

June 27, 2010 by Steve Brandon



Between Two Worlds

Ephesians 1

A few weeks ago in our prayer meeting, I started our time of prayer by reading from Paul's prayer in Ephesians, chapter 1. I made a few comments on the text, and something happened. Something changed. There was a spirit that swept across us all. I heard from several people who were present in the room at the time, that there was something about the prayer meeting that was different than normal. I believe that God met us at that moment. It was as if we all began to see the realities of life on this earth in a proper perspective, and we were drawn into the heavenly realities.

Since that time, I have been thinking upon the prayer that Paul offered up in Ephesians 1, and how crucial it is to our lives. I thought about getting back into Hebrews this morning, but instead, felt compelled to open up Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1. I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. I want to begin reading in verse 15, ...

Ephesians 1:15-23

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about 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 every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection 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.

Fundamentally, Paul prays for spiritual enlightenment. You can see it there in verse 17. Paul is praying, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Everything else in the passage supports verse 17 in one way or another. The verses before this verse provide the context. The verses after this verse further elaborate on this prayer. When I come across verses like this in the Bible, I like to draw boxes around them, so that it stands out as the primary thought of the passage. You might want to do that as well - draw a box around verse 17.

Here the core of the prayer again.

Ephesians 1:17

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Essentially, it's a prayer that we might know God better. But, he doesn't say it exactly that way. He doesn't say, "I pray that you would know God better." Instead, he prays that God would give insight into knowing Him. In saying things this way, Paul, again, is directing our attention upon God's grace. If he had merely prayed, "I pray that you would know God better," then, we might be able to get to work to answering this prayer.

Do you want to know somebody better? Just start spending more time with that person. Young men and women who are in the process of seeking a married partner will spend much time together. In this way, they will get to know each other better. Husbands and wives know each other so well because of the time that they spend with each other. Eighteen years ago, today, Yvonne and I were married. Due to the great amount of time that we have spent together, we know each other more today than we did when we were married. Now, the same is true about God. The more time you spend with God, in prayer and Bible study and trusting Him through life, the more your knowledge of Him will certainly increase.

But, Paul's prayer is such that he compels us to see our need in obtaining this knowledge of God. To know God, we need Him give us insight! He needs to give us "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Because, knowing God isn't merely about information. There are many people who know the Bible very, very well, and yet, who are far from God. Fundamentally, to know God better, we need God's help. We need God to reveal Himself to us. We need God to give us "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."

One of the most difficult things about this life is keeping our minds upon the spiritual realities of our salvation. We know the call of our lives: Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." But, as we live our lives, the practical matters of life weigh heavy upon us. What's on my schedule tomorrow? Where are the kids going tomorrow? Why aren't we getting hot water? When am I going to have time to get to that pile of bills? Do I have time to mow the lawn tomorrow evening? The car needs an oil change. My son needs a haircut. The gutter needs repairing. I need to make a trip to the supermarket. We're low on gas in the car. And the list goes on and on. We

can't escape such matters of life. But, we can keep them in proper perspective. That's what Paul is praying, ...

Ephesians 1:17

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Now, before we actually dig into the text, I want to ask you: Do you want this? Is this the sort of thing that you are longing for? I know that I long for this. As a pastor, I long for this. This is a prayer for myself. This is my prayer for all of you. I long for God to give us such a spirit of revelation into knowing Him!

As we dig into Ephesians, chapter 1 this morning, I want to do my best to remind you of that world, that the mundane matters of this life are put in perspective. Because, we, as Christians, live in two worlds. We have the physical world in which we dwell. But, we also have a foot in the heavenlies. My message this morning is entitled, "Between Two Worlds," because that is where we live. And we are called to live in this world in light of the other world. In other words, we are called to be gripped with the realities of our salvation in a way that our lives would be lived differently.

Well, let's dig in. Let's look at verse 15. Paul begins with these words, "For this reason." Sometimes such a phrase anticipates what's coming forward. At other times, such a phrase gives a reason for what was just spoken, as it does here. In this case, Paul is looking back. Based upon what he just said in the first half of the chapter, Paul now prays for spiritual enlightenment, that the believers in Ephesus would truly understand how great their salvation is.

The first half of Ephesians, chapter 1 is all about the glories of our salvation. And to understand this prayer, you need to understand verses 3-14. So, let's read through the text and ponder the salvation that God has provided for us in Christ. These things come fast upon us, like crashing waves.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

First of all, we see the blessings that have come to us in Christ. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. I like to say it this way, "If there is a blessing to be given, it has already been given." In other words, there is nothing that God is withholding from us, as it relates to our salvation. God doesn't have some gift that he's waiting until a later date to give us. No, every blessing is ours in Christ. The rest of chapter 1 merely details some of these blessings. He begins with the blessing of election, the blessing of God's choosing us in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Here's a great blessing of our salvation: God has chosen us unto salvation. God has chosen us to be clean vessels for Him, sanctified in Christ. And His choosing came to us, not on the merits of things that we had done. His choosing came to us, not because of some choice that we made. Rather, it came to us because of God's sovereign choice of us.

From the foundation of the world, God chose us. Before Jesus came, God had chosen us. Before David came, God had chosen us. Before Abraham came, God had chosen us. Before Noah came, God had chosen us. Before Adam came, God had chosen us. Before the foundation of the world, God had chosen us. He didn't look down the corridors of time to see who would choose Him, and then choose those people. That's us choosing God, not God choosing us. No, God chose us before any of us ever came to be. That's what verse 4 says.

And for those of us who have embraced this, we find it is a huge blessing in our lives. Many people point to the time when they first believed in Christ as the huge turning point in their life, and indeed it is. But, I know many people who would point to the time when they understood the glories of God's choosing them as a huge turning point in their lives as well. Because, it's right here that you realize that God really does have a wonderful plan for your life. His plan began before the world was ever created. You were in His mind before Genesis 1:1. And, in His sovereign pleasure, He brought you to Himself, carrying about everything that He had planned to do.

He chose to open our eyes when we were blind (2 Cor. 4:4). He chose to make us alive when we were dead (Eph. 2:1-6). He chose to give us understanding when we were unresponsive to spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). He chose to soften our hearts when they were hard (Ezekiel 36:26). He chose to make us new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He chose to give us new life, like being born again (John 3). Such is the reality for everyone who believes in Christ.

Ephesians 1:5

[In love] He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Here, again, we see another side of the electing love of God - not only choosing, but predestinating! That is, we see God exercising His sovereign will to insure that we would be adopted into His kingdom. Indeed, that's what takes place when we are saved. We pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. We are "adopted" into God's kingdom as sons.

J. I. Packer says that this adoption is "the highest privilege that the gospel offers, higher even than justification". [\[1\]](#) In saying this, Packer isn't

saying that justification is in any way less than adoption. After all, it's our justification before God that allows us to come to God in the first place. However, what Packer is getting at here is the blessing of adoption. See, it's one thing to forgive a criminal. It's yet another thing to bring him into your home and give him all of the privileges of a son! That's the blessing of the gospel!

According to 1 John 3:1, those who believe in Christ are called "children of God." In Romans 8, we are called "fellow heirs" with Jesus Christ. Indeed, God is kind to bring us into such a relationship. Then, in verse 6, we see the fruit of God's great blessings to us, ...

Ephesians 1:6

to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

The point of God's choosing us and predestinating us is to make salvation all of grace! There was nothing in us that made us worthy of the gospel. Rather, God, by His grace, brought us into His family through faith in Him! And, we can do no other than to give God great praise for His grace. Such was the intention of some of our songs this morning.

Wonderful grace of Jesus,
Greater than all my sin;
How shall my tongue describe it,
Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden,
Setting my spirit free;
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me. [\[2\]](#)

And ...

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled. [\[3\]](#)

Such is the end of God's bountiful blessings that have come upon us! Our praise to God for His grace toward us. Let's keep going through this chapter.

Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Such is the fundamental blessing that God gives to us: Redemption through His blood. The blood of Jesus bought us. Through the blood of Jesus, we are forgiven! Not because of works, but because of "the riches of His grace." I love how verse 8 describes God's grace, ...

Ephesians 1:8

which He lavished on us.

That is, His grace abounded to us. It overwhelmed us. Like a giant tidal wave of grace, which crashed upon us; like the feet of snow of a blizzard; like torrents of a rushing river, such is the grace of God, which He has poured upon us in our salvation. But, Paul's not done yet. He continues on, ...

Ephesians 1:8-10

... In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

This verse is speaking about God opening our minds to believe the gospel. We know from 1 Corinthians 2:14 that in our natural state, we couldn't understand the gospel. Our sins darkened our hearts to seeing the glory of Jesus. But, by God's great grace, He broke through, and gave us an understanding of His grace in Christ.

God's vision was for an every-tribe and every-tongue and every-nation sort of heaven. And that's what He brought about as He illumined the minds of people from all over the planet, who will give Him praise for His grace. The blessings continue in verse 11, ...

Ephesians 1:11

[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,

Here, our inheritance is mentioned. We have been adopted into God's family and will inherit the kingdom. The cry from heaven goes like this, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). And this all will happen according to the purposes and plans of God that reached way back, before time began. And again, we see the

end of it all in verse 12.

Ephesians 1:12

to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

These things should so blow you away that you cannot help but to give praise and honor and glory to the Lord! But, it doesn't end there. It continues on in verses 13 and 14, ...

Ephesians 1:13-14

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.

These verses focus their attention upon the Holy Spirit. Upon hearing the gospel and believing the gospel, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is a pledge of our future inheritance. Several metaphors come to mind. The Holy Spirit is a bit like a down-payment for our future inheritance. He is a token that represents God's intentions to bring us into His kingdom. If we don't get there, God defaults on the Holy Spirit! Can that happen? No way.

Or, taken another way, the Holy Spirit is a bit like an engagement ring. God has given us a ring in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the indication that God intends to marry His bride. And God never breaks his promises.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is a pledge of our future inheritance. There will be a day when we who believe in Christ, will be with God, enjoying God, singing His glory!

And now we come to verse 15. Essentially, Paul says, "I'm praying for you."

Ephesians 1:15-16

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

He prays, because he knows that the great realities of verses 3-14 are true for those in Ephesus, because they believed these things. It's precisely because Paul had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus that he prays these realities (verse 15). It's precisely because Paul had heard that their faith was on display, working itself out in love for the brethren (verse 15). And he's so thrilled at the news that he's praying constantly for them. He's praying that they would fully realize what happened to them in Christ.

In the life of our church body this week, we have had a few instances of lost children. The first story comes from our household.

We were given some tickets to attend the Riverhawks baseball game this past Tuesday evening. As the time drew near for the game to begin, we were frantically scurrying about the home, trying to gather everything that we needed for the game. We all packed into the car, along with two other children from church, who spent the day at our home, and we began to drive down the road.

We were about 5-7 minutes away, having traveled through a few major stoplights, when we heard Stephanie shout out from the back seat, "Where's David?" We quickly realized that our three-year old son was not with us in the car. In the frantic rush to get out the door, we had left him at home. To make matters worse, we knew that we left him outside and locked him out. Somehow, he just never got into the car.

I quickly turned the van around to head back home to find him. All sorts of scenarios flashed through my mind of what could have happened to him. When we arrived at home, we all rushed out of the car to find him. And there he was in the back yard, on our play set, a bit oblivious to what had just happened. As we asked him about where he was and what he was doing, I'm not sure that he had any real idea of what just took place. I almost think that he was purposefully hiding from us.

The second story is more dramatic, but makes the same point.

On Thursday, Maggie took her three children out for a walk along the bike path near the YMCA. Gage, their 6 year old, was riding his bike as they took their walk. He would ride ahead of them, and then double back. At one point, Maggie told me that Gage seemed to go a bit too far. She was planning on telling him not to ride so far next time. But, he never came back.

When Maggie and her other two children arrived at the car, they saw Gage's bicycle along the ground, but there was no sign of Gage. After about 5 minutes of looking, she called Darryn, who told her to call 911. Within a few moments, there were nine squad cars on the scene, all looking for Gage, up and down the bike path.

To make a long story short, the police were eventually able to find Gage. Apparently, he had gone ahead, parked his bike and had doubled back to find mom. Somehow, they had missed each other along the way. A kind woman had seen him alone and had discerned that something was wrong. Gage was able to tell her where he lived and what his phone number was. She tried contacting his parents, but, of course, they weren't at home. At some point, the police found him with this woman, and discerned that he was the one they were looking for. Back came the news, "We found him."

Maggie said that there were no sweeter words to be heard at that moment. Gage got to have a fun ride in the police car, back to where

Maggie was. By this time, Darryn was with Maggie to receive Gage when he arrived in the squad car. Maggie said that he was missing for about 40 minutes. She told me that Gage seemed a bit unfazed by it all.

Now, I don't know what Gage (or even David), fully know of their "rescue." In many ways they don't seem to realize what took place. In this way, they are much like many believers in Christ. They believe in Jesus and have embrace Him. They love Him and follow after Him. But, they don't really realize the extent of their salvation. Had these children understood how they were saved from some potentially dangerous circumstances, they will live differently. When it's time to go, David will stay close to us and make sure that he will get into the car. Gage will be more careful in riding his bike too far ahead. And this is Paul's heart. He says, "I have heard that you believe. I have heard that you have been rescued from your sin. I want for you to know how great was your rescue. I want for you to realize how much better things are now than they could have been. Surely you will rejoice in your salvation!"

And Paul's longing is that they might know God fully. And so, he prays verse 17.

Ephesians 1:17

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Verse 17 is the summary. Verses 18-23 are the specifics.

Ephesians 1:18

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

Let's stop there. Paul is praying for our hearts to know and feel the realities of our salvation. I love the way that he says it. He speaks about the "eyes of our hearts."

Now, of course, our hearts don't have eyes. Our hearts have never seen the light of day. They have worked in darkness their entire lives. But, then again, he's not really talking about our physical hearts. He's talking about our inner person - our minds, our wills, our emotions. And our inner being doesn't have eyes either.

But, we know what he's talking about. There's a saying in our culture, "The eyes are the windows into the soul." He's talking about our inner man knowing and grasping and feeling the realities of every blessing that we have in Christ.

This prayer is a bit like Elisha's prayer when the Arameans encircled the city. Elisha's servant was afraid. Elisha prayed, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:18).

Seeing true reality, this is Paul's prayer. **The problem with the unsaved is that "Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the ... light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4). The problem with the saved is that "their eyes are often blinded to see the ... light of the glories of the gospel of Christ."** Indeed, this is what Paul is praying for. Verse 18, ...

Ephesians 1:18-19

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know [3 things, ...] {1.} what is the hope of His calling, {2.} what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and {3.} what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

I love the specificity of this prayer. He doesn't pray, "God, open their minds to see you." Rather, he is very specific. He wants them to know about the hope that we have. He wants them to know about the riches of heaven. He wants them to know about God's power.

Let's take them one by one.

1. what is the hope of His calling.

Do you have hope this morning? If you are looking for hope in the world, you just plain won't find it. Watch the news on television. Do you find hope there? Pick up your newspaper. Do you find hope there? No. Read the Wall Street Journal. Do you find hope there? No. There is hope in none of those places.

Do you want to have hope? Let's think heaven. Please read through the following verses slowly.

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new "

This is hope--a place where everything is new. Do you know that new smell? The smell of new carpet? The smell of new construction and new paint? The smell of a new refrigerator? That's the smell of heaven. There's no dirty-garbage smell in heaven.

But heaven is also a place with no tears and no death and no mourning or crying or pain. There are no broken bones, no toothaches, no headaches. There is no arthritis and no disease. And the perfection goes beyond this. There are no more marriage problems, no more broken relationships. There is no more unemployment and no more tragedy. There are no more car accidents, no more plane crashes, no more tsunamis or earthquakes or tornados or hurricanes.

That's hope. And it's not some Polyanna wishful thinking hope.

Revelation 21:5

... And He [who sits on the throne] said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

As true as God is, so are these words true. They will come to pass.

Revelation 21:6-7

Then He said to me, "It is done I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."

This is the hope that we have. We have God! Glorifying and enjoying Him forever. Do you have hope this morning?

Paul's second request comes in verse 18, ...

2. what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Again, these words direct our attention upon the future. They direct our attention to the riches of God's inheritance.

On the one hand, I do believe that they are addressing the riches of heaven, and everything that God inherits. My mind is drawn to think of the heavenly Jerusalem, which has the glory of God (Rev. 21:10). The brilliance of the city is "like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper" (Rev. 21:11). When describing the city, the apostle John speaks of the wall as made of jasper, so brilliant in appearance, that it looks like clear glass (Rev. 21:18). When describing the foundation stones of the city, he said that they were made of all sorts of precious stones (jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst) (Rev. 21:19-21). Each of the twelve gates were giant pearls (Rev. 21:21). The streets of the city were "pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev. 21:21).

And yet, there is something about Paul's description here of the riches that make it even more valuable. The focus of attention here isn't so much upon the riches of our inheritance, as it is upon God's inheritance. We are God's inheritance! And as people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation are called into His kingdom, it is a very rich place with myriads of myriads of people singing His praise. Such are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

But, there is a third thing that Paul wants for us to see and know. It's found in verse 19, ...

3. what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Paul's heart is for us to see the power of God in our salvation. D. A. Carson has said it well, ...

What would you have chosen to describe God's power? When you think of God's sovereignty, to what does your mind turn? I confess I am inclined to think of God's power in creation. He speaks, and worlds leap into being. He designs the water molecule, with its remarkable atomic structure that ensures greater density is achieved at four degrees Centigrade than at the freezing point, so that lakes and rivers freeze not from the bottom up but from the top down, providing a blanket of ice with water underneath so that fish can survive. I think of God calculating the mathematics of quarks, with half-lives in billionths of a second. I think of God designing each star and upholding the universe by his powerful word. I think of the pleasure he takes in the woodpecker, with its specially designed tail-feathers that enable it to peck with such force. I marvel at a God who created emus and cheetah and the duck-billed platypus. His power extends beyond the limits of our imagination.

But that is not what Paul turns to. After all, for an omnipotent God there cannot be degrees of difficulty. There is no one act that is 'most powerful.' Paul does not hunt for the most powerful or the most difficult displays of God's power, since such categories are essentially meaningless. Rather, he hunts for the most glorious, the most revealing. As a result, he focuses on three events.

Paul mentions the power exerted when Christ was raised from death. ... Paul describes the power displayed in the exalted Christ. ... Paul declares the power exercised by Christ over everything--for the church. [\[4\]](#)

And you can see it right there in 19-23: God's power toward us:

Ephesians 1:19-23

... are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about 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 every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection 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.

Raising Jesus from the dead was a display of God's power. God took a corpse that was badly beaten and bruised, and breathed life into it. We celebrate it every Easter (with good reason).

Seating Jesus in the heavenly places was a display of God's power. God rules the universe. He can put anyone in power that He wants. Indeed, Jesus is head over all. He rules over all things: every rule, every authority, every power, every dominion. Now and forever. They are all in subjection under His feet! And Christ rules and reigns over us.

Notice there in verse 19 that we read of these things that "His power [is] toward us who believe." When you come to Ephesians 2:6, you realize that some of these things are true for us! It says there that we, too, have been "raised up with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And this is the great reality of our salvation. Everything that God was for Jesus, He is for us!

It's really quite unfathomable. Now, what would be the effect if such a prayer would be answered in your life? Victorious living. Such knowledge would keep us from sin. Such knowledge would give us a heart to strive toward holiness. Such knowledge would give us a boldness in evangelism.

I do believe that lack of insight into the supernatural leads to sin. When Adam and Eve took of the fruit and ate, I believe that they did so because they lacked the understanding of the realities of the supernatural. David's failure in his sin with Bathsheba was fundamentally a failure to see and know and feel the holiness of God. Israel continued in their grumbling and complaining when they failed to understand God's care for them. They had seen the plagues, but they had failed to grasp what they truly meant. Lack of spiritual insight led to the crucifixion of Christ. 1 Cor. 2:8 tells us that, "if they had understood [God's wisdom], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

In the life of an unbeliever, it works like this. They want to sin, but they see the truth. And so, they suppress the truth, so as to believe a lie. And with the lie, they willfully sin. You can read about it in Romans 1:20. For believers in Christ, the process is much the same, only we don't go so far in our unbeliefs. But, what's the antidote to sin? It's looking to Jesus and the great spiritual realities that are hidden in Him.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 27, 2010 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] J.I. Packer. Knowing God, pp. 187-6

[2] Wonderful Grace of Jesus. Haldor Lillenas.

[3] Grace Greater Than Our Sin. Julia H. Johnston.

[4] D.A. Carson. A Call to Spiritual Reformation, pp. 178-9