

**Eph 1:15-19a**

If God is in charge of everything  
And has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass  
Then what is the point of praying  
In fact what is the point of doing anything  
Why study the Bible – why pray – why witness – why do good works  
If what is going to happen is going to happen anyway  
It seems like none of these things count  
And we ought to do what we want and let God do what He does  
Ever ask yourself that kind of question

**Now listen - although God does as He pleases**

**God uses means like Bible study prayer witnessing and the doing of good works to achieve His ends**

He has ordained it that way  
So it is just as correct to say with James  
You do not have because you do not ask  
As it is to say – God’s will is done  
If we do not pray, the good things for which we pray will not happen

**Since it is through prayer that God brings the blessing**

The first chapter of Ephesians teaches this lesson  
No passage in Scripture stresses God’s sovereignty more strongly  
Yet it also emphasizes the importance of prayer just as strongly  
In the first half of the chapter  
Paul praises God for salvation

**God is both the author and the accomplisher of our salvation**

**God the Father chose – God the Son redeemed**

**God the Holy Spirit applied the salvation to you personally**

But now in the second half of the chapter  
Paul begins to pray

The short version of this prayer is

That God who has planned and accomplished this salvation

Might complete it

**You see for Paul the knowledge that God was working**

**Was an incentive to pray**

Not an excuse to shirk or neglect it

And it was because God was at work that he could pray with confidence

**This prayer is about knowledge (READ 15-19)**

If you were asked the question

What is the greatest need of the church – what would you answer

Greater love – more unity – more bold witness

More spiritual gifts – greater love for the Word

Paul tells us

**That the churches greatest need is to know God**

There is no problem a church faces that cannot be solved by more of Jesus

He has heard of the churches faith

He has heard of the churches love

So he prays that they would know God

Paul loved God passionately

Had you been around back then

You would have said – Paul knows God

And yet knowing Jesus his great desire

He tells us his personal goal in Phil 3

**That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection**

That is precisely what he is praying for the church at Ephesus

Paul who knew Jesus personally wanted to know Him more

**You see knowing God is progressive**

You will never know all of God there is to know

At least not in this body

One day in 1969 I was transferred to Cleveland, Ohio

The receptionist was a pretty young lady named Jackie  
Now a week later if someone had asked me – do you know Jackie  
I would have replied – yes I do  
I knew her well enough to want to get to know her better – which I did  
I have now been married to her for forty years  
And if someone were to ask me – do you know Jackie  
Being a man and married forty years – I would respond – not really  
And that is the way it is with God  
When I became a Christian had someone asked – do you know God  
I would have immediately responded – yes I do  
I really believed that what I had was all there was  
But now some 35 years later having experience after experience with Him  
Having studied His Word – seen Him answer my prayers  
Get me out of tight situations and bless me beyond my understanding  
If someone were to ask me – do you know God  
I would respond – a little  
Well somewhat wasn't good enough for Paul - it isn't good enough for me  
It isn't good enough for you  
I want what Paul wants for himself  
I want what Paul wants for me - **I want to know Him, and the power of His resurrection**  
That is the essence of this prayer – **That we might know Jesus better**  
The first thing I want to point out in this passage is this  
**Paul prayed out of knowledge and understanding**  
Paul prayed for them because he had heard about them  
He had heard of their faith and their love  
Paul heard that Ephesus was doing well  
And because of that he knew how to pray for them  
Most of us find it easy to love some saints and hard to love others  
We have personality differences – we are at different levels of sanctification  
Differing levels of social maturity

**But of course the command is to love all the saints**

Not those who are easy to love – all the saints

**Paul prayed consistently**

I do not cease to make mention of you in my prayers

I have found that the more our heart is in the request

The more we pray – and the more intensity we have in prayer

**Paul prayed with knowledge he prayed with consistency and he prayed with passion**

That is real praying

**You realize of course - Praying is the primary work of the church**

Too often we decide to do something and then pray that God will bless it

We work hard and struggle mightily and achieve some success

Then make the statement how God led us to do it

It never was of God from beginning to end

**You see nothing of the eternal happens in the Christian life except as a result of prayer**

That's why Paul told us to pray without ceasing – and he meant it

And he practiced it

**Paul's prayer for us is a Christ centered prayer**

**Paul wants the church to know more of the Person of Christ**

There is a huge difference between knowing about God and knowing God

**You can learn a lot about God by studying His creation and reading His Word**

There are intellectuals who can list the 10 Commandments

Quote Scripture and tell you all of the attributes of God

They know a whole lot about God – but they don't know Him at all

**Knowledge of God must come from God**

Here in this passage Paul describes God as the Father of glory

In 1Cor2, Paul describes Jesus as the Lord of glory

**The Father is the Father of glory; Jesus is the Lord of glory and the Holy Spirit is the revealer of glory**

Knowing Jesus takes an act of the Holy Spirit

**A person can only be truly known through revelation or experience**

Revelation is the Word of God applied to the heart by the Spirit of God

Experience is God revealing Himself to you as an individual

In the day to day living of your life

If you are like me then it is mostly in the hard times of life

That God reveals Himself to you

So when Paul says his goal is to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering

He puts it that way because they are linked

**We grow in knowledge of Jesus and experience His power through suffering**

Certainly it is not the only way

I wouldn't even call it the approved method

But I can sure testify that that is how it has worked in my life

My understanding and growth in Christ has almost always been

At the expense of my personal comfort

Hard times at work – hard times in the family – health – in the church

Have all helped me grow in Christ

Lots of hard time – yet I can tell you it has been worth it

I have experienced His power – His comfort – His faithfulness

In short - I have experienced God's care for me – all the time of course

But it was in the hard times that I realized how great that care was

God used the hard times in my life to cause me to grow more like Jesus

J I Packer wrote – Knowing God is a matter of personal dealing. It is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to you, and being dealt with by Him, as He takes knowledge of you. It is a matter of personal involvement in mind, will and feeling. Knowing God is a matter of grace. The initiative throughout is with God – as it must be, since God is so completely above us, and we have completely forfeited all claim on His favor by our sins

**We can know God because God knows and loves us**

How have you experienced Jesus Christ

How well do you know Him

What crises has He taken you through

Do you recognize His voice or do you wonder what He sounds like

There is one recurring theme in the New Testament – it is: get to know Jesus

The second part of Paul's prayer

**Is that we might understand three elements of salvation**

The first of the three is

**That we might understand the hope to which He has called us**

The Bible uses the word hope differently than the world

The world uses hope this way - Are you going to marry Bill

I hope so - We've been dating three weeks

To the world hope is wishful thinking

But Biblically hope is used this way – Are you going to marry Bill

I hope - He has asked me to marry him and given me the ring

**You see in Scripture hope refers to what has already been promised**

And what God promises always comes to pass

God does not have the phrase – if only – in His vocabulary

There is a Biblical hope linked to the calling of God

Our great hope and that to which the Bible is usually referring

When it discusses hope - is heaven

**Someday we will be taken into heaven and transformed into the very likeness of Christ – 2X**

Meditate on that and it will transform your life

It will change how you think about sin

It will change how you think about others who share this destiny – your forever family

It will change how you think about those who don't share your destiny

Matthew Henry's parents were from different social stratas of society

His mother's parents alarmed that she would marry outside her class asked her – Who is this Philip Henry – where did he come from

And she made this reply – I do not know where he has come from, but I know where he is going

In the body of Christ social standing race nation of origin mean nothing  
The worth of a person is not determined by their background  
But by where we are going

**Heaven is our home and when we get there we will be like Jesus**

Knowing this should give you confidence

God's hand is on you leading you to a wonderful destiny

**You are God's child and you have a wonderful inheritance awaiting you**

That is your hope – and it is not wishful thinking – it is assured

Guaranteed by the very blood of Jesus

**Your hope is grounded in what Christ has done for you and God has promised to you**

It is like the old hymn

My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand

All other ground is sinking sand

First that you might understand the hope to which He has called you – your inheritance

**And that you might understand the glory of Jesus inheritance in you**

What Paul calls the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints

Jesus gets something out of your salvation

What you get defies description - what He gets transcends comprehension

What you get - is Him – what He gets - is you

Now let me think - I place my faith in Jesus and I get God's hand guiding me now His presence with me wherever I go and heaven and glory await me

Now on the other hand – I place my faith in Jesus and He gets me

A poor sinful insecure man as His inheritance

Okay – sounds like a plan

I don't know about you but it seems to me that God has made a bad deal

But Jesus doesn't think so

**You see Christ considers you worth the price He paid**

Had He not done it already – He would die for you now

You are precious in His sight

You are the precious jewel He found in a field

He is the one who sold everything He had to purchase you

To adequately understand who you are

**You must see yourself in the light of the value of the blood of Christ**

I don't know what He sees in you

**But Jesus loves you with all that He has and all that He is**

You are precious in His sight – don't ever forget that

In some glorious way

You have become a source of untold wealth in the balance sheets of heaven

**You are an asset of incredible worth to the Living God**

You are the inheritance of Christ – I am the inheritance of Christ

I don't understand it – my mind keeps going – does not compute 3X

I can't comprehend it – I can only marvel that the Holy Spirit says it is so

Jesus is our inheritance – we are His

**Finally Paul wants us to know more of the power of Christ**

**The only way you can truly understand power is to experience it**

We can see something of the power of God in the universe

With the naked eye we can see about 7,000 stars

But the Milky Way contains about 100 billion stars

Edwin Hubble has estimated that there are as many galaxies in the universe

As there are stars in the Milky Way

About 100 billion galaxies containing about 100 billion stars each

I have no idea how to say that number

If you take all the power of all the 100 billion times 100 billion suns

You have not begun to touch the limits of the power of Almighty God

**God's power is infinite and He wants you and me to experience it**

We first experienced it in salvation

John Stott says

We are living between the call of God which is past  
And the riches of our inheritance which is in the future  
We live in the here and now

And the question we must address every day

Is how do we live as God's children

In a world set up to tempt us to live just like everybody else

How can we sinful beings live like citizens of heaven

**Power to live righteously comes from experiencing the power of God**

**In our daily lives**

It is just like Ian Thomas states

What does God expect of you – failure

Only one person has ever successfully lived the Christian life

And He wants to do it again through you

**Experiencing the power of the risen Lord Jesus**

**Enables you live a life pleasing to God**

But His power goes beyond righteous living

There are numerous other ways we experience the power of God

Let me list a few other ways you experience God's power

I am going through this list quickly so write fast

**You experience the Power of God in the fruit of the Spirit**

**You experience God's power when you use His gifts**

**You experience God's power when you clothe yourself in His armor and fight against the spiritual forces of wickedness**

**You experience God's power when you realize you cannot do it yourself collapse and call upon His name**

**You experience God's power in obedience to His will when you do His work**

**You experience God's power when you tithe more money than you can afford and somehow all the bills get paid**

**You experience God's power when you go to Him in anxious prayer, and His peace comes over you**

**You experience God's power when you pray for the impossible and it happens**

You experience God's power when you say – Lord I can't do it

Lord I cannot handle it – Lord this is completely out of my control

Lord - I need you

Those are the ways I thought of

Where you might know the greatness of His power

It is important to know about God's power intellectually

But how much sweeter how much greater to actually experience it

**God is not stingy with His power but He is not going to waste it**

He gives it to those who are His in His will doing His work

I mentioned several ways to experience God's power

But how do you appropriate the power that is available to you

Let me give you some steps that will keep you in touch with power from on high

And it is pretty simple – nothing you haven't heard before

**First - Spend time with God in His Word**

**To live in the power of Christ's resurrection**

**We must come to know God**

You might recall that is the first thing Paul prayed for

**Everything the Christian life has to offer begins with the knowledge of God**

If you are to know God you must spend time with Him

Read His Word – meditate on it

**Then spend time with God in prayer**

You cannot know a person without having spent some time with them

And the more time you spend the better you get to know them

That's not a spiritual principle

That's just the truth of life

**Third obey what He has commanded**

As you do what He says His power flows through you

As Harry Ironside began his ministry he visited an old saint on his deathbed

The old man opened a Bible and began to go through it with the pastor

He opened passage after passage

And explained truths that Ironside had never heard before

Ironside said – where did you get these truths – did you go to seminary

Is there a book I can read

His response – I got these truths on my knees with a Bible in front of me

That is the secret –

It is not intelligence – or outstanding instructors – or academic degrees

It is time spent talking to God with His Word open before you

Remember Martha and Mary – Martha busy in the kitchen

Mary sitting at Jesus feet

Jesus said that Mary had chosen the better way

Let me challenge you today – commit to choose the better way

Commit to spending time with God – in His Word on your knees

How many here have ever tried a 30 day diet plan

Did it work

Try this faithfully for 30 days and you will have results