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Ephesians 1:18
The Hope of His Calling and His inheritance in the Saints

We're going to continue our study of the book of Ephesians this morning. We've made it to Ephesians 1:18, so if you want to turn there you can.

If you'll remember, last time we spoke about the absolute necessity of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation working in us to bring us to the true knowledge of Christ. If you missed that last time, you might want to pick it up in the bookstore. And basically what we mentioned is that it is impossible for the Lord's body to do the Lord's will without the mind of the Lord working in that body. And that only happens through the Spirit of God living in us and revealing and forming Himself in our soul. That is the true knowledge of God – it is a participation in His life.

If you were to ask me what I believe to be the most central, vital issue in the body of Christ having to do with spiritual growth, living into our purpose, fulfilling the will of God – it would without question be the necessity of Christ revealed in you as your life. Or you could say the truth as it is in Christ being made the truth as it is in your soul. Everything of Christ life, maturity, increase, and expression hinges right there. That is what we spoke about last time. That is where Paul begins this apostolic prayer. And it continues in verse 18, which is where we will focus our attention today.

Eph 1:18 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,

I want to spend some time this morning looking at the hope of His calling. Before I do anything else, I'd like to just mention that the Greek word that we have translated into English as the word "hope" would be much better translated "expectation". Greek scholars agree that this word is not a wish or desire or hope as we understand it today, but the confident expectation of what we know is sure to come to pass.

And the hope of this calling is a confident expectation because it is based on a finished work.

So, we'll start by looking at the "hope of His calling", and then get a bit into His inheritance in the saints. You will find this word "calling" used by the apostles various times in the New Testament. I want to try to explain what I've seen about our "calling", what it is and what it is not. But first, let's just look at a few other verses where Paul mentions this calling.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

1Co 1:9 God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1Co 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 **But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption**—31 that, as it is written, "HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD."

Eph 4:4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

Phi 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

1Th 2:12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1Th 5:24 He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*.

2Th 1:11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power,

2Th 2:14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Pe 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1Pe 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,

From God's point of view, what is the "calling on your life?". I believe that there is an incredible amount of misunderstanding surrounding this concept. I know that there certainly was *is* my life. The reason that I quoted all of the above verses was simply to show you that in none of them will you find God's calling on your life having anything to do with what He wants **you to do**. On the contrary, God's calling on your life has to do with realizing and walking in the fullness of what **He has done**. In other words, your calling isn't about accomplishing things, but rather growing up in the thing that He has already accomplished.

Every one of these verses deals with the calling of God, and each one has to do with what He has done, what we must realize, and then what results from that. God's calling, in each of these verses has nothing to do with tasks or objectives that God is calling you to carry out or achieve, but rather they each deal with the reality of what He has achieved working fully in you. **He is calling you to know by faith,**

and manifest through transformation, the reality of what He has done. Can you see the difference?

It is because you “have been called into the fellowship of His Son”; its because He has “called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”; its because He has “called us into His eternal glory in Jesus Christ”, that we can attain, press toward, know and expect the reality of this calling to work in our lives.

Many people I have talked to are incessantly concerned with “God’s calling on their life”. And what that means to them is, more or less, trying to hear from God or figure out in one way or another exactly what it is that God wants them to do. Is my calling to be a doctor or a Pizza Hut manager? Is my calling to be single or married. Is my calling to be a missionary or a house-wife, to live in Akron or live in Costa Rica, to be a prophet or an apostle, a teacher or an intercessor.

I’d like to suggest to you that, though the Lord might direct you in any of those above mentioned directions, none of them really has anything to do with your primary calling. Now the Lord may have a particular way that His life working in you functions in His body, but **your calling is not bound up in things being done, it is bound up in who’s life is being lived in whatever is being done.** In other words, your calling is not fulfilled in things, times, and places. Your calling is fulfilled in the manifestation of Christ in all things, times, and places. God is not calling you to perform an assignment. God is calling you into the fullness of His Son. That is the expectation of His calling.

And if you’ll notice in our verse, that is actually how it reads. It reads “the hope of **His** calling”. And that is significant because God gets to define the calling, not you. It is what He is calling you out of and calling you into. Now it can also be called your calling, because it applies to you. But here Paul says “His calling”.

I like to use my hand a lot as an analogy because it is a member of my body and an expression of my life – just as we are members of Christ’s body and are meant to be expressions of His life. Well, listen...as far as my head is concerned the calling on my hand isn’t really a list of specific projects or daily objectives. The calling on my hand is to fully manifest my life and will in whatever task, at whatever time, and in whatever place. If my life wasn’t formed in and functioning in my hand, there is not a chance that it could fulfill the hope of my calling.

2Co 2:14 Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge **in every place.** **15** For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Even if you heard the audible voice of God telling you what your occupation was supposed to be, what house you were supposed to buy, who you were supposed to marry, how many kids to have, what church to go to, and where to give your money, and how many times a day to brush your teeth...you could still completely and entirely miss His calling on your life because His calling is not found in any of those things. I might say that a bit stronger, if you don’t mind. Unless the true calling of God is working in our soul then regardless of however we think God is instructing us, we can miss His true hope (expectation) of our calling.

Well then, what is our calling? Our calling is really an invitation to travel the way of the cross. Now that sounds like a Christian cliché, so let me clarify. Our calling is to leave behind all that He left behind, become as dead to it as He is dead to it, and live in and by Him alone...and find in Him, as Him, the substance and sufficiency of New Life. That is the way of the cross. The cross is not bad circumstances, cranky bosses, or male-pattern balding. Our calling is a calling out of one man, one creation, one covenant, one realm, and into another. Another what? Another man, another creation, another covenant, another realm.

Our calling isn't really the things done in and by the earth, but the things done in and by Christ in you that are made manifest in the earth. I'm not trying to be clever with semantics. I'm simply trying to make clear that the expectation of our calling is not a series of tasks, or instructions from God, but the ever increasing experience, conformity, and expression of Jesus Christ's residence in our soul. That is what you are called to. It's not things you do, it's what you become through the inward working of the cross. It is not the places you go or the tasks you finish. Your calling is conformity to the image of Christ through the revealing of Him as your life.

And sure, that then can change just about every outward thing. What you do, say, think, feel, love, despise, whatever. All of that is effected by the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. But these are the byproducts of the hope of His calling, not the goal. The goal, simply put, is to have Christ Himself formed in you. That is your calling.

And that is why Paul says things like "you were called to gain the glory of Jesus Christ". Or "You were called into His own kingdom and glory."

And so, as Scripture says, there is one hope of your calling. There are not many different expectations of where God's calling leads. There are many people in whom that same expectation is working. There are many situations and places in which that single expectation will be manifest. But there is one hope of your calling, because God planted ONE incorruptible Seed in each soul with ONE thing in mind. His hope, His expectation is for it's increase. What is yours?

I have seen people travel half-way around the world to try to get a man or a woman to tell them in a conference what God's calling is on their life. I think they could have saved some time and money by just reading the Bible.

When you think of the several parables that have to do with a seed sown and a harvest reaped. In each case, the expectation on the soil is always the same thing – to bring forth the increase of what was sown. The parable of the wheat and the tares, the sower and the four soils, the vineyard, the money lender. In each of these parables the expectation of Christ is very simply the increase of what was planted or given.

So often the New Testament speaks of this one "hope" that we have. Well, not understanding what that hope really is in the mind of the Lord, once again it simply becomes to us whatever we hope to see happen. Often we read the words "the hope of our calling" or the "hope of His calling" and it naturally has something to do with an imagination of heaven that you want to see in the future. Often it has to do with personal natural possessions or health in the present. Sometimes, though we would rarely admit it, we make the hope of our calling equivalent to our aspirations for ministry and spiritual greatness in the sight of God and man. Whatever your hope

from God is, you have to ask yourself the question – is my expectation in this thing in line with God’s. Is it His expectation, or is it my hope?

Because if it is not His expectation, you’re going to find yourself, knowingly or not, cross-purposes with Him. And that will only have one of two outcomes. Either you will become burned out and disappointed. Or you will convince yourself that He is after what you are after...and chase it all the days of your life. I remember when I was applying for seminary, one of the recruiters (or whatever you call them) told me that I believe 85% of seminary grads are PERMANENTLY out of ministry within five years after graduation. Does our expectation line us with His?

You could really say it this way. This is the way I like to think about it. The “hope of His calling” is roughly equivalent to saying “the fullness of where this thing goes”. What are we being called to leave behind? What does that mean? What are the implications of that? What are we being called into? What does THAT mean? What is the goal, the objective, the aim, the target of what Paul calls the “upward call of God in Christ Jesus”. “How far does thing really go, after all? That’s a really good question. Its one that I think about extremely frequently.

It won’t surprise you when I say to you that it is far more than Christian beliefs, behavior, and so-called service. It is far more than an expectation to go to a better place when we die. You will never find Paul reducing God’s calling down to doctrines, behaviors, and future locations. For Paul, the call of God was nothing less than taking this thing as far as it goes. For Paul it was counting all things as dung compared to the excellency of knowing Christ. It was forgetting all that lies behind the cross and laying hold of everything for which Christ had laid hold of him. It was coming to know even as He was fully known. For Paul, the upward call of God in Christ, was the reality of being conformed to Christ’s death so that He could live in Christ’s resurrection. Again, it was taking this thing as far as it goes. The hope of His calling.

And I want to just pose a question to all of you this morning. How far do you want this to go in you? I know that everyone’s first response is always “all the way, Lord”. Regardless of where you ask that question, everyone always answers that way. But lets be real, here. Words are meaningless. The Lord knows our heart.

*Draw Diagram

If you can picture the calling of God as a highway that leads out of death into the fullness of life, out of Adam into the fullness of Christ, out of the first into the reality of the second...picture it as a road or a highway. There are exit ramps every quarter mile along the way. And these exit ramps are tricky because you don’t even really decide to take them, you just find yourself on one when you take your eyes off the road. You actually quite convinced that you’re still on the highway. You’re not even aware that you’ve headed back the wrong way.

I’m not trying to scare you or anything like that. I just know that there are so many exit ramps, and enumerable ways to legitimize them. They can be justified and rationalized by the natural mind in so many ways. Paul was constantly dealing with Christians who had taken exit ramps. You can’t read one of his epistles without hearing this. In one Paul is begging those who began in the Spirit not to think they can come to maturity in the flesh. He wonders who bewitched them. In another he says he wonders how they could go back after starting with the reality of Christ and

Him crucified. In another he wonders if he has labored for them in vain. In another he says he wants to feed them solid food, but finds them still needing milk. He wants to speak to them in spiritual words, but can only speak to them as carnal. He thinks that they should by now be teachers, and are yet stuck in the elementary basic principles. Exit ramps, all the way on the highway of this calling. And so much of the Apostle's letters and prayers are directed towards those who have, in one way or another, turned aside from the hope of their calling. Those who are falling short of where this thing goes.

You see, this is why Jesus speaks with such frightening candor and bluntness about what it means to be His disciple. The church finds dozens of ways to water down the things that He says and make them more Adam-friendly. But nevertheless there they stand as the highway of God's high calling.

Lose your life and you can find mine. Hate your life and you will save it. Hate father mother, wife and husband, son and daughter or you cannot be my disciple. What does all of this mean? It means that the calling of God on your life costs you your life. And very few care to pay that price. Now, to be sure, nobody having gained Christ ever looks back and even considers it a cost. But to those who are in love with what we are being called out from, the cost seems high. We would much rather add Jesus to our life, then lose our life to know Christ. And that right there is one of the very first exit ramps we encounter.

Luk 14:27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*— 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Well, that's pretty heavy. But it makes a point. The point is that there is no way to follow the fullness of His calling when we continue to send out delegations and ask for terms of peace. Jesus, lets make peace. Both you and I live and reign together in my soul, in my heart. No, that's not where this thing goes. I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. For me to live is Christ. Not I, but the one who works mightily in me. There is where the hope of His calling leads.

Now we all know that it is progressive. But is that hope, is that expectation, your expectation? That's what I want you to think about this morning. Do you have another expectation besides the one that has burned in the heart of the eternal God from before the foundation of the world. Do you actually think that there is some other purpose for your creation, for your life, than to walk in the hope of His calling? Have you actually imagined another calling, purpose, reason, function, objective or goal other than becoming the fragrance of Christ to His Father? Have we been so deceived. I hope not.

I hope that we, in our little fellowship, want what Paul is praying for this church in Ephesus. I hope we truly want the Spirit of God to open the eyes of our heart and

show us the hope of His calling, so that it will be rooted and grounded in us as our own spiritual expectation and aim.

Well then...very briefly, what is the outcome if the Spirit of God does work the expectation of His calling in our soul? What does it do? What does it grant? It grants the very next thing that Paul mentions in this prayer. It grants God His inheritance in the saints.

Do you see how wonderful that is? Our expectation is His increase. Christ all and in all. Us partaking in all that He is – righteousness, life, love, redemption, wisdom, truth, joy. And the Father's expectation is that very same Son coming forth from the soil of our heart as the increase of what He has sown. The one Seed that He sowed into death, now coming forth in harvest through many. The one Treasure that He had from eternity past, now being manifested in many vessels who bear in themselves the glory of that treasure. God's inheritance in the saints.

You have to ask yourself, what could God possibly want as an inheritance that He didn't already have in the Person of Jesus Christ. Well, nothing **other than** Jesus Christ. Not Jesus plus anything. But Jesus now magnified, now glorified, now enjoyed and expressed through a people who bear in themselves His very life and glory. Now a people joined to Him in Spirit becoming the temple of His glory, the city of His rule, the body of His life, the kingdom of His reign. God's inheritance in the saints is the increase of Christ. And our becoming that to Him is precisely the expectation of His calling.

2Th 2:14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Its like a farmer and his soil. God is the farmer, we are the soil. The Farmer plants His Seed in the soil. The inheritance of the soil is to bear and enjoy the increase and fruit of the seed. The inheritance of the farmer is to enjoy the increase and fruit of the seed coming forth from the Seed. His expectation, His inheritance has become our expectation, our inheritance. Amen.