
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XII : THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND CONFESSONAL MATERIAL IN PRAISE TO GOD — 1:15-23

Paul gives thanks for the readers

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you,

intercessory prayer-report

making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may 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 exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

confessional material in praise of God's power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, leading into the next section

according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ

when He raised Him from the dead

and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above

all principality

and power

and might

and dominion,

and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²² And He put all things under His feet,

and gave Him to be head over all things to the [congregation],

²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (NKJV)

FORM AND STRUCTURE — Prior to discussing details, it would be beneficial to note the over-all structure of this portion of scripture. Removing some of the points on which Paul expands, here is a break-down of what Paul wrote:

making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ ... may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ ... *that you may 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 exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ

when He *raised Him from the dead*

and *seated Him at his right hand* in the heavenly places, ...

²² And He *put all things under His feet*

and *gave Him to be head over all things to the [congregation]*

Note Paul prays the Ephesians would have a greater understanding of God regarding three things: *the confidence we have in our calling, the peace of knowing we are God's inheritance, and the power of God*. Paul then elaborates on the power of God towards us, but why only upon God's power and not the first two items? One possibility could be how the power of God related to the occultism which was widespread in the Ephesian territory. But more than that would be the practical application of that power in the lives of believers over the realms of darkness, as evidenced in Paul tying together the resurrection of Christ with the

‘resurrection into new life’ of the believer in chapter two:

^{19b} according to the working of His mighty power

²⁰ which He worked in Christ *when He raised Him from the dead*

and *seated Him at His right hand* in the heavenly places (1:19b-20 NKJV)

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

⁶ and *raised us up together*,

and *made us sit together* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:4-6 NKJV)

Thanksgiving with Prayer for the Believers’ Knowledge of God and Their Awareness of the Significance of the Assembly (1:15-23)

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (KJV)

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV)

Because of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love to all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the recognition of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, for your knowing what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us who are believing, according to the working of the power of His might, which He wrought in the Christ, having raised him out of the dead, and did set [him] at His right hand in the heavenly [places], far above all principality, and authority, and might, and lordship, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one; and all things He did put under his feet, and did give him — head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of Him who is filling the all in all, (Young’s Literal Translation)

Intercession (vv. 16b-19)

WHERE DOES PAUL END HIS PRAYER? — Bible students debate as to where Paul’s prayer ends and his narrative begins. Hoehner suggests Paul’s prayer goes to 1:23: “[S]ome think that the prayer ends at verse 19 and that verse 20 begins a new hymn of praise. However, this is not likely because grammatically the following relative pronoun would indicate that the prayer is continuing. Furthermore, Paul picks up on [energeia, power] and uses the verb form in verse 20, showing continuity between verses 19 and 20. Also, verses 20-23 are a very fitting conclusion to his request for their knowledge of God’s power on their behalf. *It is one thing to state the concept of power, but it is quite another to show how this power operates. That is what he is going to do in verses 20-23. God has directed toward the believers that same power that he exercised in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand, that subjected all things under his feet, and that gave him to the church as head. There is a continuity between what God worked in Christ and what he is working in believers through the centuries up to and including the present time. As suggested by a previous illustration, there is a difference between describing what a bulldozer can do and seeing what it can actually do.*” [Hoehner, 272f] However I tend to agree with Ernest Best who believes the prayer begins here in 1:16b-19, transitions into a narrative and begins again in 3:1, interrupted by a parenthetical thought and then concludes the prayer in 3:14-19. He also continues to make the following point which would be good to remember:

WE SHOULD NOT RESTRICT PASSAGES TO OUR PRE-DETERMINED ANALYSES — “It is probable that the prayer

ends here, to be briefly resumed at 3.1 and then, at length, in 3.14-19. *Scholars enjoy defining passages as eulogies, thanksgivings or intercessions and then drawing precise boundaries for what they have identified; it is by no means certain that NT authors kept in mind the desire of scholars for clear boundaries. One theme or form often drifts unconsciously into another.*” [Best, 170]

REQUEST: “that God ... may give to you the Spirit of insight and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (v. 17)

PURPOSE: “in order that you might know ...” (v. 18b)

CONTENT:

(A) “what is the hope of his calling” (v. 18b)

(B) “what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (v. 18c)

(C) “what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe” (v. 19)

v. 16b — making mention of you in my prayers — *μνείαν ὑμῶν, ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου* [mneian humōn poioumenos epi tōn proseuchōn mou] **making mention** = used 7x in NT, exclusively by Paul. It has the idea of “remembrance, memory” of someone (Phil 1:3; 1 Thes 3:6; 2 Tim 1:3). **Prayers** = in classical literature this word had the idea of a prayer or vow. It occurs in the NT 36x, always with the idea of prayer or supplication to the eternal God or the place of prayer. **Note not one of the things Paul prays for is material wealth or goods.** “Dr. Kenneth Chafin, a well-known Baptist author, tells about the pastor and deacon who were visiting prospective members and drove up to a beautiful suburban home surrounded by a velvet lawn and gorgeous landscaping. Two expensive cars stood in the driveway, and through the picture window, the men saw their prospect, lounging in an easy chair and watching color TV. The deacon turned to his pastor and said, ‘What kind of good news do we have for him?’ How prone we are to confuse prices and values.” [Wiersbe, 15]

v. 17 — that = ἵνα [hina] “in order that,” it could indicate purpose or result, but often in the case of prayer it denotes content. “At times it is difficult to distinguish between purpose and content, for when praying for God to perform his purpose in one’s life, that request is also the content of the prayer.” [Hoehner, 254]

HISTORICALLY, THIS WAS A VERSE USED BY THE ARIANS — the God of our Lord Jesus Christ — *ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* [ho theos tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou] *Arianism* denies the deity of Christ and the Trinity, teaching that even though Christ was the greatest of all created beings, He was still a *created* being. This teaching is perpetuated today by Jehovah Witnesses and the Way International. “The one who is addressed in prayer is ‘the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ This is similar to verse 3 (‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’; cf. also Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Col 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3) although there are some differences. The form in the present context is unique. The Arians misconstrued it to mean that Christ was not the eternal Word but was the created Son of God who prayed and worshiped his Creator. **The Arians failed to distinguish between the subordination of the Son to the Father, and the unity of essence of both the Son and the Father.**” [Hoehner, 254f]

The Father of glory (ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης). The God characterized by glory (the Shekinah, Heb 9:5) as in Ac 7:2; 1Co 2:8; 2Co 1:3; Jas 2:1. [Robertson, Word Pictures] ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης [ho patēr tēs doxēs] is proper; most commentators argue against the rendering “*glorious Father.*” (contra NIV) This further description of God is unique in Jewish and NT traditions. “He is called ‘the God of glory’ (Ps 29:3; Acts 7:2), ‘the Lord of glory’ (Num 24:11; 1 Cor 2:8), and ‘the king of glory’ (Ps 24:7, 8, 9, 10). As discussed at verse 6, the meaning of ‘glory’ is *the reflection of the essence of one’s being, the summation of all of one’s attributes. The essence of one’s being makes an impact from which one’s reputation emerges. Because of the way in which God has revealed himself, his reputation displays splendor, power, and radiance. In the immediate context God has revealed himself in election, predestination, redemption, revelation of his will, and the sealing with the Holy Spirit. All of these characterize gracious acts which brings praise of his glory (vv. 6, 12, 14).*” [Hoehner, 255] “The second phrase, ‘the Father of glory’ picks up [glory] from v. 14 and attributes a quality to God which we should expect to bear some relation to the content of prayer. Normally ‘father of’ would be followed by the name of a person, however a metaphoric use of father is found in Jas 1.17; 2 Cor 1.3 (cf. Heb 12.9) with the sense of ‘source of’; thus here he is the source of glory to those who are his children.” [Best, 161] Bruce, Lincoln believes it should read “Father of glory”. Hendriksen gives an alternative rendering of “the glorious Father.” [Hendriksen, 96] Calvin notes “The Father of glory is a well-known Hebrew idiom for The glorious Father.” [Calvin, 212]

glory = “[Glory] itself is a complex term; two meanings seem possible here: (1) ‘might, power’ (as in 3.16; Rom 6.4); God’s might is emphasised in v. 20 and linked as in Rom 6.4 with his might in the resurrection; (2) ‘splendour’, since ‘glory’ is taken up in v. 18 where the connotation is ‘splendour’; v. 18 is closer than v. 20 and so (2) is probably significant here. ‘Splendour’ with its implication of ‘sight’ is appropriate to the impartation of knowledge and the enlightenment of the eyes. It is difficult to find an English word which carries these two senses of [glory] but perhaps ‘majesty’ may do so, as an old term for royal beings who have, or had, both power and splendour.” [Best, 162]

[God] may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation — *δώη ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως* [dōē humin pneuma sophias kai apokalypseōs] Paul is praying that God may give to them (the Ephesian believers) the content of the request expressed in the next words. “Two parallel requests (17b and 18a), both concerned with knowledge, give the content of the prayer. **The readers’ loyalty and love are not in question; what they need is more knowledge** (contrast Phil 1.9). Knowledge, a theme already present in vv. 8f, is of great importance to AE; what follows indicates the areas where he believes his readers’ knowledge should grow. God is requested to give them ‘the spirit of wisdom and revelation...’. **This is not simply a prayer that they should**

be more intellectually alive, though they should be, but goes much deeper for the biblical concept of wisdom does not relate to intellectual processes alone: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The revelations AE prays for his readers are not insights into scientific or artistic truth, but relate to the way they are to live their lives.” [Best, 162] “The writer is indicating that he makes use of what he knows of his readers and their situation to intercede on their behalf before God. His intercession amounts to a prayer for their growth in Christian maturity. In praying for wisdom he is asking for something which, according to v 8, has already been lavishly given. Yet this prayer indicates his realism about the state of his readers — there will always be room for further growth and sanctification — and his appreciation of the object of his request — God’s wisdom can never be totally possessed, since it is inexhaustible.” [Lincoln, 56]

wisdom, insight = this word has been discussed in v. 8. It means “*the true insight of known facts, insight into the true nature of things*” and thus best translated “*insight*.”

revelation = is a combination of two words meaning “*to cover, to hide, to conceal*” + “*from,*” therefore “*to unveil, to disclose*” something that had previously been hidden. It is the name of the last book in the NT, “the Revelation [ἀποκαλύψεως, apokalupsis] of Jesus Christ.” “*In the NT it always has theological significance, referring to the unveiling of those things which were hidden in God and unknown to humans. It is ‘not the impartation of knowledge, but the actual unveiling of intrinsically hidden facts.’*” [Hoehner, 256]

IS ‘SPIRIT’ A REFERENCE TO OUR HUMAN SPIRIT OR THE HOLY SPIRIT? — much discussion has been raised over whether this is the human spirit or the Holy Spirit. *Grammatically it could be either and good men have been on both sides of the issue (e.g., for human spirit: Chrysostom, Abbott, Wescott, Lenski, Barth, Bruce; for Holy Spirit: Calvin, Hodge, Hendriksen, Lincoln, O’Brien, Hoehner). Most of the commentators I used argued for the context demanding it mean the Holy Spirit. The major reason for that rendering is the fact that while there is a sense that the human spirit can have a “spirit of wisdom, insight,” only the Holy Spirit can give revelation.* “[Spirit of wisdom] occurs a number of times in the LXX, where it refers to the inspiration of the makers of Aaron’s garments (Exod 28:3), Bezalel, the craftsman (Exod 31:3; 35:31), Joshua (Deut 34:9), and God’s Messiah (Isa 11:2)... But the factors which favor an emphasis here on the divine Spirit as giver are weightier.” [Lincoln, 56f] “Does [spirit] refer to God’s Spirit or the human spirit? For those who use language which capitalise all nouns this is an unimportant question when translating, but for those using languages which do not it is essential to make a decision. Of course if it refers to the human spirit, then for believers it is the human spirit as inspired by the divine Spirit. Since the readers have already been sealed with God’s Spirit (v. 13) and may be presumed to possess it, many commentators take the human reference pointing out that [spirit] lacks the article and that there are many parallel phrases to a spirit of wisdom (= a wise spirit), e.g. Exod 28.3; Num 5.14; Deut 34.9; Zech 12.10; Lk 13.11; 1 Cor 4.21; Gal 6.1. The absence of the article cannot however be a valid objection to a reference to the divine Spirit for it is often anarthrous [absent the article] (Mt 12.28; Mk 1.8; Lk 1.15, 35, 41, 67; Rom 1.4; 1 Pet 1.2). Moreover while a spirit of wisdom can mean a wise spirit, a spirit of revelation can hardly mean a revelatory spirit (a spirit open to revelation?). *That the Spirit is said to be given is more appropriate to something handed over from outside and is in accord with contemporary Jewish usage. Believers are not immediately made completely wise when converted and sealed with the Spirit; an area exists then where enrichment is necessary and it can only come from the Spirit.*” [Best, 163]

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERING AND ENABLING THE BELIEVER — “*It may be asked, ‘But how is it possible that Paul prayed that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation be given to those who already possessed the Spirit; in fact, according to verse 13, had been sealed by him?’ ... The answer is provided by Paul himself. It amounts to this: what is already present must be strengthened. The Holy Spirit is present, to be sure, but the apostle prays that the Ephesians ‘may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man’ (3:16). The work begun in the heart must ‘be carried on toward completion’ (Phil 1:6). Love and all the other graces must ‘abound more and more’ (Phil 1:9; cf. 1 Thes 3:12; 4:10). It is clear, therefore, that Paul’s prayer here in Eph 1:15-23, including therefore also verse 17, is entirely consistent with what he had solemnly declared in verses 3-14.*” [Hendriksen, 97f] “[T]he prayer is not for some further Spirit reception, but for the indwelling Spirit whom they have already to give them further wisdom and revelation.” [G. D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*; q.v., O’Brien, 132] “[P]aul is not praying that they be given the Holy Spirit for he has already been imparted to them. Rather, he is praying for a specific manifestation of the Spirit so that the believers will have insight and know something of God’s mysteries as a result of the Holy Spirit’s revelation.” [Hoehner, 258]

in the knowledge of Him — ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ [en epignōsei autou] **knowledge** = “*knowledge directed towards a particular object, perceiving, discerning, recognizing.*” This knowledge is directed towards God, not Christ. “*It is to know God intimately.*” This corresponds very closely with Col 1:9-10 where Paul prays that they will be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding and further that they will increase in the knowledge of God.... Therefore, Paul prays that God would give the Holy Spirit’s insight and disclosure in the sphere or area of the knowledge of God himself. This corresponds to 1 Cor 2:10-16 where the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God and reveals them to the believer. The deep things of God are God’s wisdom and power to change individuals through the crucified Christ. In the present context the believer is to come to know him intimately and as a result the believer will become acquainted with God’s actions described in the following verses. Hence, *it is not facts about God that are most important but knowing him personally and intimately. One can know many facts about the leader of a nation through the news media, but that is quite different from personally knowing that leader as his or her family does. Thus, one acquires this knowledge of God not only by facts from the Bible but by the Holy Spirit’s giving insight and disclosure in the knowledge of God himself. In the end, philosophy says ‘Know yourself’ whereas Christianity says ‘Know your God, through the Holy Spirit.’* One final thing that needs to be said is that this knowledge of God is available to all

Christians and not just to the apostles, prophets, or a select group within the community.” [Hoehner, 259] “[Of him] refers to God and not to Christ or the Spirit. What AE prays for his readers is not understanding of human nature but an understanding of God; he is not setting out an anthropology but a theology.... **What is given is not knowledge of the nature of the world or of human nature; it does not refer primarily to theoretical knowledge or its accumulation; it is not the disclosure of the mystery of 3.3, 5 since this has already been made known to apostles and prophets; it is practical and experiential knowledge and should lead to obedience to and love for God and to the care of the oppressed and downtrodden. In the light of what follows it probably also relates to knowledge of God’s calling, the believer’s inheritance and God’s might.**” [Best, 164] “For these early Christians, who so recently had emerged from pagan fear, superstition, and immorality, who were able to communicate with Paul only by letter or through a messenger, and who were living in the midst of a heathen environment, wisdom and revelation were doubly needed, and this not only in order to gain a clearer insight into the way of salvation but also to know just what was the right course to follow in any given situation.” [Hendriksen, 98] “**The goal of this gift of wisdom and revelation is the personal knowledge of God. So, in Col 1:10, Paul and Timothy pray that the Colossian Christians, bearing fruit in every good work, may ‘increase in the knowledge of God.’ This is much more than the bare knowledge of God from his works which was available to the pagan world (Rom. 1:21); it is that personal knowledge of him in experience which involves a two-way relation, entered into by those who ‘have come to know God, or rather to be known by God’ (Gal. 4:9), for ‘if one loves God, one is known by him’ (1 Cor. 8:3).**” [Bruce, 269f] “The knowledge of the godly is never so pure, but that some dimness or obscurity hangs over their spiritual vision.” [Calvin, 212]

Is Christ real to us on a day-by-day basis? “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil 3:10 NKJV) Some have said “we are saved to serve” — that is both an oversimplification and a misleading statement. **The intent of our salvation is a ‘loving – obedient relationship;’ loving being vital, intimate communion with our heavenly Father; obedience being a submissive humble spirit.** Yes that obedience does include service; no believer can love the Lord without it showing forth in service. But it is possible and far too frequent to have those who serve the Lord yet not have an intimate relationship with Him. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3 KJV)

Speaking of this intimate relationship, theologian / songwriter Michael Card said it like this in his song “Know You in the Now”:

*Echo of history
A light so many strain to see
The One we talk so much about
But rarely ever live it out*

*Could You tell me why
Was it for this You came and died
A once a week observance
When we coldly mouth Your words*

(chorus)
*Lord I long to see
Your presence in reality
But I don’t know how
Let me know You in the now*

*We should confess
We lose You in our busyness
We’ve made You in our image
So our faith’s idolatry*

*Lord, deliver me
Break my heart so I can see
All the ways You dwell in us
That You’re alive in me*

(repeat chorus)

NOTE THE MENTION OF THE TRINITY — All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this verse: “... that the **God** of our Lord **Jesus Christ**, the Father of glory, may give to you the **[Holy] Spirit** of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”. This is common throughout the book of Ephesians (1:4-14, 17; 2:18, 22; 3:4-5, 14-17; 4:4-6; 5:18-20).

v. 18 — **the eyes of your understanding [heart] being enlightened** — πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν [pēphōtismēnous tous ophthalmous tēs kardias humōn] “[**Kardia, ‘heart’**] is here as often the centre of personality. It should not be contrasted with the mind, as if mental processes are to be suppressed, nor equated with it, as if a mere intellectual grasp of the issues is all that is needed. The metaphor of the eyes of the heart appears elsewhere. There are similar phrases relating to the mind or soul.... The enlightening of the eyes was also widely used metaphorically (Ps 19.8; Ezra 9.8). **Despite his impressive**

intellectual ability Paul would have remained a Pharisee had his Damascus Road experience not opened his eyes. Certainly AE, if he is not Paul, would have thought of Paul as having an enlightened heart but what he prays for here is the enlightenment of the hearts of his readers. The hearers of a sermon need enlightenment as much as its preacher; if they do not have it, or do not obtain it during the sermon, they will not be able to appropriate what is being said.... [S]alvation includes knowledge as well as those elements like adoption and the forgiveness of sin which we normally associate with it.” [Best, 165f] “Using an Old Testament expression (‘the eyes of your heart,’ Pss. 13:3; 19:8), he prays that they may have spiritual insight so as to grasp the truth of God’s purposes.” [O’Brien, 133]

enlightened = “to give light, to light (up), to illuminate, to enlighten.” The eye is metaphorically the avenue through which all light flows to the heart or mind. It is used to refer to the seat of the moral and intellectual life, therefore the “eyes of the heart” denotes enlightenment of thought and understanding. Hoehner argues that “enlighten the eyes” not as a request but as a secondary thought to the request, thus being translated “that God may give you the Spirit of insight and revelation in the knowledge of him, you having had the eyes of your heart enlightened, in order that you might know...”. He understands this all as happening at our salvation: “Paul prays that God might give them the Spirit to procure the insight and revelation of their knowledge of God. This was possible because their understanding had already been enlightened at the moment of belief. Again, the reason Paul made this request was because of his great desire that they know God more intimately.” [Hoehner, 262] “The inability to see and understand spiritual things is not the fault of the intelligence but of the heart. The eyes of the heart must be opened by the Spirit of God.” [Wiersbe, 15]

that you may know — εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς [eis to eidenai humas] “Having stated his request that the Ephesians might know God intimately, Paul now states the purpose of such knowledge. This intimate knowledge would make believers aware of: (1) the hope of his calling (v. 18b); (2) the wealth of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (v. 18c); and (3) the greatness of his power in us (vv. 19-23). These are not three separate prayer requests but a declaration of the one request.” [Hoehner, 263] “The purpose of the enlightenment of the heart is now presented in three parallel clauses introduced by τίς τίς τί [tis, tis, ti, ‘what’] and further aspects of the salvation of which AE spoke in the eulogy are brought forward. The three clauses are best understood as parallel.... Three of the leading ideas (hope, inheritance, power), one from each clause, are also found together in 1 Pet 1.3-5.” [Best, 166]

what is the hope of His calling ...

what is the hope of His calling — τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ [tis estin hē elpis tēs klēseōs autou] **hope** = “hope, expectation, confidence.” “Keep in mind that the word hope in the Bible does not mean ‘hope so,’ like a child hoping for a doll or a bike at Christmas. The word carries with it ‘assurance for the future.’” [Wiersbe, 15] The word was used to describe the “confidence” the Peloponnesians had in their navy. “Greek thought hope consists merely of a consoling dream of the imagination designed to forget the present troubles but yet leaving one with many uncertainties. On the other hand, *in the OT the hope of the righteous is directed toward the eternal God who will protect and ultimately deliver if not now, certainly in the future.... The NT’s concept of hope is built on the OT and has the elements of expectation, a trust in God, and the patient waiting for God’s outworking of his plan. The ultimate hope for Christians is to be with their Lord (Rom 5:4-5; 8:20, 24-25; 12:12; 15:13; Gal 5:5; Col 1:5; Titus 1:2) and they eagerly wait for his coming, unlike the heathen who have no hope (Eph 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:8; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:3).* Hope in the present context is not the objective hope, that hope which is laid up for the believer (Col 1:5; Rom 8:24) but the subjective hope of all believers. One needs to realize that the subjective hope is based on objective hope, a hope that looks back to God’s work of redemption in 1:3-14, especially in 1:9-10 where Paul relates that all things are going to be headed up in Christ. Nevertheless, in this verse Paul is referring to the subjective hope. *Hope for believers is not the world’s wishful thinking, but the absolute certainty that God will make true what he has promised.*” [Hoehner, 264f] “Let those addressed then ponder how rich they are because of the hope for which God had called them. This hope is firmly grounded in God’s infallible promises. It is the soul’s anchor, moored to the very throne of God; hence, to the very heart of Christ (Heb 6:18-20). *It is therefore a fervent yearning, confident expectation, and patient waiting for the fulfilment of God’s promises, a full Christ-centered (cf. Col 1:27) assurance that these promises will indeed be realized.*” [Hendriksen, 99] Paul makes a similar observation in Rom 5:5a, which in the KJV is “*And hope maketh not ashamed.*” The sense is more accurately picked up in the NKJV: “*Now hope does not disappoint.*” What Paul is saying is that when we finally stand in glory and look back on the promises of scripture, we will not be disappointed.

THIS CALL IS AN ETERNAL EFFECTUAL CALL — calling = relates back to “hope” as “hope produced by his calling.” “Call” is closely linked with election. In the present context it refers to the believer’s call of God to adoption, to become part of his family. “The first of the parallel clauses speaks of the hope which is brought to light through God’s calling of believers; 4.4 again associated hope and call, an association found only in Ephesians. *Because their call was pre-temporal (1.4f) and not simply the result of subjective experience, the hope of believers is soundly based.* It is brought about by enlightened knowledge. Hope is an important theme in Paul (Gal 5.5; Rom 5.2-5; 8.24f; 15.4; 2 Cor 3.12)... A tension then exists between the certainty of attained salvation and the need to live as those who have not fully attained it; already heirs of salvation, having received the first-fruits of the Spirit (1.14), they have not yet fully entered into their inheritance. Even if the content of their hope is not spelt out it needs to be distinguished from the hope of better conditions on earth, of a new social order, of attaining great wealth, or of a contented mind.” [Best, 166f]

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ...

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints — καὶ τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις [tis ho ploutos tēs doxēs tēs klēronomias autou en tois hagiois] “This is the second concept Paul wanted the Ephesians to comprehend. Thus, he requests that they might know God intimately in order that they might know first, the hope of his calling and now second, the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” [Hoehner, 265f] “[T]he text speaks of ‘his inheritance’, and it is better to understand this of the portion which belongs to him, namely, his own people.... *That God should set such a high value on a community of sinners, rescued from perdition and still bearing too many traces of their former state, might well seem incredible were it not made clear that he sees them in Christ, as from the beginning he chose them in Christ. As a consequence, then, Paul prays that his readers might appreciate the extraordinary value which God places on them.*” [O’Brien, 135f] “*Our riches is in God, God’s is in his saints.*” [Robertson, Word Pictures] **inheritance** = we saw this word in v. 14 and basically means “property, possession, or inheritance.” In v. 14 it referred to the believer’s inheritance which is their share in heaven. Here it is speaking of God’s inheritance. “This corresponds to verse 11 where the believer is assigned as God’s inheritance. Because of his choosing, redeeming, adopting, and sealing us, we are his possession. Thus, his possession is located in the saints. He will fully gain his inheritance when the saints are removed from this earth and come into his presence. Therefore, not only do we have an inheritance (v. 14) but he also has an inheritance (vv. 11, 18).” [Hoehner, 267]

SAINTS = ANGELIC BEINGS OR BELIEVERS? — this is understood by some to refer to angels. Ernest Best states there are growing number of commentators who are taking that position, especially since the discovery of the Qumran manuscripts. Best quotes 1 QS 11.7f as follows, “*God has given them [various spiritual blessings] to His chosen ones as an everlasting possession, and has caused them to inherit the lot of the Holy Ones.*” *If so, then the sense is the believers here on earth share an eternal inheritance with the angels in heaven. However most of the commentaries I studied considered this a reference to believers.* “While the term [‘holy ones, saints’] can be used to designate angels (Deut 33:2-3; Ps 89:6, 8; Dan 8:13), and some understand Eph 1:18 to be a reference to heavenly beings, the phrase ‘among the saints’ speaks of the community of believers, Jew and Gentile alike. This fits with the notion of the inheritance being God’s, with the emphasis of the eulogy on God’s people as his possession, the other references to ‘saints’ in Ephesians (1:1, 15; 2:19; 3:8), and the focus in the letter on God’s people within his purposes (cf. 3:21; 5:27).” [O’Brien, 136]

and what is the exceeding greatness of His power ...

v. 19a — **and what is the exceeding greatness of His power** — καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ [kai ti to hyperballon meyethos tēs dunameōs autou] “*Paul prayed that they might know God more intimately in order to comprehend three things. The first dealt with the past, where the hope was produced by the calling of his people to himself. The second dealt with the future when God will gain his inheritance at the coming of Christ. Now Paul deals with the third area, that is, the greatness of his power which God directs toward believers. Whereas the first and second concepts to be understood dealt with the past and future respectively, the third deals with the power of God in the present time toward believers. This may be the reason Paul spends more time on this area.*” [Hoehner, 267]

exceeding, surpassing = ὑπερβάλλον [hyperballon] is used of “to throw over or beyond a mark” and metaphorically it can be translated “surpass, excel, exceed.” It is used in the NT 5x and only by Paul, being translated “surpassing, extraordinary, exceeding.”

greatness = μέγεθος [megathos] is only used here in the NT as “greatness, magnitude.”