

Eph ch 1 vs17-23

As always, to refresh your memory, last week we isolated vs 15-17 of the 1st chapter of the book of Eph and in these few vs we recognized the fact that when we are born again, when we give our hearts to Jesus Christ and we are brought out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light what is created in that process is a testimony. We become witnesses, and it doesn't take long before people begin to hear of what it is that's taken place in your life and it becomes known what kind of witness we are.

So the challenge that we're all faced with is what is it that people are hearing about you? Are they hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, or are they hearing, "yeah, they claim to be Christians, but they sure don't act any different." Do people see you as the real thing, do they portray you as "genuine" or are you heaped in the general category of "hypocrite"?

Paul says in vs 15 of ch 1 that he had heard of their "faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints" and those are 2 qualities or characteristics of someone who's had a real encounter with Jesus Christ, faith toward God and indiscriminant love towards all the saints. Not tolerance for all the saints but love for the brethren, and these 2 attributes of faith and love are inseparable, they go together in the life of the believer. and Paul; hearing of these genuine qualities of faith and love in the lives of these Ephesian believers said I thank God for you, and I remember you in my prayers, oh how we need to have a disposition of thanksgiving and gratitude when it comes to our prayer lives. How we need to thank God for our brothers and sisters who are accurately reflecting Jesus Christ to those around them and pray for them that God might strengthen them and encourage them and give them boldness to continue on and to live ever increasing lives of godliness. That God might receive much glory from them and use them in more and more radical ways to reveal Himself to this hurt and dying and desperately empty world that we live in. God help us that the only time that people find their way into our prayer lives not be when we've either got a problem with them that we're asking God to mow them over for us or after they've stumbled or fallen and so we're praying for them to be restored and renewed.

Now, is it wrong to pray that God would vindicate you, no, as long as you're willing to stand in the light of the scrutiny of God and say "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*" and If you're willing to be the one who's in need of correction and godly direction and repentance in your life then go for it, and if your not willing to be in that spot then that's probably a pretty good indicator that you do have a problem and you're not right before God.

Is it wrong to pray for people who have fallen, absolutely not, you do well to pray for those people who are in that position of weakness seeking restoration before God. But maybe you've heard the old adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Put these people of your prayer list before they fall and it just might be that they won't find themselves in the position of needing restoration but rather they live full and flourishing lives set apart to Jesus Christ with an ever increasing appetite for His word and the fullness of Him who fills all in all. and Paul had one general prayer request for them and then it broke down in basically 3 parts from there and I would have you take note of the fact that Paul didn't make a request for them to receive anything that they didn't have. But rather he prayed that they might come *into*, and that God might reveal to them the *fullness* of that which they already possessed. and You might also make mental note that he didn't pray for material gain for them, but rather spiritual gain.

Last week we took a little bit of time in this general request, and this morning we'll spend just a little more time on it coming at it from a little bit different angle than we did last week. But the general request or the primary request that Paul petitions God for on their behalf is that (notice with me in vs 17, read vs17-23)

Vs17

This latter portion of vs 17 is the main emphasis of this prayer, that God might give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation (and notice this, watch carefully and catch it) in the knowledge of Him. The fundamental request that Paul makes, or that which he sees as the foremost essential need in the lives of us as believers is that we might be given wise spiritual insight that leads to knowing God better, more intimately and accurately, deeply and personally.

So that you can see the way that it breaks down as we go through it, what Paul desires that they get out of this is understanding concerning #1 (notice in vs 18) what is the hope of His calling, #2 what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and 3^{rdly} vs 19 what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. So vs 17 is the primary request, and these are the different aspects that that request break down into. But I want to spend a little more time on vs 17 because last week for times sake we really didn't tap to deeply into it, so I want to examine it a little more closely again this morning.

Paul's prayer for us as believers and we would do well to include it in our prayer for one another as the Spirit prompts us, was that we might be given wise spiritual insight that leads to perfect knowledge of the Lord. Not knowledge *about* the Lord, but wisdom and insight the leads to knowing the Lord Himself, why? Because that's what the kingdom is all about, not religion, but relationship, that's one of the central woven themes through out all of the scriptures. That His message is all about relationship, God reaching out to mankind and saying I want to create an avenue through which you might know Me.

He created that avenue ultimately through the person of His Son, again all of the OT sacrifices merely a foreshadowing of what was to come in the person of Christ. Jesus is the only way by which we are able to know the Father; Jesus Himself said that He was the way the truth and the life and that no one came to the Father but by Him. and It's God's desire that you come to Him, that you might know Him, or maybe in your case that you might know Him more intimately.

You see there's a big difference between knowing about someone and really knowing them, I might know all kinds of things about our president, but I've never met him, nor do I know him. I know quite a bit about Chuck Smith, know quite a bit concerning his background, about his theology, about his perspectives of church government and practical applications of body life through sacrifice and service, in humility through love. I've spoke to Chuck Smith a few times, shook his hand a couple of times, he's had through Calvary Costa Mesa personal investment in times past in what God is doing here. But given all that I don't know Chuck Smith personally (yet anyway, nor may I ever unless God wills for some reason), I don't call him on the phone, he wouldn't recognize me if he saw me. and You see this is the type of relationship that many people have with the Lord. They know an awful lot about Him, understand many things concerning His love for mankind and desire to save as many as will come to Him, and some even have master's degrees in theology and so they're able to tell you all kinds of things about the Lord, but they don't know the Lord, personally.

That's why Jesus said in Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' You see God's desire isn't that you know about Him, but that you know Him. That's why we read in scriptures like Jer 9:24 "But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD."

What's the Lord delight in? You knowing Him and knowing Him intimately, knowing His heart, that He exercises lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. We read in Jer 24:7 where God says, "I will give them a heart to know Me." 2 Peter 1:3 says that, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, (how) through the knowledge of Him who called us." How is that all things that pertain to life and godliness are given to you, through knowing Him.

Did you know that that's what the scriptures define as eternal life? If someone asked you to get to the heart of the matter and define for them what is eternal life what would you say. Many of us would say, well, eternal life is escaping hell, and enjoying heaven, but that's to miss the mark, those are the peripheral issues of eternal life, those are a couple of the benefits of eternal life, but that's not at the heart of eternal life, Jesus tells us exactly what eternal life is. We read in John 17:3 *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* Eternal life is knowing God personally, that's why Paul said in Phil 3:8 I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and what is the out cropping, or the evidence of someone who has truly come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

We talked about that last week we know that Jesus said that people would know that we're His disciples, not through the manifestation of tongues in our lives but by the fact that we'll have love for one another. and How is love displayed, well; towards our brother's and sisters, many times by service, but with the Lord it comes through obedience, Jesus said if you love Me keep My commandments. Now last week we seen how the bible gave us a litmus test more or less by which we can know that we have passed from eternal death to eternal life, and that was by our love for the brethren. Here's a test by which we can see if truly the love of God is at work in us, and if our knowledge of God is personal, 1 John 2:3-4 says, *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."* Because the more you know Him the more you love Him, and how do you display that love? Through obedience to His word, how many people do you know that claim to be Christians, yet they don't obey the word of God, many of them don't even know what the bible says.

Paul said concerning these people that, *"They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."* You see if your life doesn't accord with godliness, not perfection, but reflecting the characteristics that line up with the scriptures, then I have to question whether or not you even know the Lord, no matter what you tell me concerning yourself. Because there are certain basic elements that the bible says will be in the lives of the true believer, we've mentioned a few of them already; faith toward the Lord Jesus and love for the brethren, last week we mentioned the attribute of the prayer life of the believer, and here we're speaking of the lifestyle that will correspond with the teaching of the scriptures.

Or to understand it another way, obedience to the word of God, that's why Paul prayed for the believers at Colossae "that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." You see, not denying the Lord through their works but rather affirming the fact that they knew God intimately through their obedience to the word of God, and then growing more in knowing the Lord.

Now on the other end of the spectrum, we also read what becomes of man when they don't retain in them the knowledge of God, and we won't go there for times sake but you can find that out in Rom ch 1 people become debased in their thinking and they give themselves over to all kinds of gross immorality to do those things which are not fitting. Which results ultimately in eternal separation from God, if knowing God is eternal life, then to alleviate the knowledge of God from your life, or to not know God is eternal death, it's that simple. and Then there are also those people who come to know God initially but never grow in the knowledge of God and so they don't know God any better 5-10yrs down the road then they did when they gave their hearts to Him all those years ago. Oh they may know more about God, and can quote more chapters and vs, but there's little to no fruit of growing intimacy, and that's not right.

I've only been married at this point for 6 yrs, but if I didn't know my wife in a much more intimate and personal way now then I did when we 1st met or was 1st married there would be a problem. Because at the heart of marriage is relationship, and it works the same way with God, God desires that you and I know Him deeply and fully, and the only one who can teach us the deep things of God is the Holy Spirit abiding in us, illuminating to us God's word and revealing to us God's heart. 1 Cor 2:9-11 tells us that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." It's the Spirit of God that reveals to us the deep things of God, or that as this next vs says enlightens the eyes of our understanding that we might know Him more.

Literally here in vs 18 the prayer reads "the eyes of your heart being enlightened;" the heart meaning "the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, and endeavors. (from The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon) God wants to enlighten us with spiritual understanding, but again this only comes from the Holy Spirit opening the eyes of our hearts, that's what Jesus was in reference to when He said in reference to the people that, "*seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*" Not because they couldn't intellectually comprehend, the inability to see and understand spiritual things isn't the fault of the intelligence but of the heart. The eyes of one's heart must be opened by the Holy Spirit, that's why Paul said that the carnal man can't discern spiritual matters nor can he know them, not because he doesn't have the capacity to grasp them in his mind. But because his heart is blind to the truth's of God and devoid of the knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit hasn't opened his understanding, now particularly as it relates to Eph ch 1 what is it that Paul wants us to be enlightened to, what is it that he desires us to understand?

Well I believe it's fairly obvious, the primary concern is that we might know God, because at that point all the worldly distractions fade away. Paul didn't pray oh God spare them the lusts of the world, he just prayed to the heart of the matter, God help them to know You in truth.

If we're fixed upon the Lord and our eyes are turned upon Jesus as He is in truth, you are going to be so overwhelmed and in love with Him that nothing that this world has to offer is even going to seem desirable to your palate. Especially when it comes to the appetites of the flesh, as a matter of fact those things will seem utterly repulsive, because they're so grievous to the heart of God.

So 1st and foremost God give them a spirit, or a disposition of wisdom and revelation that they may know You, and then also I believe this is saying open their understanding to all that they possess and the unlimited resources that are at their disposal in Christ, that are there for them to draw upon so that they might lead victorious and abundant Christian lives. There seems to me to be a strategic relationship in this ch between vs 3 and vs 17-18, vs 3 revealing to us the fact that we've been blessed with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. and Then here in these vs we come to understand the need to ask God to enlighten us and to show us what those things are and the need to pray for one another that we might be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened. and One of those things that God wants to show us about Himself is His loving, gracious and abundant provision for us in Christ that is without limit, it's unlimited in its vastness. Everything we'll ever need to lead radical lives of victory bringing such tremendous glory to God is already ours in Christ, we just need to see it, and understand it, and appropriate it to our lives by faith.

What are a few of the things that Paul wasn't us to be assured of concerning these things? Well, we see in vs 18 "*that you may know what is the hope of His calling.*" and That word "hope" that comes up from time to time in the scriptures, don't miss understand it, it doesn't mean hope like we think of when we say, I sure hope I get a raise sometime soon. Or, I hope that for Christmas I get this or that, or I hope I don't get a flat tire on the way home. Because hope in that sense is to say I'm really not sure if it'll happen or not, that's not the biblical understanding of the word hope. This word hope speaks of "assured anticipation and expectation."

You see when we were in the word (or if you find yourself this morning with no saving knowledge of Jesus Christ) the bible says that you are with out hope and that we were with out hope. But in Christ the bible says that we have a *living* hope, and Paul says I want you to understand that. In other words to break it down here Paul is saying that I want you to be know and be confident concerning the assured expectation and the absolute certainty that is guaranteed to all of those who answer the call of God to come unto Him. To come and meet Him, and get to know Him, and to live with Him forever, drinking freely of the waters of life. God is calling mankind to Himself 2 Cor 6:17-18 says, "*Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.*" "*I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.*" and To all that answer that call there is such a hope, there is such a sense of assurance and guarantee and absolute certainty that is there for all that answer His call to come unto Him.

Paul says I want you to understand that hope, the confidence and assurance that is yours in Christ, Jesus will never cast out anyone who comes to Him, understand that. I don't care where you've been or what you've done, you are invaluable to the Lord, that's the next thing that Paul prays that we might come into the fullness of the knowledge of; of how highly God values you.

Notice again vs 18, that you may know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Now think about that, God created all of the heavens and the earth, David said "*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him?*" We seem so infinitesimal and miniscule in comparison, God owns all the stars, the earth and the fullness thereof, numberless galaxies and worlds and yet you, if you are found in Christ are His treasure. When you study the parable of the pearl of great price or the parable of the treasure hidden in a field in Matt 13 and the man goes out and sells all that he has in order that He might purchase the field and take the treasure out, or gives all that He has in order to purchase that pearl. You find out that Jesus is the merchant, the earth is the field and you are the treasure, you are the pearl that God gave everything He had even to the laying down of His very own life that He might purchase you with His blood. and The bible says that it was for the joy that He had over it, God places more value on you then you or I could ever know. Allow that to work deep-seated humility in your life and be grateful and joyful over that fact, you are His riches and His inheritance.

Then also, this 3rd aspect just briefly before we close vs 19

Vs19-21

God wants you to know the exceeding greatness of His power toward you who believe, in other words He wants you to understand that this power, this dunamis or it's the word from which we get the word dynamite, it's speaks of explosive and impactive influential power that's there for us in Christ. and It's to be operating toward our lives; it's to be upon us and working into the everyday practical life of the believer. It's that power that God wants to use to bring us into all that God wants to do with us and for us and deep with in us, and all that comes about as we trust in Him and receive it not by works that we do as though we can earn it, but by simple faith and trust in Jesus Christ

To many of us operate with in the spectrum of our own power, the will power or own inner strength that we can muster up, which in reality that isn't even worthy to be placed on the same measuring stick as the power that this is in reference to. It's so weak and anemic, it's prone to defeat and failure, because we try to do the work of the Spirit in the efforts of the flesh, and not only can it not be done, God doesn't honor it and so it's all a big wash. God desires that we operate with in the power that He supplies in Christ toward us who believe in Him.

Paul elaborates on exactly what type of power this is that he's in reference to in the last ½ of vs 19 on out through vs 21, and time forbids me to get to deeply into it and so I'll just tell you what it is with out developing it a whole lot. It's resurrection power, that's the power that God worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and surely we would all agree that as believers we would all desire to have this kind of dynamic, explosive power of the resurrection at work with in our lives, gaining us victory, and empowering us to be witnesses from on High. But there's a catch so listen closely so as not to miss it, resurrection power will cost you, because to get it you're going to have to die. Why, because there's no need for a resurrection if there isn't 1st a death, even Jesus Christ Himself, the very Son of God, couldn't experience the power of the resurrection with out 1st dying. and So to with you, you have to die, this type of power isn't "unleashed" upon the carnal believer, the flesh has to die, you have to take up your cross, the cross was an instrument of death, and for Christ it spoke of the denial of His own will.

So to with us until you are willing to die to self, live in denial of your own will, reckoning yourself indeed dead to sin but alive in Christ you'll never experience the power of the resurrection. Until you're willing to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings you'll never partake of the power of the resurrection, I know we're running over but bear with me and turn with me quickly one book over to Philippians ch 3 look at vs 8-11

That's why when we're baptized we're baptized into the death of Christ, we identify with the death of Christ being buried with Him spiritually speaking in the waters of baptism, saying that we've counted the cost we're saying death to self and yes to Jesus. and Then even as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, the bible tells us even so we should walk in the newness of life, that is in the resurrection power of Christ. We read in Romans 6:5-6 *"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."* This is the type of power that God desires you and me to be growing in, developing in, maturing in and walking in the fullness of. Let's close up shop and if the Lord wills that we spend a little bit of time on this concept in our next gathering developing it a little farther then we will.

Vs22-23

We'll touch on that a little bit as well Lord willing the next time we meet.