

# Everything God requires He has already given to us

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 17 July 2022

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, before we come to prayer, let us turn to God's Word. The first reading this morning is found in Ephesians chapter 1.

So, Ephesians chapter 1, verses 15 through to 20. This is the sort of main focus of this morning, and the only reason for reading from 1 Corinthians 2 in a moment is just to cause you to remember what the Spirit of God does for those who have new life in Christ.

So, here in Ephesians, we read from verse 15, now hear God's Word. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards 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 a 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards 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 the right hand in the heavenly places.

And then, in 1 Corinthians 2, which you turn backwards in your Bible, not too far, 1 Corinthians 2, we read in verse 6 through to 16 these words, bearing in mind that what Paul is praying for in Ephesians is the spirit of wisdom, wisdom, and so now we come to the wisdom passage here again in the spirit.

Verse 6, Yet the mature we do impart wisdom, yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not the wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away, but we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

[ 2 : 35 ] None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

These things God has revealed to us through the spirit, for the spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him.

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

[ 3 : 47 ] The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?

But we have the mind of Christ. Let's pray. Father God, we look to you this morning for the very spirit of wisdom that Paul prayed for amongst those in Ephesus and amongst those in Corinthians who had received that wisdom.

We pray, Father God, that we would acknowledge the wisdom that we have received by the spirit and that we, like Paul, pray for that spirit of wisdom to be in our church, in the church, to be in our lives.

And we also ask, Father God, that we would be able to apply this wisdom with the wisdom that you give us. Father God, we thank you that if it is prayed for, then it is needed, and we recognize our need.

May we also recognize, Father God, the reasons for which you give us this wisdom, the reasons why you cause us to live the way that you do, and the future that we have ahead of us.

[ 5 : 12 ] Father God, we recognize that without you we can do nothing. But by your spirit, we are able to overcome things that the natural person cannot overcome, namely what we see and what we understand and what we know to be true.

These things have been revealed to us by your spirit. And we thank you, Father God, that natural people cannot understand what we are reading or saying or hearing now, but we can understand only because we have received your spirit.

And so, Father God, we ask you to grace us this morning with great favor. Would you enlighten our mind with a view of changing our heart that we may be more like Christ and walk in your way.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, if you would, turning your Bibles back to Ephesians chapter 1. Amen. And let's begin by noticing that God wants his people to receive the spirit of wisdom, and if it is prayed for, then it is needed.

In the same way you were to read, let's say, the book of Philippians, when Paul is saying certain things, it is often because other things in the backgrounds are being addressed.

[ 6 : 34 ] Here it's quite plain that Paul recognizes that the church is in need of the spirit of wisdom in order to live wisely before God.

And so God gives to his people particular gifts in order to do what God requires of them. And as we have said in our look at the spirit over these last few weeks, we've been looking at it in the context that we share our life with God.

Our life is a shared life. Therefore, it is no longer our will but God's will. We are not around, but we are bought with a price. And therefore, our value is measured because of who we belong to.

We are valuable because of who we belong to. We are valuable because of the investment that God has put into us, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, life, death, and resurrection.

And so we recognize right from the very beginning, or at least we ought to recognize, that everything that God requires of us, he first supplies us with. So everything that God requires from us, he supplies us with in the first point.

[ 7 : 46 ] So God doesn't require anything of you that he has not already given to you in Christ. Okay, God does not exasperate his children.

He does not get his children to do something that they cannot do. He does not get his children to do things that are beyond their ability to be able to do them.

And so the first thing that God does in order for him to expect these great things of you is to give you these qualities and these virtues and these gifts in order to be able to expect them.

Once you have them, and once you understand that you have them, you are then obligated to obey the Lord your God. You are then obligated to understand that God's expectations are not unfair or unreasonable, but you are to live to them because you belong to him.

Not only because you belong to him, but because he has given you these abilities, these gifts and these virtues, because he is expecting them from you.

[ 8 : 51 ] Now we understand that our relationship before God is one not where we literally sit back now that we're saved waiting for heaven, as some do, but rather we are a different person, not just in terms of our state that is no longer sinful, but a new creation, but we are a different person in terms of the gifts that we have received from God.

And as we saw last week, holiness is a precondition to being useful to God. Your holiness is a precondition to being useful to God.

So how you live your Christian life matters because it is a precondition to how God then uses you in the church and what type of witness you really are.

So just imagine for a moment, if you can, a person who is genuinely saved, but who decides to live according to their old pattern of life.

Does that reflect their old life or does that reflect their new life in Christ? Well, hopefully that shouldn't be a difficult one to be able to draw a conclusion on, but it becomes difficult simply because of the freedom you feel when doing what you want to do.

[ 10 : 19 ] God's will can often feel constrictive, can often feel tight, can often feel as like we're being bound, where the freedom we feel that comes with doing what we want to do is so freeing in the sense that it feels free that we feel much more at home in that stroll or pattern of life.

Well, such a person who lives that way lacks the wisdom of God or rather lacks applying the wisdom that they have received.

So we understand quite clearly that the natural person doesn't get this. You can explain it to them forever and a day and they do not get what you're saying because the natural person receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

They cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. And so the reason you understand the things of God is not because you are a natural person, but it is rather because you are now a spiritual person in Christ Jesus.

These things are perceived only because you belong to Christ Jesus. These things are understood only because of who you are in Christ Jesus.

[ 11 : 41 ] So credit goes to God, not to ourselves for being able to work these things out. So why do you think Paul, at this point in the life of the Christians, Ephesus, considers the need to pray for them that they would receive the Spirit of wisdom?

Why do you need, as a Christian this morning, the Spirit of wisdom? Well, without it, you're not going to pay attention to what I'm saying.

You're demonstrating your lack of wisdom. Or rather, you're demonstrating your lack of applying the wisdom that God has given you. You are saying to God, thank you very much, but I'm not right now.

Maybe another time. Now, the benefit of receiving this wisdom that God gives to us this morning has one thing in mind which we have seen the pattern of throughout the last few weeks.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Holiness is the precondition to being useful to God. Living the way God wants us to live is the definition of holiness in thoughts, words, and in deeds.

[ 12 : 55 ] And so what we see in 1 Corinthians 2, just briefly, if I can touch on that, is that the Spirit of God who comprehends the thoughts of God and who comprehends our thoughts is able to bridge the gap between the deep things of God and our human heart.

Because the Christian now lives with knowledge that the unbeliever does not have, but yet we do not know everything. And this has the potential of upsetting us in our walk before God if we do not understand why God has given us wisdom.

The Spirit of Wisdom, as we will see, is not God telling you things about the future that he hasn't already revealed in his word. Rather, wisdom works very differently than anything else that God has given us because it is to be applied in such a way that we are able to live the way that God wants us to live.

Therefore, the wise person that we are to turn to, like you do in Proverbs, is able to instruct the younger person on how to live, not because he is old, but because he is wise.

The wise person is able to see the folly of youth. The wise person is able to look and understand that that pattern of life is only going to end up in one place.

[ 14 : 21 ] Whereas this pattern of life is what God looks down upon as righteous and just. So the wise person is not only able to tell the difference in his own life, but he is then able to tell the difference in the lives of others which is necessary in the community of God's people because the obligation that sits with you who are old is to teach those who are younger.

It is you who are old, the older women, the older men in the fellowship, who are to instruct with wisdom those who are the younger women and the younger men in the fellowship.

That's what God expects of you. And the reason God expects it of you is because he has given you the spirit of wisdom just like he's given to the young men.

The difference, however, is whether or not we are applying this. So notice what Paul says, verse 15. Let's summarize these verses. Paul acknowledges, first of all, that this church is expressing faith and love towards each other.

And this is something which he gives thanks to God for. He does not cease to give thanks to God because he recognizes that those attributes in a fellowship come from God.

[ 15 : 42 ] Then in verses 16 and 17, 16, he's giving thanks. Then in verse 17, he recognizes that what the church needs is the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

Paul's prayerful concern for the church is that they know more. But this knowing more is not academic, it's practical. They have to know more in order to be able to apply more.

So in one sense, it happens in the mind and in the heart. But ultimately, it's to be worked out in practice. They're also to know the riches of the glorious inheritance, the hope that is before them, the power of God, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in their bodies.

They have everything for them in Christ Jesus. But it is possible in order for a believer to be told to live a certain way as we see in the New Testament, then it must be entirely possible for a believer to live contrary to that way.

Right? She wouldn't need to be told. If you're told to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and grow in knowledge and live this way and to keep yourself from idols, as John says in 1 John, if you're told these things, then you're only told these things because the danger of you not doing them is there.

[ 17 : 07 ] If you're told to walk this way, it is because you have the potential of walking in the opposite direction. You would not have to be told how to live if you knew how to live upon your initial salvation.

So you don't. The reason you have to be told is because we don't know. But now we know and now we have the ability to and now we know that we have the ability to live the way God wants us to live.

The question is, what's stopping you? And the answer is quite simple. The freedom you feel doing what you want to do and the constriction that comes with sometimes doing God's will.

I think Joan is probably one of the most best examples to point this out. the fact that he knew what God's will was and then went in the opposite direction and fell asleep in the middle of a storm is a man at peace doing the very opposite of what God called him to do.

So this idea that I know it's the will of God because I'm at peace doesn't hold any water. I know it's the will of God because I'm at peace.

[ 18 : 28 ] No, you don't. That's not how you know what the will of God is because Jonah was at complete peace doing the very opposite of what God wanted to do. So peaceful, in fact, he was fast asleep in the middle of a storm.

There's the definition of peace. The flip side of that is, of course, Jesus fast asleep in the middle of the storm only doing the will of God.

So this idea that we can somehow interpret whether or not we're doing the will of God based on the freedom we feel and the ease of which it comes is not true because sometimes doing the will of God it constrains our nature, it conflicts, it opposes what we actually want to do.

And we see that in the life of Jonah as a prime example. So there are two ways I want us to look at this wisdom. The first is this, the reward of wisdom, of the reward of this insight that God gives to us.

So, namely, a person can feel quite free doing what they want to do and quite opposed doing the will of God because their nature is opposed by the Spirit of God which we saw last week.

[ 19 : 45 ] The desires of the Spirit are opposed against the desires of the flesh to stop us from doing those things that we want to do. And Paul is speaking to Christians when he says that.

That the Spirit is given to you to stop you doing those things that you want to do even as Christians. So, the freedom you feel when doing your own thing comes almost naturally.

And sometimes the opposing force and struggle that you have doing God's will is more natural, it would seem, more typical than the freedom and peace of doing your own will.

In other words, peace is not a good indicator. The hope, then, which Paul speaks about is so that you would live in light of the future. You would live in light of the future hope that God has promised you.

That your mind and heart would be so set on what is ahead of you that you would walk in a way that portrays that on a daily basis.

[ 20 : 50 ] And the reason you need the Spirit of wisdom is so that you can have this insight and understanding of what God has promised you, this glorious inheritance. and the fact that God has given you the same power to live the Christian life that he did to raise Jesus Christ from the dead.

So that you would be able to understand that there's almost no excuse that you could possibly make in order to no longer live the way that God wants you to live. Everything is for you.

Nothing is against you apart from yourself, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now, this is how wisdom works. Wisdom is not giving you something and then it's all sorted.

The way wisdom works is it's to be used like a hammer. It's to be used like a saw. It does a particular job. And so when wisdom is given to a person, they are then to use that wisdom, that insight, to be able to understand how the world works, how God is relating to them, how they are relating to God, how they are to walk on a daily basis.

So imagine it like this. Probably one of the ways I could explain it. Imagine you're learning to play the piano. You don't know how to play, but you're just beginning to learn. And the first thing you do is you start to read music.

[ 22 : 12 ] And after a while, you can read music. And then you're able to correspond that those notes link to these black and white keys. And then you're able to play a few notes. And then after a while, you're able to play a small piece of music, a simple piece of music.

Jack and Jill went up the hill or happy birthday or something like that. And then after a while, you're able to play more complicated pieces. And then after a while, you're able to play a complicated piece of music, sometimes without even the sheet music in front of you.

Because of the repetition of it going in through your fingers and through your heart and through your mind and you play and you play. And so the reward of all that practice is found in being able to play the piano.

And that's how wisdom works. It is the practice of wisdom that allows you to do something that you couldn't previously do without the practice. That's how wisdom works.

It builds itself up and it strengthens you in areas that you were previously weak. It now enables you to see things and do things that you did not do before. through practice.

[ 23 : 23 ] And so what happens now is you're now able to sit down at a piano and you're now able to play and the reward is not just in the practice that you're able to play but now you're almost able to play without even thinking about it.

It comes as like a second nature. You've practiced so well and so hard and that's how wisdom works. And so the failure happens like it did with Solomon.

Solomon is the wisest man on earth biblically speaking. Biblically speaking he is the wisest man on earth without exception because God gave him the wisdom he asked for it.

But the question is then is how can the wisest man on earth make some of the most biggest mistakes and sinful thoughts words and deeds than any other man in the world? How do those two fit together?

And the answer is really quite simple that he had the wisdom but he didn't use it. So he's given the gift of wisdom but he's not practicing it. And so the application of being able to use what God has given you is just not looked after.

[ 24 : 32 ] And it's like anything. If you're learning something and you practice it you get better at it you get stronger at it and you almost get to the point where you can do it without even thinking about it. that's the way wisdom works.

And so Paul prays for these people to receive the spirit of wisdom but it's not automatic in the sense of its application. It is something which we then have to live by.

And because it's difficult because it takes practice because it is something that we are to do on a daily basis the default of the human heart is always to search for the freedom.

I mean how many of you after doing something difficult need to give your mind a rest by watching rubbish on TV? Right?

I mean half the programs that are on TV I don't even have a TV license anymore so we don't watch it but I'm assuming that the TV now is just like it used to be that most of the TV programs on TV don't actually require you to think.

[ 25 : 38 ] You just sit back and you just take it it goes in it goes out and you know very little thought that's needed it's just like chewing gum for the mind or for the eyes it's just relaxation through hours of watching nothing and so what do you do when things become difficult?

Well you have a glass of wine you stop doing the thing that makes it difficult studies have shown that when children are revising that the point at which they really learn is at the same point when things become difficult exactly the same point and yet what do most children do at that point?

Turn to the computer go outside and so at the very point where you're actually stretching and learning now you're then turning off and the same pattern occurs in the Christian life that this is difficult this is difficult I give up this isn't God's will for me this isn't that and then we just don't live the way God wants us to live well the second thing here in concerning the hope is the part that future plays when you keep your mind on the future you have this teleology you know where you're going you know where you are and therefore you know how to work towards it okay you know where you're going you know where you are and you know how to get there and that's the blessing that we have this teleological outlook that God has told us the future he has shown us where we're going and now we're not walking blindly we're not walking as though we do not know what to invest in that we do not know what to practice because we know the future not the future of what will happen tomorrow but because we know the inheritance that

God has prepared for us in part we know what we ought to invest in that's the type of investment that we should be making on a daily basis so that it's not wasted now here's the problem and it's a problem which has to be overcome by a lot of caution and that is a lot of people Christians may want to know the future for a very genuine reason and that reason may be to calm their anxieties about the future and so Lord will you only tell me what's going to happen next month or next year or in the next five years and the reason I need to know Lord is because it'll calm my anxieties but it won't and the Lord knows that it won't and that's why the Lord doesn't tell you God has already given you everything that you need to calm your anxieties firstly the command not to worry and secondly in everything with prayer take it to God

God has given you exactly what you need to calm your anxieties and the spirit of wisdom is not to tell you more about the future than what God has already told you and the reason why it's that way is because if God did tell you more about the future it may add to your anxieties rather than take them away because knowledge about the future is not the same as control understanding what will happen tomorrow is not the same as having any control over what will happen tomorrow so let's imagine for a moment you did know what the future had in store for you but now you also recognize you have no control of it will that add to your anxieties or take them away well it all depends on what the future is and so the reason why God does not tell us beyond what he has told us in his word is because he understands that knowledge without control can actually increase our anxieties and destroy our feeling of hope rather than build us up and so the spirit of wisdom is not telling us things we do not know but it's rather applying the things we do know in the hope that God has already promised us God isn't about to tell us more he's simply about to affirm everything that he has told us on a daily basis and so the way we live this

[ 30 : 13 ] Christian life is to live in light of the wisdom that God has given us and to practice it on a daily basis and the spirit of wisdom to make it absolutely plain and simple means that the spirit of God is only confirming to us everything that is already written in the word of God Jesus said himself in his prayer that the spirit of God and to his disciples will lead them into all truth and his word is truth so the spirit of God is not doing anything other than what we've actually got written down here for us and so now we're able to understand that in those difficult moments that what is needed is to keep our eye on the hope the glorious inheritance the power of God those things which God has given us in order for us to live for him but here's the exhortation as I close as I've introduced already it is without question that you as a

Christian will feel more free at times doing what you want to do than what God wants you to do but that freedom and that sense of ease and that sense of peace should never be interpreted as though this is what God wants you to do because because it's quite clear from the text of scripture that sometimes doing what God wants you to do comes with great opposition the desires of the spirit are opposed against the desires of the flesh to keep us from doing those things that we want to do and so the reason why the Christian does not make progress and the church does not make progress in the way that God would have us make progress is simply because the Christian has within their walk the ability to do the very opposite of what they're being told to do God is not forcing us but rather he is giving us wisdom he is giving us everything that we need to be able to live for him faithfully in this fallen world what we need is what we have been given wisdom in wisdom insight what we don't need is more knowledge about the future because that could actually increase our problems and destroy our hope so the way that God does it takes into consideration the deep things of God and the condition of the human heart and so understand that this wisdom is not academic this knowledge this insight is not academic but it is entirely practical it is teaching you how to live for God amen

Jesus Christ the grace and the power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead be at work in your mortal bodies and may you know this power and this presence of God both this day and forevermore in Jesus name amen so you you you Thank you.