

Ephesians 1: 15-18; “The Prayers of the Apostle Paul”, Message # 6 in the series – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 10th, 2023, in the Morning Worship Service.

The experiential truth being related here by the apostle Paul in verses 15-21 is meant to build upon what he has said to us in verses 13 and 14. He begins with the word “therefore” in verse 15 pointing us back to what he had said before about these believers having had the experience of coming to know the Lord, because of their “having believed” in Christ. Having believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This being sealed “with” the Spirit, I said to you, is the Lord giving you, the believer, the assurance that Christ is really yours. This sealing brings you, the believer, to understand better that the Holy Spirit is there in your life permanently.

You are sealed with the Lord Spirit, to teach you how to live your Christian life in accordance with the truth of the word of God. When you first believe, your being sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise is your guarantee of having possession of all the blessings of eternal life, in having Christ. These blessings will most certainly be conveyed to you over the course of your lifetime until the redemption of the purchased possession takes place. That completion of redemption will be your being glorified by God at the time of the resurrection of the righteous dead at the last Day of the world.

In verse 15 we hear Paul saying that he would not cease to pray for the believers in Ephesus. He would not cease to give thanks for them. He would make mention of them in his prayers. What is it that he was praying to the Father for? He was praying for a couple of things which are very important to us who are here today, as well. 1st of all – He prays that the Father would give to them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. And 2nd – He prays that they would know what was the hope of God’s calling them in salvation.

Paul is saying the same thing to us here this morning. He would have each of us to know that God would have us to become righteous and holy in terms of our living to His glory. He would not have any of us simply to live to ourself. So, I pray that we will humble ourselves now, to receive these profound truths which are found in the apostle’s prayers, as I open them up for you.

1st – Paul prays that the Father of glory would give to them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (verses 15-17)

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease 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 to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...” Let it be understood clearly by us now, that there is a very real spiritual experience in a person’s coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Savior and Lord. And this experience is established by the Holy Spirit Himself. It is not merely an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the gospel or the word of God. It is not just “making a decision” to receive and follow the Lord. It is true that choosing to receive Christ and His finished work is an essential part of your coming to know the Lord.

It is, in truth, that you have received the Holy Spirit when you first believed. And you know His precious working and influences taking place in your life. It is His working in your life which proves to you, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you belong to Him. And He will be continuing to confirm your salvation to you as you live your life to God. The fact that you have been sealed means that the Spirit will be working with you, to lead you. He will be working to change you into the image of Christ. He will be with you to guide you all the way to glory. And He will be perfecting you in your character. He will be transforming you more into the image of Christ, in according with true knowledge which is found in the Scriptures.

This is what Paul was praying for, for the saints in Ephesus. It was that God, the Father of glory, would grant to them, this spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ. Paul prayed for them regularly, that this would be theirs. And so, Paul wants us to see this too, we who are here

today. It is the knowledge of Christ, that a true Christian must grow up into, if you would glorify God in the way that you live your life to Him. What is required, for you to have, is a greater knowledge of Christ in terms of the spirit of wisdom and revelation being given to you. The means to this great end which are aimed at, here, humanly speaking, is your having wise and knowledgeable Christian people praying for you, and specifically, in their prayers. They will be praying that you would come to this greater wisdom and revelation of the glory of what God the Father has done, and has given to you Christ. And what He would give to you, even now, if these prayers are effectual.

According to the efficacy of these prayers, you will be thinking about what God is doing for you, and in and through you, by the Spirit's working. God will answer these prayers in relation to your specific experience, of His giving to you a greater revelation of wisdom and understanding in terms of your knowing more of the glory of knowing Christ. It will be wisdom that is given to you in relation to walking with Christ by means of your holding communion with the Triune God. The apostle Paul says here that he had not ceased to give thanks for the saints at Ephesus, making mention of them in his prayers. And evidently, the foremost thing that he prayed for, was this thing that we are thinking about together now.

Paul would have us, as God's saints to pray in this same way for one another. We should pray for each other that we would be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Let us understand that it is the particular Office of God the Father to give His people any revelation of the excellency of His glory, that He does. He will show us the excellence of His wisdom in His having formed the whole plan of our salvation. He will reveal to us every experience of the glory of Christ that He sees that we personally need; both in connection with Christ's Person, and in connection with His ongoing work in our lives.

This involves His communicating to each of His saints all of the specific revelation of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Himself that will fulfill His purpose in relation to their particular life. When the Father gives this revelation of glory, He gives exactly what He knows will be useful to promote the glory of the Triune God; that is, a spirit of wisdom and understanding to better understand Him, His will and His ways. Here, the apostle prays that the God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may give this blessing. God the Father is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sense of His humanity. And more specifically to our purpose, the glorified humanity of His Son.

Paul's prayer is that we might have greater illumination upon this grand doctrine of what He has done in giving us His Son to be our Savior. It will be the best possible situation for us if we can be brought to see our need of greater understanding in relation to the Scriptures and know greater revelation concerning His plans for us in Christ – That is, that His purpose is to transform us into Christ's blessed image, and to glorify us together with Him. This is the spirit of wisdom; to compare Scripture with Scripture, and by praying to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened, that we would truly apprehend more of God's glory. The Father will help us to behold more of the glory of how He can transform us into those who please Him in our walk with Christ.

Turn with me over to John chapter 14, verses 21-26 – “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” “And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” “Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us and not to the world?’ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’ “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.” “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.” “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

Now, you can see here that it is the person who has God's commandments and is most decidedly interested in keeping them, that is the person who loves Christ. And Jesus said to His own disciples that it would be to those who love Christ that the Father would love them as well. He would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of His Son. They already knew the Father

through Christ, but now they were promised that the Father and the Son would come and make their home with them there in their hearts, by their sending the Holy Spirit. This was a further manifestation of glory which was being promised to them here, in this giving of the Holy Spirit, than they had received so far.

He would teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them. This is how they would be able to write down the gospels and the know how to write the rest of the New Testament Scriptures. They already had had the Holy Spirit there with them, in their lives, but there would be a fuller manifestation of the Spirit's working given to them which is here described as the Father and the Son "making their abode with them". In other words, they would come to have a deeper more meaningful communion with God and with Christ because they would be receiving greater wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. They would be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation in a greater sense than they had ever experienced thus far.

And so we should understand that it is by this activity of praying for ourselves and others that the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ would be given to us by the Father of glory, this is the very basis of our coming to have greater communion and deeper more meaningful fellowship with God the Father and the Son. But what about those who have not really been showing forth their love for the Father and the Son, by loving God and keeping His commandments? Well, if you will turn over with me to Revelation 3, verses 14-21 you will find the answer to this.

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.'" "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.'" "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing', and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.'" "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

Now, these believers in Laodicea already had the Spirit; that is, those among them there were those who were true Christians. But many of them had fallen into being so lukewarm in the way that they lived their lives, that they were neither hot nor cold in Christ's sight. They were not so much living for Christ, as they were for the world, and it made our Lord sick. He had to rebuke them. Verse 19 says – "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "Therefore be zealous and repent." Now, He said this out of love for them. But when He says this, you will notice that He is standing at the door of their hearts, knocking and calling for them to open to Him.

And if they will open to Him, He is offering to give to them the spirit of wisdom and understanding in His willingness to come in to them and spiritually dine with them. Yes, He knows that He will have to have serious dealings with them. And yet, He also offers to have sweet communion with them in the process of their learning to overcome the world, their flesh, and the Devil. In verse 21, He says – "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." You see here, that this is how even a backslidden Christian can be brought around right and go, as Paul says in Romans 1: 17 – "From faith to faith", and learn to glorify God by receiving the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

2nd – Paul prays that they would know what is the hope of God's calling them in salvation. (verse 18)

He asks God that they would be given a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 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..." We should see from verse

18 that God's inheritance is found in the saints. It does not say that God's inheritance is heaven or the blessings of salvation. Here, it says, that it is found "in" the saints. (εν τοις αγιοις) Therefore, I believe that it will be good for us to come to know, what the hope of what His calling us, is.

It is to know that the riches of the glory of God's inheritance is found in the saints; and that therefore we, who are His saints, should live to His glory. We should live in such a righteous and holy way that other people will know something of the reality of these riches of Christ's grace, when they observe our life. Have your eyes been opened to these profound truths; to realize that there is a certain hope which relates to your having been most certainly and effectually called by God to be a partaker of Christ? The hope of your calling is to make progress in holiness; to pursue complete righteousness and holiness as a result of the tremendous working of the Triune God taking place in your life.

He is continually supplying you with grace. He is giving you the opportunity and the ability, by His grace, to become mature and steadfast in your faith, as you rightly respond to all that He has given to you in grace and truth. You do this, by rendering to Him a sincere obedience to His word. The hope of His calling is that every one of His saints by faith, looks forward to the time when they shall be made perfect in holiness; that someday when they die, someday when they see Christ face to face, they shall be perfect in every way.

Look over at 1st John 3, verses 1-3. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" "Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." So the riches of the glory of God's inheritance is found in the saints; those who will glorify Him by purifying themselves because they have their hope in God that He will give them help to them to glorify Him while they are still upon the earth.

In this regard, it will be of help to us spiritually, to pray the words of Psalm 16, verses 1-3. "Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust." "O my soul, you have said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You.'" "As for the saints who are on the earth, 'They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.'" The saints are called here, by David – "God's excellent ones, in whom was all his delight." I believe that as we think about other Christian around us, that we ought to see them in the same way that David saw them, as God's excellent ones.

They are excellent ones, not in themselves, but because of the grace which God imputes to them and grace which He imparts to them, day by day, because of Christ. We should therefore determine to glorify God while we are here upon this earth by doing good to His saints. And in doing good to the saints, others who are not saints may see as well. In Matthew 5: 16, Christ says – "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

In other words, pray that God would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, so that you would know, and that others would know, by looking at you, what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. O that we would see what God's great calling of us is. It is the call to righteousness and holiness. Our great calling to holiness is in relation to what we are by calling , and what we should be in the sight of God. Be holy, even as I am holy, God says.

But the call is also to practice righteousness. And this is best seen in relation to thinking how we can keep God's commandments and show Him our love and thankfulness for all that He has done for us by His grace. It is also seen in how we treat other people around us, and the good works that we will do in relation to them. 1st Timothy 6: 11 – "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Let's pray that we will be able to do this.