

Ephesians

1:15-23

Introduction

“God has opened the eyes of your heart.” That is the meaning of the words Paul used. In verse eighteen, the phrase “the eyes of your understanding” literally translates, “the eyes of your **heart**.” We normally think of the heart only as the seat of our emotions. When the Bible uses the word heart, it means the entire inner person – emotions, mind, and will.

The eyes of your heart “being enlightened” means that you have *already been* enlightened. Paul was referring to what he had just said in verses three through fourteen. Through the operation of the Spirit of God, the Word of God has opened the eyes of your heart to the truth that all the fullness of heaven’s spiritual blessings already belong to you. Now you need only to **appropriate** them.

It was Paul’s desire that his readers – including you and I – would appropriate all of heavens spiritual blessings each day in an ever-increasing experience. To do so we need what he called “knowledge”:

1. In verse seventeen, we need “the knowledge of Him...”
2. In verse eighteen, we need to “know” certain other things.

The words for “knowledge” are different in each verse. In verse seventeen, the word means to know *intimately*; in verse eighteen, the word means to know *insightfully*. We need intimacy with God and insight from God in order to appropriate our spiritual blessings each day in an ever increasing experience.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 God Has Opened The Eyes Of Your Heart So You Can “See” Him Intimately, and #2 God Has Opened The Eyes Of Your Heart So You Can “See” Him Insightfully.

#1 God Has Opened The Eyes Of Your Heart
So You Can “See” Him Intimately
(v15-17)

I told you that verses three through fourteen were one long sentence in the Greek language. Guess what? So are verses fifteen through twenty-three! Paul stops to take a breath, then begins again.

Ephesians 1:15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

It had been several years since Paul had left Ephesus. He was writing this letter from prison. One of his joys was to receive visitors who brought him reports about all the churches. The things he heard about the church at Ephesus comforted and encouraged him in his prison cell.

He heard about their “faith in the Lord Jesus” being manifested by “love for all the saints.” Faith does not refer to saving faith; it’s a word that can be translated *down-among you faith*. It is faith at work on a daily basis; or, as James might say, faith that works.

Genuine faith always inspires “love.” Love is not primarily an emotion; it is an attitude. It is an attitude of selfless sacrifice that results in generous acts of kindness toward others.

They had love “for all the saints.” God’s love cannot discriminate between the saints on the basis of color or character.

Ephesians 1:16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

Paul had a vibrant prayer life. He prayed without “ceas[ing].” When did he find time to pray? Walking from town-to-town... Sitting and stitching tents as he supported his ministry as a tent-maker... Stuck in prison... He invested himself in prayer.

His prayers for the saints had a sense of “thankful[ness].” Paul was grateful to God for every saint who had been saved by grace through faith.

He was more than thankful for them. He was hopeful that they would grow by appropriating their spiritual blessings. He prayed first for them to know God intimately.

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

We've seen previously in the opening verses that Jesus was and is equal with God. Here Paul is describing Jesus in His Incarnation as God in human flesh, God with us. Jesus revealed the "glory" of God the Father to mankind. He often said that to see Him was to see the Father.

I've already told you that "knowledge" is an intimate, first-hand knowing. It's one thing to know who someone is; it's another thing to know them personally – to be able to say "Hi" and even know some things about them. It's entirely different to be acquainted in a growing intimacy.

You can be acquainted with God in a growing intimacy because He "give[s] to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation." The word "spirit" refers to a complex idea involving both your human spirit and the Holy Spirit. Your human spirit is *indwelt* and *influenced* by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Who indwells you influences you by His "wisdom and revelation." *Wisdom* means that the Holy Spirit, Who is Himself God, knows everything about God the Father; *revelation* means that He reveals what He knows about God the Father to your heart. The indwelling Holy Spirit influences you to know God in a growing intimacy.

One translation simply says, "to know God better." That's all Paul is saying. You will appropriate all spiritual blessings in heavenly places as you get to know God better.

How do you get to know God better? Well, how do you get to know anyone better? You get to know someone better by a combination of *time* and *talk*. You invest **time talking** with them.

I would also add this: Christians have a tendency to go to extremes:

1. Charismatics tend to have an *inspirational* relationship with God rather than an *intimate* relationship with Him. They exalt emotion. The problem with emotion is that you learn to walk with God by **feelings** rather than **faith**. When it comes to appropriating the spiritual resources you need to have victory, you're waiting for a feeling when you need to walk by faith.
2. Conservatives tend to have an *intellectual* relationship with God rather than an *intimate* relationship with Him. They exalt the intellect. The problem with intellect is that you learn to walk with God by **facts** rather than **faith**. When it comes to appropriating the spiritual resources you need to have victory, you're searching only for facts rather than seeking God by faith. You forget that Christianity is a Person, not a program.

Real intimacy with God involves the whole person. You need facts; you have feelings; facts and feelings must both be subordinated to your faith.

Let's say you love someone. If they are constantly struggling with their feelings, wondering if you truly love them, it will hinder your relationship. On the other hand, if they never show any feelings and only act matter-of-factly, going through the motions, that, too, will hinder your relationship.

Figure out which extreme characterizes you and then ask God to help you find the proper balance of inspiration and intellect so that intimacy with God is not hindered.

#2 God Has Opened The Eyes Of Your Heart So You Can "See" Him Insightfully (v18-23)

"That you might know" in verse eighteen is a different type of knowledge. It means *to be aware, to perceive*. Our word "insight" captures the idea – a deep, settled perception.

There are three insights in verses eighteen and nineteen. Each is introduced by the words "what is" or "what are." They have to do with your *past*, your *future*, and your *present*.

Ephesians 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling...

“The hope of His calling” is insight into your past. “Calling” refers to your salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Your salvation is sometimes illustrated as God “calling” you.

God calls to all mankind:

Acts 2:39 “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

All who call upon God are saved:

Romans 10:13 For “*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*”

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

“Hope” in the Bible means *certainty*. The hope of His calling takes you back to the past, to the very beginning of your Christian life. Not just the moment in history when you were saved; go back even further. Earlier in chapter one you were “enlightened” that God the Father selected you before the foundation of the world. The hope of His calling is the certainty that, if you are saved, it is because God selected you in eternity past and then worked in your personal past to bring you to the place you would hear His call.

You “see” this with the eyes of your heart. It is an insight into God’s effectual working in your life. It is exactly what Paul says in Philippians 1:6,

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

You can be “confident,” have the certain hope, that God is always effectually working in your life. Those times God seems far off... Or you cannot even begin to comprehend what He might be doing... You can have the confident hope He is working, working, working. He selected you; He saved you; He is constantly working.

God is working to accomplish His ultimate purpose in your life; and Paul jumps ahead to your future in the next phrase of verse eighteen:

Ephesians 1:18 ... what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

“The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” is insight into your future. This refers to “the saints” being **God’s** inheritance in the future. It means that God will complete His work in you and the completed product will bring Him glory for all eternity.

Look at yourself. *You don’t seem all that glorious!* Look at all of us, the whole church. Where’s the glory? **It’s coming!** You have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. One day you will be like Him – holy and without blame or blemish. For all eternity God’s holy angels will look upon you and marvel at the grace and glory of God in transforming you.

What about the present? Paul gives you insight into the present in verse nineteen:

Ephesians 1:19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

Your present life should be characterized by “power.” Paul accumulates words for emphasis: “power,” “working,” “mighty power.” “Exceeding greatness” means it is *immeasurable*. God’s immeasurable, mighty power is working “toward us who believe.”

God’s power is available for you to appropriate in any and every circumstance and situation of your life. It is often made perfect in your weakness and suffering; but it is always sufficient to sustain you. This is the insight which will make the difference between victory and defeat in your walk with God – whether or not you understand that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13).

Exactly what kind of power are we talking about? Paul describes God’s power in verses twenty through twenty-three. It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead to be exalted as the undisputed Ruler over all of God’s creation.

Ephesians 1:20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

Ephesians 1:21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Your Savior was raised from the dead. God's power arrested the natural process of decay and preserved Jesus so He would not see corruption. Then He did not just reverse the process, He transcended it by raising Jesus to an altogether new and glorious life which nobody had experienced before.

But that's not all God's power accomplished. Jesus is not just **Savior**; He is **Sovereign**! No authority or power, either human or in the spirit world of angels and demons, is greater than that of Jesus Christ. Both now and even moreso in the future ages to come, Jesus Rules over God's created universe.

The power of God is evident in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus... But what does that have to do with you and me? Even though we are on the earth, we are in the Church. Being in the Church, we have a connection with Jesus by which God's immeasurable, mighty power is available to us.

Our connection with Jesus is somewhat mystical, so Paul gives us an illustration we can understand. The Church's relationship to Jesus is like the relationship of a head to its body.

Ephesians 1:22 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church,
Ephesians 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Physically speaking, the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning. Jesus is the Head Who controls His body, the Church on earth, by the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Since we are connected to Him, we share His resurrection and exaltation – things Paul will describe more fully later in this letter.

The power of the Holy Spirit is therefore available to every born-again believer. In the four Gospels, you see the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of Jesus Christ. But in the Book of Acts, you see the same power of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of ordinary men and women who believe the Gospel. In one place in the Book of Acts these ordinary men and women were said to be turning the whole world upside down (Acts 17:6). This was how they were described by the enemies of the Gospel. It would probably be more accurate to say that they were turning the world right side up!

This is the very same power available to you to turn your world right side up. Whatever “world” you can think of, God’s power is available to you to turn it right side up.

Conclusion

As Californians we have been living with a power shortage. Let’s make sure that as Christians we are not attempting living with a power shortage!

I mentioned two extremes earlier – charismatic and conservative. With regards to God’s power:

1. The charismatic tends to understand God’s power as a surge that blows the circuits and fuses!
2. The conservative tends to understand God’s power as a battery that was charged once at salvation, never needing any recharge.

Don’t go to those extremes! God’s power is yours as you make a direct connection with the source. **Intimacy** and **insight** keep you connected.