

“The Eyes of Your Hearts”

Ephesians 1:15-23

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(Lord’s Day Service, Sunday, September 30, 2018)

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¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Introduction

The testimony of Paul, the author of Ephesians, is written in the books of Acts. Acts 9 tells of how Paul, a murderer of Christians, turns into a martyr for Christ. Acts 9:8 says:

“Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.”

Saul was Paul’s name before he became a Christian. Here in this verse, Paul becomes blind. To regain his sight, God instructs a disciple named Ananias to go to Paul to pray for him. Acts 9:17-18 says:

“¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;”

Paul, as soon as he becomes a Christian, becomes blind so that he can see. When he starts to see, he does not just see physically, but he also starts to see spiritually. As a Pharisee, Paul was an expert of the Old Testament. However, he only had shallow, informational knowledge of God, and did not know that the Old Testament was pointing to Jesus. Now, Paul starts to see because the eyes of his heart were opened. Ephesians 1:18 says:

*“having **the eyes of your hearts** enlightened”.*

This is what Paul prays for the Ephesian believers and the surrounding churches to experience. Paul is not praying for circumstances. Paul is praying for the knowledge of God, so others can gain the strength to go through these circumstances. We need to pray more for strength to go through difficult circumstances as we have a greater knowledge of God.

I. Pray with knowledge [15-16]

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

A. What Paul knew about God [3-14]

Paul also talks about the incredible inheritance that we receive through our adoption as children of God, as we participate in His Kingdom work. When you become a Christian, you receive an enormous trust fund. Paul wants us to figure out what's inside this trust fund, so that we can draw from it.

The greater the God that you see, the greater your prayers will be. Paul knew God as an enormous, amazing, and awesome God. As a result, he cannot help but pray for others that they may also see this kind of God – a God that they can draw strength from. How much of God do you really see?

B. What Paul heard about people [15]

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

The two main ideas in verse 15 are *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *love* towards all the saints:

Faith is the vertical relationship between the people and God. Through faith, we can believe in Jesus Christ and be spiritually resurrected. As a result, we can vertically receive grace, mercy, strength, and faith from God. Therefore, we are led to love other people with the power and love that God gives us.

When it says, “*your love towards all the saints*”, Paul is talking about the believers. We are called to love believers and unbelievers differently. However, the love that we have for believers and unbelievers should be the same nature of love - God's love in our hearts. True love of others will lead to prayer for others.

What Paul prays to God on their behalf [16]

¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

A key word to this prayer is “hope.” How do we pray for those who are doing well spiritually? We pray that they may continue to have true hunger and love for God in the future. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says:

“¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

This verse talks about the motive of our hearts- faith, hope, and love. As spiritual beings, we need to constantly have faith and hope so that we may have the strength to draw from Christ to become loving like Him.

Faith, hope, and love come up again in Ephesians 1:15:

*“For this reason, because I have heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus and your **love** toward all the saints”*

And in Ephesians 1:18:

*“having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you”*

When Paul uses the word “hope”, think about these three things: growth in us, glory in us, and glory through us. Our hope is that as we *grow* because of Christ’s glory *in* us, He will further be glorified *through* us.

II. Pray for the Knowledge of God [17]

¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him

Though Paul’s letter is addressed to the Ephesian church, it was not written just for them, but to all the believers in the surrounding areas. The churches have many issues; however, Paul does not address those things. Instead, he prays that they would have the knowledge of God because that ultimately becomes the solution for all their problems.

The more we know God, the more the problems in our lives will dissolve. The shadow of our problems will disappear when the light of the knowledge of God comes into our lives. Knowledge itself does not guarantee growth, but it is an indispensable part of growth.

A. God

As Paul prays for the knowledge of God, he talks about the three persons of God. The first is God the Father. Verse 17 says, *“God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father... in the knowledge of him”*. What is this knowledge?

The Greek word for personal knowing is *gnosis*. But Paul is using the word *epignosis*, which means deep, thorough, experiential knowledge. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for the Greek word *epignosis* is *yada*. It’s used in Genesis 4:1:

*“Now Adam **knew** his wife”*

Yada is used to describe a deep, experiential, intimate knowledge of someone – a knowing so deep that it can even bear children. This same concept is used in 1 Corinthians 13 when it talks about love:

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

The word “know” first used in verse 12 is *gnosis*, and “fully known” is *epignosis*. Here, Paul is talking about the knowledge of heaven - knowledge without sin nature, just loving others. As we grow more in our spiritual nature, we can have this kind of eternal knowledge of God.

B. Spirit

¹⁷...Spirit of wisdom and of revelation...

Through the Holy Spirit, we can obtain wisdom and revelation of God's word. As the Word of God comes in our minds and our hearts, we can live it out. It is the application of the Word that gives us wisdom. Jesus Christ, as the living Word, can be known and loved through the written Word by the Holy Spirit.

C. Christ

¹⁷...God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory... in the knowledge of him.

The Father of glory helps us to know the glory of Christ. We become more like Christ because God is the one using the Holy Spirit through the Word to give us more of Christ. Often Paul's address of God is related to the requests that He is going to give to us in our lives. For example, in Romans 15:4, Paul prays for endurance and encouragement:

"...the God of endurance and encouragement"

God, being addressed as the Father of glory, is working so that we can become glorious, that we may be more like Christ. This is all summarized in 2 Corinthians 3:

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

What Paul is praying for is that Ephesian believers would be sinking *deep* into the infinite ocean of the knowledge of God's Word, of His Spirit, and of who God is. As we sink deeper into the knowledge of God, the more we'll grow in the experience and power of God.

Often our problem is that we really do not know what we think we know. When we complain about what God has not given you, the real problem is you don't know what you already have. We need to learn how to take the promises of God like Ephesians, and wrestle with them through prayer so that we may know God.

III. Pray for the Knowledge of hope [18]

¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

Pray for the spiritual power of hope. Pray that the eyes of your heart may be opened so that you become spiritually sensitive.

A. What is the hope of His calling – the call to hope

The English word "hope" describes uncertainty: "I hope this happens." But the Biblical definition of "hope" is foundational certainty: "It hasn't happened yet, but it's going to." When verse 18 says we have been "called," it means God called us out of hopelessness and into an eternal, foundational hope.

The word "call" is important in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 1-3 talks about how we are called by God to God. Ephesians 4 talks about how we are called to the world:

*"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** to which you have been called."*

We are living in the heavenly realm, but we are also called to the places where we live. As we become more like Christ, we are going to display the glory, beauty, and worth of Him, so every soul that sees us will praise Him. This is what we're called to.

B. What are the riches of His glorious inheritance – the substance of hope

The word “*inheritance*” is used differently throughout the Bible. It could be used to describe us as God’s treasure, or it can be used to describe God as our treasure. In this context of Ephesians, the emphasis seems to be on God as our inheritance. In the first three chapters of Ephesians, the word “riches” is used six times to describe how rich Christians are.

*Ephesians 1:7 “according to the **riches** of his grace”*

*Ephesians 1:18 “what are the **riches** of his glorious inheritance in all the saints”*

*Ephesians 2:4 “But God, being **rich** in mercy*

*Ephesians 2:7 “the immeasurable **riches** of his grace”*

*Ephesians 3:8 “unsearchable **riches** of Christ”*

*Ephesians 3:16 “according the **riches** of his glory”*

We are called to receive this incredible inheritance. What Christ should receive, we receive. What we are hoping for in this life, as well as eternity, is growth in us, glory in us, and glory through us.

IV. Pray for the Knowledge of His power [19-23]

¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

A. Great power [19]

*¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power** toward us who believe, according to the **working** of his **great might***

Paul uses four Greek nouns in this verse to describe God’s power. The first word for power is *dunamis* – like dynamite. It describes a raw power. The word “working” in Greek is *ergon*. The word energy comes out of it, and it describes inner power. “Great” is *iscus*, talking about capability. “Might” is *kratos*, used to describe conquering power. Paul has exhausted his language to describe the power of God. He layers these synonyms to express as best as he can the highest and greatest power available.

The small phrase in verse 19, “*towards us,*” is talking about how all His incredible power is working in and for us, for the church of Jesus Christ. Whenever you open the Bible to read it, you receive power. You are wielding the sword of God’s Spirit that has the power to cut off all your sin.

Humans are limited in their spiritual seeing, which is why Paul prays “*may the eyes of your heart be opened.*” Faith expands our spiritual vision by expanding the boundaries of our hearts.

Resurrection power [20]

²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead

God brought death to death. There are three kinds of death: spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. But death was arrested in the death of God's Son Jesus Christ with His resurrection power. What may look like death is really the beginning of life. The resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is at work in us to cause a spiritual resurrection.

B. Ascension power [20b-21]

²⁰seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The enthronement of Christ is at the right hand of God. This is a place of rule of the king. Because we are in Jesus Christ, wherever He rules, we rule in Him.

C. Filling power [22-23]

²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

As Christ is the head of the church, we are his body. There is a sense of intimacy and oneness. As His body, Christ fills the church with the fullness of Himself. God uses his sovereign power over everything for the good of the Church.

The last phrase of this verse, "*who fills all in all*," means that through the Church, Jesus is filling the earth. As He fills us, we become the embodiment of His fullness so that His glory may be manifested for the rest of the world to see.

Because we are spiritually blind, we need the eyes of our hearts opened. When we see God, we will seek Him. God wants to pour His fullness into us, but because of our lack of desire, He can't. This passage is teaching us how to pray for ourselves and for others. As we pray, we change so that we can live for the glory of God. It enables us to help and love others to expand the kingdom of God. Keep on praying.

Conclusion

Pray for others and the next generation because it will transform our selfish thinking and transform us to live with a kingdom mindset. Pray prayers that will outlive your life, for there is no expiration date on our prayers. We are guaranteed to be heard by the King of the universe and receive His strengthening grace.

When we pray, we may not receive all that we want, but we will receive all that we need. When we pray, we transcend into the realm of extraordinary prayer to make external impact in the lives of people in ordinary moments of our lives.