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Sermon Notes

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Prayer to the God of Glory

Ephesians 1:15-17

The challenge and promise of genuine prayer:

Perhaps nothing in the Christian life holds so much promise coupled with deep problems as does PRAYER. I have had some of the richest times in my life in prayer... but I also struggle as most Christians do with a wandering mind and a weak will

Ephesians 1:15-17 is the doorway into a deeper prayer life...

Context:

Ephesians 1:3-14... perhaps single greatest, most elaborate and complex sentence ever penned in literary history... the unfolding of clause after clause explaining the eternal depths of our salvation, from God's gracious election of us in Christ before the foundation of the world, through His loving predestination of us to be adopted as his sons, through the gift of Jesus Christ, whose blood has worked full redemption for us, the forgiveness of our sins... through the giving of wisdom and insight to understand the purpose of His will to unite everything in the universe under one head, Jesus Christ... through the direct activity of the Holy Spirit in working in us to believe the gospel, through the sealing of the Spirit... giving us "authenticating proof" that we are children of God. All of this flowed through the pen of the Apostle Paul in one, long, glorious sentence of truth... like a flowing of radiant light and heat, sweetness and glory all wrapped up in words... words, words, one after the other, communicating infinitely deep truths

Having established in this one, long, glorious sentence these ineffable truths, Paul turns to PRAYER for the Ephesians

This is a powerful combination: the ministry of the Word and Prayer... the dual foundations of all genuine ministry

But as we listen in on Paul's prayers for the Ephesian Christians, we are mindful of our own deficiencies in prayer... we read of the lavish promises God makes in Scripture concerning prayer:

John 15:7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

We read testimonies of many of the godliest people in church history concerning prayer:

- "God does nothing except in response to believing prayer." **John Wesley**
- "The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history." **Andrew Murray**
- The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity...if we want to see might wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. ~ J. Hudson Taylor

Then we look at our own prayer lives, and we are brought up short... we are brought to grief; we wonder if we have ever really prayed at all; many Christians testify that they hardly pray at all, though they yearn to pray; many set aside time for prayer every day, and they have a "prayer list" and they follow some pattern for prayer, and they crank it out... but they know there must be SO MUCH MORE to prayer than that!!

So we can understand Jesus' disciples when they saw Jesus derive so much pleasure from His prayer life; they saw Him get up a great while before dawn and go spend hours in intimate fellowship with God, pouring out His heart to His heavenly Father, listening to the Father's answers, readying Himself to do everything the Father wanted Him to do that day; a perfect man leading a life of perfect prayer... who it seems could do or say NOTHING apart from the direction of God His Father...

Once, when Jesus' disciples saw Him praying like this, the emptiness in their own hearts, the vanity of their own prayer lives was exposed; but awakened within them was this one yearning:

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!!!

Well, in God's good providence, He has assigned to His choice servant, the Apostle Paul, a measure of the answer to that request... **LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!!!** The Lord would say to us, "Have you considered my servant, Paul? Have you read how he prays for the churches in the various epistles he wrote? Learn from him!"

So, we come to Ephesians 1:15-23, we come to one of the richest of Paul's prayers for the Christians he was ministering to... and as we study his model prayer, we can grow in

amazing ways to be more powerful and effective in prayer, and more intimate in our relationship with our heavenly Father

I. Thanksgiving for the Ephesians' Genuine Conversion

Ephesians 1:15-16 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

A. General division of prayer: thanksgiving/worship and petition

Daniel 6:10-11 Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.

Thanksgiving can be for anything God IS or HAS DONE... so it can be combined with WORSHIP and ADORATION

But then, prayer is a humble acknowledgement of our own NEEDINESS and GOD'S ALL-SUFFICIENCY... we are weak, He is strong; we need filling, He is able to fill us abundantly

So in Ephesians 1, we see Paul beginning with thanksgiving, and moving on to intercession, making requests for the Ephesians

B. What moved Paul to pray?

1. "Ever since I heard about your FAITH in the Lord Jesus and your LOVE for all the saints..."
2. Paul heard greatly encouraging reports about how the gospel had transformed their lives
3. In other words, he heard compelling evidence of the GENUINE CONVERSION of the Ephesians

C. Marks of genuine conversion

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus

- a. It is not enough for someone to "believe in God"... Jews believe in God; Muslims believe in God; Hindus believe in God
- b. Paul is moved by reports of their faith in the Lord Jesus
- c. The gospel came to Ephesus, and at the center of that Gospel was the truth about "the Lord Jesus"

- i) This cuts to the center of what a sinner has to believe to be saved, and it reduces it to the simplest level possible
- ii) Jesus IS the center of the gospel... specifically His saving work on the cross

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins

- iii) Faith in the Lord Jesus means I have abandoned all hope of self-salvation; I know I am a sinner; I have cast myself completely on the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him alone to save me from hell
- iv) But who was this person who died on the cross? He is the LORD JESUS, Paul says
- v) "Lord" = the deity ... "Jesus" = the humanity; this man, human being, born of the Virgin Mary, fully man, fully God
- vi) This included all the miracles Jesus did, proving His deity; His ability to heal every disease and sickness; his power to feed the 5000 with a few loaves and fish; his ability to still a storm with a word; to drive out demons; even to raise the dead!! The LORD JESUS
- vii) The Ephesians came to believe that their Savior was human, able to shed his blood and die... but also that He was GOD, as proven clearly by His resurrection from the dead

Romans 10:9 ... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

- viii) This conviction can only come by the direct work of the Holy Spirit on their hearts:

1 Corinthians 12:3 no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- d. Paul heard that these Ephesians had left their pagan ways and had come to believe that the LORD JESUS was their personal Savior

2. Love for all the saints

- a. This is the other great transformation the Holy Spirit... a deep love for other Christians
- b. The natural man, not born again, has no desire for fellowship with Christians
- c. They tend to despise them, think of them as narrow-minded bigots, killjoys, hypocrites, uneducated, worthy of mockery or disdain

- d. But once someone is born-again, they have a deep desire to be with other Christians; a delight in fellowship with people who also love Jesus as they do
- e. How do we explain this? How can anyone explain away that I would MUCH RATHER be with a genuine Spirit-filled Christian than the most famous and wealthiest and beautiful non-Christian?
- f. The Holy Spirit had worked this genuine love for other Christians in the hearts of these Ephesians...

Application: are these two evidences clearly seen in your life? Do you have faith in the LORD JESUS and do you have a deep love for all the saints?

D. Thanksgiving: Because God is Responsible for Every Genuine Conversion

- 1. These two evidences of genuine conversion MOVED PAUL to thanksgiving, because God the Father had sovereignly worked them by His Holy Spirit
- 2. So Paul gave credit where credit was due...
- 3. Thanklessness is a great sin in the unregenerate heart

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- 4. Thanksgiving is based on God's sovereignty in salvation

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

THANK GOD YOU OBEYED!!!

- 5. We should all GIVE THANKS to God for our own conversions!

The TEN LEPERS:

Luke 17:15-18 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

- 6. But Paul has moved way beyond that... he NEVER CEASES in giving thanks for OTHER PEOPLE'S CONVERSION
 - a. God deserves just as much praise for someone else's salvation as He does for yours

- b. The more mature you become in your prayer life, the more thanks you will give for the grace you see in other people's lives

II. Perseverance in Prayer

A. Paul Says from the First He Heard, He Has NEVER STOPPED Thanking God

*Ephesians 1:15-17 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I **have not stopped** giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ 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.*

B. The Need for Perseverance in Prayer

1. Prayer was meant to be continual... constantly flowing up to God
2. Part of our problem in prayer... how prone we are to grow weary and give up
3. Jesus' parable of the PERSISTENT WIDOW:

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

4. God does not move immediately in response to our prayers... we need PERSEVERANCE in everything we do in life; prayer is a great training ground for this
5. Especially in worship and thanksgiving, learning to thank God without ceasing for your own salvation and that of other saints is so HEALTHY and strengthening

C. Paul's Example

1. Paul prayed day after day for the saints...
2. He refused to rest, refused to cease; God was every bit as worthy of thanks on Tuesday as He was on Monday; as worthy when things were going well as when they were going badly
3. Paul said he literally "made remembrance" to God of the Ephesian saints; he spoke their names, remembering them to God in prayer
4. So also should we!

III. Prayer to the God of Our Lord Jesus, the “Father of Glory”

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

A. Paul’s Prayer: Directed to God the Father

1. Say this reverently: Sometimes a problem when Christians focus so much on Jesus and neglect the Father
2. Everything Jesus did was to reveal the Father to us, show us the Father, bring us to the Father
3. We should not have an unreasoning and unscriptural fear of the Father as we overemphasize fellowship with Jesus, walking with Jesus, praying to Jesus
4. So many hymns are directed to Jesus... and yet the Scripture directs us always ultimately to God the Father
5. Paul consistently in his prayers in the epistles offers them to God the Father
6. Some have said (rightly so) there is no jealousy in the Trinity
 - a. It’s not wrong to pray to Jesus, though there’s only one example of it I can find and that’s when Stephen was dying and he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”
 - b. There is no example anywhere of prayer to the Holy Spirit
 - c. Every other prayer in the Bible is offered directly to God the Father
7. Jesus is the MEDIATOR... He came to open a door of access to God the Father

Hebrews 10:19-20 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

8. The Spirit empowers us to pray through Jesus’ mediation to God the Father

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

9. So we should focus our hearts on this biblical pattern... approaching God by the mediating work of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit

B. True Prayer Begins with Remembering Who You’re Speaking To!

1. Too often we rush into the presence of God and forget who He is, how powerful and awesome and radiant

2. We are so prone to extremes: to be either so terrified by the majesty of God, feeling that we need a perfectly worded prayer, very formal sounding, with high grammar and vocabulary... OR to be thoughtless and careless and cavalier about prayer, flippant, irreverent
3. So we must STOP! PAUSE! THINK! REFELCT!! Who is this Being you're about to address

C. Paul Prays to "The God of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

1. This is a vital reflection for us... how Paul identifies the Person to whom he is praying
2. We do not pray to an unknown God... as Paul said to the Athenians:

Acts 17:23 as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

Invictus

William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank **whatever gods may be**
For my unconquerable soul.

3. God has revealed Himself in history, and in scripture
4. We call on Him based on that prior revelation
5. Old Testament: God identified by past encounters

To Isaac:

Genesis 26:24 "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."

To Jacob:

Genesis 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me.

To Moses, God identified Himself this way:

Exodus 3:6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

6. God is the God who created heaven and earth, the seas and everything in them; God is the God who made a way through the Red Sea; God is the God who chose David and made him King over all of Israel; God has been identified in all these ways and others in the Old Testament
7. BUT Jesus is the Mediator of a New and better Covenant! So Paul identifies God as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. When Jesus became human, he identified with us
 - b. He approached God the Father as a man and believed in the Father, trusted Him, obeyed Him
 - c. He loved His Father, prayed to Him, sought to please Him at every moment
 - d. And after His resurrection, He speaks to us like this:

John 20:17 Go ... to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

8. We pray to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus has revealed God to us and enabled us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

D. The Father of Glory

1. Paul also identifies God as “the Father of glory”... (NIV has “the glorious Father”, but “Father of glory is better!!)
2. God is not merely glorious... He is the source of ALL GLORY there is the universe... he is the unending fountain of glory; it flows from His person like a vast river flows from a limitless spring
3. Glory = radiant display of God’s perfections; God is the one

1 Timothy 6:16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light

Meditate on that phrase: UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT!

I picture the seraphim in Isaiah 6 covering their faces because the glory of the Lord is so overwhelming

I picture the sun, 93 million miles away, burning, burning, burning... With unapproachable power; the sun is so huge, (1.4 million km in diameter), you could line 103 earths side by side next to each other to reach from pole to pole of the sun...

If we approached the sun, and somehow God willed that we not be incinerated by its inconceivable heat, we would be overwhelmed by its sheer magnitude... stretching fifty earth diameters up and fifty earth diameters down... a wall of fire, a raging inferno; a single flare erupts from the surface, emitting more energy than the earth would use in a billion years... it is a **TERROR**, a raging inferno of power; and God is infinitely greater; He created it and sustains it at every moment

4. God is the Father of Glory...

a. Hebrew for "glory" = "weightiness", "massiveness"

b. God is the weighty center of the universe, visible and invisible

c. God has put His glory on display in the creation and sustaining of the universe...

d. BUT far more, in the unfolding of the gospel

i) We see God's power; God's wisdom, God's immutability; God's love; God's patience; God's kindness;

ii) All of these on radiant display in the gospel

iii) He is the "Father of Glory!"

5. This is the God to whom Paul prayed... the God to whom we pray as well

6. Thus as we begin to pray, we come with a sense of overwhelming AWE and reverence...

Matthew 6:9 This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

IV. The Goal of Prayer: Knowing God

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

A. We Come to Paul's First Intercession

1. We come to God because He is capable of giving us infinitely more than all we could ask or imagine!

2. We glorify God by asking Him for GREAT THINGS because He is a GREAT GOD!!!

3. God wants us to make our requests known to Him
4. But note what is the first request...

B. "In the Knowledge of Him"

1. Paul is going to pray many more things than this
2. He want the Ephesian Christians to know and be assured of many things
3. But Paul starts his requests for them in this way... that they might KNOW GOD... know Him more deeply, more intimately, more powerfully than they ever have before

C. A.W. Tozer and J.I. Packer

Tozer: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." *Knowledge of the Holy*

Packer: "What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance, and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?" *Knowing God*

D. An Infinite Study

1. Amazing! These Ephesian Christians had already come to know God...
2. Conversion is not the end of this study... it is merely the beginning!
3. Paul wants them to know God MORE AND MORE
4. There is absolutely no end to this study... to know the infinite person of God will take an infinite amount of time; and that's what we'll have in heaven—an infinite amount of time; and that's what we'll do in heaven—study God forever.

E. Jesus' Deep Heart Cry for Us

1. Definition of Eternal Life

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

2. This is the great tragedy of the lost world:

John 17:25 Righteous Father! The world has not known You.

3. This is the work Christ did for us at conversion

John 17:6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

4. This is the ONGOING work He will do in us forever

John 17:26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

F. What is this "Knowledge"?

1. It IS factual... knowledge ABOUT God

- a. There can be no basis of a love relationship without factual knowledge
- b. God wants us to know everything we can about Him... all the facts; who He is, what He has done
- c. Those facts are revealed plainly in the Bible and also in creation
- d. We should be zealous to gain as much factual knowledge about God as we can be knowing the Bible intimately and clearly

2. But it is INFINITELY MORE than that

- a. Demons have far more accurate factual knowledge about God

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

- b. God wants us to go beyond mere factual knowledge
- c. He wants us to have an intimate knowledge of Him, a LOVE RELATIONSHIP

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

- d. He wants us to have an ENCOUNTER with the living God!!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "It is almost impossible to put this truth into words, but it means that God should be real to us, and that we should be conscious of Him and conscious of His presence. I make no apology for asking whether you have ever known this? Is

God real to you? When you get on your knees to pray, do you know that God is there, do you realize His presence?"

3. So many accounts of this

a. Jacob at Bethel:

Genesis 28:16-17 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."*

b. aa

Exodus 33:12-23 *... Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" ¹⁷ ¶ And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." ¹⁹ And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." ²¹ Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

c. Psalm 63

Psalm 63:1-3 *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.*

d. Job

Job 23:3 *If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling!*

Lloyd-Jones: "He had not lost his theoretical knowledge of God; he had not ceased to know the attributes of God and about the works of God. That was not what Job was seeking. He had experienced fellowship and communion with God, but for the time being he had lost it. What he was seeking was the Person Himself, direct contact from the living God."

At the end of the book of Job, God "shows up"... Job has an unforgettable encounter with the living God as God speaks powerfully to him out of a terrifying storm:

Job 42:5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

4. Seeing and Savoring God

Psalm 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good

Have you TASTED the goodness of God? Savored it? Imagine a cut crystal dish of raspberry sorbet on a table covered with a white linen table cloth. Imagine a heavy silver spoon next to it. You can picture the sorbet in your mind, you have a sense of the sweet delicate flavor, of how it would be if it melted on your tongue and the sweet liquid flowed down your throat... but thinking about it and actually tasting it are two different things.

Jonathan Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light”

Thus there is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance.

Have you tasted the goodness of God for yourselves? Do you KNOW His goodness?

V. The Means to that Goal: The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

^{ESV} Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him

A. “Spirit” not “spirit”

1. Almost every English translation has the word “spirit” with a lower-case “s”
2. But this is clearly the ministry of the Holy Spirit... it is His secret and powerful work to minister the knowledge of God directly to our hearts
3. The Holy Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance
4. In order to do this, He takes some of the future intimate knowledge we will have of God in heaven and brings it to us RIGHT NOW

B. The Spirit of Wisdom

1. The Spirit works wisdom in us... the ability to perceive and accept and delight in the truth about God

2. Not merely the wisdom of Solomon that seemed very much tied to the physical creation and daily life

1 Kings 4:32 - 5:1 [Solomon] spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³ He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴ Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

3. But the wisdom of God embodied in scripture and in Christ... the wisdom of spiritual things in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus
4. This is wisdom only the Holy Spirit can give

1 Corinthians 2:7 we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

- a. The philosophers and scientists of this world could not reason their way to God

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

- b. But this wisdom is Christ and it is God's secret nature

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

C. The Spirit of Revelation

1. God cannot be known by us unless He reveals Himself to us

1 Timothy 6:16 God dwells in unapproachable light.

J.I. Packer: "All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me."

2. God unveils Himself to us by the ministry of the Spirit as He reveals Christ

- a. This special and deep knowledge of God does not come by extrabiblical revelations
 - b. The cult leaders all claimed to have special revelations from God
 - i) Mohammad did, and wrote the Koran
 - ii) Joseph Smith did, and wrote the Book of Mormon
 - iii) Mary Baker Eddy did, and founded Christian Science
3. The Spirit's external work: the inspiration of Scripture
- a. We come to know God better by the work the Spirit has ALREADY DONE in inspiring the perfect Scripture

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

4. The Spirit's internal work: the illumination of Scripture

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Psalms 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

5. The Spirit's additional internal work: sealing to a greater and greater degree

D. Without The Work of the Spirit, We Cannot Know God At All

Lloyd-Jones tells story of William Wilberforce trying to lead his intelligent powerful best friend William Pitt to faith in Christ. Wilberforce had been converted by reading Philip Doddridge's book *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. Wilberforce was an active Christian, instrumental in the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. William Pitt was brilliant, the Prime Minister of England, but he had no understanding at all of spiritual things. Wilberforce was extremely anxious about his friend's eternal soul; he sought to get him to come to church regularly. Finally, Wilberforce heard that a powerful preacher named Richard Cecil was going to be preaching in a certain church. Wilberforce persuaded Pitt to go. Richard Cecil preached a very powerful message, so powerful that Wilberforce had never heard such a clear exposition of the gospel and of spiritual things in his life; he was deeply moved, even to tears. After the service had ended, Pitt turned to Wilberforce and said, "You know, Wilberforce, I did my very best to concentrate with the whole of my power on what that man was saying, but I have not the slightest idea as to what he was talking about."

Pitt was far more intelligent than Wilberforce, but the same message that so powerfully moved the soul of Wilberforce was incomprehensible to Pitt.

That is why Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know God. They were babes in Christ, and needed to know God more and more... that is the ongoing work of the Spirit through the scripture today.

VI. Application

A. Do You Know God Like This?

1. Have you had the powerful clear revelation of God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son?
2. Have you seen yourself to be a sinner, desperately in need of salvation?
3. Has the Spirit made Christ crucified glorious and beautiful to you?
4. Has the Spirit shown you God's loving face, His tender mercies in Christ?

B. If You Are a Christian

1. Do you see how zealous Paul is that the Ephesian Christians know God netter and better?
2. Does this awaken inside you a sense of yearning for intimacy with God?
3. Can you begin praying these things for your own heart? Could you pray this:

***Psalm 42:1-2 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?***

4. Can you ask God to work in your prayer life in the same way?
5. Can you begin praying these things for other brothers and sisters in Christ?
6. Can you set the ideal of knowing God as the central quest of your life?
7. Can you search the Scriptures every day to see what they may show you of the glory of God?
8. Can you "Taste and See" that the Lord is good?
9. Can you learn more and more to cherish God the Father, the Father of the Lord Jesus, the Father of Glory... to go directly to Him in prayer?
10. Ask God to make you a prayer warrior like this... filled with persevering prayer, of this type...spiritually minded, praying these kinds of things for your spouse, your children, your parents, your friends, your coworkers, your neighbors, your pastors and elders...