

15 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,16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;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.18 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,19 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 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,21 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.22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

"For this reason" (v. 15a) most likely points back to vv. 3-14, and especially vv. 13-14. Paul's intercession is also prompted by what he had heard of them (see the almost identical language in Col. 1:3-4). Often when God blesses others, be it spiritually or materially, some may begrudge it or are jealous or question their worthiness ('he doesn't deserve that blessing!'). But Paul rejoices with those who rejoice. Nothing pleased him more than the progress and prosperity of other Christians (though he himself remains under arrest as he writes this!).

When faith and love are mentioned one expects to hear of hope as well, but that will come in v. 18. If "faith" and "love" were ultimately the result of something these believers had done, why would Paul have thanked God for them? Certainly they displayed faith and love, but Paul evidently believed that God was the ultimate source of both and everything comes from God.

For this characteristic of Paul's prayers, see Rom. 1:8ff.; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3ff.; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; Philemon 4 ("you" is singular). Note also that in Paul's prayers credit is given to whom credit is due: God! Of course, Paul doesn't mean that he does nothing but give thanks, but that he regularly gives thanks for them each time he prays (most likely, morning, noon, and evening, the customary three hours each day).

It's important that we be imitators of Paul not simply in the fact that he prayed for

others but also in what he prayed for them. His content is no less normative than his constancy (at the same time we acknowledge that on occasion Paul's prayers are uniquely related to the circumstances of his readers). Be it also noted that Paul evidently believed that the spiritual growth of his readers was wholly dependent on God who gives generously to his people when they call upon him in prayer. Furthermore, although they had already received 'wisdom (1:8), Paul knows there is always an ongoing need for more!

Paul prays that the Ephesian believers might be spiritually enlightened so as to increase in their knowledge of God 1:17

His prayer is that God would act in such a way that they might more fully grasp and understand the implications of the many spiritual blessings with which God has already blessed them in Christ. Paul doesn't assume that simply because they have been so richly blessed they need no further understanding or growth or application of these truths.

Here God is referred to as 'the Father of glory (v. 17a), which might well be translated, 'the glorious Father. Or it may be that the Father is the source of all glory.

Note the word, "give" (v. 17b). The knowledge of God is the gift of God. See Mt. 11:27; 16:17; 1 John 5:20. Human genius cannot account for the knowledge of God. Neither native abilities, education, nor human will power can attain insight into the character and heart of God. God is known by a divine and supernatural light. The youngest and lowliest of children can exceed the oldest and most elevated of scientists when it comes to the knowledge of God!

To what does the word "spirit" refer? Is this the Holy Spirit or the human spirit (cf. Eph. 4:23; Gal. 6:1)? Probably the former:

\* The HS is the agent of revelation (cf. John 15:26;) and illumination (1 Jn. 2:27). Indeed, revelation always finds its source in either the Father, Son, or Spirit (see Mt. 11:25,27; 16:17; Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2:10; Gal. 1:12,16; Eph. 3:5).

\* One telling argument against taking 'spirit as a reference to the human spirit is the word "revelation" itself. As Fee notes, "whereas one might be able to understand 'a spirit of wisdom' to mean something like 'a wise disposition' or 'a wise spirit,' to speak that way of 'revelation' is to speak near nonsense. What, one wonders, can 'a spirit of revelation' possibly mean in any sense in English?" (676).

\* Consider also the trinitarian structure of Ephesians 1. It seems also to appear here in v. 17 where we find reference to Jesus and the Father. How appropriate, then, that the Spirit should also be in view. In this regard, see especially Isa. 11:2.

\* The parallel in Col. 1:9 points to the Holy Spirit as does the close verbal parallel in Rom. 8:15 ("Spirit of adoption").

If the "spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit, as I believe it does, we should understand the verb "give" to mean an increased activity or deepening experience or intensified ministry of the Spirit. After all, believers already have the Spirit, as vv. 13-14 make clear. In the words of Fee, "the prayer is not for some further Spirit reception, but for the indwelling Spirit whom they have already received to give them further wisdom and revelation. The emphasis, therefore, is not in receiving the Spirit as such, but on receiving (or perhaps realizing?) the resident Spirit's gifts (676)." In summary, Paul's prayer is that God would grant us his Spirit who in turn will supply the wisdom to understand what he also reveals to us about the character and purposes of God and our role in the latter.

Note well: here we have an unmistakable reference to revelation being given to non-apostolic Christians, revelation that is, therefore, non-canonical. Contrary to the cessationist argument, revelation is not restricted to the biblical authors or to the biblical canon. God can and does speak and grant knowledge and insight and illumination and truth to the average believer without such revelatory activity threatening the finality or sufficiency of Scripture! Question: What is the relationship between this ministry of the Spirit and the Word of God? What are the implications of this passage for biblical hermeneutics? Does Paul intend to say that the Spirit grants

insight and understanding into God and his ways apart from the written Word or only through the written Word?

The purpose of the Spirit's revelatory activity is to increase our knowledge of God (see Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; Philemon 6). Contrast this with what we typically pray for ourselves and for others!

b. The knowledge of God for which Paul prays consists of three truths: the hope of his calling, the wealth of the glory of his inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of his power vv. 18-23

Here in v. 18a Paul further defines what it means for the Spirit to give us wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God: it means having the eyes of one's heart enlightened, i.e., receiving spiritual insight (contrast this with their former, unenlightened condition in 4:18 and 5:8). All the study in the world will avail little in the true knowledge of God apart from the energizing, enabling, enlightening ministry of the Spirit! Note too the relationship between "knowledge of God" and the "heart" (vv. 17b-18a). Here heart = the core of both the spiritual and mental life of a person, including emotions and will.

\* (1) the hope of his calling (v. 18a)

The "hope" of which God's calling is the source or cause is our anticipation of the inheritance referred to in the verses that follow. But it also refers back to the summing up of all things in Christ, which is the ultimate purpose of God's saving purpose(1:10). The "calling" Paul has in mind is related to divine election in 1:4. In other words, Paul is praying that we will know the significance and implications of God's sovereign, pre-temporal choice of us. God's sovereign saving purpose for you is something God wants you to know and appreciate, not ignore.

\* (2) the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (v. 18b)

Once again there is ambiguity in the word translated "inheritance." Some contend that the inheritance is ours and that God is the one who gives it (cf. 1 Pt. 1:4). What

might our inheritance include? Eternal life (Titus 3:7), glory with Christ (Rom. 8:17), immortality (1 Cor. 15:50), the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 5:5), and the heavenly city (Rev. 21:2-7), just to mention a few. But more likely this is the inheritance God receives (namely, us). Note well, Paul says it is "His inheritance." We are God's inheritance (see Deut. 4:20; 9:26,29; 2 Sam. 21:3; 1 Kings 8:51,53; Ps. 28:9; 33:12; 78:62,71; 106:5,40; Isa. 19:25; 47:6; 63:17; Jer. 10:16; 51:19; etc.). Paul would thus be praying that we might be enabled to understand the glory and honor and wonder of that privileged status, to understand and reflect upon the spiritual wealth of what it means to belong to God, to be his people. God wants us to fully understand and grasp and experience what we are to him!

Note well: Paul declares that there is glory in being God's inheritance. Indeed, there are spiritual riches or great wealth in this glory. Such is what it means to be chosen by God (1:4) and predestined to adoption as his children (1:5). We are the principal means by and through which God now and forever after will display the indescribable splendor of his resplendent beauty! Paul's prayer is that the Spirit might enable us to appreciate and enjoy and celebrate and marvel at this unfathomable value which God places on us.

\* (3) the surpassing greatness of his power (vv. 19-23)

Note how Paul piles up words in v. 19 to highlight the magnitude of God's power. It isn't enough for him simply to refer to God's 'power, so he refers to the "greatness" of God's 'power. Nor is it enough for him to refer to the greatness of God's power, so he refers to the "surpassing" greatness of God's power! The best part is that this power is not an abstract energy or a theoretical assertion of what God can do but a declaration of what God actually does "toward (or unto) us who believe." This indescribably great and awesome power of the great and awesome God is intended for and on behalf of you and me!

This declaration would have had special significance for the people living in southwest Asia Minor who lived in a milieu characterized by flourishing magical practices, the renowned Artemis cult, and a variety of other Phrygian mysteries and astrological

beliefs (Arnold, 167). In the midst of this religious diversity there was a common fear of hostile religious (i.e., demonic) powers. Paul's prayer, notes O'Brien, "presupposes and emphasizes the supremacy of God's power, which was shown particularly in Christ's resurrection and exaltation to a position of authority over all things. In the light of this superior power of God, who works all things in accordance with the purpose of his will, there is no longer any reason for the readers to fear tyrannical evil powers (138)."

**End of part 1**