

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND
THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL:
A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON FIFTEEN)

“AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD”

EPHESIANS 1:3-23 (KING JAMES VERSION)

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.

EPHESIANS 1:3-16
(THE PASSION TRANSLATION)

1 Dear friends, My name is Paul, and I was chosen by God to be an apostle of Jesus, the Messiah.

2 I'm writing this letter to all the devoted believers who have been made holy by being one with Jesus, the Anointed One. May God himself, the heavenly Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, release grace over you and impart total well-being into your lives.

3 Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm has already been lavished upon us as a love gift from our wonderful heavenly Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus — all because he sees us wrapped into Christ. This is why we celebrate him with all our hearts!

4 And he chose us to be his very own, joining us to himself even before he laid the foundation of the universe! Because of his great love, he ordained us, so that we would be seen as holy in his eyes with an unstained innocence.

5-6 For it was always in his perfect plan to adopt us as his delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that his tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify his grace — for the same love he has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us. And this unfolding plan brings him great pleasure!

7 Since we are now joined to Christ, we have been given the treasures of redemption by his blood — the total cancellation of our sins — all because of the cascading riches of his grace.

8 This superabundant grace is already powerfully working in us, releasing within us all forms of wisdom and practical understanding.

9 And through the revelation of the Anointed One, he unveiled his secret desires to us — the hidden mystery of his long-range plan, which he was delighted to implement from the very beginning of time.

10 And because of God's unfailing purpose, this detailed plan will reign supreme through every period of time until the fulfillment of all the ages finally reaches its climax — when God makes all things new in all of heaven and earth through Jesus Christ.

11 Through our union with Christ we too have been claimed by God as his own inheritance. Before we were even born, he gave us our destiny; that we would fulfill the plan of God who always accomplishes every purpose and plan in his heart.

12 God's purpose was that we Jews, who were the first to long for the messianic hope, would be the first to believe in the Anointed One and bring great praise and glory to God!

13 And because of him, when you who are not Jews heard the revelation of truth, you believed in the wonderful news of salvation. Now we have been stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

14 He is given to us like an engagement ring is given to a bride, as the first installment of what's coming! He is our hope - promise of a future inheritance which seals us until we have all of redemption's promises and experience complete freedom — all for the supreme glory and honor of God!

15 Because of this, since I first heard about your strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your tender love toward all his devoted ones,

16 my heart is always full and overflowing with thanks to God for you as I constantly remember you in my prayers.

17 I pray that the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would impart to you the riches of the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation to know him through your deepening intimacy with him.

18 I pray that the light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination, flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling—that is, the wealth of God's glorious inheritances that he finds in us, his holy ones!

19 I pray that you will continually experience the immeasurable greatness of God's power made available to you through faith. Then your lives will be an advertisement of this immense power as it works through you! This is the mighty power

20 that was released when God raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to the place of highest honor and supreme authority in the heavenly realm!

21 And now he is exalted as first above every ruler, authority, government, and realm of power in existence! He is gloriously enthroned over every name that is ever praised, not only in this age, but in the age that is coming!

22 And he alone is the leader and source of everything needed in the church. God has put everything beneath the authority of Jesus Christ and has given him the highest rank above all others.

23 And now we, his church, are his body on the earth and that which fills him who is being filled by it!

In our previous **Lesson**, we started to consider a new section of the Apostle Paul's letter to the **Ephesians**, which begins at verse **15** and **16**: *"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**, and in particular, because of the report that had reached him in prison concerning the faith of the Ephesians in the Lord Jesus Christ, and their love expressed toward each other, Paul thanks God for them and prays for them. Because of the fact that the Ephesian saints had received every spiritual blessing — including election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the mystery of His will, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance — Paul now prayed that his readers might know God personally and intimately. Verses **15–23** form one sentence in the Greek, as was the case with verses **3–14**.

We stated that the Christian life has two dimensions: faith toward God and love toward men, and that the two cannot be separated. The phrase, *"faith in the Lord Jesus,"* emphasizes the vertical relationship of the saints with Jesus Christ, while the phrase, *"love unto all the saints,"* emphasizes their horizontal relationship with each other. We also said that a proper relationship with God should lead to a proper relationship with other Christians.

If our faith is indeed genuine, it will inevitably result in us loving other Christians. If these two dimensions are not an integral part of our Christian experience, then, we need to seriously examine ourselves to see whether or not we were genuinely converted.

In verse **16**, Paul tells the Christians in Ephesus that his heart is always full and overflowing with thanks to God for them, and he assures them that he constantly remembers them in his prayers. That information must have been very comforting for them. But what is Paul praying for them about? What is he focusing on as he prays to God on behalf of the saints in Ephesus? 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 Passion Translation renders the verses as follows:

17 I pray that the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would impart to you the riches of the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation to know him through your deepening intimacy with him.

18 I pray that the light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination, flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling — that is, the wealth of God's glorious inheritances that he finds in us, his holy ones!

19 I pray that you will continually experience the immeasurable greatness of God's power made available to you through faith. Then your lives will be an advertisement of this immense power as it works through you! This is the mighty power

20 that was released when God raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to the place of highest honor and supreme authority in the heavenly realm!

The expression, “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” must be understood in the context of our Lord's humanity. It is critical for us to understand that when our Lord was here on the earth, He ministered as **a man** anointed by the Holy Spirit. This, of course, does not, in any way, deny His full deity, but rather emphasizes the wonderful truth that He willingly decided, from the foundation of the world, that He would limit the exercise of His deity when He assumed a human existence. He chose to do so, in order to live His life as a man on this earth, in the same fashion, and with the same limitations faced by ordinary human beings. The Apostle Peter's statement in **Acts 2:22**, clearly indicates that this is so: “*Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*”

The phrase “*The Father of glory*”, is literally “the Father of the glory.” God Almighty is the Father of the glory in the sense that He is the Father to whom all glory belongs. The phrase recognizes God as the source of all glory and the goal of all glory.

Paul prays that God might give to the Ephesian saints “*the spirit of wisdom and revelation.*” This indicates clearly, that wisdom and revelation are intimately related. They are intimately related because the source of both wisdom and revelation is God!

But how are we to understand the word “*spirit*” as it is used here, in light of the fact that the definite article is missing? Are we to understand the word “*spirit*” here to refer to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit? The Ephesian saints possessed both. How could God give them something that they already had? What Paul seems to desire and pray for is that God might so work in the lives of the Ephesian saints that they will have the spiritual wisdom and a revelation from Him that is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work of energizing their human spirit. That spiritual disposition should characterize these saints.

To put it another way, Paul is praying that He who is already present in the lives of the Christians in Ephesus, will be allowed to exert an increasingly dominant influence in their lives. The Holy Spirit was certainly present in their lives, but the apostle prays that the Ephesians would surrender their human spirits to the influence of the Holy Spirit to such a degree, that He will have the pre-eminence in their lives. They will, then, 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.”

Brothers and sisters, a knowledge of God is the highest and greatest knowledge that it is possible for a human being to have. A person cannot understand much of anything else without a knowledge of God. Every genuinely saved individual has a saving knowledge of God and that is good. But the Christian must grow in his or her knowledge of God. To know God personally is to experience salvation (**John 17:3**). To know Him increasingly is to experience sanctification (**Philippians 3:10**). To know Him perfectly is to experience glorification (**1 Corinthians 13:9–12**). Every true Christian has experienced salvation and is experiencing sanctification. One day, we will experience glorification.

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 better we will know ourselves and each other. It is not enough to know God only as Saviour. We must come to know Him as our “*everything,*” as our “*all in all.*” The more complete our knowledge of Him is, the more satisfying our spiritual lives will be.

In His famous Hymn, “*How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds,*” **John Newton** included the following verse:

*“Jesus! my shepherd, husband, friend,
My prophet, priest and king,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,
Accept the praise I bring.”*

In these lines, Newton claims Jesus Christ as His Shepherd, Husband, Friend, Prophet, Priest, King, Lord, Life, Way and End! Apparently, he had come to know the Lord in a very intimate and thorough way! Paul desires all the saints to know God like this.

Brothers and sisters, 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 worthy of note that the only gifts Paul desired for these converts to possess, were gifts of a spiritual order.

This is not surprising, for this is what he desired for himself. Listen to the cry of his heart expressed in **Philippians 3:7-16**:

7 Yet all of the accomplishments that I once took credit for, I've now forsaken them and I regard it all as nothing compared to the delight of experiencing Jesus Christ as my Lord!

8 To truly know him meant letting go of everything from my past and throwing all my boasting on the garbage heap. It's all like a pile of manure to me now, so that I may be enriched in the reality of knowing Jesus Christ and embrace him as Lord in all of his greatness.

9 My passion is to be consumed with him and not clinging to my own "righteousness" based in keeping the written Law. My "righteousness" will be his, based on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ — the very righteousness that comes from God.

10 And I continually long to know the wonders of Jesus more fully and to experience the overflowing power of his resurrection working in me. I will be one with him in his sufferings and I will be one with him in his death.

11 Only then will I be able to experience complete oneness with him in his resurrection from the realm of death.

12 I admit that I haven't yet acquired the absolute fullness that I'm pursuing, but I run with passion into his abundance so that I may reach the purpose that Jesus Christ has called me to fulfill and wants me to discover.

13 I don't depend on my own strength to accomplish this; however I do have one compelling focus: I forget all of the past as I fasten my heart to the future instead.

14 I run straight for the divine invitation of reaching the heavenly goal and gaining the victory-prize through the anointing of Jesus.

15 So let all who are fully mature have this same passion, and if anyone is not yet gripped by these desires, God will reveal it to them.

16 And let us all advance together to reach this victory-prize, following one path with one passion.
(The Passion Translation)

Is there anyone here who desires to know God? Can we identify with the Psalmist who in **Psalm 42:1-2** cried, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

Are we able to join with David who in **Psalm 63:1-8** said:

1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:

6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

Does any member of **The Grace Workshop Ministries** still hunger and thirst for God? The truth is that we need "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," more than we need anything else.

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.”*

Is there anything more profitable, satisfying and enriching than to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God? Let us all desire to grow in these areas and pray to this end.