



**Love Incorruptible**  
**#3 Prayer for the Church**  
**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**  
**May 7, 2017**

We are in a series right now called “Love Incorruptible” - it is a section by section look through the book of Ephesians.

And the book of Ephesians is all about IDENTITY. It is all about who we are in Christ. Paul downloads to us some amazing information in the second half of the book about how to

practically live out certain aspects of our lives... covering topics like anger... and handling emotions, and one thing that I always found to be so fascinating is there is even this section in there about giving, and about how much of a thrill it actually is for a person to work with his own two hands to earn something, and then in turn GIVE THAT THING AWAY. There is some incredibly powerful stuff there...

but Paul spends the entire first half focused on who we are in Christ alone.

Because no matter how much you may accomplish in this world... no matter how much you are able to even OVERCOME in this world... none of those things define you... and if you let those things define you it will always come back on you, because even though you and I may have good moments... moments when we overcome our anger, and we process it properly...

There will always come a day when our anger will get the best of us again.

And if our identity is found in how well we manage our emotions, then our emotions will be a roller coaster our entire lives... But thank God, our identity is only found in the one who holds the world in His hands. Who is stable even in our instability... who is faithful even when we are faithless.

and the thing that is so amazing about that, is not only IS HE FAITHFUL TO YOU... but He is also CRAZY ABOUT YOU! Jesus Loves you. Just as you are... right in the middle of whatever you are in the middle of. He loves you.

Lets open our bibles to Ephesians 1:15-23

### **Thanksgiving and Prayer**

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **I do not cease to give thanks for you**, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### *Let's Pray*

One of the crucial things that Paul expresses here in this prayer and elsewhere throughout the bible, is he identifies something in them that gives him so much hope... He identifies that they have faith in the Lord Jesus and they have love toward all of the saints... and because of that, Paul says that he doesn't cease to give thanks for them.

Love is the currency of the Kingdom of God... it is the one thing that will never fail, and Paul, at the beginning of this prayer recognizes that love exists among the members of this church. It is there. It is evident. And seeing that incorruptible love, as Paul describes it in the last words of this letter, brings Paul an amazing amount of joy.

He is locked up, chained to a guard 24 hours a day, and here he is in this prison giving thanks for the church in Ephesus.

and He prays this very powerful prayer over this church that demonstrates just how much God's plan involves US.

Now, there is one section that I want to really focus on this morning... and there are so many ways we could do this, but we have a Cinco De Mayo Parade in a few minutes, and we want to make sure that we are out celebrating with our community on this incredibly important day... so I am going to focus us here, because IF YOU LEAVE WITH THIS... you will be in good shape:

This is verse 18-20:

having **the eyes of your hearts** enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

First of all, notice the way Paul words this... "the eyes of your hearts." Normally when we think of eyes, we think of something that you see, which then sends that information to your brain...

and even here, Paul says "having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may KNOW..."

but Paul is saying that this is not just something you know, as in *information*... this is NOT just your eye seeing something, and you acknowledging what you are seeing... No. This is your heart coming to the place of faith, where even when your eyes CAN'T SEE, you still know.

He is saying "something has to take place in your heart in order for this to happen."

That you may know:

1. The hope to which he has called you
2. what are the riches of HIS glorious inheritance in the saints
3. what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe

#1...The hope to which he has called you.

This is simple and powerful. There is an unbelievable hope written into the calling that He has for your life.

Your destiny.

The bible says that “hope is the anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19) - it is the constant... when the storms may come, hope keeps you in place... but again, its not hope as in “I hope that this will happen” - no... this is the eyes of your heart locking in on the truth that: THIS IS GOING TO HAPPEN. That is the hope which those who are in Christ have.

Now,

The word “called” there (Greek: “*klēsis*” pronounced: clay-sis) literally means: “a divine invitation to embrace salvation of God” (BLB)

I think of Jonah (Jonah 2:9), who quotes the Psalmist (Psalm 37:39) when he says “Salvation comes from the Lord.” - which is so fitting because Jonah is fighting God on whether or not God should SAVE NINEVEH. And here Jonah is thinking that He is better than the Ninevites, so he argues with God and refuses to go to Nineveh and so God intervenes, causes a huge storm, Jonah gets thrown off the boat that he is on, and swallowed by a huge fish and it is in the belly of this fish that He realizes... “God is going to do what He is going to do... and He if wants to work in the lives of the Ninevites, WHO THE HECK AM I TO STOP THEM?”

So He says this... “Salvation comes from the Lord.”

and until we come to terms with the fact that we all, at one point, were just like Nineveh... dead in our sins and living without hope... living with NO

ANCHOR, because we hadn't yet come to terms with the hope that comes in being divinely invited to embrace the salvation of God...

Until we come to terms with the fact that we too were like Nineveh, we will always be like Jonah.

And we will see people, and we will think that they don't deserve WHAT WE have been given... but the only thing that differentiates us from a person who hasn't come to Christ yet, is that we have accepted that divine invitation to embrace the salvation that ONLY COMES from God.

and our lives MUST REFLECT A HOPE THAT IS FOR EVERYONE.

but until you understand that it is a divine invitation you were given, you will always think that you did something to earn it. But the thing that is so hopeful about this calling, IS THAT YOU DIDN'T EARN IT.

Because if you earned it because of something that you did, then it could just as easily be taken away from you, for something that you do. But our HOPE is found exclusively in what Jesus did for us, when he stood in our place.

Moving on... the second thing that Paul wants us to know:

2. That you may know what are the riches of HIS glorious inheritance in the saints...

Notice this... when we read this quickly, especially when we read it understanding the gospel... we read this thinking it says "our glorious inheritance" because we know that we are children of God and on account of NOTHING that we have done, we are the ones who will in the end, get everything.

But look closely at what it says... it says "His glorious inheritance"

This is not talking about what we get in Christ... this is about what God gets by you coming to Christ.

The book of Malachi records something that seems very out of place, in Malachi 3... it comes right after this huge section on tithing, where it says that tithing is the one area of life in which God actually wants you to test him... He says bring the WHOLE tithe into the storehouse... bring God His 10%... show him that you trust him with your money... which is the one thing that is most important to most of us...

but then right after that, we get this interesting section called "The Book of Remembrance" and it is interesting, right after the writer describes what WE DO with our money... which to most people is *our* most treasured possession, the writer then talks about this book, and in this book He talks about people's names being written in it.

and the ones who FEAR THE LORD, they are written into this book of remembrance, and when that happens, Malachi says that they are added to God's TREASURED POSSESSION.

So most people, unfortunately, live their lives as if money were their treasure... but God says that HIS treasure is people.

and to understand this, you have to ask the question:

what do you give the one who has it all?

Because God already owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10-11)

Everything already belongs to God... its all His. So it feels like anything we could give him, he already has, right?

Or, an even better question would be... WHAT DO YOU GIVE THE ONE WHO ALREADY GAVE YOU EVERYTHING?

Its always, for me, so hard to shop for my parents near Christmas time, because they have spent their entire lives giving me everything that I ever needed... and a lot of what I wanted. And it always feels like anything I do, it would never compare to what they already have done for me.

And its very easy to feel that way toward God... He already gave us that divine invitation for His salvation when we ABSOLUTELY did not deserve it. It would feel impossible to repay... and yet it says here, that YOU ARE HIS INHERITANCE.

What He TREASURES MOST, in all the world... is you.

and this should change the way that you view God. It really should.

Because most of us have this view of God that says that even if he saves us, its not because He actually likes us, but rather He just feels bad about sending us to hell... or something.

But that is the beautiful thing about being "IN CHRIST" as Paul says over and over in the book of Ephesians. Because when we accept what Jesus did, we become all that He is. Jesus is the son of God... and when we come to Him, God literally views us like we are His children.

He is wildly in love with each and every one of you.

He doesn't see you the way that you see you...

You are more valuable to Him than anything else in this entire world, and we should walk in that confidence and in that assurance because it really does change things.

#3 - and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ

and I believe that there is so much in here... the power of God. The God who can do anything, and the God who has done everything.

I found this fascinating.. there are three Greek words in here that Paul uses, and from these words we get some of our most over the top description words...

immeasurable is the word "*hyperballō*" (*Hu-pear-bal-o*) and in a second I will tell you what it means, but from it we got our English word "super"

Greatness is the word “*megethos*” where we get the English word MEGA from... and power is the word “*dynamis*” where we get the word dynamite from. Paul just keeps using these big, explosive words to try and describe, as best as possible, just how amazing it is,

Not just one big emphasizing word, but three... IT IS SUPER, MEGA, EXPLOSIVE that:

God carefully laid out every detail of salvation, and of grace and even more than that, of calling and purpose.

How else could we describe the God who brought so many likeminded people into this Detroit community to be an active part of reconciliation... they are just HUGE WORDS with HUGE IMPLICATIONS because God is doing something SO HUGE through His church.

This word immeasurable, is the Greek word “*hyperballō*” (Hu-pear-bal-o) and we get the word super from it, but this is what it means, literally... and its so fascinating to me - “to surpass in throwing, to throw over or beyond any thing”

I immediately think of Football... of the quarterback with the best arm in the world and how incredibly far He can throw... and how everyone would see that and then be so amazed...

as far as I could find, nobody knows for sure what the record is for the longest throw of a Football, but in the 1988 Quarterback Challenge Vinny Testaverde threw a pass for 80 yards...

I am not talking about throwing the ball 40 yards and the receiver catching it and running for another 40... you see those things a lot... I mean in the air for 80 yards... thats a long throw.

and everyone was amazed... many say that was the longest throw. That is a long throw. Brett Favre has had some really long throws too.



but imagine if all of the sudden, someone else just came out and said “oh, 80 yards in the air... peanuts.” and then without any effort at all just tossed the ball into the air and it cleared the whole field... all 100 yards and beyond, beyond the end zone, and the out of bounds area, into the stands.

That is the image that I get of God here... when Paul talks about the power TOWARD US who believe in Him. He is always at work in absolutely miraculous ways... He is in every detail, and He is always going BEYOND what we imagine... He is always throwing beyond...

We see one thing... and maybe its a step toward where we are going, but God always sees something bigger... He always throws beyond. That is how I feel about this discipleship house... we saw something... and I thought it was going to be something that would take tons and tons of work, and tearing apart rooms, and redoing electrical, and drywall... but God saw beyond that, something better for where we are RIGHT NOW... and gave us exactly what we actually needed... it was way beyond what I saw.

I think about how today we are celebrating Cinco De Mayo with our community, Dawn and I for the third time! And how we have now completed two full years here with you guys... and I always take this week to do a little reflecting on how God even brought us here... because even though we had glimpses of what He was doing... and had ideas of our own for how we would get to Detroit and begin doing some ministry...

God just threw beyond all of them. His plans for us were immeasurable compared to what we had. And yet, He was setting us up for it the entire time.

When Dawn and I think about the things we have journaled, and written about, and the way that they are lining up now, here for us... its far more than we ever imagined! We saw something great, but now we see so many ways that God is going to throw beyond all of that...

and again, that is the anchor that we have in Christ. That Jesus will always throw beyond anything that we can even imagine. We get that verse in chapter 3 of Ephesians: “He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us”

And when you begin to look at life like that, you can read this passage in Ephesians, that so often we read right over, and see it a little bit differently...

Because God has an amazing plan for your life... we are really going to dive into that next week... but there is a calling on your life that is so filled with hope, it literally can not be contained if we can grasp it...

and its so important that we actually walk in that hope, because we are God's inheritance... we are it. We are the bride walking toward Him... that He is waiting for at the end of the isle with so much anticipation...

and what we will be able to do together... when the bridegroom finally takes the bride as His own, and the church walks in the power which it is called... it will be immeasurably beyond anything that we can ever imagine... Because all of the power that is in Christ Jesus has been handed to us on a silver platter with the this command:

Bring the world back to Me.

and finally... the last thing he says is this, and it brings it all together verse 22 and 23:

he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

This is a huge re-iteration of the three things we looked at today... Because Jesus overcame all the things that overcome us, and He has called us to himself.

And I want you to catch this very last line... "the church, which is his body, the **fullness** of him who fills all in all."

The church.... the body for which Christ is the head of... we are the fullness of the one who fills us.

This is crucial. It goes back to God's inheritance... and it goes back to power. You see, its very easy to get this idea that God will do whatever He will do with or without us... and I think there is some merit to that... Because He is all powerful...

But I want to say something that may surprise you this morning, and that is: God will NOT do whatever He will do, WITHOUT THE CHURCH.

There is no case whatsoever biblically to be made for the church getting left in the dust while God does what He does. The church is the bride of Christ, and the bride goes where the bridegroom goes. And the way that we know that is from this verse, is this word right here... fullness.

its the Greek word "*plērōma*" (play-ro-ma) - it means "full measure, completeness, fulfillment."

Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones says this of the final line in Ephesians 1, he says: "To the degree you understand this phrase, you will receive strength not to sin."

Because when you come to terms with exactly WHO and WHAT you are to Christ, you realize how much stock He has in you.

The cross of Jesus Christ has to be combined with the empowerment of the church in order to change the world.

Several of the coming weeks we will focus on the church... because Ephesians has more to say about what the church IS, than any other book of the bible. and there is just so much in there.

But what we have to leave here understanding, is that WE ARE A PART OF SOMETHING THAT GOD CAN NOT GO WITHOUT...

The church is the plan... and it has been empowered in every way by the God of the universe to make real impacts on peoples eternities.

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We are going to close this morning, by reading this entire passage as a prayer over our church. It is so simple, but it is so powerful because it shows us not only how much Jesus loves us... not only how much He has done FOR US...

but also how much He believes IN US... and empowers us... and literally calls us, the church, HIS BODY: THE FULLNESS OF HIM...

we are essential to the plan...

we are the plan!

and He is using His church to bring reconciliation to the broken places of our worlds... and to the broken places of peoples hearts. Through opening our hearts and opening our hands, through doing things like our Kids Club which launches this week, and like today's community lunch and time spent in our neighborhood with the parade...

and He is doing it all around the world, through people meeting in underground locations and spreading hope in areas where hope is not even legal... to others digging wells in areas where drinking water is the greatest human need and the greatest human deficiency... He is working through people doing practical things, and others doing drastic, life risking things...

He is working here.

Through simple acts of love, all the way to the huge projects that we take on... that will NEVER HAPPEN IF HE DOESN'T INTERVENE...

but all of the work, it is all for the purpose of being the fullness of Him. The people who not only want to see our world change, but also who understand when we read the bible, that the only hope for change in our world, is God, working through HIS CHURCH.

His imperfect, sometimes wayward bride, who He will never stop chasing.

Lets pray this pray together:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **I do not cease to give thanks for you**, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.