

Open My Eyes: Ephesians 1:15-23

Scriptures for Today:

Ephesians 1:15-23 *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, **16** Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; **17** That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: **18** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, **19** And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, **20** Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, **21** Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: **22** And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, **23** Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Introduction

- The title of the sermon today is "Open My Eyes."

[QUESTION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE YOUR EYES OPENED?]

- When the Bible speaks about having our eyes opened, most of the time it's not talking about our physical eyesight.
- Sometimes we can look directly at something... but fail to understand what we are seeing.
- We can read the words of the Bible but fail to recognize the truth God is showing us.
- We can look at our circumstances and only see the trouble surrounding us.
- Our physical eyes can work perfectly while the eyes of our understanding remain closed.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Psalms 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

- The writer of this Psalm was not asking God to heal his physical eyesight.
- He already possessed the law of God and could read its words.
- But he understood that he needed God's help to behold the wondrous things contained within it.
- There is a difference between seeing words on a page and understanding the truth those words reveal.

[KEY LINE]

-Not only do we need to open our Bibles... We need God to open our understanding so that we can see what is in the Bible.

[ILLUSTRATION — ELISHA'S SERVANT]

- There is a powerful example of eyes being opened in 2 Kings 6.
- The king of Syria was making war against Israel, but God was revealing his plans to the prophet Elisha.
- When the king learned that Elisha was warning Israel, he sent horses, chariots, and a great army to surround the city where Elisha was staying.
- Elisha's servant woke up early, walked outside, and saw that they were completely surrounded.

[NEXT SLIDE]

2 Kings 6:15-17 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

- The servant's physical eyes were already open.
- He could clearly see the Syrian army.
- He could see their horses and their chariots.
- He could see that the city was surrounded.
- Everything he saw was real, but it was not everything that was there.
- Elisha told him, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."
- Then Elisha prayed, "LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see."
- When the LORD opened his eyes, he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.
- The Syrian army was still there.
- The danger had not immediately disappeared.
- But the servant could finally see that the power protecting them was greater than the power threatening them.

[KEY LINES]

- The servants fear came from judging the entire situation only by what his physical eyes could see.
- His problem was that he could not see what God had already provided as protection. He did not see the power that was around them until his eyes were opened.

[CONNECT TO EPHESIANS 1]

- That brings us directly to Ephesians 1.
- Paul prays that "the eyes of your understanding" would be enlightened.
- He wanted the Ephesians to understand spiritual realities that could not be seen with their physical eyes.
- He wanted them to understand what God had revealed and what God had accomplished through Jesus Christ.

[EXPLAIN THE TITLE]

- That is why the title of this sermon is "Open My Eyes."
- We are not asking God to show us some secret vision that cannot be found in His Word.
- We are not asking God to give us new revelation outside of Scripture.
- We are asking God to help us understand the truth He has already revealed.
- We are asking Him to open the eyes of our understanding so that we can see Jesus Christ more clearly.

[BRIEF CONTEXT — EPHESIANS 1:3–14]

- Before we begin in verse 15, we need to remember what Paul has already written in this chapter.
- In the first 14 verses of chapter 1, Paul describes the spiritual blessings God has given to those who are in Jesus Christ.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

- Paul speaks about being chosen in Christ.
- He speaks about redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
- He speaks about an inheritance.
- He speaks about being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after we believe.
- Paul has explained what God has done for believers in Christ.
- Beginning in verse 15, he prays that they will understand the importance of what God has done...

[KEY LINE]

- Paul moves from praising God for these spiritual blessings to praying that their eyes will be opened to understand them.

[MAIN QUESTION]

- The main question we want to answer...What does God want believers to see and understand?
- Paul has already explained what God has given them and all of us who believe.
- Now he prays that their eyes will be opened so they can understand the greatness of what they have received.

[SERMON DIRECTION]

- As we work through this passage, we are going to examine three parts of Paul's prayer.
1. THE PRAYER FOR OPENED EYES (VV. 15–17)
 2. THE TRUTHS THEY NEEDED TO SEE (VV. 18–19)
 3. THE POWER REVEALED IN CHRIST (VV. 20–23)

[TRANSITION]

- Let's begin in verse 15 with the prayer for opened eyes.

1. THE PRAYER FOR OPENED EYES (VV. 15–17)

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:15-17 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

- Verse 15 begins with the word "Wherefore." Paul is connecting this with his previous statement.
 - He just got done explaining that the Ephesians have the Holy Spirit of God;
 - So because he heard of their faith, He knows they have the Holy Sprit, now he is going to give thanks for them and mention them in his prayers. He's going to let them know specifically what his prayer is.
 - Even though these people had already trusted Jesus Christ. They still needed to grow in wisdom and in the knowledge of God.
 - Being saved does not mean that you automatically understand everything about God.
 - Being saved by Jesus is really the starting point of our understanding.
 - The more we start to learn about Jesus, the more we recognize how much more there is to learn.
- Salvation happens the moment we believe. But growing in the knowledge of God should continue for the rest of our lives.
- There should never come a point when you think you know enough about God.
 - You're not understanding who God is if you think you know everything about God.
 - The infinite, almighty Creator...you don't understand His ways. But He wants you to learn about Him.

-So Paul was thankful that the Ephesians were saved, they had the Holy Spirit, they had faith and loved other believers, but he didn't want them to stop there. Notice again what his prayer was...

[NEXT SLIDE]

Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

- Paul's prayer is not for God to change their circumstances. He's not praying for God to give them prosperity, riches, and material wealth.
- He prays that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.
- That is far greater than any material thing that can be obtained on this earth.
- They already possessed salvation, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual blessings in Christ.
- But they needed wisdom to understand the value and importance of what God had given them.
- That understanding can only come from the Holy Spirit.

- But notice when it says "the spirit of wisdom and revelation". That is not talking about a private revelation outside of God's Word.

- People will say things like, "God told me this...", or "The holy spirit told me to tell you..."

2 Peter one verse twenty says ...that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

- Paul is not emphasizing new revelation. He wants them to understand the truths that have already been revealed through scripture and the preaching of the apostles. And the purpose is so they can have the knowledge of God.
- Every doctrine in the Bible teaches us something about who God is, what He has done, and how we should respond to Him.
- The goal is not to just collect information so we can be puffed up with knowledge. The goal is to know the Lord more clearly and allow that knowledge to affect the way we live.

[NEXT SLIDE] Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

- God does not want us glorying in our intelligence, strength, wealth.
- He wants us to glory in understanding and knowing Him.
- True Spiritual wisdom should not make you proud. The more knowledge you gain about God, it should actually humble you when you recognize how much you actually need Him in your life.

[APPLICATION — PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING]

- Paul's prayer reminds us not to neglect the spiritual needs of the people we love.
- Pray that your children will understand the Word of God and know the Lord.
- Pray that new believers will grow in wisdom and become grounded in the truth.
- Pray that faithful members of the church will continue growing.
- Pray that God will help you understand His Word and see Him more clearly.

2. THE TRUTHS THEY NEEDED TO SEE (VV. 18–19)

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:18-19 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

- Verse 18 continues the prayer that Paul began in verse 17.
- He prayed that “the eyes of your understanding” would be enlightened.
- He is not talking about their physical eyes. He is talking about their ability to understand spiritual truth.
- To enlighten something means to give it light so that it can be seen clearly.
- God had already given these believers spiritual blessings in Christ.
- Paul prayed that God would give them the understanding necessary to recognize the greatness of what they had received.

[ILLUSTRATION]

- Imagine walking through a familiar room in complete darkness.
- You may know where the furniture is supposed to be, but without light, you can still stumble over something that was there the entire time.
- When someone turns on the light, nothing new is added to the room. - The furniture was already there. The light simply allows you to see it clearly.
- In the same way, Paul was not praying for God to give them new spiritual blessings.
- He was praying for God to enlighten their understanding so they could clearly see the blessings He had already given them in Christ.
- If we could see all the times that God helped us, or saved our lives, or stopped something bad from happening... If we could see all the Good that He has done, we would be more grateful. It would make us want to serve God more. Scripture reminds us of all of those things. That’s why it’s very important to have understanding.

[THE THREE THINGS THEY NEEDED TO KNOW]

- Paul identifies three specific things that he wanted the Ephesians to know, and we need to know them too.
- The hope of His calling.
- The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
- The exceeding greatness of His power toward those who believe.

[THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING]

- When we use the word hope, we often use it to describe something uncertain.
 - We hope the weather will be good. We hope a situation will work out. But we do not know what will happen.
 - Biblical hope is a confident expectation based upon what God has promised.
 - Think about “the hope of His calling”
 - God calls people through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - When we believe the gospel, not only do we receive forgiveness of all our sins...we also are given the hope of eternal life, the promised resurrection of our bodies, and a future with Jesus Christ forever.
 - We cannot see the fulfillment of all those promises yet, but we know they are coming because God cannot lie. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”
- The more you understand the hope of his calling, the more you will want to go out and share it with others.

[THE RICHES OF HIS INHERITANCE]

- The second thing Paul wanted them to understand was “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”
- Earlier in verse 11 Paul said that believers have obtained an inheritance.
- In verse 14 he said that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance.
- The Holy Spirit is the assurance that God will complete what He has promised.
- But notice that Paul calls it the “riches of the glory of His inheritance”.
- Paul wants them to understand this.
- We receive an inheritance from God, but we also belong to God as His purchased possession.
- We were purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ and claimed as His own.
- We are precious to God because of our faith in His Son.

[EXAMPLE] Little children are very precious because they have simple unwavering trust. That’s a picture of the kind of trust that God wants us to have toward Him. That is precious to God. Simple faith is what pleases Him.

- Paul wanted believers to know that there are great riches in the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints.
- Where does that glory come from? It doesn’t come from us. The glory is in Jesus. Faith in Jesus is a great treasure to God.

[THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER]

- The third thing Paul wanted them to understand was “the exceeding greatness of his power.”
- I absolutely love this statement. It’s really incredible.
- I think there is a reason Paul puts the most emphasis on this last truth. If believers can understand this it changes everything in their lives. The lack of understanding in this area is why so many Christians keep going backwards.
- God has unlimited power and notice that it is described as being “towards those who believe”
- We are not the source of this power.
- The world wants us to focus on our own power. Human potential, and positive thinking.
- We do not produce power through our intelligence, or strength.
- This is God’s power that is given to believers. It comes from Him. And it’s exceeding great.
- This does not mean that believers can use God’s power to accomplish anything they desire.
- It does mean that nothing can prevent God from accomplishing His purposes and fulfilling His promises toward those who believe.
- We have exceeding great power from God to do good and accomplish His Will. Once you start to understand how amazing that is, your perspective on things will change in a great way.
- The burdens become lighter when you know you are doing what God wants and you have access to His unlimited power through faith in Jesus.

[APPLICATION]

- Paul wanted the Ephesians to see beyond what was immediately visible.
- If we only look at our present circumstances, we will easily become discouraged and fearful.
- We see our weakness, trials and failures, corruption of this world.
- But when our eyes of understanding are opened by the Holy Spirit, we know that we have an unstoppable force on our side. The exceeding great power of God is toward us.
- In these last verses Paul is going to show us how great that power really is.

3. THE POWER REVEALED IN CHRIST (VV. 20–23)

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:20-23 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, **21** Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: **22** And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, **23** Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

- Verse 20 continues Paul's description of the exceeding greatness of God's power.
- One of the best demonstrations of that power is the resurrection of Jesus.
- Jesus Christ was crucified, His blood was shed, and His body was placed in a tomb, His soul went to hell.
- But God raised both body and soul from death.
- The resurrection proves that Jesus is God because only God has power to conquer death.
- The same power that raised Christ has made us alive and dwells in us.

[LOOK AT THAT VERSE AGAIN] [NEXT SLIDE]

Ephesians 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

- God didn't just raise Jesus and return Him back to the same earthly life.
- He exalted Him and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.
- This was promised long before the resurrection took place.

[NEXT SLIDE] Psalm 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

- Jesus Christ is presently seated at the right hand of the Father.
- He is not struggling to gain authority. Matthew 28:18 "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth"
- He has already been exalted above every other power. There is no greater position than being seated next to the Father.

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

- It doesn't just say he is above them. It says that he is **far** above them.
- If you take all the authority and power from every single human being that ever existed, every angel, every spirit, and you combined all of that power. Jesus Christ is far above.

[NEXT SLIDE] Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: **10** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; **11** And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- No ruler will ever rise above Him, and no future power will ever replace Him.

[APPLICATION]

- Believers should not live as though the powers of this world have the final authority.
- Rulers may oppose God, governments can reject His Word, and spiritual enemies can work against us. -
- But none of them are above Jesus Christ.
- We should never allow fear of a lesser power to make us forget the authority of Jesus Christ.
- It's sort of like being afraid of a tiny bug

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

- To place something beneath a person's feet is a picture of complete authority and total victory.
- We do not presently see every enemy destroyed, but every enemy will eventually be defeated.

[NEXT SLIDE] 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. **26** The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

- Jesus will reign until every last enemy is destroyed.
- Sin will not win. Satan will not win. The kingdoms of this world will not win. Death itself will be destroyed in the end.
- We still see death in this world, so we know the final victory has not yet been accomplished.
- But the resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees that death's destruction is coming.

[NEXT SLIDE] Ephesians 1:22-23 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, **23** Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

- The One who is above every principality and power is also the Head of the church.
- The head gives direction to the body.
- If Jesus Christ is the Head, the church must receive its doctrine, direction, purpose, and authority from Him.
- The church does not belong to a pastor, a religious movement, a denomination, or a personality. But many churches act like it.

[EXAMPLE] Churches will choose the authority of man over Jesus. They will not believe His words.

- His words are clear and simple, but churches will reject His authority for another man's opinion.
- The church belongs to Jesus, so we listen to Jesus. No tradition or movement has authority to override His Word.

[WHICH IS HIS BODY]

- Verse 23 calls the church the body of Jesus Christ.
- A body depends upon its head for life and direction.
- In the same way, the church cannot accomplish anything of spiritual value apart from Jesus.

[EXAMPLE] You may see large churches with huge buildings, tons of money, programs, large crowds, but without Jesus as their head, those things mean nothing.

- Paul calls the church "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
- We are the fulness of Jesus.
- The emphasis is not upon the greatness of the church apart from Christ.
- The emphasis is upon the greatness of Christ, who fills us.
- Everything the church needs spiritually is found in Him.

[APPLICATION — SEE CHRIST AS HE IS]

- Paul prayed that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened.
- He wanted them to see Jesus Christ as He truly is.
- He is risen, seated at the right hand of God, far above every authority, and Head over the church.
- When our eyes are fixed only upon the powers and problems surrounding us, we will become fearful.
- But when our understanding is enlightened, we see that Jesus Christ is above them all.

[QUICK SUMMARY OF THE PASSAGE]

- Paul had heard about the Ephesians' faith in the Lord Jesus and their love unto all the saints.
- Because of that, he continually thanked God and mentioned them in his prayers.
- He prayed that God would give them wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.
- He wanted the eyes of their understanding to be enlightened.
- He wanted them to understand the hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward those who believe.
- Paul then showed them the greatness of that power by pointing to Jesus Christ.
- God raised Christ from the dead, seated Him at His own right hand, placed every authority beneath Him, and made Him the Head of the church.

[MAIN TRUTH]

- These believers already had salvation, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual blessings in Christ.
- What they needed was for God to open their understanding so they could recognize the greatness of what they already possessed.
- They needed to see their hope, understand their inheritance, trust God's power, and recognize the authority of Jesus Christ.

[APPLICATION]

That's what we need as well. When you finally start to understand how amazing God is and the power that He has toward us, it will change things for you. You will have less fear, you will have less worry and anxiety, you will have more peace and joy.

[FINAL CALL]

- That should be our prayer today: "Lord, open my eyes."
- Open my eyes so that I may know thee more clearly.
- Open my eyes so that I may live according to the hope thou hast given me.
- Open my eyes so that I may value the eternal inheritance above the temporary things of this world.
- Open my eyes so that I may trust your power instead of living in fear.
- Open my eyes so that I may see Jesus Christ above all.

Let's Pray.