

A. Introduction – what precedes today’s text?

1. verses 3–14

2. verses 15–16a

B. Knowing God – the Means – 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,

1. what are some works of the Holy Spirit?^A

2. what are our responsibilities in the Spirit’s work^B

C. Knowing God – Appreciating Him – ^{18b} 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;

1. at the human level, appreciation makes one^C

^A John 16:13, Hebrews 11:10, 13:21

^B Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

^C Proverbs 12:25

2. what do the following mean to me?

a. hope of His calling^D

b. riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints^E

c. His power toward us^F

D. To know God better, I shall ...

E. For further meditation

1. what is the reason for and action in the Spirit’s illuminating work?^G

2. what do the riches of His inheritance impel in us?^H

3. what freedoms does being a saint encompass^I

^D Matthew 22:14, Romans 8:28-30, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, 2 Timothy 1:12

^E Revelation 21:3

^F Philippians 3:10, Isaiah 11:9

^G 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, 3:18, Psalm 119:18, Isaiah 42:6-7, Luke 24:45, Acts 26:17-18, 16:14

^H 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Phil. 3:13-14, 3:21, Titus 2:13, 3:7, 1 Peter 1:3-5

^I Galatians 5:1, 13, Romans 8:1-2, Hebrews 3:1, 2 Timothy 1:9

A. Introduction

1. In our preaching through Paul’s Ephesians letter, looking at the Biblical teaching on the church, we have seen
 - a. 1:3-14: the tremendous spiritual blessings we have in Christ
 - b. and we came last week to the first of 2 prayers in this book
 - c. covering verse 15 through the end of the chapter one
 - d. the opening of the prayer is thanksgiving
 - (A) and the nature of that thanksgiving
 - (B) answers the question
 - (C) what counts in a church? ... what really matters in it?
 - (D) because Paul highlights 2 key characteristics; the same 2 as he and the other apostolic writers do elsewhere:
 - (1) these are: faith and love;
 - (2) simply, faith and love
 - e. E. M. Bounds, an evangelist, wrote these words just over a century ago: **God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men...What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men – men of prayer.** –{2}.
 - f. those words are as true now as then, but
 - (A) for what should we be praying?
 - (B) what are the real needs of God’s church?
 - (C) our church congregational survey showed that the matter of location was on your hearts and minds – yet we do not find NT prayers for a church building
 - (D) there has been general agreement with “A Church Portrait”, our brochure on our vision, mission and so on – but there are no NT prayers asking for these
 - g. Paul was a man mighty in prayer – what did he pray for on behalf of the church? – listen to today’s text:

2. 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;

3. what the church needs, says Paul in this prayer, is a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God Himself
- a. first, a knowledge gained by God's self-revelation to each individual and to the church as a body
 - b. second, a knowledge that is well acquainted with and fully appreciative of those spiritual blessings we have in Christ
 - c. let look at these verse with this simple outline
 - (A) Knowing God – the Means
 - (B) Knowing God – Appreciating Him

B. Knowing God – the Means

1. the means of knowing God are not human but Divine
 - a. there is a temptation that,
 - (A) after having come to know Jesus as our Saviour
 - (B) after having been born anew as a child of God
 - (C) that because we have God's Spirit within us
 - (D) we can then revert to natural means and methods
 - (E) of studying truth as a mere intellectual exercise
 - (F) to come to the understanding of God, ... of our faith
 - b. Paul's prayer gives the lie to that idea

c. spiritual knowledge does not come by human effort

My dad gave me one dollar bill
'Cause I'm his smartest son,
And I swapped it for two shiny quarters
'Cause two is more than one!

And then I took the quarters
And traded them to Lou
For three dimes - I guess he don't know
That three is more than two!

Just then, along came old blind Bates
And just 'cause he can't see
He gave me four nickels for my three dimes,
And four is more than three!

And I took the nickels to Hiram Coombs
Down at the seed-feed store,
And the fool gave me five pennies for them,
And five is more than four!

And then I went and showed my dad,
And he got red in the cheeks
And closed his eyes and shook his head -
Too proud of me to speak! ^{-{3}}.

d. that's the sum of human knowledge!

2. Paul's prayer for these saints – and so for us – was that '[God ... may give you the Spirit](#)' (NIV) – capital 'S'!
 - a. now that is not how we read it from the NAS but that is what is meant; it is the Holy Spirit; for you see
 - (A) we could speak of a spirit of wisdom as purely human
 - (B) but the word '[spirit](#)' here governs two words
 - (C) not just '[wisdom](#)' but also '[revelation](#)'
 - (D) and while a person can humanly gather to himself experience so as to gain a spirit of wisdom, he cannot gain for himself a spirit of revelation, which is ability, not to understand, but to disclose or to uncover the previously unknown, unrevealed, spiritual truth – that is God's domain, and God's alone
 - (E) [As \(H A W\) Meyer points out, it is doubtful whether in the NT there is any case in which, when the {spirit} is spoken of as given, it is not the objective \(ie., Holy Spirit\) ^{-\(4\)}.](#)
 - b. I therefore, without apology, affirm that this is a work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life, the Holy Spirit whose role is to '[guide you into all truth](#)' (John 16:13)
3. now, in saying that this wisdom, revelation is by the Holy Spirit
 - a. I am not saying this is an anointing of a select few
 - (A) of those that are the spiritual elite
 - (B) or those that are serving in some form of ministry
 - b. neither is this a special gifting of ministry
 - (A) as those listed in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 to 14
 - (B) or in this book of Ephesians in chapter 4
 - c. nor am I am speaking about a second blessing
 - (A) some special infusion of the Holy Spirit after salvation
 - (B) one that with cognitive signs endows in a special way
 - d. but this is a work of the Holy Spirit
 - (A) which Paul would see in every believer
 - (B) in the rank and file of the church
 - (C) in me as well as in you
 - e. Paul prays that the believers in the church may be granted the operative work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in three very closely related areas of their lives

- (A) wisdom: that experience which shapes our decisions, our choice, our lives to our good and God's glory
 - (B) revelation: that disclosure of the heavenly, spiritual reality which our human senses deny; like Abraham who "... was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10)
 - (C) understanding (in the eyes of our heart): appreciation of spiritual truth in a fashion affecting our innermost being, 'working in {us} that which is well-pleasing in His sight .' (Hebrews 13:21)
- f. Paul's prayer encompasses the removal from our lives of those things that would hinder this operative work of the Holy Spirit – let me direct your attentions to verses on this:
- (A) "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30), and Lord willing, we shall expand on this theme when we reach that passage
 - (B) "Do not quench the Spirit;" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and the surrounding verses provide some instructions on how this can be realized, "16 ¶ Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)
- g. Paul prays that his readers may have knowledge
- (A) wisdom, revelation, understanding: all of these to be found and centred in one sphere of our being
 - (1) in our knowledge of God
 - (2) not merely knowledge about God
 - (3) but personal, relationship knowing God
 - (B) then Paul prays that they may apprehend 3 spiritual truths whereby they may appreciate what God has done and who God is for them to know God better

C. Knowing God – Appreciating Him

1. In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman
 - a. lists 5 words of love, 5 ways that the love relationship – and it is talking of marriage – can be strengthened
 - b. in brief, these are Affirmation, Time, Gifts, Service, Touch

- c. and you can, perhaps, see how each of these apply in the love relationship between God and us
- d. but let us just consider the first for a moment: affirmation
- e. affirmation expresses acceptance and appreciation of the other person: "[Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad.](#)" (Proverbs 12:25)
- f. praise is our affirmation to God of our gratitude as we learn, recognize and appreciate His blessing to us
- g. so Paul turns his thoughts and ours to three truths of what God has done which when we appreciate them we will be turned in a desire and hunger to know Him better
- h. let me list them in their most simple form
 - (A) hope
 - (B) riches
 - (C) power

2. One, Hope: '[that you will know what is the hope of His calling](#)'

- a. in the Gospels, that is before the events of the cross had taken place in time, and the way of salvation had been opened up through Christ's being executed for our sins and being raised again for our justification
 - (A) those who are called are contrasted with the chosen
 - (B) those invited to come with those who are the elect
 - (C) as Jesus says, in Matthew 22:14, '[for many are called but few are chosen.](#)'
- b. but, in the Epistles, with the salvation plan complete
 - (A) the mystery of God, hidden from the ages, is revealed
 - (B) and the called of God are always those to whom the call has come with effect, who have listened to it and have been made believers
 - (C) Paul lays this out in the 8th chapter of Romans: "[28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 ¶ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.](#)" – foreknew – predestined – called – justified

- (D) this morning we will not plummet the depths of these great spiritual truths except to note one thing: what God sets out to do he carries out to its final end
- c. now consider what this is saying to a believer and to the body of believers in the local church:
- (A) first it is saying that God
- (1) the Almighty, majestic, supreme, holy God
 - (2) "... He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. ..." (1 Timothy 6: 15b-16a NAS)
 - (3) this God totally involves Himself in my salvation
- (B) so that you, so that I,
- (1) having accepted in trust God's gracious invitation
 - (2) having come to the Father through the only Way, Jesus Christ the Son of God
 - (3) can now look back and say with Charles Wesley
Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray;
I woke - the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. —{5}.
 - (4) the life-giving look of God bringing salvation
- (C) and second, this verse is saying that God
- (1) the same God who began this work of salvation in the annals of eternity and counsels of the Trinity
 - (2) is carrying it out to its consummation
 - (3) Paul prays that we know 'the hope of His calling'
 - (4) this is assured; this is certain; this awaits us; "... for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (2 Timothy 1:12)

3. Two, Riches: 'know ... what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.'
 - a. Bible students argue this one: does Paul mean inheritance which we receive from God, or the possession-inheritance that we constitute for Him
 - (A) but, as we have said on a previous occasion
 - (B) you really cannot separate these two – they are the opposite sides of the same coin
 - (C) the summation of all things in Revelation 21: 3 is "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,'"
 - b. Paul does not regard it as presumptuous that we should think about our heavenly inheritance or even anticipate it with joy and gratitude. On the contrary, he prays that we may 'know it', the 'glory' of it, indeed, 'the riches of the glory of it.' ^{-(6)}}
 - c. God's avowed desire to dwell with His precious possession, with His people, should want us to acquaint ourselves more closely with Him now in anticipation of eternity

4. Three, Power: 'know ... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.'
 - a. that word 'toward' – 'toward us' – seems very weak, for it could be taken as merely being 'in our direction'
 - b. the Old English 'us-ward' of the AV is rightly understood by some modern versions as 'in us' or 'for us' – the Greek can also be translated as 'unto' or 'into'
 - c. this is power that is not only in our direction, but it reaches us, it enters us, it connects us to God.
 - d. and knowing this power, this linking power, will bring to us the knowledge of God; not just know about but that we 'may know Him and His resurrection power'
 - e. on this subject of God's power we will continue next Sunday, Lord willing.

D. Conclusion

1. there was a cartoon in the New Yorker magazine where two men are talking over lunch and one says to the other, "I've learned a lot in 63 years but unfortunately, most of it's about aluminum" ^{7}.
2. how sad to have spent a life and all we know is aluminum when what God wants is that we know Him
 - a. that's been His purpose from the very start in Eden
 - b. that we His people might walk with Him and know Him
 - c. if you are without hope of heaven, without Christ in your heart, come to know Him by accepting in faith the sacrifice He made for you and your sins on the cross
 - d. if you are a child of God, determine that you will seek to spend time with Him and know Him as Paul has prayed
 - e. "They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9)
 - f. what the church needs is men and women who increasingly know God

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. from “Preacher and Prayer” by E.M. Bounds, 1907, p. 5,7, quoted by Rev. Mike Hays in a message, “Unleash the Power” – Kerux sermons #13645
3. From “Praying for Riches” by Rev. Chris Vogel – Kerux sermons #7124
4. Expositor’s Greek Testament, *in loc*
5. “And Can It Be?” by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
6. From ‘God’s New Society’ by John R. Stott, page 57; Inter-varsity Press, 1979
7. Quoted in “Growing Together” by Rev. Dave Wilkinson – Kerux sermons #685