

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. Eph 1.17.

Years ago there used to be a TV quiz programme called 'Mr and Mrs' where husbands had to answer questions about their wives' habits and *vice versa*. Remember it? The usual result was that they didn't know their partners as well as they thought. The men were usually the most hopeless cases. We *think* we know, but then we men don't listen and don't notice, do we? The point is that even after umpteen long winters together we don't really know each other. Do we really know our children? Have you ever listened to the words of the music they're listening to? Do you know what they doing on Face Book or what they're learning from their friends? Do our children really know us as we are? When we marry, do we know the person we are going to spend the rest of our lives with? We probably do more research when buying a new car or planning the summer holiday!

Well, here in the first chapter of *Ephesians* Paul tells them that he keeps praying that they may know *God* better, v17... And he *keeps* praying this. I pray for all of you, individually, and as a congregation. I pray every day that St Paul's will grow not only *numerically*, but, much more importantly, grow *spiritually*. My vision is not just for bums on seats. (So far I'm not being paid by results!). My prayer is that you will grow spiritually by knowing God better and coming closer to him. I want you to have a personal relationship with the living Lord Jesus; to know him as your personal Lord and Saviour. And so, my challenge to you this morning is, So how well do you know God? Is Jesus a reality in your life?

At *this* point you might be saying to yourselves, 'Well, I don't really know God *that* well. I come to *church*, but Jesus is just a name, a figure from the past. Perhaps I should try harder to read the Bible and say my prayers'. If that is how you are thinking right now, go back to *Eph* 1.17... Notice that Paul's prayer is not for the *Christians* in Ephesus to try harder to know God better, but for *God* to give them the Spirit to *enable* them to know him better - a very different thing!

And this is my main point this morning: that the only reason you know anything at all about God is that God has *allowed* you to know him. It isn't because you have worked him out, but because God has revealed himself to you. The teaching in this passage is a great insight, (and also a great *relief* to us who beat ourselves up because we're not better Christians!).

We tend to think that Christianity is something *we* do. *We* decide to believe in God. *We* try to get to know him better, to read our Bibles more, and say our prayers more regularly. *We* try to be better people, more Christian, more loving and less selfish. It's all about *us*, and *us* *trying* harder.

Well, it ain't! Christianity is not about what we can do for God, but what God has done for *us*. And that makes Christianity *Good News* and not just *Good Advice* which you can take or leave, depending on your inclination. As always, let's see what the *Bible* says. We saw last week how God has a plan to unite all the brokenness of the world: in Christ he will one day bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ, vv9-10... Notice first, that it is *God's* plan, not ours; second, that he, not we, will activate it, and

third, he will do it in *his* perfect time, vv9-10... *We* are not going to change the world: *God* is.

But go back a few verses. V3: God has blessed us in the heavenly realms... V4: God has chosen us: we did not choose him ... V7: Christ has shed his blood for our forgiveness. *We* didn't pay the price to get rid of our guilt and past; *God* did... And now in today's passage we are told that it is because God graciously gives us his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we are enabled to *know* him, v17...

It's all about what God has done and is doing for us, *not* about what we can do for God. Isn't that amazing? So stop beating yourselves up that you aren't doing enough, not good enough, and just be thankful and give God the glory.

So that does that mean we Christians just lie back and do nothing, then? Well, not quite. But it does mean that we stop acting like God. I am sick of hearing Christians working 'to build the kingdom'. We are *not* building the kingdom, either through our political involvement or our social work in the community. We must never forget the simple truth that the kingdom of God is *God's* kingdom. Of course, we play our bit in our corner of the vineyard, but *God* will bring in his kingdom, in his way and in his perfect time. To follow Christ does not mean that we should *be* Christ. We just follow.

We ask people if they 'believe in God'. I would rather ask you if you '*believe* God'. Think about that! Do you actually believe what God has said and promised in the Bible? I think a lot of Christians *don't*. Do you really believe that Christ has died for your sins and as a result you can face him on the Day

of Judgement and know that you will be in heaven? Do you believe that promise? Despite all the awfulness in the world today, do you believe God when he told us in *Eph* 1.10 that he has a plan to join everything together in Christ? Do you believe that he really *does* have the whole world, and you and me, brother, in his hand? Because, if you did, you would be able to face each day with peace and confidence.

*Eph* 1.17 tells us that it is the Holy Spirit, given at Pentecost, who makes God known to us, not our own cleverness and piety. Unfortunately the Bible gives us another insight, that the devil is at work, keeping us from knowing God. Turn to p1160, *2 Cor* 4.4... 'The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...' We need the Spirit to see God.

The god of this age does not want us to see Christ as God's glorious Son who is working to save the world. The devil wants us to see just a teacher, a bit of a prophet. The devil wants us to see God as just some distant 'thing' who can't do a lot; who can't answer your prayers; who can't raise Jesus from the dead. But God's *Spirit* enables us to see God in all his greatness and amazing power. If he can raise the dead, he can bring everything in heaven and earth together in Christ. He can also sort out *your* problems, if you let him in, vv18-21...

This first chapter of *Eph* is telling us to look up, to raise our game, to stop making God small, and to see him in all his glory, power, and amazing grace. He wants us to see his greatness and at Pentecost he graciously gave us the Spirit to enable us to know him better. Just ask for the Spirit in *your* life, and just believe God. He's an awesome God.