a love for God, with faith in the Gospel, there is no joy in scripture.

1 Cor 15:3 John 5:39 Luke 24:37 (All 1 Slide)

All scripture points to Christ. All scripture points to Jesus. If all the scripture points to Jesus, if all of the Bible is about Jesus, and we don't care about Jesus, then why would we care about scripture? It would be meaningless to us.

Illustration: Denali. My wife and I have a dog, Siberian Husky Denali. I'm one of those weird, Missoula dog owners who cares way way too much about my pet, ya know. I'm not even joking, I will talk to my dog, carry on conversations with my dog, you can ask my wife, it's weird, I know it's weird. But we adopted him last summer, and at the time he was just about a year old, and by the time we adopted him, we were I think his 4th owner. And if you know anything about Siberian Huskies you know that they are very intelligent and very loyal dogs, but they are also extremely stubborn and strong willed. So we are his 4th owners, he's barely a year old, he would listen to a word we said. I can't even count how many times I chased him around the neighborhood because he wouldn't listen to the command come. It was so embarrassing. Denali didn't understand the concept of a master. He hadn't had an established authority, thus he care because he didn't care about his master.

If Jesus isn't sitting on the throne of our hearts, He cannot sit on the throne of our minds. If Jesus isn't the Lord of your life, he cannot be ruler of your thoughts.

We have been given so much grace, so much life, why wouldn't we let the ruler of the universe rule us.

Ephesians 1:19b-23

Christ is FAR above all power and dominion, ruling over all, all things are at his feet. Jesus is the pre-eminent power of the world, of the galaxies, of the universe. He is the omnipotent omniscient head over all. He is outside of time. Sitting at the right hand of the Father, sovereignly in control of all. He above and before everyone. He is the KING. Yet, he has been, given, to, the Church.

Jesus wasn't given to an individual, He has been given to the Church. The entire church. Our brothers and sister's in all of Missoula, in Helena, in Kalispell, in Idaho, In Florida, in America, In Brazil, Chille, Dubai, our brothers and sisters in 2013 in 1913 in 113, in 2113. Jesus has been given as the Head of the Church.

Friends that is who died, that is who paid the death penalty that we earned, that is who gifted us His righteousness. We have been given the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We, the church, the body, have been given, the Christ. The only proper response is Worship, Worship with our lives, with the entirety of ourselves, with ALL of ourselves. Our Soul. Our Heart. Our *MINDS*.