

We Would See Jesus



Part 1: That You May Know

T. M. Moore

The Fellowship of Ailbe

A ReVision Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Welcome to *That You May Know*

The Christian's highest calling and privilege is to know Jesus Christ. To know Jesus is to know God the Father, and thus to know eternal life in Him (Jn. 17.3).

Like those ancient Greeks who came to the disciples (Jn. 12.21), our constant prayer should be, "We would see Jesus." In this series, we're going to look to the Scripture to see what that entails, and to discover how we may have the vision of Christ more constantly before us, so that we know the Presence of Christ more continually, truly, and powerful with us.

We begin by looking at Paul's prayer for us in Ephesians 1.15-23. This prayer sets the framework for seeking Jesus, because it takes us from our profession of faith all the way to Jesus filling us and filling our world through us.

It's a truly exciting and challenging prayer, and we begin our series *We Would See Jesus* by looking to Paul to show us what we may know and how we may know it.

We're pleased to provide these *ReVision* studies at no cost, to help you in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

If you find these studies helpful, please consider making a contribution to The Fellowship of Ailbe to help us in our ministry. You can do that by clicking the contribute button at our website, www.ailbe.org, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 See Jesus

...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...
Ephesians 1.19, 20

Paul's strength and ours

On the pulpit desk of the seminary I attended, a simple bronze plaque reminds all who would proclaim from that platform what their sole purpose must be: "Sir, we would see Jesus" (Jn. 12.21).

The goal of all Christian instruction – preaching, teaching, studying, or reading – is that Christian people might increase in love for God and their neighbors (1 Tim. 1.5; 1 Cor. 13.1-13). This is the *goal* of Christian instruction. But Christian instruction is not the *means* to realizing that goal. Many people have submitted to a wide variety of Christian instruction, and over many years, without realizing the goal of such instruction in their daily lives. This is because they have mistaken instruction as the *goal* of Christian teaching, rather than what it really is.

Christian instruction is not the *means* to loving God and neighbors. Christian instruction is the *way* or *avenue* into the *means* whereby we increase in love for God and our neighbors. And the *means* for realizing the purpose of our redemption is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. "Sir, we would see Jesus." The task of Christian educators at every level is to *lead people to see Jesus, to know Jesus, to participate in Jesus, and to enter into Jesus' power*. Jesus is the *means* whereby we increase in love. He is also the *means* whereby we are inclined or disposed or empowered to love, as the Spirit of God forms us increasingly into the likeness of Christ along the various avenues of Christian instruction (2 Cor. 3.12-18). Jesus Christ *shows us* what real love looks like; He also *enables us* to become people who love others out of our transformed lives.

But Jesus is also the *love we show to God and others* as we reach out in one way or another to fulfill our reason for being. When people experience the love of God *through* us, it is because Jesus has commandeered our lives – all our words and deeds and dispositions – that He might express Himself through us and draw others to Himself.

As we see Jesus more and more clearly and consistently, He "stretches out" in us, reaches out through us, and points others to Himself, giving them a taste of Him, creating a thirst and hunger for Him, so that they begin to desire Jesus, Whom they see in us.

Paul understood that *seeing* Jesus is the absolute indispensable key to the end of Jesus *filling the world* with Himself, which is the unwavering intention and goal of our Lord (Eph. 1.22, 23; 4.8-10). So it does not surprise us that Paul told the Ephesians that he "did not cease" praying for them, that they might *see* Jesus, *know* Jesus, *enter into* His power, and *live* as agents through whom He makes Himself present throughout the world: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself" (Jn. 12.32).

When Christ is lifted up to us, before us, to our deep, spiritual understanding, then He draws us to Himself. When we are in His Presence, we know Him and His power, and He lifts Himself up in us, so that we are changed. And when He goes in and through us into the world around us, others see and taste and experience Him, and He draws them to Himself (Mic. 4.1-8).

What, then, could be more important, more thrilling, more all-transforming, and more world-changing than that you and I and all believers everywhere at all times have as our prayer to God our Father, "Sir, we would see Jesus"?

You see Him

Paul wrote that Jesus is seated in heavenly places at the right hand of the Father, right now. And right now, as you read those words, you *see* Him there. Perhaps not very clearly, like a video with dissolving pixels. Maybe like a fleeting image you might encounter in a dream. Or an old Sunday school poster you recall from youth. But you see Him. When you read, “Jesus, seated at the right hand of God,” you see Him. Well, you see *something*, and not with physical eyes, but with your mind, as well as your heart. You see an image – a cognitive function or your imagination – and you feel a certain emotion – a resonance in your heart. You see Jesus. You know Him to be where Paul and many other writers of Scripture report Him to be.

But if you’re like most Christians, what you see of Jesus, seated at God’s right hand, is flat, lifeless, fleeting, trite, and not particularly compelling.

But what if you were really *there*? What if you were *really* before Him, looking upon Him as He is, being caught up in the ambience and environment of where He is seated, hearing the sounds, smelling the fragrances, being swept along by His beauty and drawn closer and closer to Him. What if that is what you see?

All the time.

If that is what you see, then you will be where David was when he wrote, “I have set the LORD always before me...In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16.8, 11).

Do you think you might linger there a while? Do you think such a vision, such a closeness, such an experience of Jesus might have transforming effects on you?

Do you think that’s the vantage point from which you might like to live your life (Eph. 2.6)?

Seeing Jesus

For the apostle Paul, seeing Jesus – His face, His glory, His exalted eminence and splendor – was *the* crucial component of his discipleship: “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal” (2 Cor. 4.6, 16-18). “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3.1-3).

For Paul, seeing Jesus was the goal of every moment of His life, because seeing Jesus, he became transformed into the likeness of Jesus, and was able to live Jesus in the world.

And Paul commands us – you and me and all believers – to imitate him, as he imitated Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1).

How we can do that, and the power and joy and hope and fruitfulness that issue from that, will be the focus of the studies in this series.

For reflection

1. What does the phrase “see Jesus” suggest to you?
2. How should Christian instruction contribute to our growing in love?

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3. What do you think it will take for you to see Jesus more clearly and consistently?

Next steps – Preparation: In prayer, talk your vision of Jesus at the Father's right hand back to Him. Ask Him to begin enhancing and enriching that vision today.

2 The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 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... Ephesians 1.15-17

From faith to fullness

It seems to me that, in Ephesians 1.15-23, Paul outlines a most important component of the life of faith, one which is crucial to realizing the new “dispensation” or “economy” which the Lord began in Paul’s day (Eph. 1.9, 10; Eph. 3.1-12), and which includes the work of making disciples and growing healthy churches (Eph. 4.1-16). Let’s make a few observations.

First, the passage begins with a community of people who are known to have true faith in Jesus. The evidence of that true faith is the love which issues through them (v. 15). The passage ends with the entire world being put under the feet of Jesus, and Jesus Himself, by His Church, filling all things in all things. Thus, it starts with us where we are, living out our faith in Jesus by loving one another (v. 15). From there the vision expands into an experience of the power of Jesus (vv. 19-21) as it operates to fill the world with His Presence (v. 23; cf. Eph. 4.8-10). Implied is a connection between that outcome, and all the “upside-downness” it implies (Acts 17.6, 7), and our daily experience as believers.

Second, the focal point of this passage is not what believers do in their churches – how they conduct worship, what kinds of buildings they should have, what programs to run, staff to hire, and all that with which we are so familiar, and which we regard as so crucial for healthy, growing churches in our day. The focal point of this passage is on what believers *see*, *how they see it*, and *the effect seeing it* has upon them. And here Paul directs us to the greatest *unseeable* thing imaginable, Jesus exalted in glory. We know He is exalted in glory; and while we can’t see Him there with our physical eyes, we must learn to see Him nonetheless. Seeing Him there, and participating in His “mighty power” are the bridge between our daily faith as believers and a world filled with Jesus.

Churches and church activities do not make us the kind of people who fill all things in all things with Jesus Christ. Churches and their activities *can* play a role in this, but they are not the *means* whereby Jesus fills the world with Himself. They are the *vesel* through which that filling occurs (v. 23), but they are not the *means* of that world-filling miracle.

The means for that filling of all things in all things is the Lord Jesus Himself, by His Spirit.

The Spirit of wisdom

Jesus Himself is the means for filling the world with Himself. Specifically, His Spirit, dwelling and working within each believer, is the means whereby we are enabled both to *see* Jesus and to *know* His power and glory, so that, in and through us, He fills the world with Himself.

So Paul prayed for the Ephesians to have a greater measure of the Spirit (not “spirit”, as in the NKJV) Who has the wisdom and revelation of Jesus which we need for the new economy we are pursuing by grace through faith.

The Spirit leads us to understand the wisdom of God, a wisdom so compelling, that it captures the attention and hearts of the people around us, causing them to marvel at the righteousness, justice, peace, love, joy, consideration, patience, selflessness, generosity, and goodness they see reflected in every aspect of our lives (cf. Deut. 4.5-8).

The Spirit of God is the Spirit from whom wisdom comes to us. He alone can lead us into the wisdom which Jesus Himself embodies for us (cf. Col. 2.3; Prov. 8.1-36). Jesus, Who *is* Wisdom authenticates and proves Himself *as* Wisdom by the wisdom He bears in those who are His offspring (Lk. 7.35). The wisdom that wows the world comes from Jesus, Who is Wisdom. And it is mediated to us by the Spirit of wisdom, Who brings us into the knowledge of Jesus' power and glory. *Only* the Spirit can give us such wisdom. We must not count on any human exertions to make us wise. Preaching, teaching, books, courses, workshops, and all the rest can only, at best, connect us to Jesus through the Spirit. When they do this, they fulfill their purpose as avenues along which we engage the means that bears the fruit of love in us.

Only the Spirit of wisdom can give us the wisdom of God. How does He do that?

The Spirit of revelation

He does that by opening to us the revelation of God in all its forms, for He is not only the Spirit of wisdom but the Spirit of revelation as well. He *gave* the revelation of God to the writers of Scripture (2 Pet. 1.20, 21), and He *teaches* the revelation of God – which is the revelation of Jesus – to all who look to Him in faith (Jn. 14.26).

The Spirit leads us to *see Jesus* in all the revelation of God, both in His Word and in His world. We are not submitting to the Spirit of revelation if we are not waiting on Him and following Him and allowing Him to lead us to Jesus in *all* the revelation of God. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might receive the Spirit of revelation, not as some kind of second blessing, but as an ever-increasing reality in their souls, the living, teaching, convicting, correcting, gifting, fruit-bearing, wisdom-bestowing, witness empowering Presence of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Only Jesus Christ can transform ordinary believers such as we into world-filling, world-transforming witnesses, citizens, and ambassadors of the new economy God is advancing through His Kingdom. We need to *see* Jesus and *know* Jesus and *participate in* Jesus if we are to fulfill our calling as the new creations that we are in Him (2 Cor. 5.17-21).

Only the Spirit can connect us to Jesus. It pleases Him to use pastors and teachers, services of worship, courses of study, and our own daily reading of God's Word to help us *see, know, and participate* in Jesus. But if any of these are engaged *apart* from the Spirit, or *without His filling and leading*, or *for any reason other than what He is seeking*, then all our activities will be of no value in fitting us to fill the world with Jesus. Apart from the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, we will remain babes in Christ, unable to fathom the depths of the riches of our loving Lord, or to know Him being formed in us and expressed through us, filling our world with Himself.

Thus it is clear that to see Jesus, as Paul intends we should, and to know Him and His power in transforming ways, we must seek the Lord for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in ever-increasing measure and consistency, for every aspect of our lives.

For reflection

1. What should be the role of churches and church programs in our discipleship? How can we know when churches are fulfilling this role?
2. Why is the Holy Spirit both the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation?
3. How often do you seek the Lord for a greater measure of His Spirit?

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Next steps – Transformation: In your daily prayer time, and throughout the day, ask the Lord to give you more of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

3 The Eyes of Your Heart

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 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, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling... Ephesians 1.15-18

Paul's vision and ours

We have been urging the point that Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 encapsulates his vision for the Christian life. The vision you have of the Christian life – how you perceive and pursue your walk with the Lord – will determine the nature and impact of your life in Christ. As Paul put it, once we have come to *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, we begin learning how to show *love for all the saints* (v. 15). When Paul sees this, he rejoices, because this is what is supposed to happen in the Christian's life. Those who believe in Jesus become epicenters of grace and truth in that part of the world field the Lord has assigned to them. Believing in Jesus and bearing the fruit of love is the heart and soul of being a Christian. (1 Tim. 1.5; cf. Heb. 6.9, 10).

But Paul wants us to think big about this calling – to think big, aspire big, and live big, so that, increasingly, we become filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3.19), and this fullness of God overflows from within us to fill every place we go with the Presence of Jesus Christ. Elsewhere, Paul makes this same point by describing believers as the *fragrance* or *aroma of Christ* in every place (2 Cor. 2.14-16). Wherever we go, whatever we're doing, whomever we're with, we waft and impart the Presence of Jesus.

We must not think of our lives as Christians only in terms of what *we experience* – freedom from guilt, the joy of forgiveness, the hope of eternal life, the peace that passes understanding, and so forth. We must also be concerned for what Jesus *sends us to express* as His followers. We are called to *be* His witnesses (Acts 1.8). And we are part of a larger movement of like-minded people who are becoming filled with the fullness of God, and whose objective is to put everything under the feet of King Jesus, and to fill all things in all things with the living Presence of our risen and beautiful Savior (Eph. 1.22, 23; 4.8-10).

So Paul prayed that we might have the Spirit of God to grant us His wisdom – the Wisdom which is our Lord Jesus Christ – by means of divine revelation. Wisdom is the goal; revelation is the means; the fullness of God is the result, when the Spirit of God is vitally at work within us (Phil. 2.13). This is what Paul wants for us as followers of Jesus. What could be more exciting or world-changing than to fulfill our part in a vast, worldwide movement of people who are filling all things in all things with Jesus Himself?

A heart-felt vision

For this to happen, for this to be *our* experience of following Jesus, certain things have to happen. We need to *know* certain things, and not just as cognitive categories or intellectual insights. We must know in a deeper, richer, more determinative way than can happen by our minds alone. If we are to know as a lived, exciting, transforming experience the *hope* of our *calling* and the *riches* of God's *glory* (v. 18), and the *greatness* of God's *power* – exceedingly abundantly beyond what we've ever dared to ask or think (Eph. 1.19; 3.20) – so that we are filled with the fullness of God and fill all things through the Body of Christ into the world, then something crucial needs to happen.

The eyes of our heart must be enlightened (v. 18).

What the NKJV translates as “the eyes of your understanding” is literally, “the eyes of your heart.” Paul could have said “understanding,” for he certainly had a word for that, if that is what he intended. But to accomplish the goal of his prayer, he needed something *larger* than understanding, something that includes understanding but goes beyond it to bring about lasting change in a person's life.

Paul thus directed his prayers toward the *hearts* of disciples – the hearts of the Ephesians and our hearts as well. In Scripture, the heart is that part of the soul that harbors the affections. Primary among these are the affections of love, desire, longing, and intention. What we love, desire, long for, and intend is what shapes our thoughts and directs our actions. If we are to be filled with all the fullness of God and fill all things in all things with the living Presence of Jesus Christ, we must *love* such a notion, *desire* it above all else, *long* for it at all times, and *incline all aspects of lives* to the realization of it.

The heart is the heart of the matter in the life of faith. Both Solomon and Jesus affirm this (cf. Prov. 4.23; Matt. 12.34, 35; 15.19). Paul insisted that it is when our affections become wrongly focused that our walk with the Lord suffers (2 Cor. 6.12). The mind has an important role to play in the life of faith. The revelation of God that leads to wisdom and Christlikeness enters our minds, as the Spirit teaches us the things of Christ. But this information will be of no benefit unless it is *coupled with the proper affections*, affections which enliven and direct our thoughts, and move us in our bodies to love God and our neighbors. We can learn all the doctrines of Scripture, and all the outlines and themes of all the books of Scripture. But if our affections toward what we're learning are not enlightened with the light of *Jesus*, we will be *indifferent* or *complacent* or *smug* about those ideas, at best, and *opposed* or *hardened* to or *scornful* of them at worst (1 Cor. 13.1-3).

Bible information, doctrine, Christian instruction, preaching – these are not the *means* to being filled with the fullness of God and filling your part of the world with Jesus. They are part of the way into the means, but they are not the means itself. If your heart is not enlightened by the light of Christ, all your reading and study will be of no benefit; it will bear no true fruit of faith in love for God and others.

Your heart *must be enlightened* before you can *know* as God wants you to know, and *live* as Jesus calls you to live.

True enlightenment

What is this “enlightenment” that comes upon our affections so powerfully, that it engages them all in the direction of being filled with all the fullness of God and filling all things with Jesus Christ? “Enlightenment” is a term that has been used to describe the modern era’s liberation of itself from the constraints of “religion” so as to be led into true understanding of our lives through the ministrations of science.

Nothing could be further from the truth. And the record of the “Age of Enlightenment” does not demonstrate the achievement of a world filled with happy, generous, selfless, moral, and noble people. True enlightenment does not come from rejecting God and turning to science. Science is a wonderful discipline, and it holds great promise for contributing to the progress of Christ’s rule on earth as it is in heaven. But science, uncoupled from the light of Jesus Christ – the Treasury of all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2.3) – is a dead end. Only as the eyes of our hearts are enlightened by the light of Jesus Christ can we expect to realize Paul’s vision for the life of faith.

And the light of Jesus is nothing other than Jesus Himself, Who is the Light of the world, and Who must and can enlighten our love, desire, longing, and inclination so that we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus, and carry the fragrance of Him into everything we do. Only the Light of Jesus can enlighten our hearts so that we truly *know* what we must know.

For reflection

1. Why do we say that preaching and study and reading are not the means to a rich life of discipleship? If they’re not the means, what are they?
2. How does the heart function in relation to the mind? Why do our hearts need the Light of Jesus?

3. Why is mere knowledge of doctrine and Scripture not sufficient to help us realize the goal of our discipleship?

Next steps – Preparation: Think about the people you meet throughout the week – the people to whom Jesus sends you as His witness and ambassador. For each person, how would you describe the attitude of your heart?

4 The Light that Shines from Jesus

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: but 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, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling... Ephesians 1.15-18

*The entrance of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119.130*

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” John 5.39

The Light that enlightens

We mentioned that Jesus is the Light Who enlightens the eyes of our heart, bathing our affections with the warmth of God’s grace and nurturing them for truth. I don’t want to rush by this point, because it is the key to our participating in the kind of faith that fills our world with the reality of Jesus Himself.

Jesus is the Light of the world (Jn. 8.12). The light He shines into our hearts emanates from His very being – holy, righteous, good, eternal, and true – and liberates us from the fears that stalk people who live in the darkness – principally, the fear of death (Heb. 2.15). The light Jesus shines into our souls reaches us in holy spiritual photons of grace and truth; and it is life-giving, transforming us little by little into His likeness, and empowering us to live as He did, restoring the world to the Light of life (2 Cor. 5.17-21). The light from Jesus illuminates the dark corners and untidy conditions of our soul, and casts rays of holy transformation, showing us how to order our affections with those that beat within His own heart.

The light which Jesus, the Light of the world, shines into the eyes of our hearts comes from behind the veil that separates the visible and invisible worlds. Thus, it is not constrained by the possibilities of material existence. Rather, it glows and gleams with possibilities for life, newness, and power that are of the same sort and magnitude that healed the sick, raised the dead, stilled the waves, brought Jesus to life again, and upholds the universe and all things in it (Heb. 1.3). We’ll know that our affections have been reached by that light as we begin to love, desire, long for, and incline to the Kingdom which is not of this world, the Kingdom which brings power to make all things new, the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, which, like a growing stone, is even now increasing and expanding to fill all the earth with Jesus Christ and the knowledge of God’s glory (Dan. 2.44, 45; Hab. 2.14; Rom. 14.17, 18; 1 Cor. 4.20).

As the light from the Light of the world penetrates the eyes of your heart and begins to transform your affections, the thoughts of your mind will brighten with heavenly prospects and plans, and the priorities of your conscience will solidify in joyous resolve for seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God in all things. And you will know then the incomparable joy of Jesus, alive and growing in you.

Let us seek the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that He might overcome our sluggardliness and indifference, open the eyes of our heart, and let the Light of the world shine radiantly in all the rooms of our soul.

Searching for the Light

The light which reaches us from the Light of the world comes to us through the medium of revelation. The Spirit of God, using divine revelation, gives life (Jn. 6.63), life so effervescent with spiritual fruit that it flows out from us like living waters, to refresh, renew, and restore everything in our lives (Jn. 7.37-39). The Spirit *brings* us to the revelation of God, making us *willing* to *search* for the Light (Phil. 2.13). The Spirit *opens* the apertures of our heart to allow the Light of the world to shine through them, and to imprint our souls with

the light that comes from Jesus. The Spirit of God sets us free from whatever holds us back from loving, desiring, delighting in, and embracing the light from Jesus, and then He cause the light of revelation to penetrate and bathe us richly, so that the image of Jesus, conveyed in revelation's light, begins to shape our affections, thoughts, and priorities into His likeness as well (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

But this does not just happen. Like the Bereans of old, we must take up the discipline of searching for the light that comes from Jesus, daily turning to His revelation with singleness of purpose, that the Light of the world might break through into our hearts (Acts 17.11).

All of Scripture is about Jesus, as He Himself insisted. In our reading of Scripture, we must not be content to delight in theological ideas or fleeting spiritual insights *only*. These are good and necessary. But we must, like those ancient Greeks, say to the Spirit, as He leads us into the revelation of God, "Sir, we would see Jesus." We would see Him as the Light of the world. We would see Him healing and loving and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. We would see Him in the magnanimity, humility, and unfathomable love of His suffering. We would see Him on His throne in glory. We would see Him riding forth, conquering and to conquer. We would see Him putting His enemies under His feet. We would be dazzled by His radiance. We would see Him in all His majesty, brilliance, strength, peace, wisdom, holiness, joy, and victory. We would see *Jesus!*

We must search the revelation of God – both in His Word and in His world – to gain even the slightest glimpse of the Light of the world. For when we do, then light from Him will break through the apertures of our soul and press some aspect of His incomparably glorious image on the depths of our being.

If you are content merely to read your Bible – even to read it daily – without also searching through prayer, meditation, and waiting on the Lord for the Light of the world that shines on every page of that revelation, then you should not be surprised if your heart does not delight in Jesus. You should not be surprised that the Christian life you lead does not make each day of your life an adventure of following Jesus onto the waves and into the darkness as a light- and joy-bringer for our lost world.

But if you will search the Scriptures, and if you will pay more attention to the revelation of the Light of the world *in* the world around you, then the Spirit will open the eyes of your heart and then you will truly begin to *know*.

Know what?

Not everything we can know is of equal value. We understand that. In fact, everyone, in making their way in life, sorts through the many things that can be known, to gain the knowledge of those we consider to be most important for us – how to make friends, make a living, make a family, make a success of our lives. We leave behind or set aside far more knowledge than we will ever gain in life.

But there is some knowledge, that acquisition of which is the privilege of a chosen few, but which, as it is gained, can bring meaning, purpose, direction, righteousness, peace, and joy to life *that never fades, but only increases daily*.

Wouldn't you like to have more of *that* knowledge? Paul says the Spirit of wisdom and revelation can lead us into that knowledge, as He opens the eyes of our heart for the light from Jesus to shine in. And what is it that we shall then know? The hope of your calling. The riches and glory of your inheritance. The power that raised Jesus from the dead.

That's what Paul says we can know.

For reflection

1. What did Jesus mean by saying He is the Light of the world?

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2. How is the light He shines in us like the light of the sun? How is it different?
3. What does searching the Scriptures – and all the revelation of God – require of you?

Next steps – Transformation: What can you do to improve how you search God's revelation, that you might see Jesus?

5 The Hope of His Calling

...that you may know what is the hope of His calling... Ephesians 1.18

...God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2.12

Our calling

The apostle Paul reminded the believers in Corinth – and through them, us – that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6.19, 20). God has purchased us out of sin and spiritual blindness, out of the darkness of unbelief, out of confusion, uncertainty, and hopelessness, into the glorious Kingdom of His Son for eternal life with Him (Col. 1.13; Jn. 17.3). By the grace of God, we have been reborn into a Kingdom not of this world. We have the Spirit of the living God dwelling within us, and we are the temple of the Lord.

Having bought, begotten, saved, and indwelt us, God has *called* us to His Kingdom and glory. And God's *calling* brims with mysteries so compelling, numerous, vast, wondrous, and satisfying, that we could never completely fathom or realize them in this life.

But while we cannot in this time know the *fullness* of His calling, we *can* know the *hope* of it; that is, we can *experience* the hope of God's calling in our daily lives. This is what Paul prayed for, that we might "know what is the hope of His calling". When the Spirit of God opens the eyes of our heart, so that wisdom and revelation from God bathe, refresh, and renew our soul, we will begin to know – to experience in our daily lives – the hope of His calling with greater fullness. The more we *know* hope, the more those who have *no* hope can *see* our hope; and many will be piqued to ask us a reason for it (1 Pet. 3.15).

Knowing the hope of God's calling with greater fullness and consistency thus prepares and fits us to fulfill our mandate of being witnesses for Christ, who make disciples as we are going (Acts 1.8; Matt. 28.18-20). And, as we fulfill that mandate, we make our unique contribution to filling all things in all things with the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1.22, 23).

So let's have a closer look at the hope of God's calling, those "things hoped for" which are so vital a part of true and saving faith.

Things hoped for

The writer of Hebrews explains that "faith is the assurance of *things hoped for...*" (Heb. 11.1, emphasis added). Faith – true and saving faith, the kind that Paul heard about in the Ephesians (1.15) – focuses on the things we hope for, which are the things to which God has called us, namely, His Kingdom and glory. We should think of this on two planes.

First is the plane of *spiritual* unseen things. The Christian knows that this temporal, material world is not all there is of God's creation. The earth and the cosmos are set within a vast spiritual realm, which we may tap into for fulfilling God's calling. In that realm, Christ is seated at the right hand of God. From His throne on high, He upholds the universe and everything in it (Heb. 1.3); He is putting all His enemies under His feet and establishing His rule in their very midst (Ps. 110.1, 2); He is building His Church (Matt. 16.18); and He is restoring the reconciled world to the Father *through* the Church (2 Cor. 5.17-21). Angels go back and forth at Christ's command, to do His bidding on behalf of His saints (Heb. 1.13, 14). Myriads of departed saints fill the court of heaven with continuous praise to God and intercession for us, His people (Rev. 4, 5).

All this is happening all around us, all the time, and we earnestly hope one day to attain this by the grace of God. And we are seated in that unseen realm with Jesus (Eph. 2.6), that we may know the joy, power, and

glory of that vast realm, and have our lives on earth shaped and stretched and employed in furthering the rule of Jesus on earth as we know it to exist in heaven (Matt. 6.10). Our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God holds out to us the hope of participating in this holy and glorious unseen realm in real and transforming ways, so that through us, heaven comes down to earth and the goodness of God comes to light in the land of the living (Ps. 27.13, 14).

This leads us to hope in God's calling in the plane of *temporal* unseen things. As the Kingdom and glory of God work within us, to change us – by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation – into the image of Jesus Christ, the unseen hope of heaven begins to be realized in us, who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, filled with the hope of God's calling. As we are changed, we work to change the world around us. We nurture a vision of the Kingdom's righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit coming to expression in all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities. We long for the people in our lives to know the love of Jesus, to see the beauty of Jesus, and to experience the goodness of Jesus; and we order our lives to serve as channels of that unseen realm as it comes to expression in time.

Our great hope in this life is that we might realize more of the unseen things of the spiritual realm in the world we inhabit. And beyond both of these, we hope in the promise of a coming new world, where righteousness dwells, and death and sin will be no more. So we nurture a vision of our lives as vessels of faith and love through which Jesus begins to fill all things in all things. And we hope in God's calling day by day, that we may increase in the realization of that calling to the Kingdom and glory of God.

To know the hope of our calling

What is the effect of this on us? That is, as we come to *know* the hope of God's calling, how does this affect our outlook and our lives? Perhaps Paul has summarized it best: "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3.7-14).

When we know the hope of God's calling, everything in our lives becomes reoriented, reprioritized, renewed, redirected, and re-energized for seeing Jesus. We would see Jesus, to know more of Him at work within us, willing and doing of His good pleasure (Phil. 2.12, 13). We would see Jesus in order that we may have more of Him and less of our old sinful lives (Jn. 3.30). We would see Jesus for the wonder of it, for the joy of it, for the courage and boldness of it, and for the strength that flows from seeing Him.

As we increase in knowing the hope of God's calling, that calling itself – the Kingdom and glory of God – increases *in* us and *through* us to fill all things in all things with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

For reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what God's calling for us is?
2. How can we be more continuously aware of those unseen things which are so important for our faith?
3. What does it mean for you to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"?

We Would See Jesus Part 1: That You May Know

Next steps – Preparation: Rewrite Philippians 3.7-14 as a prayer. Pray it often throughout the day. Share it with some friends.

6 The Riches and Glory of our Inheritance

...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...
Ephesians 1.18

O LORD, You are *the portion of my inheritance and my cup;*
You maintain my lot.
The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Yes, I have a good inheritance. Psalm 16.5, 6

The riches of glory

An inheritance is a good thing. A good inheritance is an even better thing. An inheritance that consists of endless riches, and is available right now is a really, *really* good thing.

And that's what we as believers have – an inheritance of boundless riches, spread throughout the Body of Christ, available now, and inexhaustible in the world to come.

Yes. That's an inheritance to get excited about.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians – and for us – that we might *know* – that is, *realize* or *possess* or *experience* – the riches of the inheritance that have been laid up for us and are even now being distributed to and shared among the saints. Our inheritance consists of the *riches of glory* which are to be known in Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Phil. 4.19).

The glory of God is God Himself, making Himself unmistakably known to us, giving us glimpses of His eternal being and majesty, and drawing us into His infinite and eternal pleasure. That glory consists primarily in Jesus, Whom, as we *see* Him, radiates with the glory of God in powerful, uplifting, and transforming ways (cf. 2 Cor. 4.6; Rev. 1.9-20). Nothing compares with this experience of knowing the glory of God, of participating in the risen Christ and fellowshiping with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all together and increasingly. God Himself is our inheritance. He is infinitely rich and varied in glory and wonder. And He is distributing His inheritance to all those who have the eyes of their heart enlightened unto wisdom and revelation by the Holy Spirit.

The benefit of having this inheritance – the riches in glory of Christ Jesus – available to us now, is that it makes everything in our lives a pleasant place and a foretaste of eternal blessedness.

Pleasant places

“The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places,” David insisted. In his lifetime, David experienced some rather *unpleasant* places and situations. His life was often threatened. He made horrific blunders that cost him and others dearly. He was betrayed, hounded, and sent into exile by his own son. Who would sign up for so many trials and troubles?

But, reflecting on his life, David saw that the lines God had prepared for Him were pleasant places – pleasant, because, as David said, he had “set the LORD always before” him (Ps. 16.8). The eyes of David's heart were wide open for the Spirit to enlighten his soul with wisdom and revelation from God. In every situation, David could *see* the Lord. He knew the Lord to be with him – He Who is perfect peace, unflinching faithfulness, astonishing power, and unshakeable joy. Whatever else was going on around him, David could *see* the Lord; he knew the Lord's *Presence* with Him, and he sheltered in the Lord's protection, provision, promises, and power.

David drew on his inheritance (Ps. 16.6); and the riches of glory which he thereby knew raised him above his circumstances and enabled him to look upon them from the vantage point and in the fellowship of the Father Who loved and saved him.

God was his portion and cup. God maintained his lot in life. God instructed him in his heart. What else could he do but bless the Lord, rest in Him, and bask in the safety and joy of his inheritance?

No wonder Paul prayed that we might be able to *know* the riches of glory which are our inheritance in Jesus Christ, spread lavishly among all the saints of God.

Claim your inheritance

Claiming your inheritance begins in prayer. Paul *prayed* that “the Father of glory” would open the eyes of our heart so that we may know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. When we pray like Paul did, we can expect to realize the requests Paul taught us to pray. The eyes of our heart will not be open unless we pray for the filling of God’s Spirit and the illumination of His Word, that we might *see Jesus* and, in Him, draw on the riches of glory which are stored up for us as our inheritance from God.

If we don’t pray this specifically, then we have no reason to expect that we will know all the moments and situations of our lives as pleasant places, filled with the glory of the Lord, lifting us above our circumstances into eternal blessing, peace, and joy.

We should have no fear of coming day by day, and throughout the day, with our empty hands held wide to request, “Please, Father, may I have more?” May I see more of Jesus? May I know more of Your Presence, promise, and power? May I experience the riches of glory exceedingly abundantly above all that I’ve ever dared to ask or think before, so that I might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3.19, 20)?

Our God will not turn us away as we seek another installment of our inheritance. Indeed, He is more willing to make a distribution than we often are to receive it. We must work to develop the discipline of praying without ceasing (5.16-18), rejoicing and giving thanks in every situation, as we set our minds on the things that are above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places (Col. 3.1-3). We must cultivate the discipline of being always in prayer, and we must not allow ourselves to grow weary in so doing (Lk. 18.1).

Remember that Jesus is with us always – *always* and in *every situation* (Matt. 28.20). Remember also that we have been seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2.6), so that we see Him putting our enemies under His feet, advancing His rule in and through us, and holding out His vast treasure of wisdom and knowledge for us to claim (Ps. 110.1, 2; Col. 2.2, 3). *His* Presence with us, and our presence *with Him*, makes everything in life a pleasant place, as we draw on the riches of His glory stored up for us in Him.

“Please, Sir, may I see Jesus, and may I see more and more of Him, more and more of the time?” This is the key to knowing and possessing and experiencing the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance, which He daily distributes among all who seek it from Him.

For reflection

1. How should we understand the idea that Jesus Christ is our inheritance?
2. Why does knowing our inheritance make of everything in our lives a pleasant place?
3. How can believers help one another to know more of the riches of the glory of our inheritance?

We Would See Jesus Part 1: That You May Know

Next steps – Transformation: Write a brief prayer to use throughout the day by which you lay hold on your inheritance in every situation.

7 The Greatness of His Power

... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.
Ephesians 1.18-21

The power of spiritual power

Power is on people's minds a lot these days – electrical power, Internet power, military power, economic power. When storms shut down electricity to millions of people, suddenly the power we take for granted each day comes pointedly into focus. “How soon before the power is back on?” When some international bully decides to flex his country's military prowess against a neighbor, we feel a chill go up our spines at the thought of war and all that it portends. When a big-box gobbles up the business of mom-and-pop stores in a community, we see economic power at work. And whenever we surf from website to website, looking for just the right gift, and suddenly begin to be accosted by pop-up ads offering the same sort of thing we're seeking, then we wonder about the power of the Internet to get into our minds and wallets.

But all such powers are merely *dependent* powers. They exist and perform their work only because a greater power exists which upholds not only them, but all the vast cosmos and everything in it. The power of Jesus' Word is spiritual power, but it is the power that makes all other powers function, and that has the power to shut them all down, should it be the will of the Lord.

Power is energy applied in a focused way to produce work. Gasoline power works to move our cars. Heat power cooks our meals. Political power sets limits on what we can do. All these powers are rather “on demand.” They work when we appeal to them, for whatever we might want them to accomplish for us.

Scientists explain that four basic powers keep the universe going – gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak forces of the atom. For almost a century now, many cosmologists have believed that these four powers reduce to one overarching and all-controlling power. The Grand Unifying Theory of the universe represents a quest to discover that power, a power so great and so constant that all other powers, forces, motions, and movements depend on it at all times.

Well, we can put the GUT theorists at ease, because we know that power. We've seen it at work, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, and especially raising Jesus Christ from the dead, and seating Him *in the seat of all power* (Matt. 28.18) at the right hand of the invisible God. From that vantage point, Jesus speaks power to everything that exists (Heb. 1.3), and the holy spiritual power that issues from His Word determines the continuance, disposition, movement, and consequences of all other powers. This does not in any way impugn Jesus for the misuse of any power, or when the various powers of a world in rebellion against Him bring havoc and destruction to the earth. In the exercise of His holy spiritual power, Jesus allows the consequences of sin to be always before us, that we might revolt against all such exercises of power – even down to those within our own souls – and unite ourselves with the power that raised Jesus and upholds the cosmos, power far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.

Spiritual power is *real*. And when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our heart by the wisdom and revelation of God, then we can *know* that holy spiritual power and experience its uprighing and transforming effects.

Power comin' at ya

Paul reminds us that the power that raised and exalted Jesus is “power toward us who believe” (v. 19). Jesus directs His power toward us. More than that, He sends His power to dwell within each one of us, in the Person of the Holy Spirit of God. As Jesus promised, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1.8). This is power to open the revelation of God, and to grant us His wisdom, embed us in His hope, surround us with His glory, and distribute to us the riches of our inheritance in Jesus Christ. This is power that can overcome your doubts, fears, and hesitations. This power brightens the mind, so that we think and plan and direct our lives with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). This power overcomes the inertia of self-love to enable us to love others the way Jesus did (John 13.35). This power leads us to dismantle all lesser priorities and set our consciences on seeking the rule and righteousness of King Jesus as the defining priority in every aspect and facet of our lives (Matt. 6.33).

And this power transforms us into the very likeness of Jesus Christ Himself (2 Cor. 3.12-18), so that nothing which He calls us to do will be impossible for us, and everything we do can bring glory to God.

This power is indeed comin' at ya. Are you open to it? Do you seek it? Are you eager to receive and act on it daily? Are you plugged into the Source of this power? Do you believe Him for the exercise of it? As the Holy Spirit of God opens the eyes of your heart, and you begin to focus your entire being on Jesus, exalted in light and magnificence and majesty and might and glory, then the light of Jesus can pour through the eyes of your heart and empower you for restoring the reconciled world in which you live.

For filling everything with Jesus!

Paul prayed that God would open the eyes of our hearts, that we might know wisdom and revelation from Jesus Christ, with the result that we would know the hope of glory, know the riches of our inheritance, and know the power that raised Jesus from the dead. This is what Paul wanted for you. Is this what *you* want? Or are you content with having a “good enough” faith in Jesus, a faith that assures you of heaven, makes you happy to be a Christian, and satisfies you with some participation in your local body of believers, and not much more?

Such contentment is not laudable. Not when *power is coming at you* that can change you into the image of Jesus and, through you, change this sad, weary, uncertain world into a thriving environment of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Until you want what Paul wants for you, you'll be of little use in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God. You can pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” all you want, but you'll never experience it, never see much of the fruit of it, never become immersed in the exhilarating joy of the Presence of Jesus, until you begin earnestly to desire what Paul earnestly desired for you.

Pray with Paul: “Open our eyes, Lord; we want to see Jesus,” and make seeing Jesus the driving force, defining priority, and constant focus of everything you do. Then watch as the power begins to flow to you and through you, to fill all things in all things with the glory of God and the Presence of Jesus Christ.

For reflection or discussion

1. Why do we say that all forms of power are *dependent* on the power of Jesus' Word?
2. What can keep us from knowing more of Jesus' power in our lives?
3. Do you understand what Paul wants for you? Do you want that as well?

Next steps – Preparation: Spend time meditating on Ephesians 1.15-23. Ask God to help you want what Paul wants for you.

We Would See Jesus Part 1: That You May Know

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why should we want to “see Jesus” more clearly and constantly?
2. What are the “eyes of the heart”? How does the Holy Spirit “open” them?
3. What is the hope of God’s calling? Why is it important that we know this hope?
4. What are the riches and glory of our inheritance? How can we access these?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study, *We Would See Jesus*?

For prayer:

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Thank you.