

A Prayer For Revelation

Ephesians 1:15-18a

Turn with me this morning to the book of **Ephesians 1:15-18**. We have so far been looking at the central theme of the letter found in verse 3 – the spiritual blessings found in the heavenly realms (the area that we can't see) that are ours because we have accepted Jesus Christ into our hearts. What are those blessings?

We have seen that we have been called by the Father, he has destined us to be his sons and daughters, he has offered redemption and forgiveness because of his son, He has revealed his plan for all mankind, he has sealed us with his Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has enlightened our hearts, and the presence of the Holy Spirit within our lives is proof that we are the recipients of such incredible blessing.

These things that we fail to think about and take for granted when in reality if we would just take the time to realize the incredible love and privilege we have been given to be called a son or daughter of God. An incredible yet overwhelming thought. We truly have been blessed.

Paul switches gears now in this letter and begins to express his heart of prayer for those in Ephesus. He tells us in **Ephesians 1:15-18**:

For this reason, ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for Christians everywhere, I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonder future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people.

There was something about the people in Ephesus that moved Paul to pray for them. There was something that triggered Paul's heart for them to come to a full understanding of the things of God. What was it? We find two characteristics in our first verse and Paul explains how he has been made aware of their faith and their love. **(1) The key identifying traits of any Christian is faith and love.**

Their faith was not only evident in their conversion but it was also evident in how they lived. There was a radical transformation of the people in this church from people who worshipped pagan idols to those turning to Christ. But the key thing that convinced Paul that their faith was genuine was the evidence of love. Eventually, **true faith is seen in action**. James hit on this point. In **James 2:18** James writes:

“Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” I say, “I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds.”

In essence James is telling us “Show me your love, and I’ll see your faith; but don’t talk to me about faith unless love is present.” These people in Ephesus were genuine because their belief was evident in love. We are told in **Hebrews 6:10**:

God will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do.

God sees our love for him and love for other Christians as the same. Paul tells us that they showed love to other Christians. Not just a certain group of Christians but all Christians, no matter who they were and where they came from. **Being a Christian was not just about them but also about others (Others-centered).** Now, I think we can all agree that its not always easy loving every Christian we come in contact with, is it? But the church in Ephesus were known for the fact that their love for each other was the result of their love for God.

That is why we should never separate from other Christian brothers and sisters because of denominational lines, or because we don’t quite view the spiritual gifts the same, or because they don’t quite do things that same way we do. We should embrace our brothers and sisters, holding them up in love because God has given us spiritual brothers and sisters. Just like in a family, we didn’t get to choose our brothers and sisters did we? But the reality is that we love each others because we are family. Because we love the one who has put us together.

Paul could tell that they were real Christians, they were taking their faith seriously and he desired that they would continue to grow. Paul knew that there was still more for them to learn, but he was encouraged that they were off to a good start. **The church in Ephesus had the right heart, and that is the beginning point of a healthy walk with God.** It is one thing to have great and profound and scholarly theology and understanding, but it is absolutely useless unless it reaches the heart. A Bible teacher that I respect put it this way:

“Truth known never changes anybody, but it is truth done, truth which has flowed through the emotions and gripped them and thus motivated the will that makes an impact.”

We need to make the connect from the head to the heart. There needs to be the moving of emotions so that the whole person gets involved and is properly motivated.

We move on to verse 16 and we find that Paul directs his prayers to “God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” Paul was praying to the one whom Jesus asked the same from – that they would have spiritual wisdom and understanding. Paul wanted God to enlighten his truth to the Ephesians the same way that Jesus wanted God to enlighten his truth to the disciples. In his prayer Jesus ask God in **John 17:17**:

Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth.

So the very God that Jesus himself prayed, and upon whom he depended to keep his disciples in the truth that they were learning is the same that Paul prayed to and the one to whom we are to pray, that Father God will open our hearts and minds.

Paul prays for spiritual wisdom and understanding. If these are Christians he is writing to why does he have to ask God to do that? If every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is sealed by that presence wouldn't that mean that they would have spiritual wisdom and understanding because the Holy Spirit? Not necessarily. The Apostle Paul is praying for a special ministry of the Holy Spirit that is found in the book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit of God in **Isaiah 11:2**:

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Paul doesn't assume that the ministry of the Holy Spirit to give spiritual wisdom and understanding is an automatic feature of the Christian life. **If you want the scriptures, the Word of God, the truth, to come alive to you , you must ask for revelation.** And if you want it to come alive for someone else then you pray that they will be given the spirit of wisdom and understanding. It is ridiculous for us to think that we can understand any of God's truth without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, sometimes God's revelation is dependent upon our desire or hunger for his truth. God really wants to know if we are hungry or just going through the motions. **God will not allow his scriptures to come alive unless we desire and long for his truth.** And if you do have a desire then you will come to him and ask for his revelation. All too often we neglect the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and just think that the growth of our souls is going to simply happen, when in reality it doesn't happen unless the Holy Spirit works in us.

Every time I sit down to read God's word, my heart and my desire is that the Holy Spirit will awaken my soul and that I come to understand and know my Father God more each day. When I open the pages of my Bible my prayer is "Lord, who am I?" and the God promises the words of **Jeremiah 29:13**:

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

The bible is not merely a book to read in order to learn what is going to happen as prophecy is fulfilled. It isn't merely a book from which to get ethical guidelines on how to behave in the relationships of life. This book is designed to lead you to stand in the presence of the living God, to feel him, to know him, to sense his love, his wisdom, his strength, his might, his incredible grasp of circumstances, his control of human events, and to enable you to understand your relationship with him, to have him stand in your presence living, breathing, and compassionate.

Look at verse 18. Paul prays that their hearts will be flooded with light so that they can understand their hope of the future, the riches in Christ, and the power of God. In the NIV verse 18 reads as follows:

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.”

It’s an unusual phrase but the eyes are the instruments through which we perceive, or see things. It is also true that we can perceive things in our minds – grasping ideas. But just as we have seen in the lives of the Ephesian church, the truth of Jesus Christ got a hold of their hearts and changed them into people who loved each other. That is why we sing songs like “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to see You” I want to understand you, I want to experience you, I want you to impact my heart and make a difference in me.

Just last week we talked about the two men on the road to Emmaus who listening to a stranger unfold the scriptures to them and their hearts was awakened and described as “burning within”. When the heart begins to burn with truth, when the truth from the word of God becomes real and it takes root in you that you can’t ignore it any longer, that is when you know that God is real, and that everything he has promised to you will come to pass.

You never get the whole man until the heart is moved, until the eyes of the heart are enlightened, until truth is moved from the head down to the heart, and that has gripped the emotions. That is real Christianity and that is the goal we face each and everyday. “God, show me who you are, teach me your truth, that I may know you a little better each day.”

My prayer every Sunday morning is “God may they see you” and unless I am willing to do that, the words I speak are but empty ideas on a page. But with the Spirit of God is invited into not only the mind but also the heart, that is when we continue to become little bit more like Christ. Let’s pray!