

Ephesians: Living in Sync with Reality
Part Three – Knocking on Heaven’s Door

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I. Sharing in the Life of God

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your **faith in the Lord Jesus** and **your love for all God’s people**, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayer. I keep asking...”

– Ephesians 1:15-17a

Genuine faith in Jesus will always issue genuine love for all God’s people.

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

– Ephesians 5:1

Never take for granted this bond we share with every believer around the globe, and the call to love them with the love of God. We share in the life of God. We belong to each other through the work of Jesus.

II. Knowing God

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” – vv. 17-119a.

Every believer, the moment we believe, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul has just said that in v.13: “When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”

Paul is asking for something *from* the Spirit. He’s asking that the Spirit open us up to know the wonder, truth, skill and power to live as God intends us to.

Wisdom: the skillful ability to carefully consider and act consistently, in concrete ways, with the ways of God.

Revelation: *Apocalypsis* – means to “pull back the curtain” to “lift off the lid”, to “reveal”, to “make known.”

Paul prays that we would have the Spirit of wisdom and *apocalypse*. That God would pull back the curtain, lift off the lid. Why?

“...that you may know him better.” To know God for who God really is. To see with a new set of lenses, to live in sync with reality.

Knowing God isn't just knowing more *about* God. It's experiencing God for ourselves in a profoundly personal, intimate, and life-transforming way.

III. Enlightened Hearts

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

Our heart is not only the place where we “feel”, but is the place where we “think, plan, and desire.” The heart is the seat of our will – the place out of which the rest of our lives flow.

Paul is praying that we would “see” more clearly. That God would “open up” our “seeing” so that our hearts would live in alignment with the truth.

1) Hope

We cannot live without hope. The human spirit needs hope. And I don't think it's an overstatement to say that hope is often in short supply in our world today.

Paul is in prison, and yet he bursts into praise as he begins this letter, and then he prays this list of spiritual blessings into the lives of believers...from jail. Living with an uncertain future.

For Paul, hope is much bigger than simply: “Will my situation improve?”

But Paul also asks people to pray for him in a challenging situation.

Romans 15:30-32:

“I urge you, brothers, and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and in the contribution, I take to Jerusalem may be favourably received by the Lord's people there, so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed.”

I think Paul would rather not be in jail. And yet, and yet, he also knows that “...God is working all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his good purposes.”

– Romans 8:28

- a) The hope of the gospel is that God is making all things new. Jesus' death and resurrection are a “living hope that...can never perish, spoil or fade.” – 1 Peter 1:4

- b) The hope of the gospel is also that until we know the fullness of new life at the end of the ages, God will use all that is happening to us – all that is ugly or painful – to make us more like Jesus.

2) The Riches of his Glorious Inheritance

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...so that you know...**the riches of his glorious inheritance** in his holy people...”

Inheritance: We are claimed by God as his prized possession. You delight God’s heart. The Spirit of God is in you, guaranteeing it all until our full redemption – life in God’s unmediated presence forever at the coming again of King Jesus.

3) God’s Great Power for Us

“I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened in order that you may know...the hope...the riches...and his incomparably great **power [dunamis]** for us who believe. That **power [energeia]** is the same as the **mighty [ischus] strength [kratos]** he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”

“Power” *Dunamis*: This is where we get the word “dynamite.” Potential energy ready to be released. Capacity to get it done.

“Working/power” *Energeian*: “Energy at work.”

“Strength” *Kratos*: It’s where we get “-cracy” like “democracy” power of the people; or “autocracy” – power of the self.

“Might” – *Ischus*: inherent strength to overcome resistance.

What’s the power *for*?

- To love others.
- To seek unity.
- To forgive.
- To resist evil.

It’s to “...live a life worthy of the calling you have received,” as Paul will put it in 4:1. What does that look like? “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

– Ephesians 4:1-2

IV. The King Over All

“That power [that is for us, towards us] is the same as the mighty strength he [the Father] exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above any rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the age to come. And God placed all things under his feet

and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

– Ephesians 1:19b-23

What does Paul want us to know? That the carpenter’s son from Galilee is now at the helm of the universe.

When you are *in* the One who is over everything there is nothing, ultimately, to fear.

The thing Paul wants you to know is that Jesus is on the throne. Where do you need to know that again this week?

Where do you need to know that hope and that power again? Ask for it. Who in your life needs to know that hope and power? Ask for it. Where do you need a fresh vision of God’s goodness in your life? Ask for it. Where do you need his wisdom? Ask for it.

For it is by Jesus’ name, according to his reputation and character, that we can come before the throne of grace with our requests. Let’s come asking, even as we celebrate.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection

Open Up

Think about a time someone gave you a gift. Was it something you wanted? Needed? Do you find it easy or hard to ask others for what you need? Why?

Dig In

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

1. Paul is addressing many people he does not know – has never met (vv.15-16). And he commends their faith and love for each other. How does his tone and excitement encourage you?
2. Are there ways that you would like to follow this example and demonstrate this kind of loving attitude and commitment to prayer for people you may have very little connection with this week? How could you do that in a practical way?
3. What is it that Paul asks from God for the believers? What does this tell you about Paul's priorities?
4. In what areas of your life do you need wisdom and revelation? Where do you need to know the hope, inheritance, or power of God? (As you listen to each other, take note of how you can be asking for these things for each other).
5. How do you feel about asking God for these things – for yourself and others?
6. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus has authority over everything? How could that change how you pray and ask God for what you need?

Prayer

Take time to thank God for the love we share through Jesus, and for the victory he already has over the powers. Take time to bring the requests you shared in your group before God, knowing that he loves to answer these prayers. Pray for our community – that we as a church body would grow in our love for one another and our commitment to praying these things for each other.