

**THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND**  
**THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL:**  
**A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**  
**(LESSON SIXTEEN)**  
**“OPEN MY EYES O GOD”**

**EPHESIANS 1:1-23 (KING JAMES VERSION)**

*1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

*2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

*4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

*5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

*6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

*7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*

*8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

*9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*

*10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

*11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

*12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

*13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,*

*14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

*15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,*

*16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.*

*17 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:*

*18 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,*

*19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

*20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own 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 world, but also in that which is to come:*

**22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,**

**23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

In our previous two **Lessons**, we been considering a new section of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which begins at verse **15** of chapter **1**. Verses **15–23** of chapter **1**, form one sentence in the Greek, as was the case with verses **3–14**.

In verses **15-16**, Paul writes, *“Wherefore 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.”*

**On account of all that was true of the Christians in Ephesus, which he had outlined in verses 3–14, Paul, gives thanks unto God for them and is led to pray unceasingly for them. What is it that was true of them? God had elected them; He had predestinated them; He had adopted them; He had redeemed them; He had forgiven their sins; He had showered His kindness upon them, along with all wisdom and understanding; He had revealed to them His mysterious will regarding Christ and the entire creation; He had made them His inheritance and He had sealed them with His Holy Spirit. All this and more was true of the Ephesian Christians. All this and more is also true of us!**

**We stated that Paul informed the Christians in Ephesus that he prayed for them continually. What was he focusing on as he prayed to God on their behalf? The content of his prayer is revealed to us in verses 17–20:**

*17 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:*

*18 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,*

*19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.*

*20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.*

The focus of Paul's prayer is that God might give to the Ephesian saints *“the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,”* along with everything else that was wrapped up in an intimate knowledge of Him.

It is Paul's desire and prayer that God might so work in the lives of the Ephesian saints, that they will yield their human spirits increasingly to the influence of the Holy Spirit and as a result, receive a continually growing supply of wisdom and revelation.

We must carefully note that this spiritual wisdom and revelation is *“in the knowledge of Him,”* referring to God. The word *“knowledge”* is a translation of the Greek word **epignōsis**, which refers to “knowledge that is true, accurate, and thorough.” It means, “full knowledge.” Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, according to **Genesis 1:26–28**, the more intimate our knowledge of God is, the more intimate our knowledge of ourselves and of each other will be.

Brothers and sisters, knowledge of God must come from God. The spirit of wisdom and revelation that gives us the knowledge of God must come from the Holy Spirit. It is only through a knowledge of God Himself, that we will be able to receive the gift of enlightenment which will cause us to fully understand how much He loves us, how much He has done for us, all the resources He has made available to us, and how by consistently harnessing these resources, we can glorify Him, which is our ultimate purpose.

It is noteworthy that Paul does not pray for some of the things that loom so large in our prayers - better health, more money, job promotion, provision of a spouse, etc. Paul prayed that the saints might know God more intimately.

A person can only be known through a process of revelation. Information will assist us to learn **about** a person, but if we are ever to really know the person, then the person must reveal himself or herself to us. He or she must reveal who they are through their words and actions. They must express their thoughts and feelings, their hopes and ambitions, their likes and dislikes.

God has revealed Himself through His written Word - the Bible, and through His incarnate Word - Jesus Christ. If we sincerely desire to know God, we must know Him through the revelation of His Word and the revelation of His Son. This is the greatest privilege and responsibility of every Christian. What does the Bible have to say about God? What has Jesus Christ revealed about God through the lens of the Word? If we are not reading our Bibles consistently, we are not giving the Holy Spirit much to work with. "Get to know God" is Paul's basic answer to all of the problems and perplexities of life.

In seeking to know Christ more, we are in the true way of getting more insight into all that is Divine. The importance of opening our human spirit to the influence of the Holy Spirit, even after we have been saved and sealed by Him, is here made very clear. A growing knowledge of God is a most healthy feature of Christian life. This is what the Apostle Peter highlights in **2 Peter 3:18**: *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."*

The importance of an increasingly intimate knowledge of God is emphasized in verse **18**: *"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."* The words, *"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,"* speak to the results of the act of God giving the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the sphere of a full knowledge of Him. In other words, when God grants to us the spiritual wisdom and revelation that facilitates a full and accurate knowledge of Him, the light of God will illuminate the eyes of our hearts, flooding us with light, to the extent that we will experience the full revelation of the hope of His calling and the wealth of the glorious inheritances that we find in Him and that He finds in us.

In the Greek, the words, *"the eyes of your understanding"* is literally, "the eyes of your heart." In Scripture, the heart is the core and centre of a person's inner-most being. The heart refers not only to the emotions, but also to the reason and to the faculty of intelligence.

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit the eye of the heart is blind (**Isaiah 9:2; John 9:39-41; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16**). Persons who are in this state are in need of two things. These two things are the Gospel and spiritual life and consciousness. This spiritual life and consciousness is what is meant by the *"eyes of your heart being enlightened."* In order to bring about this illumination, the Holy Spirit regenerates persons, thus, removing the blindness from their hearts. The more the saved individual yields to the Holy Spirit, and so comes to know God more intimately, the more the Holy Spirit is able to put sin out of their lives and cause His fruit to be manifested. The more the heart is purified, the more the spiritual eye is enlightened (**Matthew 6:22-23**). The more the spiritual eye is enlightened, the more we will understand and experience the benefits of the blessings of God.

The words, *"being enlightened,"* are a perfect participle in the Greek text, meaning that the words refer to a past complete act which has present results. The clause literally reads, "the eyes of your heart having been enlightened with the present result that they are in a state of illumination."

That is, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit will do a permanent work in the human spirits of these saints, that their inner spiritual faculty for understanding the truth may receive benefits that are permanent.

In this regard, Paul wants the Ephesian Christians to know three things. The first thing is, “*what is the hope of their calling.*” The Greek word translated “*what*”, speaks to the specific nature of the hope of God’s calling. Paul desires for them to know what the hope really is.

Paul is aware that the most effective way for a person to neutralize their old sinful tendencies, is to stop concentrating on **them** and to concentrate rather on the blessings of salvation. The Ephesian Christians had received the effectual **internal** call. The urgent invitation of the gospel, which is the **external** call, had been applied to their hearts by the Holy Spirit, producing the **internal** call. It is this **internal** call that Paul always refers to in his epistles.

The Greek word translated as “*calling*” here, is used particularly of the divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption. The word was used in the first century as a technical word in legal practice, and meant “an official summons,” as in the case of the summoning of a witness to court. The word means more than a mere invitation. It is a divine summons. The ones summoned are made willing to obey this summons, not against their will but with their free will and consent. It is an effectual call. The one called always responds.

The hope of His calling had its beginning in the council chambers of God in eternity past. It became a reality for us, when He saved. And it will have its completion in heaven.

The hope of His calling takes in all of God’s eternal purposes and plans in Jesus Christ. We have been caught up in something that is so wonderful, so great, so vast, so far beyond anything that we can imagine, so much more than anything we could ever ask or think, that our minds cannot fully comprehend it all. No wonder Paul prayed that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened.

The hope of God’s calling is firmly grounded in God’s infallible promises. It is the soul’s anchor, securely fastened to the very throne of God and therefore, to the very heart of Christ. This is the argument of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews in chapter **6:13-20**:

*13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,*

*14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.*

*15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

*16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

*17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:*

*18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

*19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*

*20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

**The Passion Translation** renders the passage as follows:

*13 Now when God made a promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater than himself, he swore an oath on his own integrity to keep the promise as sure as God exists!*

*14 So he said, “Have no doubt, I promise to bless you over and over, and give you a son and multiply you without measure!”*

**15** So Abraham waited patiently in faith and succeeded in seeing the promise fulfilled.

**16** It is very common for people to swear an oath by something greater than themselves, for the oath will confirm their statements and end all dispute.

**17** So in the same way, God wanted to end all doubt and confirm it even more forcefully to those who would inherit his promises. His purpose was unchangeable, so God added his vow to the promise.

**18** So it is impossible for God to lie for we know that his promise and his vow will never change! And now we have run into his heart to hide ourselves in his faithfulness. This is where we find his strength and comfort, for he empowers us to seize what has already been established ahead of time — an unshakeable hope!

**19** We have this certain hope like a strong, unbreakable anchor holding our souls to God himself. Our anchor of hope is fastened to the mercy seat which sits in the heavenly realm beyond the sacred threshold,

**20** and where Jesus, our forerunner, has gone in before us. He is now and forever our royal Priest like Melchizedek.

Brothers and sisters, the hope of our calling is secure because God's purposes are unchanging. It is secure because He has confirmed it with an oath and it is impossible for God to lie. It is secure because it is guaranteed by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, not by ours. It is secure because it is fastened to the Mercy Seat. It is secure because of the continual, never-ending High-Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, including His intercession for us. Therefore, we have a confident expectation, and we wait patiently for the fulfilment of God's promises. We have a full Christ-centered assurance that these promises will indeed be realized and that assurance serves as an anchor to our souls!

This hope is a living and sanctifying force according to **1 Peter 1:3-9**:

**3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

**5** Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**6** Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

**7** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

**8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

**9** Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

**The Passion Translation** renders the passage as follows:

**3** Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his fountain of mercy has given us a new life — we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

**4** We are reborn into a perfect inheritance that can never perish, never be defiled, and never diminish. It is promised and preserved forever in the heavenly realm for you!

**5** Through our faith, the mighty power of God constantly guards us until our full salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time.

**6** *May the thought of this cause you to jump for joy, even though lately you've had to put up with the grief of many trials.*

**7** *But these only reveal the sterling core of your faith, which is far more valuable than gold that perishes, for even gold is refined by fire. Your authentic faith will result in even more praise, glory, and honor when Jesus the Anointed One is revealed.*

**8** *You love him passionately although you did not see him, but through believing in him you are saturated with an ecstatic joy, indescribably sublime and immersed in glory.*

**9** *For you are reaping the harvest of your faith — the full salvation promised you — your souls' victory!*

The second thing Paul wants the Ephesian saints to know in regard to the eyes of their understanding being enlightened is *“what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”* I am of the view that Paul is referring to **two things** here. **Firstly**, I believe he desires to highlight the fact that the saints have received an inheritance from God. He is speaking about the glorious riches, the marvelous magnitude, of all the blessings of salvation, some of which will not be experienced by them until the great consummation of all things. These blessings are called an *“inheritance”* because they are the gift of God's grace, and once He has bestowed them, they will never be taken away again.

**Secondly**, and even more wonderfully, I believe that Paul is referring to the truth that the saints are God's inheritance! This takes us back to verse **11** where Paul says the saints were made God's inheritance. In verse **18**, Paul prays that we might know how precious the saints are in God's eyes as His inheritance. He is glorified in His saints, and this glory is valuable. It is part of the wealth that God possesses, dearer to Him than all the splendours of creation.

Brothers and sisters, we are not the only ones who get something out of our salvation. God gets something out of our salvation too. What we get is Him. This is a gift that is indescribable. What He gets is us. This is a gift that is incomprehensible. We sure got the best of the trade. What a poor bargain for God. And yet, somehow, He considered us to be worth saving. Somehow, He thought we were worth dying for. Somehow, He is not ashamed to call us His own, even though we are still so poor and miserable and wretched. Somehow, He never gives up on us, even though we have given up on Him many times. Somehow, even when we believe not, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself. The only explanation is His amazing, divine love, a love that is its own reason and logic!