

## **Ephesians 1:16-19**

November 22, 2020

Seven score and seventeen years ago, Abraham Lincoln uttered his famous Gettysburg Address. November 19 of this past week marked the 157<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that special occasion.

By all accounts, Mr. Lincoln was a remarkable man. Not only was he an amazing orator, a brilliant war time President and our nation's emancipator of slaves, he was also known for his hospitality and accessibility to the public. He loved to interact with the common man, and he maintained an open-door policy throughout much of his tenure at the White House. He seldom turned away anyone who had the determination to patiently wait for an audience with him.

Can you imagine getting to meet Mr. Lincoln in person? To get a glimpse of him at work, a chance to shake his hand...or even ask him a question? I bet, if we did, we would probably run about boasting that we not only met Abraham Lincoln, but that we actually "knew" him.

But can you really know someone you've barely met? Not really. Especially, someone who has long passed from the scene like Abraham Lincoln.

To know someone, you really have to spend time with them. You have to do life with them. You can't just know them from historical accounts or samples of their writings, or from their Wikipedia page.

Unfortunately, some of us only know God this way. We know what the Bible says about Him. We know all those stories about Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. We know all the parables and pithy sayings of Jesus. We can even wow our friends with our knowledge of theology and doctrine.

But in the end, we don't really know God because we've never really encountered him. We've never had a real conversation with Him because we've never experienced him as a real person. In a sense, we know God no differently than we know Abraham Lincoln, as an interesting yet detached historical figure.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

**Proposition:**

God can be known. In fact, he strongly desires to be known, even experienced, as a real live person. Right here. Right now!

And the text we shall study this morning clearly demonstrates this to be true. God desires to be known, even experienced by us.

Let's hear what the Spirit says to us through Paul's prayer to the Ephesians.

### Ephesians 1:15-19

<sup>15</sup>For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

<sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

<sup>17</sup>that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,

<sup>18</sup>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,

<sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,

There are a lot of remarkable statements in that prayer. Let's take a closer look at some of them. First,

notice for what Paul is praying ...in verse 17. He is praying **that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you the Spirit.** (Note the capital "S" on the word "Spirit" in the ESV. Not every translation capitalizes Spirit here. But I believe this rendering is correct.)

And if it is correct, Paul is effectively asking God the Father, the Father of God the Son to give us God the Holy Spirit.

In other words, he is asking for the Triune God to give Himself to us.

But wait a moment, you might say... do not all believers already have the Holy Spirit? Doesn't Paul say that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit when we first heard and believed the gospel. Indeed, he does...just a few verses before this prayer. You can see it there in 1:13..**"in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit"**.

So why would Paul pray that God give us the Spirit again, just four verses later? Well, the Spirit is being asked to do something different in verse 17 than in verse 13.

**In verse 13 he seals. In verse 17 he reveals.**

**In verse 13, he sealed us when we first believed.**

**In verse 17 he reveals to us more of God, to those who continue to believe.**

That's essentially what verse 17 is saying: **the 'Spirit of revelation' reveals Him**. The Spirit shows us who God really is and allows us to know more of Him.

And verse 18 goes on to reenforce this idea. This same **Spirit who reveals the knowledge of God in verse 17, enlightens the eyes of our heart in verse 18.**

**It is the Spirit who reveals, or said another way, it is the Spirit who enlightens the eyes of our heart.**

And what does the Spirit reveal?

First and foremost, he reveals God, and as a result, He enables us to know God. Not just knowledge about God, but knowledge through direct experience of God!

It's what we might call relational knowledge, or experiential knowledge.

It's the kind of knowledge gained by walking thru life hand and hand with ...someone we know very well...like a spouse or family member or close friend.

It's the kind of knowledge that knows who a person is at their very core... that knows their quirks, their responses and all their pressure points. It knows what delights them. It knows what makes them angry. It knows their strengths and weaknesses.

This is the kind of knowledge that Paul prays we will receive. He asks the Spirit of God to reveal to us this kind of knowledge of God.

Who He is at his core...  
His response towards us,  
What delights him,  
What angers him,  
His immeasurable strength  
And his total lack of weakness

Here in Ephesians 1:17 is God's invitation for us to know Him in a way that is very personal...  
In a way that is very real...  
And in a way that is very tangible.

How? Through His Spirit, the Spirit of revelation that He himself has given us, to indwell us and...**to enlighten the eyes of our heart**, just as verse 18 says.

So, to sum up, we could say it like this:

**The Spirit enables us to know God better**

And that's not all. Verses 18 and 19 list three more means of grace that the Spirit brings to our attention as we get to know God better. Let's identify them:

In verse 18, there are two:

That we may know:

- i. The hope to which he has called you
- ii. The riches of his inheritance in the saints

And verse 19 adds a third:

- iii. The immeasurable greatness of his power

Now let's examine these three statements one at a time.

First, there is "the hope to which he has called you".

What does Paul mean by this?

Well, Paul wants us to know that we've been called to know and experience God. But called by whom? It doesn't take a whole lot of thought, or even searching within the letter of Ephesians to figure that out.

Look back at the earlier part of Ephesians chapter 1. A quick perusal will reveal whom our mystery caller is.

(V3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...(v4) who chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

There it is! The one who called us, actually chose us, before the creation of the world. It is the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom Paul prays that we get to know in verse 17.

But, to what has God called us?

Verse 5 tells us. He called us to himself. In fact, he adopted us as his children, and he did so according to the purpose of his will. In other words, he strongly desired to make us his own and to fulfill his purposes for us. That's what he had in mind when he called us!

This calling entails a host of blessings promised in the first 14 verses of Ephesians. These give us plenty of reason to hope... and plenty of certainty that he who called us will bring all these promises to completion.

Therefore, it is good to know and be reminded of the hope of our calling.

When we are discouraged.

When we are disappointed.

When we are depressed.

Listen to God's promises as you read his Word, as you sing his truth and as you hear it proclaimed!

Let the Holy Spirit enlighten the eyes of your heart to remember that.

i) -> **God calls us...most certainly**

**The second means of grace mentioned in verse 18, is "the riches of his inheritance in the saints".**

Did I read that correctly? Did Paul just say that God's inheritance is in the saints? How could that be? Doesn't God possess the world and everything in it? Why would he declare that his most treasured possession, his inheritance, is "in the saints"?

But exactly what is an 'inheritance' in the Bible. It's a piece of land, it's a place of dwelling, it's a home passed on from generation to generation.

So, think of God's inheritance in this way. God's inheritance is where he chooses to dwell for ever and ever; and where might that be?

Paul answers that question for us a little later on in this letter. In fact, he devotes most of chapter 2 explaining it. Look at his conclusion in the last verse of chapter 2.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22)

Surprisingly, God's dwelling place...his chosen place to dwell, is not where many of us would guess it to be. I would have thought that God's preferred to dwell in heaven, but according to Scripture that would be wrong! God prefers to dwell with

his people...

his saints,

his church.

And it's not just Paul who says this. Listen to what God declares in the final book of his Bible.

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people."

Revelation 21:3

Remarkably, God has chosen to dwell with us. And so, he has placed his inheritance in the saints.

And Oh! the riches of that inheritance. Would that we know them!

That's exactly what Paul prays in verse 1:18. That we would know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints!

How does this apply to us? What is Paul driving at?

He wants us to realize what a treasure trove God's people are! God has stored up riches of grace within his community of saints. And he's placed each of us strategically within that community!

One of the best ways to know and experience the presence of God is in the company of other believers. God literally dwells with us and has knitted us together in love with other saints in our local church. We are not alone in this walk. We have fellow saints to help carry our burdens and celebrate our triumphs!

Let the Holy Spirit enlighten the eyes of your heart to realize that.

ii) -> **God dwells with us...most gloriously**

**And finally, one more means of grace..."what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us"?**

This one is perhaps the easiest to understand. But for many it is the hardest to believe, especially the "toward us" part.

Can the Creator and sustainer of the universe really have immeasurably great power towards us? Puny, sinful us? Doesn't he have better places to wield his mighty sword than to defend his lowly people?

But that goes against everything we know of God, thus far! Why wouldn't the very God who chose us before the foundation of the world and rescued us to make us his dwelling place, powerfully strengthen us and defend us, as we walk the walk he's called us to?

Afterall, We are too weak to walk on our own. We need his power just to get up in the morning. We need it to stay the course and keep moving forward through all the uncertainty and suffering we face. The Christian walk is difficult. No...it's actually impossible without the power of God strengthening us and enabling us to endure.

And yet we so easily forget...that it's there...surrounding us...sustaining us...enabling us to walk...in a manner worthy...of our calling.

Do you remember that story in the Old Testament where the prophet Elisha and his servant came face to face with an adversarial army bent on their destruction? The servant was frightened. But Elisha was not, because he saw something the servant did not. So, to rectify that situation Elisha encouraged his servant as follows:

**"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed**

and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

(2 Kings 6:16-17)

All it took was a prayer for the servant's eyes to be opened and see where the real power lay! Those divine chariots of fire were immeasurably greater and more powerful than anything that pitiful enemy army had to offer.

And if you want to know how it turned out, read 2 Kings chapter 6 some time.. I'll give you a hint. For Elisha and his servant, it ended most excellently. But for those enemies of Israel...not so much!

Let the Holy Spirit enlighten the eyes of your heart to see what Elisha saw and recognize that.

**iii) -> God fights for us...most powerfully**

So, church, take this encouragement from Ephesians 1:16-19.

God can be known. In fact, he strongly desires to be known, even experienced, as a real live person. Right here. Right now!

And he has given us his Spirit to make that experience not only a possibility, but a reality.

We can know the certainty of his call.

We can experience the rich fellowship of his saints

And we can see the greatness of his power.

But with one caveat!

Notice that little phrase in the middle of verse 19.  
All of these prayed for promises are true for those  
“who believe”.

In order to experience them there is one condition  
you need to meet. You need to believe!

You need to believe that God has called you to follow  
Him through his Son Jesus Christ.

You need to believe that Jesus died for your sins and  
rose from the dead to spare you from God’s  
judgment, to save you from death and to give you an  
ever-growing knowledge of him.

And you need to believe in such a way that you begin  
to follow him whole heartedly, and eagerly seek to  
experience him on a daily basis.

For then you shall have a new birth of freedom...and  
that relationship of the Lord, by the Lord, for the Lord  
shall not perish forever, Amen.

PRAY