

Ephesians 13-10-20a

This is Sunday, the 20th of October, 2013. We continue our study of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans, alternately known as the Book of Ephesians. We pick up this morning in chapter 1, verse 18.

Let's take a moment to individually go to the Lord in prayer and collectively dedicate our time of worship and fellowship to Him. Father, what a privilege it is to address ourselves directly to You. The Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest.

He has conferred on us the honor of being priests in Your service and having the privilege of coming before You, entering into Your throne through that new and living way that He has made through the veil by the sacrifice of Himself as we have just observed in that review of His work on the cross for us. We thank You for the present standing and opportunity that we have in Him. This wonderful book that is before us contains so many truths revealing what You have done for us through the Lord Jesus and all of the things that we possess and that we can attain in Him.

We thank You for this passage. We ask Your blessing on us as we study it together. We know that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to enlighten it, to make it real and understandable to us, memorable, usable in time of need, in time of challenge, in time of decision, in time of determining direction.

We pray that the things that we see this morning will be clear, that they will be pertinent, that they will be meaningful and motivating for us as we look at them together in the light of Your grace and in that wonderful potential that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name, Amen. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 15 and following, Paul speaking to this group of growing believers, those who are sanctified and faithful in Christ Jesus, reminds them that having heard of their faith and their love, their faith toward the Lord, their love for one another, he constantly prays for them.

They are on his prayer list. He is a man of prayer following the example of the Lord Jesus who was also a man of prayer, following the example of King David, following the example of countless believers recorded in the scriptures who recognized what a privilege it is to address ourselves personally and individually to the Lord God, Creator of the universe and sustainer of all things. A scientist can study the laws of physics.

He can get into astronomy and astrophysics. He can gaze at the distant galaxies. He can speculate on the origins of planets and the things that the planets contain.

But one thing he can't do is talk to the galaxies, talk to material, universe, objects and things and get any response. You can gaze at the images that come from the Hubble telescope. You can wonder.

You can be inspired. But the images don't talk back. The images don't do anything.

They don't respond. We have the knowledge that these are created things and instead of practicing idolatry, trying to get the created thing to respond, this is really no different than trying to draw inspiration and encouragement from what is observable in creation. This is what your secular materialists do.

You might as well be an idolater. Remember our study, the passage in the Old Testament where it talks about the man who takes a log and cuts it in half and with half of it he builds a fire and cooks his dinner and with the other half he makes an idol to worship. And it's a sort of derisive reference to how we imbue and invest things with mystical significance when they really have none.

And this is a component of our nature. Part of our survival instinct is, and this has been recognized in science, they try to explain away our belief in God as a product of this, but we are built for survival. And when we supposedly in ancient days surveyed the African savanna and suddenly saw some of the grass moving, we are built to suspect that maybe there is a predator crouching and crawling through there to eat us.

And we have a healthy ability to surmise that this isn't just the wind. We can detect that there's something abnormal and we think there's something I can't see but I know it's there and we have a great preservative fight or flight response to things like that. But we have to be careful.

There's a current series of commercials on television that play during football games and since this is football season I have seen these repeatedly talking about superstitions that people have about, you know, if I wear my old socks my team will win or if we pound the table the guy will make the field goal. I don't know how I saw this, I think we were watching America's Funny Videos or something and there was a picture of a woman, this was after the Super Bowl and apparently the Vikings won and the Packers lost or something, but there's a woman, this is just like phone cam footage of a lady, they were coming home after the game and this woman is weeping, weeping, saying you told me to wear my sparkly fingernail polish and the Packers lost. It's your fault for making me wear this sparkly polish.

You told me if I wore this polish they would win. I wore the polish and they lost. The woman is in tears.

She is devastated that she wore the wrong fingernail polish and her team lost. I just give you this as sort of an exaggerated out there flaky edge example, but just remember anytime you see an out there flaky edge example remember we are made out of the same stuff. There is somewhere lurking in us in our DNA this same thing and we have to be careful to not be mystical about our faith.

God is not mysterious and He is not mystical. He is real and He is practical and He has a purpose

and He is working that purpose out and it's not a matter of getting that spooked look in our eyes and lighting candles or playing with strings of beads or well if I just engage in some ritual God will respond. There's some sort of invisible link between what I do and what God does.

There's no mystery to it at all. God tells us exactly what is going on and it is a matter of knowledge. It is a matter of knowing and as we look at our passage this morning we find Paul saying 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 ongoing.

Now does it strike you at all if there truly is free will and we all are self determining and nothing from the outside affects our volition in what way do you pray for someone to do better spiritually if it's all up to them? You can't God smite them, strike them, inspire them, influence them, tip the table so that they will roll in this direction. I mean is it practical to pray for other believers in an area that is determined by their own will? Can you pray for unbelievers? Oh Lord save Uncle Erasmus whoever it may be. Can you pray that? If it's a matter of their will and God is not going to play with that self determination then what's the point of praying? Well we look carefully at the prayers of Paul in particular because we have so many of them recorded and this is one.

He is praying for other believers. What does he say? I do not cease to give thanks for you. I mention you constantly in my prayers.

That's the connotation of the way this is constructed that this is what he prays. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory and this of course strongly ties what he is about to say to what we have just seen and heard in the first 14 verses. Our Lord Jesus Christ how many times has He been mentioned? The glory of God how many times has it been mentioned? So as Paul prays what is his overarching thought in praying for these believers? That Jesus Christ be glorified.

We've got a hymn may Jesus Christ be praised. Paul's intent his overarching purpose what he is thinking of as he prays for these believers isn't oh God give them a Cadillac, oh God take away all their problems, oh God heal their physical illnesses. What is his purpose in the prayer? That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory.

The context of his prayer for other believers is primarily God the Father and God the Son. He is praying in the power of and through the agency of and with the translating ministry of God the Holy Spirit. We know this Paul tells us in another place we don't know how to pray as we ought.

But the Spirit conveys our intents our prayers to God with groanings that cannot be uttered. It's a language we can't learn. It's a divine language and even as our prayers ascend to heaven they are converted and they are enabled and empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

And they are sanctified they are purified. Just as sin cannot abide the presence of God and God cannot abide the presence of sin there is a protective barrier of holy fire and burning ones in

God's throne room. Even our prayers we are a mixture of motives we are impure in our thoughts and even when we try to come before God in our current ongoing salvation project status we are not complete we are not finished we are not ultimately sanctified and even our prayers have to be cleansed and purified and transformed before they come before God.

Which I am grateful for because I do not know how to pray as I ought. I do the best I can with what I know but I'm so grateful that God the Holy Spirit takes my prayer. God the Holy Spirit is like the divine supernatural editor.

A lot of us know something about editing because we do it as a part of our living. I've done it for a long long time. You take verbiage that's not quite right words that haven't been used correctly transcribed words that were misheard misunderstood misconstrued homonyms and things awkward constructions.

My first job in Dallas was taking engineering reports from environmental surveys and people who went in to review asbestos remediation and underground storage tanks that had leaked. These engineers were intensely well informed and knowledgeable about their job but when it came to English they were awful and you can't this guy's trying to write this stuff up saying you know your tanks is leaking type of thing. You can't send that to a client and expect them to accept your bid well if you can't write how can you remediate you know you're going to leave asbestos hanging out of my ceiling or what.

So it is transformed it is made elegant it is made proper it is suited to its purpose by somebody else and that's what God the Holy Spirit does with our prayers. He not only cleans them up but He makes them effective. We do not know how to pray as we ought but He does this.

Well the Apostle Paul here is praying and what is his goal? What is his objective? That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ not just any God He doesn't say the Creator God He doesn't say the God of our fathers it's the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because all of this remember all of those in hymns the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the one who made this possible the one who sent Him so that we could be in Him that God the Father of glory God has many purposes many actions many things that He is engaged in but this particular thought is God's glory His self-revelation His communication of Himself His essence His purposes in the earth. I do not cease to be thankful and to make mention of you it is prayer of thanksgiving and prayer of intercession I would submit that it is best to always precede intercession and request with thanksgiving any good prayer should begin with acknowledgment as Jesus did in the model prayer He gave the disciples our Father hallowed sanctified be your name may your purposes be accomplished on earth as they are in heaven specifically the kingdom in that context.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give to you a spirit characterized by and I am expanding this a little bit to make it clear for us may give you a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Parentheses almost the eyes of your

understanding the eyes of your hearts having been enlightened and this harks back again to what He said in verses 3-14 we understand that we have been given these privileges we have been cleansed we have been illuminated and enlightened so that so that verse 18 you may know. So that you may know the word know here this is not just any old knowledge this is factual knowledge this is information that you will have the information before you.

If you are going to do a thing I was wanting to review I have strung my classical guitar since decades ago I can do classical guitar I know how to tie the knots down on the bridge I know how to string it through the pegs I know how to tighten and stretch the strings I know exactly how to do it I know how to tune it I have done classical strings dozens and dozens and dozens of times. Acoustic guitar strings are steel and some of them are wound and it is a little bit different thing and if you have a nice instrument you want to be sure you know exactly what you are doing do you take all the strings off at once or do you change them one at a time to maintain the tension how do you feed them through the pegs how do you make sure you don't scratch the headstock up there with the loose ends on a cheap guitar it probably doesn't matter you can't really hurt plywood but if you have a nice one you really have to take some care with the strings so this past week I pulled up a video and watched the manufacturer of fine guitars send their best guy on YouTube to say here is how you change your strings here is how we do it I read a guy just weeping because he had bought this hugely expensive guitar and he said the first thing I want to do is put new strings on and he had one of these string winders it is kind of like a battery hand screwdriver well they make these with a little fitting to turn the keys and so he was doing that but his particular guitar had kind of small keys and so the string winder went in and when he turned it on it just went scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch and put a circular scratch on the side of his headstock this beautiful multi thousand dollar people spend as much on their guitars as you would spend on a car especially my cars I could buy a couple of cars for what guys will spend on a guitar well scratch scratch you can't get that out that's not like oh let me get a little old English and that will go away I mean it's you know well you want to know what you're doing well this is information now watching the video and gaining the information about wow the guys at the factory take all six strings off at once I didn't know that on my classical guitar because of the way it's made and the different wood that the top is made of the recommendation is change one string at a time and maintain the tension but on these guitars the guys at the factory the guys that build them take them all off put them all back on and put them all on loose and then tighten them one at a time but no harm no foul don't worry about the tension on the top it can take it so I didn't know that it's information now I've watched it and I've gained this information I think wow I've got some new facts I've got some cautions about what not to do how to how to not booger up the thing as I do it not scratch it and not damage it that's information that's what adenai means in verse 18 that you may know now the knowledge did not restring my guitar did it I've got wonderful information in my head but I haven't done anything with it yet it has not yet become epinosis which is something that works itself out as I put it into practical use but Paul doesn't say I pray that you will yet that you will put it into practical use because you can't pray that that's a decision that you and I make I'm back to my point what can you pray for someone else can you pray that

they are going to practically apply you can't pray that what can you pray I pray that you will get that information I pray that God will play the video for you so that you will have the knowledge you can pray that right because you'll find it out maybe you didn't know have you ever found a really valuable piece of information just sort of backhandedly you're sitting in a waiting room and two people are talking you overhear something you say I did not know that that is so useful I didn't know that you could use a particular kind of sealant on your granite or I didn't know that that this stuff would strip your floor so well or I didn't know that you could substitute this for that and and not have to pay for windshield washer fluid or whatever it might be you just come upon a piece of information that you weren't even looking for and you think wow how handy how practical how cool is that I'm gonna I'm gonna go try that out well this is what that prayer is Paul is saying I pray that this information is going to come to you that you're going to have good teachers that you're going to have these things brought to your attention so that you will have the information to do good things and do them without damaging yourself and others isn't that a neat thing what Paul prays what he's doing here I pray that you will know that you will get the information that will make it possible for you having the information creates potential doesn't it now I can do a really great job I can do this more efficiently I can do it more safely more safely I can do it with greater safety I pray that you may acquire the information that you will have the knowledge you can pray this all day now think about people we're trying to pray for people that are in under stress people that are being challenged people that have got opportunities to exploit how can they bet it's not always problems we tend to focus on problems but what about opportunities somebody's going to school but they're trying to figure out exactly what to study or what classes to take somebody is circulating in social life but who do they spend time with what activities do they choose and not choose you're at work and you've got a variety of different things you can focus on or emphasize which ones should you prioritize we can pray for each other that God will give us the information that illuminates our opportunities and helps us make those decisions we can't pray oh God please help Sam choose the right thing not directly but we can pray that Sam will have the information so that he can make a good choice if he is doing what he's supposed to if he's inclined if he's got humility if he's bringing things before God and asking and seeking and knocking with that information now you've got opportunity now you've got that potential I 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 a spirit a human spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation in the epinosis of him that you will have this kind of human spirit it is characterized by wisdom it is characterized by revelation it's kind of the same thing isn't it your eyes have already been enlightened your heart has already been opened so that you may know and this is sort of a restatement if you have a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation so that you have wisdom and revelation that's what he's saying the summary of the prayer is up above I pray that your spirit will have these things and now he's elaborating what does it mean to have a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation this is what it means if I say I pray that you will have a reliable car so that you can reliably travel to and from school or to and from work to and from the grocery store when I say I pray that you'll have a reliable car well that's implied it's not just wow

I've got a reliable car in the driveway what's the point of having a car so that you can do these things what is the point of having a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation is it enough just to sit there and say wow wow no so that this is the kind of knowledge this is what the wisdom is so that you may know what is first of all the hope of his calling well if there was ever an abstract theological phrase that's it everybody take a little space in your notes here and just briefly write out what is the hope of his calling to do that you need to define hope you need to define calling calling in the context of hope hope in the context of calling what is the hope of his calling well calling his calling to salvation his calling as a church age believer what is its hope well my expectation I know it's expectation I'm going to be raised from the dead I'm going to be raised from the dead I know from looking at this chapter it's got to do with reflecting his glory you know church without spot and blemish right what is the hope of his calling thankfully the apostle Paul has given us some great illumination in this regard and we had a clue remember up in the previous couple of verses here verse 12 especially in him I'll start in 11 in him we've obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will we've been pre-purposed right that would certainly have something to do with our hope and our calling the purpose that God has so that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory and we get this the hope of his calling in some way it's safe to say you know we are supposed to glorify him reflect his glory but remember that we who first trusted we who were first to hope was the word pro alizzo the first to hope turn to keep your place here but turn to Romans chapter 8 verse 23 Romans 8 I alluded to this section of Romans earlier we know in verse 22 the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now when a woman is in birth pangs what's going on here in terms of expectation we call pregnancy that knowing oh she's expecting expecting what expecting a baby she's expecting there's a book a very helpful practical book called what to expect when you're expecting it takes you through the whole process and you know here's how you're going to feel here's what you can do and here's what you can't get past and you know breathe breathe you know that kind of thing the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now it's expecting something it's waiting in hope of something not only that but we also who have the first fruits of the spirit we who have the first fruits of the spirit we who are the first to hope we who are the pro-alpizzoing ones right it's the same idea we who have the first fruits of the spirit even we ourselves groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for the adoption the redemption of our body for we were saved in this hope aha now I can complete my paragraph now I can answer the question what is the hope of my calling it is the expectation just like the creation has the expectation I have the expectation we ourselves groan within ourselves we are in the birth pang portion we are in that process that is necessary for our new birth to have its completion and its fulfillment we ourselves groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for the adoption the redemption of our body most women wait for the natural birth but we have a kind of birth pang wouldn't it be something if you know nine months you go into the maternity ward and you're groan groan groan and then you know suddenly they wheel in a baby from China they wheel in a baby from

Afghanistan or from Borneo or some far off place you say wait a minute wait a minute I thought I was you know husband and I would kind of thought it would be you know ours it is yours but it's an adopted baby you're adopting groaning in ourselves eagerly waiting for the birth no waiting for the adoption and it's a it's a curious thing that that normally the woman is in birth pangs waiting for the natural birth here we the ones to be born are in birth pangs waiting for our adoption so it's a I think I think the Apostle Paul has sort of a half smile on his face as he's saying this because it's a it's an analogy it's not the same we're not naturally born we are adopted as sons in this age as church age believers so we who have the first fruits of the spirit the the the evidence of good things to come this is the woman whose whose girth enlarges over the course of the months and begins to have all of those signs that a baby is coming we have these pangs these labors groaning within ourselves waiting for the adoption the redemption of our body we were saved in this hope but hope that is seen is not hope why does one still hope for what he sees but if we hope for what we do not see we eagerly wait for it with perseverance Paul says I pray for you constantly that you will come to know that you will have the information that you will have a grasp of the reality of the hope of your calling that you will understand what this really entails this is that microscopic unicellular life form being promoted into the world of sentient humanity this is God taking us such a worm as I the hymn says and elevating us adopting us promoting us into the realms of his glory to be a functional part of his glory the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of glory give us a grasp an understanding of what that hope really means it's not an abstract it's the most amazing thing our salvation achieved by the work of Christ on the cross is stunning in its magnitude it's stunning what God is able to do in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and that's his glory it's not just a bright light it is an achievement of purpose unlike anything that has ever come to the ear of man that God could do this that God is doing this and that we are going to be elevated promoted our bodies are going to be redeemed they're going to be purchased out of the pond water drop and entered into the realms of God's glory up above the angels in the heavenlies with Christ it's incomprehensible we just cannot grasp it but Paul says I pray that God will give you a sense of it that you'll have that information that you will come to know the hope of his calling just how big it is if we had the tiniest grasp of the corner of the hymn of the hope of his calling we would be so dedicated we would be so committed we would be so faithful we would be so purposeful in our moment by moment day by day living if we could just begin to realize what is at stake and the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary if we could keep just a sense of that there's nothing that would motivate us more and Paul says that's my prayer for you that that will come into your consciousness that's the first of three things that he prays the first of three things that he prays that we will come to know we're going to pause here and take our break when we come back we'll look at the other two.