

Ephesians 1:15-23

“Intimacy With God Yields Insight From God”

We’ve finally finished the single longest sentence in the entire bible☺. Paul was so pumped to share w/us the unified work of the Triune God in every detail that makes for our salvation, our sanctification & our eternal destination that he couldn’t even finish his sentence. He just kept going & going & going, informing us that God has blessed us w/every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

He spoke of the selection of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son, the seal of the Holy Spirit... How we’ve been chosen, adopted, favored, forgiven & redeemed. How that God has revealed His will *to us* & has given us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee of the inheritance that *awaits us* & he speaks of all of this in just 12 short Vs of the very 1st Ch...

But now he pauses to pray. He wants us them move beyond an *awareness* of these things into an *understanding* of these things that they might *appropriate* these things. So He progresses from *proclaiming* & revealing God’s *plan to* them, to *praying for* them.

Because in order to understand & appropriate the spiritual blessings that have been given to us in Christ we need what the bible refers to as “wisdom & knowledge”, yes? & **What we’re going to discover as we make our way through these Vs is the fact that the wisdom & knowledge that comes *from* God overflows out of intimate time spent *with* God. It’s intimacy w/God (time spent talking *to* & learning *of* God) that will yield insight *from* God. & If we’re to appropriate the spiritual resources God has availed to us in Christ, we need to spend that time w/Him that we might glean insight (wisdom/knowledge) *from* Him.**

Ok, I’ve told you before that Paul the apostle was the king of run on sentences. Vs 3-14 are one sentence in the Greek. He finally took a breath, but now he starts right back in & gives us Vs 15-23 in one sentence as well. ☺ Notice.

Vs 15-16

Let’s not forget that we left off last time being reminded of the fact that these to whom Paul is writing had *heard* the word of truth (Vs 13), the gospel of our salvation & they had come to believe in J.C. & the atoning work of His substitutionary, sacrificial death upon the cross on our behalf. The wages of sin is death, & Jesus poured out His life for us. He died for us paying the purchase price of our redemption through His shed blood.

But it’s been awhile since Paul’s seen them, he’s penning this letter from prison. & It’s just a sad fact of life that not every who begins this race will finish it. Some will respond to the gospel initially, but they fade away eventually...

(Jesus talked about that in the parable of the sower, Matt 13, Mark 4). But when Paul receives the report that the Ephesian believers are abiding in Christ, they're holding fast to the faith (faith in the Lord J.C.) & he hears of their love for all the saints, he says, "Man, all I could do was thank God..."

Few things I want to draw to your attention here. #1 It's so important that we have a *thankful* heart before God. Paul says here, "I thank God for you!" Too many times I believe our prayer lives are like a grocery list of "to do's" for God. "God I want you to do this, or take care of that, & if you could help me here, or solve my problem there..." & It's not that it's bad to let our requests be made known to God, the bible exhorts us to do so. However we're also exhorted to give thanks... To the Philippians Paul said, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*"¹ Let's not forget to add the element of thanksgiving in our prayers. We're approaching "Thanksgiving Day", I'm just gonna tell ya that that should be *everyday* in the life of the believer! To the Colossians he said this, "*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*"²

I want you to be a people of prayer, of intercession, placing the needs of yourself & others before the Lord. But take the time to be thankful, thank God that He loves you, He's caused His grace to abound toward you, He's given new life to you, He provides for you... & Here's one, thank Him for His grace toward *others!* That's what Paul is doing...

Too often what moves us to prayer for others is hearing of some need they have, they're sick, they've stumbled spiritually, they're struggling in some manner personally... Check it out, it could be that if we prayed for them while they were doing *well*... That they wouldn't fall into that state of struggle! Let's not wait for trouble, sickness, distress or crisis to move us to pray for people... *When you find out someone is excelling spiritually, pray for them, support them in prayer. If you're in a good bible teaching church, thank God for it! Pray for that man who's feeding you God's word... For the leadership of that church... Give God thanks (That's #1). #2 I already went over, don't be moved to pray for people only by their hardship or affliction, pray for those who are doing well, that God might strengthen them, hedge them & use them all the more...*

The 3rd thing we want to see here is how these 2 things work together; *faith* in the Lord J.C. & *love* for all the saints.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Php 4:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Col 4:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If our vertical relationship is as it should be, then the horizontal will be in the balance as well. Or another way to understand that, a right relationship w/God, will evidence itself in a right relationship w/other believers.

& It's *significant* that Paul gave thanks *not* for their love for God, but their love for all the saints. How so? Because the real evidence of God's work in us isn't the love that we claim to have for Him, but our love His people that's on display in our lives. In other words, it's our love for God's *people* that testifies of our love for *God*. Does that make sense? Jesus said that like this, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you (fight, gossip, accuse & have ought w/one another, is that what He said!? NO!) have love for one another."³ So, faith will make you a Christian, but it's the love of God for the people of God that *validates* you as a Christian.

& Let's remember that love isn't primarily an emotion, it's an attitude of selfless sacrifice resulting in acts of kindness & generosity toward others placing them ahead ourselves. (For a little closer look at what the Love of God is & how it manifests itself in our lives you might write down & read later 1 Cor 13).

But Paul says that hearing of these attributes in their lives, it provoked him to pray for them. & The words he uses indicates that he was praying regularly, (he says, I do not cease) giving thanks, making mention, Paul was persistent in his prayers for others...

Family, it's a real key to fruitful prayer; persistence. You can write it down & look it up later, Luke 11:5-10. There you'll find Jesus teaching on the value of being persistent in your prayers... & When you read that parable don't get confused, the sleeping guy was a "Friend". It's not about if God likes you, or is bothered by you (He does & He's not ☺). The issue is will you/I be faithful to pray persistently, to ask continually, is it important to me?

So Paul was praying, what was his petition? He had a few... notice 1st.

Vs 17

BTW, real quick here I want you to see that the Father is called, "The God of our Lord J.C.". Does that mean then that Jesus isn't God? Not at all. The Father refers to the Son as God as well. In the book of Heb Ch 1 the author is pointing out the exalted position that J.C. has attained. He speaks of how God has said of His angels that they are servants. Then he says, But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.'⁴ There's no conflict, the scriptures are clear.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 13:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 1:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1 God, 3 Persons, The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

But his request on their behalf is that the God of all glory, may give to you “the spirit of wisdom & revelation” notice “in the knowledge of Him.” That the Holy Spirit might “inject” or “infuse” into their spirit the dynamic of wisdom & revelation.

What is “wisdom”? We’re talking about having the knowledge that spills out into the practice of the things necessary to lead godly, upright lives. It goes beyond simply knowing the right thing, it’s *doing* the right thing. & When he speaks of “revelation” he’s speaking of insight/understanding into the things of God.

He’s not praying that we’d receive some “new truth” (there’s nothing new under the sun). Peter has said, “*...His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*”⁵ So the idea here isn’t that we’d receive some new revelation becoming “apostles” as it were ourselves. But that God might gift us to understand or gain insight into that which He’s given to us in His word. (He amplifies that a bit in Vs 18 when he says, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”).

So, he’s praying for Divine insight, wisdom/revelation. How do we apprehend it? “In the knowledge of Him.” This word “knowledge” here speaking of coming to know someone thoroughly/precisely/accurately/distinctly through time spent w/them personally. The idea is one of intimacy. To *know* Him. How many false concepts & misrepresentations of God are out there? Paul’s prayer is that we might know Him accurately, personally, intimately... The net effect of time spent *with* God, is growing in the wisdom & revelation (understanding) that comes *from* God...

Let me ask you a question. Do you need wisdom & revelation? Direction & answers in your life, for your life? Then spend time *with* God, talking *to* Him (prayer), learning *of* Him in His word & He will guide your life. Jer 33:3, “*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*”⁶ We need to keep growing in our relationship w/Him, our pursuit *of* Him.

Vs 18

The bottom line here is that the inability to see & understand spiritual things isn’t the fault of the mind/intelligence, the issue is in the *heart*. When Paul says, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” more literally he’s saying, “the eyes of your heart.”

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Pe 1:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 33:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration & growth in sanctification isn't in giving new knowledge to our brain, but in changing the disposition of our heart. One might be brilliant intellectually, but that's zero guarantee of understanding spiritual truth to *any* degree. Remember Romans 10? It's not w/the mind one believes unto righteousness, it's w/the heart. Yes, truth comes 1st to our mind, but if it's to take hold of us & change us it has to penetrate to & through the heart.

What's the request here? That the eyes of our heart might be opened (enlightened), "that you may know what is the hope of His calling". This word "know" is a different word than the word used in Vs 17. This word speaks of "factual knowledge", a soldier needs to understand the facts of his equipment before he goes into battle.

Paul wants you to know, to realize the *hope* of His calling... I point it out from time to time but it's important to understand. A biblical "hope" isn't an optimistic outlook w/a chance for failure. Like you "hope" you get a certain something for Christmas, you're optimistic but there's a chance it might not happen. That's not hope in the biblical understanding of the word. The word "hope" in your bible speaks of a concrete reality, a guaranteed certainty, an assured expectation... In Ch 2 we'll see that those who are w/out God are w/out hope in the world. But in Christ you have a "living hope."

& Your hope reaches into the future, but it's anchored in the past (you were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world). As sure as the Father's selection of you, the Son's sacrifice for you & the Spirit's sealing of you is this hope *in* you. It's the guaranteed certainty of your calling, your salvation. Your eternal future rests not in your goodness, but in His grace... *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*⁷ Eternal perspective family; it's such a key.

Now... last week we spoke of our inheritance in Christ. This week we learn that God has an inheritance...in *us*! It blows us away, we don't get it. God certainly seems to get the short end of the stick on this one but somehow & for some reason (in Christ) we are His treasure! Let that soak in, that's how much God *loves* you. Remember what Jesus said? He said, *"...the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."*⁸

Listen, the field is the world, the man is the Lord who gave all that He had... why?

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 29:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 13:44). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Did He want the planet? It wasn't the planet He was interested in, it was the people on it. He gave all that He had that He might purchase the world to extract *you*, the treasure, out of it... You are His treasure, of infinite value to Him, His inheritance... Finally, Paul makes one final petition. That you might know...

Vs 19-21

Paul isn't praying that *we would be given* power over sin, he wants you to see/realize the power you've *already been given*. The power of God that raised J.C. from the dead is the same power that lives in you who believe. Paul's prayer is that the resurrection power of Christ would be real *to you & in you*.

If the power of God is great enough to raise Jesus from the dead, renewing/transforming His body, causing Him to ascend to the right hand of the throne of God far above all principality, power, might & dominion... & every name that is named (not only in this age but also in that which is to come). *I'm pretty sure that it's strong enough to help you quit smoking, or drinking ☺. I'm fairly positive it can pull you up from the pit of pornography... Family, we don't need more power. We need to realize & utilize that power that already abides in us.*

Paul uses a # of words to try & bring illumination/clarification to our understanding regarding the power of God. He speaks of the "exceeding greatness", the Greek words are like, "hyperbolic megaton", the "surpassing magnitude". In other words there *are no words* that can accurately define God's power, it exceeds the limit of every word. *His "limitless infinite power" (dynamic living force) that works toward (on behalf of) us who believe "according to" the working of His might power, (or strength, controlling power, power that overcomes resistance, think of the miraculous power of Christ) that He worked (from which we get our word energy/activity) in Christ when He raised Him from the dead & seated Him on high exalting Him as the undisputed ruler over all creation.*

God's excessively immeasurable dynamic strength is available & active "toward us who believe." But that doesn't mean we walk around like super-humans, His strength finds it's perfection in our weakness (look it up later 2 Cor 12:7-10).

But folks, this insight is the difference between victory & defeat in our walk w/God. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you... spend time w/Him, learn of Him, walk in the power that abides in Him (& in you through Him).

That's what Paul is pointing to as Ch 1 comes to a close... Look at Vs 22 (& 23)

Family; *all things* are under His feet. Dominions, powers, addictions, problems, pornography, profanity, gossip, depression, laziness, meanness, ugly tempers... financial issues, relational issues, vocational hardships. Whatever we can't get *over* has already been placed *under* Him...

Who is our head. You are the body of Christ (the church), He is the head. That means that there is a living connection between you & Christ. & Even as your head controls your body physically, through the Holy Spirit Christ rules in you (literally).

The power that worked in Him, works in you. The greatest power shortage today isn't electrical or some fossil fuel, is the realization & appropriation of the power of the Spirit of God in the lives of believers. Will Paul's prayer be answered in your life?

Spend intimate/alone time *with* God, that you might receive the insight that comes *from* God & walk in the resurrection power *of* God in your life. It will edify you, & glorify Him. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. For the goodness of Your grace & the riches of Your love. May Your love penetrate our hearts & show itself in our lives. Help us God to pray more consistently for one another. To be a people of thanksgiving. & May we spend that time w/You, growing in the knowledge of You.. & I pray for each person here today that you might give to them the spirit of wisdom & revelation, open the eyes of each heart that we might know the hope of our calling & the reality of Your resurrection power at work in our lives.

God loves you, Jesus died *for* you & it's His heart's desire to save you. To spare you the penalty of your sin, forgiveness is there for you in the Person of J.C. Believe on Him (from the heart) & you'll be saved. It's really that simple.