

1. 30. 2011

With a son in my life now, my perspective of what is and isn't important has become more clear. Specifically, as I pray for him each night, I find myself focusing my prayer completely on his salvation, that he would become a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Nothing else really matters but that, and how I pray for him reflects that.

Similarly, Paul prays regularly for believers, and he focuses on what is important. We must remember that Ephesians was most likely meant to be a circular letter, sent from city to city and read by all believers. So Paul is praying for all of us too, not just the Ephesians. In verse 15, Paul writes that he prayed unceasingly for “ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for the saints.” In verse 16 he then asks God to “give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” He focuses on what matters and prays that we would know God better.

Paul knows he is praying for believers because he has heard about their faith and love. 1 John states that he who loves knows God, such that our love for one another is a “mark” of true discipleship. How do you measure up to this standard? Are you serving one another with love in the church?

While many interpret Paul's prayer for “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,” as being the Holy Spirit, or some other spirit of wisdom, I think that he means *spiritual wisdom*. I base this on Colossians 1:9, in which Paul similarly prays for believers to gain knowledge of the will of God “through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” It makes more sense than the Holy Spirit, since God already gave that as a deposit, as Paul himself wrote earlier.

Just as the body needs food, the inner spirit also needs spiritual food. This makes us grow closer to God; and it comes from the Scriptures. This is the “wisdom and understanding” Paul is praying for us to have. The first three chapters of Ephesians are about giving us that understanding, a clearer and deeper understanding of God and His salvation. This is how we come to know God in a true and accurate way.

In verse 18, Paul continues to pray that the eyes of our hearts are enlightened. This is basically saying the same thing as before. He wants us to know God better through spiritual wisdom, which comes from the Bible. This is why we come to church, Sunday school, and Bible

study. Fellowship is important, but the main reason is to have our hearts enlightened. Paul wants us to know three specific things: the hope to which we are called to, the riches of our inheritance in the saints, and the power for those who believe.

All these three things are for Christians only. Hope is for those *who are called*, the inheritance is in *the saints*, and the power is for *those who believe*. In addition, the first two things call us to look towards eternity. The hope is of a future resurrection and eternal life with Christ, for now we still live in a dying body and in a dying world. The inheritance is also something to come, and its riches are glorious and eternal. This is the moment when we enjoy the wonderful privilege it is to be God's chosen people, when God takes us as His prize. Both of those aspects of our faith cause us to yearn for something yet to come.

For us who live in comfort, it is hard to spurn this world that seems so good to us. But we must remember that this transitory world is full of evil, pain and death and that our true hope lies in the eternity to come. We must resist the distractions of comfort and pursuit of worldly success.

The last thing, the power of God, is something we can receive now. God urges us to live a life worthy of the calling, but He does not expect us to do this alone. He knows that it is hard, so He gives us His own incomparably great power to help us. We must realize that we cannot conquer sin alone and must instead trust in God's resurrection power – the same power that raised Jesus and conquered sin and death.

I hope that in this church, we can all gain a deeper spiritual understanding through Scripture so that we can gain a deeper relationship with God, and learn to focus on the glorious future He has in store for us, instead of our own light and momentary troubles. What a blessing it is that God draws us towards Himself and the hope of His eternal salvation.