

Remembered  
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Ephesians 1:15-23

*"I already possessed what I needed and didn't even know it."* Has that statement ever applied to you? Ever needed a tool for a specific repair or project and just as you were about to go buy it you discovered you already owned that very tool? Ever discovered an un-deposited check or an un-spent gift card you forgot?

We have a real example of finding resources you didn't know were available to you. When my parents needed to move to assisted living and we had no idea how to make their money work, a friend told us about pension benefits from the VA for World War II veterans. Those funds closed the gap to pay for their care. It was a benefit awarded to my Dad because of his position and we had no idea it existed. When Susan's parents made that same move we knew how to apply for her Dad. We had access to the resources needed and didn't even know it.

- Last week we said this letter from the Apostle Paul to the church he planted at Ephesus was written "...to strengthen the doctrine and practice of the believers in Ephesus."<sup>i</sup>
- Paul spent the first three chapters explaining what Jesus did for us through His death, burial, and resurrection; and the last three helping us learn "*how to live in light of the new identity we have in Christ*"<sup>ii</sup>
- In the first fourteen verses of chapter one we learned that followers of Christ should continually praise God because He has chosen us, has purchased us, and has adopted us. In the second part of this chapter Paul described his prayers that the Ephesian church (and all believers) would understand "*the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe.*"
- Sadly, many followers of Christ never get further into their relationship with Him than being grateful for eternal life after we die.
- As amazing as the promise of eternal life is, God also makes wisdom and power available so we can live the life He's called us to NOW.

Big Idea: On top of the promise of eternal life, salvation in Christ gives His followers a treasure trove of resources to live the life He's called us to. Through prayer we can grow in our knowledge of God and His power available to us.

- Paul begins this section with a peek into his prayer closet.

Ephesians 1:15–23 (NLT)  
*Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom*

<sup>15</sup> Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, <sup>17</sup> asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to

give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. <sup>18</sup> I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

- Like a parent to a child, Paul tells these church members specifically how he had been talking to God about them.
- Look at verse fifteen. **What made Paul thankful about this church?**
- We see two important qualities of a Christ-centered church:
  - Strong faith in the Lord Jesus
  - Love for God's people everywhere
- Yes, we need to be strong on truth and in our faith, but it's also about love.
- Chuck Swindoll writes, *"Bible-believing churches need both fidelity to the truth and unconditional love for fellow churches. Without abandoning doctrinal purity on the essentials of the faith, we need to foster unity between churches and between Bible-believing denominations...A church that has truth but lacks love is not a church; it's a giant Bible class cultivating cliques, leading to a clannish mentality, and producing cultlike attitudes of pride, superiority, and exclusivity. That must stop!"*<sup>iii</sup>
- A Christ-centered church is strong faith in Him and love for His people.
- Verse sixteen: Paul prayed for them "constantly." He planted many churches so imagine how long his prayer list was!
- Truth: Believers should pray for other believers. Are we praying regularly for family, friends, and those who are God's servants in ministry? Are we only talking to God about their material or physical needs? Paul says we should be asking God to give them (and us) much more than that!
- Verse seventeen: **What did Paul ask God to give them and why?**
- When asked, "How can I pray for you?" sometimes I have specific needs but generally I just ask them to pray for God's wisdom. It covers so much!
- Specifically, Paul wanted them to have the wisdom and insight to grow in their knowledge of God.
- Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8 (NLT) <sup>8</sup> *"...everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ. [Then in verse ten] <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead."*<sup>iv</sup>
- There are many practical things we can and should pray to God about for other believers, but our first and highest prayer for fellow believers should be for spiritual wisdom and insight to grow in their knowledge of God.
- Quoting Swindoll again: *"Through both wisdom and revelation, we enjoy a fuller understanding of our heavenly Father. When that happens, we're no longer "clueless," walking around life as senseless victims of*

*circumstances. Instead, we see through things. We begin to grasp God's perspective on the world. The result? With great eagerness, we submit to His authority and trust in His promises."*<sup>v</sup>

- Look at verse eighteen. **How do followers of Christ get that insight?**
- Illumination is the Holy Spirit who lives in each believer giving us the "knowledge of divine things."<sup>vi</sup>
- J.I. Packer writes, "As by inspiration he provided Scripture truth for us, so now by illumination he interprets it to us. Illumination is thus the applying of God's revealed truth to our hearts, so that we grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth."<sup>vii</sup>
- How do we access that illumination? Packer: "The way to benefit fully from the Spirit's ministry of illumination is by serious Bible study, serious prayer, and serious response in obedience to whatever truths one has been shown already."<sup>viii</sup>
- Back to verse eighteen: **Did Paul ask God to illuminate their minds? Where DID he pray this illumination would occur? Why there?**
- Warren Wiersbe: "The inability to see and understand spiritual things is not the fault of the intelligence but of the heart. The eyes of the heart must be opened by the Spirit of God."<sup>ix</sup>
- This may be why we sometimes feel we are banging our "head against the wall" for God's wisdom. Instead of banging our head we need to ask Him to talk to our "heart." His Spirit communicates at the heart level.
- Remember the lyric: "Open the eyes of my heart Lord, I want to see you?"<sup>x</sup>
- Am I asking God daily to help our heart to see Him for who He is?
- Verse eighteen: **What did Paul pray God would help them to understand? What is our hope in Christ?**
- We ask God to help us understand the "confident hope" we have as believers. Wiersbe: "...hope in the Bible does not mean "hope so," like a child hoping for a doll or a bike at Christmas. The word carries with it "assurance for the future." The believer's hope is, of course, the return of Jesus Christ for His church (1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 John 3:1-3). When we were lost, we were "without hope" (Eph. 2:12); but in Jesus Christ, we have a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3) that encourages us day by day."<sup>xi</sup>
- It's interesting that Paul called believers Jesus' inheritance. Usually we think of OUR inheritance in Christ but we are also HIS inheritance. A King is only a King if He has subjects. "At the time of the resurrection of believers...God will inherit those whom He has purchased at a great price according to the riches of His grace (v. 7.)"<sup>xii</sup>
- I think in many ways verse nineteen is the best part! Paul prayed for the Ephesian church members and for every believer today: "...that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him...the same mighty power<sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand..."<sup>xiii</sup>
- Back to how often we "bang our heads against the wall" trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. We sometimes suffer from chronic "Spiritual" amnesia and forget that salvation gives us access to POWER.

- That's why followers of Christ have to ask Him DAILY to keep us mindful that the *"same power that raised Jesus from the dead"* is available to equip us to live the life He called us to live when He saved us.
- Are we asking God daily for His power in our lives and in the lives of other believers? Do we really believe we need His power? Are we desperate?
- The last three verses remind us of why we can have such confident hope that Jesus can meet every need in this life and provide eternal life forever.

<sup>21</sup> Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. <sup>22</sup> God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup> And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Wouldn't it be tragic to have exactly what you need and not know it; to literally have a storeroom of valuable treasure from God and be clueless?
- Long before we were born there was a "media mogul" named William Randolph Hearst. He was a collector of expensive and rare art. As the story goes, *"...one day Mr. Hearst found a description of some valuable items that he felt he must own, so he sent his agent abroad to find them. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were in Mr. Hearst's warehouse. Hearst had been searching frantically for treasures he already owned! Had he read the catalog of his treasures, he would have saved himself a great deal of money and trouble."*<sup>xiv</sup>
- Sadly, many followers of Christ never get further into their relationship with Him than being grateful for eternal life after we die. As amazing as that is, on top of the promise of eternal life, salvation in Christ gives His followers a treasure trove of resources to live the life He's called us to.
- Through prayer we can grow in our knowledge of God and His power.
- This week let's add to our prayer list for ourselves and other believers who we love these requests:
  - Asking God to give us spiritual wisdom and insight so that we can grow in our knowledge of Him.
  - That the eyes of our hearts will be opened so we can understand the confident hope he has given to those He called.
  - That we will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. The same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.
  - This week let's not stop at praying only for material or physical needs, let's pray to *"know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead."*<sup>xv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 159). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> ~~ibid~~

<sup>iii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 3:8, 10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publishers.

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 3:8, 10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 178). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vi</sup> Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs* (p. 154). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

<sup>vii</sup> ~~ibid~~

<sup>viii</sup> ~~ibid~~

<sup>ix</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 15). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/michaelwsmith/opentheeyesofmyheart.html>

<sup>xi</sup> ~~ibid~~

<sup>xii</sup> Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 620). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>xiii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Eph 1:19–20). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>xiv</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>xv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 3:10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.