That You May Know

Ephesians 1:15-23,

Key Verse 18, 19a

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

When I was a young boy, one day a guest came to our house. He graciously gave 20 dollars worth of Korean bills to me and my younger siblings. Out of greed, I showed two quarter’s worth of coins that I had to my brother and sisters and guess what? I successfully exchanged their 20 dollars worth of bills with my coins. I then had 80 dollars in total. I felt good. What a boy I was! It was quite easy and possible because my siblings did not know how valuable a 20 dollar bill was. But they would never have let me get away with it, had they known the full value of money they had received. Also the late wealthy newspaper publisher, William R. Hearst who built Hearst castle in San Simeon spent a fortune collecting art treasures from around the world. One day he felt that he must own more valuables. So he sent his man abroad to search for them. After months of searching, he reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were already in Mr. Hearst’s warehouse. He had been searching for treasures that he already owned! Likewise although Ephesian church members were given every spiritual blessing in Jesus, as mentioned in detail in verses 1-14, apostle Paul earnestly prayed for them in verses 15 to 23 that they might be enlightened to know God better and to know the full value of God’s blessings.

Look at v 15-16. “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” Being in prison, Paul could have been full of self-pity and complained about God, “Why did you put me here. After serving you faithfully so many years, what did I get, a seat in jail.” But he did not say that. Rather he was filled with thanks for God and prayers for others. Rather than thinking about himself or his situation, he focused on the faithful Lord and all God’s faithful people. He said, “For this reason”, referring to v. 13 and 14 that Gentile believers are now in Christ through the message of truth, and were sealed by the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing God’s inheritance. Paul heard that they had strong faith in Jesus and loved all God's people. Real proof of God's work in us is not only the faith we claim to have, but the love we have for His people. 1Jn 4:21 says, “And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.” Here we can learn from Paul about how to see our fellow believers. Although they lack something else, we should see the work of God in them, giving thanks and praying for them instead of criticizing them. What then was his prayer topics?

Look at v 17. “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Here Paul prayed for the Ephesians to "know God better." Although they knew God already, they needed to grow in the knowledge of God. Often times we spend time focusing on knowing ourselves, other believers, doctrines, or programs, rather than focusing on knowing God. Our life must be centered on knowing God. We should ask for, as Paul did, is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him better. In reality though it is not easy to know our glorious Father, for He is immortal and lives in unapproachable light. However, this God revealed himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jn 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known." Knowing God is not just theoretical, but relational based on personal experience. To know someone in a personal way is to meet with them and spend time with them. For this purpose, God richly blessed us with his living words. When we spend time meditating His truthful words, God reveals us himself through His counselor, the Spirit of truth who knows the deep thoughts of God. In this way we can outgrow any false or idolatrous ideas about who God is. Like Paul, we pray to study God’s words with our Bible students and our children to have them know God better.

What is Paul’s further prayer topics? Let us read v 18-19a. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Interestingly, Paul used the words, ‘the eyes of your heart’. This heart is not a blood pumping heart. Rather it indicates the very core and center of one’s life. He added the word, ‘eyes’. Our eyes are important in focusing image like a camera. Both eyes are necessary for driving, throwing, or catching. Loss of vision in one eye can lose depth or distance perception. As soon as you close your eyes, balance becomes difficult. Like this analogy, he prayed that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened to know 3 important things; what God’s calling is, what His inheritance is, and How great His power is. First, God’s calling. As we learned last week, God calls us to be like him; to be holy and blameless. V4 reads, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” This is God’s call to share God’s image. This is indeed a wonderful hope of our calling in Christ. The more we know the depth of our weaknesses, the more we appreciate this calling. No matter how weak or sinful we are, one day we will stand before him as holy, blameless, and perfect people like Jesus. Since this has been God’s holy desire, it will surely be done. Second, God’s inheritance. Paul wants our eyes to be enlightened to see the riches of God’s glorious inheritance as His holy people. Paul said in V5 that in love God has chosen us to be his sons and daughters that we might be his glory. “The riches of **his** glorious inheritance in **his** holy people” Here he used a pronoun, “his” twice. We usually think only of our inheritance in God, but Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand that they are so precious to God that He considered them His own inheritance. God has invested his riches of love, riches of wisdom, riches of suffering, and riches of glory. All these things accrue to a rich inheritance in the saints. So we need to see who we are from God’s perspective. God wants us to see, know, and experience the hope of his calling and the riches of his glorious inheritance. I want to call these vision. This vision will change our perspective and how to live our lives. Once we have seen it, we can no longer stay within our boundary. We will no longer be driven by despair, petty desires and be swayed by small gains/loss. We would pray on a larger scale and we would serve God’s eternal work to bring in many sons and daughters to Him. No matter how small a role or service we are asked to do, if it’s what God wants, then it’s indeed a part of God’s great work. Then we can joyfully serve him. For this, we must be enlightened and thankful always.

Now look at v 19. “And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength” Here Paul is asking God to enlighten us to know the great power God has given to us who believe. Here for a moment let’s take notice of the order of Paul’s prayer. So far Paul mentioned about God’s vision, and now power. First, we see. Then God’s power working in us. Unfortunately many believers try to change this order. They set aside knowing God and His purpose first, and they want to check out God’s power for their personal needs. Of course we need personal victory and power. But as Paul prayed, God expects us first to know Him and His vision. Then God will surely work powerfully in us to achieve His own purpose. First comes the knowing of the hope of God’s calling, and of the riches of his glorious inheritance. After that, comes the knowledge of “his great power for us who believe”. It never works the other way around! At the same time, if we know God’s plan without knowing his power for us, we will only have head knowledge. We should also know, in terms of personal experience, God’s great power for us. But the truth is that this great power has already been given to us and is already in us. Do you believe this? For this reason Paul simply prays that the Ephesians see it instead of asking more power. Let’s read v. 19 to 21. “and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” Here the power which God shows to those who believe is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ. Just as God’s mighty power worked in Christ, especially in raising him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realms, God works in us in the same way. Whatever power God used to work in Christ, he will to the same extent work in us who believe now. So all we have to do is to unlock it by faith. Have you experienced this to be true in your own lives? If not, then let us read v. 19-21 again with believing heart. “and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” In due time we shall be brought to heaven where Jesus is seated and we will reign with Him forever. We can also experience His rule in this present time by faith. So we are no longer blind to God’s power. The power of God already working in each of us is stronger than any problem we have. We should never say that we cannot overcome any problem, especially our tedious sin problem, whether it is an addiction to pornography, hatred for someone else, greed, lust, you name it, because God’s power in us is far stronger than all of these. No more excuses. No more despairing. We have God’s power already working in us here and now. We made mistakes in trying to fix our problems only because we lost our 20/20 vision to His power. So Paul doesn’t say what we have to do, rather he simply says what God is now doing with His power. We are powerless. God is powerful. All we have to do is to see our God working in us and this world, and trust Him and pray earnestly no matter what.

Lastly let’s read v 22-23, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” In the flow of the context, here Paul clarified that this power working in us is not only for our personal blessing, but for the sake of Christ’s body, the church. If one of our body parts hurts, the whole body hurts. When one member suffers, all the other members suffers together. If you also show love and affection to the church, you show love and affection to Jesus, for the church is his body. Jesus is the head. The purpose of the head is to give direction to the body. So far we get to know what the head, Jesus wants his body, the church to do. So we must learn to live in the body, for the head and the body must be united. It’s simply impossible and cannot imagine to separate each other. Are you connected well to both the body, the church and the head, Jesus? We shouldn’t think of ourselves more highly than others, for we are in the same body. When we talk about the work of God in us, we must take the church into consideration above our own needs. We treasure the church. Praise Jesus who fills our church with everything in every way. It is great assurance when we serve God together. That is why Paul added these verses without missing to let us have the same mindset of Jesus to be a beautiful part of His body, the church. We are more than conquerors in Jesus.

In conclusion. Let’s read the key verse. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Praise God who helped us to know the full value of what we’ve been given through Jesus. May the Lord help us to know God better, and His hope for us, the riches of His inheritance, and His power. God surely fills everything, in every way for the church to win many souls for God. Today we have been richly blessed with His words of wisdom and revelation. We are now more than eager to share this blessing with others. May the Lord bless our church, LA UBF to be a power station to serve America to be a kingdom of priests for world mission purpose in our generation and the generation to come. One word: That you may know