

Session 1 Paul’s Prayer in Ephesians 1:17-20

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul’s one general prayer here is that the Father would give His people increased understanding of the knowledge of God so that they would experience three expressions of His glory—the hope of His calling, the glory of being God’s inheritance, and walking in the power of God.

¹⁷[I pray]...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding [heart] being enlightened; that you may know [by experience] what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him...and seated Him at His right hand... (Eph. 1:17-20)

1. To walk in confidence (hope) related to God’s calling—His “assignment” for our life.
2. To know who we are to God as His inheritance—how He sees us and feels about us.
3. To experience God’s power in our life—in our mind, heart, circumstances, and ministry.

- B. Paul had just outlined aspects of God’s glory referred as “spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3-14). This is one of the most comprehensive statements in the Bible describing how God lavishes grace upon His people. The Father chose His people to enjoy the exalted position of being His adopted children.

³“...the Father...who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us...⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons...⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...” (Eph. 1:3-8)

- C. Paul appealed to God as the *God of Jesus* and the *Father of glory* (Eph. 1:17).

1. ***The God of our Lord Jesus Christ***: This includes what God did with Jesus in His humanity as the ideal picture of what the Father is committed to ultimately do with His redeemed people.
2. ***The Father of glory***: The glory that the Father possesses is the very glory that He imparts to His people in salvation. He gives it to His people in this age *according to our hunger* for it.

- D. ***The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him***: Paul’s primary prayer here was that God’s people know or encounter Him by receiving more of the spirit of wisdom and revelation—that their “eyes of their understanding” (heart) be progressively enlightened by the Spirit (1:18).

1. The knowledge of God includes what God is like, how He acts and feels towards His people.
2. The unaided mind cannot understand spiritual truths—we need living understanding that only comes from the Spirit. The strongest eyes are useless when a person is in total darkness. The natural man has no spiritual sight. The Scripture is more than intellectual ideas, but it is an unveiling of spiritual things which requires the supernatural capacities given by the Spirit.

¹²Now we have received...the Spirit...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God...¹⁴The natural man [unaided mind] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them... (1 Cor. 2:12-14)

- E. ***That you may know***: The Greek word for *knowledge* (*epignosis*) refers to experiential knowledge which is much more than informational knowledge of true facts about God. To know or encounter God is the essence of eternal salvation (Jn. 17:3; Phil. 3:10).

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only God and Jesus Christ. (Jn. 17:3)

- F. Foundational to Paul's approach to discipleship is that "the heart of a believer be enlightened." It takes God to know God; thus, we earnestly pray for more. To Paul, this was the primary need for the Ephesian believers. It is the most powerful influence that equips us for wholeheartedness. I pray, "Lord, let me see what Paul saw, so that I can see and obey You like Paul did."

II. THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING

- A. Paul's first specific request was that they have confidence related to God's calling for their lives—God's calling on our lives includes our calling to be in His eternal family (Eph. 1:3-14), but it also includes His divine assignment for our lives—in this age and the age-to-come. In other words, Paul prayed that people would receive living understanding about how God views their calling.

¹⁷...that the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...¹⁸that you may know [by experience] what is the hope of His calling... (Eph. 1:17-18)

- B. The divine assignment on our life has *two dimensions* (internal and external) in *two time frames* (temporal and eternal). We need revelation in these because by nature we have a wrong perspective.
1. We need a paradigm shift in each of these areas.
 2. What God values and plans is opposite of what we naturally value and plan. Only by revelation can we understand God's view.
- C. God has a tailor-made calling or assignment for each person's life that includes both the present and future. This is one of the main emphases in Paul's prayer for believers.

⁹We...do not cease to pray for you...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will... (Col. 1:9)

⁴Epaphras...always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)

- D. ***Our internal calling***: Our primary calling in this age is internal. We are to say and do what He said and did (Sermon on the Mount lifestyle) without regard to the honor or money that we receive or the size of our impact or influence. Our internal calling is to be a faithful disciple of Jesus that loves God and embraces what the world calls foolish (humility, serving, giving, praying, forgiving, etc.).
- E. ***Our external calling (in this age)***: This aspect of our divine assignment includes our position and function in the marketplace, a ministry organization, or our home, etc. This is what most people are focused on when considering their "calling." This is an important part of our calling. However, it is the least important aspect of God's calling on our lives.

1. History testifies that the Lord has given the vast majority of people (99.9%) an assignment that involves “few things” and makes “very little” public impact as individuals (in terms of the numbers directly impacted). Of the approximately one billion believers today, my guess is that maybe only 1,000 (?) of them directly impact 10,000 or more people on a regular basis.

¹⁷You were faithful in a very little; have authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17)

²¹You were faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. (Mt. 25:21)

2. I compare this life to a 70-year internship which prepares us for ministry in the age-to-come. It is important to understand that what we do in this age has continuity with the age-to-come.
3. Our life is changed when we have assurance that the “small things” that we do in seeking to obey God are valuable to Him—He esteems and remembers them forever (Mt. 10:42).

⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Mt. 10:42)

- F. ***Our eternal calling*** (starting in the Millennium): The impact or the measure of God’s glory that the Spirit will release through us in the age to come will be much greater than it is in this age. It takes revelation to see that our greatest measure of power and ministry impact is in the age-to-come. By revelation we see that faithfulness in “little” now leads to “ruling ten cities” in the age-to-come.

III. THE GLORY OF BEING GOD’S INHERITANCE

- A. Paul’s second specific request relates to who we are to God. This prayer is to realize that we are God’s inheritance. To know who we are to God as His inheritance is to know how He sees and feels about us. By making us His inheritance, God has revealed His passion for us. Paul spoke of both our inheritance in God (Eph. 1:14) and of God’s inheritance in us (Eph. 1:18).

¹⁷...may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...¹⁸that you may know [by experience]... what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:17-18)

- B. Paul is making a reference to Moses’ revelation from God (Deut. 32:9).

⁹For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. (Deut. 32:9)

- C. The Father promised Jesus an inheritance. It is amazing that God who possesses all things has an inheritance for which He must wait. Jesus’ inheritance is a people who are voluntary lovers of God. God will not force this on us but woos and wins us by His grace to respond freely to Him in love.

- D. The great prize of all the ages that the Father has chosen to give Jesus is a Church filled with those who voluntarily choose to love Him.

1. We are the reward that God gave to Jesus because we are what Jesus most desires. This reveals His passion for us and gives us great dignity.
2. We are that which is nearest and dearest to His heart. We are the reward that Jesus longs for.

- E. Seeing who we are to God is foundational to our spiritual identity—we are objects of His affection. We are transformed when we see the value, dignity, honor, and beauty that we possess in His eyes.
1. We confess that we are Jesus' favorites in that He loves us as the Father loves Him.
As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you... (Jn. 15:9)
 2. We confess that the heart of Jesus, the Bridegroom King, is ravished for His Bride.
⁹You have ravished My heart, My sister, My Bride... (Song 4:9)
 3. We confess that Jesus' desire is for His people.
¹⁰I am my Beloved's and His desire is toward me. (Song 7:10)
- F. We can overcome passivity and discouragement by growing in revelation of who we are to Jesus.

IV. EXPERIENCING THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER (EPH. 1:19)

- A. Paul's third specific request relates to experiencing the power of God and perceiving rightly how it operates in and through us.
¹⁷...may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...¹⁸that you may know [by experience]...¹⁹what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe... (Eph. 1:17-19)
- B. We must not despise the "small things" that the Lord does in and through our lives (Zech. 4:10). We need revelation to see how God has wisely chosen to release power in His Kingdom. God's way is to usually to release His power in small measures—but it is still "His power." On many occasions the Spirit inspires our heart and uses us to bless others—in small measures but it still "His power."
¹⁰For who has despised the day of small things? (Zech. 4:10)
- C. When we see small measures of God's power as true expressions of His glory, then we receive it with gratitude while being sustained in our hunger to contend for greater measures of power.
- D. We must walk in the tension of being grateful and faithful in the days of small beginnings while contending to see a far greater measure of His power. We pray earnestly for an historic visitation of the Spirit while giving thanks for the smaller measure that we walk in today.
- E. The greatest outpouring of the Spirit in history will occur in the end times, resulting in a Church filled with God's glory (Eph. 5:27). The spirit of prophecy will be released in an unprecedented measure, resulting in a great ingathering of new believers from all nations (Mt. 24:14; Rev. 7:9).
¹⁷"...in the last days...I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams...¹⁹I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke...²⁰before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD." (Acts 2:17-20)
- F. We need revelation of God's zeal to pour out His Spirit in this way—to have a sustained vision to contend for the full breakthrough of God's power in our lives, city, and nation.