

Have you ever found yourself in a circumstance needing a boost or inspiration? How about something positive to stand on? Confident the answer is yes for us all to both of these questions, the next question is natural, where do we turn for our boost and inspiration and something positive to stand on?

Like us today, the Church at Ephesus needed a boost. They needed some inspiration. They needed something positive to stand on amid the surrounding questions and cultural demands. What does Paul do then? Paul sends them a letter.

At the beginning of that letter, what Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus is his prayer to God for them. And right in the middle of that prayer, perhaps you picked up on it, Paul says, “with the eyes of your heart enlightened.” Another way to understand the word enlightened is the word “open.” The heart is the core of personhood and locus of the will. So, what Paul is saying to the Church is that with the heart enlightened (open) to God, great things will happen. I don’t know about you but that sounds like a boost and inspiration and positive place to stand to me.

Let’s consider closely what Paul prays.

“I pray” (I trust and hope and therefore make known my desires)...

“that God” (the One and Only True God),...

(How do we know that God is the One and Only True God?)

(because our God is...)

“the Father of our Lord Jesus” (the Father of the One who came to save us and deliver us from ourselves and the world)

(and)

“the Father of glory” (the God of majesty and beauty and power and victory),...

“may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know God” (true wisdom and revelation of all that is most paramount come as we are in relationship with God because God is the source of true wisdom and God is the source of the spirit),

“so that” (this is important because...),

“with the eyes of your heart enlightened” (because that is what happens when God gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation and we come to know God- our hearts are open),

“you may know what is the hope to which God has called you” (We all need hope. Not just any hope but hope that comes from God. God’s hope breeds possibility. God’s hope is inspirational. God’s hope is positive. To know of God’s hope and God’s will for our lives is to know that **“in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose...”** (Romans 8:28) Is that you? Yes. Is that me? Yes. We are to know of God’s hope for us. Jeremiah 29:11 says, **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and future.”**

(and that you may know...)

“what are the riches of God’s glorious inheritance among the saints” (God’s riches are numerous and as children of God we stand to receive a weighty inheritance. Riches can be financial, but I don’t think that is really what God’s riches is meant to be understood as here. The wealth we have in God is defined in love, joy, peace, hope, light. It can be defined in purpose and belonging with family and friends. It can be defined in gratitude and humility and hunger to serve and help others. It can be defined by the spirit of wisdom and revelation of God gained and used. For the one who holds these holds the greatest and most glorious of all treasures. That treasure is Christ himself in your heart.)

“and what is the immeasurable greatness of God’s power for us who believe” (The boost and inspiration we are able to find in God is incomparable because God is incomparable)

(The next part of Paul’s prayer reveals the hope and glory and power at work.)

“God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead” (When God defeated darkness and death with light and eternal life for good)

“and seated him (Christ) at his right hand in the heavenly places,” (The most honorable and just of all places)

“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named,” (Christ is the King, Lord, and Prince)

“not only in this age” (for Paul and the people of the early church)

“but also in the age to come.” (for all those who will follow after, that means us today, until Christ comes again)

Paul's prayer to God for the Church at Ephesus is my prayer for the Church, you and me, today and every day. I pray we may all have a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know God more fully. I pray for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened, to be opened, so that we can know of God's hopes and God's will, God's riches, and God's immeasurable power.

Reflecting on this prayer today can be a small kindling to the flame of our discipleship, but today must be coupled with tomorrow and the day after and next Sunday and the week after and the month after. Next week for Spark Sunday, a day that marks the beginning of the churches program year, we are going to consider many ways we can be boosted and inspired through our participating in the ministries of the church. I am even going to attempt to light a fire with water with an illustration that helps highlight the importance of our remaining tapped into God.

As we prepare for Spark Sunday, this week I want to invite us to reflect on and pray this prayer in Ephesians 1. And as we pray, I invite us to think about whether it is nearly enough to just be open? You see, in a way, I think what Paul prays and what we really need, especially considering the state of the world and the many challenges upon us, is not to just be open, but to be open wide, so that we can witness more of God's revelation.

We ALL need more of the spirit of wisdom and revelation. We ALL need more of God. Why? Because God is the best source of boost and inspiration and positive ground to stand. It is not nearly enough to get it while we are kids and then try to live the rest of our lives without tapping back in. It is not nearly enough to get it for a month or a year straight. It is not nearly enough to read the bible one time through and say, "That's it, I got it." I am not limiting God's power to inspire and spark in us a flame that can last a lifetime. God can certainly do that. It has been my experience in ministry though that it is we who need more of God and much more often than we often allow. The earlier in our lives the better and the more often the better. We ALL need to be and stay tapped in so that we can grow in our understanding of God and grow in our relationship with others to be built up to be strong against the mighty forces of the world that seek to tear us down and rip our emotions and fears apart.

Open your eyes... Open them wide in the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Open your ears... Open them wide in the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Open your mouths... Open them wide in the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Open your hands... Open them wide in the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Open your hearts... Open them wide in the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Let all God's people say... Amen.

Invitation to the Table

Road to Emmaus- The people were with Jesus (right in front of them) and they were questioning and blinded by their fear and worry... as they sat down to eat with Jesus and he broke bread, it is said "And their eyes were opened". The spirit of wisdom and revelation came upon them and their hearts were enlightened. May it be so for us as we receive and partake of this bread of life and cup of salvation...