

Last week we finished that profound introduction of praise for all that the Father had done for us in Christ Jesus. We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. We read of how we are blessed in the Beloved, and that eventually all things will be united in Him. To help us believe and endure, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit who is a guarantee that we will inherit all things. The declarations are so magnanimous that it is hard to believe they are true. Yet, we experience a foretaste of all that is still to come. (4:13)

Paul's introduction for the prayer that follows gives us the reason that he gives thanks for the Ephesians and why he continually prays for them. ¹⁵ *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,* ¹⁶ *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,* His reasons is two-fold. He has heard of their faith and their love for all the saints.

Their "faith in the Lord Jesus" meant that he was certain they had placed their trust in Christ for salvation and daily living. Jesus had become their Lord and Savior through faith. Paul insists that it is faith alone that brings us into a relationship with Jesus. We believe that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25) We believe that is all that need be done for us to be in a right relationship with God. (Romans 5:18) That results in good works done by the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, but those works are a result of our faith, not the source of our faith. (James 2:17) Nothing we do earns any merit toward salvation. It is all a work of God. We can add nothing to what Jesus did to redeem us.

So when Paul says that is the reason he gives thanks and prays for them, he is saying that he is thankful for their salvation that came through faith by grace. (Ephesians 2:8-9) He will address that in the next chapter. The salvation of our fellow believers is a reason for us to give thanks and to pray for them. Whenever you hear of someone receiving Christ, we should rejoice along with the angels in heaven. We should pray for them. Praise God that someone comes out of the darkness and into the light. (1Peter 2:9) We go from being vessels of wrath to vessels that declare the glory of God destined to inherit all things. There could be no greater Cinderella like story than the salvation of a lost soul.

If you are here this morning and you know God is calling you to become a child of God, to repent of your rebellion against Him, and to believe in what He has done for you in Christ Jesus, I'll give you an opportunity at the end of the service to declare it publicly. Jesus wasn't ashamed to hang on the cross for our sins. We should certainly not be

Commented [notes1]: Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Commented [notes2]: Romans 4:25 (ESV)

²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Commented [notes3]: Romans 5:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

Commented [notes4]: James 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [notes6]: 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

ashamed to declare that we accept His gift of salvation by faith, accepting Jesus as our Lord, becoming children of God.

Paul also gave thanks and continually offered prayer because of their love for all the saints. The same reason behind our rejoicing over the faith of fellow believers is the reason we love them. They now share the same great love and gratitude that we have. We love them because they are now our brothers and sisters in Christ. We love them because they have become a part of the body of Christ, a part of the great dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) We may be annoyed by their old nature, or have conflicts with their personality, but if they are redeemed, our same great love for our Savior overcomes all that which is yet to be sanctified and sees with eyes of faith what they will be when God's work is done in them.

I hope you realize other people are doing the same with you. You see, the Word gives us a mirror to see our shortcomings and helps us understand how obnoxious we can be. (James 1:23-25) If we are in the Word, we have more sympathy and understanding for our brothers and sisters shortcomings, because in them we see our own. In fact, it is the things we most dislike in ourselves that bother us when we see them in others.

Paul continues to be grateful for them and to pray for them. The gratitude and prayer goes on and on. It wasn't just the first day he heard, but *from* the first day he heard. Now he will describe his prayer, and in this description we should get some good guidelines for how to pray for one another, for Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He prayed ¹⁷ *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*

It is fascinating and mysterious that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and yet His God is the Father of glory. It is that mystery of the one in three and the three in one. Paul is praying to the Father, asking the Father to give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Paul is not talking about the Holy Spirit, though the Holy Spirit does give us wisdom. In another place he wrote about the spirit of fear. (1Timothy 2:7) It is simply the way he speaks of these intangible attributes. He prays for them to have wisdom and revelation.

We need spiritual wisdom to know God. The things of the Spirit are not naturally discerned. (1Corinthians 2:14) We need to ask for wisdom for ourselves and for others that we might perceive what is of God and what is not. In doing so, we see God's attributes more clearly. The world does not have this gift. Sometimes a thing can appear to be wonderfully kind and benevolent when in fact it is destructive. We need wisdom to discern the difference. In discerning the difference we see God more clearly.

We need spiritual revelation. God has to show us things. The Greek word means an unveiling of something previously hidden. We couldn't see it before but all of the sudden it becomes perceptible. In those revelations, we see God more clearly.

Commented [notes7]: Ephesians 2:22 (ESV)

²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Commented [notes8]: James 1:23-25 (ESV)

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Commented [notes9]: 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV)

⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Commented [notes10]: 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

The purpose of these gifts is a fuller revelation of God. The Greek word used here for knowledge (*epignosis*) can be translated as a fuller knowledge in which you become perfectly united with the object.¹¹ We need spiritual wisdom and revelation to more fully know God and be perfectly united with Him. In other words, **to get in sync with His will, His ways, and His heart, we need to see Him more clearly.** One of these days we need to go back over the sermon series on the attributes of God. That was Ida's favorite sermon series. The more we know God, the more we love Him, and the more we can discern what is of Him and what is of this fallen world. We need a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him! Amen?

Commented [notes11]: "now I know in part (*ginōskō*); but then shall I know (*pignōskō*) even as also I have been known (*epiginōskō*)," "a knowledge which perfectly unites the subject with the object; Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

The direct effect of increasing in the knowledge of Him is ¹⁸ *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,* To know the Father is to know His Son, and to know the Son is to know the Father. If you know God, you'll see the riches of His glorious inheritance in the body of Christ, the saints.

Some believers are always whining about other believers that aren't yet perfected. But if the eyes of our hearts are enlightened, if we know what is the hope to which He has called us, then we see the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints. We start to get a vision for what He is making us into, the likeness of His Son (1John 3:2), the bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2), the beautiful temple in which God lives by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:21-22) But you can't see that if the eyes of your heart aren't enlightened. Instead you see with the eyes of the flesh and pick out all the flaws and become critical and unloving.

Commented [notes12]: 1 John 3:2 (ESV)
² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Commented [notes13]: Revelation 21:2 (ESV)
² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Commented [notes14]: Ephesians 2:21-22 (ESV)
²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Commented [notes15]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)
²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Commented [notes16]: Ephesians 5:26-27 (ESV)
²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

When we see Jesus in all His glory, we will all be complete. (Philippians 3:21) How would you like to live in a place where everyone had the spiritual attributes Jesus? The bride, the church, will be holy, without spot, or wrinkle or any other blemish. (Ephesians 5:26-27) That is His glorious inheritance in the saints. When the eyes of your heart are enlightened, by faith you can see that hope even now. What a change of attitude it will make toward your fellow believer. At this point I hope you are beginning to get a sense of the loftiness of this letter. It is so rich and should capture our imagination and our heart. You, fellow believers, are God's glorious inheritance. He will share it with you. That is rich! That is the hope to which He has called you.

But we aren't done. There is more and it is just as incredible. I hope you can take this all in, because it can change your attitude and your life. ¹⁹ *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might* ²⁰ *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead...* Paul prayed that they would know the power toward us as believers. He says it is immeasurably great. There is no instrument that could measure this power.

I recently watched a DVD of a true story of a Muslim who was training to be a terrorist. (More Than Dreams) This man was feared in his community. He was known to be a mean and demanding radical. His family feared his outbursts of wrath when they were not being as devout as he thought they should be. One day his Imam gave him a project to disprove the Bible and point out all its flaws. He refused again and again because he believed it cursed those who read it. Finally the Imam convinced him it was an assignment to bring glory to Allah and expose the lies of Christians. The more he read, the more he began to be changed by the words. Finally he did write. His book was called, Is the Koran Inspired?

Jesus appeared to Him in a dream and told him where he could find the Bible that had been stolen from him. He was so transformed that he began to beg forgiveness from the Christians that he had abused including his own family. His transformation was nothing short of the immeasurably great power that raised Jesus from the dead. He was dead and now he is alive in Christ.

Your transformation may not have been as amazing or radical, but it was the same great power that brought it about and continues to bring it about. (Colossians 1:29) Why would anyone turn from selfishness to focus their life on bringing glory to Jesus? It makes no sense in the natural world. It can only be explained as the power of God, the immeasurably great power of God that raised Jesus. Brothers and sisters, you have resurrection power at work in you. Yield to it. Fan the flame. Shine! "Hide it under a bushel... Oh no! I'm gonna let it shine!" Know that power. This is what Paul prayed.

Not only did that power that raised Christ and transform you, it *...seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* It put Jesus in the place of all authority and us there with Him as we'll see in the next chapter. Because He was obedient to death, He was raised and exalted to the highest place. Jesus perfectly exhibited God's heart toward us and so the Father exalted Him to the highest place with the highest title, His own name, both now and forever! (Philippians 2:8-11)

But let us keep it in context. Paul is praying that you might have the wisdom and revelation to know this, to be united with Him in it. When you know Jesus has all authority and that you are in Him, what do you have to fear? What peace should be yours! What joy we should possess! Oh that we might have the spiritual wisdom and revelation to really grab hold of this in our minds and see it with the enlightened eyes of our hearts for then we will be like those Christians of the first centuries that transformed the world in which they lived.

Commented [notes17]: Colossians 1:29 (ESV)

²⁹For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Commented [notes18]: Philippians 2:8-11 (ESV)

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God's on the throne! Whatever I'm going through, He has allowed for my good. (Romans 8:28) He'll get me through it. I can trust Him. I may not understand His hand, but the cross tells me to never doubt His heart.

22 And he put all things 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. God put everything under Jesus. This world, life and death, things present and things to come are all under Christ and must obey Him. (Romans 8:38-39) He will have the final say. There is a day coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

He is head over everything for the church. He is the Great shepherd of His undershepherds and He holds them accountable. Though the church goes through its cycles of backsliding and revival, Christ is the head and will teach us through it all. He will complete the work He began. He is the head of the body.

Now this last line has to sink in and give us a heavenly perspective for it is an example of that wisdom and revelation given to Paul that he is praying for us to have as well. **The body of Christ is the fullness of him who fills all in all!** Once again let me remind you that we see the present flaws and focus on them. The enlightened eyes see the finished product and focus on Jesus. The church, filled with the Holy Spirit, is the fullness of Christ in the world. (John 14:12) We are doing more than Christ while on earth because we are in every part of the globe ministering love and hope in a million places. He is in us as we go about our daily business and shining His light into this dark world that so desperately needs it. Yes, we are the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Get the heavenly vision and start seeing with enlightened eyes. Stop focusing on the sin in the world and start thinking about what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, things of excellence and worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:8) See Jesus. (Hebrews 12:2) See Him in His body. See Him at work around the world transforming lives with immeasurable resurrection power!

Questions

- 1 What were the reasons for Paul's gratitude?
- 2 What did he do about it?
- 3 Why should we do the same?
- 4 What specifically did he pray they would receive?
- 5 What was the expected result of those gifts?
- 6 Why should we overlook faults?
- 7 What does "in the knowledge of Him" mean?
- 8 What is the hope to which He has called you?
- 9 What is His glorious inheritance in the saints?
- 10 What is His power for us?
- 11 What else did that power do?
- 12 So what should be our response?

Commented [notes19]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [notes20]: Romans 8:38-39 (ESV)

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Commented [notes21]: John 14:12 (ESV)

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

Commented [notes22]: Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Commented [notes23]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.