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When we ended last week I stated that we had a bit more to discover in this passage before we could move on. So let's pick up again beginning in verse 11.

***Ephesians 1:11-14***

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that **we** who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, **you** also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of **our** inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

I want you to notice that Paul made a shift from talking about “we” to “you” and then finally to “us.” This is another foreshadowing of a central theme in Chapter 2 (and one of the Biblical mysteries) and that is that even though Jesus came and preached the gospel to the Jews (who Paul refers to as “we”), the Jews would be used to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (who Paul refers to as “you”) and both Jew and Gentile become one in Christ (hence the reference to “our” inheritance). Again, this will be more fully developed in Chapter 2, but Paul is giving us a preview of what is to come.

Paul says that “we” (the Jews) were the first to hope or to place our trust in Jesus Christ. In the Greek, this hope is in the perfect active tense. This means that once they placed their hope in Jesus, this action was perfectly completed and nothing else needed to be done. Thus, they could be at rest knowing they belong

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to God and that the effect of that decision was always active in their life. This is once again another confirmation that our place as sons of God is secure and is never in jeopardy: we are at rest.

The implication of this truth is ginormous in terms of our living as sons who belong to God. We will dive down deep when we get into Chapter 2 but for now I want you to fixate on the word “rest;” because if that does not describe your day-in-and-day-out existence with Jesus, then you have a serious problem. There are beliefs which you hold to—beliefs about God and about you—which are not in alignment with the truth! This is something we must remedy! But there will be more of that to come.

Then he says that they (the Gentiles) also heard and believed and in effect placed their hope in Jesus Christ, which is why they were also sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise. I don’t want to go past those two words too quickly—heard and believed. This combination of words paints a beautiful picture for how God delights in working in and through His body. Sure, as God, He could snap His fingers and a person would believe; but that is not how He chooses to work. He works by reaching out to people and touching them flesh to flesh. He lets their ears hear from our mouths. He lets their eyes see a glimpse of Him in how we live and relate to God as our Father, to Jesus as our Lover, and to the Holy Spirit of promise as our Counselor. And then He lets them choose.

Please understand, in God’s economy we are more than important. We have a vital role to play in the expansion of His kingdom and He has uniquely placed each of us exactly where He wants us to best fulfill His purposes. Again, this should

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help you find rest with your life (there's that word again) and the things God has called you to do. It should help you be at peace with where He has you right now.

I know we all are always longing for something bigger and greater (which I believe is an imprint from the Father), but nothing can be bigger and greater than being exactly where the Lord, the creator of the universe, wants us. And He has us in our jobs, in school, in various relationships, etc., so others (whom He has specifically appointed for us) will believe because: they were ***touched*** by His Spirit; ***saw*** Him as He lived in and through our lives; and ***heard*** Him as we spoke the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul speaks to all of this in ***Romans 10:14-15***.

It is an amazing way to live when you become convinced that you are more than just “Joe Blow” or “Jane Blow” walking around here on earth trying to survive as a “good Christian” and start to understand that you are chosen by God, that your life has been pre-ordained, your body tabernacles the very presence of God on earth, and you are the possessor of the mysteries of the God—the truth—for which others are in desperate need. Talk about having a reason to live and a reason to not waddle around in puddles of self-loathing and despair.

As we move on in this passage, Paul then prays an amazing prayer for the saints, a prayer inspired by the Spirit of God, a prayer which covers you and me.

### ***Ephesians 1:15-23***

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give

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you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

The first thing that is over the top amazing is the picture we get of Paul's heart. Paul is so into the bride of Christ and is so encouraged that they are in love with Jesus that he says that he has not ceased to give thanks and make mention of them in his prayers and what a beautiful prayer he lifts up on their behalf.

Notice that Paul linked the notions of "*faith*" and "*agape*" love (the kind of love that comes only from God). As we grow in our faith in Jesus Christ, as we learn to trust ourselves to Him, then the fruit of our lives will naturally produce His love for other believers. Agape love is a fruit of the Spirit of God (*Galatians 5:22*). The Spirit loves His own; therefore, as He controls more and more of our heart, we will likewise love His own since He will be the one who will love through us.

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This is the exchange that we have talked about on many occasions. As we give Jesus more and more control over our lives, the selfishness, which is a direct byproduct of our old sinful nature, diminishes proportionally and, in exchange, Jesus' love is produced and expressed from our lives to others. And if it is not, then despite what you might think or feel about your spirituality, you are not practically living by faith. The fruit of your life says it all.

So let's hone in on this notion of faith producing love. According to **Hebrews 11:1**, faith is all about believing—choosing to bet our lives on the truth about God. This is how we were saved (we heard and believed the truth) and this is how we are to live (**Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 2:20**)! But for many of us this truth is unfortunately forgotten. We are ok knowing that we were saved by faith, but in terms of day-to-day living we tend to want to wrench control of our lives back from God because 1) we don't really trust that His is good and has good intentions for our lives, 2) we don't like the fact that His good is about having more of Him and not necessarily more of what we want, 3) we don't like the way He is managing the details of our life—we want bigger/better/different, and 4) are afraid to let Him into those scary rooms in the corridors of our soul which we keep locked down and protected because of the ways we have been hurt and severely wounded.

Thus, instead of living by believing that He is our Daddy, our Lover, and our Great Comforter and Counselor who is in absolute control of all the details of our life and has planned wonderful goodness for us, we give Him a feigned nod of obedience wrapped around good Christian pleasantries, but all the while we are still trying to be our own god—our own sovereign.

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This is one of the reasons that we get caught up in serving God and being what we think are good obedient Christians who follow all the “rules.” It’s a way to cover or compensate for the fact that we do not really trust our lives to Jesus. The problem is that this way of living does not produce Agape love because it does not result in God living through you; thus, this way of living is sin. Sure, all our effort gives us something to feel good about but it is a spiritual and emotional deception.

This is why trying to appease all the rules of the religion of Christianity simply does not please God. The only obedience which pleases Jesus is the obedience of faith: when we learn to trust ourselves to His Lordship over our lives in every area of our life. This is what it means to abide in His love and cling to Him for everything; and according to **Hebrews 11:6** it is the only way we can be pleasing to God—for “without faith it is impossible to please Him.”

When you choose to bet your life on what is true, trusting His love for you, and trusting that: 1) His is good and has good intentions for your lives; 2) more of Him is exactly what you need; 3) nothing is bigger/better/or more different than being in the center of His will; and 4) He wants to bring His warm light into all of those scary rooms which are filled with years and years of pent up emotion and actually bring healing so He can fellowship with you—or dine with you—in those places where you were once hurt, then your body will be like a huge faucet of His Agape love pouring out to others.

I want to jump ahead about 30-years in Ephesian history and turn to the book of Revelation, chapter 2 where Jesus Himself pens a letter to the church at

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Ephesus. It is only 7 verses but it addresses this issue and it is from Jesus' own lips.

***Revelation 2:1-7***

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Wow this is a pretty sharp rebuke; and, as we know, the lampstand has since been removed and the church at Ephesus no longer exists. Sadly, Jesus did exactly as He threatened. According to Paul they started off wonderfully and their faith produced God's Agape love which was beautifully expressed toward other believers. But it seems they forgot what was really important to God—how to be in love with Jesus and trust themselves to Him—and instead chose to be really

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good Christians. And boy they were good; their deeds were well known. But it was all to no avail. To God their effort was worthless because it was not a byproduct or fruit of His living in and through them but was merely their best (but totally lame) attempt at being good. They forgot that only God is good.

I love the way Jesus uses a very romantic description—you have left your first love—but even then it seems lost on them. And what is sad is that their departure did not occur over hundreds of years where they slowly migrated away from truth, but during one lifetime. Again, Jesus' letter was written probably just over 30 years after Paul wrote his letter and only about 40 years after the church had been established.

Knowing the love of God and living in the love of God is the key to experiencing all that God has for us. And when we understand how marvelous His love for us really is, we can remember that we did nothing to earn our relationship with God; it was a gift. Thus, there is nothing we can do “for” God to maintain that relationship except to believe and abide in His love. We need to learn this lesson and not follow the unfortunate path ultimately chosen by the Ephesians and instead follow the example of faith and love that they set for us at the beginning of their love affair with Jesus.

And please take note that once you start down the path of trying to be a good Christian, there seems to be a hardening in your heart that makes it very difficult for you to hear (and by that I mean receive) what Jesus Himself says to you. They didn't; it was lost on them. This is why the writer of Hebrews warns us: “Today you must listen to His voice. Don't harden your hearts against Him” (**Hebrews 4:7** quoting **Psalms 95:7-8**). Please don't go down that path; it is dry, empty and void



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of life and love. I spent way too many years on that path, but thank Jesus that He is the one who grabbed me by the nape of the neck and said, “No more.” He saved me from myself and my foolish desire to be obsessed on what I could “do” for God.

Remember life as a son of God is all about faith—about abiding in His love. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Now as we move forward in this prayer, I want you to understand that this was a prayer inspired by the Spirit of God; thus, what Paul prayed gives us insight as to what God desires for us to experience in Him.

First, Paul prays that our glorious Father would give us spiritual wisdom and insight (or revelation), so we might grow in our knowledge of God. The goal then is for us to grow in the “knowledge of God,” and the spirit of wisdom and insight are the means by which that takes place.

First let’s talk about the “knowledge of God.” The Greek word that Paul chose does not just mean to gather information and to be familiar with data and facts about God, but it means to know Him personally and implies a participation in that knowledge. In other words, our goal is not just to know the Bible, but to know God as our Daddy, Jesus as our Lover, and the Spirit as our Great Comforter and Counselor. In the Greek, the word “knowledge” infers deep intimate and personal knowledge through experience and relationship.

With this understanding, it makes sense why the spirit of wisdom and revelation/insight are the means to our knowing God. Wisdom gives us insight into the true nature of God and revelation/insight is the unveiling of all that is God to us—in other words revelation/insight opens up for us an understanding of

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how God interacts with our lives so we can know both what to believe about God and how we can bet our lives on His character and nature.

Now just so you know, when it says “spirit” of wisdom and insight, I do not believe that is a reference to the Holy Spirit, but I think it refers more to a disposition or attitude we are to have which desires wisdom and insight. I say that because according to **verse 13**, we were given the Holy Spirit when we first believed; so obviously Paul could not have been praying that God would give the Holy Spirit.

It is clear, however, that wisdom and revelation come only from God. **Proverbs 2:6** says that the Lord grants wisdom and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. But He grants it as the fruit of our getting to know Him and trusting ourselves to Him and **not** as a fruit of our knowing about Him. Wisdom and revelation are fruits which accompany intimacy with Jesus.

One thing I noticed about the woman in Song of Songs is that she is always watching for her lover. She is always attentive and she notices everything about him. She says that his cologne is fragrant (which means she must be near to him). She says that his name is pleasing, which is why all the young woman want him (**1:3**). In so doing, she compares his name or his character to perfume, which meant that his character/nature was pleasing and something that is attractive to all and in no way repulsive.

She says he is like a sachet of myrrh lying between her breasts (**1:12**). She was constantly taking in the wonderful fragrance of his character and nature—like breathing in perfume. In other words, he was constantly in her thoughts; she filled her mind with thoughts of him, the fragrance of which overpowered the

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stink of her own thoughts. She said he is a lovely and pleasant sight (**1:16**). Most likely she was not just referring to his physical beauty but again to how beautiful he was to her because everything about him made her feel so secure in his love.

She said that he is like the *finest* apple tree in the orchard and she just loves to sit in his delightful shade and eat of his delicious fruit (**2:3**). In other words, He is a rare find—unique, sweet, and fragrant and she is totally protected by his love. She is shaded from the sun which had scorched her (the sun being a reference to her prior life of slavery which is a metaphor for the world and our bondage to Satan). Moreover, because she is protected she can just sit and enjoy the tasty fruit of being in relationship with him. This reminds me of what David says in *Psalms 34:8*, “Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in Him!”

He brings her into the banquet hall and his banner over her is love (**2:4**)—in other words, everyone can see how much he loves her. She knew he was not ashamed of her and that he delighted in her and he wanted everyone to know about their love. In fact, he made a public display of his love. Again, this made her so secure in his arms.

She is even found searching all over for her lover. One day while she was asleep he came to her room. The door was closed and he knocked and knocked just wanting to come in and be with her. When she finally got up and opened the door he was gone. She yearned to just hear his voice so she searched for him but could not find him anywhere (**5:2-6**).

The picture these passages paint powerfully communicates that she knew her lover in a very intimate way. She observed him, studied him, knew all about him and yearned for him with her entire being. She knew his character and nature

were trustworthy and something she could depend upon. She also experienced his protective care and the sheer joy and glory of belonging to him. She knew her man and the more she experienced him the more she fell head over heels in love with him. She loved the sound of his voice, his smell on her body, the way he looked, and everything about him. She could not live without him and would search the city over just to be with him.

With this picture in mind, let's read ***Proverbs 4:5-9 and Proverbs 2:1-6*** and hopefully it will breathe life into these verses which will help us understand the meat behind Paul's prayer that God might give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

#### ***Proverbs 4:5-9***

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. "Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you. "The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. "Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her. "She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty."

The blessings of obtaining wisdom are amazing. Wisdom and understanding will guard you and watch over you. She will exalt you if you prize her and she will honor you if you embrace her. A garland of grace and a crown of beauty will be yours. Beyond the grandness of what wisdom has to offer, what strikes me is the

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urgency in the tone of this passage; it is intense. Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forsake her! Prize her!

Now, at first glance the notion that we have to acquire wisdom may seem to contradict Paul's simple prayer that God would grant us wisdom. But it is not. In reality they are perfectly aligned. Wisdom is a gift that God gives, but to receive it or acquire it, you have to pursue knowing Him. So the Holy Spirit through the writer of Proverbs is really shouting: know Jesus, love Jesus, experience Jesus, and find your entire life in Jesus, for wisdom is the beautiful and wonderful fruit of knowing God. Listen to what else the Spirit says:

***Proverbs 2:1-6***

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

You see, we are to be like that woman who loves everything about her lover. We are to study His ways. We are to see how He does things and how he interacts with others. We are to observe how He is faithful to His character and nature of love. We are to yearn to always be with Him. We are to obsess on Him and let thoughts of Him fill our minds. We are to soak Him up like a cachet of incredible

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perfume which hangs around our neck and overpowers the stink of our own thoughts.

Yes, we are to be so close to Him that we even have His smell on our bodies. We are to trust ourselves to His character and nature and thereby dwell in His protective shade. We are to eat of the fruit of His wisdom. We are to listen to every sound of His voice and pay attention to what He says. We are to cry out to know and experience more and more of Him. He is to be of more value than even ourselves. We are to want Him more than we would ever want the greatest of riches or anything else for which we would otherwise desire.

He is to be our lover. When we seek to be in relationship with Him in this manner, then we will come know what it means to fear the Lord (or to only love what He loves), and then we will gain the knowledge of God, for He will grant us wisdom and insight from His own mouth. It will be like the most amazing, wonderful, deep, passionate, and intense kiss you could ever imagine! You will never want to leave His embrace and you will long and desire for more—more wisdom, more understanding, more of Him.

By the way, He loves that kind of kiss as well. In *Hosea 6:6* He says He delights in our obtaining the “knowledge of God.” It literally brings Him great joy to love us in this manner and share more and more of Himself with us.

Paul then prays that our hearts will be flooded with light so we can understand (or know) the confident hope he has given to those He called—his holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance. This is totally mind blowing and I believe it takes special illumination from the Holy Spirit for us to really understand this truth. We can hear the words, but to live as if we were worth

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everything to Jesus is another matter altogether. But it is true! We are Jesus' reward. We are His gift— handpicked by the Father and made holy for His Son. We are Jesus' rich and glorious inheritance. Let these truths flood your mind that you may know them to be true. In the Greek, this word “understand” or “know” is in the *perfect active* tense. These truths are to be perfected in us as our ever present reality. This must be how we live!

**Hebrews 12:2** says that for the joy set before Him Jesus endured the cross. You have to come to believe that you are that joy. To Him you were worth His leaving heaven, setting aside His glory, and taking on the form of mortal man. You were worth the mocking, the brutal torture, and you were worth dying for. You and I are His delight. This is why the Song of Songs says that He is captured by just one glance from our eyes (**4:9**)

Last week I mentioned the mysteries of the kingdom in Matthew 13 and two of the parables speak directly to this point.

**Matthew 13:44**

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Jesus is this man who found us in the field of the world. From sheer joy over finding us, He left heaven and became a man so that He could die and with His

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blood buy the field (Jesus died for the sins of the world) just so He could be the possessor of you and me—His hidden treasure.

***Matthew 13:45-46***

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

In this parable we are the pearl and Jesus is the merchant and believe it or not He is actually seeking to find us (***John 15:16***, He chose us we did not choose Him). And here is the mind blowing thing; Jesus would have died for you even if you were the only person to ever believe in Him. Even if it was just you (upon finding one pearl of great value), He still would have left heaven, became a man and died just so He could redeem you, or purchase you with the price of His precious blood. That is how valuable and precious you are to Jesus. We need to have our hearts flooded with light so we can understand this truth and live in this truth.

The hope of our calling is glorious. You mean everything to Him. In fact, you are His glory. I pray that you would let this truth sink into your soul and penetrate every area of your being so that you would come to fully understand why you can—and why you must—trust yourself completely to Him.

Do you understand God is not out to hurt you or do horrible things to you? He loves you and you are precious to Him. I know at times the things He allows in our lives can be really horrible, but it is not because He is not obsessed with you; it is because He is. It is because He wants you to know and experience what it is like to



abandon your own wisdom and understanding and cling to Him for your very life so you will come to believe that He is trustworthy and faithful and come to know the joy and delight of being loved by God.

I think that is enough to try and absorb tonight. What Paul says next is even more mind-blowing than what we covered tonight, if you can imagine that, so I think I want to save that for next week. So for now, let's just spend our week meditating on how valuable, precious, and desirable we are to Jesus. Let these truths flood your mind constantly. Personally, I want to believe this in every fiber of my being so I can begin to know what it is like to live all the time with this truth being a pillar upon which my life is built. I am His precious possession. I am His glory. I am His beloved and He is always obsessed with me. My prayer is that each of us will come to know this to be true and live as if it is our truth.

Let's Pray