

May the eyes of your heart be enlightened

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Preacher: John Winter

[0 : 00] Well, I just wanted to turn you to a part of the Bible in Ephesians chapter 1 and verses 15 to 23.

! People about the Holy Spirit. And there was a lady there yesterday who's been coming to Alphabet, is just really beginning her journey with Jesus.

And one of the questions we were asking was, you know, there are various categories of people. When it comes to talking about the Holy Spirit, there are people who say, I really don't want to know anything about this. It's quite scary.

And then there are other people who say, I really want to know more. And I'm just so thirsty for this. Please tell me more.

And then there are others who are a bit confused. They've heard of the Holy Spirit but don't quite know the details. And then there's another category that we're entirely uninformed.

[1 : 22] And so we went around the group and said, which category do you think you're in? And this particular lady, for whom everything is new, said, I am just uninformed. Uninformed. She had nothing except the desire to know.

And in this passage that I'm going to read to you now, I want you to just see what is possible for us as Christian believers.

And if we're not Christian believers, just to see what is possible if you're just interested to know what Christianity is all about. It's a kind of extension of what we were doing yesterday and this morning, really.

That we are not about being religious. This is not about a ritual. This is about a relationship. And a relationship with Jesus.

And so, verse 15 says, this is Paul's prayer for this church. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[2 : 28] I keep asking 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.

Now, just stop at that phrase for a moment. That you may know him better. He's not saying you don't know him. It's great that you know Jesus. He says, but I want you to know him better. You must never stop pursuing your knowledge of Jesus.

Let us press on to know him, Hosea said. Let us press on to know God. Or as Paul puts it in Philippians 3, I'm like a runner that runs a race. And I'm not content until I get over the finishing line. And until I get over the finishing line, I'm never going to stop. I'm going to press on. When I became a Christian in 1981, I used to think to myself, I wonder how long this will last.

And there were many a time I thought I wouldn't last the journey. And then all of these years on, 63 now, been in the race since I was 18, but still pressing on and still desiring to know him better.

[3 : 43] And that's the thing about relationship, isn't it? If we really love the person we're in relationship with, if we really care, then we've got to avoid familiarity. We want to know that person even more than we previously did.

And we want that relationship to be more loving and more intimate. And then verse 18, he says, I pray also, and this is the phrase, that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

In order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. And we talk a lot in our churches, we talk a lot about experiencing Jesus in conversion.

And very often we're given the impression, and it's been good tonight to hear the testimonies because it's been contrary to that. But very often we hear the dramatic testimonies of people who

have been suddenly converted. I was dramatically converted.

It was quite dramatic. And it probably needed to be for me. But then I used to think to myself, once I'd become a Christian, I used to think to myself, I wish I'd been brought up in a Christian home.

[4 : 56] I wish I'd not been exposed to the things that I'd been exposed to or exposed myself to. And that would have been so much better if I'd been brought up in a Christian home. And then I used to kind of compare testimonies with people.

And when they would say, oh, I wish I had a testimony like yours, I would say, I wish I had a testimony like yours. I wish I'd kind of never known a time when I didn't know Jesus.

I really do. I really do. I listen to what Anne shared about her home life and what Dee shared about her home life. And just, they've always loved Jesus, really.

I mean, I had that conversion experience. But Dee can't remember that time. And that's almost how it ought to be. Certainly, if you're raised in a Christian home, that's almost how it ought to be.

But there was a time when the eyes of my heart were enlightened. And it was like somebody switched a light on.

[6 : 01] I picked up a Bible. I read the Bible. I thought, I can't make sense of this. Got through the first few chapters of Genesis and thought, I can't make sense of this. It doesn't make any sense to me at all.

Give up as a bad job. And then somebody persevered. Then they gave me an easier Bible to read and told me to start in the New Testament. You know that story. I've told you before. And as I read, a light switched on.

And suddenly, it began to make sense. Jesus became real and became living in my experience.

And yesterday, when we talked to the group, and we talked to people at various stages.

We did this last Monday as well with the bigger group, the various stages. And some people get a bit discouraged because they hear somebody say, oh, I came to know Jesus. It's been brilliant. And then others think, I've just not had that yet.

And it discourages them. And so, what we say to people on the Alpha journey is, the Christian life is a journey. It's not a one-off event.

[7 : 06] It's not a eureka experience where you suddenly find it. It's a journey. And the way to think about it is not, I wish I was like that person who was really far on the journey.

The way to think about it is just this. How far have you moved in your journey with Jesus? In your understanding, how have the eyes of your heart been opened?

How has he spoken to you? How are you being moved forward? And whether you run at lightning speed or you're just a little jogger or even a fast walker or even a slow walker.

Whether you're way off in the distance or just kind of, you know, making progress. That's okay. It really is okay. Because it's about the eyes of your heart being open to Jesus and seeing Jesus for who he really is.

And then that's something we touched on this morning as well. About encounter. Encounter with the living God. Encounter with the person of Jesus.

[8 : 19] Because what lifts these words off the page and through your mind into your heart is the Holy Spirit. Who Jesus says is sent to us to be alongside us.

The paracletos. Called alongside us. To comfort us and to counsel us. To teach us what Jesus has said.

And to make it known. That is, reveal it to us. Make it live in your heart. You see, I could tell you till the cows come home that Jesus is the answer for your real needs.

That he is the solution for your spiritual desires. But you won't believe that unless the Holy Spirit makes that real in your heart.

I can't do that for you. People used to say to me when I tried to evangelize them, they'd say, you can't make me a Christian. When I first was a Christian, I used to think I could.

[9 : 25] And I tried very hard, sometimes too hard. And I must have been terribly irritating sometimes. But I discovered that's true. I can't make you a Christian.

But I can commend Jesus, my Savior, to you. And I can ask you just to open your hearts to the possibility that he really does love you.

That he really did die for you. And that he really has a special purpose for your life. If you will let him in. The eyes of your heart being opened.

So that you can see that when he died upon the cross, he died not just for people. He actually died for you. He died in order that your sins might be forgiven.

That you might become part of the family of God. And that you might have the hope of eternal life. That's encounter. And if in your heart there is something that resonates to that.

[10:38] Then just test him. Just try him out. You will find that he will meet your every spiritual need. So that's the phrase.

The eyes of your heart being opened. That's what I want you to think about as you leave tonight. Lord, open the eyes of my heart.

Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you. Okay. Is Tony going? Are you? Tony is going to share.

Brilliant. Okay. Can I invite you just to pray for a moment? Pray with me. Pray with me. There's a prayer that I pray on such a regular basis, but I just love it, and I pray that it will resound in your heart.

One thing I have asked of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

[12:09] And then there's a refrain, who is it that you seek? To which we answer, we seek the Lord our God. And then there's a question, do you seek him with all your heart?

And we reply, Amen, Lord. Have mercy. Do you seek him with all your soul? Amen, Lord.

Please have mercy. Do you seek him with all your might? Amen, Lord.

Lord, please have mercy. To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory. And then we seek the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in what is called the circle, Patrick's circle.

[13:26] Christ as a light, illumine and guide me. Christ as a shield, o'er shadow me. Christ under me, Christ over me, Christ beside me, on my left and on my right.

This day, be within and without me, lowly and meek, yet all-powerful. Be in the heart of each to whom I speak, and in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.

This day, be within and without me, lowly and meek, yet all-powerful. Christ as a light, Christ as a shield, Christ beside me, on my left and on my right.

Amen. Amen.