

## **Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 4)**

Ephesians 1:15-19

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In today's passage Paul tells us what he prays for. When we pray for others, we often ask for good health or material provision. When Cindy was pregnant with Zachary, we learned that there was a high probability that he would be born with Down syndrome, so we prayed fervently about that. But when Paul prays for believers, he doesn't pray for good health or material provision. Instead he prays that they may know God more. We all know God, but we all need to know Him more. We must keep ingesting spiritual truth so that we may see God more clearly every day. In the early days of the Internet, when you loaded an image it would start out very pixelated and gradually become more resolved as it refreshed, until full resolution was achieved. This is like how we see God. As we grow in faith and understanding of God's character through Scripture, He becomes more resolved in our minds. We begin to see Him more and more clearly. This is what Paul prays for.

First, in Ephesians 1:15, Paul gives thanks for the faith and love of the believers. Faith in Jesus and love for God's people go hand in hand. Love is how faith manifests itself in our lives. And love is expressed in service to others. But as Paul mentions in his letters, love within the church community is most critical, and it takes priority over love for outsiders. We are to love people outside the church, but they should be able to see the special kind of love we have for each other, being intimately united in the body of Christ. If we cannot love our own in this way, then Jesus isn't seen in us. This love goes beyond the kind of service nonbelievers can do for the community because this love comes from Jesus through faith. How do you serve and love God's people? When newcomers arrive at church, it's all our responsibilities to be welcoming to them. We gather here to be with each other, to love each other, and to support each other in faith.

After giving thanks for the faith and love of the believers, Paul asks God to help them know Him better (v. 17). The phrase "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" is actually ambiguous in its meaning, since the original text didn't have capitalization. The NIV suggests that this is the Holy Spirit, but in v. 13 we know we already have the Holy Spirit as a deposit. The ESV and NASB translate this as "a spirit of wisdom," implying an attitude of wisdom. However, in this case the interpretation that seems to make the most sense is actually that of the NLT, which says "spiritual wisdom." This lines up with the wording in Colossians 1:9. The kind of knowledge

God gives is spiritual. It's about the invisible, things that we couldn't figure out on our own through observation and science. These are things that concern God. While mankind used worldly knowledge to advance technologically, God has been revealing spiritual knowledge so that mankind would turn back to Him. This revelation is food for our spirit. When we ingest it, we know God better, and we follow Him more.

In v. 18 Paul asks that the eyes of our hearts be open, that our spirits are enlightened with spiritual wisdom and understanding, that we may see God more clearly. Four times here Paul talks about knowing God more. This is his primary concern because it's our primary need. Our spirit hungers for knowledge of God. Feed your spirit with the word of God and you will know Him better. The longer I have been married, the more Cindy knows me. By now she knows my tastes well enough that she knows how to order for me. The longer I worked with Pastor Richard, the more I know him, even to the point of being able to anticipate what he will say. Likewise, the more you know God, the more you will understand His character and what kinds of things please Him, and what He would think about different issues. And this knowledge of God makes us into better people. It changes the way we think to be more in line with what He thinks. This knowledge fills us from the inside and shines out from us.

Finally, Paul wants us to know three specific spiritual things in vv. 18-19. The first is the hope to which we are called. This hope isn't just dying and having our spirits go to heaven, but rather it's the return of Jesus, who will renew creation and give us our bodily resurrection. The world is broken, and only Jesus can fix it. This is our hope. Second is the inheritance in the saints, which means that all those who believe in Jesus are now God's inheritance; they are His treasure. We are now A-listers in God's eyes. Finally Paul wants us to understand the resurrection power available to us, which he refers to again in 3:20. This incomparably great power works within us to help us be victorious against sin and overcome the world. We aren't powerless. Ask God and you will receive. We know God more by knowing what He provides for us. Let us continue to ingest God's word and see Him more clearly every day.