

Eph 1:15–23 (ESV) For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ⁽¹⁶⁾ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ⁽¹⁷⁾ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ⁽¹⁸⁾ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ⁽²⁰⁾ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ⁽²¹⁾ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ⁽²²⁾ And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ⁽²³⁾ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

1. We are studying this prayer filled with wonderful petitions for the believer

- A. Paul has taught these believers incredible truths beyond human comprehension
 - 1). One verse after another explaining the spiritual riches we possess in Christ
 - 2). It seems – he thinks this is beyond human understanding – so he stops and prayer
 - a). He asks that the Spirit would help them understand what all this means
- B. He will repeat this pattern in chapter 2 – More great truths of the believer's position in Christ
 - 1). Again he will stop and pray that God will grant understanding

2. Last week we saw this prayer was only for the genuine believers

- A. We also saw how Paul knew they were genuine – two cardinal characteristics gave proof
 - 1). They had placed their faith in Christ and they were loving other believers
 - 2). Faith in Christ is where life begins – love for others is the evidence that life has begun
- B. If these two traits are in you -
 - 1). You have placed your faith in Chris as your Savior
And you see the evidence of that faith being real – there is a love that wasn't there before
 - a). Then this prayer is for you also

Transition: Let's dig into this incredible prayer – start by introducing it

Introduction to This Remarkable Petition

1. Paul is praying that the believer would enjoy their Christianity

- A. So many have all these resources given to them but they don't enjoy them at all
 - 1). They are like the man Jerry Bridges spoke about in "Gospel for real life"

Jerry Bridges, Gospel for Real life: Some years ago our pastor told an unusual story about a Southern plantation owner who left a \$50,000 inheritance to a former slave who had served him faithfully all his life. That was quite a sum of money in those days—perhaps equivalent to half a million dollars today The lawyer for the estate duly notified the old man of his inheritance and told him that the money had been deposited for him at the local bank. Weeks went by and the former slave never called for any of his inheritance. Finally the banker called him in and told him again that he had \$50,000 available to draw on at any time. The old man replied, "Sir, do you think I can have fifty cents to buy a sack of cornmeal?" Not having handled money most of his life, this former slave had no comprehension of his wealth. As a result, he was asking for fifty cents when he could easily have had much, much more.

- 2). I would say that is an apt illustration for many believers
 - a). Spiritually rich beyond imagination– recipients of these inexhaustible resources of God
 - b). Yet they enjoy no more peace, joy, freedom than the unbeliever
- B. God's riches are given to us to use
 - 1). So we can rest in him – stop trying to earn the acceptance we already have
 - 2). So we can stop worrying about life – trusting his promises to provide
 - 3). So we can start enjoying the fullness of life he came to give to us

Point: So Paul prays they would understand who they are in Christ and what they have in Christ

- A. Understand this enough to use it – to enjoy it – to have it change the way you view life

2. The order in this petition is important – Paul as always begins with God

“God give them revelation of who you are and what you’ve done.”

- A. Many of our problems in the Christian life is because our ideas are so man-centered
- 1). We run everything through ME! I’m the center of everything – my needs are the priority
 - a). Salvation is all about me being forgiven
 - b). Sanctification is all about me being delivered from sin
 - 1a). Why is this important? Because sin robs ME of MY happiness
 - 2). So much of Christianity today starts with man and works towards God
 - a). Since man needs this – thinks this – then God must be like this... Salvation must do this
 - b). We filter everything through US – even what we think God is like
- B. Christianity always begins with God – what has God done
Then what our response should be in light of that – let me show you how it works
Example: We have materialistic needs – therefore we think God should respond this or that way
- 1). When God doesn’t meet our expectations we panic – we lose our joy – we get frustrated
 - a). That’s because we’ve started with us – MY NEED MET IN MY WAY - MY TIMING
 - 2). If we start with God – He is perfect and will meet our needs perfectly
That will be in his way AND in his timing FOR his glory
 - a). We can rest – it will happen when he chooses and how he chooses and when he chooses
 - b). Since he is perfect – I can rest thankfully and joyfully – he knows what he is doing
 - 1a). If I’m waiting it is because he know that is the best thing for me
He is working in me character – it is all for my good
 - 3). If I start with man then everything falls apart quickly
BUT when I start with God then everything like dominoes will line up under that truth
 - a). Since God is like this – has done that – has promised that
Then the logical response to that is.... Rest, joy, patience, peace
- C. The problem with a man-centered Christianity – it creates spiritual brats who are miserable
- 1). Throwing fits because God is not doing things the way they want
 - a). They want their needs met NOW – they don’t care about Christian character
 - 1a). They don’t care that the wait is producing patience and perseverance – Christlikeness
They just want what they want – and if God doesn’t meet that – He’s not loving
- D. Can I suggest something – make it a lot simpler for you – get out of the way – Put God first
Mt 6:33 (ESV) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- 1). Seek him first and rest – he will bring into your life everything you need – every necessity
Ps 34:9–10 (ESV) Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! ⁽¹⁰⁾ The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
 - 2). Start with God – what is he like?
Augustine: God is more anxious to bestow his blessings on us than we are to receive them.
 - a). But you must learn to trust in his timing – his wisdom – his ways
- E. This prayer is all about God – what he has done for the believer
Transition: Let’s look at the petition for these believers – interesting where he begins

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Eph 1:17 (ESV) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, *may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*

Eph 1:17 (NIV) I 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.*

Transition: Who is this talking about? Some say it is Jesus Christ. I don't think so – context helps

So That You May Know Him Better

1. The question. Know who better? Who is the “him?” - Keep reading

A. Some suggest it is talking about Jesus – it can't be – context helps

Eph 1:18–20 (ESV) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which *he has called you*, what are the riches of *his* glorious inheritance in the saints, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and what is the immeasurable greatness of *his* power toward us who believe, according to the working of *his* great might ⁽²⁰⁾ *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*

1). Who called you – it was the Father

1 Pe 5:10 (ESV) And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace, who has called you* to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

a). The call comes from God the Father – it is a call to faith in Christ
That results in eternal glory

B. Then v. 20 clearly states that it is speaking of the Father

Eph 1:20 (ESV) that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

1). The *he* of these verses is different than Christ – it is the Father who raised Christ from the dead

Question: Why does this matter? It brings some necessary balance

A. We can so concentrate on Christ the Father becomes almost an afterthought

B. Even heard the Father is the mean God of the OT – Christ the nice God saving us from his wrath

1). He is the one who SO loves us he sent his Son to provide a way of forgiveness

Jn 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

2). The Father is the one who chose us before the foundation of the world
And who calls us to Christ to be saved

3). 1 Peter 1:3 tells us it was because of the Father's great mercy we were given new birth

4). Eph 1 tells us those given new birth are adopted be adopted as his children

a). Scripture tells us this brought the Father great pleasure

5). Peter tells us that the Father will keep us (guard us) until we are with him (1 Peter 1:5)

6). Paul tells us the Father will finish that work of salvation he began in us until we are with him (Phil 1:6)

2. So Paul prays that the believer would grow in their knowledge of God

A. That they would understand how great he is – how loving to give all these blessings

Thought: Can I suggest we are face-to-face with our supreme need today

A. This is what the church needs more than anything else – to KNOW God

1). We need this much more than clever techniques and fog machines – new technologies

2). We need to know him well enough that he captures our imagination and affections

a). To be so captured by him that we leave the world behind to joyfully follow him

B. The abundant life Jesus promised is found right here – knowing God intimately

1). This is the channel that the incredible potential of Christianity flows into our life through

a). You can't have his joy – his peace – his rest – his contentment

When you are not walking closely to him

- b). The more distant you are – the less you experience these things
- 2). Can I say that you know this – everybody I talk to that has wandered away from God
 - a). They all talk about how they miss that joy, peace and contentment

Transition: So Paul prays that we would grow in our knowledge of God

- A. This is so important – let's dig in a bit here – try to figure out what this knowledge is

Knowledge Defined

1. It is not speaking of a superficial knowledge – a mental assent

- A. Yeah. I believe in God. The big man upstairs.
 - 1). This is not just an intellectual, theoretical or general knowledge that there is a God
 - a). The Mormons and Muslims have that but they aren't saved
 - b). The devil has that but he isn't saved
- B. This is an intimate knowledge that comes when we are in relationship with somebody
 - 1). It is important we agree there is a God – so God commanded his creation to proclaim him
 - a). Day after day – to all people everywhere his creation preaches a sermon
What you see is no accident – there is a divine hand behind this
 - 2). But the believer is one who has gone beyond a general understanding there is a God out there
 - a). To a personal knowledge of that God – they know him – they are his child
 - b). Paul prays I want you to know him more! To the fullest! I want you to enjoy him
 - 1a). That's why we were created – and life doesn't really work until that is happening
 - 2a). If you aren't walking closely with God – enjoying him – there is a natural void

2. Notice the means of this knowledge (This is important)

Eph 1:16–17 (ESV) I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ⁽¹⁷⁾ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation...*

- A. This knowledge we need to know God better is given by him to us through the Spirit

1 Co 2:9–10 (ESV) But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— ⁽¹⁰⁾ *these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*
- B. We come to a greater knowledge of him through his self-revelation to us
 - 1). We don't just imagine what God is like – or what God likes - we will always get that wrong
 - a). We come up with a god who is nothing like the God of the Bible
 - 2). Therefore the Spirit authored a book that tells us who God is and what he is like
 - a). A book that instructs us how to go to him – how to live a life that pleases him
 - b). How to live a life that results in enjoying these blessings he has given to us

Point: This book – this divine revelation gives us *wisdom* Paul says = **wisdom is the art of living**

- A. The Bible feeds us truth – the Spirit gives us understanding of that truth
 - 1). When we apply that truth correctly – when we seek God like it says we should
When false gods are chased out of our hearts
When our goals are purified – when we line up with the truth of that Biblical revelation
 - a). We stop living like fools – we start living lives that God calls wise
- B. This is why we want to be disciplined in the Word
 - 1). It is the instrument of revelation the Spirit uses to lead us into this greater knowledge of God
 - 2). It is the instrument he uses to clear out all those lies that keep us from him

Ro 12:1–2 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ⁽²⁾ *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

- a). You walk in a toxic world – those pollutants are constantly filling your head
Those Satanic lies that pull at you – tug at you – attempting to cool your love for God
- b). The way we fight that is through the Spirit authored – life giving – heart purifying word
- c). Stop reading this book and the world naturally starts to corrupt your thinking
 - 1a). You've stopped applying the cleansing agent of Scripture
And God slowly but surely is replaced in your affections by other things

Thought 1: So you want to have this Spirit given revelation that leads to wisdom – the art of living

- A. You must read the Word of God – that is how it primarily comes to you
- B. And let me add one more angle – you must stop doing those things that block that from happening
 - 1). Sin will rob you of all this – sin can stop this prayer from being answered in your life
Is 59:1–2 (HCSB) Indeed, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear. ⁽²⁾ *But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide His face from you so that He does not listen.*
 - a). Rather than God giving you revelation of himself – he fades away
 - b). Rather than your prayers being answered – he stops listening
- C. If we choose sin we are not living wisely are we – we are hindering our walk with the Lord
 - 1). We are cutting off the true source of joy and peace – the source of blessing and rest
We end up striving – we become anxious – we are at odds with our creator
- D. Psalms gives us a very interesting angle on wisdom = where it begins – the mindset

Ps 111:10 (ESV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...

- 1). This is about attitude - The Spirit wants to give us revelation that leads to wisdom
 - a). But to be able to receive that – we must have this fear – this reverence
 - b). This reverence that causes us to live our lives according to God's perspective
 - 1a). A willingness to base our decisions upon his book – his revelation
 - 2a). It is a desire to please him with our lives
- 2). This is the person who will be given more and more revelation – they will know God intimately
 - a). Listen to this incredible promise for those who obey
Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, *and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*"
 - 1a). Fantastic pay-off for obedience – He will manifest himself to me
 - 2a). I will not live without his touch upon my life
Through the Spirit he will give me more and more revelation – more understanding
I will be thrilled by who he is and by what he does – He will be alive in my life

Thought 2: Of course the Spirit is going to lead you to other things to know God better

All these you will find in the book he wrote – filled with divine revelation to give you wisdom

- A. He is going to lead you to prayer - you can't know somebody you don't spend time with
 - 1). If you read the book without adding prayer it's like reading a biography of somebody
 - a). You may be amazed but a relationship isn't being established - strengthened
 - b). Intimacy requires time spent together
- B. He's going to lead you into fellowship with other believers
 - 1). I learn so much more about God as I talk with you – different angles

- a). Tuesday mornings been amazing! The depth – the new things I've never thought about

Transition: So Paul is praying for those that are saved – that they grow in their knowledge of God

- A. Not only in the facts about God – but in the experience of God – the intimacy with God
B. Let me say – you want this to be the desire of your heart – the passion that drives you – thrills you
1). As you are driven to him – you draw near to that which truly satisfies

This Was the Desire of David

Ps 42:1–2 (ESV) As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ⁽²⁾ My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

1. He wasn't saying "I long for another fact about God"

- A. He did long for that – therefore – he read the Scriptures – "Sweeter than honeycomb"

But here he is desiring intimate contact with the God of those facts – the living God

- 1). He desired a personal touch from Him – Later he says in Psalms

Ps 63:1–2 (ESV) O God, you are my God; *earnestly* I seek you; my soul *thirsts* for you; my flesh *faints* for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ⁽²⁾ So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

- a). What a great desire – I have beheld your power and glory and *I want more!*

- 2). That's the way it is with God – the more we know him the more we want to know him
The more we experience him the more we want to experience him

- a). Conversely the more we give ourselves to the world – the more we want the world

- B. Therefore Ps. 34:8 says "Taste and see that the Lord is good." = Taste so you'll hunger for more!

- 1). The more you taste the greater the appetite

- 2). Great verse but that Psalm continues on

Ps 34:8–10 (ESV) Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! ⁽⁹⁾ Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for *those who fear him have no lack!* ⁽¹⁰⁾ The young lions suffer want and hunger; *but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*

- a). Those who live for him will have all they need

Those who seek him will lack no good thing

- b). How many wear themselves ragged trying to provide for themselves

God says fear me = live for my glory

Seek me in all things = I will provide for you – I will take care of you

Mt 6:33 (ESV) *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

- 1a). Put him first and rest

- 2a). Concentrate on pursuing him and he will add everything you need

Transition: David knew his God intimately – he didn't block that relationship with sin

- A. There were some failures – but his life was characterized by obedience – man after God's heart

- 1). Therefore the channels remained open – God just kept manifesting himself to David

- 2). The more David saw God the more he wanted of him – he tasted and that developed a hunger

- B. Let's look at one other man who felt the same way

This Was the Desire of Moses

Ex 33:18 (ESV) Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

1. Moses had already experienced so much of God

- A. When Moses was in the wilderness God appeared to him in a burning bush

- B. In Egypt he saw God's might & power in the miracles & the ten plagues

- C. On the way to Canaan he saw God part the Dead Sea and swallow up the Egyptian pursuers
- D. He saw God's glory in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire which led Israel in the wilderness
- E. He built a Tabernacle for God and saw the Lord's glory shining over the Holy of Holies
- F. He had enjoyed an intimacy with God beyond imagination

Exo 33:11 (NIV) The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend...

2. But Moses wasn't satisfied – he still wanted more of God

So after all that – his desire is this: Exo 33:18 (NIV) “Now show me your glory.”

- A. He longed for God – he pursued God – God blessed this desire – he always does
 - 1). If you really want God – above everything else – I guarantee you will find him

2 Ch 16:9 (NET) Certainly the LORD watches the whole earth carefully and is ready to strengthen those who are devoted to him.

 - a). The Lord is just watching – when a saint really wants to know him
When a saint puts him first – he shows himself mighty to them
- B. So many times we talk a good Christianity – I really want God
 - 1). But really we want the things of the world – they are what satisfy us
They are what we pursue – then we wonder why we never experience God
 - a). Do you think he's going to play second fiddle – dance to your tune?

Point: Paul prays these saints will know God – that God will work that desire in

- A. That the Spirit will so open up revelation – so move upon their heart that God becomes their desire
 - 1). That the truth in the Scriptures will liberate them from the deadening pull of the world
And make them wise – where they start to live for what really counts - eternity
 - a). Where they will begin to value what God values
 - b). How foolish to live for that which you can only keep momentarily

CONCLUSION

1. Here is what I suggest – Get your Bible out and read it in a prayerful attitude

- A. And cry out “God let me see you in here. Thrill me with who you are and what you've done!”
 - 1). “Capture my heart. Turn me from those worthless things I love.”
- B. Daily pursue him until the Spirit opens up these words of revelation to your understanding
 - 1). Then you will begin to live in a way that is wise
Pursuing the only one that truly matters in the end