

Apostolic Prayer #1 - Ephesians 1:17-20

“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; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:17-20 NJKV)

- Paul’s one general prayer here is that the Father would give His people increased understanding of the knowledge of God so that they would experience THREE expressions of His glory—the hope of His calling, the glory of being God’s inheritance, and walking in the power of God.
- There are 3 main areas he is praying into:
 1. To walk in confidence (hope) related to God’s calling - His “assignment” for our life.
 2. To know who we are to God as His inheritance - how He sees us and feels about us.
 3. To experience God’s power in our life - in our mind, heart, circumstances, and ministry.
- In order to understand what was in Paul’s heart when he prayed this prayer we have to look back at what he was saying just before this.

In verses 3-14, Paul had just outlined the “riches of the glory of His grace.” Paul shifted from declaring who Jesus is to praying that the believers in Ephesus would now be touched by it in a way that is real and tangible in their hearts and minds.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence (Eph 1:3-8 NKJV)

THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM (Eph 1:17)

- Paul's primary prayer here was that God's people know and encounter Him by receiving more of the spirit of wisdom and revelation— that the “eyes of their understanding” (heart) be progressively enlightened by the Spirit.
- It happens in our heart inch by inch, little by little, it is called “the spirit of revelation.” It is living understanding, and it is increasing ever so slightly and incrementally. As the months go by, as you look back, you can see and feel the truth more clearly than you did some months ago, if you stick with it. And then a few years go by and you see it more and more.
- The natural mind cannot understand spiritual truths— we need living understanding that only comes from the Spirit. The Scriptures are more than intellectual ideas, they are an unveiling of spiritual things which requires the supernatural capacities to understand given by the Spirit.
- In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul talks about how the natural man or mind can't receive the things of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:12-14 NKJV)

The most uneducated person can have far more revelation of God than the most brilliant theologian who is not encountering God, though he knows the Bible, Greek, and Hebrew, and he knows all the Bible verses.

THAT YOU MAY KNOW (1:18)

The Greek word for *knowledge* (*epignosis*) refers to experiential knowledge which is much more than informational knowledge of true facts about God. To know or encounter God is the essence of our salvation.

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3 NKJV)

- We need more than just informational facts about God, though that is valuable to have. Without the “spark” and those little inspirational moments it is not going to move us to walk out our salvation in humility and obedience. Informational facts might equip me to win an argument in a theological debate, but it will not move me to humility and obedience. That is the litmus test.... We need the *epignosis* truth that moves us to humility, obedience, or love.
- It is like “He gives us this day our daily bread” in the Lords prayer. As we feed on the Word, we get those little moments of inspiration enough to be humble that day. The next day we need daily bread to be inspired and stirred to go hard after the Lord. When we draw back from encountering the Spirit and the Word, and some months go by, and we have those moments where we feel like “Eh, I don’t feel like it. I don’t have the same kind of resolve I had last year.” We can lose it, but we can get it back. That is the good news: we can get it back.
- Anytime we find ourselves in a season of dullness in our walk with God it is typically because we are failing to see Him. Revelations about who He is set us on course and remind us of our “why” behind being with Him.

THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING (Eph 1:18)

Our “assignment” has two dimensions. We have an internal assignment for our life and our heart to grow and an external assignment in how we impact other people. Not only do we have an internal and an external assignment, we have a temporal one in this age and an eternal one that starts in the Millennium and goes on past that. So Paul is saying that if you can take a step back, and see the big picture it will make much more sense to make costly and even difficult decisions now because you are seeing that it is affecting your internal assignment. As a matter of fact, your primary assignment in this age is internal. It is to grow in love. It is to grow in meekness. It is to grow in gratitude etc., etc.

- God’s will is not just about what city you go to, what occupation you have, and who you marry. God’s will for our life is what happens inside of us on the journey as well. That is the bigger part of God’s will, yet a lot of people do not think about that much. If you get confidence in that it changes everything and takes some of the pressure off of the external assignment.

Our internal calling: Our primary calling in this age is internal. We are to say and do what He said and did (Sermon on the Mount lifestyle **Matt 5-7**) without regard to the honor or money that we receive or the size of our impact or influence. Our internal calling is to be a faithful disciple of Jesus that loves God and embraces what the world calls foolish (humility, serving, giving, praying, forgiving, etc.).

- The only thing you will bring with you from this age to the age to come is the development of your heart. You will not bring your economics, or your properties with you. You will not bring your reputation, and you won't even bring your failures. You will not bring anything with you except your development in love or humility, or gratitude etc etc.
- When you line up and agree with God for what He is after in your calling, your internal before your external, then you do not get nearly as disappointed, depressed, and mad at people or mad at God when you have seasons that don't turn out like you had hoped.
- Our external calling is important, but it is the least important. What I mean is that if we have big impact, but we have not grown in humility and love, we will be shocked when we stand before the Lord because He is not going to ask us how big our ministries were, or how big our business was. He is going to ask you how you grew in humility and love. That is all He is going to evaluate. You will think, *“Wait a minute! I had the biggest kingdom business in America! And You are asking me if I grew in humility? Really?”*

Our external calling (in this age): This aspect of our divine assignment includes our position and function in the marketplace, a ministry organization, or our home, etc. This is what most people are focused on when considering their “calling.”

- Our external calling is important to have understanding on because it is what we will do with our physical strength for a large portion of days, weeks, and months.
- Every believer has the same internal calling but not all have the same external call. God has a hand tailored assignment for all of us and as long as it is the Lords will it is a beautiful display of the uniqueness of His family.

THE GLORY OF BEING GODS INHERITANCE (Eph 1:18)

Paul's second specific request relates to who we are to God. This prayer is to realize that we are God's inheritance. To know who we are to God as His inheritance is to know how He sees and feels about us. By making us His inheritance, God has revealed His passion for us. Paul spoke of both our inheritance in God (***Eph. 1:14***) and of God's inheritance in us (***Eph. 1:18***).

- Think about this for a minute....That God would have an inheritance? The God who possesses everything is waiting on something He does not have? This is the great mystery that keeps us in the tension of intercession.

- Seeing who we are to God is foundational to our spiritual identity - we are objects of His affection. We are transformed when we see the value, dignity, honor, and beauty that we possess in His eyes.

EXPERIENCING THE GREATNESS OF HIS POWER (1:19)

Paul's third specific request relates to experiencing the power of God and perceiving rightly how it operates in and through us.

- We need revelation to see how God has wisely chosen to release power in His Kingdom. God's way is usually to release His power in small measures - but it is still 'His power'. On many occasions the Spirit inspires our heart and uses us to bless others—in small measures but it still is 'His power'.
- When we see small measures of God's power as true expressions of His glory, then we receive it with gratitude while being sustained in our hunger to contend for greater measures of power.
- When you have a situation where you could slander, give in, cave in, draw back, or not bless, and you say, "You know what? I am not going to say anything. I am just going to ask the Lord to bless them!" that is the power of God working in you! That is not the devil in you and that is not your flesh.
- We must walk in the tension of being grateful and faithful in the days of small beginnings while contending to see a far greater measure of His power. We pray earnestly for an historic visitation of the Spirit while giving thanks for the smaller measure that we walk in today. If we only associate God's power with big miracles we will quit and give up on believing.