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Ephesians 1:17 – 18
The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

We're going to continue looking at the book of Ephesians this morning. We've made it up to Ephesians 1:17 where we'll focus in on this prayer of Paul. This prayer deals with Paul requesting God for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of God. We have talked a great deal about the necessity of this working in the believer. But I find that my heart is continually brought back by the Lord to focus in on the necessity of Christ being revealed. Today might be things you have heard here before, but I encourage you to let the Spirit of God deal with your hearts in a fresh way to cement in your heart the necessity of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation working in your soul.

Last week we mentioned that it is only in the light and reality of everything that Paul has already said that this prayer has its significance. Paul isn't stopping in the middle of a thought and pausing for a prayer meeting. He is sharing with the church of Ephesus what he prays for them in light of what he has already taught them. What has he taught them?

First he began by describing the finished work of God in Christ. He will go on to elaborate more fully on that in the next chapter. But, to briefly review, Paul spent the first 11 verses of this chapter describing something of what God has done in Christ. Verse 3 – in Him we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. Verse 5 – In Him we have the adoption, the son-placement that has been promised. Verse 7 – In Him we have the redemption. Verse 9 – in Him we have the mystery revealed and made known. Verse 10 – in Him we have come to the administration of the fullness of time where all things have been gathered up, summed up in Him. Verse 11 – In Him we also have obtained the inheritance. We spent a week or two on each one of those realities, showing them, as Paul says, to be now in Christ.

Then, in verse 12 – 14 Paul tells these believers the Spirit of God has been given to them as the guarantee, the certainty, that they will come to know, live in, abide in, possess or experience the very things that have been given. It is very similar to how Jesus says "the Spirit of Truth will guide you into all truth", "He will teach you all things", "He will take of mine and reveal unto you". Or as Paul says in 1 Corinthians "the Spirit has been given so that you might know the things that have been freely given to you by God"

Well, first He describes the things freely given. Then He describes the seal of the Spirit, our guarantee, our certainty of knowing that which has been given. And when I use the word "know", neither I nor Paul meant an intellectual knowing. That is the furthest thing from the meaning of that Greek word, or the Hebrew concept. This is the knowing of experiential union. This is a knowing that occurs when two are made

one. Even as it says in Genesis "and Adam knew Eve, and they conceived and gave birth to a son". I'd say that was probably more than an intellectual experience.

And so it is that with a description of the finished work of God, followed by a description of the ministry of the Spirit of Truth, Paul goes on to ask the Lord to show them more of what He has done in Christ that they would bear the image of His finished work. That they would not walk in blindness. That they would not neglect so great a salvation.

And that, more or less, brings us to our verses today. Lets read them.

Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

The question has to be asked – why is Paul praying this way for believers? Why is he praying for spiritual wisdom and revelation, the opening of the eyes of the heart, for believers about whom he has just said he heard that they were growing in faith and love.

Now remember, this is a church that he had planted, and if memory serves, he remained with this church for three years before sailing back to Jerusalem where he was imprisoned. You might think to yourself – "I can understand why he would pray like this for a church that was backsliding, or a church that he hadn't planted and established, but why this church?".

Well, if you ask that question about the church of Ephesus, you'd have to ask it about every church that Paul writes to. There is not a letter that Paul writes that is not primarily concerned with believers growing up in this sort of knowing, seeing, through the Spirit's revealing and granting of spiritual wisdom and understanding. It is everywhere you look.

In Philippians 1:0 Paul is praying that the church would abound still more and more in spiritual knowledge and all discernment. In Colossians 1:9 Paul is asking that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In Philemon 1:6 Paul prays that the sharing of faith may become effective in the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

We see it everywhere. And we see it everywhere for this simple fact: **nothing of Christ's will can be accomplished without Christ's mind working in Christ's body.** I've said that before, and I'll say it again. Nothing of Christ's will can be accomplished without Christ's mind working in and through Christ's body. And Christ's mind only works in us through the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

The mind of Christ is never something you'll stumble across. It's not something you can figure out. I guarantee you that every nice and spiritual thought that you have, as long as it comes out from yourself, is not only NOT the mind of Christ, it is contrary to it.

Rom 8:6 For the mind of the flesh *is* death, but the mind of the Spirit *is* life and peace; 7 because the mind of the flesh *is* enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it *be*.

Friends, if we don't reckon with this fact, then our lives will be the manifestation of our mind for Him, and never His mind through us. And our mind, as this verse says, is enmity with God...regardless how friendly or spiritual it might appear. It cannot do His will. It is, by nature contrary to it.

We mentioned this last week briefly when we were looking at the words faith and love. Remember, faith is not what you believe. Faith is not hope, it is not trust. Faith is the mind of Christ working in your soul. Faith is the view of spiritual reality that is present to the eyes of your heart subsequent to the revealing of Christ. Faith is a spiritual seeing, beholding, that is given to you by the Spirit. More than that, it is actually the Spirit's beholding, His view working in your soul. It is not your understanding of a spiritual thing. It is the Spirit's understanding of all things being wrought in your heart. And so faith is when His mind, which is in you by new birth, begins to bring you to His view, to work in you His reality. And then that produces in you His nature, which is love. That conforms you to His image.

We spoke about that last week. Faith is His mind working in you. Love is His nature working out of you. Faith brings forth love. Galatians 5:6 – "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything, but faith working out through love". And love becomes the outworking of the Person who is in you through new birth.

But what I'm saying today is not really any different than that. His mind must be working in you, or nothing of His nature or life comes out of you. In other words, nothing of His will is accomplished without His mind working in His body. Do you see? And his mind isn't just good Christian ideas. His mind isn't just whatever you think Jesus would do. No, that is YOUR mind, trying to decide what He's like. But that's not even how **your** body works! Your body doesn't try to decide what you're like and just go for it. Can you imagine how **embarrassing** it would be if you had to walk around with your body trying to decide what you are like and then acting it out? Is there any chance that it would get it right?

How could it? How could a body manifest a life when the best it knows is an imitation of what it imagines that life is like? Hello? Friends, the body of Christ does not exist to imagine what we think good things are, what we think Christian behavior is, Christian actions, thoughts, responses, emotions, and then go out there and imitate Jesus. The Gospel is not about imitating Jesus. The gospel is the impartation of Jesus so that we can manifest His life to one another and the world.

Now why is this so hard for us to grasp? It's a no-brainer when it comes to our own body. Why do we still think that His body can function with individual members trying to act like Jesus? Are your toes trying to act like you? What needs to happen for your toes for them to stop trying to act like you, and start manifesting you? Your mind needs to work in them. Your mind needs to be the source and cause and supply of all that your toes do. And that is why the mind of Christ must be revealed by the Spirit, to work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

I say this sort of thing all the time to people, and quite often they look at me like I'm saying something quite strange. But this is really so simple. You don't have to look past your own toes to see how life works in a body. There must be one mind, one life, one source, one supply...and all members, being one in that life, together express that one life AS the mind works in it.

This takes us back to the basics, but lets just go there as often as we have to. What is a Christian? Is it a smiley person that cuts your grass when you're out of town? Is it a person who believes true facts about Jesus Christ? Is a Christian defined by doctrines, emotions, and nice deeds,? I have unbelieving neighbors who have found that smoking various plants will make them smile and act kind towards those around them. Is a Christian defined by emotions and actions? Or is a Christian one in whom the living God dwells and seeks to manifest Himself. Yes, a Christian isn't a hand trying to be like a head. A Christian is a hand who, through the revealing of the Head, has become a vessel through which the Head has expression.

Now I know that to some of you that may sound like simplicity itself. But I also know that in my heart, the Lord is always bringing me back there. And I find myself praying for myself and for this body just as Paul does in Ephesians 1:17. I find myself praying every day that God would reveal His Son in Me that I not make a Jesus charade with my fleshly imitation. I find myself realizing that my natural mind is enmity with God. Its best notions and aspirations are at best well intended...and then again, even that turns out not to be the case. They are, without effort, contrary to His ways and self-consumed...because I am by nature, as Paul says, a child of wrath.

Well, what happens when a child of wrath is born again? Well, that is fantastic. New Life is in you. Christ now literally lives in your soul. But its one thing for Him to be there, and its another thing for His mind to work in you so that His nature can be formed in you. Do you see? This is behind Paul's prayer. It is one thing to be born of the Spirit, it is another thing all together to have the mind of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and bear the fruit of the Spirit.

And so Paul prays. Paul prays that this body of believers who he knows to be growing in the truth would continue to have the spirit of wisdom and revelation make real to their soul what is already there. What is there? The mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:14 "we have the mind of Christ". Yes, but is that mind working in you by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation opening the eyes of your understanding? Or is that mind buried somewhere underneath all of our theologies, Christian concepts, and attempts at self-improvement.

Paul prays that the Spirit would, by revelation, bring them to the true knowledge of God. Do you realize that the knowledge of God is actually God's knowledge? It is God's reality, heart, perspective, truth. The knowledge of God isn't your knowledge about God. It is the true knowing of Him as His reality, His heart, His perspective, His Truth works in you by His Spirit.

So much of what Paul is teaching about and praying for the church has to do with growing up in the true knowledge of God. But I often think we're confused on what that really is. Try to think of it this way. What would be a better way to know me? What would be the "true knowledge of Jason". Would it be better to know everything conceivable about me through studying my life and listening to my words and watching my reactions to things and talking to my family. Or...would you know me better if my actual mind and heart were working in you, showing you what I felt and knew and thought about everything. Wouldn't it be a far greater knowing if my actual spirit was in you showing you exactly what "makes me tick?" Wouldn't that quality of knowing make any other sort of knowing seem so external, and subject to the observers opinion? I'm not just making up this analogy, it is EXACTLY what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

1Co 2:9 But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10 **But** God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Ok, Paul starts out by saying that the things that the natural eye cannot see, the natural ear cannot hear, and the natural heart cannot know, God has revealed. God reveals by His Spirit what your senses could never perceive. He continues.

1Co 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Do you see his point here? It is precisely what I just shared in my "knowledge of Jason" analogy. Nobody knows Jason except the spirit of Jason within me. If you wanted to really know Jason, you'd somehow have to partake of the spirit of Jason within me. Jason's spirit would have to live in you. Well, look what Paul says. Even so (vs. 11), it's the same way with God. Nobody knows God except the Spirit of God. Boy, that's a bummer, I guess I can't know Him. No, LOOK AT THE NEXT VERSE. "Now WE HAVE RECEIVED the Spirit of God that we might know the things that have been freely given.

This is the knowledge of God that Paul is praying for the church. Not more knowledge about God. Not better theology, not spiritual facts. Not even more of **your** knowledge of Him. But His very Spirit living in you, revealing in you that reality of His indwelling Life.

This isn't really your knowledge, heart, and mind coming to an understanding of Him. This is His knowledge, heart, and mind coming to work in you. The Spirit has been given so that you might know Him. And so Paul prays that by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation we might know Him. Experiential union. Knowing the One who is in us. Knowing the Spirit that is living in our soul. The one having been joined to the Lord has become one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and inasmuch as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has **given** us an understanding (the Spirit's understanding GIVEN to us), that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

It must always be the Spirit working in us spiritual reality as it is in the heart of God. It can never be our research or study of Him. Why? Well, read on in 1 Corinthians 2:14

1Co 2:14 [because] the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Now that doesn't mean that I don't search the Scriptures. I certainly do. But I search the Scriptures not as a discipline or for a daily life lesson. I search the Scriptures because they are a window through which I can look to see the true God, the Person of Eternal Life. I search the Scriptures so that the Spirit has something to use to open the eyes of my heart and reveal Christ in me as my life.

This is the true knowledge of God. God's Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, given to the human soul to reveal His very Life, His view, His heart, His will, His nature, His love, His righteousness, in us. Causing both the knowing that comes from experiential union, and a participation in the One known. And that may be an even better way of defining the "true knowledge of God". It is nothing less than a participation in the Life of the One we come to know. So the measure of our knowing is the measure to which His life is formed in us.

Conversely, the measure of our lack of knowing is the measure to which we still live in His place. The measure to which the toe is still trying to act like the head.

And that is why Paul's prayers are so consistently for the mind of Christ to work in the body of Christ. That is why Paul prays the way he does here in Ephesians chapter 1, and then again in Ephesians chapter 3 saying very much the same thing. The will of Christ cannot be done unless the mind of Christ is being revealed in the members of His body.

Some of you will hopefully remember the analogy I shared a year or so ago about a friend of mine in college. His name was Chris. Chris had cerebral palsy and had never had control of his arms. He could do an amazing amount with his feet, including type on a keyboard, write with a pencil, etc. But his hands were completely out of his control. In fact, not only did he not have control of his arms, but his arms were constantly doing things that were not according to his will, his mind. His arms had a mind of their own. They would have muscle spasms – shooting out in every which way. They often bumped things, knocked things over, hit people...all contrary to his mind. And he actually told me on a couple occasions that if his parents would have let him, he would have had them surgically removed years ago. As far as he was concerned, they were good for nothing. They only embarrassed him and misrepresented him. Apart from Chris' mind, they really could do no good thing. And he just wanted them cut off.

That might remind you of something that Jesus said.

Joh 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

Well that's what my friend Chris wanted to do. He wanted to chop off these dead limbs and throw them away. His limbs were worse than dead. **His limbs actually had a mind of their own, a will of their own, movement of their own.**

What am I getting at? I hope its obvious. We are dead limbs that have a mind of our own, will of our own, movement of our own, ministry of our own, glory of our own, EVERYTHING OF OUR OWN, until Christ is revealed in us.

We are like those arms. Those arms had Chris's life in them. That wasn't the issue. The problem wasn't the absence of life. No, that wasn't the problem. Our problem isn't that we lack the life of Christ in us. We have the fullness of new Life that at new birth. Our problem is that we lack the mind of Christ by which all things of His Life are manifested and His will are accomplished. And that comes only by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation bringing us to the true knowledge of Him.

Oh, the things that Jesus' limbs do in "his name" apart from his mind working in them both to will and work for His good pleasure. And that is why Paul prays what he prays. He prays unceasingly that the life that is in them through new birth would bring transformation and manifestation through the true knowing of Him. Paul knows that therein lies the key to seeing the will of God expressed.

Don't ever forget: the will of God is never in the doing of things for Him, but in the formation and expression of Himself in us. In other words, God is not trying to tell you what His will is so that you can go do it. It will never work that way. God is trying to transform your soul into the fragrance or manifestation of His will in every place. (2 Cor. 2:14) God is not trying to give you instructions on how to be like Him any more than you are trying to give instructions to your knee to be like you. He is seeking, just like you, to have each member effortlessly express the life that lives within.

And the way to get a body to become the effortless expression of the indwelling life, is to have one mind, one nature, one Life become the source and supply of all that happens in that body. That is why Paul prays the way he does.

He doesn't pray that Christ's body would just discipline themselves in such a way that they don't do this or that. No, that would be like praying that my friend Chris finds a way to tie his arms to his wheelchair. That might relieve some of the symptoms of the problem, but it hasn't solved the problem. What would solve Chris' problem? If Chris' mind, and will, and nature would reign supreme throughout in those arms. That would remove the need for the ropes to tie them down, wouldn't it? What would solve the same problem in the body of Christ? If Christ's mind, and will, and nature would reign supreme throughout His entire body. And knowing that, Paul prays the way he does.