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Eyes To See The King

Eph. 1:15-23

Couldn't help but read Paul's thanks for the Ephesians and be thankful for you! Do not cease to pray for you—doesn't mean he never stops. It means that when he prays he thanks God for them...and here Paul transitions seamlessly into one of his prayers for the Ephesians church starting in verse 17 and it continues through 19.

"That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened"

Now this spirit He refers to here I take to be the Holy Spirit because of its connection with the word revelation. This word means to uncover something that's hidden. Paul has in mind that there is something hidden from the Ephesians, something they can't see, and the only way they are going to see that is if the Holy Spirit reveals it to them. Now you may ask, don't these people already have the Holy Spirit? Haven't they already hoped in Christ? And the answer is yes (cf. 1:1-13)! Then, why is Paul asking God to give them the Spirit? This is a very important question. And that answers starts with a phrase in vs. 17, "the knowledge of him."

You see when we repent of our sin and believe on Christ, that's when we really meet Him for the first time. And that's wonderful. But He doesn't want to just shake hands with you and ride off to save someone else. He wants you to *know* Him. Not believe he exists—like you believe gravity. Not know facts about him—like I know facts about George Washington. He want you to personally know *Him*.

This truth lies at the center of the Christian faith and we can't forget this or downplay it because it may seem strange to our culture—in fact if you're just checking out Christianity today I want to make it really clear why we're all here today and it's not to be good people or learn Christian values. We are here because we believe there is a God who created the universe, who put the stars in the sky, who keeps all the planets in orbit, who commands every blade of grass and every grain of sand on the seashore, who was never created and will never end (or even get older!), who is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good—and who can be personally known. We believe that God of the universe has invited us into a personal relationship with Himself. And I hope that sounds almost crazy to believe because if it doesn't I might not have said it right. This is an astonishing, glorious, truth!

But that's exactly what this text says. And this knowledge of God doesn't just happen when you get saved. Otherwise Paul wouldn't be praying for it. These people are already saved. They've met God. But there is a kind of hope and riches and power that they still have yet to grasp. There is perspective on life and self and God and the world that still needs to be brought into focus for them. And this is what the Spirit does. He goes to work helping believers see the full beauty and glory of the God they've trusted in. It's a process! **2 Cor. 3:18**—The Spirit helps me see his glory...he does it by opening the eyes of their heart "having the eyes of our heart enlightened"... **Magic Eye.** Sherlock Holmes would always tell Watson, "You see but you do not observe."

And in the same way, when it comes to seeing Jesus, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and gradually reveals to us the glory and beauty and majesty of The God we've trusted. He helps us fall in love with the God

who's loved us before the foundation of the world. And when we do, everything is brought into perspective for us and we're able to enjoy the privileges that are now ours in Christ. Paul knows this. That's why he specifically asking for it here...that as our eyes are opened and we increased in the knowledge of God, we would know, vs 18 "The hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and incomparably God's power towards us who believe..." The hope, the value, the power these belong to us as children of God. But unless the eyes of our hearts see God for who He is, and realize we are children of the King—we won't live into those privileges. We will be children of God and choose to live like orphans.

Imagine there was a king who lived in a huge palace. And this king enjoyed all the privileges of royalty he sat on a throne, wore nice clothes and ate nice food. Well this king has a big heart and he goes outside of the palace to the market place and sees a boy living in the slums who been completely abandoned. And he has compassion for the child and decides to adopt him. The child can't believe it. He's given finest clothing, and the best food, and the best toys—because when you're the son of a king, you enjoy the privileges of royalty. And that night he learns he gets a bedroom in the palace all to himself, and after he puts on his pajamas his dad tucks him in and says, "Did you ever think you'd be a prince? Well you are. Don't forget it. Good night son."

And the king comes to his room the next morning to give him his eggo waffle and his Flintstone vitamin. And realizes that his child isn't there. He starts to panic. Did he leave? Did he not like it here? So he looks all over for him. He's nowhere in the palace. And he finds him, dressed in his royal clothes begging for money and eating scraps that people throw on the ground. And his Father finds him and says son, what are you doing? He said I'm trying to do the best I can to make it. Trying to get a penny or two so I can eat and live maybe make something of myself one day. And the king said, "Son, have you forgotten who you are. You don't have to live like this anymore. You're not an orphan anymore. You're my son. You're royalty. All the privileges of my kingdom belong to you. And you need to live into those privileges. You need to live like who you really are."

And it's the same with us. Adopted by the king of the universe, inheriting the world, given every spiritual blessing, about to rule with Jesus over his new creation, and begging for people's praise and approval. Hoping that maybe we'll be something someone day. But you don't have to do that. Because the truth is that God had a Son who from eternity past enjoyed all the privileges of royalty. And he gave up those privileges—he left the palace at great cost to himself so that you come in and that his privileges as a son of God could become yours. And Paul's praying here by understanding that the king is now your Father you'd realize who you really are, realize you've been given the king and the kingdom...and live like it.

And in order for you to do that, in order for the Ephesians to do that, Paul wants them to know three things—Three privileges that belong to us because we have God as Father: I can summarize them in three words: Hope. Value. Power. First hope.

Paul asks that God would help them know vs. 18, "what is the hope to which he has called you."

What is hope? Well, in the way we use the word, hope it's our desire for something in the future that's uncertain. I don't say I hope I'm married later today. That's a sure thing. We use the word hope to express desires for things that aren't sure. I hope I have a pleasant afternoon. I hope my team wins. But this is not what the Bible means when it talks about the hope that we have. You see worldly hope is rooted in circumstances. Biblical hope is rooted in calling. Look at our hope in vs. 18 it's the "hope to which you've been called"—Paul just done talking about this calling in vss. 3-14—we've been adopted and forgiven, and given an inheritance—that's what we've been called to—that's our hope.

Which means that our hope isn't in our circumstances or achievement or people's approval, or anything like that—we may or may not get those things. But with biblical hope there's really no element of probability. When it comes to our hope biblically, there's no maybe. That's the difference in biblical hope and worldly hope. You see worldly hope says, "Look forward to what you might get" Biblical hope says, "Look forward to what's already yours in Christ." Worldly hope is fueled by a possibility. Biblical hope is fueled by a guarantee.

And I can't tell you how many folks I see placing their hope in things they're not guaranteed. I'm not talking about little h hopes like I hope for a good day. I'm talking about big H hopes where people are placing their hope for a full and meaningful life in career and beauty and kids and achievements. They're not bad things, they're just not a sure things, and when you put your hope in them not only is that idolatry but because you're not guaranteed those things you spend so much time worrying about them. This is why we worry so much—we place our hopes in things that we aren't promised. We want kids, but God hasn't promised that. Our hope is in the faithfulness of God. And the measure of God's faithfulness isn't children. The measure of God's faithfulness is the cross. And we can't afford to put our hope anywhere else.

Paul knows that we're going to struggle with misplacing our hopes, because of sin our hopes are broken, that's why he's praying that we would realize that we would realize and live into the hope we have as children of the king. Think for just one second if you thought like this all the time. Now I'm not suggesting you say this—but it would be very socially awkward—imagine having a conversation with someone and y'all were just going back and forth and "My dad's a lawyer—My dad's the king of the universe." "I'm going to live it up this weekend—I'm going to live forever." "I'm going to buy a Ferrari, I'm going to sit on God throne." "People respect my opinion—I'm going to judge angels." I'm going to inherit my dad's estate—I'm going to inherit the world." That is socially awkward but it's theologically correct! Don't forget the hope—the sure things—the inheritance—that you have. Number 2 value.

He asks that God would help you know **"what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."**

Now we've talked about the fact that we have an inheritance, but this verse is very interesting—it says that God has a glorious inheritance. I remember being surprised years ago when I read this text. Like God, has some inheritance coming to him? Wonder what that might be seeing as he already owns everything, made everything, has everything. What could God possibly inherit that he doesn't already have? And I remember looking carefully at this verse and was stunned at what I saw. God, as the glorious, reigning, supreme being in the universe, says in crystal clear terms: my glorious inheritance—is you! You are what I want! Believer in this room today, let this sink in God has multitudes of angels singing his praises, infinite power infinite resources at his disposal and his inheritance, his glorious prize is redeemed sinners. He treasures you. He slayed his Son—to have you. Surely how much you love something can be seen in what you're willing to give up to have it. What would you slay your son to have? Which means that if you're a believer, God wants you more than you want anything in this life. He sings songs over you. **Zeph. 3:17**. What could possibly make you feel more valuable that the God of the universe looking at you with all your sin and shortcomings and singing because he gets you as his inheritance! And this is so important for us when it comes to our identity. Everyone lives for a verdict.

Listen you were made to receive praise and approval. You were made to hear the words "well done." You can't live life just telling yourself you're wonderful and valuable. It won't work. You need outside affirmation. You have to have it. And you have it. You have it from the king. Paul is praying that you

would understand what God thinks about you so that you don't waste your life building an identity based on what others think about you; that you would be so enthralled with his praise that you don't live for everyone else's. And it's only when we see how valuable we are before God that we're not enslaved to that. It changes our identity.

Friends, the glorious truth of the Gospel is not just that you're receiving an inheritance, but that you are the inheritance. It's one thing to say, "I'm receiving an inheritance." It's another thing to say, "I am the inheritance". "I'm what God gets." That's what it says. Believers are the reward Christ purchased for God. And that may sound bold but it's exactly who you are—and when you try to build your identity on yourself and your own achievements and the praise of others, you're like the adopted son of the king back in the slum hoping that one day he might make something of himself. You've forgotten that you are something because the King has made you something. You are the glorious inheritance of the King of Kings. Don't forget. Lastly power.

"And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Paul wants the Ephesians to know they have very power of God available to them. The same power that rose Jesus from the dead. He's made his power available to them, in fact, Romans 8 says that he's put His Spirit into them and in you to help you put sin to death and advance his kingdom. And that is only possible because vs 20 God has "raised him from the dead and seated at the right hand in the heavenly places for above all rule, authority power and dominion and ever name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." These words, rule authority, power, dominion—this is language that the Ephesians would have associated with the spiritual forces represented in all the witchcraft and Artemis worship in Ephesus. The Ephesians know what we often consign to Hollywood movies; that there is a real spiritual world with forces of evil—in Eph. 6:12 he'll refer to them as "the cosmic power over the present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil." And Paul wants to make it abundantly clear, that while there are still battles to fight, the God has won the war. "There is no power in hell, or any who can stand..." Christ has conquered in his death and resurrection. And note his posture. It's significant that Paul says that Christ is seated. He's pacing in heaven biting his nails about how this thing is going to turn out. He is seated. Rankin Willbourne says that Christ seated is a visual picture of the words, "It Is Finished". The war has been won! Which means that we don't fight for victory, we fight from victory. Christ has conquered and there is nothing that can stop him working through his church...look with me

Vs. 22 "And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Christ was not raised from the dead to be the head of a charity organization, or a school, or a political party, or a country. He was raised to be the head of the church—the bible calls the church Christ's body. It's who he died for. Eph. 5 says that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. God's is saving sinners through the church. He's displaying his wisdom through the church. He's offering hope to the world through the church. He's guarding the faith of believers through the church. Compassion International and World Vision, and International Justice Mission those are all wonderful ministries but make no mistake about it—the local church is the hope of the world. That's what Christ died for, that's what he's designed to be the vehicle to extend blessing to the world, and that's where he's placed his presence. Vs. 23 is one of the hardest to translate in the whole book, but the idea here is that Christ, who is filled with God, fills his church. Colossians says that in Christ, the fullness of deity was pleased to dwell. And that's the idea here that the Lord Jesus—as completely God and totally divine—fills church. Which not only means that church is unique it means the church is invincible.

I hear people panicking all the time...church isn't in a danger of dying. People quote all these statistics that the church is decreasing and the truth is only certain pockets are decreasing—according to a recent Washington Post article by David Haskell, it's largely the mainline churches. The church isn't dying, things are just being clarified—we're just seeing who's really following a resurrected king and who's just doing cultural religion. We're seeing that nominal churchianity fizzle out. And if there's any doubt in your mind let me just remind you that in Mt. 16 Jesus looked at Peter and told him that he would build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Christ has come to give you hope rooted in a calling that's guaranteed, dignity in being god's glorious inheritance, and he's come in power to disarm the cosmic forces of darkness and fill his church with his presence so that we can walk together side by side fighting the good fight of faith—until the day when we see him face to face. And my prayer for you this morning is that God would open the eyes of your heart—so that you would know that—and you would live like it's true.