

A Knowledgeable People

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[0:00] Let's pray. Father of glory, give us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of you.

! Having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we may know what is the hope to which you have called us, what are the riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of your power, power towards us who believe, according to the working of your great might.

Amen. I wear spectacles. That's obvious, right? But these are not just for show.

My eyes have a power of minus 6.5 and minus 7, and if I take them off, I can't really see well. So that's why I wear them, to help me see clearly.

But what about at night? Apparently, I can't see when the lights are off. If you can, please raise your hand.

[1:07] I would love to watch you do that. But the truth is, I need light to see as well. If it wasn't obvious enough, I just made five eyesight-related puns.

But I promise I'm getting to my point. You see, much like physical eyesight, we need spiritual eyesight as well. But why?

We saw a glimpse of that last week. And we'll see a glimpse of it this week too. It is to see the spiritual blessings that Christ has given us.

In other words, it is to see Christ. To see who he is, the King of Kings, and to know what he has done for us on the cross.

And how do we see Christ? Well, the Bible is the spiritual lens to see Christ. But the Holy Spirit is the light that helps illuminate his words and to know him more.

[2:15] So keep your Bibles open to Ephesians 1, verse 15 to 23. And it is my prayer today that God will open our eyes of our hearts and enlighten us.

So that we can know and grasp the hope, inheritance, and power that are already ours. Because Christ is the head over everything for the church. Now, last week, we saw the spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ.

And now in verses 15 and 16, Paul writes for this reason. In other words, because God has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ, he responds with thanksgiving and prayer when he hears news and evidence of God's grace among the people.

How is it evident? Look at verse 15. There are two signs Paul seems to look for. There are faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all God's people.

Elsewhere in Galatians 5, verse 6, Paul writes that the only thing that counts is faith, expressing itself through love. These are people who have come to faith and shown love to God's people in a city known to be associated with pagan worship and magic.

[3:40] And Paul here is not just admiring. He's not saying, Oh, wow, that's wonderful. I'm happy for you. No.

All the information about the Ephesians was not purely knowledge. It prompts him to be grateful and praise for them. He gives thanks to God for them without stopping.

He prays too without stopping as well. You see Paul doing this often. At the end of the letter in chapter 6, verse 18, what does Paul write?

And this raises a question for us.

What moves Paul to pray? For Paul, it was good news. He heard about God's grace at work in the Ephesians, and it moved him to pray, to thank God and to ask for more.

[4:52] But is that why we pray? So often we pray only because we are thinking about ourselves, right? God, give me this.

God, give me that. Very common, isn't it? There's nothing wrong with praying for earthly needs, but do we only pray for these things?

If this is you, can I encourage you to see why Paul prays? It goes higher and stretches further. He sees how God's grace is at work in the Ephesians and can't help but pray for others to see this as well.

So is this why we pray for God's people? Do we pray that they have their spiritual eyes open? God, help me know you.

Help my home fellowship group know you. Help your church persevere. Help us live faithfully. Why not have this prayer and priority in your minds?

[5:58] I suspect for many of us, we pray for the earthly things we want. A lot of times we live as Christians who just want more. More money, better relationships, higher grades, an easier life, etc.

And if we get it, we stop praying. But the beauty of what Paul prays for is that he's praying for something heavenly.

That we will keep growing in our knowledge of Christ. And that something ongoing, something we will never outgrow. So we keep praying.

Isn't that just amazing? So let me ask you this. Do we want to know more of God? Do we know and live in light of what we already have?

Of what God has done for us and given us in Christ? And this brings me to my second point, which is Paul's prayer. What exactly does Paul want the believers to know?

[7:04] What does he pray for? And this prayer is for sight, as we shall see. In verse 17, Paul asks that God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may give believers the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know him better.

Hmm. Don't the Ephesians know Christ? Don't we know Christ? Why do we need to know him better? I think all of us can agree that knowing someone is easy.

All you need to do is ask a few questions. What is your name? Where do you live? But to actually really, really know them, that is difficult.

I just asked my brother, growing up in the same home for 20 years, and I still don't know what his favorite food is. Neither does he know mine, I suspect. You need countless questions and have to spend time to really know someone.

But even then, you can only infer so much because people change. In Mandarin, there is a saying, ■■■■■■.

[8:22] It translates to knowing the person, knowing the face, but not knowing the heart. You know the person, but never fully. Why?

Because human hearts are hidden. Our hearts are not an open book, but God's heart is. He has laid his heart wide open for us across the pages of Scripture.

If the Mandarin proverb is true, to know the heart of someone is to truly know the person. And we have been given the ultimate gift.

We can know the very heart of God. And yet, how is it so often that we do not want to know the heart of the one who made us, who called us his children, who lavished on us every spiritual blessing in Christ, who gave us his Holy Spirit, and whose heart is written for us all to know?

About ten years ago, my father kept a soft-shell turtle, on the screen, as a pet, in a small aquarium outside my house. It's nothing really special.

[9:37] I thought it was a cute pet. One day, it rained heavily, and the next morning, the turtle was gone. I asked my father how he felt, and I remembered him saying nonchalantly, Oh, it's nothing.

A week later, I stumbled upon a book on my father's table when cleaning the house. I had a quick look to see what was inside, and was really surprised when I saw the words, which I will paraphrase to the best of my memory.

My turtle went missing after a heavy rain today. I am heartbroken, and will not keep another pet anymore. I thought I knew what my father was feeling, but didn't really know how he actually felt, until I read what he wrote.

It may be the same for us with Jesus. We think we know Jesus, but it may only be surface level. Sure, we listen on a Sunday.

Maybe we listen to Christian podcasts, or videos, or read commentaries to help us know the Bible better. And sometimes something really speaks to us. But do we read the Bible for ourselves?

[11:03] Hmm, no time. Don't understand. I'll just stick to sermons. Thank you. But how else can we know deeper unless we read his word to know his heart more?

Because my fear is that sometimes I know, I know in my head, but not know in my heart. I know his truths, but I live as though everything is a lie.

I know God is sovereign, but maybe he doesn't have control over this or that matter. I know that God is loving, but maybe not to someone I find unlovable.

I know God is fair and just, but maybe he shows favoritism. Does this sound familiar to some of you?

And I don't blame you because I have been there too. But here's the thing about Jesus. You will never get to the bottom of him.

[12:10] Later in this letter, Paul prays again for the same believers. They would grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know that this love that surpasses knowledge.

So Paul is saying that there's always more of Jesus to discover. You can know his love now, yet there's still so much more to know.

So whatever truths you have known about Jesus, don't stop there. Have that desire to know more. And you find that there is only truth.

But how? Look again at verse 17. What does Paul pray for? Not primarily for comfort, prosperity, safety or an easier life, but he prays that they will know Christ more.

He prays that believers may be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation. The spirit guides us into the truth, not by giving us some new revelation, but by giving us a deeper understanding of God.

[13:20] And this is the light that shines and reveals him when we read his word. The phrase spirit of wisdom is used closely for the Holy Spirit. And Paul may have used it here to let the believers know that the spirit of wisdom and understanding, which Isaiah said would rest on the Messiah.

And Christ now sends him to share with us wisdom and revelation. The spirit brings us to know, understand and live in light of the revelation God has made of himself in Christ and through the spirit.

So again, this is not talking about receiving some new private revelation, but God opening our eyes to what he has already revealed in his word.

So, not yet reading the Bible? Why not try five minutes daily? If you do, good. Before reading, pray. Pray and keep asking God to fill us with the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know him more. But we need all the help we can get.

[14:32] You see, often we can read the words without really seeing what is there. And although we often say we should walk by faith and not by sight, that doesn't mean that we don't need God to open our eyes.

And that's why Paul asks what he asks for in verse 18. He prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened so that we may know more of what we already have in Christ.

Because it's not just head knowledge, it's heart. You can know many, many wonderful things about Jesus, but you're not thanking him, you're not rejoicing in him, you're not living out the hope that he has called us.

I'm sure some have heard or done LASIK before. It's eye surgery to restore your vision. When Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened, he is praying that we would see what truly matters.

As we genuinely seek to know God, the spirit graciously performs spiritual eye surgery in our hearts, opening our eyes to see God for who he is.

[15:46] But what could be so great that Paul prays for believers to know? You see, there are three blessings that are already theirs. First, the hope of his calling.

Second, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. And the third, his incomparably great power to those who believe. Let's start with hope.

Now, what was life like for the Ephesians before Christ? In chapter 2, verse 12, Paul tells us they were separate from Christ.

Paul says that the Ephesians had no hope. They were not recipients of the covenant promises given to Abraham by God.

They were hopeless. And this takes them back to the very beginning of their Christian lives, which now, because of Christ, they have been given a future and a hope.

[16:53] And it's not wishful thinking, but it's the assurance of the reality which is yet to be fully experienced. How can they be so sure? We can look back at earlier at verse 14, because the Spirit has guaranteed our inheritance.

Like those believers, we all have hopes for the future. But Paul wants them to see the glorious future that God has promised. Everything united under Christ.

In other words, how we live today is shaped by what we hope for tomorrow. We see an example of how to live today in 1 John 3, verse 2 to 3.

Knowing He will come again shapes how we live each day and witness to people around us in purity, holiness, and godliness.

We need to see the future clearly, to live in the present faithfully. Paul then mentions the second blessing.

[18:04] Not only is there hope, there is riches as well. He wants believers to discover their wealth. But we shall soon see that it is not physical wealth, but spiritual wealth.

Now when you hear the word inheritance, we usually think about what we get. And last week in verse 14, that's exactly what Paul was talking about.

Our inheritance. But look closely at verse 18. Notice the little word His. His. Glorious inheritance in His holy people.

And so here is Paul's point. It's not only that we have an inheritance in God. God also has an inheritance in us.

We are His treasure. And this is not a new idea. We can see all this throughout Scripture. For example, in Malachi 3 verse 17, the Lord says that His people will be His treasured possession.

[19:20] Do you see it's two sides of the same coin? We have treasure in heaven and we are treasured by Him. But why is it important that our eyes are open to see this?

Because seeing this gives us dignity security and security. We have dignity because we are treasured by the great God in whom our lasting treasure is to be found.

We have security because it is guaranteed and will not perish, spoil, or fade. We only need to believe this because we have nothing to offer Him.

we need to see, know, and appreciate it. When we do, we'll be in awe. So, if we know that we are treasured by God, we know our worth and we don't have to prove it to others.

And likewise, if our treasure in heaven is secure, we'll want to know and treasure the God who gave it to us. And here is where Paul mentions the third blessing that is already ours.

[20:38] His incomparably great power for us who believe, which is my next point, the sight that is the reigning Christ. How great is that power?

Paul doesn't just tell us, he shows us in Christ. Look at verses 19 and 20, that power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Let me repeat that. So the same mighty power for us who believe is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. We were spiritually dead, now given hope, new life, and inheritance in his kingdom.

kingdom. And if God can raise a dead man, there is nothing God cannot do even in the face of hardened hearts. And all this is possible because God did what no one could.

God's power raised Jesus from death, not just restoring him to new life, but transcends it. I wonder if some of us may still think that Jesus is somehow less powerful than God the Father.

[22:11] Like if there is a tier list, maybe you are thinking God the Father number one, Jesus number two, Holy Spirit number three, but verse 20 says they are equal in power.

To be at the right hand of the Father is to have the place of highest honor, power, and equal authority with God the Father. It is the power to rule over everything which we shall see in the next few verses.

We must have sight and the knowledge to understand who he is, full of majesty, power authority, king of kings, lord of lords.

And if God's calling of hope looks back to the beginning and the inheritance looks to the future, then God's power spans this period in between. And for the believers then, they needed to know this power.

You can look at Acts 19 verse 23 to 41 for more context. It's quite long so it won't appear on the screen. Basically, in verses 27 to 28 of Acts 19, many worshipped Artemis as a goddess.

[23 : 29] For the Ephesians then, they needed to know Christ is far above other gods and power. They needed to see that Christ is the sovereign lord who rules over the entire universe and not just a single city.

God His power is more than enough to sustain us, is sufficient for us, as He calls us and brings us safely to the riches of the glory of the final inheritance in heaven.

And Paul wants us to see how incomparable it is. Notice how he uses so many adjectives here in verse 19.

incomparable, great, mighty. Not to lose sight of this surpassing greatness, let me ask a simple question.

Why must we keep praying? Why must we keep praying? I'll give you 10 seconds. You can turn to the person next to you and ask the question. I think there will be many answers.

[24 : 35] Why must we keep praying? I think most answers are probably correct.

But can I suggest a different way of looking at prayer? We must keep praying because we are at war.

Yes, we are at war. What? There is a Latin saying that goes, in times of peace, prepare for war. We may not see it physically, but reality is, there is a spiritual warfare going on. Governed by evil forces and praying is like a walkie-talkie to call for God's help.

We see this picture in chapter 6 verse 12, where the enemy, in effect, wants believers to be spiritually blind, numb, and discouraged. To paraphrase John Piper, prayer is the power to do hard things for the kingdom, not fix my life.

[25 : 52] You wouldn't know what prayer is for until you know life is war. The reality is that they are evil spiritual forces and powers lurking around, which we cannot see.

But guess what? We see Christ seated far above every one of these powers, visible or not. Let's look again at verse 20 and 21.

Christ, having been raised to life, seated at the right hand of God, is now far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in this present age, but the age to come.

The resurrection of Christ leads to him being far above all rule, power, name, now and forever.

There is absolutely nothing that is above Christ.

He is sovereign over everything. No authority, power or dominion can thwart his plans and purposes. None is equal, unassailable.

[27 : 01] And that is true in the present age and the age to come. And it's even more reason to keep praying. Paul goes on in verse 22, and God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

The exaltation of Christ leads to all things far below to be placed under his feet and is appointed head over everything for the church. It echoes Genesis 1, where all things were supposed to be under Adam, the first man to rule over creation, for all things to be under him.

And yet, man's dominion is limited by sin. And now, the man Jesus Christ, who had no sin, the last Adam, restores dominion over creation, not only the physical realm, but also the spiritual realm, and all things are under him.

And there is absolutely nothing below that is not under him. Knowing he is this powerful, we can rest in him.

Knowing he is in control of the things we can't control. Let's take a moment to search our hearts. Do we see Jesus as the risen Lord, supremely over all things?

[28 : 34] Because if we do not, then we see Jesus as just another God. His majesty we see as mediocre, his power we see as powerlessness, his glory we see as garbage.

Brothers and sisters, do not lose sight of who we worship. The God we worship is not just God of this church. He is not just a village God.

He is not just God of this city or this country, but he is God of the whole world, the whole universe.

Do you see that he is God and we are not?

Do you see that Christ is so infinitely big? When we see that, it would make us seem so insignificantly small.

God, yet, he loved insignificant people like you and me, chose to die for sinners like us, and called us his people, a treasured possession.

[29:40] Do you see how deep God's love is for us? How vast beyond all measure, to make a wretch beyond all treasure? And so we see that Christ is far above all powers, and all things are placed under his feet.

God has appointed him over everything. For what? For the church. Look again at the end of verse 22. Do you see how amazing this is?

The one who reigns over everything is not distant from his people. God is bringing all things under Christ, and the church belongs to this reigning king.

Put it another way, most authorities, who have absolute power that we know of, feel distant and unreachable, but not Christ.

He is present with us, as we will see in verse 23, which Paul goes on to say, the church is his body, the fullness of him who feels everything in every way.

[30:54] Verse 23 is honestly quite difficult to explain. The ESV puts it as the fullness of him who feels all in all. It's a massive theological statement, but if you try to break it down, Paul is saying two things.

The church is Christ's body and is filled with Christ. And Christ, who fills the church, fills the universe also. Christ fills the universe with his power and authority, but he fills the church with his intimate personal presence.

It certainly doesn't mean that Christ is incomplete without the church. He is already Lord over everything. He fills the whole universe with his rule.

But there is one place where he fills in a special way, his church. In other words, Christ has already taken up residence amongst his people.

And that's why Paul says that the church is the fullness of Christ. He truly dwells amongst us. Yet later in this letter, Paul also prays that believers would be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

[32:15] And he says that Christ gives gifts to his church so that we may grow into his fullness. Simply put, we still need to grow to be who God meant us to be.

Hence, that's why we also still need Christ to fill us in every way. The fullness of Christ is therefore both our status and our aim.

So brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ, you are not running on empty. The king who rules over the whole universe is at work in his people.

And that means even the most ordinary gathering of church is not ordinary. Christ is here filling his people with himself. And yet that is what we keep praying for, more of Jesus.

And you also see what the church is for. The church shows Christ's rule and presence more visibly in the universe. When we walk out of these doors, we carry his presence with us.

[33:31] And if Christ is our head, we are his body as his representatives. As I end, let me ask, what is the point of seeing Christ for who he is and knowing him better?

On the screen, to quote John's thought, knowledge is the ladder by which faith climbs higher. Knowledge and faith need each other.

Faith cannot grow without a basis of knowledge. Knowledge is sterile if it does not bring forth faith. In other words, faith requires knowledge and knowledge fuels faith.

And we need sight to keep seeing this. That's what Paul has been doing in his prayer. The believers would know God and see what is already ours.

The hope, inheritance and power. Because Christ rules over all things for his church. And therefore, if we want to see Christ rightly, we too must pray.

[34:52] And I hope you can see the cyclical effect of prayer and knowledge as well. Without the light of the spirit, we cannot see. But God wants us to ask for his spectacles and he is more than willing to give them if we only ask.

Because if we do not, we can have all the knowledge in the world, but remain empty of a real relationship with Christ. We can have 20-20 vision or perfect vision, yet still miss seeing him for who he is.

If you are hearing this for the first time, try reading the Gospel of Mark to see who Christ is, what he has come to do and why. Come and talk to the elders if you would like to know more.

If you are a Christian, how is your prayer life like? Do you pray that the eyes of your hearts be open to know Christ more?

Do you pray for others to know him more? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word.

[36 : 09] Help us to keep beholding your glory, majesty and authority. Help us to keep knowing Christ and we pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened to see Christ for who he is our rock, our redeemer, our shepherd, our counselor, prince of peace, mighty God, and so, so much more.

Thank you for being so loving, just, patient, strong, and kind toward us when we were so weak, slow, and impatient. Thank you for your great love which you have lavished on us, and for the hope, inheritance, and power at work within us.
sinners who are entirely undeserving of your grace and mercy. We thank you and give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.