

Introduction

- Queen Victoria was longest reigning British monarch
 - once, late in her reign, she was worshipping at Crathie Kirk. For some reason the minister hadn't been expecting her majesty there, and was over-awed by the experience!
 - in his eagerness his prayer including the following phrases:
 - "as she grows to be an old woman may she be made to be a new man"
 - and "that in all righteous causes she may go forth before her people like a he goat on the mountains"
- Wonderful pieces of religious gobbley-de-gook!
 - (not recorded whether her majesty was amused!!)

Nonsense!

- Danger of Ephesians 1 is that it is so dense, so full of spiritual riches, that we end up dismissing it as religious gobbley-de-gook:
 - incomprehensible, and therefore of no value

Thelma Howard

- Thelma Howard worked as maid for Lilian and Walt Disney
 - at Christmas, birthdays, etc, Walt Disney would call her in and give her a little stock in his company
 - it seems she didn't really comprehend the value of what she was being given - whether it was because it was stocks and shares and she didn't realise it translated into actual wealth, or what, we don't know
 - but when she died, in poverty, she had a net worth of £6 million!
- Our danger with a passage such as Ephesians 1 is that we end up in the same position as Thelma Howard:
 - rich, but ignorant of that reality!
 - we let words like election, salvation, redemption flow over us - never grapple and engage and revel in and appreciate and understand the reality of which they speak, and leave it to others to get the benefit!
- If we do this, we condemn ourselves to spiritual destitution and poverty:
 - truly rich, but living on scraps!
- And so Paul is praying for the Ephesians (and for us) for spiritual discernment, so that 3 things happen:

1. Thanksgiving (v.15,16)

- Paul prays for our spiritual discernment so that we never stop giving thanks
- Word association: **church!**
 - sharpen that: **Fintry church at 11am or 6pm**
 - **hold that thought!!**
- Paul here is reflecting on a congregation - and as he does do he falls into both praise and prayer - he can't help it!
 - he sees what **God** is doing behind the scenes - vs.3-14, the blessings we looked at last week - that God has been at work!
 - and as he **sees** that he **gives thanks** - God is at work!
- Paul **looks** round at the congregation and **sees** all that God has done:
 - election, adoption, a family, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, sealing them...
 - he'd do the same here tonight!
- If you'd known Walt Disney's maid was sitting on £6 million, you'd have gone to her and told her!
 - that's what Paul is doing here - he's looking around, giving thanks, because he can't get over the stunning reality of God's generosity
 - and he doesn't stop - as we won't stop giving thanks, never missing the opportunity to do so, as we drink in the riches of all that God has done for us

- Thanksgiving is hard to teach - cf small child!
 - in Romans 1 Paul there admonishes the Romans for their lack of thanksgiving - it was a critical mark of spiritual blindness
 - *can we say v.15 ourselves?*
- There are two marks there of authentic Christian faith:
 - (i) faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - (ii) love for his saints
 - can't have on without the other - our love for Christ is measured or tested by our love for his people
- When we stop giving thanks, we'll forget the giver, and we'll forget the gift, and then we'll forget those who have not yet received the gift!
 - as though it is unimportant that they die in their sins!
- *Have we internalised those truths from last week so much that we overflow now with thanksgiving?*

2. Prayer (v.17,18)

- Paul prays for our spiritual discernment so that we would know that we are sitting on a spiritual goldmine!
- Ephesians faced persecution, and would have faced all the same financial and personal pressures we do
 - but notice what Paul doesn't pray for! - **security, safety, success, health...**
 - Paul prays for eyes open to the wonder of spiritual blessings already given in Christ
 - a deeply rebuking passage! And incredibly hard to shake off the habits of praying for the wrong things!
- How often do we pray like this?
- *Lord, you know that John is really struggling with his illness and you know how worried I am about the pressures of Claire's job, and how stressed Paul and Fiona are about selling their house, but thank you that they are Christian believers and that you've blessed them in Christ with every spiritual blessing. Please open their eyes to grasp what you have done for them"*
 - that is Paul's prayer - at one level seems tame!!
 - to pray for the grasping of invisible truths, and change in inward character...
 - doesn't appear to grapple with the actual issues they are facing...
- **But**
 - if people know God, then whatever issues are raised stay in perspective
 - *this is the rock - that we would know God*
 - and there is a depth here - **v.18** "eyes of heart" is an evocative phrase, signifying a desire that we would see clearly at the centre of our beings
 - that deep down in our hearts we would know the hope, the inheritance that is ours
- These are future words:
 - Paul is praying for these young Christians that their tremendous future would be something they see
- Are we thinking about heaven?
 - or are we afraid of being "**so heavenly minded we are no earthly use**"?
 - but Paul says its the other way round - **unless we are heavenly minded we will be no earthly use!**

Building heaven here

- The danger is that if we are not heavenly minded, we will seek to build heaven here
 - in jobs, in relationships, in happiness, in satisfaction...
 - we have eternity sized desires for, eg happiness, love, beauty, given to us by God
 - but unless we allow those desires wait to be satisfied with God in heaven, we will never find ultimate peace here

- Paul's prayer is that we'd know we are sitting on a spiritual goldmine:
 - and knowing that, we'd live in grateful service, properly delaying our gratification until the one place where true satisfaction will be found!

3. Power (v.19ff)

- Paul prays for our spiritual discernment so that we would have the power to engage with this reality
- The question Paul finally grapples with is the **HOW** question
 - where does the power come to enable us to look at such things in this way, and to live in light of that reality?
 - and Paul's answer is that **not only do we have this fantastic inheritance, we also have Christ's power**
- Or, putting it another way, Paul says: **"Don't look inside for power"**
 - for if we look inside, its often very depressing
 - our inability to change habits, to change attitudes, to cope with things...
- Paul says, simply, we don't look to ourselves for this power, nor to other humans:
 - we look to God
- **He has already been at work in us**
 - it is his power that has already accomplished the fantastic work of vs.3-14, the blessings of adoption and forgiveness, of sealing by the Holy Spirit...
 - and its the same power that raised Christ from death, defeating once and for all Satan's power...
- **Paul says, in effect, "Look, when you feel wobbly, weak insecure, look up to what God has done in Christ... look at his body, the church, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way - and be encouraged therefore to live for Christ."**
- So, what is your point of weakness?
 - the place you can't control?
 - it's a cause of guilt and shame to you...
 - tongue, temper, lust, greed, malice, jealousy, unrelenting selfishness... **these and many others!**
- **Now, do you think it is beyond the power of God, who raised Christ from death, to control that?**
 - certainly beyond our power - but that's not the question!!
 - **is it beyond Christ's power?**
- So I'm battling these things - what do I do?
 - look to Christ, I ask for his help: **"Lord Jesus, help me now to live your way"**

Conclusion

- **We are spiritual millionaires** - will we pore over the likes of Ephesians 1, and pray these into our heart?
- **Prioritise prayer for spiritual discernment**, open eyes to see clearly what God has done - so that we will not foolishly give our resources to building heaven here
- **Power - will we go to him?**