

Ephesians 1:15-23

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eph/eph-1/ephesians-115-23/>

Paul prays that the hearts of the Ephesians would experience the hope of everything God calls us to, to live rightly before Him in the abundant power He gives us to choose to obey Him. A glimpse of the greatness of God's power is displayed in the resurrection of Jesus. God raised Him from the dead and put Him on the Throne in Heaven, giving Him rulership over all of creation and all people as the reward for His obedience to God.

In the previous section Paul wrote of the riches lavished upon believers (vs. 3-14) so as to encourage and empower the Ephesians in living obediently to God. Now Paul continues: *For this reason, he writes, 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.*

Reports have reached Paul that the Ephesian believers have *faith in the Lord Jesus* and *widespread love for all the saints* (the “holy ones,” set apart by God, which is to say all who are believers in Jesus). Because of this, Paul is continually *giving thanks* to God for the Ephesians and their great faith and love, praying for them, specifically in asking *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*, to *give to them a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*

This emphasizes that this letter is written to existing believers, who are already walking faithfully in Christ. They are already born again. But Paul desires that they grow. He does not want them to remain babies, but to grow to maturity, and take on responsibility. He wants them to be “sons” in the kingdom, those who take leadership and serve (Ephesians 1:5). To this end, Paul prays that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* (that is to say *the Father of glory*) will *give to the Ephesian believers a spirit of wisdom.* *Wisdom* is skill in living. It is to walk in life in a manner that fits with its design. Thus, to walk in a *spirit of wisdom* allows us to gain the most benefit and fulfillment from life. As Solomon stated:

“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.
For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.
She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.”
(Proverbs 3:13-18)

Solomon here personifies Wisdom as being female, and notes that whoever acquires her gains peace, pleasant ways, riches, honor, long life, and a profit that exceeds material wealth.

Paul also prays that God will give to these faithful believers a *spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him*. The word translated *revelation* is the Greek word “apokalypsis” from which we get the English word “apocalypse.” It means to reveal, to demonstrate or show. This is the word used in the first verse of the book of Revelation, which says:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants.”
(Revelation 1:1a)

The idea seems to be that Paul is asking God to reveal, to show Himself, to the Ephesian church. To reveal His essence and character, that they might know Him.

When Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17, He stated that the very definition of eternal life, which is to enjoy the greatest possible experience of life, by knowing God.

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”
(John 17:3)

Therefore, for Paul to pray that these Ephesian believers will come to know God is to pray for them to gain the greatest possible experience of living life on this earth.

Paul goes on, and continues to pray for the Ephesian disciples: *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.*

Again Paul points to *riches, glory, and inheritance*. Throughout this letter, Paul will contrast what God gives us versus the former ways of our flesh, of Satan, and of the world, tempting believers to fall back into sin and ignore the *power* God has provided for us to experience the *riches of His glory*. If the Ephesian believers truly understand *what is the hope of His calling*, then perhaps they will endure patiently the difficulties of life, knowing there is a great purpose to all God has asked of us. God has laid up for us a great *inheritance*. There are a number of aspects to this *inheritance*, some unconditional, as God is always our inheritance, and some conditional, as reigning with Christ is a great reward for overcoming (Romans 8:17). However, in this instance, Paul seems to raise another aspect of inheritance, that being *His inheritance in the saints*.

It seems that believers working together as one, in unity, are supposed to be a part of each other’s reward. We see this principle in the parable of the unrighteous steward, where the disciples are encouraged to use God’s money to benefit other believers, so they will invite them into their “eternal dwellings” (Luke 16:9). We also see this principle when Jesus says those who lose a mother in this life will gain a hundred mothers (Mark 10:30). A probable interpretation of how this could be is for a physical mother to be replaced with many mothers in the Body of Christ.

God's *inheritance in the saints* is to be a part of a well-functioning body, which is the Body of Christ, made up of all believers (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Holy Spirit is working, God is working, Jesus Christ is working that we would recognize and see the hope which God has called us into. That we would recognize and live out the riches that we have in Christ Jesus. This is our core identity as adopted children into God's family, as people redeemed from sin and death, as a people sealed with an *inheritance* in God's kingdom (Ephesians 1:5, 7,13).

The power of God will transform our lives because it is at work within us in every area of our life. This power, as Paul will show in Chapter 2, has overcome Satan and our sinful "flesh," our self-centered impulses that lead us to exploit others, rather than serve them. The *surpassing power* of God at work within us allows us to choose to follow God's ways, to be *enlightened* and look forward to a heavenly *inheritance, riches* far greater than anything the world can offer. This applies not only to the Ephesians, but to all of *us who believe*. These words transport the words of Paul to make them applicable to any era of believers in Christ.

Paul prays that the *eyes of the Ephesians' heart* would be *enlightened* so that *they would know what is the hope of God's calling*. God is calling us to a future *hope*, something which we cannot fully see or understand yet, which, if we are to pursue that *hope*, to some extent we have to set our *heart*, what we want, on God's *riches*, even if we don't yet experience them. But we can experience God's *surpassing power* in leading us to pursue this *hope* (1 Corinthians 2:9; Hebrews 10:23, Romans 8:24-25).

Paul continues: *These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ*. God displayed the *strength of His might* when *He raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places*. God's *might* is greater than death, what to us humans seems terrible and permanent. But God raised His Son *from the dead* and rewarded Him with rulership over the earth, sitting at His *right hand in heaven* for the time being before Jesus establishes His throne on earth (Revelation 11:15).

This *authority* which God has given Jesus is above all others. Paul says Jesus's kingship *is 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*. No one who has ever existed or ever will exist, no other king, emperor, conqueror, dictator, or president can compare to the total and staggering authority Jesus has. In reward for His perfect obedience, God *put all things in subjection under Jesus' feet*. That means everything. All lands, creatures, and people belong under Jesus's rule.

Furthermore, God *gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all*. The church is called the *body* of Christ throughout scripture (Colossians 3:15, Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:27). Not only is Christ over all the earth as King, He is the *head over all things to the church*. Picturing the church as a *body*, which Christ is the *head* of, doing all the thinking and leading, shows how we are to be Jesus's hands and feet to work out His will on the earth, to minister as He ministered, to bring people far from God back to Him as He did.

Paul's admonition and prayer in this first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians is for them to comprehend the incredible position they hold in the spiritual realm. By understanding our position, our hope and our opportunity, we can shift our perspective from chasing the illusions and shadows of this world, and instead grasp the amazing inheritance available to us if we have eyes to see, and faith to walk.

Biblical Text

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.