

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups April 26th 2009

More love...More Power! Renewing our Vision – the journey where next!
Ephesians 1:15 - 23

Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Ephesus today in ruins was once a place of power. It was a major centre of imperial influence in Paul's day and had great social and civic power. It was also a centre of religious power where all sorts of cults flourished; cults that focused on power – power to make things happen in the world, to influence people and events, to gain wealth or health for oneself and to bring down one's enemies. In this city Paul left a church, a small community of believers in Jesus Christ. Last week we focused on Paul's opening words of blessing and encouragement to the church in Ephesus (1:3-14), this week we read of Paul's prayer for them – read 1v 15-17.

Having heard of their Christian faith and love (v15) Paul has not stopped thanking God for them but the truth is he is not satisfied with them! He knows there is more! So what is it that Paul focuses on in his prayers for them? - read 1v17. The key phrase Paul prays is 'that you might know him better.' This is repeated in v 18. The knowledge Paul is referring to is more Hebrew than Greek inextricably linking experience with understanding. So what is it that Paul wants the church to know? The key to this is in verses 18 and 19

1 Gods Call - 'I pray..... that you may know the hope to which he has called you.'

Paul wants the church to know that God's call is a call with a hope for the future. God's call is not random or purposeless, he has called us to be his church for this specific time in this specific place. It is a call to a new life that embraces suffering and glory, freedom and peace, forgiveness and hope for individuals and the world.

2 Our Inheritance – 'I pray.... that you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance.'

Paul wants the church to know their inheritance – glory now and in the future! This inheritance is not future heaven so much as his kingdom come and coming! A world - 'all things on heaven and earth' - renewed and refreshed by God's power and love, a cosmos flooded with his grace and presence. Read 1:9-10. As Christians we know in part this inheritance and we are called to be signs and carriers, agents of grace of this bigger vision.

3 Power God's and Ours! – 'I pray.... that you will know His incomparably great power for us'

Power is one of the great themes of Ephesians. Read 1:19b -23. For Paul the greatest display of power the world had ever seen took place when God raised Jesus from the dead (1:20). This power is superior to any other power that people may come across and at the heart of Paul's prayer for the church is the longing that we will realize that this same power seen at Easter and available at Pentecost is available today! This does not mean that we will become super heroes with miraculous powers but it does mean that our lives transformed by God's Holy Spirit will have a powerful effect on the world.

Over this past year we have we spent time prayerfully considering our vision statement and believe that we are being challenged to live out our '3 Love Vision' with more :

- **Passion for loving God – greater integrity of faith and worship**
- **Commitment to loving one another – deeper fellowship and commitment to community**
- **Conviction of the urgency of loving all in God's World – action and outreach to neighbours on our doorstep and across the world**

We need more of God's power to transform our lives.... our own personal development and discipleship. And as we move forward into all we sense God is leading us into as a church family - new expressions of our life and vision - the development and use of our church buildings - we will need more of God's power, more of his Spirit to empower our life together as his church.

Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. Do you think Paul would be satisfied with us/you? If not why not? What can we/you do?
2. What does it mean to know God?
3. Is knowledge of our faith 'inextricably linked with experience? How can we link the two more?
4. What experiences of the power described in verse 18 have you had?
5. According to v 22 -23, how is the church central to God's plans for the universe?
6. Read through the Vision Statement. What particular signs of hope, agents of grace, of a bigger vision could you/your small group/you be called to?
7. Think about what it is to be called by God? Why is this a source of hope for us...and for the world? What difference would it make in your life if your eyes were more opened to the hope of God's call?
8. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11 -12. If someone were to pray these words for you what is one specific way you would want God to change your life? Spend some time in prayer and ministry focused on this passage and your responses.