

Ephesians 1:16-23

REVIEW

Let's review last week before getting into this weeks text. Last week we covered Ephesians 1 verses 15-17. I want to review verses 16 and 17.

The Blessings of Redemption

¹⁶...while making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (NIV= *to know him better*).

Paul kept praying for the Christians in all the churches that The Holy Spirit would cause them to know God better. If you want to see how the people responded to Paul's prayer and the Holy Spirit's work, you can read about these churches in Revelation Chapters One through Three.

Laodicea and Ephesus continued to be lukewarm. Jesus warned the Christians at Ephesus their lamp stand would be removed if they did not renew their love for Christ.

Last week we talked about how few Christians take the time to walk in the full power of God's Holy Spirit. Jesus is the bread of life yet we do not stop in silence to feed on His presence. When we feed on Christ our love for Him is refreshed and renewed.

Instead of feeding on our own deep faith with fresh revelations from God, we live off the faith of other people who have taken the time to feed off of Christ and get that fresh revelation.

We read someone else's devotions but we never write our own deep musings and insightful thoughts about God. We read someone else's poetry but do not enter into God's presence deeply enough to write our own. We listen in awe as someone speaks a passage in the power of God's prophecy

but we do not walk in that same power. We sing someone else's song but we do not sing a new song or make music in our hearts. We lick the crumbs off the plate of other people's Christian walk and we cannot understand why we are spiritually anemic and unsatisfied.

We skip spiritual food 6 days of the week and then expect someone to feed us for 20 minutes and make us full the whole week even though we have had only had one spiritual meal in 7 days.

When we rest in stillness and feed off of God's presence, The Holy Spirit will reveal more and more of who God is and what he wants to do in our lives. That is the Spirit of revelation and wisdom spoken of by Paul. The end result of the Holy Spirit's working is that we know Christ better.

Until we know him more as individuals we will not see lasting revival. People will not respond to our invitations to come to fellowship. We need to know him better. That is the engine behind revival and growth and powerful ministry.

Sunday morning is not designed to feed the Christian. It is designed to be a gathering point of praise and worship where we tell the stories of what God has done in our lives the other 6 days. Grown up Christians know how to feed themselves and how to feed others. That feeding takes place when we are quiet enough to enter fully into God's presence. It is only in silence that the din of this life fades to the background and the 7-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit comes fully into view speaking into our hearts so that as sheep who hear the master's voice, we know him better.

If you want to hear more of last week's sermon it was tapped and a full text version is available on the web site. Let's continue in the text.

**¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened,
so that you will know 3 things**

ENLIGHTEN

Verse 18 tells us the Holy Spirit will enlighten us so we can know God better. The churches addressed by Paul in this letter knew the concept of being “in Christ” but many of them did not know God in a deep intuitive way. Paul’s desire was that Christians experience all Christ has for us in a deep intuitive way.

Paul mentioned three things that the people in these churches knew in their head but not in their heart. When we know information about Christ in our head and not in our heart we are simply smart sinners. But when we know the things that Christ wants us to know in our hearts, we will become more like our Savior.

ENLIGHTEN REGARDING THREE THINGS

Paul wanted the Holy Spirit to enlighten the Spiritual eyes of these Christians so that they would intuitively experience and know three things.

The hope of His calling.

The riches of our inheritance.

The greatness of His power working in us.

what is the hope of His calling,

If the story is dark right now, God’s hope is that it will not be dark forever. The end of the story is filled with great hope because in Christ no matter what is going on right now; there will be an end to our pain, and suffering and disappointments. Our hope is that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can have joy and hope that is way beyond positive thinking. It is a miracle that God gives us.

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹

Whose inheritance are we talking about? The inheritance we are talking about belongs to God. It is “His inheritance.” When we die we pass

things down to people who come after us. But when we die, we leave our body, soul and spirit to God. When we gave our lives to Christ we sign over the estate of our body, soul and spirit to the Lord. Right now we live the Christian life to practice the truth that we belong to God.

what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

The power of Jesus Christ is on display right now in us and through us. The power of Christ is on display toward us so that we are no longer addicted to booze or drugs or bad relationships and we are no longer a victim of the past, but are healed and set free of shame and embarrassment.

This is the power of Christ at work toward us so that when we go to tell our neighbor about Christ the words suddenly come with power. This is the power of Christ where we hear his voice and we suddenly want to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the power of Christ that breaks through our lethargy and sleepwalking to renew our passion for him.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead

The bible says that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. That is the power behind every Christian.

²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Father gave Jesus who is ruler of the universe to the church to be its head. Jesus is the head - the control center. We are the body - the objects to be controlled by the head. When Jesus (the head) controls us, we are the fullness of Him. When we are here for Jesus we are walking fullness. When we are walking in the fullness of His body we are walking in the fullness of Jesus.

We mentioned in previous verses about how God wants to increase his power in our personal relationship with Him. However, that is not the fullness of God. According to this passage the fullness of God is found in his body. God's fullness is incomplete in us apart from fellowship with other Christians.

Here is how it works. First, we get full of God's power and love and joy through our personal time of feeding on his presence. Then, just like oxygen and fuel are mixed together to become explosive, the power of Christ that is at work in us becomes explosive when we move toward other Christians. When we are together we become more powerful than the sum of our parts.

The spiritual power that we receive from feeding on Christ doubles or triples each time we move toward other Christians. If I get an insight from God as I am praying through a bible text and I bring that to you guys in my preaching it suddenly multiplies and turns into spiritual power for all of us. When God gives you some insight into the word, or a story of how God moved in fresh power in your life, God multiplies spiritual power as soon as you bring that testimony to the rest of us. In order to walk in God's full power we need two basic things. Feed and Share.

- We need to feed on Christ daily so that we are walking in the power of His Holy Spirit. If there are no God sightings in our lives we are not feeding on Christ as much as we need to.
- We need to take the powerful things God does in our lives inside His church so that his power multiplies. This is more than attendance. It is taking the stories of our God sightings to the other Christians so that Sunday is a celebration of God's great power. Or perhaps it is

following through with a word of encouragement that God gave us for a fellow Christian. Perhaps it is following through by launching a new small group or a ministry the Lord put on your heart. (By the way, the elders and I do not sit around planning new small groups and new ministries. We are waiting for God to talk to you about starting new small groups or ministries. Our part is to confirm God's call, equip you and help you get the thing rolling).

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BODY

Most Christians know that it is God's will for us to feed off of him and get closer to him as individuals. I also believe most Christians know that it is God's will that we fellowship with one another regularly. However, what many Christians do not really know and believe in their heart is that the success, the tone, and the level of powerful ministry in a church is determined by how many lay people in the church are getting filled up with God, listening to His voice, and then following through with the things God shows them to do inside the church among other believers.

If we hear God's prompting in our hearts to bring a testimony to the church, God's power will multiply. If we hear and respond to God's prompting to encourage someone at the church or help him or her in some way, then God's power will multiply. If God gives us a passion for working with kids or teens or building maintenance, if God thought it up and we do it to bless his body, then God's power will multiply. If we have a poem or a devotional thought or a bible passage that really got us through the week and God puts it on our heart to share it with the body, then his power will multiply inside the church.

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

If you are a member of this church God has given you many benefits. But he has also given you many responsibilities. Our culture has taught us to expect the benefits all the time and follow through with our responsibilities only when we feel like it. If you are a member or a regular attender of this church God has given you blessings and privileges and he has also given you responsibilities. All of these responsibilities have to do with walking in God's power and in God's love.

LIFESTYLE COMMITMENT

All new members get a lifestyle commitment that outlines our responsibilities to the other members and attenders of the church. In the coming weeks we are going to work that through together. If you are getting filled up with God on a regular basis then this stuff will be a great joy for you to do because it is simply a response of love to God's word and God's people.

We want to work this through because as a church I believe we want to walk in the fullness of God's power that multiplies when we engage with and love the body of Christ.

In the following weeks we will address some of the things that prevent us from following through with what we committed to do and what God has asked us to do. Some of it is that we need healing. Our fragile egos and our pain of the past or a lack of forgiveness makes it impossible for us to get as close to other people as God wants us to get. We will need to address that in coming weeks as we go through the lifestyle agreement.

Walk in God's power as an individual and multiply God's power by bringing your God sightings to the other Christians inside the church. If you want revival and refreshing, that is where a lot of it begins.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are you taking sufficient time to feed in silence on Jesus the bread of life?
2. When is the last time you stayed in God's presence long enough to journal a new idea that the Lord gave you, or write a poem or a devotional thought or had a bible passage suddenly come alive to you so that you could see how it applies to your life right now; or simply feed your soul on his quiet presence?
3. When is the last time you had a God sighting that you took and shared with other people in the church? When is the last time God put a strong urge on your heart to serve him in a certain way in the church context and you followed through with it?
4. Is there some pain in your life that is short cutting your Christian life right now? Are you easily upset or offended by others? Would you rather walk away from fellowship than to work through a difference of opinion? Is there something going on in your life that causes you shame and embarrassment? If so, would you reach out to someone in confidence and seek God's healing so that you can walk in the fullness of Christ and his body?