

Ephesians 1

The Blessings of Redemption

¹⁵For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶do not cease giving thanks for you,

This letter was sent to all the churches in the region in which Ephesus was located. These churches are mentioned in Revelation Chapters One Through Three. It is called the letter to Ephesians because the letter ended its journey in Ephesus.

Some people told Paul that many individuals in that region had a strong faith in Jesus Christ. He also got reports that the people in those churches love one another deeply.

Paul's life was centered on having people in the entire known world come to faith in Christ. The dream of his life was coming true in this region. The prayer and desire of every preacher is to see God bring new souls to eternal life.

while making mention of you in my prayers;

Paul prayed for the people in Ephesians. Listen to Paul's prayer for the people in verse 17.

¹⁷I 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. ^{NIV}

There is a lot to unpack in the passage. From this passage we can see that Paul keeps on praying. There is something so important to Paul that he never stops praying until it happens. What does he pray? He prays that the Holy Spirit would supernaturally give these Christians wisdom and revelation so that Christians can know God better.

HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD BETTER?

Today most of what passes as getting to know God better is really getting to know more facts and head knowledge about God. Paul is not saying that he wants us to learn more facts about God so that we can be better at bible trivia.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

If I told you that I wanted to get to know you better, what do you think I would be talking about? I could go to the courthouse and look up records on when you were born and the date of your marriage. I could look you up in your high school yearbook. I could call people who grew up with you and ask them a bunch a questions about you. That would give me more of an idea of who you are. But the only way I can truly get to know you is to be in your presence. I only get to know you when I you respond to humor and I do that with you. I get to know you better when I see what makes you angry and happy and I do that with you. I know you better when I learn about your hobbies or see the passion in your eyes when you talk about some subjects and the glazed over look when you talk about things that mean little to you. I get to know you more when I am in your presence. And it is only in your presence that the deepest bonding takes place.

WISDOM AND REVELATION

Paul prayed that God would give us a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. The reason we need a Spirit of wisdom and revelation is so that we can know God better. On a human level we cannot communicate with God. No one has ever sat down and interviewed God. In fact it would take a miracle for us to talk with God. But the truth is, God offers that miracle through His Holy Spirit. Here is how it works.

The revelation is that the Holy Spirit serves as a sort of cell phone between God and us. Through the Holy Spirit's presence we can hear God's voice speaking in our heart. We can hear God in our hearts telling us the meaning of the bible passages we read and how they apply to our lives. The revelation is a word that means God revealing himself. God will reveal himself to us. He has done so in His word. And in our time of resting in and feeding on his presence we can know specifically how the bible applies to our lives because through the Holy Spirit God tells us what to do, where to go, how to serve Him.

The bible tells us to Go into the world and make disciples of all nations. But The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation tell us to go and drop in on our neighbor George or Bob or Sandy or whoever. The bible tells us to reach out and the Spirit of Revelation and Wisdom tells us who to reach out to and when to do so.

When we spend little or no time walking in the Holy Spirit of revelation and wisdom getting to know God more we will not grow, not mature and not be fed. The sad truth is, and this is why Paul prayed the way he did; most Christian do not bother to get to know God as well as they could. Most Christians do not walk in the Holy Spirit of revelation and wisdom.

SLEEP WALKING CHURCH

We need a revival in this nation and in our church. It seems as though there are a growing number of people in churches around the country that are sleeping walking through their faith. Content to have God and his church remain an afterthought and not the main thought. Yes we get thirsty for God and miss his presence but we are unwilling to pay the price to walk in His blessings and power.

So what do we do when we are unwilling to pay the price for a real relationship with God but we still want a revival? We try to come up with a program that will get people to engage in church activities and get pumped up in the Lord. We try prayer nights, and small groups and meetings and concerts and a push for better attendance on Sunday mornings. All these things are good but our passion for God is still not ignited. These solutions are like trying to grow oranges without bothering to plant a tree. We want the fruit without the tree trunk and the branches and water and sunlight. So we do activity to prove that God is here when we have to back up and plant and water the seed the correct way. Paul gives us the answers right here in this text.

It is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we can know him better. But let's try to state this in a way that really helps us understand Paul's point.

LIVING ON OTHER PEOPLE'S FAITH

We are very busy people. Even those who retire no longer sit on the front porch rocking the rest of their lives away. We take care of relatives and baby sit and serve on many boards. We can always be found because communication technology has gotten so much better. People want answers and they want them right now. Cell phones and email and 24 hour news channels satisfy our lust for instant knowledge and activity.

The Spirit of our age is that people are drawn into more and more activity. We go in so many directions that sometimes we sit in a sermon and work on a list of things to do or we are going over our travel plans in our heart. We are hardly ever fully engaged in anything. We are half there. We are half there when we pray and when we sing and when we read the word

and when have devotions. We are hardly every fully present and fully listening to one another or to God.

The truth is that our busy-ness has become routine. We actually have to concentrate really hard to stop and fully focus on relationships with people or with God. To be honest, most of my conversations with my wife take place during commercials. If we are not busy outside the home, technology gives us a million shows to watch that keep up from being fully present with God and one another. Noise, noise, noise!

And so because of our busyness and our technological noise we have become too lazy to stop and rest. We have become too lazy to stop and walk out that Spirit of wisdom and revelation to truly know God, feed on his presence and hear his voice and discover his will for our life.

The result is that we take short cuts in our spiritual life. Our short cut is that we live off the faith and powerful relationships of other people. We lick the plate and nibble at the crumbs of those who feed on the solid meat of Christ. We live unsatisfied expecting someone else to feed us when we should learn to feed ourselves. What does that look like?

HOW DO WE PARASITE THE FAITH OF OTHERS?

- We sing someone else's songs, which is fine, but we do not feed in the silence of God's presence long enough to have him write a new song on our heart.
- We read someone else's poetry and we are inspired by the depth of insight they have with God, which is fine, but we do not spend time feasting on God's presence long enough to give birth to our own poetry.
- We listen to sermons and tapes and people on television who have spent sufficient time in God's presence so that God has made the bible

come to life in a unique way, but we have not spent the time feeding on God himself so as to come up with our own insights in the word of God coming from the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

- We talk about what a miracle God did in someone else's life, but we do not feed on God's presence long enough to learn from His Spirit of wisdom and revelation what kind of miracle he is willing to do in our life today so that our God sightings of today are just as powerful as our God stories of yester-year.
- We read the daily bread for our inspiration. There is nothing wrong with that. But if we spent sufficient time feeding on God's presence, some of us would discover that we could write the same kind of insights and devotion material that would be much more powerful because we are not living on someone else's revelation of God. We are living on the power of our own revelation that God gave us when we took the time to slow dance with Jesus and feed on his presence.
- We read and forward many things from the Internet. Some of them are good and some of them are corny. If we spent time feeding on God's presence we would be able to write our own insights and wisdom and healing words and forward what we wrote.
- We have become too lazy to be still and know that He is God. Satan does not have to get us to fall in sexual impropriety, or run off with the money. All he has to do is give us a lot of toys and activity and the power will drain right out of the church.

FEED ME FEED ME!

People having no Spirit of wisdom and revelation of their own are thirsty to meet God. So they come to church and because they have been too

lazy to feed themselves, they expect a preacher to feed them and make up for their 6 previous days of failing to connect deeply with the heart of God.

People, having failed to make music in their hearts speaking to one another with Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs expect the worship team to give them a spiritual crack cocaine shot in the arm to carry them through the week when worship on Sunday is simply practice for when we will all sing The Song of The Lamb together in heaven. It is getting used to singing together because the rest of the week we feed on God by making music in our hearts and using whatever style of music that helps us to do that.

TRUE REVIVAL

True revival is not a tent meeting when one guy speaks well enough to pump us up on Spiritual caffeine. True revival is an overflow of the deeper life. When enough of us decide to stop being lazy and feed on God's presence, then the testimonies will flow, and we will share them together and that is where lasting revival is birthed. There have been great revivals in the past but they were never maintaining unless individuals decided by the grace of God that they will no longer live on someone else's spiritual leftovers. They will feed themselves because they embrace the truth that if they do not get their life from God then they do not really have life that is worth writing about.

WHAT DO I DO TO CHANGE?

Maybe God is getting a hold of your heart and showing you through His Holy Spirit of Revelation and Wisdom that we do not want to settle any longer for living off of other people's faith and spiritually sleep walking through life. We want more love and we want more power in our life. How do we get this thing rolling?

Well I am going to address this for a few weeks so we will have time to process it, but here are some things there we can do for starters. For this week let's start here.

STEPS TO TAKE

Read and Feed (rest)

- Read Ezekiel One or Isaiah 6 (they both paint an image of God's glory and his throne). Then in the silence dwell on that image of God's throne. Imagine what it will be like to kneel in front of that throne one day. Imagine what it means that we can boldly approach that throne of grace today. In fact that is what your time is all about. Feed on just being with him.
- Have a conversation with God about anything that is on your mind and any questions you want him to answer. Wait long enough in his presence for Him to answer your prayers. If you ask him a question, quiet your mind so you can hear him answer you.
- Write a song, a poem, a question, a name of someone you think God want to save, a devotion, a prayer that expresses your heart of where you are at right now with Him.

Keep It Going

- At least three times each day, pause and come back to that place of resting in Him. Ask him to refresh you and fill you with His Holy Spirit so that when you get busy you will not forget him.

Testify

- Write down anything God has shown you in your time with him that you would like to share with the rest of us. (song, testimony, poem, a prayer, a bible passage that God used to speak to you....)