

Without the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, we will never understand the Bible in a saving way. Many people read the Bible, know what it teaches, but never believe its message. It is not that they are somehow less intelligent. *They do not believe it because they have not been granted the ability to do so.* - **Ligonier Ministries, RC Sproul.**

Another way to look at it is that the word of God operates externally by our reading and by our hearing it, and the Spirit works internally to apply it to our minds and our hearts in a transformational way. Illumination takes what is already there in God's word and makes it real to us. Without illumination, the Bible is just a big book with a bunch of words on a bunch of pages. **1 John 2:20** points to illumination in a concise way - *"But you have been anointed with the holy spirit and you all have knowledge."*

BIG IDEA: As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know God, His Hope and His Power.

The sermon text: **Ephesians 1:15–23**

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

Before we jump into the text, I would like to reflect on the topic of illumination in my own life. Although I was raised in the Church, God's word was just background noise to me for most of my childhood and throughout high school. It was at best a head knowledge, not a heart knowledge. I said I was a Christian, but my life looked no different than anyone else. I was not transformed. The Bible was no different to me than any of my school textbooks.

Does anyone remember Awana when you were little? Awana pushed hard the value of God's word through scripture memory. I didn't give a rip about the memory! I just wanted to play the games. I was a beast at the games, but sucked at the memory. The bucks system was jacked!

Then when I was 19 years old the Holy Spirit illuminated God's word in my heart through the preaching of a pastor at a collegiate conference. It was my freshman year at KSU. This pastor spoke from **Isaiah 55**. God's word fell fresh on my heart as if Jesus himself was speaking to me. My heart sang for joy and my life would never be the same. Even this morning, if I close my eyes for a minute, I can place myself in that very room with 1500 hundred college students eager to hear God's word and to change the world. Here was the invitation I heard from Jesus through the speaker that night out of, **Isaiah 55:1-2**

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

I said, are you kidding me??? I have nothing to offer but my broken self, and I can still have a place at the table with Jesus? I'M IN, MAN I'M IN! And so the flag was planted! That was the first example of illumination in my life. Before we jump into the text, here is a reminder of our big statement this morning: **As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know God, His Hope and His Power.**

From this statement, I have broken my outline into three sections relating to **verses 17, 18, and 19**.

1. **17** - The Spirit enables us to Know God.
2. **18** - The Spirit enables us to Know His Hope,
3. **19** - The Spirit enables us to Know His Strength.

KNOWING GOD

17: *(I keep praying) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.*

As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to know God! Paul is PRAYING over and over that God would grant this group of Christians the gift of the Spirit. This implies that the gift of the Holy Spirit leading to the knowledge of God is a spiritual process that lies outside of ourselves. We can't just muster up wisdom and revelation on our own. It is a gift from God.

A clear example in scripture showing that our knowledge of God is indeed a spiritual encounter is the conversation with Jesus and Peter in **Matthew, chapter 16:**

(Jesus said) "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

The gift of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God proceeds from the father and is enabled by the Holy Spirit. Paul is praying that Christians would obtain the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. How do we obtain the Spirit of wisdom and revelation? God delights in giving the Spirit of wisdom and revelation when there is less of us and more of HIM. If we are full of ourselves there is no room for him.

This is why John said in **John 3:30** *"he must increase, I must decrease."* And this is why Paul boasts in his fears and his weaknesses - because then there is more room for Christ and His wisdom! **2**

Corinthians 12:9:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

If you want wisdom and revelation of the spiritual things in this life, then we must empty us of ourselves so that Christ can fill us up. Only then will we understand the profound and life changing mysteries of God. What is the purpose of wisdom and revelation? It is not to boast in our wisdom, rather IT IS TO KNOW GOD personally. **17:** *May the Father of glory, give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.*

It is not a head knowledge but a relational and experiential knowledge. Check out this verse in **Exodus 33:11:** *"The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend."* Just like with Moses, when we sit down with the word of God and in prayer, we are not alone! We are with our King, our Saviour and our Friend.

"How can we turn our knowledge about God into knowledge of God? The rule for doing this is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each Truth that we learn about God into matter for meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise to God... There's a difference between knowing God and knowing about God. When you truly know God, you have energy to serve him, boldness to share him, and contentment in him." - J. I. Packer, Knowing God

Illumination enables us to know God personally, not just about him. Discovering wisdom and revelation in the Knowledge of God is the greatest cause we can give our life to. **As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know God...**

Let's move on to **KNOWING HOPE**

18: *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know his Hope... Verse 18 says the eyes of our hearts become enlightened so that we may know the hope to which we are called. In order to understand the point of hope we have to know our calling. We are called into a present reality and a future inheritance.

Our present reality is that we have a new identity as servants of Jesus within his ever growing Kingdom. Our future inheritance is that we are eternally secure and someday we will be fully perfected and worship Jesus forever. When the eyes of our heart are opened to these truths of God, this is illumination of the Spirit.

One of our goals in teaching and preaching at LifeConnection is to proclaim the gospel every Sunday morning. The Gospel brings good news to us in 1,000 different ways. Here is ONE example of good news for us this morning: For those that yield to Jesus it means that this very real and glorious inheritance gives us hope to endure our present reality no matter what the circumstance. Sometimes life is smooth, a lot of times it is not - especially when we engage the suffering of our neighbors.

We as believers have the ability to push through the pain and the brokenness and the misery of our current situations because someday God will heal and restore all things. He will make all things right and we will delight in Jesus forever. **James 4:14** says *our life in comparison to eternity is a mist*. Here one day and gone the next. So our future inheritance helps us press on and press into our present realities. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus was not just victorious over Satan, sin and death - but it also purchased our souls eternally to be kept in the tender and mighty hands of God. Nothing will separate us from his grip as **Romans 8:38** promises.

Jesus comforts his disciples in **John 14** as they wrestled with their current reality. He is saying that hope for the future can help you persevere today!

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know his Hope...

Let's move on to **Knowing His Power**.

19: *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*

As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know His Power... His power toward us as noted in this verse is "immeasurable." God's power has no limits and for those that profess faith in Jesus - that power is given to us! That power helps us get out of bed in the morning, it helps us to be patient with our kids, it helps us to love our enemies, and it helps us to change the world one friendship at a time.

The word of God has 10,000 examples of God showing his power, but the example from our text this morning is perhaps the best example. It is the power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead.

and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

This is one of the big shortcomings of my life, that is I often don't walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6 convicts me and compels me. It again reveals to us that we have the same Spirit and therefore the same power as Jesus.... (MIND BLOWING!)

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

What we are called to is impossible on our own strength. We can't even make it a day without a big whiff. What would our lives look like if we walked in this amazing reality that God's Spirit empowers us - with the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.

I think one of many effects is that we would take our mission more seriously. I think we would quicken **Matthew 24:14**:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So we are not there yet. The end has not come which means there are still some nations (people groups) that need to hear about Jesus. Until then the Spirit will delight to give us strength and courage to fulfill this mission.

Now is a perfect time for a brief update on our Gospel Communities this Fall. This Fall our hope is to fulfill **Matthew 24:14**. You will be equipped for 7 weeks of training and then sent out to start Discovery Bible Studies in your context. God's power will give us courage to engage the lost in our own neighborhood.

This morning are you feeling like God's word is just a book and holds little to no value in your life? Are you tired of reading and not feeling moved or stirred by God?

Allow me to read these three verses again. **17,18,19**. 6x - you will hear the pronouns - You, Us, We, Our. Know that the YOU here in this text is not just the group of believers 2000 years ago. But the YOU is YOU and I. It's just not about them, it's about US! If God granted the gift of the Holy Spirit to them, he can do it for us here this morning! This is the beauty of God's word. It is living and active. Illumination of the Spirit applies words written down thousands of years ago to our hearts today, this morning. So listen for these pronouns.

(I pray) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might...

The Holy Spirit is a gift for you and I. The knowledge of God through His word is a gift for you and I.

By way of wrapping up this morning I want to take a little shift from the text to share my top 10 favorite verses that reveal the treasure that His word is. God has illuminated His word in my life and I am thankful. What was once background noise is now the greatest noise my heart and mind will ever hear. These 10 verses, through illumination, **the Holy Spirit has helped me know God, His Hope and His Power**. As you listen, would you consider this week listing out the top 10 verses that make your heart go crazy for God, as these do for me.

2 Chron 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Psalms 34:18-19

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but God delivers them from them all.

2 Cor 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Hebrews 10:34-35

You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

Matt 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Psalms 67

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us— so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.”

Psalms 73:25-26

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

John 12:24-25

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

1 Cor. 2:3-5

When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

As we study God's word, the Spirit enables us to Know God, His Hope and His Power - This is illumination by the Spirit. Let's pray.