

The Book of Ephesians

Lesson 2: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom -- Ephesians 1:15-23

Have you ever watched someone receive a gift so large they could not take it in all at once? A child on Christmas morning who keeps unwrapping, eyes growing wider, until at last he just sits in the middle of the floor surrounded by more than he can hold. That is something close to what Paul is feeling as he writes. He has just spent eleven verses naming the riches that belong to every believer in Christ. Now he stops, and he prays. He prays that the Ephesians will actually be able to see what they already have.

It is a striking prayer. Paul does not ask that these Christians be given more. They already possess every spiritual blessing. Instead he asks that the eyes of their hearts would be opened, that they would truly grasp what is already theirs. He knows something about the human heart that we often forget: it is entirely possible to be rich and to feel poor, to be loved and to feel forgotten, to be powerful and to live as though we were helpless.

So Paul prays for three things in particular. He asks that they would know the hope of God's calling, the wealth of the inheritance God finds in His own people, and the sheer greatness of the power that is at work in those who believe. And then, almost unable to contain himself, he tells us how great that power is. It is the very power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of God, far above every rival, with all things placed under His feet.

This is not a distant theology lesson. Paul is praying that ordinary believers, people with bills and burdens and doubts, would wake up to the reality that the risen, reigning Christ is the head of the church to which they belong. He is not waiting somewhere to begin His reign. He is reigning now. And the same power that lifted Him from the grave is the power that is quietly at work in us. Paul wants us to see it. So we begin where he begins, by asking God to open our eyes.

Group Discussion: Paul prays not that the Ephesians would receive more blessings, but that they would see what they already have. Why is it so easy for believers to possess great spiritual riches and yet live as though they were poor, and what might help us actually see what is ours in Christ?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own life are you living as though you were spiritually poor, forgetful of what God says is already yours? What is one truth from this passage you most need God to open your eyes to see?

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Study Questions

1. In verse 17 Paul prays that God would give the Ephesians the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. What kind of knowing is Paul praying for, and how is truly knowing God different from merely collecting facts about Him?
2. Paul prays that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened. In what area of your life do you most need God to open your eyes right now, and what keeps you from seeing clearly there?
3. Paul prays that they would know the hope to which God has called them (v. 18). What is the Christian hope Paul has in mind, and how is biblical hope different from the way the world uses that word?
4. A person who has lost hope and a person filled with hope face the same day very differently. Where have you let your hope grow dim, and how would living in the hope of God's calling change the way you face this week?
5. Paul prays that they would know the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints (v. 18). What does it mean that God speaks of His people as His own inheritance and treasure, and what does that reveal about how God regards the church?
6. It is one thing to believe God loves you and another to believe He treasures you, and treasures the believers around you. How would seeing yourself and your fellow Christians as God's prized inheritance change the way you treat them and yourself?
7. In verses 19 and 20 Paul prays that they would know the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us who believe, the same power that raised Christ from the dead. What is this power, and what does it mean that it is at work in ordinary believers?
8. Where in your life do you most need resurrection power right now, in a habit, a relationship, a fear, or a calling that feels beyond you? What would it look like to stop relying on your own strength there and lean on His?
9. In verses 20 through 23 Paul says God raised Christ and seated Him at His right hand, far above all rule and authority, put all things under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church. Where is Christ right now, and what is He doing? How does this picture of a King already reigning differ from the idea that Jesus is still waiting to set up an earthly kingdom in the future?
10. Paul says the reigning Christ has been given as head over all things to the church, which is His body. Looking back over this whole prayer, name one specific way the Lord is using these truths to form you, and how the reign of Christ over your life will shape one decision this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:32–36, God raised Jesus and made Him both Lord and Christ, reigning now; Daniel 2:44, the God of heaven setting up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed; Colossians 1:13, believers already transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son; Philippians 3:20–21, our citizenship in heaven and the power that subjects all things to

Christ; 1 Corinthians 15:24–26, Christ reigning until every enemy, including death, is put under His feet.