

God imparts to human hearts (2/13/22)

Sermon Description: We often misread our bibles. When we see someone act, we often think I must do that. So, this week, that would mean, “Paul prays so I should probably pray.” That’s NOT good news (especially if we promise to pray more and then don’t). A better reading is to see Paul’s praying as a reminder that Jesus is praying, and working, and imparting to human hearts revelation, hope, and power. That’s good news!

Main Passage: Ephesians 1:15-23

Title: **God imparts to human hearts**

Topics: God> Attributes of> God as Mediator

Tags: prayer, revelation, hope, power, remembrance, forsaken, compassion

Questions to consider:

- When seeing a person acting in the bible, do you tend to relate that action to something you should do or something that Jesus is doing on your behalf?
- Has the hope to which we’ve been called caused your perspective to change regarding your life? Or relationships? Or Covid? Or loss?
- If it’s true that God imparts to human hearts, what are you in need of?

Week #5

Merry Christmas!! (Just kidding...kind of)

O Little Town of Bethlehem

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv’n!
**So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav’n.**
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

Introduction:

Ephesians 1:15–23

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may

be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Last week: Eph 1. If it's all we had, we'd have SO MUCH about who God is and his work in the world.

This week we jump into a new passage.

Before going too far, let's consider how to misread this passage.

You heard me correctly. Let's first consider how we, even as Christians, often misread the bible. It is tempting when we see an action—in this case, prayer—and assume the main point is that we should pray more or more consistently or with greater passion.

As has been stated previously, Jesus is the star. So in the actions of other biblical figures, we should not first think that this is something we must do. Instead, we need to consider how that biblical character or that action compares (or contrasts depending on the situation) with the actions of Jesus. In this case, how is it that Paul's praying showcases Jesus? In this particular case, let's consider the specific phrase Paul uses of "remembering you in my prayers."

The theme of remembrance in the bible is significant. If we first consider remembrance from the human perspective, Scripture makes clear that we are forgetful people. No book of the bible does this message come through more clearly than the book of Judges.

In summary: **Judges 3:7** ⁷The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; **they forgot the Lord their God** and served the Baals and the Asherahs.

Now, contrast this with remembrance from God's vantage point. **Deuteronomy 31:6** ⁶Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." This to say, he will always remember. He will never forget. He will never forsake.

Yet, as humans, we struggle to believe this. So, consider this quote about the word forsake/abandon.

"In the Bible the word *forsake* and its synonym *abandon* were used in two ways: in one meaning, *forsake* was a verb that meant to forget or discontinue performing a specific action; in the other

meaning, *forsake* conveyed the abandonment of individuals who had no one else to care for their distresses.”

Ryken, Leland, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, Colin Duriez, Douglas Penney, and Daniel G. Reid. In *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

So, is this passage really about how great we are at remembering? I don't think so. The example of Paul in this letter, in this one moment, reminds us that at EVERY moment Jesus remembers. Jesus keeps performing the action, the intercession, the remembering. He will not forsake us. He will not abandon us. He will not leave us to be cared for by another because this world is incapable. This is GOOD NEWS!

In the remainder of the passage there are 3 ways by which Paul prays for the Lord to work in the lives of the Ephesians believers and, by extension, God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.

#1 - God imparts to human hearts revelation

Ephesians 1:17

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

This is in contrast how people often try to approach God. Consider this:

1 Corinthians 1:19–21

¹⁹For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” ²⁰Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

God makes clear that it's about revelation, not education, a relationship, not scholarship. God's salvation is disclosed to us, we don't discover it.

#2 - God imparts to human hearts hope

Ephesians 1:18

¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

There is a glorious inheritance which awaits believers. Paul knows this has the potential to bring incredible hope to the Ephesian believers. How so? Its reality should alter our perspective. The

fact that our future is so secure should adjust our understanding of the present. Consider these two passages:

Hebrews 12:2

²For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Philippians 4:11–12

¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

How can Jesus possibly consider the cross joy? Is it because he takes joy in pain, amidst suffering? NO! It's because of what the cross will achieve—salvation!

How can Paul possibly say he's content when facing all of life's circumstances? The word for content can be translated as full. So it's as though he's saying he can have fullness amidst life's emptiness. What!??

Perspective. Hope of a glorious inheritance. It alters how we view this world. Paul (and more importantly Jesus) wants us to know this hope.

#3 - God imparts to human hearts power

Ephesians 1:18-23

¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe. ¹⁹That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Unsurprisingly, Paul returns to gushing about God's greatness. In this case, God's power is in view. Three different descriptions of God's power are used.

1. The power displayed in the resurrection
2. The power displayed in the ascension
3. And the power displayed by all things being placed under the feet of Jesus.

Why is this shared? It's important for us to have a clearer understanding of the power which is available to us in Christ. This power is set to work chiefly for our welfare in the battle against sin internally.

Ephesians 3:16–17

¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit **in your inner being**, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

It doesn't mean that sin is only internal. Rather it is the principal location for God's power to be exerted in the life of a believer. And the power as described above is available in our struggles, temptations, and challenges.

Friends, this is far from a passage that calls you to "do more, pray more." It is the good news of the gospel for us. That when Paul prays, it reminds us that Jesus prays on our account. When Paul intercedes for the Ephesian believers, Jesus intercedes for all believers. And in these actions, it is relationship not scholarship, it's revelation not education. God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. So, receive them.

Questions for reflection:

- When seeing a person acting in the bible, do you tend to relate that action to something you should do or something that Jesus is doing on your behalf?
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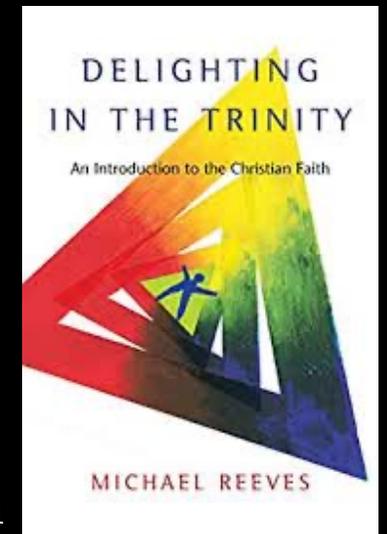
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Ephesians

Eph. 1

“Christianity is not primarily about lifestyle change; it is about knowing God. To know and grow to enjoy him is what we are saved for...

Michael Reeves - Delighting in the Trinity:
An Introduction to the Christian Faith



Ephesians 1:15–23

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How to misread this passage

Ephesians 1:15–16

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Who is doing the remembering?

Ephesians 1:15–16

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The theme of remembrance

Judges 3:7

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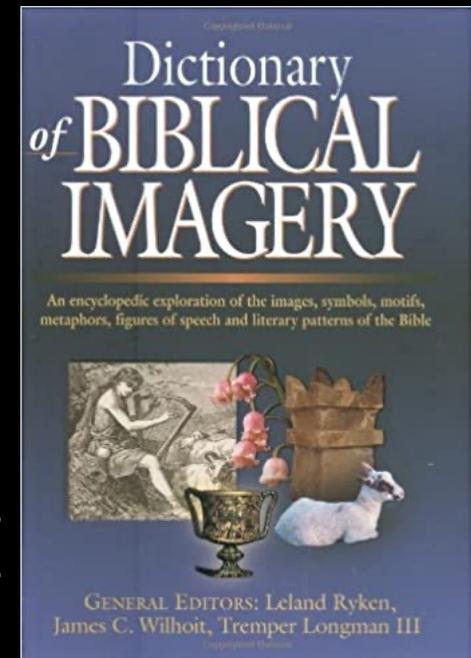
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Ryken, Leland, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, Colin Duriez, Douglas Penney, and Daniel G. Reid. In *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.



The good news that Jesus remembers us

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IKKYK

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#1 - God imparts to human hearts revelation

Isaiah 55:6-9

⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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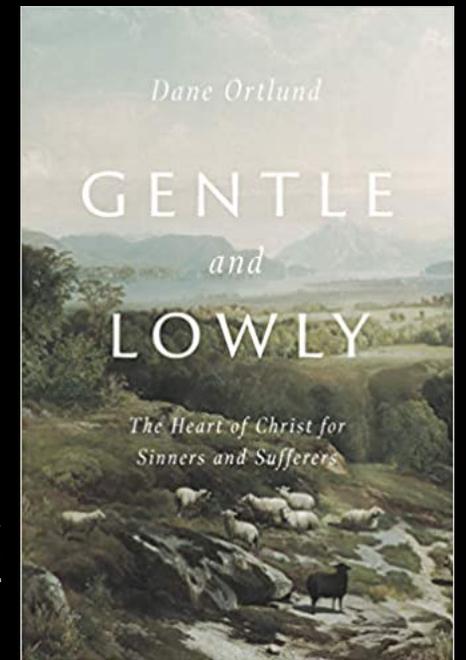
Isaiah 55:6-9

⁶“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

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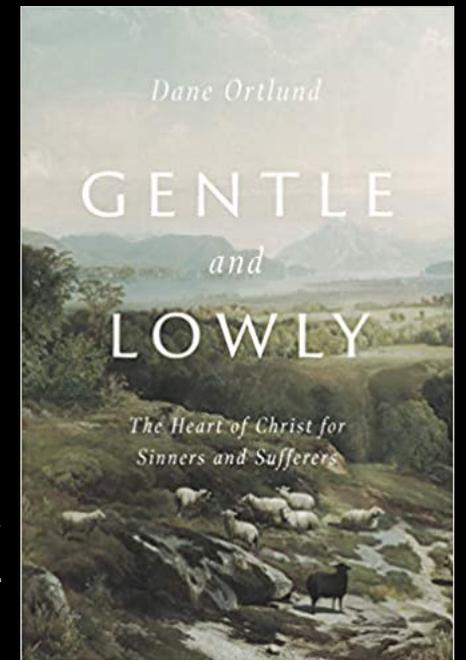
We tend to project our natural expectations about who God is onto him...The natural flow of the human heart is toward reciprocity, tit-for-tat payback, equanimity, balancing of the scales...We are left with an impoverished view of how he feels about his people.

Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*, 155-162



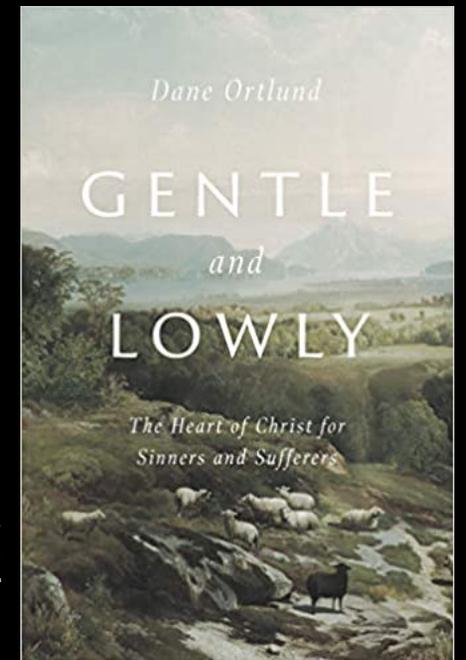
[In context, this passage] is a statement not of the surprise of God's mysterious providence but of the surprise of God's compassionate heart...The parallelism of Hebrew poetry gives us another way of saying that God will exercise compassion toward us: "He will abundantly pardon" (v.7).

Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*, 155-162



This is profound consolation for us as we find ourselves time and again wandering away from the Father, looking for soul calm anywhere but in his embrace. Returning to God in fresh contrition, however ashamed and disgusted with ourselves, he will not tepidly pardon. He will abundantly pardon. He does not merely accept us. He sweeps us up in his arms again.

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Photo credit:
Wendy Maybury

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#3 - God imparts to human hearts power

**“WE CAME HERE
— TO BE —
ELITE!”**



SKI-U-MAH

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What are you in need of?

God imparts to human hearts

The theme of remembrance

